



# MEDIEVAL WOMEN, MATERIAL CULTURE, AND POWER

## MATILDA PLANTAGENET AND HER SISTERS

by  
**JITSKE JASPERSE**

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MATERIAL CULTURE,  
AND POWER**

## **Gender and Power in the Premodern World**

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## USAGE AND CONVENTIONS

FIRST CITATIONS IN footnotes contain full information, whereas the bibliography consists of selected works, including the main primary sources. The articles published in Dietrich Kötzsche, ed., *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989) and Jochen Luckhardt and Franz Niehoff, eds., *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Welfen 1125–1235*, 3 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1995) appear in the footnotes but have been omitted from the bibliography. The focus in the select bibliography is on material culture, women, and power.

I have anglicized most names, including German emperors and places like Braunschweig (as Brunswick) and Hannover (Hanover), but have made some exceptions, including Marie (of Champagne) and Alix (of Blois). The name Leonor of Castile is preferred over that of Eleanor in order to avoid confusion between the queen of Castile and her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine. To enhance readability, dates of death of major figures are largely absent in the introduction; instead these are given in the subsequent chapters.

## PREFACE

MY MATILDA BOOK, as I have been calling it over the years, has accompanied me from Amsterdam to Madrid, only to be finished in Berlin. It was my former PhD supervisor and dear friend Wendelien van Welie who introduced me to Duchess Matilda when I was her student in Amsterdam. Her interest in Matilda has never ceased and I am happy that she read some of my findings. My scholarly journey would have been impossible without my mentor, good friend, and eagle-eyed editor Therese Martin, with whom I closely cooperated in Madrid. She has inspired and supported my research from the start, and generously offered to read my manuscript, for which I am immensely grateful. I sincerely hope that one day I will be able to reciprocate all that she has done for me.

Many others have also contributed to the arrival of this publication and I want to express my deepest thanks to all of them. I found a stimulating environment at the Universität Bonn in 2018 when I presented some of my findings from the first chapter at the workshop “Macht und Herrschaft: Pre-Modern Configurations in a Transcultural Perspective,” organized by Emma O’Loughlin Bérat and Irina Dumitrescu. Cartographer Sebastian Ballard created the fabulous map that accompanies the first chapter. My colleague and sister-in-arms Marije Osnabrugge carefully read the chapter on coins and seals; small objects that she knows how to appreciate. Marie-Adélaïde Nielen kindly sent me a copy of her book on the seals of the French queens and their offspring, and Clément Blanc-Riehl and Jean-Luc Chassel equally kindly gave me free use of the images at the Archives nationales in Paris. And I much appreciate Brigitte Bedos-Rezak’s extensive reply to my enquiries about some seal issues. Amanda Dotseth, Laura Cleaver, Amanda Luyster, Therese Martin, and Chris Woolgar were so good as to discuss with me possible approaches to the gospel book of Henry and Matilda during IMC Leeds 2018. Although the chapter on Matilda’s manuscripts is different from what I had at first envisioned, and probably deviates from what we discussed together, I am happy that they agreed to meet and share their knowledge. The chapter on textiles has greatly benefitted from the invaluable expertise of Ana Cabrera Lafuente, María Judith Feliciano, and María Barra Rios. Justine Moreno, from the Département de Maine-et-Loire, kindly responded to my inquiries into the will of Joanna Plantagenet in which textiles are mentioned. And with their insightful comments Martin Aurell and Laurent Macé helped shape this chapter as well. My colleague and dear friend Annika Rulkens read the draft of my epilogue and for that I am grateful, as I am to Heidi Gearhart and Stephanie Pearson, who generously shared their ideas on the index. I also want to express my thanks to Barbara Klössel-Luckhardt for sharing with me her article on German noblewomen’s seals as well as for digging up the photo of the so-called *Mathildenbändchen* kept at the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv at Wolfenbüttel, of which Julian Hartig provided me with photos. My thanks are due to student assistant Edouard Compere for kindly checking the footnotes and bibliography.

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## INTRODUCTION: MATERIAL CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE OF POWER

BRUNSWICK, GERMANY, JUNE 24, 1935. In the Church of St. Blaise the graves belonging to Henry the Lion (1131/1135–1195), duke of Saxony and Bavaria, and his wife Matilda (1156–1189) are unearthed at the behest of the Nazi Party. Henry the Lion was the only child of Duke Henry the Proud and Duchess Gertrud; through his mother, Henry the Lion was the grandson of Emperor Lothar and Empress Richenza. The 1935 excavation was part of a campaign to convert the Christian temple into a Nazi shrine commemorating the Lion. His consort Matilda, as the eldest daughter of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, as well as the granddaughter of the Empress Matilda, had an equally impressive pedigree, but she was of no use to Nazi propaganda. The redecoration campaign resulted in a profoundly altered church interior featuring heavy granite, large curtains decorated with an eagle and swastika, and aggressive black-and-white sgraffiti on the walls replacing the medieval decoration.<sup>1</sup> Reviving Duke Henry was a means to connect the Nazis' expansionist politics towards Eastern Europe with the duke's historical conquest of Slavic lands: the duke served as a glorious model of a past that needed to be restored.<sup>2</sup> For Matilda little role is evident in this appropriation—and abuse—of history, as she was merely the “wife of,” and English rather than German to boot.<sup>3</sup> Yet the excavations had another impact as well: the material remains of the ducal couple were photographed and published, allowing modern viewers to glimpse the life and afterlife of Henry and Matilda (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

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1 Karl Arndt, “Missbrauchte Geschichte: Der Braunschweiger Dom als politisches Denkmal 1935/45,” in *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Welfen 1125–1235*, ed. Jochen Luckhardt and Franz Niehoff, 3 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1995), 3:88–95.

2 Karl Arndt (see note 1) points out that the project mainly had a local impact and was only of minor interest to Hitler, who focused on contemporary monumental building projects in Berlin, Munich, and Nuremberg. Nevertheless, St. Blaise was not a unique project; Heinrich Himmler searched for the bones of King Henry I in the Church of St. Servase at Quedlinburg in 1936. See Uta Halle, “936 Begräbnis Heinrich I – 1936 die archäologische Suche nach den Gebeinen in Quedlinburg und die NS-Propaganda,” *Mitteilungen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* 16 (2005): 14–20.

3 How the Nazis exactly valued Matilda's presence, as well as that of other medieval elite women, deserves further investigation, but goes beyond the scope of this book. Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg mentioned the medieval queen Matilda (d. 968) when he said that “the first truly great German ruler ... is King Henry I [of East Francia] whose wife [Matilda] prided herself on being a direct descendant of Duke Widukind.” Cited in Halle, “936 Begräbnis Heinrich I,” 17.

4 Jörg Weber, “Bericht über die Freilegung der Gruft Heinrichs des Löwen im Sommer 1935,” in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 3:cat. H 112; and Weber, “Zwei während der Freilegung der Gruft Heinrichs des Löwen entstandene Fotografien,” in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 3:cat. H 113.



Figure 1. Leather shroud with Henry the Lion's remains. Wolfenbüttel, NLA WO 250 N, Nr. 205. Photo: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Wolfenbüttel.

Long after World War II, Duke Henry the Lion managed to captivate the interest of historians, art historians, literary specialists, and numismatists.<sup>5</sup> Although Matilda

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<sup>5</sup> Joachim Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe: Eine Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), with references to the vast number of publications that appeared concerning Henry the Lion; Johannes Fried and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Heinrich der Löwe. Herrschaft und Repräsentation* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2003); Jochen Luckhardt and Franz Niehoff, eds., *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit. Herrschaft und*

was a crucial part of the story of Henry's rise to and fall from power, scholars have not accorded her a prominent place in the duke's daily affairs, neither in his rise nor fall. This scholarly oversight is all the more surprising given the survival of no fewer than four twelfth-century visual representations of the royal couple: Matilda and Henry appear together on a coin, in a psalter, and twice in a gospel book. This indicates that Matilda's involvement mattered to Henry the Lion. Indeed, it would only be through Matilda that he and his family were able to stay at Henry II's court between 1182 and 1185 after the duke had been exiled from Germany by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Yet Matilda is rarely considered to have played an active role in Saxon politics, and this is partly due to the scarcity of references to Matilda in charters and chronicles. As we will see, Matilda is not completely absent from the chronicles, which provide basic information on her birth, status, marriage, and motherhood, but fail to offer much more than that. Many medieval elite women of Matilda's time shared the same fate, mainly because most chroniclers were producing their narratives for male rulers and religious institutions led by men, while also pursuing their own clerical agendas.

Given Matilda's royal status we would, however, expect her to appear in charters issued by her husband, who was of lower status. In fact, only three such documents are known. A charter dated February 1, 1168, known through a seventeenth-century copy, tells that Henry and Matilda were engaged in Minden Cathedral on that day.<sup>6</sup> Matilda appears in the charter's *recognitio*—indicating place and time—as *Machtildem filiam regis Anglie*. The *filiam regis Anglie* expression is far from unusual, since it can be found in almost all of the other written sources, but its presence in Henry's charters evinces that it was important to the duke as well. The second charter dates from 1170 and is known to us from a sixteenth-century cartulary. The document's closing protocol states: "All these things were done with the consent of the glorious Lady Matilda, duchess of Bavaria and Saxony, and also with the devout permission of Lady Gertrud, daughter of Henry and Clementia; prosperous until eternity."<sup>7</sup> Matilda is designated as *domine Matildis, Bawaria et Saxonie ducisse*. Lady—or female lord—refers to Matilda's marital status, through which she had obtained the title of duchess, sharing in her husband's authority as duke of Bavaria and Saxony. Since Matilda is merely mentioned as *domina*, rather than *uxor*

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*Repräsentation der Welfen 1125–1235*, 3 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1995); and Karl Jordan, *Heinrich der Löwe: Eine Biographie* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1979).

**6** "Acta sunt hec Minde anno dominice incarnationis MCLXVIII, indictione I, quando Heinricus dux Bawarie et Saxonie Machtildem filiam regis Anglie ibidem subarravit, kalendis februarii. Data Minde per manum Hartwici Utledensis Bremensis canonici." MGH DD HL, 111–13, no. 77. See also [chap. 1](#), p. 24.

**7** "Acta autem sunt hec anno dominice incarnationis MCLXX indictione III; data in Heretesberch II idus novembris. Dominus Baldewinus notarius domini ducis assignavit. Omnia hec acta sunt ex assensu gloriosissime domine Matildis, Bawarie et Saxonie ducisse, nec non ex pio assensu domine Gerthrudis, filie ducis, feliciter in perpetuum." MGH DD HL, 123–24, no. 83. Two conclusions may be drawn from the mention that Gertrud had granted her permission: first, that Gertrud was still Henry's only heir and was therefore entitled to inherit; and second, that because of her right to inheritance, she was in a position to wield influence.

or *coniunx*, this may indicate that Henry and Matilda had as yet not shared a bed, which would be understandable considering that Matilda was still only fourteen at the time. When turning to the third and final charter, which has survived in its original form, this situation has changed. This document mentions Henry's donation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (1172). Matilda, who did not join Henry on his journey due to her pregnancy, is not presented as a co-donor, nor does she give her consent or act as a witness, but instead she is cited as one of the beneficiaries.<sup>8</sup> Both Matilda's descent and her authority as duchess are specifically stated. The addition of *uxoris mee* is meaningful, as it not only declares that the relation between Matilda and Henry is legitimate, but also implies that she is responsible for Henry's offspring, for whose spiritual wellbeing the donation was also made. Of the 123 charters connected with Duke Henry, only these three mention Matilda, but they give an important insight into the development of her position from young bride to young mother.<sup>9</sup> We should be wary of interpreting Matilda's absence from Henry's ducal documents as clear evidence of her absence in his lordship, especially given that she, as we shall see, appears in visual sources. Rather, it fits the charter evidence for the Saxon lands where women's names were rarely included, even though these women do appear in chronicles and lists of properties owned by monasteries and churches as well as on coins.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the challenging written source material, another explanation for the lack of a more detailed analysis of Matilda's actions must be sought in the scholarly assumption that Matilda mainly embodied status and monetary value. This perception springs from the many chroniclers who mentioned Henry's marriage to the *filia regis Anglorum* (daughter of the king of the English) and spoke of the great treasures she brought with her.<sup>11</sup> Their entries have been read as a confirmation of the wealth of

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**8** "Notum sit omnibus tam presentibus quam futuris sancte matris ecclesie filiis, quod ego Henricus per dei gratiam Bawarie et Saxonie dux misericordie instinctu tactus pro remissione omnium peccatorum meorum et inclite uxoris mee ducisse Matildis, magnifici Anglorum regis filie, et eorum, quos deus misericordie sue dono michi dedit, heredum nec non et totius generis mei tres lampades perpetuo ad honorem dei ardentis in dominice resurrectionis ecclesia locari constitui et ordinavi." MGH DD HL, 143–45, no. 94. See also [chap. 3](#), p. 78.

**9** For an analysis of the charter material, see MGH DD HL, XV–LIX.

**10** According to Karl Jordan hardly any charters were issued in Saxony before Henry the Lion, MGH DD HL, XVI. Before her death Duchess Gertrud (d. 1143), Henry the Lion's mother, appears in three charters, each time together with her son. Clementia of Zahringen, Henry's first wife, appears in one of his charters (MGH DD HL, 22, no. 13) and is represented together with Henry on his coinage. See also [chap. 2](#), p. 44–45. Sophie, the wife of Henry's competitor Albrecht the Bear, who was margrave of Saxony (r. 1138–1142) and margrave of Brandenburg (1150, 1157–1170), features four times in documents issued by her husband. See *Codex Diplomatics Anhaltinus. Auf Befehl seiner Hoheit des Herzogs Leopold Friedrich von Anhalt*, 6 vols., ed. Otto von Heinemann (Dessau: Barth, 1867), 1: nos. 456, 464, 483, and 486. She also appears on coins together with her husband.

**11** For this reference in chronicles: Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Bernard Schmeidler, MGH SS rer. Germ. 32 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1937), 209; Robert of Torigny, *Chronica*, ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols. (London,

the English king, Henry II, and of his appreciation of rich vestments.<sup>12</sup> It is suggestive of the ostentation that accompanied Matilda on her travel: in addition to moveable items that served as marriage goods, Matilda brought with her £5,102 of silver.<sup>13</sup> By regarding Matilda herself as an element of the treasures, almost an object that was given to Henry the Lion, modern scholars have denied her an active voice in the years that followed her marriage. To counter and nuance that narrative, this book argues that the impressive range of belongings that I connect to Duchess Matilda—textiles, illuminated manuscripts, coins, chronicles, charters, and literary texts—allows us to perceive elite women's performance of power, even when they are largely absent from the official documentary record. It is especially through the visual record of material culture that we can hear female voices, allowing us to forge an alternative way toward rethinking assumptions about power for sparsely documented elite women.<sup>14</sup>

The eldest daughter of the king and queen of England, Matilda was among the most elite of women and, as I will make clear, she was far from a passive pawn. That she exerted power from 1170 to 1189 as daughter, consort, regent, patron, and mother is corroborated by the traces of the many artefacts connected to her. At this point it is worthwhile to return to the grave of Henry and Matilda. From an art historical perspective what surfaced is quite disappointing: no jewellery, no clothing, and no precious grave goods, even though “pearls of rosaries, bronze pins, and the remains of sarcophagus hinges” were found.<sup>15</sup> In addition a tablet-woven band—perhaps covering a lock—and a bright spot of silver tarnish were discovered on the leather shroud covering one

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1889), 4:234; *Annalen van Egmond*, Containing the Annales Egmondenses, Annales Xantenses, het Egmondse leven van Thomas Becket, ed. and trans. Marijke Gumbert-Hepp and J. P. Gumbert, and the Chronicon Egmondanum, ed. J. W. J. Burgers (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 250–51; Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores, or Chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (London, 1867), 1:288; Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. William Stubbs, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores, or Chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages*, 4 vols. (London, 1868), 2:269–70; Gerhard of Steterburg, *Annales Stederburgenses*, MGH SS 16, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1859), 221; and Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. J. M. Lappenberg, MGH SS rer. Germ. 14, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1868), 11–12.

**12** Joachim Ehlers, “Anglonormannisches am Hof Heinrichs des Löwen? Voraussetzungen und Möglichkeiten,” in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1998), 205–17; and Sybille Schröder, *Macht und Gabe. Materielle Kultur am Hof Heinrich II. von England* (Hussum: Matthiesen, 2004).

**13** See [chap. 1](#), p. 17.

**14** Therese Martin, “The Margin to Act: A Framework of Investigation for Women’s (and Men’s) Medieval Art-Making,” in *“Me fecit.” Making Medieval Art (History)*, ed. Therese Martin, special issue, *Journal of Medieval History* 42 (2016): 1–25 at 7–8.

**15** Cited in Ulrike Strauss, “Neues zu Grabungen in der Gruft Heinrichs des Löwen im Dom zu Braunschweig,” *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 74 (1993): 147–64 at 149.



of the bodies.<sup>16</sup> In 1935 the skeleton placed in the leather shroud was identified as being that of Matilda; accordingly the tablet weave was thought to be hers, whence the name by which it is known, the *Mathildenbändchen* (Figure 2). Forty years later, the excavation report together with its interpretations were critically analyzed; the consensus is now that it was Henry the Lion who was buried in the leather sack and thus the textile is thought to belong with his remains.<sup>17</sup> A modern in-depth study of the weaving's material and technical qualities combined with an analysis of comparable tablet weaves might help to establish the band's function and meaning, and perhaps even its origin of manufacture.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, such an enterprise may never be undertaken because the band's current whereabouts are unknown. The textile archaeologist Karl Schlabow, who was the director of the Industriemuseum Neumünster where the tablet-woven band was studied and reproduced after it was excavated, estimated that this 6 mm wide band was woven using nineteen tablets, each with four holes, resulting in a warp of seventy-six threads. The band was made of a brightly coloured purple silk with patterns in gold brocading, a technique of adding "a floating, supplemental weft thread to the ground weave."<sup>19</sup> This textile trace, like the many objects discussed in the present study, goes beyond a simple narrative focusing on the duke as it offers an example of the value of material culture for elite people to shape medieval life—and afterlife—regardless of their sex. It is through these objects rather than charter evidence that history, from visual to social to cultural, can be told because they are vivid reminders of the importance of communicating wealth, prestige, and power. Which brings me to the most compelling reason for writing about Matilda and her sisters; that is, to investigate the connections between women and power through the lens of material culture, still an under-developed approach in medieval studies with its continued focus on the written record. Before addressing how I deal with power and performance, however, the term "material culture" deserves some explanation.

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**16** Tilmann Schmidt, "Die Grablege Heinrichs des Löwen im Dom zu Braunschweig," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 55 (1974): 9–71 at 12.

**17** Schmidt, "Die Grablege Heinrichs," 9–71.

**18** The tablet-woven band found on Henry the Lion's body does not necessarily indicate that it belonged to him. Of course, the same caution is in place when the band was thought to be Matilda's. For the challenges involved in the interpretation of grave goods, see Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London: Routledge, 2001), 36–37.

**19** Karl Schlabow, "Brettchenweberei," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. Heinrich Beck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978), 3:445–50 at 449 (without reference). For the copy (which I have not studied), see Wolfgang Metzger, "Schaufassung für das bei der Grabung 1935 gefundene Schmuckband von Karl B[orromäus] Berthold," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 3:cat. H 119. The definition of brocading is from Nancy Spies, *Ecclesiastical Pomp and Aristocratic Circumstance: A Thousand Years of Brocaded Tablet-woven Bands* (Jarrettsville: Arelate Studio, 2000), 71. The warp consists of lengthwise organized threads, with a single thread running through each of the holes in the tablets (a square tablet has four holes and therefore a maximum of four threads). By turning the tablets a shed is created through which the weft is passed.

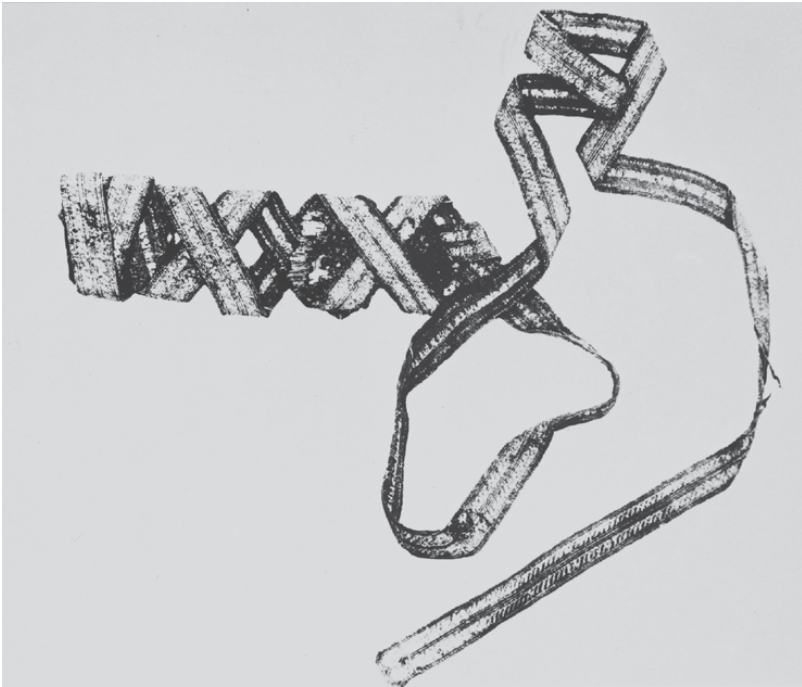


Figure 2. *Mathildenbändchen*. Wolfenbüttel, NLA WO 250 N, Nr. 205.  
Photo: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Wolfenbüttel.

There is no simple definition of what material culture entails, nor do scholars always attempt to define it. Often, the emphasis has been on everyday objects—varying from tools to pottery, and from textiles to furniture.<sup>20</sup> However, as Roberta Gilchrist has pointed out, these artefacts are not so ordinary because they either have survived or were documented. In addition, many of these items belonged to higher social levels of society, the silk tablet-woven band found in Henry the Lion’s grave being a case in point.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, items made for and used by elites, as well as artefacts related to the practice

<sup>20</sup> Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, “Introduction: Writing Material Culture History,” in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–13 at 2; Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, eds., *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); and Valerie L. Garver, “Material Culture and Social History in Early Medieval Western Europe,” *History Compass* 12 (2014): 784–93 at 786–87.

<sup>21</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, book review of “Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings,” ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson,” in *The English Historical Review* 127, no. 526 (2012): 703–4.

of religion, have been incorporated into more recent studies of medieval material culture.<sup>22</sup> Here special attention is paid to how things empower people, arguing that objects have agency themselves and thus going beyond the question of what individuals do with objects. For example, artefacts can help us to recall a person or an event, triggering our senses and emotions. The term material culture also suggests that the widest variety of objects can be studied, and it rejects a hierarchy of media, something that long has dominated art history with its emphasis on the “high arts” of painting and sculpture. In the present case, not only luxury manuscripts but also coins and seals, which I study from formal and semiotic perspectives in order to shed light on personal and collective identities, provide evidence of the communicative powers of objects and the networks of relationships connecting people and things.<sup>23</sup> Thinking of artefacts and their “affective, social, cultural and economic relationships” with people has resulted in some innovative ways of rethinking medieval artworks, both whole and fragmentary.<sup>24</sup> For example, the materiality of objects has been studied in terms of their social value by taking into account what they are made of, their size, and their biography (the social life of things).<sup>25</sup> Another way of approaching materiality takes into account the theological, philosophical, and somatic ideas concerning matter and reality.<sup>26</sup> This, in turn, has resulted in studies that investigate haptic, sensory, and performative aspects of artworks.<sup>27</sup>

I address material culture as items that are closely linked to the elite society in which they were produced and activated.<sup>28</sup> The works are analyzed in relation to their multiple users, acknowledging that objects themselves have agency. Things not only have

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**22** For example Marguerite Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-century France: The Testament of Blanche of Navarre (1331–1398)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Therese Martin, “Fuentes de potestad para reinas e infantas: el infantazgo en los siglos centrales de la Edad Media,” *El ejercicio del poder de las reinas ibéricas*, ed. A. Echevarría and N. Jaspert, special issue, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 46 (2016): 97–136; and Beth Williamson, “Material Culture and Medieval Christianity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John H. Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 61–72.

**23** Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, “Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept,” *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 1489–1533.

**24** Gerritsen and Riello, “Introduction,” 2.

**25** Gilchrist, “Everyday Objects”; Karen Overbey, “Materiality and Place in a Medieval Scottish Pendant Reliquary,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 65/66 (2014/2015): 242–58; Nancy Wicker, “Gold in Motion: Women and Jewelry from Early Medieval Scandinavia,” in *Moving Women, Moving Objects 300–1500*, ed. Tracy Chapman Hamilton and Mariah Proctor (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 13–32; and Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

**26** Williamson, “Material Culture and Medieval Christianity,” 61–72; and Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and The Life Course* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012).

**27** For example, Elina Gertsman, *Worlds Within: Opening the Medieval Shrine Madonna* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); and Fiona Griffiths and Kathryn Starkey, eds., *Sensory Reflections: Traces of Experience in Medieval Artifacts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

**28** Garver, “Material Culture.”



the potential to be an active part of social life, but also to impact people and their lives, thus becoming an important part of the performance of power.<sup>29</sup> At the same time a material culture perspective allows for a whole-scale rethinking of the concept of power; this “grand, all-embracing, and reifying term.”<sup>30</sup>

In 2015 a special issue of *Medieval Feminist Forum* was published in which several medievalists reflected on both older and current research on women and power in order to point towards new avenues of approaching the topic. In a thought-provoking article, Marie Kelleher pointed out that despite the influence of Michel Foucault’s understanding of power as not being “unidirectional” nor “necessarily belonging to one set of public institutions,” the focus still was on women and public power; that is, elite women’s power exercised through institutions.<sup>31</sup> As a consequence, the conclusion often has been that women held less or different power. Foucault’s analysis of power as a matter of government, which includes “political structures or the management of states,”<sup>32</sup> does not sit easily with twelfth-century realities of power, which, as Thomas Bisson has insisted, were inextricably linked with lordship, that is, the personal command over dependent people.<sup>33</sup> Regrettably, female lordship plays no part in Bisson’s analysis, a fundamental omission given that Kimberley LoPrete has argued that women exercised authoritative lordly powers.<sup>34</sup> However, from a gendered perspective Foucault’s idea of government has had its merits, as it also includes “modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people.”<sup>35</sup> In the case of medieval women the latter exercise of power has been labelled agency or

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**29** For a definition of agency that includes the impact actors and actions have, see Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, glossary at xiii. The most extensive theoretical analysis of agency is Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). For a critical assessment of the way agency of artefacts has been studied, see Andrew M. Jones and Nicole Boivin, “The Malice of Inanimate Objects: Material Agency,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 343–51. For agency and art, see Stephen Perkinson, “Portraits and Their Patrons: Reconsidering Agency in Late Medieval Art,” in *Patronage, Power and Agency in Medieval Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 257–74; and Williamson, “Material Culture and Medieval Christianity,” 61–72.

**30** Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Michel Foucault: Power, The Essential Works 3*, ed. James D. Faubion and trans. Robert Hurley et al. (London: Penguin, 2000), 326–48 at 336.

**31** Marie A. Kelleher, “What Do We Mean by ‘Women and Power’?,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 51 (2015): 104–15 at 109. Italics in original.

**32** Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 341.

**33** Bisson’s definition of lordship can be found in Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3. See also his “Medieval Lordship,” *Speculum* 70 (1995): 743–59.

**34** Theresa Earenfight mentions this omission in her review of Bisson’s book; see Theresa Earenfight, “The Emergence of the State,” review of *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government*, by Thomas N. Bisson, *The Review of Politics* 72 (2010): 162–64 at 163. Kimberly A. LoPrete, “Women, Gender and Lordship in France, c. 1150–1250,” *History Compass* 5/6 (2007): 1921–41.

**35** Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 341.

informal/soft power.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the fact that both agency and soft power are as hard to define or grasp as the term power itself, the idea that women's power should need different words to describe how they could impact their own lives and that of others implies that women functioned in their own spheres, apart from men, and that they were rarely able to exercise the sort of "real" power attributed to elite men. This does no justice to the range of possibilities that both women and men had at their disposal to affect others, such as financing civic architecture, creating alliances, or gathering an army. Nor does it agree with the reality of men's lives when they are treated as a homogenous group that held and shared in power equally, without acknowledging that their leverage greatly differed and depended on multiple economic and social circumstances.<sup>37</sup>

Kelleher's proposed definition of power "as the ability to take action that has the potential to affect the destiny of others" acknowledges exactly the breadth and inclusiveness of Foucault's analysis.<sup>38</sup> Inclusiveness allows us to investigate the power of a woman such as Matilda, whose government has not been formally documented in charters, chronicles, or ceremonies of fealty. We can focus on the question of how women "actually used [power], individually, as part of a ruling couple, as a parent, or collectively."<sup>39</sup> Recent studies on medieval women have demonstrated that material culture is a fruitful way of exploring objects as an important nexus between women, dynasty, and power.<sup>40</sup>

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**36** See also Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, "Introduction," in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 1–17; Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, "Introduction. A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages," in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1–16; and Kathrine L. French, "Genders and Material Culture," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198–210.

**37** This has also been argued by Lucy Pick, *Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 6–13.

**38** Kelleher, "What Do We Mean by 'Women and Power?'," 110. For a critical analysis of the usefulness of the word "power," see Gajewski and Seeberg, who in their study of lay and cloistered women's production and donation of textiles analyze "women's actions from power to compliance," asking "what was their 'margin to act'?" Alexandra Gajewski and Stefanie Seeberg, "Having Her Hand in It? Elite Women as 'Makers' of Textile Art in the Middle Ages," in *"Me fecit." Making Medieval Art (History)*, ed. Martin, 26–50 at 31.

**39** Amy Livingstone, "Recalculating the Equation: Powerful Woman = Extraordinary," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 51 (2015): 17–29 at 20, with reference to Jonathan R. Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters: The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). See also Theresa Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe," *Gender & History* 19 (2007): 1–21; and Pick, *Her Father's Daughter*.

**40** For example: Martin, "The Margin to Act"; and Tracy Chapman Hamilton and Mariah Proctor-Tiffany, eds., *Moving Women, Moving Objects 300–1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

My acceptance of Kelleher's (and Foucault's) inclusive definition of power does not blind me to women's positions and limitations within patriarchal political and cultural structures.<sup>41</sup> Rather, the material evidence problematizes thinking in binary categories of male–female or public–private. For one, because both men and women interacted with artefacts by commissioning, donating, and displaying them. While particular objects, such as a given sword or book, may be labelled male or female, textile donations in the central Middle Ages, for example, do not neatly fit these categories, a useful reminder that these binaries did not exist in the extreme or were not always that evident. Further, thinking along those lines of opposites suggests that men and women are stable categories, always acting out their identities in the same way (e.g. by giving gender-specified gifts), without acknowledging the impact of political and economic developments, as well as changes in lifecycle, such as age and widowhood.<sup>42</sup> Reaching a senior age or being a widow could support women in gaining and exercising power in what some scholars perceive as the public sphere inhabited by men, indicating women's actions were not necessarily limited to their household. But more importantly, the analytic dichotomy public–private does not do justice to how medieval people must have experienced their lives: could a woman's gift to a church or an ally really have been considered a private affair, devoid of any sense of public authority? And how to value women's (and men's) display of elaborate dress within the confinement of the castle while discussing military strategies: a public or private affair? As these questions show, material culture helps us to shift away from binaries that tend to be central to documentary sources.

Analyzing material culture as a pathway for perceiving women's power also aids in understanding “power as the outcome of dynamic (rather than fixed) processes, and as the result of social structures rather than individual agency,” which includes women's connections with men and women's interactions with women.<sup>43</sup> The dynamics of power relations have also been pointed out by Foucault, who remarked that it can result in a “strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal.”<sup>44</sup> Material culture can be recognized as a manner in which to demonstrate power as well as part of the struggle for obtaining and maintaining that power. In both cases, there is a clear awareness of the presence of other parties involved in the exercise of power. Thus, in my analysis of the artefacts connected to Matilda, the negotiation of power through artworks, and the potential conversion of their meaning in the hands of new owners is explicitly taken into account.

Precisely because material culture is part of the exercise and negotiation of power, and holds an active potential, the term “performance” is used here. Here performance means

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41 Kelleher, “What Do We Mean by ‘Women and Power’?,” 114. Kelleher also warned against denying or ignoring that women's expressions of power can play into negative gender stereotypes, such as scold or gossip.

42 Erler and Kowaleski, “Introduction,” in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, 2.

43 Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, 28. For a similar conclusion, see also Erler and Kowaleski, “Introduction,” in *Women and Power*, 6.

44 Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 346.

acts done by people with artefacts, such as materializing relationships, reading, communicating identities, and displaying status and wealth. And it also includes the agency that artefacts themselves have, such as keeping memories alive, eliciting emotions, triggering donations, or spurring people to visit places. It is through cultural acts, in which objects play a dynamic role, that power relations are constructed and power itself is displayed.<sup>45</sup> Material culture empowered women to create, activate, manipulate, and promote their present ambitions and preserve the future of their dynasties.<sup>46</sup> “Performance of power” thus refers to the instrumental character of artefacts and buildings: through the items with which societies interacted, high-born women like Matilda sought to impact their own lives as well as those of their natal and marital families.

My concern here is the agency of objects and the interactions between objects and people in medieval society, and not the unsolvable question of Matilda as the primary person commissioning artefacts. In an excellent analysis of patronage for the Bayeux Tapestry (actually an embroidery), Elizabeth Carson Pastan argued that the model of a micro-managing Renaissance patron fits uncomfortably with medieval material and that the focus on Odo of Bayeux has led to extensive (and not necessarily fruitful) speculations.<sup>47</sup> Further, the identifying of depicted figures as sponsors tends to overshadow the object’s materiality as an indicator for possible patronage.<sup>48</sup> For example, the ninth-century purple pillow discovered in the tomb of St. Remigius at Rheims demonstrates that patronage per se is not the most fruitful category of analysis. While the gold embroidered inscription mentions Bishop Hincmar as the person ordering it to be made, it was Alpais (d. after 852), the sister of Emperor Charles the Bold, who collected the materials, embroidered and presented it.

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**45** The idea of performance as a constitutive act is borrowed from Judith Butler, although she defines performance in a different way; that is, as repetitive acts that construct construction of gender identity (sexed bodies), and thus have a differing potential. Butler’s ideas about gender and performance have not gone unnoticed by medievalists; see Erler and Kowaleski, “Introduction,” in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, 2; Madeline H. Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages. Sight, Spectacle, and Scopio Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury, *Women’s Space. Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Victoria Turner, “Performing the Self, Performing the Other: Gender and Racial Identity Construction in the Nanteuil Cycle,” *Women’s History Review* 22 (2013): 182–96 esp. 184–85; and Joana Ramôa Melo, “Open Books: Performativity and Mediation in Elite Women’s Effigies at Lisbon Cathedral (14th C.),” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 11 (2019): 193–221.

**46** Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

**47** Elizabeth Carson Pastan and Stephen D. White, “Problematizing Patronage: Odo of Bayeux and the Bayeux Tapestry,” in *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations*, ed. Martin K. Foy, Karen Eileen Overbey, and Dan Terkla (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 1–24.

**48** Elizabeth Carson Pastan, “Patronage: A Useful Category of Art Historical Analysis,” in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (New York: Routledge, 2017), 340–55.

The renowned Bishop Hincmar ordered Alpais to make and present this humble work. He indeed ordered it so, but she happily carried this out and made the work you see here. By the occasion of the new honor [the translation of the relics and dedication of the new church] she made this little pillow, which will support the sweet and venerable head of Remigius. Through the merits of Alpais everywhere, may her prayers be furthered beyond the stars.<sup>49</sup>

Valerie Garver has brought to the fore that, while the inscription hails Hincmar as the patron who commissioned the work, the text clearly praises Alpais as instrumental in executing the little pillow. Alpais used her work to document her virtue, found a way to interact with St. Remigius, and sought to keep her own memory alive.<sup>50</sup> That the inscribed presence of women's names can very well indicate their active participation in the making process has been put forward convincingly by Therese Martin. She proposed an important new direction in rethinking the relationship between medieval women and art by introducing the concept of women as makers. Her argument that women should be viewed as makers of art and architecture originates from the (*me*) *fecit* inscriptions found on objects and buildings, which often held flexible meanings, enabling us to see women's contributions as "patrons and facilitators, producers and artists, owners and recipients."<sup>51</sup> Envisioning Matilda and other women as makers encourages a rethinking of objects that either have been considered from the perspective of male patronage, or have been largely ignored because they are anonymous. Moreover, the term "maker" is more powerful than "patron," as it suggests an action performed through art that is meant to achieve something: from commemoration through prayers, to salving the wounds of conflicts, to making rulership omnipresent, to communicating social networks. This empowering impact of material culture is at the heart of this book.

In order to contextualize Matilda's engagement with material culture, it is necessary to consider other elite women. The selection of these women is primarily based on Matilda's natal network, meaning that artefacts connected to her sisters Leonor and Joanna are included. Matilda's parents, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, also feature, as do her half-sisters Marie of Champagne and Alix of Blois. Colette Bowie's study of the daughters of Henry II and Eleanor has been pivotal in understanding the importance of the natal family to Matilda, Leonor, and Joanna.<sup>52</sup> The spread of Thomas Becket's cult

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**49** Cited in Valerie L. Garver, "Weaving Words in Silk: Women and Inscribed Bands in the Carolingian World," *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 6 (2010): 33–56 at 46.

**50** Garver, "Weaving Words in Silk," 46–47.

**51** Therese Martin, "Exceptions and Assumptions: Women in Medieval Art History," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as "Makers" of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–33 at 5.

**52** Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). For reviews, see Hayley Elizabeth Bassett, review of *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, by Colette Bowie, *Royal Studies Journal* 2 (2015): 26–27; Clara Harder, review of *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, by Colette Bowie, *H-Soz-Kult*, December 2, 2015, [www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-23289](http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-23289); and Ralph Turner, review of *The*

in Saxony, Iberia, and Sicily after the archbishop's murder on December 29, 1170 is an example of filial efforts made to atone for paternal sins, as well as to control damage by appropriating Becket as spiritual and dynastic friend.<sup>53</sup> Through Bowie's detailed analysis of the written sources, we gain insight into the mother–daughter bonds as well as into the web of social relations through their father and husbands, all of which shaped the lives of the three sisters. Yet the author's emphasis on written over visual evidence means that Leonor, whose life can best be traced through textual sources, receives disproportionate attention. Bowie's book is of immense value to scholars working on the Angevins, but I demonstrate here that shifting the focus to material culture paints a different picture of Matilda's relative power than Bowie and other scholars have acknowledged. Viewing the duchess as a maker of artworks reveals the otherwise undocumented ways in which objects empowered her and enabled her to cement significant social connections.

How elementary artefacts were to medieval culture is evident if we once more return to the graves of Matilda and Henry. Even though fragmentary, the tablet-woven band, pearls of rosaries, bronze pin, and traces of silver offer material evidence of the desire to be buried, commemorated, and resurrected according to their highborn status. Back in 1935, this was of no interest to the Nazis. They only wanted to appropriate Henry the Lion as a bellicose role model, while largely denying Matilda any part in their history. But as scholars have shown in recent decades, the roles in lordship played by medieval women were crucial, even if they can be difficult to discern in documentary sources, and so it is through a focus on their objects that a more comprehensive picture of Matilda's power and that of other elite women is painted.

As [Chapter 1](#) demonstrates, Matilda treasured her royal descent and could rely on her natal family when she and Henry were exiled in 1182 as the result of Henry's ongoing refusal to comply with the demands of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa,<sup>54</sup> yet the duchess spent most of her time in Saxony, where at least some goods that I connect to Matilda were manufactured. My focus on women's material culture means that the ducal couple's exile between July 25, 1182 and September 1185 plays a minor role.<sup>55</sup> Surely

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*Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, by Colette Bowie, *sehpunkte. Rezensionenjournal für die Geschichtswissenschaften* 15 (2015), [www.sehpunkte.de/2015/03/24932.html](http://www.sehpunkte.de/2015/03/24932.html).

**53** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 141–72. One of the first to draw attention to the importance of the daughters in the spread in the Becket cult was Kay Brainard Slocum, "Angevin Marriage Diplomacy and the Early Dissemination of the Cult of Thomas Becket," *Medieval Perspectives* 14 (1999): 214–28. For recent research on the cult, including the role of the Plantagenet sisters, see Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin, eds., *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170–c.1220* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), to which Colette Bowie also contributed.

**54** The events that led to Henry the Lion's downfall and exile are more complex than can be dealt with here. I refer the reader to Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 317–44 (in which references to primary sources and the most important scholarship are given) and 354–66 (for a discussion of the period 1182–1185).

**55** The departure date of July 25, the feast day of St. James of Compostela, suggests that the punishment with exile also had a penitential component. Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 354 and 357.

Matilda interacted with artefacts while travelling through Normandy and England and remaining at Henry II's court, as is corroborated by the English Pipe Rolls in which the expenses the king made for his daughter, son-in-law, and their household are recorded.<sup>56</sup> Food, wine, and horses, as well as travel and entertainment, were all subsidized by the king. And the importance of garments and furs, which will also be discussed in the first chapter, clearly surfaces from the Pipe Rolls, demonstrating the value Henry II attached to the appearance of his family members. While we can imagine that textiles, like horses and food, played a crucial role in the performance of power, with the Pipe Rolls as the main source it is difficult to establish how Matilda used such items to impact the lives of others. The richness of the material culture with which the duchess engaged is best documented for Saxony, where Matilda undoubtedly had more leverage than at the Anglo-Norman court, where she ultimately was a guest. Importantly, it was in her marital land that the coin type on which Matilda and Henry are depicted circulated. In [Chapter 2](#), this coin type is contextualized by taking into account other coins as well as seals because these miniature items render visible how women's power was displayed, experienced, and exercised. In Saxony Matilda also presented generous gifts to religious communities on at least three occasions. The ducal couple donated a gospel book to the Church of St. Blaise in Brunswick, which was part of their Burg. In [Chapter 3](#), an analysis of the gospel book together with their psalter—made in the same workshop—clarifies how the self-fashioning of their personal and dynastic identity helped the rulers to stage their power. Later, as we shall see in [Chapter 4](#), Matilda gifted luxurious vestments to Bishop Ulrich of Halberstadt and presented textiles and *vasa sacra* to the Cathedral in Hildesheim. I argue that she strategically engaged with textiles in order to enforce relations with churchmen. By following the material traces connected to Matilda, along with those of some of her contemporaries, I show the importance of women as makers of material culture, as well as the dual agency of women and their objects in the consolidation of their very real, if all but unwritten, power.

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**56** See PR 30 Hen II, 134, 135, 138, and 145; and PR 31 Hen II, 9, 206, and 2015. See also Bowie, *The Daughters*, 104–5.





## Chapter I

### STAGING THE BRIDE AND HER TREASURE

MEDIEVAL MARRIAGE GIFTS of landholdings, both from *dowry*—property given with the bride by her natal family—and *dower*—property handed over to the bride by her husband—have primarily occupied historians due to the struggles over territories that resulted from marital alliances.<sup>1</sup> While all sisters received dower lands from their husbands, Henry II and Eleanor endowed neither Matilda nor the youngest sister Joanna (1165–1199) with dowry.<sup>2</sup> It would not have made much sense for King Henry II to give his eldest daughter part of his or his wife’s lands, as her future husband’s territories were too far away from those held by the English king. The same argument can be made for Joanna when in 1177 she married King William II of Sicily. Whether Matilda’s younger sister Leonor (1161–1214) was given Gascony as dowry when she married Alfonso VIII, king of Castile, is debated among historians, since no English records make mention of such a grant.<sup>3</sup> While Alfonso certainly went to great lengths to claim Eleanor of Aquitaine’s land, it was never successfully consolidated in his kingdom. The absence of dowry was compensated for by the *auxilium*—payments made by his subjects, in this case to facilitate the marriage—Henry II raised: Matilda brought £5,102 sterling to Saxony, a sum higher than the £4,549 he would later collect for Joanna’s marriage in 1177. Matilda’s *auxilium* matched that of the money spent by her great-grandfather King Henry I on the occasion of his daughter Matilda’s engagement to the German king (and later emperor) Henry V, who received 10,000 Cologne marks of silver, which corresponds to £5,000.<sup>4</sup> Even though no similar large sums of money are documented for Leonor, it is only reasonable to assume that she brought a substantial sum of silver into her marriage with Alfonso.

In addition to the silver, Matilda was accompanied by many treasures that are examined here to demonstrate the ongoing importance of artefacts in marriage politics.<sup>5</sup>

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**1** A vast amount of references to scholarly discussions of dowry, dower, and their developments as well as a critique of the general idea that medieval transformations in property management are evidence of a loss in status for women, can be found in Cynthia Johnson, “Marriage Agreements from Twelfth-Century Southern France,” in *To Have and To Hold: Marrying and Its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400–1600*, ed. Philip L. Reynolds and John Witte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 215–59. The documents she studied are concerned with immobile property and money. Although moveable goods are sometimes mentioned, they are never specified.

**2** For their dowries and dowers, see Bowie, *The Daughters*, Part III.

**3** José Manuel Cerda Costabal, “La dot gasconne d’Aliénor d’Angleterre. Entre royaume de Castille, royaume de France et royaume d’Angleterre,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 54, no. 215 (2011): 225–42. For a positive assessment of Gascony as dowry, see Bowie, *The Daughters*, 119–22.

**4** Ehlers, “Anglonormannisches am Hof Heinrichs des Löwen?” 213. A Cologne mark differed from an English mark in that it was worth half a pound, not two thirds of a pound.

**5** For the different meanings the word treasure could hold to medieval people, see Elizabeth M. Tyler, ed., *Treasure in the Medieval West* (York: York Medieval Press, 2000). For sumptuous

These treasures included gold, silver, vessels, vestments, chairs, saddles, and many other items. By asking how such pieces reflected the royal status of Matilda's natal family and added to the creation of her social identity, Matilda's sumptuous goods can be understood as a first step in the performance of power of royal daughters. To this end, comparisons are made with moveable objects that can be connected to her paternal grandmother Empress Matilda (d. 1167) and to the younger Matilda's sisters in the context of their respective marriages. In a way, Princess Matilda followed in the footsteps of her eponymous grandmother, who as an eight-year-old had journeyed to Germanic lands to meet her future husband, King Henry V (d. 1125). Matilda's sister Leonor went to Iberia to become the wife of King Alfonso VIII of Castile (d. 1214) while Joanna was to marry first King William II of Sicily (d. 1189) and later Count Raymond VI of Toulouse (d. 1222).

Matilda, Leonor, and Joanna were twelve, eight/nine, and eleven respectively when they entered the households of their husbands-to-be. In Colette Bowie's discussion of the marriages of the three sisters, she traced Leonor's and Joanna's travel routes; together with the possible routes I suggest for Matilda, it is possible to map the way-stations on the journey of each to her new court (see [Map 1](#)).<sup>6</sup> Henry II placed his daughters strategically across western Europe, dispersing them as he did other gifts.<sup>7</sup> Equally importantly, the

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artefacts as part of a woman's marriage arrangements in the early medieval period, see in the same volume: Leslie Webster, "Ideal and Reality: Versions of Treasure in the Early Anglo-Saxon World," 49–59 at 51; and Pauline Stafford, "Queens and Treasure in the Early Middle Ages," 61–82. For the central Middle Ages, see Laura Brander, "Mit großer Pracht zur Ehe gegeben," *Mediaevalia Historica Bohemica* 12 (2009), Supplementum 3: 393–421; Therese Martin, "Caskets of Silver and Ivory from Diverse Parts of the World: Strategic Collecting for an Iberian Treasury," in *The Medieval Iberian Treasury in the Context of Cultural Interchange*, ed. Therese Martin, special issue, *Medieval Encounters* 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 1–38; Talia Zajac, "Remembrance and Erasure of Objects Belonging to Rus' Princesses in Medieval Western Sources: The Cases of Anastasia Iaroslavna's 'Saber of Charlemagne' and Anna Iaroslavna's Red Gem," in *Moving Women, Moving Objects, 500–1500*, ed. Tracy Hamilton and Maria Proctor-Tiffany (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 33–58. For non-western brides and their precious items, see for example the daughter of the Seljuq sultan Malikshāh who married 'Abbāsīd caliph Abu'l Qāsim in 1087, whose "dowry was borne on 74 mules draped in various sorts of regal brocades, horse bells and harness were of gold and silver. On six of them [the mules] were 12 silver chests containing jewels and finery that were beyond price. Preceding the mules were 33 horses of excellent stock, whose stirrups were of gold encrusted with various jewels." Cited in Anthony Cutler, "Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (2008): 79–101 at 96n29. See also Noelia Silva Santa-Cruz, "Ivory Gifts for Women in Caliphal Córdoba: Marriage, Maternity and Sensuality," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 6 (2014): 103–25 esp. 116.

**6** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 74–75 (Leonor) and 89–91 (Joanna).

**7** For women as gifts, see Stafford, "Queens and Treasure," 64; and Jitske Jasperse, "Women, Courtly Display and Gifts in the *Rolandslied* and the *Chanson de Roland*," *Mediaevistik. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Medieval Research* 30 (2017): 125–41.



Map 1. The way-stations on the journeys of Matilda, Leonor, and Joanna to their courts in Saxony, Castile, and Sicily respectively. Design: Sebastian Ballard.

young women's travels demonstrate that their journeys were a vital part of the communication of the English king's power.<sup>8</sup> Each journey can be seen as a theatrical stage that allowed Henry to promote himself and his daughters through the display of both goods and people, from bishops, counts, and dukes to the princesses' personal entourage and other relatives. At the same time, this ostentatious representation was a means to reconnect with sometimes estranged allies, and also to acknowledge the high prestige of the future bridegrooms. After all, these marriages were political actions as well as political events, strategically conceived by the English king and his carefully selected sons-in-law. Based on the material, visual, and performative aspects of the sisters' travels, these journeys should be understood as formative experiences for Henry's daughters. They learned that the display and gifting of artefacts were crucial when aiming to impact others. My analysis of the materiality of these objects also shows that the precious items themselves held agency. Here, materiality refers to the materials used to craft the artworks (such as silver, gold, silk, and fur) as well as to the communicative meaning these materials held in the eyes of the beholder. The underlying assumption is that viewers were aware of the history of materials and their symbolic and economic value.<sup>9</sup>

### From England to Saxony

Arrangements for the marriage of Matilda and Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony and Bavaria, commenced in April 1165, when she was nearly nine years old.<sup>10</sup> This marriage, like that of her grandmother the Empress Matilda as well as those of her sisters Leonor and Joanna, provided ample opportunity to display the status and wealth of the young princess and her natal family during the long journeys to their new homes. From the entries in the Pipe Rolls, in which expenditures concerning England were recorded, it is possible to distil a general impression of what Matilda brought with her. Between July and September 1167 envoys from Germany had arrived in England to accompany Matilda to Saxony. In September of that year, the princess and her mother travelled from Winchester (?) to Dover, accompanied by Henry the Lion's and Henry II's envoys, who took Matilda to Saxony while her mother stayed behind.<sup>11</sup> Matilda departed from England in a royal ship (*esnecca*), accompanied by six other vessels, clearly displaying her royal status.<sup>12</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> For medieval brides' travels and dynastic politics, mainly focusing on the later Middle Ages, see Karl-Heinz Spieß, "Unterwegs zu einem fremden Ehemann. Brautfahrt und Ehe in europäischen Fürstenhäusern des Spätmittelalters," in *Fremdheit und Reisen im Mittelalter*, ed. Irene Erfen and Karl-Heinz Spieß (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997), 17–36.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Eileen Overbey and Ben C. Tilghman, "Active Objects: An Introduction," in *Active Objects*, ed. Karen Eileen Overbey and Ben C. Tilghman, special issue, *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 4 (2014): 1–9.

<sup>10</sup> Detailed analyses are made by Jens Ahlers, *Die Welfen und die englischen Könige, 1165–1235* (Hildesheim: Lax, 1987), 66–73; and Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 206–8.

<sup>11</sup> Bowie, *The Daughters*, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Royal vessel for Matilda's crossing to Saxony (£7 10s), six ships which crossed with her (£8 15s) and equipment for the ships which went with her (£7 10s). PR 13 Hen II, 193–94.

ships brought with them twenty bags (*paribus*) and twenty chests (*cofforum*) filled with golden and gilded household utensils (*auro ad deauranda vaisella*), textiles (*pannis*), two large silk cloths (*magnis pannis sericis*), two textile coverings or hangings (*tapetis*), three Spanish silk cloths (*pannis de Musce*), and a cloth of samite (a compound twill-weave in silk), as well as seven gilded chairs covered with scarlet and seven gilded saddles. The goods were carried by thirty-four pack mules (*sumar*) to be loaded onto the ships.<sup>13</sup>

From this entry, it is possible to get an idea of the exotic nature of the cloths in Matilda's holdings, silks that in all likelihood originated from Byzantium and Iberia.<sup>14</sup> Introduced by the Muslims, silk production in Spain was booming in the twelfth century and was exported to the rest of Europe, with London as an important centre for the trade of silks and furs. *Drap de Mulce* frequently appears in French and English romances, and it is possible that *pannis de Musce* refers to the cloth made in Murcia.<sup>15</sup> The sable furs were imported as well. Sable, a Siberian animal of the marten family, has very valuable fur;<sup>16</sup> Henry II paid £16 for the twelve sables he gave to Matilda, which is more than he paid for the seven chairs and seven saddles she also brought with her. Sable fur reappears in the Pipe Rolls, indicating that it was held in high regard, with its costliness further underscored when mentioned together with other high-priced items, such as scarlet and silk. The samite cloth, also a silk, is the only piece that provides some insight into its appearance, as it refers to a specific weaving technique.<sup>17</sup> Woven fabrics were used for clothing as well as for decorating chambers, widows, and tables. The gilded chairs of Matilda's dowry were suitable to be covered with cloth, such as scarlet (*scarleta* or *escarlata*), which is a fine woollen shaved cloth that was dyed with kermes from the Mediterranean. The use of expensive materials and the combination of

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**13** PR 11 Hen II, 2–3: “Et pro 20 paribus bulgarum et 20 paribus coffrorum ad opus Matilda filiae Regis 26l. 15s. 4d. per breve Regis. Et pro auro ad deauranda vaisella ejusdem filiae Regis 28l. 14s. per breve Regis. Et pro 7 sellis deauratis et coopertis exscarl et 7 paribus lorimorum deaur’ 14l. 13s. 8d. per breve Regis. Et pro 1 fugatore et 1 palefrido ad opus ejusdem filae Regis 36s. Et pro pannis ejusdem filiae Regis quando missa est in Saxoniam 63l. 13s. 7d. per breve Regis et per visum Edwardi Blundi et Willielmi Magni. [...] Et willelmo filio Aldelm £34 7s adquitand’ 34 sumar’ ad opus filiae Regis per breve Regis. Et pro 2 magnis pannis sericis et 2 tapetis et 3 pannis de Musce et 1 Samit 24l. per breve Regis. [...] Et pro 12 Sabelinis ad opus filie Regis 16l. per breve Regis.” See also Eyton, *Court, Household*, 109; and Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*, 230.

**14** Rebecca Woodward Wendelken, “Silk: Silk in the British Isles,” in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles of the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. Gale Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth, and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 517–20.

**15** Rebecca Woodward Wendelken, “Wefts and Worms: The Spread of Sericulture and Silk Weaving in the West before 1300,” *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 10 (2014): 58–78 at 74n75. Sybille Schröder suggests that Musce was short for Musceraves or Mozarabs; see Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*, 215.

**16** Eva I. Andersson, “Clothing and Textile Materials in Medieval Sweden and Norway,” *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 9 (2013): 97–120 at 108.

**17** Samite is a “silk fabric in weft-faced compound twill, plain or patterned, in which the main warp threads are hidden on both sides of the fabric by the ground and patterning wefts, with only the binding wefts visible.” It was also used to indicate a rich, heavy silk fabric. See Elizabeth Coatsworth, “Samite,” in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress*, 475.

the colours red and gold were unlikely to escape the attention of the viewers. Matilda's cargo also included twelve sable furs (*sabilinis*), a riding horse (*palefrido*) and a hunter (*fugatore*). The palfrey and hunter, for which thirty-seven shillings were paid, are specified as being Matilda's and were meant for hunting, an event also suitable to display status, wealth, and privileges. Like the silks and distinctly coloured materials, the furs and horses wielded symbolic, economic, and aesthetic agency.

Evidently, King Henry II sent off his daughter with sufficient pomp when he bestowed upon her an impressive variety of textiles, although the Pipe Roll entry lacks references to their colour. Equally, no explicit allusions to the appearance of Matilda's outfits are made, whereas entries referring to mantles lined with fur (*pelliciis*) or a large pallium of the finest wool dyed with red kermes and lined with sable fur (*pallio magno de escaarlata de bissis cum sabellinis*) do exist for other members of Henry's household.<sup>18</sup> Visual sources, such as the seal belonging to Matilda's sister Joanna and a miniature in Henry and Matilda's psalter, which we will examine in detail in [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#), demonstrate the presence of fur-lined mantles in the wardrobe of elite men and women ([Figure 15](#) and [Figure 17](#)). In their psalter, Henry and Matilda are humbly depicted at the foot of Christ's cross. Henry's red mantle has slipped from his shoulders, but the grey and white fur collar is still visible. Matilda's green mantle is trimmed with similar fur, with the grey fur perhaps being vair, which is the grey winter fur of the red squirrel. The highest quality of winter squirrel furs was found in Scandinavia and Russia; they were exported to Western Europe via the Baltic.<sup>19</sup> On her seal matrix, Joanna wears the same type of cloak held together by a tassel. With her left hand, Joanna touches this fringed cord that fastens the mantle. The lining of her mantle is prominently displayed and its pattern suggests that it could be miniver; that is, vair furs stitched together so that only the white bellies and some grey around them remained. The small size of vair furs meant that large numbers were needed for lining mantles, making them very costly.<sup>20</sup> The colour, texture, and size of furs, whether real or represented, were wrapped around the bodies of men and women to communicate their wearer's position in society; they signalled wealth, prestige, and fashion.

Sybilla Schröder's extensive analysis of the material culture mentioned in the Pipe Rolls has revealed that textiles were an important part of Henry II's royal representation and that of his *familia*.<sup>21</sup> Acquiring, shipping, and presenting fabrics and vestments

**18** For Queen Margaret in 1175/1176, see PR 22 Hen II, 198: "Et pro 4 ulnis et dimidia escaarlaiet pro 1 pena varia et pellicia et 1 sabelina et 32 ulnis linee tele ad opus filie regis Francie contra Pascha 4l. et 5s. et 6d. per breve regis. Et pro 3 ulnis de biso ad opus cujusdam pueri sui 3s. et 6d. per idem breve." See also Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*, 214. For Queen Eleanor in 1178/1179, see PR 25 Hen II, 125: "Et pro 1 magna cappa et 1 pallio magno de escaarlata de bissis cum sabellinis et 1 pellicia de bisis ad opus Regine, et 1 cappa et pallio de escaarlata et 1 pellicia ad opus Amarie que est cum Regina 18l. et 3s. et 6d. per breve regis et per visum Edwardi Blundi." See also Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*, 116.

**19** Maria Hayward, "Squirrel Fur," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress*, 542.

**20** Maria Hayward, "Miniver," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress*, 367–68.

**21** Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*. A further examination of the Pipe Rolls may reveal more about the gendered nature of material culture.

to friends, family, and followers was a way to show off status while simultaneously cementing alliances. In this respect Matilda's endowment was not unusual, for the crown's expenses were certainly not limited to marriages. This is evidenced, for example, by Henry's expenditures for his daughter-in-law Margaret of France, wife of Henry the Young King and daughter of Louis VII and Constance of Castile. On several occasions she received a *roba*, which can mean a complete outfit as well as baggage containing textiles and perhaps also non-textiles. For Margaret and Henry's coronation in Winchester in 1172, their robes cost over £88, a huge amount compared to other expenses made for Margaret's apparel.<sup>22</sup> Henry II took care of Margaret's needs not only because she belonged to his family, but also because she herself was a royal daughter, and she therefore required trappings that acknowledged and displayed both qualities.

Yet what makes Matilda's sumptuous silks different from Margaret's is that she took them overseas to a new court. Matilda could have used part of these goods to adorn her new home, but her father knew very well that golden vessels and saddles also made for desirable gifts and would therefore aid the young Matilda to consolidate her position in Saxony. Gold and silver vessels had a material and artistic value, as well as a functional and representational one since they could be used during liturgy, meals, and court rituals. The two gemellions, or basins, donated by Matilda's brother, John Lackland, to his nephew King Otto IV (Matilda's son) should be understood this way.<sup>23</sup> The water basins from Limoges—located in the centre of Angevin territory—are adorned with the three Angevin lions. Decoration and recognizable place of manufacture served as vivid and enduring reminders of the German king's Angevin connections, as the basins would have been used not only by Otto, but were the type of objects that we can imagine to have been displayed permanently.

The ships accompanied Matilda to Dover and it seems likely that from there the cargo moved onto other ships or carts that set sail to Wissant (Witsand) in Flanders, as can be inferred from other journeys the royal family undertook from Dover to the mainland.<sup>24</sup> The Flanders route was the shortest way to reach the continent. While there is not enough data to reconstruct Matilda's route from Wissant to Saxony in detail, two possible routes are the most likely for this interregional travel (Map 1). The first would have been to continue over water from Flanders (Bruges, Ghent, or Antwerp), taking the River Scheldt and then passing a network of waterways up north until reaching the Dutch lakes IJ and Almere. The count of Flanders, Philip of Alsace (d. 1191), and Matilda's father were well acquainted, although the relationship was not without tensions due to feudal disputes.<sup>25</sup> Nothing in the written sources suggests that the strained relations impacted

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**22** PR 18 Hen II, 144: "Et in Soltis per breve Regis pro Roba Regis filii Regis et Regine sue in coronation eorum apud Wintonia 88l. et 10s. et 4d. per breve Regis et per testimonium Aedwardi Blundi."

**23** Jitske Jasperse, "Is It All about Empire? The Angevins through the Lens of Gift Giving," in *The Angevin Empire. New Interpretations*, ed. Stephen Church and Matthew Strickland (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).

**24** Eyton, *Court, Household*, 256, 263, and 277–78.

**25** Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*, 165–69.



Matilda's journey in a negative way. From the Low Countries Matilda would have continued over the North Sea, going either to Bremen via the River Weser, or to Hamburg via the Elbe. Both Bremen and Hamburg were within the lands her future husband claimed; from there it was relatively easy and safe to reach Brunswick.

The second travel option would have entailed an overland route: after her arrival at Wissant, Matilda would have passed through Boulogne and, via Tongres (Tongeren) and Maastricht, she then would likely have visited Aachen and Cologne. From there the rest of the travel continued through Henry the Lion's territories, halting at abbeys and monasteries such as the Abdinghof in Paderborn before reaching Brunswick. Whatever Matilda's route may have been, we know that she had arrived by February 1, 1168 at her final destination: on that date, her union with Duke Henry was formalized by Bishop Werner in Minden Cathedral, according to a charter issued by Henry.<sup>26</sup>

Transport on land from Wissant to Minden would have been approximately 600 kilometres and over water about 1,000 kilometres. Despite such great distances, it is unlikely that Matilda and her entourage needed four and a half months for this journey, even when taking into account that they might have been slowed down by carts loaded with goods and the winter weather conditions, not to mention upstream travel. It is possible that along the way the princess and her retinue spent time at important places, engaging with influential people. Or Matilda might have arrived at Brunswick weeks before the marriage, so that she could get acquainted with her future husband and his court. If we are to believe Albert of Stade (writing 1204–1264), the nuptial feasting occurred at Brunswick in great splendour, perhaps an indication that after the religious ceremony at Minden the crowd travelled to Brunswick to magnificently celebrate Henry's marriage to a princess.<sup>27</sup> Although no details about these festivities are known, it is likely that Henry the Lion would have taken the opportunity to present his royal bride with much pomp. As the daughter of the king of England, Matilda deserved a great feast that acknowledged her high status and integrated her into the court, while also allowing the duke to present himself in a most favourable light.

As noted above, the Empress Matilda, grandmother of Duchess Matilda, had also journeyed from England to Germany when she, as an eight-year-old, was on her way to marry King Henry V in 1110.<sup>28</sup> Accompanied by a magnificent company, the future empress brought with her an impressive dowry of 10,000 marks in silver along with

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**26** "Acta sunt hec Minde anno dominice incarnationis MCLXVIII, indictione I, quando Heinricus dux Bawarie et Saxonie Machtildem filiam regis Anglie ibidem subarravit, kalendis februarii. Data Minde per manum Hartwici Utledensis Bremensis canonici." MGH DD HL, 111–13, no. 77. The *subarravit* (espoused) and the absence of the words *uxor* (wife) and *ducissa* could indicate that Henry and Matilda were engaged, but not yet married. If this was the case, the nuptial feast mentioned by Albert of Stade (see note 83) may have been the actual wedding ceremony.

**27** "Dux Heinricus repudiata sorore ducis Zaringiae Bertoldi, duxit filiam regis Anglorum, relictam regis Franciae et nuptias Brunswich magnifice celebravit." *Annales Stadenses*, ed. I. M. Lappenberg, MGH SS 16 (Hanover, 1859), 346.

**28** Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 44.



many splendid gifts.<sup>29</sup> From England her retinue had crossed the Channel to Boulogne and on to Liège where she met her twenty-year-old bridegroom-to-be, King Henry V, for the first time. The couple proceeded on to Utrecht for a formal ceremony of betrothal at Easter, and a few weeks later, on July 25, 1110, Matilda was crowned *Romanorum regina* at Mainz Cathedral. There Archbishop Bruno of Trier was appointed her guardian, and he took her to Trier in order to teach her German and to further educate her.<sup>30</sup> In January 1114, Matilda and Henry were married in Mainz; the anonymous so-called *Imperial Chronicle* (ca. 1114) provides some details:

The nuptials were attended by such a great concourse of archbishops and bishops, dukes and counts, abbots and provosts and learned clergy [...]. So numerous were the wedding gifts which various kings and primates sent to the emperor, and the gifts which the emperor from his own store gave to the innumerable throngs of jesters and jongleurs and people of all kinds, that not one of his chamberlains who received or distributed them could count them.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly this wedding feast was filled with elite attendees, who brought wedding gifts for the imperial couple, were entertained lavishly, and perhaps even returned home with luxury objects the emperor had given to them. The *Imperial Chronicle* makes no references to women who attended the feast, perhaps an indication that the writer was not interested in their presence or that women did not partake in the mentioned celebrations. The festivities were overshadowed by disgruntled territorial princes—including bishops—whose honour was affronted by Henry's harsh treatment of some of their peers.<sup>32</sup> Notwithstanding the historical reality of the day, the event was deemed important enough to be illustrated in the chronicle by a pen-and-ink drawing, which

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**29** *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis, vol. 5: books IX and X*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–80), 200–201.

**30** Chibnall, *The Empress*, 24–25; Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich: Herrschaftsausübung, Herrschaftsrechte, Handlungsspielräume* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 105–8.

**31** Cited in Chibnall, *The Empress*, 26. The text is from a manuscript at Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 373; see <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/rg420yp8320>. See also “Anonymi Chronica imperatorum,” in *Frutolfs und Ekkehards Chroniken und die Anonyme Kaiserchronik = Futolfi et Ekkehardi chronica necnon anonymi chronica imperatirum*, Ausgewählte Quellen zur Deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 15, ed. and trans. Franz-Josef Schmale and Irene Schmale-Ott (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 262–63. Monumenta Germaniae Historica has made the Latin text of this edition available online, accompanied by a new introduction, [www.mgh.de/fileadmin/Downloads/pdf/kaiserchronik.pdf](http://www.mgh.de/fileadmin/Downloads/pdf/kaiserchronik.pdf). A similar statement is Lambert of Hersfeld's account of gifts presented by Prince Sviatoslav Yaroslavich (d. 1076) to Emperor Henry IV; see Zajac, “Remembrance and Erasure,” 43.

**32** Franz Reiner Erkens, “Fecit nuptias region, ut decuit, apparatu: Hochzeitsfeste als Akte monarchischer Repräsentation in salischer Zeit,” in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter. Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Detlef Altenburg, Jörg Jarnut, and Hans-Hugo Steinhoff (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991), 401–21 esp. 412–17.

precedes the textual narrative in the manuscript (Figure 3).<sup>33</sup> There is no doubt that Henry V and Matilda, who are centrally seated at a richly furnished table, are at the heart of the festivities. The crowned couple are flanked by two clerics and served by two cupbearers. This drawing visualizes a key moment in the history of Henry V, a history that was magnified by incorporating Matilda, who, according to the *Imperial Chronicle*, “was held to bring glory and honour to both the Roman empire and the English realm.”<sup>34</sup> The chronicle also includes a painted miniature depicting the crowned Henry V receiving the orb from Bishop Ruthard of Mainz.<sup>35</sup> Both episodes from Henry’s life are narrative scenes, breaking with the tradition of static, enthroned images that represent his royal and imperial predecessors in the same manuscript.<sup>36</sup> Even though the visual depiction of this festive matrimonial meal is unique, written descriptions of nuptial celebrations in chronicles appear relatively frequently. In the *Chronicle of Frutolf* (ca. 1103) the 1044 marriage celebrations of Emperor Henry III and Agnes of Poitou in Ingelheim are commemorated. By contrast with the largesse Henry V displayed towards jesters and jongleurs, here we are told that Henry III “left many performers and jongleurs not only without gifts, but even let them go without food and drink.”<sup>37</sup> Franz-Reiner Erkens has pointed out that Henry III’s behaviour was the result of his religious belief that entertainers disrupted the aura of sacred kinship. By withholding their reward, the emperor promoted himself as a supporter of the church reformers.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, jesters and jongleurs were part of the festive, political, and public nature of wedding celebrations, and their presence helped to represent and affirm rulership.

The public act of a wedding feast would have been the culminating moment of the long journey from England of Matilda and her entourage, serving as an excellent stage for the dual roles of king/daughter and duke/consort to be performed through the display of material culture. On the occasion of Henry the Lion’s marriage, Helmold of Bosau (writing 1163–1172) states that the envoys “brought homewards the daughter of the English King together with gold and silver and extensive treasures.”<sup>39</sup> Might the writer, who was well-informed about Henry the Lion, have actually seen the costly goods, or did he simply know of King Henry’s wealth? In the *Draco Normannicus* (1167–1169), Helmold’s contemporary Stephen of Rouen—a monk at Bec Hellouin—wrote of Matilda’s treasure that “no one was able to count the large amounts of gold and silver. The splendour of

**33** Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 373, fol. 95v.

**34** Cited in Chibnall, *The Empress*, 26.

**35** Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 373, fol. 83r.

**36** [www.mgh.de/fileadmin/Downloads/pdf/kaiserchronik.pdf](http://www.mgh.de/fileadmin/Downloads/pdf/kaiserchronik.pdf).

**37** “Frutolfi Chronica,” in *Frutolfs und Ekkehard’s Chroniken und die Anonyme Kaiserchronik*, 64–65.

**38** Erkens, “Fecit nuptias region,” 410–11.

**39** “In tempero dierum illorum misit Heinricus dux Bawariae et Saxioniae legatos in Angliam, et adduxerunt filiam regis Angliae cum argento et auro et diviciis magnis, et accepit eam dux in uxorem.” *Helmold’s Slavenchronik*, ed. Bernard Schmeidler, MGH SS Rer. Germ. 32 (Hanover, 1937), 209. Also Helmold von Bosau, *Chronik der Slaven*, trans. J. C. M. Laurent and W. Wattenbach, *Die Geschichtschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit* 7 (Berlin, 1852), 221. On Helmold’s account and others concerning Matilda’s travel and marriage, see Brander, “Mit großer Pracht,” 404–6.



Figure 3. *Imperial Chronicle*, ca. 1114. The Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 373, fol. 95v. Photo: Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

the vessels was incomprehensible. What and how many royal ornaments of different variety and value the royal princess carried is beyond description.”<sup>40</sup> To Stephen, it must have been obvious that King Henry II—one of the main characters in the *Draco*—would bestow on his daughter many precious objects because this reflected positively upon his own rule and showed that he respected his future son-in-law, who—as the chronicler points out—was the cousin of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Although written only a couple of years after Matilda arrived in Saxony, with the event of the marriage still fresh in memory, the tales told by both Helmold and Stephen describe the precious items in terms of impressive quantities of silver and gold rather than detailing the ornaments in the treasures. Chroniclers referring to the event decades after it had taken place used similar wording, although Ralph Niger distinguishes between vestments and vessels, perhaps reflecting the common liturgical division between the two.<sup>41</sup> Despite the topoi in these descriptions, their insistence on Henry II’s wealth bestowed upon the ducal couple in terms of the movement of gold, silver, treasure, ornament, vestments, and vessels demonstrates a clear representational understanding of such things. At the same time, the active potential of these riches surfaces if we interpret their mobility not merely in terms of wealth going from England to Saxony, but as transmitters of status, stories, and connections.

### Entering Palermo Resplendent with Regal Garments

That artefacts were made to work with and for people becomes even more evident when turning to Matilda’s sister Joanna. Negotiations for Joanna to marry King William II of Sicily were carried out during the summer of 1176. The planning for this marriage involved the coming and going of ambassadors, and with them gifts must have been brought back and forth. The reliquary pendant of Queen Margaret of Sicily (d. 1183), mother of William II, serves as an example of such gift-giving (Figure 4a–b). Queen and bishop are depicted on the back of the small gold pendant, with Margaret holding out her hands as if to receive the precious object from Reginald, who raises his right hand to bless her. They can safely be identified by the inscription around the border: ISTUD REGINE MARGARETE SICULOR[UM] TRA[N]SMITTIT PRESUL RAINAUD[US] BATONIOR[UM] (That [which] was transmitted to Queen Margaret of Sicily by Bishop Reginald of Bath).<sup>42</sup> The text running along the edge on the front reveals that it once held parts of Thomas

40 “Cum quantis opibus dicere nullus habet. / Aurum quis numeret, argenti copia quanta, / Vasorum species mens memorare nequit. / Quam varii generis, pretii, quot regia virgo / Ornamenta tulit, scribere nemo valet.” (v. 199–204). Stephen of Rouen, *Draco Normannicus*, ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols. (London, 1885) 2: 4. See also Ehlers, “Anglonormannisches am Hof Heinrichs des Löwen?,” 211.

41 “cum incomparabili suppellectite tam in vestibus et vasis pretiosis quam in auro et argento” (Matilda came with “incomparable sumptuous so much as costly vestments and vessels in gold and silver”). Radulphus Nigri, *Chronicon*, ed. Robert Anstruther (London, 1851), 171. See also Ahlers, *Die Welfen*, 68n300.

42 Inscriptions taken from [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468600](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468600).





Figure 4a–b. Reliquary pendant of Queen Margaret of Sicily, 1174–1177.  
New York, Metropolitan Museum, Acc. No. 63.160. Creative Commons Licence.

Becket's blood as well as pieces of the garments he wore during his murder (cloak, belt, hood, shoe, and shirt) and which were soaked in his blood. These relics would have been displayed under a crystal.<sup>43</sup> Bishop Reginald of Bath (d. 1191), a supporter of Henry II against Archbishop Becket, had the pendant especially made for Margaret in England in the late 1170s. The queen had interceded with Pope Alexander III for Reginald of Bath's father, Jocelyn of Salisbury, whom Henry II had appointed chancellor of Normandy and who had been excommunicated by Thomas Becket.<sup>44</sup> The reliquary is likely to have figured in the exchange of diplomatic items, and the marriage of William and Joanna would have been a suitable event for the presentation of the gift, although Reginald himself was not present.<sup>45</sup> This reliquary has often been used as an example of the rapid spread of the

<sup>43</sup> DE SANGUINE S[AN]C[T]I. THOME. M[ARTYRIS]. DE VESTIBU[S] SUI SANGUINE SUO TINCTIS (outer ring) DE PELLICIA. DE CILITIO. DE CUCULLA. DE CALCIAMENTO. ET CAMISIA (Part of the blood of St. Thomas Martyr. Parts of the vestments stained with his blood: the cloak, the belt, the hood, the shoe, the shirt).

<sup>44</sup> G. A. Loud, "The Kingdom of Sicily and the Kingdom of England, 1066–1266," *History* 88 (2003): 540–57 at 554.

<sup>45</sup> Neil Stratford, "Reliquary Pendant of Queen Margaret of Sicily," in *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200*, exh. cat. Hayward Gallery London, April 5–July 8, 1984, ed. George Zarnecki, Janet Holt, and Tristram Holland (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1984), no. 303; Dirk Booms and Peter Higgs, eds. *Sicily: Culture and Conquest* (London: British Museum, 2016), 240–43, and fig. 193.

Becket cult and the involvement of the Plantagenet princesses in doing so.<sup>46</sup> It also gives an idea of the type of small-scale luxury items that were exchanged and highly valued, yet not detailed in the medieval written record.

The Pipe Rolls for 1175/76 list “small supplies” (*minutis apparatibus*) which the daughter of the king needed as Joanna advanced into her new kingdom on the royal vessel accompanied by seven ships.<sup>47</sup> From Winchester they sailed to Normandy, where Joanna met her brother Henry, who escorted her overland to Poitiers.<sup>48</sup> The journey continued to Toulouse where count Raymond VI welcomed them. They then set sail to Naples, taking the sea route along the coast;<sup>49</sup> finally, Joanna arrived at Palermo via Salerno and Calabria. The small supplies brought with the royal princess are not specified, but they must have been only a fraction of the sumptuous goods that were loaded on the seven ships. Pomp was a matter of prime importance, as is testified by an entry for that same year mentioning that in London a suit of clothes (*roba*) was bought for Joanna for the staggering amount of £114, significantly more than the £88 that had been spent on the coronation robes of Joanna’s brother Henry and his wife Margaret.<sup>50</sup> The expenses made for the future bride’s garments should not come as a surprise when we take into account that King Henry II and his advisors must have known that textiles played an important representative (and commercial) role at the Sicilian court, which had its own textile workshop.<sup>51</sup> Anglo-Norman ambassadors returning from Sicily as well as Sicilian magnates who visited England surely informed Henry about the splendours of

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**46** One of the first to draw attention to the importance of the daughters in the spread in the Becket cult was Kay Brainard Slocum, “Angevin Marriage, Diplomacy and the Early Dissemination of the Cult of Thomas Becket,” *Medieval Perspectives* 14 (1999): 214–28. For recent research on the cult, including the role of the Plantagenet sisters, see Webster and Gelin, *The Cult of St Thomas Becket*; and Gregoria Cavero Domínguez et al., *Tomás Becket y la península ibérica (1170–1230)* (León: Universidad de León, 2013), 52–57.

**47** PR 22 Hen II, 198: “Et servientibus episcopi Wintoniensis 6l. et 7s. et 11d. ad procurandos nuncios regis Sicilie per breve regis. [...] Et pro 40 ulnis de canevas tiguendo ad cameram regis [painted linen for the king’s chamber] et aliis minutis apparatibus quando filia regis ivit in Siciliam 42s. per idem breve.” PR 22 Hen II, 199: “Et item in liberation esnece quando filia regis transfretavit itura in Siciliam 7l. et 10s. per breve regis. Et in liberation.vij. navium que cum ea transfretaverunt 10l. et 13s. per breve regis.” See also Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*, 103n104.

**48** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 90.

**49** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 91.

**50** PR 22 Hen II, 12: “Et mercatoribus Lond’ 91l. et 6s. et 9d. ad quietandam robam filie Regis per breve regis quod attulit de 114l. et 5s. et 5d. [...] + Et pro roba filie Regis 114l. et 5s. et 5d. per breve regis.” For garments as part of dowries in Bari, see Lucia Sinisi, “The Marriage of the Year (1028),” *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 9 (2013): 45–54, and, in the same volume, Antonietta Amati Canti, “Bridal Gifts in Medieval Bari,” 1–44.

**51** Isabelle Dolezalek, *Arabic Script on Christian Kings: Textile Inscriptions on Royal Garments from Norman Sicily*. Das Mittelalter, Beihefte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017). For the workshop, see esp. 85–86.

the Palermitan court.<sup>52</sup> The English king assured that his youngest daughter would be dressed splendidly, thereby promoting her royal status while also acknowledging that of the Sicilian king.

A lively picture of the regal magnificence that framed Joanna's marriage is painted in Roger of Howden's *Gesta* (ca. 1169–1192).<sup>53</sup> The royal chaplain was almost certainly present at Henry's court in 1176–1177 and therefore informed about the early stages of the marriage negotiations.<sup>54</sup> In 1176, the king delivered his daughter into the care of his ambassadors and those of her future husband, King William of Sicily, and he also presented to them horses and dress, gold and silver, and valuable vessels.<sup>55</sup>

In the same year before the feast of the Purification of Holy Mary [February 2, 1177], Joanna, daughter of the aforementioned king of the English, who was sent to be given into marriage to King William of Sicily, arrived in Palermo together with Bishop Gilles of Evreux, and the other envoys the king had gathered; and it was by night that they entered the city of Palermo, the whole city welcomed them, and lamps, so many and so large, were lighted up, that the city almost seemed to be on fire, and the rays of the stars could in no way bear comparison with the brilliancy of such a light. The said daughter of the king of England was then escorted, mounted on one of the king's horses, and resplendent with regal garments, to a certain palace, that there she might in becoming state await the day of her marriage and coronation.<sup>56</sup>

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**52** For the connections between England and Sicily, see Bowie, *The Daughters*, 81–97 esp. 84–85. Written accounts detailing the beauty of Palermo are mentioned in Dolezalek, *Arabic Script*, 139–40. See also Laura Sciasci, “Palermo as a Stage for, and a Mirror of, Political Developments from the 12th to the 15th Century,” in *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*, ed. Annliese Nef (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 299–323.

**53** For Roger of Howden, see Michael Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 51–66.

**54** Loud, “The Kingdom of Sicily,” 555.

**55** “Tunc dominus rex tradidit filiam suam nunciis regis Wilelmi simulque nunciis suis, et praeparavit eis necessaria sua; et dedit eis equos et vestes, et aurum et argentum, et vasa pretiosa. Et cum omnia complisset region more, et condigno honore, permisit eos abire.” Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols. (London: Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 1:120.

**56** “Edodem anno ante Purificationem Beatae Mariae, Johanna filia praedicti regis Angliae, quae missa fuerant maritanda regi Willelmo Siciliae, Panormum venit, cum Aegidio Ebroidensi episcopo, et aliis nunciis regis patris sui eam conducebant; et cum ipsa et sui civitatem Panormi de nocte intrassent, tota civitas eis applausit, et tot et tante accensa sunt luminaria, ut civitas penitus crederetur comburi; et stellarum radii prae fulgore tantorum luminum, nullatenus possent comparere. Ducta est ergo praedicta filia regis Angliae super equum regium, vestibus regalibus insignita, in quoddam palatium, ut ibidem desponsationis et coronationis suae diem gratius posset expectare.” *Gesta Regis*, 1:157. This episode is also in Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs, 4 vols. (London: Longman, 1868), 2:95. The royal weddings of Henry the Young King and Margaret, Richard Lionheart and Berengaria, John and Isabella of Gloucester, Leonor and Alfonso VIII, Matilda and Henry the Lion are mentioned, but not described by Howden.

Ten full days after the night-time entry, on February 13, the dual ceremonies of marriage and coronation took place in the royal chapel of Palermo cathedral, performed by its archbishop, Walter. Again, Sicilian clergy and nobles as well as high-placed English envoys witnessed the events.<sup>57</sup>

Even though the exact sources for Howden's chronicle are unknown, the vivid description may have resulted from his intimate knowledge of Henry's court and his access to written court documents, such as the Pipe Rolls in which he himself appears several times. His description of Joanna's splendid entry demonstrates an awareness of the impression dress was designed to make and is suggestive of the sensational experience of entries. The otherwise dark streets of Palermo were the brightly lit stage on which the body of the bride was presented. This was highlighted by focusing on Joanna's regal dress and the royal horse that lifted the princess above her audience. Howden's sensorial language stimulated the memory and imagination of his readers.

In his *Chronica* (ca. 1201) Howden achieved something similar with his portrayal of Empress Matilda's escape from Oxford after it had been besieged by King Stephen shortly before Christmas 1142. Clothed in white garments, Matilda fled across the frozen River Thames. The reflection of the snow and her white dress deceived the eyes of the besiegers and Matilda managed get to the castle of Wallingford, and Oxford was at length surrendered to the king.<sup>58</sup> Whereas the ostentatious outfit of Joanna is used to display and promote the royal body, her grandmother's white garments are meant to conceal her figure and identity.<sup>59</sup> Yet, in both cases, the element of dress is employed to underscore the importance of these women and their actions. Howden provides no further detail about Joanna's garments than the descriptor regal or royal (*vestibus regalibus*), perhaps in reference to the typical colors of scarlet or purple and gold. The clothes were likely similar to the set (*roba*) her father had paid for. There can be little doubt that the representation of apparel in chronicles, literary texts, and art, as well as surviving items of medieval clothing, highlights the importance attached to dress as a communicative tool by elite medieval societies.<sup>60</sup> Garments could be made to reveal—or conceal—high

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**57** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 91.

**58** "Et parum ante Natale fugit imperatricem per Tamensem glaciata, circumamicta vestibus albis, reverberatione nivis et similitudine fallentibus oculos obsidentium; fugit ad castellum de Walingford, et sic Oxeneford regi tandem est reddita." Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri*, 1:206; *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden: Comprising the History of England and of other Countries of Europe from A.D. 732 to A.D. 1201*, trans. Henry T. Riley, 2 vols. (London: Bohn, 1853), 1:246. Howden took this episode from Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*: see Henry of Huntingdon, *Henrici archidiaconi huntendunensis Historia Anglorum*, ed. Thomas Arnold (London: Longman, 1879), 276.

**59** When Richard the Lionheart returned from crusade and passed through the Holy Roman Empire, he tried to conceal his identity through dress as well, although he did not succeed. Richard was held by Leopold of Austria between 1192 and 1193 and then imprisoned between February 1193 and February 1194 by Emperor Henry VI. See Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri*, 3:185–86; *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, 2:269–70.

**60** Janet E. Schneider, *Early Gothic Column-Figure Sculpture in France: Appearance, Materials, and Significance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); E. Jane Burns, ed., *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles,*



birth and social status. Outward appearance was understood to be strongly connected to inner virtue and character.<sup>61</sup>

Combining Joanna's itinerary with the incidental references from the Pipe Rolls and the account by Roger of Howden, we can perceive the visual, ritual, sensorial, and representational potential of such a journey. By providing Joanna with the means and matter for her bridal trip, Henry II had undoubtedly meant to empower his daughter. And in writing about the event, Roger did not just paint a textbook scene concerned with Henry's magnificence; he also promoted Joanna as a worthy bride for William.

## Celebrating Royal Nuptials in Iberia

As for Leonor, the second of the three Plantagenet sisters, King Alfonso VIII of Castile had sent an embassy to England to petition for her hand in November 1169. Leonor married Alfonso in the cathedral of the city of Burgos some time before September 17, 1170, when the first of the royal couple's many joint charters was issued.<sup>62</sup> Departing from Bordeaux, Leonor and her entourage travelled through Col du Somport and Jaca to reach Tarazona in the Kingdom of Aragon.<sup>63</sup> It was in Tarazona, shortly before the couple were to celebrate their nuptials, that Alfonso confirmed Leonor's *arras* (dower). He stated explicitly that he did so in "the presence of the lady, my mother Eleanor, illustrious queen of England" while also acknowledging Henry as "the illustrious king of England, my father."<sup>64</sup> José Manuel Cerda Costabal has demonstrated convincingly that Eleanor was deeply involved in the negotiations for her daughter's *arras*, an example that "kings and queens were co-operators."<sup>65</sup>

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*Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and Sarah-Grace Heller, ed., *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Medieval Age* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), esp. chaps. 6, 8, and 9.

**61** Michael Staunton investigated these issues in relation to descriptions of dress found in historical writing in Angevin England. Michael Staunton, "Dress, Appearance and Power in Angevin England," unpublished paper presented at *Inside Out: Dress and Identity in the Middle Ages*, 38th Annual Conference, Center for Medieval Studies, Fordham University (New York), March 17–18, 2018.

**62** For the marriage negotiations and wedding, see Bowie, *The Daughters*, 71–75, 107–9.

**63** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 75.

**64** This charter is studied in detail by José Manuel Cerda Costabal, "Matrimonio y patrimonio. Las arras de Leonor Plantagenet, reina consorte de Castilla," *Anuario de estudios medievales* 46 (2016): 63–96 at 65. For an image of the charter and an incomplete transcription, see Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1960), 1:192. For the relation between *arras* and women's power, see Ana Rodríguez, "Stratégies matrimoniales, stratégies patrimoniales: Autour du pouvoir des femmes au royaume de León-Castille (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)," in *Les stratégies matrimoniales (IX–XIIIe siècle)*, ed. Martin Aurell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 169–91.

**65** Theresa Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe," *Gender & History* 19 (2007): 1–21 at 12.

Because Leonor departed from France instead of England, no Pipe Roll entries exist that reveal what this princess brought with her on the occasion of her marriage.<sup>66</sup> However, the poet Ramón Vidal de Besalú gives some idea of the splendour of the Castilian court when he described Leonor's "beautiful and well-made mantle of silk cloth, which is called a *ciclatón*; it was red with a silver edge and was embroidered with a golden lion."<sup>67</sup> While this description in the *Castia gilós* was surely meant to flatter the queen, it equally shows the courtly etiquette of display. Additionally, the remains of the royal couple's clothes found in their tombs at the female Cistercian monastery of Las Huelgas, just outside the city of Burgos, offer an insight into the prestige expressed through clothing.<sup>68</sup> Apart from these references, the sources connected to Leonor and Alfonso are largely silent in the matter of material culture. It is difficult to reconstruct the splendour that accompanied the Plantagenet princess and the nuptial festivities that apparently continued for a month.<sup>69</sup> However, the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, written ca. 1150 for Alfonso VIII's grandfather, Emperor Alfonso VII of León-Castile (d. 1157), paints a picture of how a royal wedding was celebrated just one generation earlier. The chronicle details at some length the splendid nuptials of the emperor's daughter Infanta Urraca when she married King García of Pamplona in 1144. In dual processions, bride and bridegroom rode through the city of León to the royal palace. The infanta entered the walled city through the Roman portal known as the Puerta Cauriense, escorted by her

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**66** From 1175/76 to 1180/81 annual payments were made to a certain Johannes, cleric of the Spanish Queen A (short for Alienora) and in 1180/81 an entry mentions that 39s 6d was paid to Fierebrachius to make a case and a small vessel to transport vessels and textiles to the king's daughter in Iberia. See PR 27 Hen II, 157: "Et Fierebrachio 39s. et 7d. ad faciendas malas et alia minuta vasa ad portandum vassellam et pannos quos Rex misit filie sue in Hyspanium per breve regis."

**67** The text by Ramón Vidal de Besalú is cited in Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180–1246) and Political Women in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 47. A *ciclatón* is "a red silk interwoven with gold thread made in Almería, one of the most important medieval centres of silk production in Al-Andalus." Kristin Böse, "Beyond Foreign: Textiles from the Castilian Royal Tombs in Santa María de las Huelgas in Burgos," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, ed. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta, *Riggisberger Berichte* 21 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 213–30 at 226.

**68** Kristin Böse, "Cultures Re-Shaped: Textiles from the Castilian Royal Tombs in Santa María de las Huelgas in Burgos," in *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages*, ed. Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 95–105; and María Barrigón, "Textiles and Farewells: Revisiting the Grave Goods of King Alfonso VIII of Castile and Queen Eleanor Plantagenet," *Textile History* 46 (2015): 235–57. For the ritual context of textiles and importance of cloths in Iberia and its impact beyond the peninsula see María Judith Feliciano, "Medieval Textiles in Iberia: Studies for a New Approach," in *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod*, ed. David J. Roxburgh (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 46–65.

**69** Bowie, *The Daughters*, 108. The reference that the celebrations continued the whole month of September can be found in the sixteenth-century *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*: see Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la corona de Aragón*, 7 vols. (Zaragoza, 1610–1621), 1:77.

aunt, noble knights, clerics, women, and girls. In the royal palace a chamber for Urraca was installed and around it a great crowd gathered and many festivities took place.<sup>70</sup>

The emperor gave valuable gifts of silver and gold, horses and mules and many other riches to his daughter and to his son-in-law, King García. [...] For her part, the Infanta Sancha [the sister of the emperor] gave her niece many gold and silver dishes, and mules and she-mules loaded with royal riches. [...] King García held a magnificent royal banquet [in Pamplona] for the Castilians who were with him and for all the knights and nobles of his kingdom, and they celebrated the royal nuptials for many days.<sup>71</sup>

This passage shows that Urraca received abundant riches from her father and aunt, with the latter also presenting gold and silver dishes, perhaps similar to the sort of household utensils Matilda brought with her to Saxony. Like Matilda and Joanna, Urraca was accompanied by these treasures when she joined her husband García in Pamplona, where a second round of celebrations took place. The *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* paints a different picture from the earlier *Imperial Chronicle* in that separate events for male and female attendees at the wedding are carefully delineated. Both chronicles, nonetheless, evidence that marriage festivities were excellent opportunities to make the presence of prestigious brides and their powerful fathers visible through processions and meals that were witnessed by audiences from near and far. The display of a wide-ranging variety of riches also underscores that both bride and bridegroom were treasured as important assets, instrumental in establishing political and economic bonds. It is quite likely that Leonor, like Urraca, festively entered towns surrounded by luxury items carried by horses, mules, and carts.

The scraps of evidence discussed in this chapter have brought to light the crucial role played by clothing—including furs, Iberian silks, and fine woollen cloth—and other sumptuous artefacts in imbuing medieval princesses with an aura of power. Although Matilda and her sisters were young when they journeyed into the lands of their future husbands, they were not completely inexperienced in matters of display. As royal daughters, they were familiar with costly artefacts and the splendour that accompanied them as essential manifestations of power. While it is true that the specific selection of objects and the royal self-fashioning for Matilda resulted from her parents' decisions, throughout her long travel the English princess must have observed how important sumptuous goods were to the promotion of her status, as well as to the establishment of bonds with influential people who might serve her in the future. Matilda and other splendidly wrapped brides, armed with richly filled chests, learned that appearance and wealth were of utmost importance when setting the stage for the performance of power.

<sup>70</sup> For a gendered reading of the chamber in the royal palace at León and the wedding festivities, see Therese Martin, "Chronicling the Iberian Palace: Written Sources and the Meanings of Medieval Christian Rulers' Residences," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2 (2010): 109–39 at 125–26.

<sup>71</sup> *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest*, ed. Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 202–3. For the Latin edition, see Antonio Maya Sánchez, *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 71 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990).



## Chapter 2

### SMALL ITEMS MAKING BIG IMPRESSIONS: COINS AND SEALS

OVER THE PAST two decades, medieval women as owners of seals and issuers of coinage have attracted a good deal of attention, specifically focusing on the relationship between the visual elements and the communication of elite status and power.<sup>1</sup> The carefully considered combination of text and image impressed into metal demonstrated the power of the most elite members of society through the restricted capacity to emit coinage; at the same time, it allowed them to promote their specific social identity. For seals, a similar sophisticated visual strategy was used, which permitted a broader range of the upper echelon to communicate messages of authority, identity, and legitimacy, if not to such a wide audience as that reached by coins.<sup>2</sup> Taking the coins and seals of Matilda and other women as our material evidence, this chapter investigates the visual constructions of status, gender, and dynastic identity. In doing so, these “miniature yet

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**1** Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, “Women, Seals and Power in Medieval France, 1150–1350,” in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 61–82; Bedos-Rezak, “Medieval Women in Sigillographic Sources,” in *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, ed. Joel Rosenthal (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 1–36; Andrea Stieldorf, “Die Siegel der Herrscherinnen. Siegelführung und Siegelbilder der deutschen Kaiserinnen und Königinnen,” *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 64 (2000): 1–44; Therese Martin, “The Art of a Reigning Queen as Dynastic Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain,” *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1134–71; Marta Serrano Coll, “Iconografía de género. Los sellos de las reinas de Aragón en la Edad Media (siglos XII–XVI),” *Emblemata* 12 (2006): 15–52; Kathleen Nolan, *Queens in Stone and Silver: The Creation of a Visual Imagery of Queenship in Capetian France* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Marie-Adélaïde Nielen, *Corpus des sceaux français du moyen âge, vol. III: Les sceaux des reines et des enfants de France* (Paris, Service interministériel des Archives de France, 2011); Susan Solway, ed., *Medieval Coins and Seals: Constructing Identity, Signifying Power* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015); Jitske Jasperse, “To Have and to Hold: Coins and Seals as Evidence for Motherly Authority,” in *Royal Mothers and Their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, ed. Carey Fleiner and Elena Woodacre (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 83–104; Antonio Roma Valdés, “Notas sobre las acuñaciones medievales leonesas: primeros escritos conocidos y las emisiones de Doña Urraca,” *OMNI. Revista numismática* 10 (2016): 56–73; and Barbara Klössel-Luckhardt, “Et sigillo illustris uxoris nostre. Weibliche Repräsentation in frühen Frauensiegeln des Welfenhauses,” *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Katja Lembke, Jochen Luckhardt, and Rainer Stamm, *Neue Folge* 2 (Petersberg: Imhof, 2017), 27–52.

**2** For a critique of the term “women’s seals,” see Alison Creber, “Making an Impression: Imperial Iconography and the Seals of Beatrice of Tuscany (c. 1020–1076) and Matilda of Tuscany (1046–1115),” unpublished paper presented at “Gender, Identity, Iconography,” a joint GMS/SFMFS Conference, Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford, January 9, 2018 (accessed via academia.edu).

mighty expressions of medieval art” help to understand how power was displayed, experienced, and exercised by women.<sup>3</sup>

Coins and seals, of course, held differing functions in medieval society. Coins were currency used in transactions, and the issuing of coinage offered a source of income to authorities through *renovationes monetae* (reminting of the whole of the coinage at regular intervals).<sup>4</sup> Seals, in turn, were appended to documents to authenticate them, showing that their content was genuine while also indicating the authority of the issuer.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, their quantity and distribution varied. Whereas coins would be mass produced and were mostly dispersed regionally, seals were made in smaller quantities and their final destination in ecclesiastical or secular archives depended much on the content of the charter and the parties that sealed the deal. Furthermore, coins would often be melted down to reuse the metal for issuing new coins. Wax seals, on the other hand, were meant to be preserved, and to this end the fragile objects received protective wrappings or bags, in an—often unsuccessful—attempt to ensure their survival.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding these differences, both coins and seals stemmed from an engraved metal die—often a silver alloy—that transformed metal into coin and wax into seal. As Brigitte Bedos-Rezak has argued in her ground-breaking research on medieval seals, the act of imprinting also transformed the meaning of the material object. The moment the sealer impressed the die, wax was no longer just beeswax but rather his or her personhood was imprinted as well. The seal truly embodied its owner: it made present the sealing authorities who were absent.<sup>7</sup> A similar argument can be made for coins.

Mundane matters complicate the study of these diminutive objects. The fact that many seals are no longer appended to the original charters hampers a more nuanced appreciation of the contexts in which they were used, as well as how often they were attached to documents and thus the possible audiences who had access to the imagery. Nonetheless, seals were meant to be seen; the imitation and appropriation of seals’ iconographic motifs is proof of their visibility.<sup>8</sup> In turn, our understanding of coinage is hindered by the fact, noted above, that coins were often melted down.<sup>9</sup> If specimens

**3** Susan Solway, “Introduction,” in *Medieval Coins and Seals: Constructing Identity, Signifying Power*, ed. Susan Solway (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 9–21 at 20.

**4** For an introduction on coinage, see Philip Grierson, “Numismatics,” in *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, ed. James M. Powell (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 114–61.

**5** For an introduction on seals, see P. D. A. Harvey and Andrew McGuiness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (London: British Library, 2006).

**6** Markus Späth, “Offen und verborgen. Zur Ansichtigkeit mittelalterlicher Siegel,” *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde* 63 (2018): 273–304 at 274–75.

**7** Bedos-Rezak, “Medieval Identity,” 1503.

**8** Laurent Macé, *La majesté et la croix. Les sceaux de la maison des comtes de Toulouse (XIIe–XIIIe siècle)* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2018), 129.

**9** The obstacles when studying German bracteates, as well as other coins we could add, is summed up by Walter Kühn, *Die Brakteaten Heinrichs des Löwen 1142–1195. Zeugnisse aus mittelalterlicher Kultur und Wirtschaft im Raum um Braunschweig und Lüneburg*, Münzfreunde Minden 16 (Minden: s.n., 1995).

were discovered individually, indicating that the owner randomly lost a coin, rather than in a hoard (a collection buried at a certain moment for a specific reason), it is much more difficult to establish the time of issue and how widely a particular coin type was used. Nonetheless, it is evident that these small objects held great social value to their medieval users and therefore merit careful attention for the material evidence they offer.

### To Wield the Sceptre: Coins and Co-Rule

At a construction site in the vicinity of the Monastery of St. Aegidius in Brunswick, 208 bracteates were unearthed in 1756, of which all but one had been issued by Henry the Lion.<sup>10</sup> Exactly why these coins were amassed remains unknown, but given that they were minted under the auspices of the duke, it has been suggested that they were buried during his lifetime, prior to 1195.<sup>11</sup> Among these silver coins were sixty-three bearing a representation of Duke Henry and his wife Matilda, one of the many coin types the duke issued in Brunswick (Figure 5).<sup>12</sup> Matilda (on the viewer's left) and Henry the Lion are depicted in bust atop an architectural structure, which either represents the town of Brunswick or the ducal couple's Burg.<sup>13</sup> According to the fashion of their time, each wears a *chemise* with tight-fitted sleeves under a *bliaut* with wider sleeves that drape loosely as they hold aloft sceptres. The duchess's hair is covered by a veil and coronet, while the duke's is parted down the middle, with curls falling over his ears. Here, like on all bracteates he issued, Henry's lion is present, referring to the duke's soubriquet specifically which he carried from 1156 onward.<sup>14</sup> To bolster his roaring image, the duke

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**10** H. Grote, "Braunschweigische Brakteaten," *Blätter für Münzkunde. Hannoversche numismatische Zeitschrift* 1 (1834): 17–19 at 17 and plate IV figs. 55 and 56. Figs. 55 and 56 represent the two specimens of the same type found in the hoard. The coin not issued by Henry the Lion was issued by Margrave Otto I of Magdeburg (r. 1170–1196). Grote gives no references to earlier publications or other sources between 1756 (when the hoard was found) and 1834 and he does not inform the reader where these were stored after the discovery.

**11** A date to around 1180 has been suggested; see Kühn, *Die Brakteaten Heinrichs*, 79. On the content of hoards, see Bernd Kluge, "Probleme der Brakteatenforschung," *Forschungen und Berichte 19. Kunsthistorische und volkskundliche Beiträge* 19 (1979): 127–38.

**12** For an overview of bracteates minted in Brunswick, see Kühn, *Die Brakteaten Heinrichs des Löwen*.

**13** Henry circumvallated his Burg complex (the Burg Dankwarderode with its chapel, St Blaise church and the adjacent buildings for the canons), Altstadt and Hagen (with Flemish wool weavers) around 1166 with an earth wall (not a stone one). See Gerhard Streich, "Burgen und 'Burgenpolitik' Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 2:484–91 esp. 285. The Dankwarderode residence (reconstructed as a two-storied hall consisting of two aisles divided by arches) was rebuilt or enlarged by Henry the Lion, probably around 1160. See Cord Meckseper, "Burg Dankwarderode," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1:cat. D 19.

**14** The iconography of the lion on Henry's coins has been studied most extensively by Kühn, *Die Brakteaten Heinrichs des Löwen*. For Henry's soubriquet, see Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 258.



Figure 5. Bracteate of Duke Henry the Lion and Matilda, ca. 1172. Berlin, Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, acc. 1892 Dannenberg. Photo: Christian Stoess.

had an enormous bronze lion set up in front of his Burg and as a consequence the lion became an even stronger visual sign of Henry's name and ducal identity.<sup>15</sup> The legend on the coin type under discussion here includes the name DUX HEINRICVS O LEO A, adding a corroborating text to the visual lion as the issuing authority.<sup>16</sup> Of the mentioned elements two are unique on the duke's coinage: the inclusion of Matilda, and the fact that she is holding a sceptre.

Unlike coins that bear text and/or imagery on both sides, bracteates are single-sided. Rather than interpreting this bracteate as an object meant to commemorate the 1168 wedding of Henry and Matilda, I argue that the presence of the sceptre in Matilda's hand invites a very different reading.<sup>17</sup> Matilda's first four years in her new home had not been marked by an active assertion of her authority, but this changed when Henry departed on crusade in January 1172, leaving his wife, now older and firmly established as duchess, equipped to hold real authority in his stead if necessary. In my reading of the imagery, it was this occasion that motivated the creation and distribution of a new bracteate featuring Matilda wielding a sceptre as a *consors regni* or co-ruler with her

<sup>15</sup> For the bronze lion, see Peter Seiler, "Braunschweiger Burglöwe," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1:cat. D 20.

<sup>16</sup> For the legend, see Walter Kühn, "Münzen und Geld zur Zeit Heinrichs des Löwen im Raum Braunschweig und Lüneburg," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 2:401–7 at 404.

<sup>17</sup> Julius Menadier, "Der Hochzeitpfennig Herzog Heinrich des Löwen," in *Deutsche Münzen. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte des deutschen Münzwesens*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Weyl, 1898), 1:220; Jürgen Denicke, *Die Brakteaten der Münzstätte Braunschweig. Teil 1 Heinrich der Löwe 1142–1195*, 4 vols. (Braunschweig: Denicke, 1983), 1:18; and Kühn, *Die Brakteaten Heinrichs des Löwen*, 84. The interpretation these coins as wedding coins is strongly rejected by Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 265.



husband.<sup>18</sup> As such, the image presented on this coin features the new power-sharing arrangement necessitated by Henry's crusading activity.<sup>19</sup>

An interpretation of Henry and Matilda's coin type as a means to express co-rule, however, is not without its difficulties. First, there is the absence of written record on the issuing of this coin type (or other types, for that matter). Second, coins depicting elite husbands and wives have not been studied in great depth, even though twelve other couples in the Holy Roman Empire were represented on coins.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, changes in the iconography found on coins did not necessarily relate to shifts in political thinking, but were in many cases the result of the renewal of coinage at regular intervals. One might even contend that Matilda's presence on the coin, instead of indicating co-rule, merely underscored Henry's enhanced status following their marriage, making her into a mere attribute of the duke's rule. However, had this indeed been the case, one would expect to find Matilda on other coin types as well to fulfil the same role. Nonetheless, medievalists have long acknowledged the importance of coins as a medium for the public commemoration of specific events or of changing political circumstances.<sup>21</sup> Finally, as we will see, even when there are written sources, women's agency and power—like that of men—are never clear cut, especially in narrative sources where authors and patrons have their own agendas.<sup>22</sup> In their gesta and chronicles, monks and clerks are not always explicit

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**18** For the concept of *consors regni*, see Thilo Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin im hohen Mittelalter. Studien zur Consors-regni-Formel* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Wissenschaftlicher, 1954); Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kaiserin Theophanu. Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends. Gedenkschrift des Kölner Schnütgen-Museums zum 1000. Todesjahr der Kaiserin*, ed. Anton von Euw and Peter Schreiner, 2 vols. (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2:245–59. For a more recent analysis and some critical notes towards Vogelsang see Föbel, *Die Königin*, 56–66 (on *consors regni*) esp. 59.

**19** An older, but still relevant study on Henry the Lion's pilgrimage is E. Joranson, "The Palestine Pilgrimage of Henry the Lion," in *Medieval and Historiographical Essays in Honor of James Westfall Thompson*, ed. James Lea Cate and Eugene N. Anderson (Port Washington: Kennikat, 1938, repr. 1966), 146–225.

**20** Jitske Jasperse, "A Coin Bearing Testimony to Duchess Matilda as *consors regni*," *Haskins Society Journal* 26 (2014): 169–90 at 176n33.

**21** H. Dannenberg, "Kannte das Mittelalter Denkmünzen?," *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* 13 (1885): 322–28; Elisabeth Nau, "Münzen und Geld in der Stauferzeit," in *Die Zeit der Staufer. Geschichte, Kunst, Kultur*, ed. Reiner Hausscherr, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1977), 3:87–102 at 95; Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1–3; Nathan T. Elkins, "Coins, Context, and an Iconographic Approach," in *Coins in Context I: New Perspectives for the Interpretation of Coin Finds. Colloquium Frankfurt am Main, October 25–27, 2007*, ed. Hans-Markus von Kaenel and Fleur Kemmers (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 2009), 25–46 at 35; Leslie Brubaker and Helen Tobler, "The Gender of Money. Byzantine Empresses on Coins (324–802)," *Gender and History* 12 (2000): 572–635 at 590; and Solway, *Medieval Coins and Seals*.

**22** Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Converters of Kings in the Earlier Middle Ages," in *Agire da donna. Modelli e pratiche di rappresentazione (secoli VI–X)*, ed. Cristina La Rocca (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 95–107 at 99.

about women's participation in gatherings where the performance of power was crucial (e.g. meals, weddings, court meetings). Moreover, the interactions between people often went undocumented, as did the rituals that were part of courtly encounters.

While the familiar royal motif of the joint depiction of husband and wife was copied on some coins issued by the upper nobility, none of the known aristocratic examples shows women bearing sceptres. Henry and Matilda's appropriation of the imperial design can be understood as an expression of their royal self-awareness, which they also displayed in their gospel book (discussed in the next chapter). As the descendants of Emperor Lothar and Empress Richenza on his side, and of King Henry II, and Empress Matilda on hers, Henry and Matilda made sure to emphasize their lineage. An impressive ancestry buttressed their status and offered the framework for the rightful exercise of power. Here, the sceptre would not have been a necessary attribute for Matilda, yet that she holds this insignia is designed to be clearly visible. Like her husband, she raises aloft a fairly long rod topped with a fleur-de-lis. In the hands of a male ruler, the sceptre habitually has been regarded as an attribute of authority and an expression of power.<sup>23</sup> Why then, when the same insignia is shown in the hand of a woman, should it not be interpreted the same way?

The earliest visual evidence for women in the Holy Roman Empire to be portrayed with sceptres is related to Queen Cunigunde (r. 1002–1024, d. 1033) and Empress Agnes (r. 1043–1077). Their sceptres reflect their active participation in the political and religious affairs of their husbands, via interventions and regency.<sup>24</sup> By the 1050s, German kings, emperors, and their consorts are no longer regularly found together in liturgical manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> Instead, coins became the primary form of communication of the queen's image and presence in tandem with that of her husband.

After their marriage, Frederick Barbarossa to Adelaide of Vohburg (1128–d. after 1187) appear together on coins, enthroned and richly dressed, with their heads turned towards each other (Figure 6). As a sign of their rule, each wears a crown. Frederick holds a lance in his left hand and a long rod topped by a cross in his right; Adelaide has an open book in her right hand and a small flowering sceptre in her left.<sup>26</sup> The book may symbolize a woman's religious virtue, as it does on seals of abbesses and in the hands of the Virgin Mary.<sup>27</sup> Because the legend identifies Frederick as king, this coin type is likely

<sup>23</sup> H. Drechsler, "Zepter," in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977–99), 9:cols. 544–45; and Joan A. Holladay, "Royal and Imperial Iconography," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (New York: Routledge, 2017), 356–72 at 358.

<sup>24</sup> Jasperse, "A Coin Bearing Testimony."

<sup>25</sup> This has been explained as a consequence of the Investiture Controversy, where the king—and thus his queen—was no longer able to claim Christ-centred kingship. See Gudrun Pamme-Vogelsang, *Die Ehen mittelalterlicher Herrscher im Bild. Untersuchungen zu zeitgenössischen Herrscherpaardarstellungen des 9. bis 12. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Pamme-Vogelsang, *Die Ehen*, 226–30, and ill. 24.2 (Hanover, Kestner Museum).

<sup>27</sup> Madeline H. Caviness, "Anchoress, Abbess, and Queen. Donors and Patrons or Intercessors and Matrons?," in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 105–54 at 141–42; and Andrea Stieldorf, *Rheinische Frauensiegel. Studien*



Figure 6. Bracteate of King Frederick Barbarossa and Adelaide, ca. 1152/53.  
Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, object no. 18205024.  
Photo: Lutz-Jürgen Lübke (Lübke & Wiedemann).

to have been issued after his coronation on March 9, 1152 and before March 1153, when his marriage to Adelaide was annulled. Adelaide is not referred to as *consors regni* on the coin, though that does not necessarily mean that her presence was passive. However, the limits of her intervention in matters of state is suggested by her absence from the documentary evidence. Adelaide appeared in only one charter in the course of her short reign, which suggests that her radius of action was limited.<sup>28</sup>

Not so for Beatrice (1145–1184), Frederick's second wife, whom he married in June 1156 at Würzburg. From that time she used the title *dei gratia Romanorum imperatrix augusta*, although she was not formally crowned empress until July 1167.<sup>29</sup> Beatrice is depicted together with her husband on bracteates issued some time between 1156 and 1184.<sup>30</sup> On one, Beatrice is shown on Frederick's right, in a manner similar to the depiction of Adelaide (Figure 7). She holds a short rod crowned by a lily of the same type decorating Matilda's sceptre. Both emperor and empress are portrayed half-length, wearing crowns and similar attire. Frederick holds a rod surmounted by a cross in his right hand, a reference to the Holy Roman Empire. In compositional terms, on both of Frederick's bracteates the rod separates the king from his wife. Despite the paucity of contemporary sources referring to Beatrice, Amalie Föbel has been able to determine that Beatrice frequently travelled with her husband and was actively involved in the affairs of the

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zur rechtlichen und sozialen Stellung weltlicher Frauen im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert. Rheinisches Archiv 142 (Cologne: Bohlau, 1999), 260.

**28** Amalie Föbel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich: Herrschaftsausübung, Herrschaftsrechte, Handlungsspielräume* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 126n242.

**29** Föbel, *Die Königin*, 51.

**30** Examples of these coins can be found in Pamme-Vogelsang, *Die Ehen*, cat. 22 and ill. 28, cat. 23 and ill. 29, cat 26 and ill. 31.2.



Figure 7. Bracteate of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Beatrice, ca. 1170. Berlin, Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, object no. 18201203. Photo: Lutz-Jürgen Lübke (Lübke & Wiedemann).

county of Burgundy, and that she also intervened on behalf of monasteries, churches and bishops, as noted in Frederick's charters.<sup>31</sup> The royal couple's mutual activities suggest that the notion of co-rule was deliberately communicated through their coinage as well.

The cases of Adelaide and Beatrice show that a single reading of this coin type as reflecting and communicating co-rule is problematic. However, in the case of Henry the Lion's coin, it is significant that the duke seems to have followed the same course of action with his first wife, Clementia—whom he married in 1147 and separated from in 1162—as he would later do with Matilda. The ducal couple is depicted on a bracteate of which two specimens are known, one found at Duderstadt (Lower Saxony) and another at Bourg-Saint-Christophe (France, département Ain) (Figure 8).<sup>32</sup> They are portrayed in profile on top of two arches; beneath the arches, a lion is shown facing right. There is no legend on the coin to identify the issuing authority, but the presence of the lion makes it perfectly clear that this type is related to Brunswick and Henry the Lion. Due to its schematic, and less detailed style, this coin is dated around 1150. Henry's reason

<sup>31</sup> Föbel, *Die Königin*, 109–11 (travelling with her husband) and 126. For a short overview of her life see Knut Görich, "Kaiserin Beatrix," in *Frauen der Staufer*, ed. Karl-Heinz Rueß (Göppingen: Gesellschaft für staufische Geschichte, 2006), 43–58 at 45–47.

<sup>32</sup> Denicke, *Die Brakteaten*, 1:21. The specimen found in Bourg-Saint-Christophe is in the Cabinet des Médailles de Lyon and discussed by Peter Berghaus, "Le trésor de Bourg-Saint-Christophe (Ain)," *Revue Numismatique* 16 (1954): 79–91, pl. I–IV at 80.



Figure 8. Bracteate of Duke Henry the Lion and Clementia, ca. 1150.  
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon. © Lyon MBA. Photo: Martial Couderette.

for issuing this coin type can be understood from his political activities at this time. In 1151, Henry left Lüneburg in order to claim Bavaria. The twelfth-century chronicler Helmold of Bosau, who knew Henry well, writes that in preparation for this military campaign the duke assigned Count Adolf of Holstein (d. 1164) to guard over his Slavic lands and the territories north of the River Elbe. Henry's wife, called the "duchess, lady Clementia," remained in Lüneburg, with Count Adolf, who was in charge and dutifully served her.<sup>33</sup> According to Helmold, Adolf held custody over the lands, yet it was to the duchess that the Abodrite ruler Niklot turned in 1151 for help in enforcing the payment of taxes to him by other Slavic tribes.<sup>34</sup> Clearly Clementia was considered the highest

**33** "Commisit igitur dux custodiam terrae Slavorum atque Nordalbingorum comiti nostro compositisque rebus in Saxonia profectus est cum milicia, ut reciperet ducatum Bawariae. Porro ductrix, domna Clementia, remansit Lunenburg, fuitque comes clarissimus in domo ducis et officiosus in obsequio ductricis paterque consilii." Helmold von Bosau, *Slawenchronik*, ed. and trans. Heinz Stoob (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 248. Henry was probably absent between January and September 1151, although he might occasionally have returned to Lüneburg.

**34** "in diebus autem, quibus dux aberat, venit Niclotus princeps terrae Obotritorum ad domnam Clementiam ductricem Lunenburg et conquestus est in facie eius at amicorum ducis, Kycini et Circipani paulatim rebellare ceperint et obniti tributis iuxta morem persolvendis." Von Bosau, *Slawenchronik*, 250; Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 77; and Bettina Elpers, *Regieren, Erziehen, Bewahren. Mütterliche Regentschaften im Hochmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003), 204.

authority in the absence of the duke and therefore the appropriate person to address. And indeed, she took action, sending Count Adolf along with Niklot to support him. In 1154 the duchess acted again in Henry's absence. That year, Clementia sent Gerold, her husband's chaplain, to Oldenburg to occupy the episcopal see upon the death of the previous bishop.<sup>35</sup> A decision of this type is clear evidence of active rulership on the part of the duchess.

The exact protocol and manner of appointment by which Clementia and other noblewomen came to rule during their husbands' absence remains unclear. In some sources husbands explicitly appointed their wives as regents. For example, before departing on crusade in 1095, Count Robert II of Flanders (r. 1093–1111) referred to Clemence of Burgundy (r. 1096–1133) in a letter as: "My wife named Clemence, who was put in charge of all my land and with it all my rights during my absence."<sup>36</sup> Robert had stated explicitly that Clemence should rule over his territories in his stead. Similarly, a letter by Count Stephen of Blois together with a reference by Orderic Vitalis attest that Stephen's wife Adela held full comital authority during his stay in the Holy Land between 1097 and 1100.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, the moment women ruled in place of the men offered an excellent opportunity to communicate joint rulership. Adela did so by employing her husband's seal on charters she signed, while Clementia and Henry issued coins as visual reminders of their joint rule, which was meant to underscore unity and ducal stability.<sup>38</sup> Henry's absence warranted such a message since opponents were always eager to impinge on his authority and territory. To the duke, transferring and sharing authority with a woman was a strategy with which he would have been familiar from his youth. After his father Henry the Proud died, his mother Gertrud and maternal grandmother Richenza acted as regents until the young duke had come of age.<sup>39</sup>

Just as with his first consort, the iconography of the later bracteate on which Henry is represented with Matilda should be understood within the context of the transfer of ducal authority from Henry to his wife. Matilda also would have been well acquainted with this form of rulership since she had witnessed how her mother ruled as a regent when Henry II was otherwise engaged and how Eleanor frequently travelled to act as her husband's deputy in Anjou and Maine.<sup>40</sup> What is more, on many occasions Eleanor even took Matilda and her other daughters with her, and so they would have learned

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**35** Von Bosau, *Slawenchronik*, 272.

**36** "uxor mea nomine Clementia quam mee et omnibus quecumque juris mei erant vice mea dum dicerem prefeceram." Cited in Thérèse De Hemptinne, "Les épouses des croisés et pèlerins flamands aux XIe et XIIe siècles. Exemple des comtesse de Flandre Clémence et Sibylle," in *Autour de la première croisade. Actes des Colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, Clermond-Ferrand, 22–25 juin 1995* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 83–95 at 89.

**37** Kimberly A. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (c. 1067–1137)* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2007), 96.

**38** LoPrete, *Adela of Blois*, 96.

**39** Elpers, *Erziehen, Regieren*, 79–97.

**40** Ralph V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 150–55.



at first hand the strategies employed by their mother as Eleanor exercised authority across different territories.<sup>41</sup> The bracteate would have constituted a suitable means to communicate transfer of authority on the eve of Henry's departure to the Holy Land in January 1172. Although we do not have such a direct, contemporary statement as that noted above by Robert of Flanders to his wife Clemence, the event was narrated ca. 1210 by Arnold of Lübeck in his *Chronica Slavorum*:

So he [Henry] managed his affairs, thinking about leaving for Jerusalem, and put his land under the tutelage of Archbishop Wichmann of Magdeburg, attested by the aristocrats of his land who travelled with him. [...] And none of the prominent men stayed behind, except Eckbert of Wolfenbüttel, who was appointed by the duke as head of his whole household, yet who was mainly assigned in the service of Lady Duchess Matilda. [...] She remained at Brunswick during the time the duke was on pilgrimage, as she was pregnant and she gave birth to a daughter Richenza. [...] Henry of Lüneburg and the aforementioned Eckbert served her, because they were faithful and honoured the duke's household.<sup>42</sup>

Why does Arnold appear to downplay Matilda's role in this passage concerned with Henry the Lion? It is possible that the author wanted to foreground that Henry was married, or that he left behind a well-organized duchy, or perhaps that an heir to the duchy was on its way. Matilda's body is framed as maternal rather than as a ruler, but this does not mean that the part of mother is the only one she had to play. Wichmann's tutelage should not be taken at face value, since the nature of his duties as regent as well as his relationship with Henry are not at all clear. Even if we were to accept Arnold's remark that the bishop gained temporary control over Saxony, this would not exclude Matilda's involvement in such affairs. The support the duchess received from Eckbert of Wolfenbüttel and Henry of Lüneburg was likely to have been similar to what they would have offered the duke. While this reference to Matilda suggests that she played an important role during her husband's absence, in his chronicle Arnold clearly was interested in presenting the duke in the most favourable light by emphasizing his power (which included force and violence), honour, and piety. Of course, Henry the Lion would have applauded this kind of image-building, but the narrative would always be that of Arnold, abbot of the monastery of St. John at Lübeck. By contrast, the image on the coin was sanctioned by the duke himself at a specific moment in time, that is, before he journeyed to the Holy Land and it enabled him to inform all that the authority within the duchy,

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<sup>41</sup> Bowie, *The Daughters*, 35–38.

<sup>42</sup> "Ordinatis igitur rebus suis, de profectioe Ierosolimatana artius cogitare cepit, et terre sue tutelam Wichmanno archiepiscopo Magdeburgensi consignans nobiliores terre itineris sui socios fecit. [...] Et non remansit quisquam maiorum, excepto Eckberto de Vulfelesbotele quem constituit dux super omnem familiam suam, maxime tamen deputatus est in ministerium domne ducisse Mechtildis [...]. Manebat autem in Brunewich omni tempore quo dux peregrinatus est, quia tunc pregnans erat, ediditque filiam nomine Rikenzam dictam. [...] Ministrabant ei Henricus de Luneburg et Eckbertus memoratus, eo quod ipse fidelis et inclitus haberetur in omni domo ducis." Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, 12.

centred on Brunswick as its most important place of residence, was and would remain in ducal hands even when the duke himself was temporarily away. If the dearth of contemporary written documents make it unclear how exactly Matilda exercised such authority, the coin type discussed here makes it more than evident that her presence at Brunswick mattered greatly. As such, this artefact is an important witness to the image the ducal couple wished to project.

In order to understand the communicative impact of this coin, we must return to where we started: the location where the hoard of coins was found. The specimens with the representation of Duke Henry and Duchess Matilda were discovered near the Aegidius monastery, and it is safe to assume that more coins than the sixty-three found there were originally issued. Like Henry the Lion's other coin types, it is likely to have been used in his northern Saxon lands located between the rivers Elbe and Weser, where the coins would have been a valid means of payment.<sup>43</sup> Rather than assuming that coins were targeted at the widest possible viewership, the regional dispersion indicates that messages were aimed at an audience that was closest to the ducal house.<sup>44</sup> Henry and Matilda followed an established pattern; precisely the elite people who were connected to the ducal house and were in the position to use money needed to understand that even though the duke was away, the natural order of things was preserved.

### Making Impressions: The Sway of Seals

Unlike Henry the Lion, Matilda is not known to have impressed her image onto wax. This fits the pattern for twelfth-century Germany, where fewer noblewomen sealed documents than in England and France.<sup>45</sup> If Matilda made use of Henry's seal, no document of this type has survived. An analysis of personal seals in the hands of Matilda's mother and sisters shows that these women followed an established iconography as they constructed and subsequently impressed their gendered and dynastic identity through insignia, dress, and legend. Before turning to Matilda's half-sisters Marie and Alix, I will briefly discuss their mother's seals, which may have served as a source of inspiration to her daughters. According to Elizabeth Brown, three different seals of Eleanor are known, although Kathleen Nolan suggested that the first and second seal result from the same matrix but were in different states of preservation.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For a map with places where hoards were found, see Kühn, *Die Brakteaten Heinrichs des Löwen*, 77; and Nau, "Münzen und Geld in der Stauferzeit," 3:95.

<sup>44</sup> See for a similar argument for the Middle Byzantine Period, Liz James, "Displaying Identity and Power? The Coins of Byzantine Empresses between 804 and 1204," in *Medieval Coins and Seals*, 189–210 at 197.

<sup>45</sup> Stieldorf, "Die Siegel der Herrscherinnen," 6–7.

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1–54 at 20–27, figs. 1.1 (seals from 1199 and 1200), 1.2 (seal from 1152) and 1.3 (seal before December 19, 1154); and Kathleen Nolan, *Queens in Stone*, 82.



After her marriage with King Louis VII of France was annulled in 1152, Eleanor issued a single-sided ogival seal as duchess of the Aquitainians, as is evidenced by the legible part of the titulus (Figure 9).<sup>47</sup> The duchess is represented standing frontally, wearing a tight-fitted long dress with long hanging sleeve cuffs reaching almost to her ankles. In her right hand she holds a fleur-de-lis, while a dove is perched on her left.<sup>48</sup> Several authors have read the fleur-de-lis on Eleanor's seal as a reference to the Tree of Jesse, which was connected to motherhood and fertility in the Middle Ages and therefore a fitting emblem to signify dynastic continuity.<sup>49</sup> There is something to be said for this interpretation because insignia referred to specific duties, signifying the defence of land and people, and the sceptre designated the exercise of lordship, including justice. Seen in this light, it was among women's jobs to provide an heir, and the fleur-de-lis may have signalled this.

Another drawing made for Roger Gaignières shows what Eleanor's two-sided seal as queen of the English looked like, completing the details of surviving examples (Figure 10 and Figure 11 a–b).<sup>50</sup> This seal, which was of larger dimensions than the earlier one, needed to be turned to view both sides. Obverse and reverse present an identical image of the queen dressed in a tight-fitting long *bliaut*, a mantle covering both shoulders, and a barbette topped by a crown of three *points fleury*. Rather than an identifiable fleur-de-lis, Eleanor holds a branch of which the top petals have the shape of a fleur-de-lis. In her left hand the bird motif has been replaced by an orb surmounted by a cross topped with a dove. Elizabeth Brown has argued that the dove symbolized the wisdom and intelligence of Christian rulers; in the representational context of seals this interpretation is convincing.<sup>51</sup> Brown adds that this symbol of authority was appropriated from the seals of English monarchs, such as Edward the Confessor, Henry I, Stephen, and Henry II,

<sup>47</sup> Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered," 22, fig. 1.2 (seal from 1152, 25 x 73 mm, green wax on white cord).

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of the fleur-de-lis, see Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 129–30.

<sup>49</sup> Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Women in French Sigillographic Sources," 7; Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy*, 130; and Arnaud Bauduin, *Emblématique et pouvoir en Champagne: les sceaux des comtes de Champagne et de leur entourage (fin XIe–début XIVe siècle)* (Langres: Éditions Dominique Guéniot, 2012), 160.

<sup>50</sup> See also the depiction and analysis in Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered," 25, fig. 1.1 (seal of natural wax appended to the 1199 document; seal of green wax appended to the 1200 document, both measure, 54 x 96 mm). The same seal in green wax, albeit it damaged, can be found attached to a document from 1192–1193 (documented in J. Horace Round, ed., "Anjou: Part 1," *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France 918–1206* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1899), no. 1090). For an image of the seal, see Nicholas Vincent, "Aliénor, Reine d'Angleterre," *Aliénor d'Aquitaine*, ed. Martin Aurell, special issue, 303—*Arts, recherches et créations* no. 2 (2004), 59–63 at 62.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered," 23. When interpreting the bird as a hawk, for example as Slocum, *Liturgies in Honour*, 112, a negative reading is also possible. See Bedos-Rezak, "Women, Seals and Power," 76. Of different opinion is Werner Rösener, "Jagd, Rittertum und Fürstenhof im Hochmittelalter," in *Jagd und höfische Kultur im Mittelalter*, ed. Werner Rösener (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 123–48.

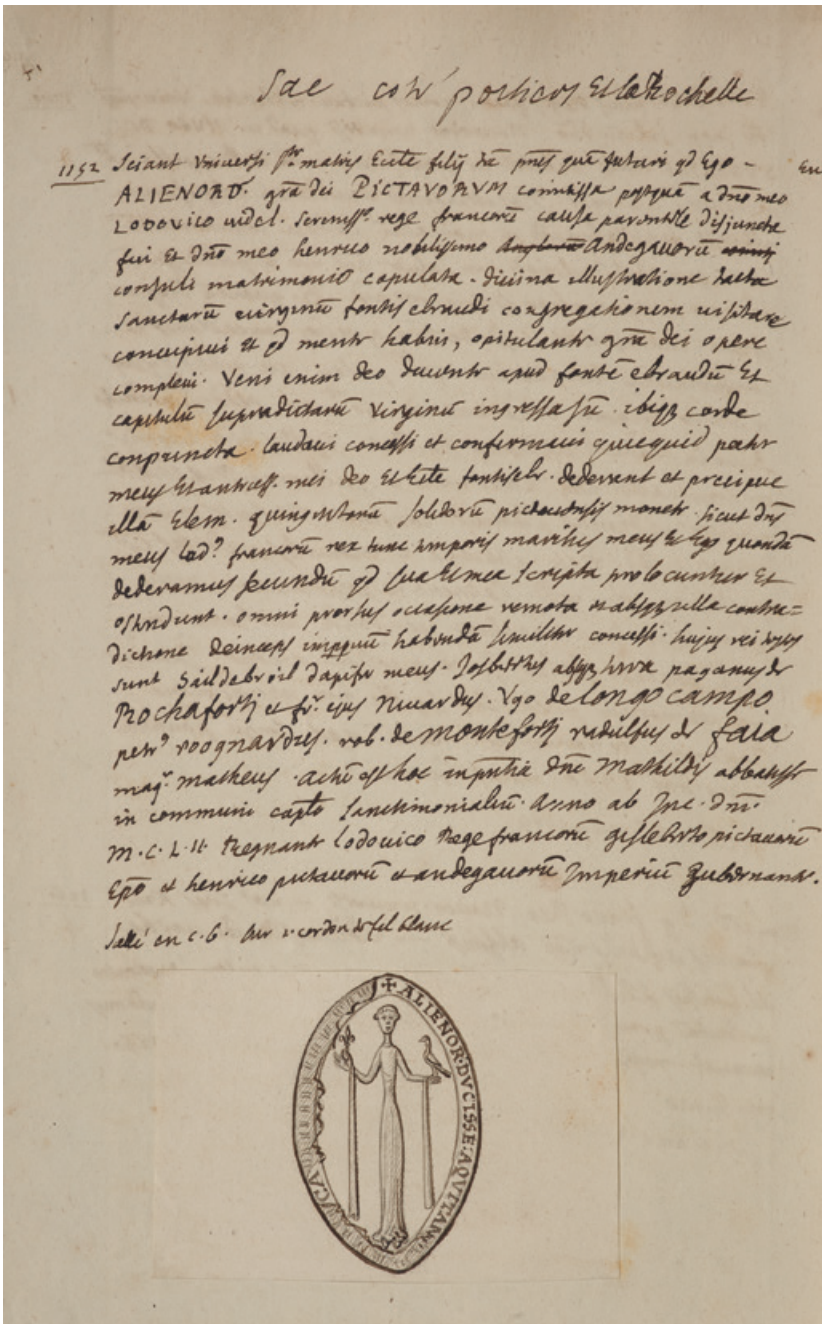


Figure 9. Seal Eleanor of Aquitaine, 1152. *Chartularium monasterii Fontis-Ebraaldi*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, MS lat. 5480 (1), fol. 486. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

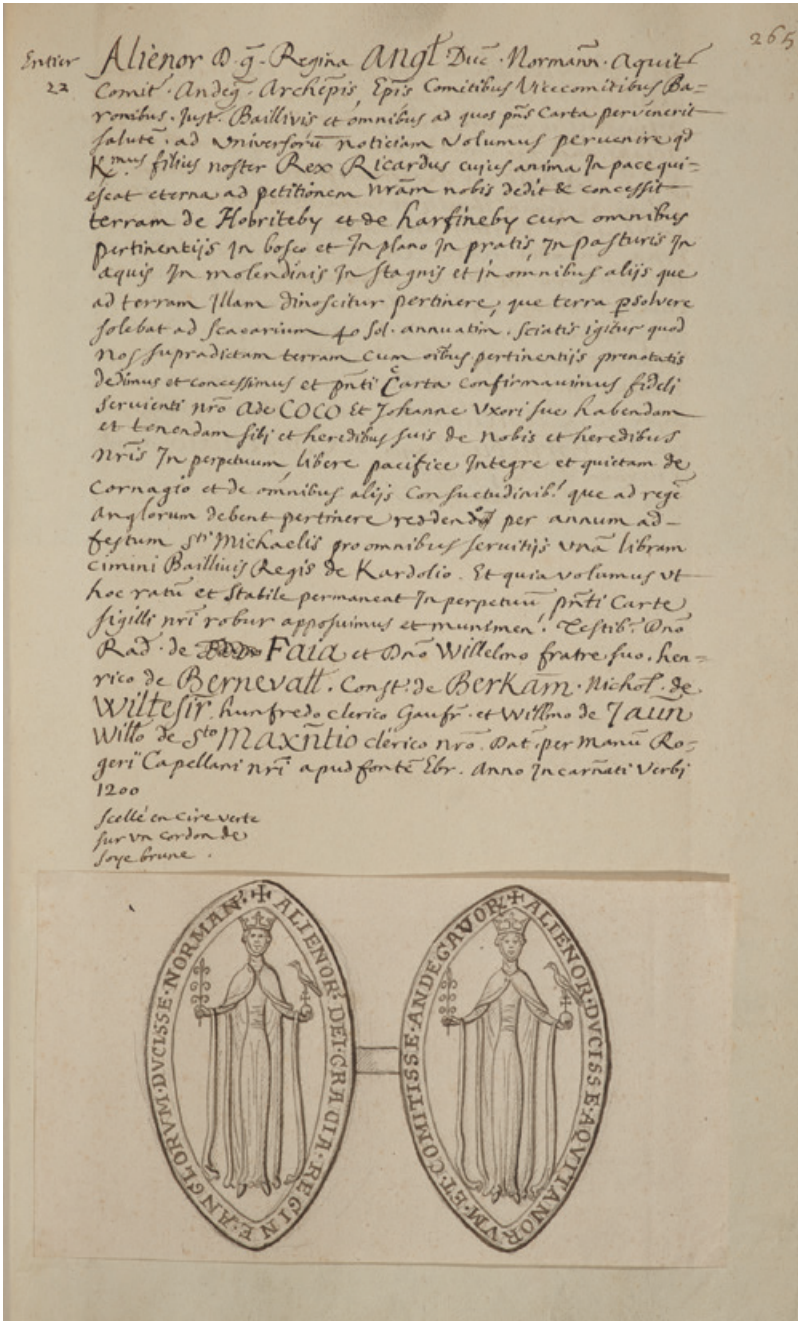


Figure 10. Seal of Eleanor of Aquitaine 1199. *Chartularium monasterii Fontis-Ebraldi*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, MS lat. 5480 (1), fol. 265. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.





Figure 11a–b. Double-sided seal of Eleanor of Aquitaine, 1199. Paris, Archives nationales.  
Photo: Archives nationales, Paris.

showing Eleanor’s ambition to possess as her own the English sigillography that expressed power and authority.<sup>52</sup> Even though a visual hierarchy between front and back is absent, Gagnières’ drawing suggests that the obverse was meant to be the side that contains the legend + *ALIENOR DEI GRATIA REGINE ANGLORVM DVCISSE NORMAN*’ (Eleanor, by the grace of God, queen of the English, duchess of the Normans), while the reverse legend designates her duchess of Aquitaine and countess of Anjou. Did Eleanor’s daughters follow their mother’s seal designs?

Marie of Champagne (r. 1166–1198), eldest daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine and King Louis VII, held two single-sided ogival seals which she used from 1166, when she married Count Henry the Liberal (r. 1152–1181), until her death in 1198. Although the seals, of which five wax impressions survive, stem from two different matrices (the second is somewhat larger and its design less refined), their iconography and legend are identical.<sup>53</sup> On a reddish wax seal attached to a document issued in 1166, Marie is represented wearing an elegant *bliaut* with long sleeves and a mantle that is draped over her shoulders (Figure 12). As such she follows the fashion of her mother and other noblewomen of her time. Like Eleanor on her first seal, Marie holds a bird in her left hand, while in her right a fleur-de-lis on a short rod is visible. In the seal’s legend she ties herself to her husband through whom she was able to claim her title and power as

<sup>52</sup> Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered,” 23; Nolan, *Queens in Stone*, 84.

<sup>53</sup> Bauduin, *Emblématique et pouvoir*, 140 and 154.



Figure 12. Seal of Countess Marie of Champagne, 1192. Archives départementales de l'Aube, coll. de sceaux détachés, 42 Fi 97. Photo: Archives départementales de l'Aube, Troyes. All rights reserved.

countess of Troyes. However, the first connection she establishes is with her father: + SIGILL[VM]. MARIE.REG[IS]. FRANCOR[VM]. FILIE.TRECENS[IVM]. COMITISE (Seal of Marie, daughter of the king of the Franks, countess of Troyes).<sup>54</sup> That she did so on both seals indicates that the importance of the repeated confirmation of blood ties between Marie and her father, even long after Louis's death in 1180.

The same message appears to have been communicated on the seal of Alix of Blois (r. 1164–ca. 1199), the second daughter of Eleanor and Louis VII, and wife of Count Thibaud V of Blois (r. 1152–1191), who was the brother of Henry the Liberal. Combining the fragments of her two known seal impressions reveals that the countess stood in a three-quarters contrapposto pose and was dressed in a long, elegant *bliaut* with a fur-lined mantle covering her shoulders (Figure 13 and Figure 14). Her hair is covered by a veil and wimple. Like her mother, Alix carries a branch topped with a fleur-de-lis in her right hand, while a bird is perched on her left hand. The legend reads: [SIGI] LLVM [... FR]ANC [COMITI]SSE B[LESENSIS].<sup>55</sup> The name “Adelicia” is now missing, but would have been part of the original inscription. The presence of “franc”—“francie” or “francorum”—makes no sense without the word “filie.” Indeed, a drawing accompanying

<sup>54</sup> Bauduin, *Emblématique et pouvoir*, 140 and nos. 29 and 30; and Melanie Panse, “Sichtbare Macht. Herrschaftsinszenierung in Abwesenheit der Kreuzfahrer,” *Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung. Zeitschrift des Mediävistenverbandes* 21 (2016): 40–60 at 46–48.

<sup>55</sup> Nielen, *Corpus des sceaux*, 152.



Figure 13. Seal of Alix of Blois, 1187. Paris, Archives nationales, D 955.  
Photo: Archives nationales, Paris.



Figure 14. Seal of Alix of Blois, 1197. Paris, Archives nationales, St 8596.  
Photo: Archives nationales, Paris.



Figure 15a–b. Double-sided seal matrix of Joanna Plantagenet, 1196–1199. London, The British Museum, 1897,0508.1. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

a transcription of a charter issued by Alix in 1199, as recorded by Gaignières, testifies that the legend contained: *FILIE LODO[...]* FRANC.<sup>56</sup> The complete legend would thus have been: “Seal of Alix, daughter of Louis, king of the Franks, countess of Blois.”

The *filia* reference occurred with some frequency on elite women’s seals, as is also testified to by the seal matrices of Marie’s and Alix’s half-sister Joanna.<sup>57</sup> The silver matrices, made in 1196 when she was married to the count of Toulouse, reveal two delicately carved figural representations in low relief (Figure 15 a–b).<sup>58</sup> On the obverse,

<sup>56</sup> *Chartularium monasterii Fontis-Ebraldi, in dioecesi Pictaviensi; quod Rogerius de Gaignieres partim ex chartis, partim ex magno ejusdem abbatae chartulario describi curavit.* Paris, BnF, MS lat. 5480 (1), fol. 238v. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10038943r/f250.image>

<sup>57</sup> Bedos-Rezak, “Women, Seals and Power,” 68; Bedos-Rezak, “Medieval Women in French Sigillographic Sources,” 4, with examples from thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The *filia* designations usually indicate female heirs, but that is not the case here, see Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy*, 134, 135 and Appendix I.

<sup>58</sup> Two-sided seal matrix of Joanna Plantagenet, 1196–1199, 86.5 × 47.5 mm. *Source:* London, British Museum, 1897, 0508.1. *Photograph:* British Museum. The matrices were first described in detail by F. Pottier, “Sceau inédit de Jeanne d’Angleterre, comtesse de Toulouse,” *Bulletin Archéologique et Historique de la Société Archéologique de Tarn-et-Garonne* 5 (1877): 261–70; L. Douët d’Arcq, “Deux

Joanna is shown standing. She appears as an elegantly dressed queen wearing a crown of four *points fleury* and holding her mantle cord with her left hand while prominently displaying a fleur-de-lis in her right. Her long *bliaut* is cinched by a narrow belt decorated with tiny dots that are meant to evoke precious stones. Her mantle falls open, showing its ermine lining. The representations of costly fur and gemstones underscore Joanna's high standing. The legend, + S REGINE IOHE FILIE QVONDAM H REGIS ANGLORUM (Seal of Queen Joanna, daughter of Henry, the former king of the English), is crucial for a better understanding of this woman's position. Her royal title could refer to Joanna's former status as queen of Sicily, to her royal status through her father, or both. The former option seems probable since in her testament of 1199 (discussed in the final chapter), she would make a donation to Fontevraud to commemorate the anniversaries of the long-dead "king of Sicily" and herself, indicating that she still connected herself to her first husband. Moreover, it was not uncommon for widowed women to continue using their deceased husband's titles: Joanna's grandmother Matilda still called herself empress, for example, long after she had returned to England following the death of her first husband.<sup>59</sup> Yet it is also possible that the reference to Joanna's regal status refers to her royal birth, especially if we consider that she explicitly connects herself to her deceased father in the legend on one side of the seal.

The reverse of Joanna's seal matrix tells a different story, both in image and word. Here the legend proclaims her current connections, defining her status as duchess of Narbonne, countess of Toulouse and marchioness of Provence (+ S IOHE DVCISSE NARB COMTISSE THOL MARCHISIE PROV). Enthroned yet uncrowned, Joanna wears a long dress draped in thick folds, and she holds her mantle cord with her right hand (which would become the left, once impressed on wax) while proffering an impressive cross with the other. The equal-armed cross explicitly connects the princess to her Toulousan marital family, thereby underlining her second marriage. An early depiction of this Greek cross with three balls decorating the outer ends of each bar can be found on the lead *bullae* of her father-in-law Count Raymond V (d. 1194), who also employed a Latin cross decorated with similar balls on the equestrian side of his wax seals. The use of this Latin cross was continued by Joanna's husband Raymond VI (d. 1222) and her son Raymond VII (d. 1249), suggesting that this Toulousan (or Occitan) cross was considered a family emblem.<sup>60</sup> Her folding throne, though uncommon for women, resembles the obverse of

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empreintes de sceaux du XIIe siècle," *Revue des Sociétés Savantes de la France et de l'Étranger* 6 (1878): 114–17; and Macé, *La majesté et la croix*, 219–32 at 229 (giving the date of 1196).

<sup>59</sup> Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy*, 134. See also Ricca (or Ryksa) of Poland, who first married Alfonso VII of León-Castile through whom she received the title of empress; she continued using this title when she married Raymond V of Provence. Maria Dembińska, "A Polish Princess: Empress of Spain and Countess of Provence in the 12th Century," in *Frauen in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Lebensbedingungen—Lebensnormen—Lebensformen. Beiträge zu einer internationalen Tagung am Fachbereich Geschichtswissenschaften der Freien Universität Berlin, 18. bis 21. Februar 1987*, ed. Werner Affeldt (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1990), 283–90 at 288.

<sup>60</sup> Laurent Macé, *Les comtes de Toulouse et leur entourage XIIe–XIIIe siècles. Rivalités, alliances et jeux de pouvoir* (Toulouse: Privat, 2000), 298 and images on 432–33.



the round seal of Joanna's mother-in-law Constance, who is also depicted bare-headed and seated, albeit on a rectangular chair-throne.<sup>61</sup>

On Constance's seal, she holds in front of her chest a Toulousan cross of different size and style from Joanna's, and with her left hand displays a lily-topped orb.<sup>62</sup> This side of Constance's two-sided seal affirms her royalty, as daughter of Louis VI of France and sister of Louis VII, and its round shape was probably inspired by the latter's seal, which also served as a model for that of Count Raymond V, Constance's spouse.<sup>63</sup> Joanna's husband Raymond VI continued this royal symbolism on his seal, having himself depicted on a throne, holding a sword and flanked by the sun and moon; the latter are also present on his parents' seals, but absent from Joanna's.<sup>64</sup> Yet, where her husband—following both his father and his mother—chose equestrian imagery for the reverse of his lead and wax seals, Joanna's "royal side" represented her as a standing queen. It was this side of her seal that personalized it by connecting the queen to her natal family; it thus showed her to be more than just the wife of a count, who may have been influential but was of lower birth than Joanna as daughter of a king. The matrices of Joanna's seal do not only reflect political considerations of the Plantagenets and Raimondins; they are also rare and precious sources representing key moments in the her life: her royal lineage, her marriages, and perhaps even her motherhood, if we accept that the fleur-de-lis refers to this.<sup>65</sup> Joanna's royal lineage through her father was also emphasized in 1208 by Raymond VI, by then long a widower, when he issued a charter in which he represented their son as "R. filium nostrum, quem habimus de regina Johanna, filia Henricis Regis quondam Angliae" (R[aymond VII] our son, whom we have with Queen Joanna, daughter of Henry former king of the English).<sup>66</sup>

There is no doubt that Joanna's matrices show a clear dynastic awareness in both word and image. But were wax seals ever made from them? Her matrices were found in the late nineteenth century during excavations at the ruins of the former Cistercian monastery of Grandselve (dép. Tarn-et-Garonne), about fifty kilometres north-east of Toulouse. How her seal matrix, and that of her son Raymond VII, ended up at Grandselve is an open

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**61** For equestrian iconography, see Jasperse, "To Have and to Hold," 83–104.

**62** Kathleen Nolan identifies it as a cross rather than a lily; *Queens in Stone*, 86–87.

**63** William W. Clark, "Signed, Sealed and Delivered: The Patronage of Constance de France," in *Magistra Doctissima: Essays in Honor of Bonnie Wheeler*, ed. Dorsey Armstrong, Ann W. Astell, and Howell Chickering (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 201–16 at 205; and Macé, *La majesté et la croix*, 130–39.

**64** An image of the comital seal of Raymond VI of Toulouse can be found at <https://paratge.wordpress.com/2015/01/25/les-sceaux-de-simon-de-montfort-un-itineraire-politique/>. A plaster cast is kept at Paris, Archives nationales de France, sc/D 743.

**65** Macé, *La majesté et la croix*, 225; and Douët d'Arcq, "Deux empreintes de sceaux," 114–17.

**66** Laurent Macé, "Raymond VII of Toulouse: The Son of Queen Joanne, 'Young Count' and Light of the World," in *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine: Literature and Society in Southern France Between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 137–56 at 141.

question.<sup>67</sup> The counts of Toulouse, especially it seems Raymond V (r. 1148–1194), had a long-lasting relationship with this Cistercian monastery, which had been founded in 1114.<sup>68</sup> The monastery also sought aid from the English King Henry I, although the first evidence that support might have been given only appears in the 1170s with Richard the Lionheart, who granted it protection and trading privileges.<sup>69</sup> Joanna could have been familiar with the monastery of Grandselve through both her natal and marital families. Further, she might have been involved in some of her husband's dealings with the monastery, especially as they concerned salt from Agen, belonging to her dowry land.<sup>70</sup> A 1261 *inspeximus* by Vincent, archbishop of Tours, confirmed that Joanna, "formerly queen of Sicily, now duchess of the March, countess of Toulouse, marchioness of Provence," had allocated rent from her salt pans at Agen for their kitchen of Fontevraud.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps Joanna employed her seal on this occasion. The traces of white and green wax found on the matrices by Abbot Pottier indicate that they were indeed used.<sup>72</sup> Yet it also possible that she and her son followed the kingly practice of gifting seals to a monastery on their deathbeds with the expectation that the matrices would be melted down to be reused for church furnishings.<sup>73</sup> Another possibility has been offered by Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, who

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**67** According to F. Pottier the matrix of the seal of Joanna's son Raymond VII was also found there; see Pottier, "Sceau inédit de Jeanne d'Angleterre," 267. I have not been able to trace the current whereabouts of this matrix, and Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak informed me in personal correspondence that she has no knowledge of its existence. Raymond VII's seal is also an enigma to Macé, *La majesté et la croix*, 221n814, where he discusses how Joanna's matrices may have ended up at Grandselve.

**68** The earliest charter dates to around 1128–1130 and concerns the donation of land by Count Alfons; see Laurent Macé, *Catalogues raimondins. Actes des comtes de Toulouse, ducs de Narbonne et marquis de Provence (1112–1229)*, Sources de l'histoire de Toulouse 1 (Toulouse: Archives municipales de Toulouse, 2008), no. 14. The majority of privileges and grants, however, were given by his son Raymond V.

**69** Nicholas Vincent, "A Letter to King Henry I from Toulouse," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 63 (2012): 331–45. Vincent also provides references to publications on the early and subsequent history of Grandselve.

**70** Macé, *Catalogues raimondins*, nos. 276 and 282.

**71** J. Horace Round, ed., "Anjou: Part 1," *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France 918–1206* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1899), no. 1104. *British History Online* [www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/france/918-1206/pp372-394](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/france/918-1206/pp372-394); Colette Bowie, "To Have and Have Not: The Dower of Joanna Plantagenet, Queen of Sicily (1177–1189)," in *Queenship in the Mediterranean: Negotiating the Role of the Queen in Medieval and Early Modern Eras*, ed. Elena Woodacre (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 27–50 at 38.

**72** Pottier, "Sceau inédit de Jeanne," 266.

**73** Michael Andersen, "Medieval Seal Matrices Found at Castles and Castle Mounds in Denmark: What Does Archaeology Tell About their Use?," in *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, ed. Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson, British Museum Research Publication 168 (London: British Museum, 2008), 71–76 at 73; Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, "L'au-delà du soi. Métamorphoses sigillaires en Europe médiévale," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 49 (2006): 337–58.

suggested that the matrices could have been presented by Raymond in order to compensate for the damage the abbey had suffered during the war with the French king.<sup>74</sup> Its abbot, Elie Guarin (d. ca. 1232), persuaded Raymond to sign the treaty of Meaux-Paris (1229), in which it was stipulated that the count had to pay 1,000 marks to the abbey.<sup>75</sup> Payment in kind rather than in coin was not unheard of. In the cartulary of St. Loup at Troyes, for example, the abbot noted that Marie of Champagne offered her signet ring as compensation for an infraction against the abbey.<sup>76</sup>

How often Joanna's sister Leonor, who lived in Iberia but remained well connected to the Occitan speaking world, made use of her seal is equally difficult to establish. Leonor's pointed oval two-sided wax seal is only known through a charter from April 1179 (kept in Toledo) to which the sole surviving example is still appended.<sup>77</sup> However, a recently discovered charter issued by Leonor in November 1179 (originally kept at the Hospital del Rey in Burgos) in all likelihood had a wax seal attached to it, as is suggested by the fold at the bottom of the parchment (*plica*) meant to strengthen the parchment so that a seal could be appended.<sup>78</sup> So there were at least two occasions on which the queen's seal was added to documents that were issued in her name. While the queen is mentioned in the majority of her husband Alfonso VIII's charters,<sup>79</sup> only the two charters from 1179 state that the queen validated them with her own hand, which can be read as a reference to the wax seal and/or to the *signo rodado*, which is the round seal drawn onto both charters.<sup>80</sup> In the sealed charter at Toledo, Leonor confirms and extends the endowment of the altar of St. Thomas Becket in Toledo Cathedral, which had been founded by Count Nuño Pérez de Lara (Alfonso's former tutor) and his wife Teresa. The queen's confirmation contributed to the spread of the Becket cult, and this document clearly testifies to Leonor's involvement: in its *intitulatio* her name is given, unusually, before that of her

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**74** Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak informed me about this via personal communication.

**75** Karl Joseph von Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles: d'après les documents originaux*, 12 vols. (Paris: Adrien le Clere, 1872), 8:229; and Macé, *Catalogues raimondins*, nos. 552 and 553.

**76** Theodore Evergates, *Henry the Liberal: Count of Champagne, 1127–1181* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 245n9.

**77** Both charter and seal are in Archivo Capitular de Toledo, A.2.G.1.5. For the text of the charter and its translation, see Kay Brainerd Slocum, *Liturgies in Honour of Thomas Becket* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004), 110–11.

**78** José Manuel Cerda Costabal and Félix Martínez Llorente, "Un document inédito y desconocido de la cancillería de la reina Leonor Plantagenet," *España Medieval* 42 (2019): 59–91 (with images of charter and transcription).

**79** Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 3 vols. (Madrid: CSIC, 1960). Nor are there any references to Leonor's seal in José Manuel Lizoain Garrido, *Documentación del monasterio de Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)* (Burgos: Garrido, 1985).

**80** The Toledo charter says "Ego Alienor, Dei gratia regina Castelle, propria manu hanc catam robo et confirm," whereas the Burgos charter says "Ego Alienor, regina, que hanc cartam fieri iussi manu propria robo et confirm." See Slocum, *Liturgies in Honour*, 110–11; and Cerda Costabal and Martínez Llorente, "Un document inédito," 86.

husband.<sup>81</sup> Her primary role is further supported by the eschatocol, which, together with Leonor's *signo rodado*, signals that the queen was the driving force behind this donation.<sup>82</sup> The slits in the Toledo charter offer evidence that only the yellow-brown wax seal of Leonor, and not that of her husband, was appended on a leather strip. Although reproductions of her seal imply that it was impressed on one side only, both sides bear slightly different depictions of the queen.<sup>83</sup> Leonor's seal also is the earliest surviving specimen connected to a Castilian or Leonese queen.<sup>84</sup> This means that Leonor had no female model from her marital family available to copy.

On the obverse of the seal, Leonor wears a slender-fitting *bliaut*, a long mantle, and a crown on her veiled head; she is depicted with a bird perched on her left hand in exactly the same fashion as her mother on two surviving early specimens (Figure 16 a-b). It is not clear what the queen is doing with her right hand, possibly pointing her index finger in a gesture of command. The size of Leonor's seal, the depiction of the bird, and the almost identical images on both sides suggest that the Castilian queen modelled her seal after those of her mother. Unfortunately, it is now impossible to read the legend on either side of her seal, but in Julio González's 1960 edition of the charters of Alfonso VIII, he provided a drawing of the obverse with the legend + SIGILLVM: REGINE: ALIENOR.<sup>85</sup>

At first sight the representation of Leonor on the reverse is the same as the obverse, yet her standing pose and gestures have shifted slightly so the mantle is draped differently, making it flow, and here the crown with its three *points fleury* resembles that of her mother. By analogy with contemporary seals of other elite women it seems that she holds her mantle cord with her left hand, a sign of high rank. The object in her right hand is again difficult to interpret; it could be a flower, but also a plant or small tree.<sup>86</sup> We already saw that Leonor's sister Joanna employed the fleur-de-lis on her seal, and so did their half-sister Marie of Champagne. In all these cases the flower indicated high status, authority and, at times, power, and it is easy to imagine that Leonor incorporated it in her seal in full knowledge of its use by Anglo-Norman and French queens and aristocratic women. Based in part on the seals of Joanna and Marie de Champagne,

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**81** Cerda Costabal, "Leonor Plantagenet and the Cult of Thomas," in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket*, ed. Webster and Gelin, 133–45 at 137–38. This is also the case in the Burgos charter.

**82** Shannon L. Wearing, "Holy Donors, Mighty Queens: Imaging Women in the Spanish Cathedral Cartularies of the Long Twelfth Century," in *"Me fecit." Making Medieval Art (History)*, ed. Martin, 76–106 at 80–83.

**83** An exception is the drawing in González, where the reverse of the double seal is given including its legend: González, *El reino de Castilla*, 1:186, without references. Photographs of both sides were published for the first time in Jitske Jasperse, "Matilda, Leonor and Joanna: The Plantagenet Sisters and the Display of Dynastic Connections through Material Culture," *Journal of Medieval History* 43 (2017): 523–47.

**84** Serrano Coll, "Iconografía de género," 15–52.

**85** González, *El reino de Castilla*, 1:186.

**86** For the identification of the object as a sceptre, see Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile*, 44. Costabal, "Marriage of Alfonso VIII," 149, identifies it as a tree, a reference to the broom plant, *genista* or *plante genest* worn by Leonor's grandfather Geoffrey of Anjou.



Figure 16a-b. Double-sided seal of Queen Leonor of Castile, 1179. Archivo Capítular de Toledo, A.2.G.1.5. Author photo.

it is tempting to speculate that the titulus on Leonor's seal would have included the term *filia regis*, as did the inscription on two liturgical textiles (discussed in the final chapter). There certainly is sufficient space along the edges available for such an inscription, and Leonor's name could have been abbreviated like that of her sister. However, it is also possible that the legend on Leonor's seal mirrors that of her husband, thus reading + SIGILLVM: REGINE: ALIENOR (Seal of Queen Leonor) on the obverse and REGINA: CASTELLE (Queen of Castile) on the reverse.<sup>87</sup> While the complete inscriptions on her two-sided seal are uncertain, the shape, iconography, and size certainly give the impression that Leonor consciously referred to the seals of her mother to underscore her roots. This is confirmed by the absence of the castle that her husband employed on his two-sided lead seal from ca. 1175 onwards.

Insignia, dress, and inscriptions were crucial elements to coins' and seals' communicative powers. They could demonstrate an elite woman's royal descent, as well as her position as a royal and/or noble consort, widow, regent, and co-ruler. As such, these small artefacts allowed women like Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughters to display and assert the multiple experiences that shaped their identities. This self-fashioning was equally important for those connected to them by family ties (natal or marital), as

<sup>87</sup> "Alienor, Dei gratia regina Castelle," is how Leonor is referred to in the 1179 Toledo charter. This, however, does not necessarily mean that this exact phrasing was also used for her seal.

well as to their peers. In this respect, Elizabeth Brown's observation that "as is true of all mute objects, the seals' significance is not so easy to access" may be a bit too pessimistic.<sup>88</sup> Imitating the iconography employed by Eleanor and referring to their father in the legends, the seals of Marie, Alix, Joanna, and perhaps Leonor show that these objects played a crucial role in the representation of lineage that was closely connected to political claims. These small wax items were therefore mighty objects, expressing present authority in terms of kinship and heritage. But does this mean that coins and seals were the result of women's ability to act or that they otherwise supported women in the exercise of power? The answer to this question requires a nuanced analysis of each individual's context and her margin to act.

In Matilda's case, the coin type on which she is represented does not offer a straightforward testimony of her rule during Henry's absence. Yet, these small pieces of silver illustrate how much the royal daughter's presence mattered to the duke and this, in turn, must have given her leverage, especially with an heir on its way. As for Joanna, if our assessment were based solely on her surviving seal, it would be difficult to determine to what extent Joanna was able to impact other people's lives. However, the very existence of this seal—on which traces of wax have been found—tells us that she issued documents, attesting to her ability to confirm, deny, and negotiate matters of importance. Likewise, the power to make such decisions is manifested by the presence of Leonor's seal attached to a charter in which she placed the Becket altar in Toledo Cathedral under her protection. Both a symbolic and a legal representation of the queen, the seal functioned as a surrogate for Leonor. By imprinting it in wax, she strengthened and confirmed the act with her own hand. This was Leonor's way of keeping alive the endowment made by Alfonso's former tutor and his wife, with which she also sought to ensure that she and her husband would be commemorated perpetually. Far from mute items, these women's coins and seals invite us to respond to them as telling objects that give voice to the different ways by which the medieval elite sought to promote their positions, including their status as spouses as well as by means of their dynastic ties.

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**88** Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered," 20.

## Chapter 3

### DEVOTION AND DYNASTY ON PARCHMENT

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter, I argued that the coin type with the representation of Henry and Matilda should be interpreted as a visual communication of the unity and cooperation between the ducal couple who complemented each other. Stamped onto sheets of silver that were meant to be circulated, Matilda is positioned as co-ruler, who possibly acted as a regent during her husband's absence. Their unity is further highlighted, as this chapter will show, in two undated manuscripts, a psalter and a gospel book, made at the Benedictine monastery at Helmarshausen.<sup>1</sup> One thing that sets manuscripts apart from the coins, seals, and textiles discussed in this study is their complex nature as multiple-page artefacts that come to life by turning the leaves in order to comprehend the book's internal structure and its performative qualities. In the present chapter, however, my focus is on the personalized aspects of the two manuscripts, leaving the larger analysis of the complete volumes to more specialized studies.

In their psalter Henry and Matilda are represented together at the foot of the Crucifixion (Figure 17a).<sup>2</sup> The gospel book they donated to the Church of St. Blaise contains two portraits: one shows them as donors of the book, while the other portrays the couple as recipients of the crowns of eternal life (Figure 18b and Figure 21).<sup>3</sup> The psalter and gospel book connected with Henry and Matilda were personalized books and this partly explains their existence. By way of comparison, no surviving manuscripts can be connected to Matilda's mother Eleanor of Aquitaine, whose status as a patron of French literature and troubadours has been critically assessed in more recent scholarship.<sup>4</sup> And while there certainly is a case to be made for Matilda's half-sister Marie of Champagne as a literary patron who may have also been involved in her husband's donation of a gospel of John to Saint Loup at Troyes, no contemporary personalized books have survived.<sup>5</sup> Apart from the "booklet" (*quaterno*) in which the names of Alfonso

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1 For Helmarshausen see Ingrid Baumgärtner, ed., *Helmarshausen: Buchkultur und Goldschmiedekunst im Hochmittelalter* (Kassel: Euregioverlag, 2003).

2 Psalter, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 381, 11 fols. (fragment), 21 × 13 cm. The book is digitized [www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7892&CollID15&NStart=381](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7892&CollID15&NStart=381).

3 Gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, 226 fols., 34 × 25.5 cm. The book is partly digitized, <http://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=105-noviss-2&hi=Cod.%20Guelf.%20105%20Noviss.%202%CB%9A>.

4 Karen M. Broadhurst, "Henry II and Aliénor of Aquitaine. Patrons of Literature in French?," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 27 (1997): 53–84; and Ruth Harvey, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Troubadours," in *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine: Literature and Society in Southern France between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 101–14.

5 For Marie of Champagne's literary patronage, see John F. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," *Speculum* 36 (1961): 551–91. For the donation by Henry the Liberal, see Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, 101.





Figure 17a–b. Psalter of Henry and Matilda, Helmarshausen, 1170s. London, The British Library, Lansdowne MS 381, article 1, fols. 10v and 11r. Photo: © The British Library Board.





Figure 17a-b. (continued)

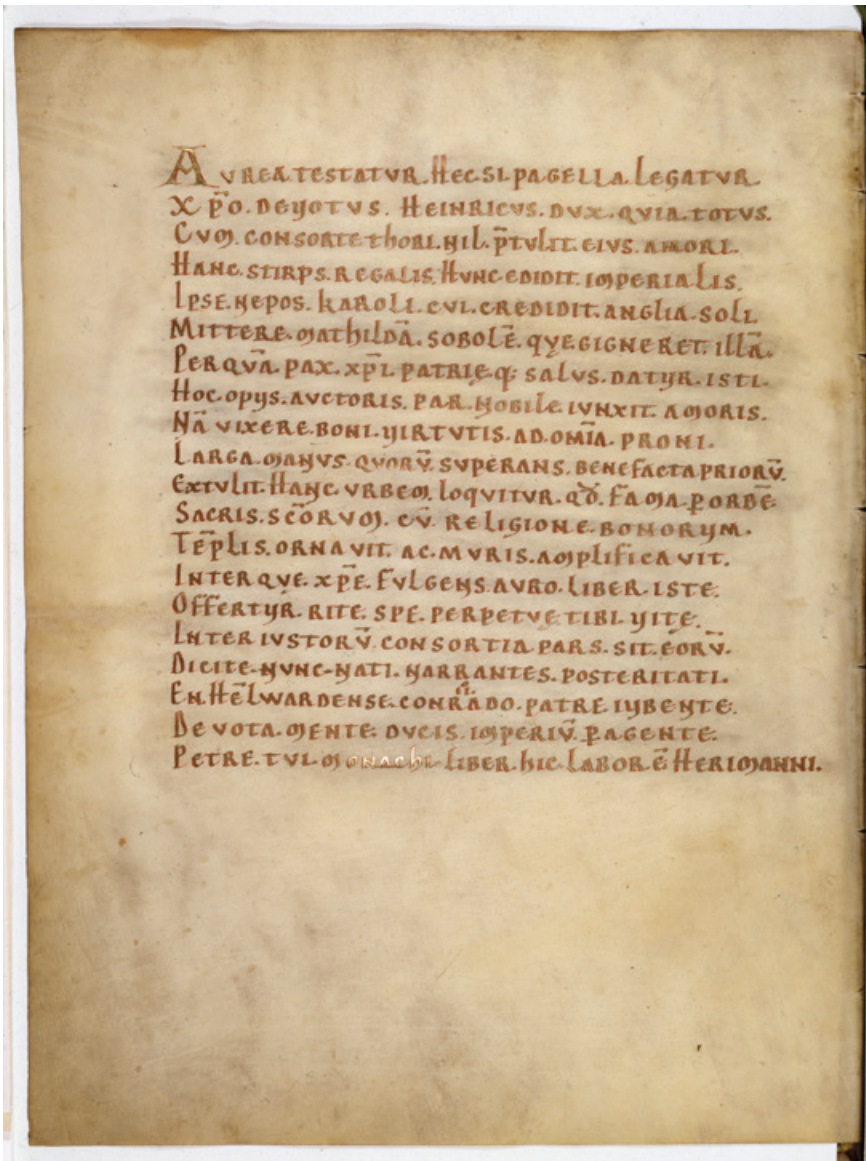


Figure 18a–b. Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, 1172–1176. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2<sup>o</sup>, fols. 4v and 19r.  
Photo: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.



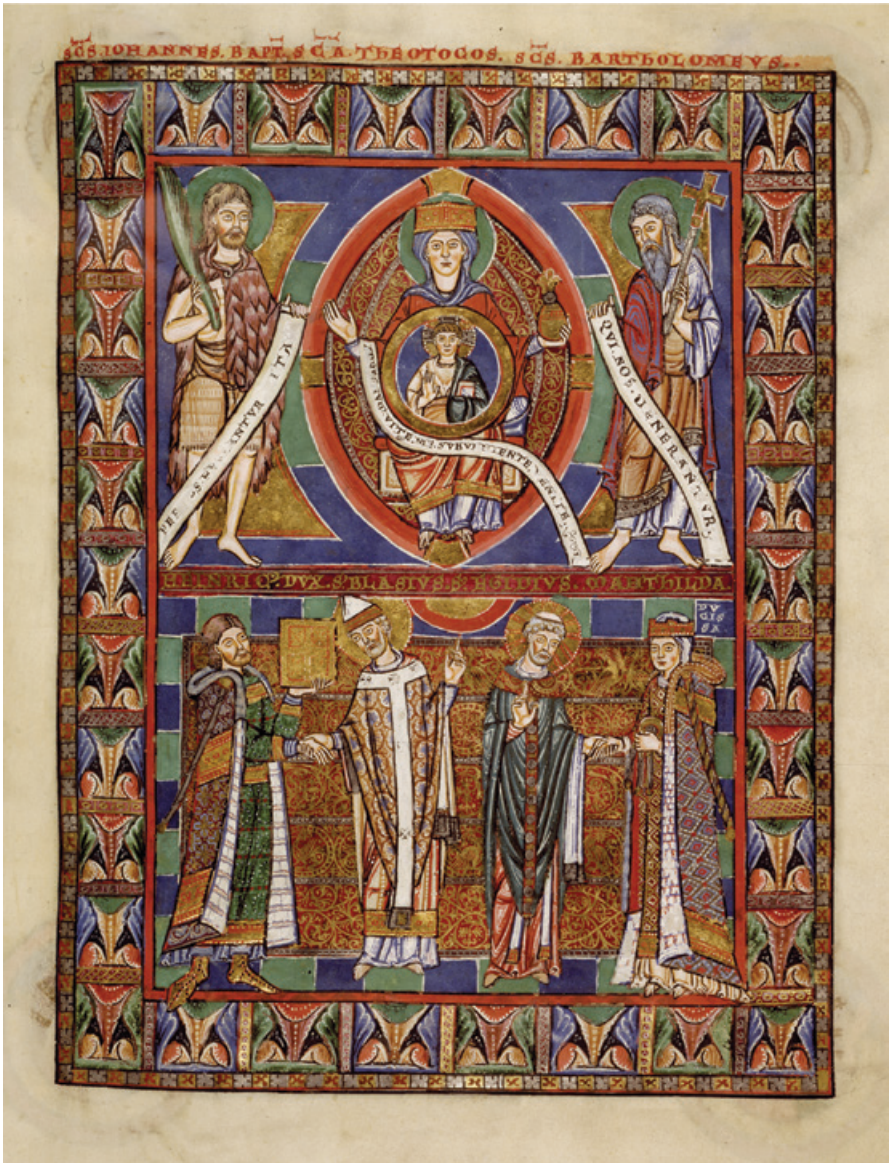


Figure 18a-b. (continued)



Figure 18c. Detail of Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda.

VIII's creditors are mentioned and that the king bequeathed to Leonor in his testament from December 1204, nothing is known about the books the queen owned and read, or donated to favoured religious institutions such as Las Huelgas.<sup>6</sup> Equally, no surviving manuscripts can be connected to Joanna, nor is any listed in her testament. Their grandmother Empress Matilda, however, donated books from her personal chapel to the abbey of Bec-Hellouin on her deathbed in 1167, confirming that manuscripts were owned and gifted by women.<sup>7</sup> On German soil, nothing is known about books owned or gifted by Clementia, Henry the Lion's first wife. But we do know that Duchess Judith of Flanders (d. 1095), who married Henry the Lion's great-grandfather, Welf I of Bavaria, bestowed several books on Weingarten Abbey, again showing that elite women possessed books, as

<sup>6</sup> "Item, pacteat cunctis quod ego teneor persolvere creditoribus meis, nominatim illis quorum nomina scripta sunt in quaterno meo, cuius exemplar tenet domina regina." González, *El reino de Castilla*, 3:344, no. 769.

<sup>7</sup> "Item libri capellae imperatricis." A. A. Porée, *Histoire de l'abbaye du Bec*, 2 vols. (Evreux: Impr. de C. Hérissey, 1901), 1:651.

is well known from surviving manuscripts related to women or references in charters and chronicles.<sup>8</sup> And of course, Leonor's and Joanna's books could have been so generic that even had they survived, they would not be recognized as once having belonged to women.

For Henry and Matilda's psalter, it was the inclusion of their portraits that made it unique, because in all other ways it was a typical twelfth-century psalm book. By contrast, their gospel book, although a common liturgical volume, stands out because of the dual coronation and dedication miniatures: no similar books from the twelfth century have come down to us. Since it is impossible to establish whether Henry and Matilda individually commissioned the books or did so together, a narrow question of patronage is not a useful category of analysis here. Rather, I address the psalter and gospel book as the result of mutual cooperation between husband and wife in terms of both use and gifting. To what extent the ducal couple was involved in the visual and intellectual design of the manuscripts is hard to ascertain, but the representations of the ducal couple and the dedication text in the gospel book suggest their familiarity with the abbot and his monks at Helmarshausen, where the books were made. This is unsurprising, given that Henry the Lion held advocacy over Helmarshausen Abbey until 1180, when Frederick Barbarossa forced him to give it up; until then the duke must have maintained regular contact with Abbot Conrad.

Important for the appreciation of the gospel book are the two miniatures in which the ducal couple appears, as well as the dedication poem that lauds them. These have stimulated extensive debates about Henry's—but not Matilda's—motives for ordering and donating the liturgical manuscript: was it a pious gift through which he tried to gain the crowns of eternal life for himself and his dynasty?<sup>9</sup> Or was the ever ambitious duke aiming for a royal crown in the here and now, seeking to communicate his claim by virtue of his imperial heritage and his wife's royal ancestry?<sup>10</sup> Depending on the point of view, an early dating around 1172 or a later dating of ca. 1188 have been promoted.<sup>11</sup> Those arguing for a late date have also adduced the gospel book's style, along with the 1188

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**8** Dockray-Miller, *The Books and the Life of Judith of Flanders*. For numerous references to literature on women and books, see the introduction in Julie A. Somers, "Women and the Written Word: Textual Culture in Court and Convent during the Twelfth-Century Renaissance" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2018).

**9** Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialbild," in *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens*, ed. Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Munich: Fink, 1984), 384–440.

**10** Johannes Fried, "Königsgedanken Heinrichs des Löwen," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 55 (1973): 312–51.

**11** For an early dating, see Johannes Fried, "'Das goldglänzende Buch': Heinrich der Löwe, sein Evangeliar, sein Selbstverständnis: Bemerkungen zu einer Neuerscheinung," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 242 (1990): 34–79; Eckhard Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei, Bischofskloster, Konvent der Kalligraphen, Künstler und Fälscher: Zur Geschichte der Äbte und Mönche von Helmarshausen (997–1196)," in *Helmarshausen*, 9–44; and Peter Rück, "Die Schriften," in *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*, ed. Dietrich Kötzsche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 122–54 esp. 123.



dedication of the altar of the Virgin in the Church of St. Blaise, for which this gospel book may have been made.<sup>12</sup> A complicating factor is that the majority of manuscripts made in Helmarshausen, like the psalter and gospel book, are not securely dated, making it difficult to establish a firm chronology.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the connection between the altar of the Virgin and the gospel book is not undisputed. The debate may never be resolved satisfactorily, which led Bernd Schneidmüller to suggest a general date range between 1168, when Henry and Matilda married, and 1189, when Matilda died.<sup>14</sup> Yet a more narrow range of dates for the manuscript does indeed matter. Because the written documentation related to Henry and Matilda does not provide direct information concerning the book's dating, the possible motive(s) behind its creation can only be understood if we take the illuminations into account. In my reading, the ducal couple's donation was made in supplication for the birth of an heir or out of gratitude that their prayers for a son had been answered.<sup>15</sup> A gift connected to pregnancy or childbirth was by no means unusual. To offer just one example, Henry the Liberal, count of Champagne, who married Matilda's half-sister Marie, presented a gospel of John "in commemoration of his [Henry the younger's] birth, for which the book was given to the same Saint Loup" at Troyes.<sup>16</sup> My analysis of Henry and Matilda's gospel book, therefore, led to its dating between 1172, when Matilda was pregnant for the first time, and 1176, when their first son was born.

Books were so much more than material items accommodating devotion, liturgy, knowledge, and entertainment. They had the potential to flaunt status and rank or to reflect dynastic anxieties; they could guide moral behaviour or serve as gifts to cement ties between donors and recipients, both lay and clerical.<sup>17</sup> Seen in this light,

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**12** Ulrich Victor, "Das Widmungsgedicht im Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen und sein Verfasser," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 114 (1985): 302–29; Reiner Hausscherr, "Zur Datierung des Helmarshausener Evangeliers Heinrichs des Löwen," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 34 (1980): 3–15; Frank Neidhart Steigerwald, *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen: Sein Bilderzyklus und seine Bestimmung für den Marienaltar des Braunschweiger Domes im Jahre 1188* (Offenbach: Burckhardtthaus-Laetare, 1985); Ursula Nilgen, "Theologisches Konzept und Bildorganisation im Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 52 (1989): 301–33 at 322; and Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Memoria Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Memoria in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, ed. Dieter Geuenich and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 128–79 at 128–29.

**13** The only dated Helmarshausen manuscript is a gospel book made in 1194; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 65 Helmst.

**14** Bernd Schneidmüller, "Kronen im goldglänzenden Buch: Mittelalterliche Welfenbilder und das Helmarshausener Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen und Mathildes," in *Helmarshausen: Buchkultur und Goldschmiedekunst im Hochmittelalter*, ed. Ingrid Baumgärtner (Kassel: Euregioverlag, 2003), 123–46 at 135. This general date range is also favoured by Hartmut Hoffmann, *Bücher und Urkunden aus Helmarshausen und Corvey* (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1992), 45.

**15** Jitske Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire: The Twelfth-Century Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda," *Studies in Iconography* 39 (2018): 135–66.

**16** Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, 101.

**17** For manuscripts connected to dynastic issues, see John B. Freed, "Artistic and Literary Representations of Family Consciousness," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory,*

manuscripts—especially illuminated ones—were part of their owner’s performance of power. This chapter asks how Matilda’s and Henry’s psalter and gospel book reflected and aided in the fabrication of their identities and how this helped to stage their power.<sup>18</sup> Scholars have addressed the concept of self-representation in these manuscripts, but they have done so mostly by focusing on Henry the Lion rather than recognizing the joint role played by the ducal couple. This imbalance has been exacerbated by the tendency to foreground the importance of the magnificent gospel book (34 × 25.5 cm), while largely ignoring the smaller psalter (21 × 13 cm).<sup>19</sup>

### Spiritual Self-Empowerment: Following in the Footsteps of the Three Marys

At some point the psalter was taken apart; now only eleven folia are left. The lavishly decorated and complete calendar in deep purple and gold is embellished with zodiac images and representations of the labours of the months (fol. 1v–7r). The calendar lists English and French saints (for example, St. Alban on March 22, the Venerable Bede on May 27 instead of May 26, St. Sévère on July 20, and St. Audomar on September 10 instead of September 9), as well as Modoaldus, the patron saint of Helmarshausen. The Anglo-Norman elements that were added to this locally produced book indicate that it was tailored to the needs and interests of Matilda, who must have been an important user of the book.<sup>20</sup> The absence of St. Thomas Becket (d. 1170), who was canonized in February 1173 and whose feast day was celebrated on December 29, is noticeable. His importance to the ducal family is evidenced by his presence in their gospel book. It therefore seems safe to assume that the psalter must have been manufactured before Becket’s canonization in 1173 and after Henry and Matilda’s marriage in 1168. After the

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*Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 233–52; Elizabeth L’Estrange, *Holy Motherhood: Gender, Dynasty and Visual Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Claire Richter Sherman, “The Queen in Charles V’s Coronation Book: Jeanne de Bourbon and the *Ordo ad reginam benedicendam*,” *Viator* 8 (1977): 255–98. For books as moral guides, see Madeline H. Caviness, “Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed,” *Speculum* 68 (1993): 133–62; Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel des frühen und hohen Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006). For book as gifts to secular people, see Dockray-Miller, *The Books and Life of Judith of Flanders*, 77; Brygida Kürbis, “Die Epistola Mathildis Sueva an Mieszko II. in neuer Sicht,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989): 318–43.

**18** Henry and Matilda also commissioned a Middle High German version of the *Chanson de Roland*. For an analysis of this text from a gendered perspective, see Jasperse, “Women, Courtly Display,” 125–41.

**19** Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, “Buchkultur im geistlichen Beziehungsnetz. Das Helmarshausener Skriptorium im Hochmittelalter,” in *Helmarshausen*, ed. Baumgärtner, 2003, 88–92; and Elisabeth Klemm, “Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen,” in *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*, ed. Dietrich Kötzsche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 42–76 at 72–73.

**20** Klemm, “Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen,” 72.



calendar follow two full-page miniatures with scenes from the New Testament (fol. 7v and 8r), Psalm 1, to which a Gloria is added (fol. 8v–9v), and Psalm 2 (fol. 9v). The texts of Psalms 3 to 99 are missing, but Psalm 100 has been preserved (fol. 10r). On the verso of this psalm (fol. 10v), a full-page miniature is devoted to the Crucifixion, with the ducal couple represented at the foot of the Cross; it is paired on the facing page with another full-page miniature, the Holy Women at Christ's tomb (fol. 11r) (Figure 17a–b). The first line from Psalm 101 (*Domine exaudi orationem meam et clamor meus ad te veniat*) is written on the verso side (11v) of what is now the last page of the manuscript.<sup>21</sup> The subsequent text from that psalm and other psalms are lost, just as the canticles and litany that in all likelihood would have been included in the complete volume.<sup>22</sup>

Although a relatively small book, it is too big to be held with just one hand. A close look reveals that this devotional book qualifies as a deluxe manuscript. Purple-red paint lavished with gold was used for the calendar and the opening of Psalms 1 and 101 (and originally also Psalm 51, following the tripartite division in the decoration of psalters). The carefully executed and brightly coloured full-page miniatures as well as the symmetrical layout of the illustrations and texts emphasize its sumptuous character. In addition, the parchment is of even quality—not thin but rather stiff—without any insect holes or repair stitches. Throughout the surviving pages, the width of the margins, with visible tiny holes used for ruling, remains the same. The wide lower and outer margins show that more parchment than strictly necessary was used. Henry and Matilda commissioned a splendid book for their own devotion and were willing to spend money on it. Patronage and ownership of books are not straightforward evidence of literacy and we do not know whether Henry and Matilda were able to read Latin, but that would not have stopped them from utilizing a prayer book.

The sumptuous nature of the materials already tells us something about the ducal couple in terms of piety and wealth, but more insights can be gained from the miniature in which they are depicted. Leafing through their psalter, or before starting to recite Psalm 101 in which the Lord is asked to hear King David's prayer, Henry and Matilda would encounter themselves humbly kneeling at the foot of the crucified Christ. His cross is not a wooden one, but striped with grey, white, green, and red to give it a three-dimensional appearance; onto the top, the sign "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews" is affixed.<sup>23</sup> The cross dominates the miniature, standing out against the gold background.

<sup>21</sup> "Hear, O Lord, my prayer: and let my cry come to thee." All the translations in this chapter are taken from the Douay-Rheims Bible on vulgate.org.

<sup>22</sup> Canticles and litany are present in another psalter made in Helmarshausen, second half of the twelfth century, 11.5 × 6.5 cm, 126 fols., now kept at Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.10, partly digitized, [www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W10/description.html](http://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W10/description.html). For the medieval psalter, see Nigel Morgan and Paul Binski, "Private Devotion: Humility and Splendour," in *The Cambridge Illuminations: Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West*, ed. Paul Binski and Stella Panayotova (London: Brepols, 2005), 163–69 at 164.

<sup>23</sup> "iesus nazarenus rex iudeorum" (John 19:19), as is the case in two other Helmarshausen manuscripts: Hersfeld Gradual and Sacramentary (Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, Landesbibl and Murhardse Bibl der Stadt Kassel, 2° MS Theol. 58, fol. 59r) and the Gospel Book of Henry the Lion and Matilda discussed below.

Christ's arms and legs are somewhat bent, and the nails in his feet and the wound in his right side are clearly visible. His bearded head, eyes closed, sags onto his chest. The suffering of Christ cannot escape the viewer, especially with the grief displayed in the upper corners by the figures of the sun and moon, who cover their weeping eyes with their mantles. Rather than showing their sorrow, the figures of the Virgin Mary and the apostle John, to whom Christ gave into each other's keeping as mother and son, are represented as eyewitnesses.<sup>24</sup> In this respect the psalter differs from the gospel book, where Mary and John exhibit deep grief.<sup>25</sup>

This cross iconography was by no means original and can be found in two other manuscripts produced at Helmarshausen. In a psalter, for example, which has been connected with women in the circle of Henry the Lion, Christ is represented hanging on a red cross, flanked by Mary and John as well as the sun and the moon (Figure 19).<sup>26</sup> And in the gradual-sacramentary of Hersfeld, even though the representations of Mary and John have been cut out, the sun and moon witness the dead Christ on a rainbow-coloured cross.<sup>27</sup> What renders the miniature in Henry and Matilda's psalter unique is the representation of the ducal couple, identified through the now barely legible inscriptions *Heinricu[s] dux* and *Mathilt ducissa* in the red border above their heads. Located within an arched setting, the bearded Henry is depicted on Christ's right—the privileged side—and the veiled Matilda is on his left. Both are represented from the waist up, and their faces are shown in three-quarters pose as their gazes try to reach both Christ and the viewer, engaging as it were with their own selves while reading this psalter. Their *bliauts*, blue and white, are decorated with golden borders and partly covered by their brightly coloured mantles. Henry's red mantle has slipped from his shoulder, perhaps meant to signify his humility. Neither ruler wears a crown in this scene of prayer. Of the preserved leaves, it is this one that shows the most wear, a strong indication that this particular page was frequently seen and touched. Taking in the images, reciting the prayers, and turning the pages were sensorial experiences that contributed to devotion through the arousal of emotions and the stimulation of contemplation, inviting the viewer to revisit specific pages.

Surviving twelfth-century psalters rarely contain representations of their donors or recipients; when these are included, they are usually not part of the narrative cycle.<sup>28</sup> Henry

<sup>24</sup> John 19:26–27.

<sup>25</sup> Gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, fol. 170v. Also, Ecclesia and Synagoga are present in the gospel book, but absent in the psalter.

<sup>26</sup> Psalter, Helmarshausen, second half of the twelfth century, 11.5 × 6.5 cm, 126 fols., fol. 41v. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.10. The depicted woman has been identified as Matilda, Richenza (Henry the Lion's first wife), or Gertrud (Henry the Lion's daughter from his marriage with Richenza), Klemm, "Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar," 69.

<sup>27</sup> Kassel, Landesbibl, 2° MS Theol. 58, fol. 59r. See Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, "Buchkultur," 101 and fig. 12. On the facing page, fol. 58v, a small donor figure is represented, but the other scenes have been cut out. See Klemm, "Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar," 69 with images.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Olaf Büttner, "Der illuminierte Psalter im Westen," in *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose and Placements of Its Images*, ed. Frank Olaf Büttner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 1–106 and 459–79 at 76–78.

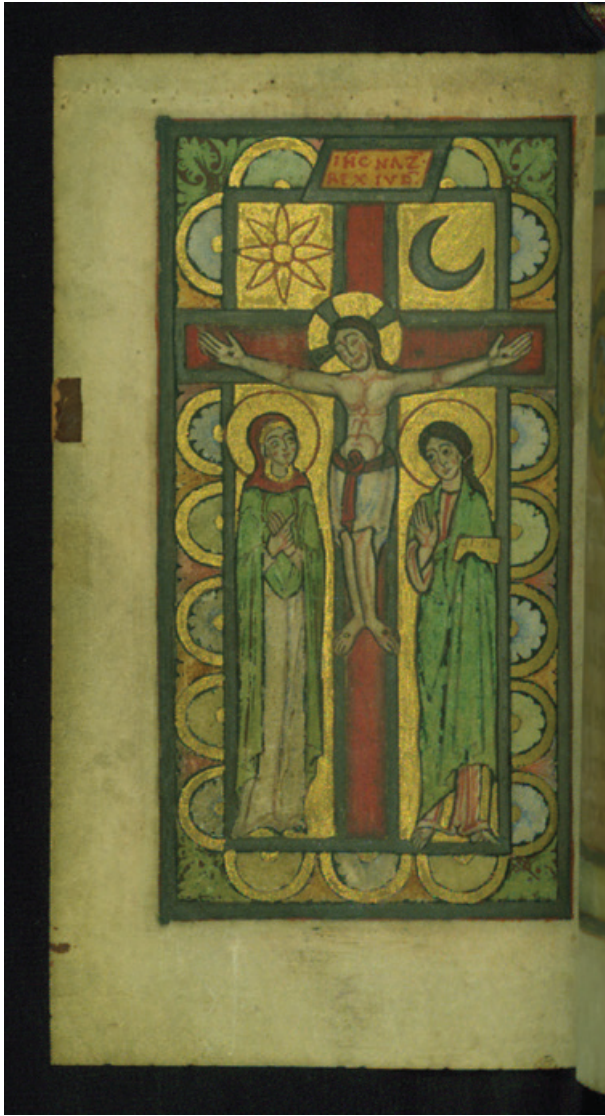


Figure 19. Crucifixion, psalter, Helmarshausen, second half of the twelfth century. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.10, fol. 41v. Creative Commons Licence.

and Matilda, however, are more than just present at the Crucifixion; they are incorporated into the visual New Testament narrative, starting with the Annunciation and ending with the Three Holy Women at the sepulchre signalling Christ's Resurrection. Their banderols draw them further into the story. The duke holds a text scroll declaring "we pray to you Christ and bless you," while the duchess's scroll implores "save us Christ by virtue of the cross."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> "Adoramus te Christe et benedicimus tibi / Salva nos Christe per virtutem crucis."

These texts belong to the office of the *Inventio crucis*, the Finding of the Cross by Empress Helena, celebrated every year on May 3.<sup>30</sup> In imitation of Constantine and Helena, the ducal couple not only contemplates the death of Christ on the cross in order to save mankind but is also part of the Cross's afterlife. The Finding of the Cross, as well as the Exaltation of the Cross commemorated on September 14, are included in this psalter's calendar, as well as in the abovementioned psalter also made at Helmarshausen. Widespread feasts by the twelfth century, these general entries may equally reflect personal meaning for the ducal couple, related to Henry's travels to the Holy Land.

Several sources inform us that Henry the Lion journeyed to Jerusalem in 1172–1173, among them the chronicles by Arnold of Lübeck (ca. 1210) and by John Kinnamos (ca. 1180), as well as a charter issued in Jerusalem itself for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1172.<sup>31</sup> According to Arnold, Henry donated huge sums of cash to the Holy Sepulchre, and he also had the basilica decorated with mosaics and its portals covered with pure silver. In addition he arranged for annual payments to buy wax candles that should burn perpetually at Christ's tomb.<sup>32</sup> Even though the candles are replaced by lamps, Arnold's narration tallies with the surviving charter in which Henry,

for the forgiveness of all my sins and those of my wife duchess Matilda, noble daughter of the king of the English, and also for the children God gave me in all his mercy, and for all of my family, established and arranged to erect in the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord three lamps eternally burning in honour of God. Of these lamps, one is to burn for the renowned sepulchre of the Lord [*domini sepulcro*], the other at the place of Calvary [*calvarie loco*] for the passion of the Lord, the third for the life-giving wood of the Holy Cross.<sup>33</sup>

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**30** Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 6.

**31** Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica*, 22; and John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. Charles M. Brand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 214. For Henry's journey and how it has been interpreted, see E. Joranson, "The Palestine Pilgrimage of Henry the Lion," 146–225 (devotional journey); Johannes Fried, "Jerusalemfahrt und Kulturimport. Offene Fragen zum Kreuzzug Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 111–37 (Arnold turned a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to praise Henry's piety); Volker Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde. Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnolds von Lübeck* (Berlin: Akademie, 2002), esp. 292–309 (disagrees with Fried about the idea of a crusade); and Joachim Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe. Eine Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), 199–211 (Henry was to fight the infidels and to negotiate with Sultan Kilic Arslan II).

**32** "Optulit autem dux ad sanctum sepulcrum pecuniam multam, et basilicam in que lignum Domini repositum est ornavit musivo opera et ostia eiusdem basilice vestivit argento purissimo. Deputavit etiam reditus annuos ad cereos comparandos iugiter ad sanctum sepulcrum arsuos." Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica*, 22.

**33** "pro remissione omnium peccatorum meorum et inclite uxoris mee ducisse Matildis, magnifici Anglorum regis filie, et eorum, quos deus misericordie sue dono michi dedit, heredum nec non et totius generis mei tres lampades perpetuo ad honorem dei ardentis in dominice resurrectionis

To Henry, Christ's death, his entombment signifying his Resurrection, and the Finding of the Cross on which he was crucified were all connected. Each event had a place in the sacral landscape of the church precinct: the Holy Sepulchre in the centre under the western dome, in the east Calvary where Christ was crucified, and further east the place where his cross was found.<sup>34</sup>

A similar landscape was evoked in the psalter, where Henry and Matilda not only witnessed Christ's Crucifixion, but were part of his Resurrection together with the Three Marys at the tomb.<sup>35</sup> All four Gospels mention women at Christ's grave, and although their number and identification vary Mary Magdalen is always among them; in Western art three women are usually depicted visiting his sepulchre on Sunday, Easter morning.<sup>36</sup> In the ducal couple's psalter, the woman in the front holds out a censer filled with myrrh and the woman in the back carries a jar of spices to anoint the body.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the representation of incense and spices would have evoked these scents for the viewers, adding to Henry and Matilda's sense of being present at the tomb. Such an experience may even have held special meaning to Matilda if we take into account that in the central Middle Ages several churchmen associated elite women with Mary Magdalen, who presented a gift at Christ's tomb. Pope Gregory wrote to Agnes of Poitou, wife of Emperor Henry III, "for just as they came to the Lord's tomb with a marvellous zeal and charity before all his disciples, so you in devout love have visited the church of Christ, placed at its site in the sepulchre of affliction, before many—no! Before all, the princes of the earth."<sup>38</sup> And Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans, thanked Queen Matilda of England (d. 1118) for her gift of a candelabra, with which she imitated "as far as possible the holy women who first came to the cross with tears and then to the tomb with spices."<sup>39</sup>

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ecclesia locari constitui et ordinavi, quarum lampadum una coram glorioso domini sepulcro ardeat, altera vero in calvarie loco ante dominicam passionem, tertia autem coram vivifico sancte crucis ligno constituatur." MGH DD HL, 143–45, no. 94; and Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 206.

**34** For a short history of the building, see Lynn Jones, "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre," *Oxford Bibliographies in Medieval Studies*. DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195396584-0044.

**35** A relic of Mary Magdalen was housed at St. Blaise; see Renate Kroos, "Die Bilder," in *Das Evangeliar*, ed. Kötzsche, 164–243 at 229; and W. A. Neumann, *Der Reliquienschatz des Hauses Braunschweig-Lüneburg* (Vienna: Hölder, 1891), 140.

**36** Matthew 28:1 (Mary Magdalen and the other Mary); Mark 15:40 (Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome); Luke 24:10 (Mary Magdalen, Joanna, and Mary of James); John 20:1 (Mary Magdalen).

**37** Luke 23:53–56 and 24:1–3.

**38** Fiona Griffiths, "Like the Sisters of Aaron: Medieval Religious Women as Makers and Donors of Liturgical Textiles," in *Female Vita Religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 343–74 at 344n6.

**39** Cited in Joan Ferante, "A Letter from Hildebert, bishop of Lavardin (c.1100–18)," *Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/416.html>. See also Griffiths, "Like the Sisters of Aaron," 344.

Arriving at Jesus's sepulchre, the holy women find that the slab has been pushed aside and his loincloth left behind. An angel tells them not to be afraid and that Christ has resurrected, as can be read on his scroll: *resurrexit d[omi]n[u]s*.<sup>40</sup> In the upper left corner a crowned figure, perhaps David, proffers a text taken from Psalm 67 referring to the Ascension (*ascendit super occasum*).<sup>41</sup> Neither the figure, who may be another king, nor the text scroll in the upper right corner can now be identified, due to the poor state of conservation in this area of the miniature. The nimbed man in the lower left corner is Jacob, who holds a scroll with the words "who shall rouse him" (*quis suscitabit eum*).<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to make out what is written on the scroll in the right corner, but the words "the third day he will rise" (*die tertia suscitabit*), taken from the Prophet Hosea, seem fitting.<sup>43</sup> Taken together, the text scrolls create an ingenious typology of passages from the Old Testament that prefigure the event of Christ's Resurrection. As we shall see, this same Christological thinking appears in Henry and Matilda's gospel book and points to the intellectual climate at Helmarshausen.<sup>44</sup> Whether or not the ducal couple could grasp the exact meaning of the texts scrolls is not a question we can answer. Yet even basic biblical knowledge would have been sufficient to understand that all the passages relate to the scene that is at the core of this page: the empty tomb that stands in for the risen Christ.

As they touched this page and witnessed this event, Henry and Matilda followed in the footsteps of the first ever pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre. Their spiritual re-enactment was supported by the addition of elements alluding to the Holy Sepulchre as it was known in the twelfth century: the tomb is placed below a dome from which a lamp is suspended. This same representation also features in their gospel book, in contrast to another gospel book made at Helmarshausen in which the tomb is not shown as part of the contemporary twelfth-century architectural space of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>45</sup> In both the gospel

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**40** Mark 16:5–6; Luke 24:6. The text in the psalter differs from the gospel book, where on fol. 74v it reads "resurexit.non.est.hoc."

**41** Psalm 67:5. "Cantate Deo psalmum dicite nomini ejus iter facite ei qui ascendit super occasum. Dominus nomen illi exultate in conspectu ejus. Turbabuntur a facie ejus" (Sing ye to God, sing a psalm to his name, make a way for him who ascendeth upon the west: the Lord is his name. Rejoice ye before him: but the wicked shall be troubled at his presence).

**42** Genesis 49:9. "Catulus leonis iuda: ad praedam, fili mi, ascendisti: requiescens accubuisti ut leo, et quasi leaena: quis suscitabit eum" (Juda is a lion's whelp: to the prey, my son, thou art gone up: resting thou hast couched as a lion, and as a lioness, who shall rouse him?).

**43** Osee 6:3. "Vivificabit nos post duos dies in die tertia suscitabit nos" (He will revive us after two days: on the third day he will raise us up).

**44** Kroos, "Die Bilder," 164–65.

**45** Gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, fol. 74v; gospel book, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 65 Helmst., fol. 12v (no architectural design, no city scape referring to the Holy Sepulchre). For analysis of Mary Magdalen in the gospel book of Henry and Matilda, see Elizabeth Monroe, "Mary Magdalene as a Model of Devotion, Penitence, and Authority in the Gospels of Henry the Lion," in *Mary Magdalene in Medieval Culture: Conflicted Roles*, ed. Peter V. Loewen and Robin Waugh (Routledge: New York, 2014), 99–115.



book and psalter the more realistic representation of the Holy Sepulchre seems to have been chosen deliberately. An interesting connection can be drawn to the similar design on a lead seal pertaining to the canons of the Holy Sepulchre, which is appended to the charter the duke brought back from Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> The reverse of the canon's lead seal provided Henry with a lasting impression of the Holy Sepulchre (Figure 20). Inscribed with SANCTISSIMI SEPVLCHRI encircling the representation of the church, Christ's tomb is pierced by three oculi that allow the visitor visual access to the holy burial place. Near—or perhaps on—the tomb two candles are visible, and the site is enclosed by an aedicule from which a lamp is suspended. It is not necessary to imagine that the seal itself served as a model for the miniatures in the ducal couple's books. However, the elements of dome and lamp as explicit references to the tomb of Christ, as it was known in the twelfth century, probably deepened their spiritual participation, especially in light of the duke's donation of candles and lamps. It is even conceivable that they requested this iconography, sparked by Henry's personal experience of Jerusalem.

The couple's veneration of the cross fits the larger context of relics brought to Brunswick and for which the duke had shrines made.<sup>47</sup> In 1173 Henry donated a reliquary cross to the Church of the Holy Cross in Hildesheim, and a piece of the Cross was given to the Abbey of Reading after he and his wife went into exile in England in 1182.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Wolfenbüttel, Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv, 1 Urk 4. [www.arcinsys.niedersachsen.de/arcinsys/detailAction?detailid=v5529613](http://www.arcinsys.niedersachsen.de/arcinsys/detailAction?detailid=v5529613). See Claus Peter Hasse, "Urkunde Heinrichs des Löwen, Herzog von Bayern und Sachsen, für das Heilige Grab in Jerusalem mit Bullen der Kanoniker der Grabeskirche, des Patriarchen Amalrich von Jerusalem (1158–1180) und des Königs Amalrich I. von Jerusalem (1162–1173)," in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1: cat. D 84.

<sup>47</sup> "Qui [Manuel I] multum letatus est reditu eius, et cum honestissime detinisset eum per aliquot dies, dedit ei quattuordecim mulos, oneratos auro et argento et sericis vestibus. Dux vera immensas gratias agens, noluit accipere, dicens ad eum: 'Habeo plurima, doinne mi, inveniam tantum gratiam in oculis tuis.' Cumque nimis cogeret eum, et ille nulla ratione consentiret accipere, dedit sanctorum reliquias ei multas et preciosas, quas postulaverat. Addidit etiam multam lapidum preciosorum gloriam, et ita valedicto dux in omni pace discessit et venit in Niceam." Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica*, 18. "Manuel gently urged him to stay for another couple of days, presenting him with fourteen mules loaded with gold, silver, and silken garments. The duke thanked him greatly, but refused the gift by saying: 'My lord, I have much if I only find favor in your eyes.' Since the emperor kept urging the duke no less than the duke kept refusing the gifts offered, Manuel finally gave him many of the saintly relics he had requested earlier. He also added much glory of precious stones. Thus released, the duke departed in peace and went on to Nis." This translation is taken from Holger Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 283–314 at 285.

<sup>48</sup> For Hildesheim, "quod pro salute et remedio anime nostre et uxoris nostre ac liberorum nostrorum nec non omnium heredum vel propinquorum nostrorum, quos preterita, presens vel future pariet generatio, ecclesie sancte crucis in civitate vestra Hidensemensi de ipsa dominici ligni substantia crucem quondam contulimus provido nostre discretionis consilio statuentes" (so that for salvation and remedy, for our spirit, and for that of our wife, and that of our children, and also of all of our heirs or even our relatives—of the past, or present, or of a future generation—we brought the cross, formerly of the same substance of the wood of the Lord, deciding with our provident sense of discretion, at the holy church of the cross, in your city of Hildesheim). MGH DD HL, 145–46,





Figure 20. Lead seal of the canons of the Holy Sepulchre appended to an act issued by Henry the Lion. Wolfenbüttel, Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, 1 Urk. 4.  
Photo: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Wolfenbüttel.

Yet it is equally imaginable that the design of both miniatures had been made well before Henry embarked for the Holy Land. The monks at Helmarshausen were undoubtedly familiar with the Holy Sepulchre. On the hill called Krukenberg, not far from their abbey, the Church (or Chapel) of St. John the Baptist had been modelled after the Anastasis Rotunda.<sup>49</sup> The building was commissioned by Henry of Werl (d. 1127), bishop of Paderborn, and was subsidized by money he had originally collected for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.<sup>50</sup> Possibly inspired by this church built within eyesight and living in an environment imbued with a pilgrimage spirit, the maker of the psalter represented the ducal couple present at the Crucifixion to atone for their sins, but only their prayers will allow them to hope for participation in the Resurrection.<sup>51</sup> In the psalter, Christ's Resurrection, as represented by the empty sepulchre, was witnessed by the Three Marys. The sites of the Crucifixion and Resurrection would have activated the ducal couple, who perhaps sought to identify themselves with Constantine and Helena, to follow in the footsteps of Christ and Mary Magdalen.

### Liturgical Display of Self: Matilda Empowering the Dynasty

By contrast with their personal psalter, the gospel book commissioned by the ducal couple was not meant to be used by them but by the priest at St. Blaise in Brunswick when Mass was performed. The book's excellent condition, showing no signs of wear and tear, indicates that it was probably used during principal feast days only. The manuscript itself contains no written clues as to how and when it was utilized, but it might also have been displayed during other important rituals, such as the swearing of oaths.<sup>52</sup> The dedication miniature

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no. 95. For Reading, see Ron Baxter, *The Royal Abbey of Reading* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 58–59: “de lingo domini crux que fuit de capella ducis saxonie” (of the wood the Lord a cross which came from the chapel of the duke of Saxony). See also Thomas Stangier, “Sogennantes Imervard-Kreuz,” in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1:D 23.

**49** Mario Müller, “Modell der Kirche (Kapelle?) St. Johannes Baptist bei Helmarshausen,” in *Für Königtum und Himmelreich. 1000 Jahre Bischof Meinwerk von Paderborn* (Katalog zur Jubiläumsausstellung im Museum in der Kaiserpfalz und im Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum Paderborn 2009/2010), ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Martin Kroker (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009), 534–35.

**50** It was not the only model the bishop had made. In the Externsteine (a sandstone rock formation) at Detmold the chamber of the Holy Sepulchre was carved out in a huge rock formation.

**51** A Crucifixion witnessed by an abbot and monk was originally part of Sacramentary made in Helmarshausen, ca. 1170 or later (Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst—und Kulturgeschichte Münster). Yet this book is a liturgical rather than a private manuscript. Also, the abbot and monk cannot be identified as individuals, they do not hold text scrolls that intensify their relationship with Christ and are not represented as part of an architectural construction. Barbara Klössel, “Einzelblatt aus einer Serie von vier Miniaturen eines Sakramentars,” in *Heinrich der Löwe*, 1:cat. G 77.

**52** For the use of gospel books in legal contexts, see Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 243–44; Eyal Poleg, *Approaching the Bible in Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 59–107.

and poem as well as the so-called coronation page (Figure 18a–b) leave no doubt that the ducal couple's presence within the gospel book mattered, if not in the performance of Mass.<sup>53</sup> The donation of this luxury ritual object demonstrates that Henry and Matilda specifically sought the support of the clerical community. At the same time, its lavish decorations and abundant use of gold, silver, and purple showcases that the ducal couple translated their status to parchment.

With the gift of a liturgical book in which they had themselves represented, the spouses followed an imperial pattern, as is testified to by the pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde (ca. 1007–1012) and the gospel book of Henry III and Agnes (ca. 1043–1046).<sup>54</sup> We can only speculate whether Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Henry the Lion's cousin, also had himself depicted in the liturgical manuscripts he commissioned, as none has been preserved.<sup>55</sup> Although not unique in its textual content, the gospel book of Henry and Matilda is still a remarkable surviving specimen. Given Henry the Lion's imperial descent, which as we will see is emphasized in the gospel book, it is likely that the duke and his wife were aware of the imperial precedents. And although Helmarshausen does not appear to have produced manuscripts for the emperor; its intellectual and artistic milieu suggest that Abbot Conrad, who on the orders of Duke Henry had the book made, must have known the practice.

In its present state the gospel book opens with the "capitula sancti evangelii secundum Mattheum" followed by the dedication poem, while the dedication miniature is placed many pages later (Figure 18a).<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Klemm has suggested that the poem may have originally faced the dedication miniature, allowing the complementary text and image to be viewed together.<sup>57</sup> The poem reads in full:

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**53** Klemm and Kroos provide an overview of the painted content of the gospel book; see Klemm, "Aufbau und Schmuck der Handschrift," 77–95; and Kroos, "Die Bilder," 164–243.

**54** Horst Fuhrmann and Florentine Mütterich, *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen und das mittelalterliche Herrscherbild* (Munich: Prestel, 1986); and Klemm, "Heinrich der Löwe und Helmarshausen," 77. The pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde, Munich, Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4452, fols. 1v (text) and 2r (miniature); presented to the Church of Peter and Paul, Bamberg, ca. 1007–1012; The gospel book of Henry III and Agnes, El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Vitr. 17, fols. 3r (Virgin blessing Henry and Agnes) and 3v–4r (text); presented to Speyer Cathedral in 1043–1046.

**55** Klemm, "Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar," 43.

**56** For an overview of the different texts contained in the gospel book, see Böhne, "Die Schriften," 96–121. For German translations and interpretations of the poem see Victor, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 302–19; and Paul Gerhard Schmidt, "Das Widmungsgedicht im Herimann Evangeliar," in *Helmarshausen und das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Bericht über ein wissenschaftliches Symposium in Braunschweig und Helmarshausen vom 9. Oktober bis 11. Oktober 1985*, ed. Martin Gosebruch and Frank N. Steigerwald (Göttingen: Goltze, 1992), 155.

**57** Klemm, "Aufbau und Schmuck der Handschrift," 78; and Schmidt, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 203–8 at 203. The book may have been reworked in the sixteenth century when its binding was changed; see Otto Mazal and Lorenz Seelig, "Der Einband," in *Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*, ed. Dietrich Kötzsche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1989), 288–306.

- 1 Aurea testatur hec si pagella legatur,  
Christo devotus Heinricus dux quia totus  
Cum consorte thori nil pretulit eius amori.  
Hanc stirps regalis hunc edidit imperialis.
- 5 Ipse nepos Karoli cui credidit Anglia soli  
Mittere Mathildam sobolem que gigneret illam,  
Per quam pax Christi patrie que salus datur isti.  
Hoc opus auctoris par nobile iunxit amoris  
Nam vixere boni virtutis ad omnia proni,
- 10 Larga manus quorum superans benefacta priorum  
Extulit hanc urbem loquitur quod fama per orbem,  
Sacris sanctorum cum religione bonorum,  
Templis ornavit ac muris amplificavit.  
Inter que Christe fulgens auro liber iste
- 15 Offertur rite spe perpetue tibi vite.  
Inter iustorum consortia pars sit eorum.  
Dicite nunc nati narrantes posteritati.  
En, Helmwardense Conrado patre iubente,  
Devote mente ducis imperium per agente,
- 20 Petre tui monachi liber hic labor est Herimanni

This golden page testifies to the reader that / Christ is loved by the devout Duke Henry and his consort, above all other things. / From kings she descends, he from emperors. He stems from Charlemagne, only to him did England / send Matilda, who would bear him offspring, / through Christ's peace and the salvation of the fatherland. / The author's work united the loving couple, / for they lived an exemplary life and always did good, / their generosity surpassed the deeds of their predecessors, / they exalted this city, proclaiming its fame around the globe, / with relics of saints, with the devotion of the good people furnished churches and enlarged walls. / One of these deeds is this gold-gleaming book, / offered solemnly to you, Christ, in the hope of eternal life. / May they be received in the ranks of the righteous. / Announce, you living children, to posterity. / At the command of Abbot Conrad (II) of Helmarshausen, / who faithfully fulfilled the duke's wishes, / here, [Saint] Peter,<sup>58</sup> is this book, a work by your monk Herimann.<sup>59</sup>

In the opening line the golden page announces that its very existence acts as a witness, showing the reader that the ducal couple is dedicated to Christ. Matilda is first and foremost referred to as the wife of Duke Henry (*consorte thori*); in this case *thori* (bed) indicates that the couple shared the conjugal bed when the text was written. Moreover, the use of *thori* underscores that this was the only place where legitimate offspring could

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**58** The monk Herimann was able to bring his work to completion with the help of St. Peter, the oldest patron saint of Helmarshausen; see Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei," 12, 15.

**59** The English translation is mine. I would like to thank Eduardo Fernández Guerrero for his help with the Latin text and its translation.

be conceived. The phrase emphasizes Matilda's duties as spouse and as consort: she is considered a participant in Henry's rule, and—as the dedicatory text states later—she partakes as his equal in the display of generosity.<sup>60</sup> We are dealing here with a unique feature: when compared to the laudatory texts in the pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde and the gospel book of Henry III and Agnes, Matilda's role in the poem is significantly greater than that of either Cunigunde or Agnes.<sup>61</sup>

Herimann made sure to highlight the couple's ancestry. Matilda is mentioned first, stemming from kings, and then Henry's imperial lineage is stressed. This made him a suitable candidate to receive a princess as his bride, despite his rank as nobility rather than royalty. The spouses are praised as a perfect match, mutually enhancing each other's status. As Henry's *consorte thori*, Matilda, daughter of kings, was assigned the task of producing offspring, as expressed by the phrase *Mathildam, sobolem quae gigneret illam* (line 6). This line has led to considerable discussion because the term *sobolem* (offspring) may refer to one child or perhaps all of the children, while the phrase as a whole has been interpreted in two different ways: either that Matilda had already given birth to a child, or that she was expected to do so.<sup>62</sup> The first reading supports the idea that the poem was added after Matilda and/or Henry had died and their heirs ruled the duchy, whereas the second reading assumes the poem was written when the manuscript was made. The text's emphasis on children underscores their absence from the dynastic portrait, to be discussed later, which is one of the reasons why it is more likely that the gospel book was created long before the couple's death.

The gospel book's poem proclaims that Henry and Matilda's child (or children) will bring Christ's peace and prosperity to the land. Although "this fatherland" (*patriae isti*) can be interpreted several ways, its connection to the city of Brunswick (*urbs*), which was located within Henry's patrimony, suggests that the word *patria* was chosen to emphasize the Saxon foundation of Henry's power.<sup>63</sup> This land was the centre of Guelph territory; as the dynasty's power base, both land with its built environment and power needed to be preserved by future generations. Although not named specifically, Brunswick is quite clearly "the city" to which the poem refers, as it was Henry and Matilda's most important residence. It is also where the Church of St. Blaise, which would receive the book, was rebuilt by Henry and Matilda from 1173 onwards, and according to the poem (line 11), it was this town that proclaimed the ducal couple's fame around the world.<sup>64</sup>

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**60** Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Fama und Memoria Heinrichs des Löwen: Kunst im Kontext der Sozialgeschichte. Mit einem Ausblick auf die Gegenwart," in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1998), 1–25 at 11.

**61** For an analysis of these texts, see Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire," 144–46.

**62** The first option (Matilda has given birth) is favored by Schmidt, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 158; and by Victor, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 312–13. The future tense is preferred by Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei," 38–39, who interprets it as a dependent clause in the subjunctive mood expressing a wish.

**63** Oexle, "Fama und Memoria," 10.

**64** Cord Meckseper, "Die Goslarer Königspfalz als Herausforderung für Heinrich den Löwen?," *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit*, 2:239 (residence) and 241 (church).

Henry and Matilda were responsible for the building of churches, the donation of relics, and the construction of the city's walls, with the latter occurring somewhere between 1165 and 1181 according to the chronicle of Albert of Stade (1240–1256). The chronicle also mentions the casting of a bronze lion during that time.<sup>65</sup> If the gospel book's dedicatory poem can be relied on, Matilda was involved in all these activities, including the construction of the city walls. Although her dower agreements do not survive, it is likely that this daughter of affluent parents would have had the money to support such an enterprise, as we know that other high-ranking women did.<sup>66</sup>

Coming full circle, the poem, beginning with a reference to just the page it was written on, ends with the "gold-gleaming book, offered solemnly to you, Christ, in the hope of eternal life" (line 15). This book was an expression of the couple's piety, nobility, and good deeds. It was meant to commemorate them as well as to communicate their wish to be awarded eternal life. The *auro liber fulgens* is depicted in the dedication page, manifesting the connected nature of the pages that were paired originally (Figure 18a–b). Henry and Matilda, together with St. Blaise and St. Aegidius, are identified by a gold inscription in the red zone above their heads. Henry presents the book to St. Blaise, who is depicted as a bishop. The book is completely covered in gold and decorated with a cross embellished with what is probably meant to resemble a large stone in its centre, while the four quarters are filled with X-shaped crosses (Figure 18c). This self-representational image must be understood as a miniature version of the actual gospel book, whose original cover has been lost. Surviving examples demonstrate that golden covers were employed in the twelfth century, some of them even made at Helmarshausen.<sup>67</sup> Although rudimentary in design, the miniature book calls to mind the golden cover of the gospel book Emperor Henry II donated to the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul at Bamberg.<sup>68</sup>

Matilda does not touch the book. Her hand is grasped by St. Aegidius, who is portrayed as a tonsured cleric wearing priestly vestments, while the duchess, as Renate Kroos proposed, holds a charter from which three cords with seals are appended.<sup>69</sup> The

<sup>65</sup> Albert of Stade, *Annales Stadenses*, 345; and Schmidt, "Das Widmungsgedicht," 206.

<sup>66</sup> Queen Constanza (d. 1093), wife of Alfonso VI of León-Castille (r. 1065–1109), built a palace and an accompanying palatine chapel at the royal Leonese monastery of Sahagún, as well as baths and a mill. And her granddaughter, the Infanta Sancha (d. 1159), constructed a bridge over the River Bernesga in León; see Therese Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 73–74, 169. And Landgravine Judith of Thuringia (d. 1191) had the castle at Weissensee erected, which resulted in a complaint by Count Frederick of Beichlingen, who perceived the castle (*castrum*) as a threat; see *Cronicon Reinhardsbrunnensis a. 530–1338*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 30.1 (Hanover, Hahn, 1896), 538.

<sup>67</sup> For gold book covers, see Frauke Steenbock, *Der kirchliche Prachteinband im frühen Mittelalter: Von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Gotik* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1965), esp. 25–36. For Helmarshausen, see Ursula Mende, "Goldschmiedekunst in Helmarshausen," in *Helmarshausen*, ed. Baumgärtner, 163–98 esp. 177–80.

<sup>68</sup> Gospel Book of Emperor Henry II, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4454#Einband. See [https://einbaende.digitale-sammlungen.de/Prachteinbaende/Clm\\_4454\\_Einband\\_Hauptaufnahme](https://einbaende.digitale-sammlungen.de/Prachteinbaende/Clm_4454_Einband_Hauptaufnahme).

<sup>69</sup> Kroos, "Die Bilder," 185.



gift of the manuscript could have gone hand-in-hand with a donation or confirmation of grants. The charter in Matilda's hand mirrors the book held in Henry's, thus confirming that the donation of the gospel book was a mutual offering. The presentation of the book takes place against a background that recalls an expensive red silk cloth decorated with golden scrolls, animals, and pearled borders. This sense of luxury is further elevated by the colourful and richly ornamented Byzantinizing outfits worn by the donors and saints.<sup>70</sup> Overall, the visual effect is one of splendour and richness. There is a detail that deserves special mention here: Matilda is wearing a decorated golden crown, whereas Henry is bare-headed. Matilda's crown can therefore only be read as signifying her high-born status, because as the dedicatory text states, "From kings she descends." True, the same poem lauds Henry as the heir of emperors, but by the time the gospel book was made his grandfather Emperor Lothar (d. 1137) had long been deceased, while Matilda's father was still very much alive.

That St. Blaise accompanies the ducal couple is to be expected: although the collegiate church in Brunswick was dedicated to several saints, Blaise was considered one of the most important. Aegidius, on the other hand, was chosen for his reputation as a saint who was addressed by those—both men and women—in need of an heir. This saint served to construct and confirm Matilda's identity as a future mother, a theme we have already encountered in the dedicatory text.<sup>71</sup> The Church of St. Blaise was Henry and Matilda's personal church, built within the Burg complex. Attached to the living quarters by an upper walkway, the couple entered the church via the north transept gallery. This would have provided a clear view of the choir for Henry and Matilda in relative proximity to space usually prohibited to lay people, and it also allowed them to be seen by the people below. Their gospel book would have been used in processions and been placed on the altar, creating an active connection to its donors when they were bodily present and an evocation of the ducal couple when they were away.

In the donation scene, the upward-pointing gestures of both saints and the direction of Henry's and Matilda's glance together suggest that someone beyond their immediate reach may be regarded as the receivers of the gold-covered book: the heavenly Virgin in her guise as God-bearer (*Theotokos*), with her infant son. Mary, dressed in a white tunic covered by a purple robe, is seated on a Byzantine-style backless throne. The gold crown and the cylindrical object (a pomegranate or small container?) surmounted by a lily represent her privileged position as the mother of the king whose teachings and sacrifice would lead Christians to eternal life.<sup>72</sup> Her raised and open right hand indicates that she acts as an intercessor in Heaven, symbolized by the mandorla that surrounds her. In a framed roundel (*imago clipeata*), her son is depicted as a bust of the young Christ resting on her breast. Christ's right hand is lifted in speech, while in his left he holds the

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**70** The textile patterns, dress style, and regalia are also connected to Byzantium; see Olaf B. Rader, "Kreuze und Kronen. Zum Byzantinischen Einfluß im 'Krönungsbild' des Evangeliiars Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Heinrich der Löwe. Herrschaft und Repräsentation*, ed. Johannes Fried and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2013), 199–238.

**71** Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire," 147–49.

**72** Steigerwald, *Das Evangeliar*, 23.



Book of Life, which contains the names of those who lived according to the Gospel and who would therefore be able to enter God's kingdom. This is expressed by the bande-rolle that drapes down from the Virgin's arm and across her lap to end above the head of St. Aegidius: "Enter the kingdom of life with my help" (*ad regnum vite me subveniente venite*), reminding the ducal couple and other persons who had access to the manuscript that they could turn to the Virgin and her Child for support. In visual terms, the scroll balances the book presented by Henry and serves as a way of linking Matilda's side to the holy writ. What is more, an additional bond between Matilda and the Mother and Child is established by the scroll, as it touches the framing device just at the M of her name.

When read together, dedication text and donation miniature reveal a clear sense of ducal self-awareness to which piety, ancestry, and largesse were essential. These characteristics defined them as belonging to the highest elite. Their secular identities are expressed in a liturgical manuscript, linking the ducal couple's worldly existence with the heavenly realm.

In the gospel book, the celestial sphere is not only embodied by the Virgin and Child, who summon the ducal couple to enter the kingdom of life, but also by Christ who calls Henry, Matilda and their ancestors to take up the cross and follow him.<sup>73</sup> Christ is represented in the so-called coronation miniature on fol. 171v; together with a *Maiestas Dei* on the facing page, the coronation scene concludes the painted cycle (Figure 21). Here Henry and Matilda respectfully receive the crowns of eternal life under the gaze of their parents and grandparents.<sup>74</sup> For the present study, my focus is on the lower zone of the miniature where the ducal couple and their ancestors are depicted, although the significance of the full scene cannot be completely grasped without taking into account the upper zone, both Christ's call to follow him, and the mediation of the saints, including the recently canonized Thomas Becket, whose presence clearly conveys Plantagenet sentiments.<sup>75</sup>

The striking red inscription against a white background above Matilda's head ("Duchess Matilda daughter of the king of the English") ties her at once to her husband and to her father.<sup>76</sup> Like Henry, Matilda is splendidly adorned, with a richly decorated mantle underscoring her status as a princess. Her royal lineage is emphasized in other ways as well. She is portrayed as standing, making her taller than her kneeling husband, thereby counterbalancing Henry's privileged position at Christ's right side while also indicating that the royal princess was equally important from both divine and dynastic perspectives. Matilda's importance is accentuated by the crown that is conferred on her, which actually touches her head while Henry's crown hovers just above, suggesting that her royal status was considered crucial to Duke Henry because it enhanced his own prestige.<sup>77</sup>

**73** The idea of the earthly gift and heavenly reward is acknowledged by scholars studying the gospel book. See, for example, Kroos, "Die Bilder," 182.

**74** Hermann Jakobs, "Dynastische Verheißung. Die Krönung Heinrichs des Löwen und Mathildes im Helmarshausener Evangeliar," in *Kultur und Konflikt*, ed. Jan Assmann and Dietrich Harth (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 215–58; and Rader, "Kreuze und Kronen," 218–19.

**75** Thomas Becket's presence is discussed in Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire."

**76** "ducissa. matilda regis filia."

**77** The crown on Matilda's head has also been interpreted as a sign that Matilda had passed away when the gospel book was made; see Kroos, "Die Bilder," 133.



Figure 21. Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda, 1172–1176. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 105 Noviss. 2°, fol. 171v.  
Photo: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

Matilda's superiority is further underscored by the crowning hands of God: they appear to be crossed, so that he bestows the crown on Matilda with his right hand, counterbalancing her less privileged position to the left of the deity.<sup>78</sup>

This gesture mirrors the equilibrium in the miniature's overall composition, in which parallel attention is paid to the ancestors of both Henry and Matilda, who stand behind them at the coronation. They can be identified as Henry's maternal grandparents Empress Richenza (d. 1141) and Emperor Lothar (d. 1137), the duke's parents Duchess Gertrud (d. 1143) and Duke Henry the Proud (d. 1137), along with Matilda's father King Henry II (d. 1189) and her paternal grandmother Queen Matilda (d. 1167).<sup>79</sup> The last was a crucial figure in this family portrait because it was only through her descent from King Henry I that her own son Henry II had been able to claim the English throne. The choice to title the elder Matilda *regina* rather than *imperatrix* may seem remarkable since most of her charters style her "empress," but for her seal she used *Romanorum regina*.<sup>80</sup> In the gospel book, the use of "queen" seems designed to underscore the royal ancestry of her namesake and granddaughter. Finally, next to Queen Matilda stands a figure who has been identified as either Eleanor of Aquitaine or Richenza, Henry and Matilda's eldest daughter.<sup>81</sup> The absence of a crown on the figure's head and simpler dress make it unlikely that Eleanor is depicted here. And while it is possible that Richenza would be included if we accept that the manuscript was made around 1172—when she was born—the absence of an inscription above her head makes a solid identification impossible. I therefore prefer to regard her (or him) as anonymous. This does not alter the message of these dynastic portraits, namely that Matilda, as a royal daughter, was a prestigious partner for Henry, while also demonstrating that the duke was a worthy partner for a princess because of his imperial descent. The presence of parents and grandparents renders visible the otherwise unrepresented offspring mentioned in the dedicatory text. The absence of children, who were crucial to the preservation of the Guelph dynasty, is one reason for reading the making and donation of the gospel book as a response to pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>82</sup>

The inclusion of parents and grandparents does not solely refer to blood ties and social memory, but also demonstrates, through the golden crosses they hold, that both families have responded to Christ's words written on his scroll in the upper register: "If

**78** For this gesture, see Jakobs, "Dynastische Verheißung," 227 with references to earlier literature.

**79** "imperatrix richen'ze. / imperator lothariv's / dvcissa gertrvdis / dux .heinricvs. / dux .heinricvs. / dvcissa . mathilda regis anglici . filia . henrici . regina mathilda."

**80** Marjorie Chibnall, "The Charters of the Empress Matilda," in *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy*, ed. George Garnett and John Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 276–98 at 277. Perhaps Matilda was labelled *regina* because Richenza was styled *imperatrix*, thus paralleling within the Anglo-Norman realm the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire.

**81** For the identification of this figure as Eleanor, see Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 97; Ana Rodríguez, *La estirpe de Leonor de Aquitania: mujeres y poder en los siglos XII–XIII* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2014), 210–12. For an identification as Richenza, see Freise, "Adelsstiftung, Reichsabtei," 39.

**82** Jasperse, "Visualizing Dynastic Desire."

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>83</sup> The text scroll held by Christ, related to both the saints and the living mortals depicted, was read during the feasts of the martyrs.<sup>84</sup> A closer look at the crosses held by the ducal couple and their ancestors reveals that they are not identical.<sup>85</sup> Lothar and Gertrud carry plain golden ones decorated with red borders, while Henry the Proud holds a cross adorned with pearl motifs. King Henry II’s and his mother’s crosses are furnished with a stone in its centre, which is also visible on the cross Henry the Lion has in his hand. Matilda’s cross is somewhat smaller, and its pearled ornamentation resembles that of Henry the Proud. The representation of the divinely ordained right to rule affirmed that the duke and duchess were good Christians, beloved by Christ, who were—like their ancestors—willing to take the cross and follow him in order to receive the crowns of eternal life.<sup>86</sup>

In the coronation scene, we thus find a small but carefully composed genealogy of selected ancestors with favoured saints above. The grouping emphasizes Henry’s descent through his mother and Matilda’s lineage through her father, while tying the two branches together in the persons of the ducal couple. The gospel book clearly is more than a pious donation in which Matilda was involved: her presence next to her husband was pregnant with political meaning. Family and lineage were not only integral to shaping a person’s identity, but also important when claiming territories, obtaining privileges, and forming alliances. Within this visual message, progeny was a crucial element for the maintenance of the family’s possessions, wealth, and prestige. Images such as this can be read in relation to the past, because they demonstrate ancestry, and the esteem and property claims that came with it, but they also have a prospective function in that they proclaim future property rights and marriage options.<sup>87</sup> The coronation scene makes explicit the dynastic character of the gospel book as a whole, appropriate for the context of public liturgical display by the canons of St. Blaise who pertained to the ducal house.

Made in the same workshop for the same benefactors, the personalized psalter and gospel book with their lavish use of gold and purple communicated status, generosity, and imperial grandeur. Indeed, a first step in the self-fashioning of the ducal couple was to commission these luxury manuscripts around 1172/1173. They reflect how

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**83** “Qui vult venire post me abneget semet ipsum et tollat crucem saum [et] s[e]quaturme[us];” cf. Matthew 16:24 and Luke 9:23.

**84** Kroos, “Die Bilder,” 230.

**85** See also Rader, “Kreuze und Kronen,” 205–17.

**86** The coronation theme is underscored by the figures depicted in the corners. In the upper corners Sponsus and Sponsa speak of being adorned with crowns: see Song of Solomon 4:8 and Isaiah 61:10. In the lower corners, Paul and Zechariah also refer to coronation, with the former stating that the crown of righteousness shall be given on Judgement Day, see 2 Timothy 4:8 and Zechariah 3:5. For the crowns, see also Rader, “Kreuze und Kronen,” 217–23.

**87** Otto Gerhard Oexle, “Zur Kritik neuer Forschungen über das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen,” *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 245 (1993): 70–109 at 104; and Oexle, “Fama and Memoria,” 8–14.

the English princess and the grandson of an emperor wished to present themselves. At the same time, the books commissioned by Henry and Matilda must be understood as manifestations of their religious beliefs. If the psalter was meant to support the personal devotion of the ducal couple and perhaps served as a piece of crusade memorabilia in an age where taking the cross occupied many men and women, the gospel book allowed them to stage their identities in a more public way through the express involvement of the religious community at St. Blaise. The donation of a deluxe manuscript was not merely a ritual confirming the political bond between the ducal couple and the chapter, but even more an act designed to elicit a favourable response from the church's canons. As spiritual guards of the dynasty, the clerics were supposed to treasure its past and look out for its future through the performance of Masses for the souls of Henry, Matilda, and their family. To this end, their lineages and largesse were emphasized in word and image. The explicit inclusion of Matilda as wife of the duke and mother of his offspring, as well as Matilda as royal daughter, highlights her crucial role in the communication and preservation of fame and memory. Above all, it was as wife and mother that the duchess empowered the Guelph dynasty.

## Chapter 4

### TRAPPINGS VESTED WITH POWER

THE SPLENDIDLY DRESSED Matilda in the gospel book, discussed in the previous chapter, leaves little doubt that dress was meant to impress. Yet an outfit could work for and against a person, and it could empower or disempower both men and women.<sup>1</sup> No wonder that King Henry II spent a fortune on the outfit of his daughter Joanna when she was sent off to Sicily to marry King William II. We also have seen that the importance of appearance was expressed in the design of Joanna's seal matrix; her flowing *bliaut*, decorated *ceinture*, and fastened mantle were executed in exquisite detail, focusing further attention on the owner's status as royal daughter and former queen. As is well known, visual sources testify that medieval elite society valued outward appearance.<sup>2</sup> Often, physical looks were considered to be manifestations of a person's inner virtue and character, with clothes playing an important role in revealing this. Textiles were appreciated because they literally embodied the status, wealth, and virtue of their wearers, and as such imbued them with power. Cloth and vestments were also valued commodities because they could be separated from their owners and be given away. As portable and displayable items they had "a performative function that activated both body and space."<sup>3</sup> This performative potential also pertained to ecclesiastical settings as is evident from the remaining textiles, inventories, and writings on liturgy.<sup>4</sup> In the present chapter, my focus turns to the donations of textiles by Matilda and her sisters. Their gifts to religious institutions are contextualized through both known material remains and references to clothing and textiles in written sources.

This emphasis on women may suggest that they were most intimately connected with the world of fabrics. Roberta Gilchrist posited that the association between women

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1 For a clerical perspective, see Dyan Elliott, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy: Rites of Ordination and Degradation," in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 55–69. For a modern perspective, see Sophie Woodward, "Looking Good: Feeling Right—Aesthetics of the Self," in *Clothing as Material Culture*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 21–39.

2 Dress was criticized by some clerics. See Laurel Ann Wilson, "Status," in *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Medieval Age*, ed. Sarah-Grace Keller (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 107–24 at 108–10; and Janet E. Snyder, *Early Gothic Column-Figure Sculpture in France: Appearance, Materials, and Significance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 81. For critique on how the clergy dressed, see Maureen Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, c. 800–1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), esp. chap. 1.

3 Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring, eds., *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 8.

4 Elizabeth Carson Pastan, "Imagined Patronage," in *The Bayeux Tapestry and Its Contexts: A Reassessment*, ed. Elizabeth Carson Pastan and Stephen D. White, with Kate Gilbert (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), 60–81.



and textiles perhaps lay in female participation in the domestic production of cloth and dress. But it went beyond women's productive skills: through textiles, femininity and social and religious roles were constructed and conveyed.<sup>5</sup> This raises the question of whether textile donations can be found more frequently for women than men. According to Stefanie Seeberg and Alexandra Gajewski, the answer is "no." In fact, they maintain that nothing in the historical record suggests that the connections between medieval women and textiles were described as gendered.<sup>6</sup> Textile objects, charters, inventories, and wills testify to both men's and women's involvement in the donation of textiles. Seeberg and Gajewski, however, do acknowledge that women were often regarded as makers of textiles and played important roles in the handling of garments.<sup>7</sup> The presence of women as creators and donors of liturgical vestments, indicative of the cooperation between women and ecclesiastical leaders, has been discussed in depth by Fiona Griffiths and Maureen Miller.<sup>8</sup> These historians have convincingly argued that, through the gift of liturgical textiles, women gained access to rituals performed at the altar from which they were normally excluded precisely because of their sex. Miller highlighted that the power this gave to women proved deeply unsettling.<sup>9</sup> Despite this tension some churchmen explicitly encouraged women to make and donate textiles.<sup>10</sup> How Matilda and other elite women strategically handled textiles in order to enforce relations with others is investigated in this chapter through the lens of the gift. The practice of gift-giving illuminates the multiple ways by which power relations were negotiated.<sup>11</sup> Taken

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**5** Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, 51. See also Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017 [1984]).

**6** Gajewski and Seeberg, "Having Her Hand in It?," 34. Of a different opinion is Julia Crick, "Women, Wills and Moveable Wealth in Pre-Conquest England," in *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective*, ed. Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 17–37 at 24.

**7** Seeberg and Gajewski, "Having Her Hand in It?," 27 and 34.

**8** Griffiths, "'Like the Sisters of Aaron,'" 343–74; and Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*.

**9** Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, chap. 4 and p. 175.

**10** Bishop Hincmar of Rheims petitioned Alpais, the half-sister of Charles the Bold, to make a pillow; see Garver, "Weaving Words in Silk," 46–47. Ivo of Chartres requested Queen Matilda of England to make him a garment and Baudri of Bourgueil asked Adela of Blois for a cope; see Griffiths, "'Like the Sisters of Aaron,'" 348.

**11** Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies (Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques, 1925)*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West, 1966). For a recent and thought-provoking analysis of gift-giving, see Olli Pyyhtinen, *The Gift and its Paradoxes: Beyond Mauss. Series: Classical and Contemporary Social Theory* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). The literature on gifts and gift-giving is vast; see, for an overview of the impact of anthropological and social theories on the historical analysis of medieval gift-giving to monasteries and churches, Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach," in *Medieval Transformations: Text, Power and Gifts in Context*, ed. Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 123–56. For more object oriented research and "courtly" gifts, see Brigitte Buettner, "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *Art Bulletin* 83 (2001): 598–625; Mariah Proctor-Tiffany, "Transported as a Rare Object of Distinction: The Gift-Giving of Clémence of Hungary, Queen of France," *Journal of*



together; these artefacts demonstrate that vestments were imbued with meaning not merely through their materiality and function but also through their presentation as gifts. The performance of such gifting empowered Matilda and her contemporaries.

### What Remains: A Documented Textile Gift

Duchess Matilda, dedicated to our church, together with her husband Duke Henry gathered for our church very beautiful ornaments fittingly decorated with gold and golden embroidery: a white chasuble, a red chasuble, a white dalmatic, a red dalmatic, a white tunicle, a red tunicle, a stole of gold embroidery with a maniple, a purple cope, a snow white cope, a single alb, a Greek censer, a completely golden woven altar cover and an even better golden one in needlework: in addition, another golden embroidered cover, two shrines and sandals for the office of the bishop.<sup>12</sup>

This impressive donation of eighteen “very beautiful ornaments” is recorded in Hildesheim Cathedral’s chapter book (*Liber capitularis*) (Figure 22). Apart from one shrine that has been identified as the Oswald reliquary, the other items have perished.<sup>13</sup> The *vasa sacra* must have entered the cathedral sometime before Matilda’s

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*Medieval History* 41 (2015): 208–28; Schröder, *Macht und Gabe*. For a discussion of the interpretation of gift-giving and gift exchange, see Janet L. Nelson, “Introduction,” in *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–17; Philippe Buc, “Conversion of Objects,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 28 (1997): 99–143; Karl Leyser, “Frederick Barbarossa, Henry II and the Hand of St James,” *English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 481–506.

**12** “Methildis ducissa ecclesie nostre devotissima una cum marito suo Henrico duce contulit ecclesie optima ornamenta auro et aurifrigiis decentissime ornata: casulam candidam, casulam rubeam, dalmaticam candidam, dalmaticam rubeam, subtile album, subtile rubeum, stolam de aurifrigio cum mapulis, cappam purpuream, cappam niveam, albam unam, thuribulum Graecum, pallam altaris totam auro textam et alteram meliorem auro acu pictam; insuper aliud pallium auro textum, scrinia duo et sandalia ad ministerium episcopale.” MGH DD HL, 179. no. 122; and *Liber capitularis* (Kapiteloffiziumsbuch), Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 83.30 Aug. 2°, 29 × 18 cm, 204 fols. The entry, belonging to *Obedientie et reditus ecclesie Hildesheimensis in variis locis*, is at fol. 183r. There is a transcription of fols. 9r (*servitia coquina*), 10r–15v (calendar), 34v–35r (two lists with names of Hildesheim canons), 36v–128r (martyrology and necrology), 164r–173v and 174v and 175v–177r (anniversaries), 174r (Officium to Bernward’s Feast), 179r–184v (donations *pro memoria*), see *Das Hildesheimer Kapiteloffiziumsbuch (Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel Cod. Guelf 83.30 Aug. 2°). Transkription der bislang nicht edierten Teile*, ed. Hans Jakob Schuffels, commissioned by Prof. Dr. Hans Goetting (†) (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen Diplomatischer Apparat, Februar 2015).

**13** Michael Brandt argues that one of these shrines is that of St. Oswald; see “Kopfreliquiar des hl. Oswald,” in *Kirchenkunst des Mittelalters: Erhalten und erforschen. Katalog zur Ausstellung des Diözesan-Museums Hildesheim* (Hildesheim: Bernward, 1989), 135–60 at 135–38. For a recent publication on this reliquary, see Thomas Vogtherr, “Mathilde von England, Heinrich der Löwe und die heiligen Könige. Das Hildesheimer Oswald-Reliquiar aus der Sicht des Historikers,” in

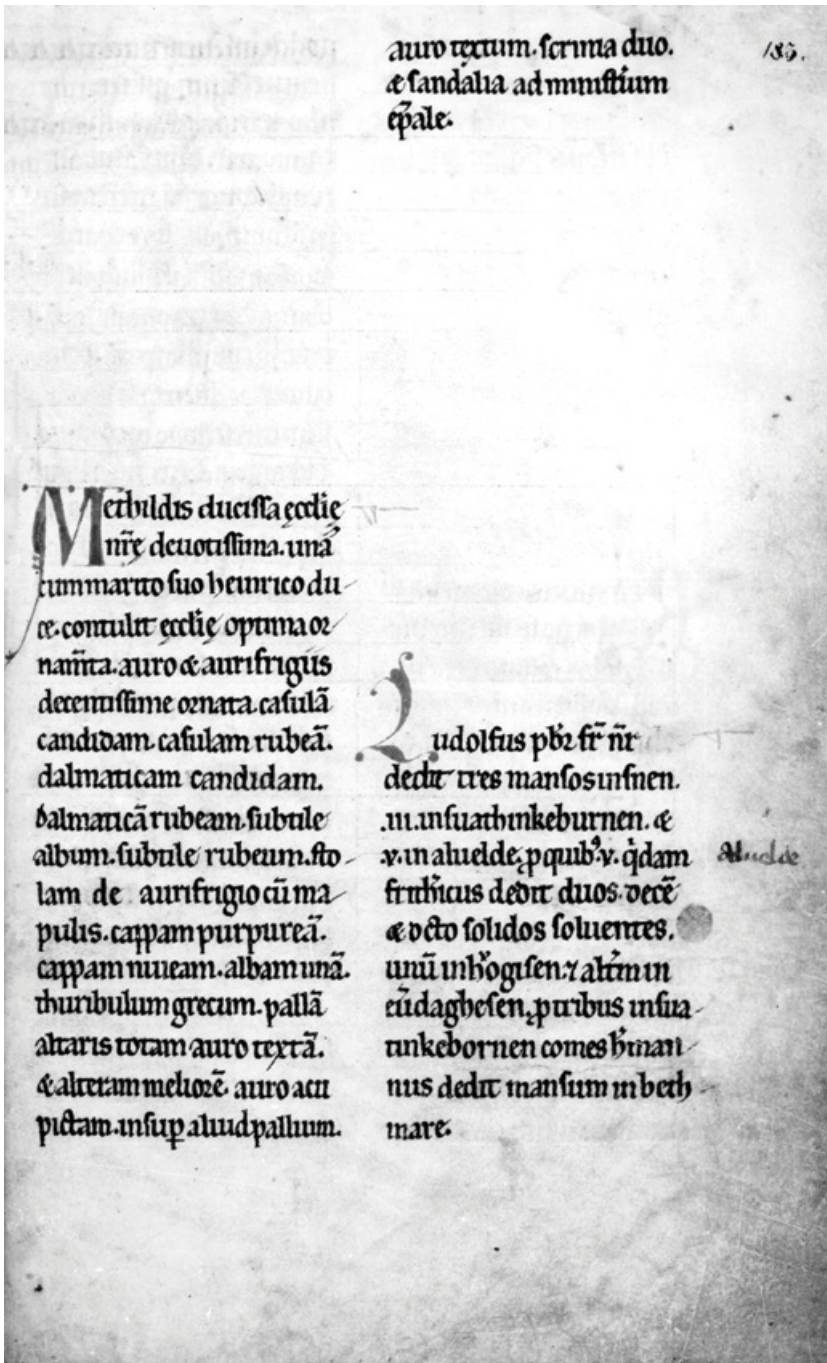


Figure 22. *Liber Capitularis* of Hildesheim cathedral, twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 83.30 Aug. 2°, fol. 183r.

Photo: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

death in 1189. Her name is given first, and only Matilda is referred to as *ecclesie nostre devotissima*, revealing that it was the duchess who had a special relation to Hildesheim. In fact, Matilda's association with the episcopal town is confirmed by the cathedral's necrology, written down in the same book, in which her death is mentioned at June 28, 1189 (*Methildis Ducissa benedictae memoriae*) whereas her husband's name is absent.<sup>14</sup> That Duke Henry is not included confirms the primary importance of the duchess to the cathedral community, perhaps in part because she was the major donor of the precious ornaments.

The vestments and vessels in this entry are described in too general terms to completely satisfy our curiosity. For example, we are left wondering whether any of the gold decorations perhaps were lions, the animals that were employed by both Henry the Lion and the Plantagenet kings as heraldic devices on coins, seals, water basins, and textiles. Whatever the case might have been, that this list exists at all shows that the donation was deemed significant enough to be copied into the chapter book.<sup>15</sup> This multiple-text manuscript was compiled around 1191/1194, with various entries and comments being added until the fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The entries—also including the cathedral's chronicle—narrate the cathedral's history, list its bishops, canons, and affiliated communities and record its belongings, underlining the centrality of this book for the memory of the community. The manuscript not only served the liturgical commemoration of the dead, but also documented the possessions and revenues of the cathedral, providing insight into the cathedral chapter's network.<sup>17</sup>

Matilda's gift is one of twenty-two recorded donations by laypeople (seven men and two women) and by clergy (thirteen men) that were added to the chapter book in the early

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*Typen mittelalterlicher Reliquiare zwischen Innovation und Tradition. Beiträge einer Tagung des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel am 22. Oktober 2016*, ed. Klaus Gereon Beuckers and Dorothee Kemper (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2017), 195–210. He considers the object as a visual testimony to Henry the Lion's self-awareness.

**14** *Liber capitularis*, fol. 81r. Two of Matilda's relatives are included: her eldest son Henry (d. April 29, 1227) on fol. 66r (*Henricus dux palatinus*), and her brother Henry the Young King (d. June 11, 1183) on fol. 76v (*Heinricus rex Anglie*).

**15** The entry resembles those appearing in inventories of church treasuries. For a discussion of these inventories with abundant references to earlier but still crucial research, see Joseph Salvatore Ackley, "Re-approaching the Western Medieval Church Treasury Inventory, c. 800–1250," *Journal of Art Historiography* 11 (2014): 1–37.

**16** Several authors have highlighted the complexity of the *Liber capitularis*; see Eckhard Freise, "Das Kapiteloffiziumsbuch des Hildesheimer Domkapitels 1191," in *Ego Sum Hildensemensis: Bischof, Domkapitel und Dom in Hildesheim 815 bis 1810*, ed. Ulrich Knapp (Petersberg: Imhof, 2000), 239–44; and Nathalie Kruppa and Christian Popp, "Das Kapiteloffiziumsbuch des Hildesheimer Domkapitels," in *Editionswissenschaftliches Kolloquium 2011. Quellen kirchlicher Provenienz. Neue Editionsvoorhaben und aktuelle EDV-Projekte*, ed. Helmut Flachenecker and Janus Tandeci (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2011), 71–87. In addition to digitizing the manuscript, a more detailed description of its layout and content as well as an analysis of its quires would be welcome.

**17** Freise, "Das Kapiteloffiziumsbuch," 239.

thirteenth century (fols. 179r–184v).<sup>18</sup> As some of these offerings—like the ones by Matilda and Archbishop Rainald of Cologne (d. 1167) on fols. 183v–184r—were made well before 1191/1194, the entries must have been copied from earlier written materials. They are not arranged haphazardly, but according to the anniversaries of the donors recorded in the necrology (fols. 36v–128r). The duchess’s donation is distributed over two columns and written down in an even script for which the ruling is still visible. Given the chronological order of the entries, I have found no satisfying answer as to why this gift—like so many others—is registered leaving blank spaces before and after the specific entry. Did the clerics of Hildesheim cathedral expect to fill in the blanks with other donations at a later time? Or were not all of the entries written down at the same moment? Whatever the case might have been, what stands out when comparing the content of the entries is that Matilda and Henry were the only donors to bestow on the cathedral solely moveable items. Unlike the other laypersons they offered no lands or properties, such as houses, estates, or mills. Yet this is not to say that their donation was of lesser value, given the number of offered items that were made of gold.

What exactly did Matilda and Henry donate? A large part of the entry is devoted to the costly and luxurious vestments for the bishop, priests, deacons, and subdeacons. Chasubles, maniples, and stoles were worn by priests during Mass, dalmatics were tunics for deacons, and tunicles (a variant of the dalmatic) were worn by subdeacons. Copes were for bishops, who would also wear the sandals mentioned at the end of the entry.<sup>19</sup> With the exception of the maniple, stole, alb, and sandals, the rest of the items were listed in pairs of reds and whites; from this we may infer that they were specifically selected to be given as gift sets. Red and green had already been defined as liturgical colours before the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, although their use varied regionally throughout Western Christendom. It is possible that these red garments were intended to be worn on the feasts of the apostles and martyrs, as well as Pentecost and the Holy Cross.<sup>20</sup> The white ones were in all likelihood used during Easter. Although no reference is made to their materials, it is likely that Matilda donated silk or fine woollen garments, which were fashionable during the central Middle Ages. A single alb, or white tunic used as undergarment, closes the list of liturgical garb, followed by a number of altar adornments making up the second part of the donation. Matilda offered a Greek censer, and we can only guess what was meant by “Graecum.” Did the item come from Byzantium, or more generally from the Eastern Mediterranean? Or was it made in the style of the “East”?<sup>21</sup> It is possible that “Greek” referred to its shape, namely a censer that took the shape of an equal-armed Greek cross. In addition to the censer the duchess also

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**18** According to Freise these entries belong to the twelfth-century part of the *Liber capitularis*.

**19** For those wearing these garments, see Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, appendix; and the seminal study by Joseph Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1907), 728–36.

**20** Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 39–41; and Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, 729.

**21** For the conceptualization of “Greek,” see Ackley, “Re-approaching the Western Medieval Church Treasury,” 25–26.

offered a completely golden woven altar cover, and an even better golden one in needlework, along with yet another golden embroidered cover, as well as two shrines and episcopal sandals. Here the extensive use of gold stands out for the altar covers, indicating both appearance and value, whereas the materials of the shrines and sandals remain unspecified.<sup>22</sup> With this gift to the cathedral, Matilda added generously to what already was an impressive trove of *ornamenta*.

Hildesheim Canon Godefridus (*frater noster*), whose presence is attested in 1182/1183, presented to his church a “red samite cope with gold embroidery and a gold chalice together with his priestly robe,” together with an impressive range of books.<sup>23</sup> And the aforementioned Archbishop Rainald of Cologne donated “a good pallium adorned with golden *signa* and an embellished banner.”<sup>24</sup> The textile treasure was expanded further when Bishop Conrad of Hildesheim (1194–1198) added thirteen textiles, two small shrines and relics. The *Chronicon Hildesheimense*, which was written between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries and is part of the cathedral’s *Liber capitularis*, describes the bishop’s gift in fair detail: three chasubles (one of red silk, another white, and the third of purple-red, all decorated with gold), two dalmatics (one of red silk, the other white), an alb of white silk, three altar cloths (two of purple-red, of which one is decorated with gold circles and the other with stars; the third one for daily use on the altar), a good curtain that normally was hung in the north part of the choir, a purple towel, six copes (three of red, three of white silk), two small shrines of gold and gems, two fragments of the relics of St. Stephen and St. Laurentius, and some balsam.<sup>25</sup> Here, too, the outer vestments are red and white, and the chasubles are decorated with gold. Like the alb Matilda donated, the one presented by the bishop is white as well, and now the material is specified as a silk fabric known as samite.<sup>26</sup> It was through such liturgical vestments donated by Bishop Conrad and his predecessors, as well as by Matilda, that bishops, priests, deacons, and subdeacons quite literally fabricated their specific

**22** A pair of episcopal sandals from the mid-twelfth century can still be found at Hildesheim; see Michael Brandt, ed., *Abglanz des Himmels. Romanik in Hildesheim*. Katalog zur Ausstellung des Dom-Museums Hildesheim, Hildesheim 2001 (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2001), 182, cat 4.2.

**23** “Dedit in super ecclesie cappam de rubeo examito cum aurifrigio et calicem deauratum cum indumentis suis sacerdotalibus.” *Liber capitularis*, fols. 180v and 48r.

**24** “Ecclesiam vero nostram pallio bono aureis signis distincto et vexillis adornavit.” *Liber capitularis*, fols. 183v and 184r.

**25** “Ipse ecclesie nostre ornatum decenter ampliavit; dedit enim tres casulas, unam de examinato rubeo, aliam de candido, terciam de purpura violatia, omnes ornatas aurifrigio; duas dalmaticas, unam examito rubeo, alteram de candido, albam bonam examito candido, tres pallas altaris, duas de purpura rubea, unam de auro circulatam, aliam stellatam, terciam cotidianam in altari; cortinam bonam, que suspendi solet in aquilonari parte sanctuarii, purpuram unam villosam; sex cappas, tres de examito rubeo, tres de albo; duo scrinia pulchra ex auro et gemmis, duas porciones reliquiarum sancti Stephani et sancti Laurentii, modicum balsami.” *Chronicon Hildesheimense*, ed. and trans. Klaus Nass, *Mittelalterliche Quellen zur Geschichte Hildesheims. Quellen und Dokumentation zur Stadtgeschichte Hildesheims 16* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 2006), 68–69.

**26** For samite, see chap. 1, note 17.



religious identities, recognizable as differing ranks of clerics. Their dress was crucial to the performance of their office during Mass and in liturgical festivities like processions. Clearly, ecclesiastical dress activated the bodies of the clergy while also marking the spaces they entered and used. That these garments held a special status is evident also from the fact that the clergy were not supposed to wear them outside on the street.<sup>27</sup>

### Woven Words: The Power of Threads

While written descriptions of the ornaments donated by Matilda give a general impression of their appearance and costliness, neither exact design nor fabrics can be established from the textual source. We are fortunate, therefore, that in connection with her sister Leonor original textiles do survive in fine condition: a silk stole, intended to be worn around the neck of the priest, and a matching silk maniple, which was worn over the priest's wrist (Figure 23). They are preserved in the Museo de Real Colegiata de San Isidoro in León.<sup>28</sup> Both pieces are tablet weaves, a technique in which a bundle of flat tablets (made of ivory, bone, or wood) with holes in their corners is used to create the warp through which the weft is passed. This technique was common for similar liturgical vestments, as also for belts, borders, and trims.<sup>29</sup> The silk warp of both cloths consists of red threads and yellow-green threads with a weft of the same yellow-green silk thread, to which metal threads and blue and red silk threads are added for the crosses, castles of Castile, and inscriptions. The abundantly used metal wrapped around a silk core is an alloy of silver, gold, and copper, resulting in colours varying from white to yellowish. Technical analysis has revealed that the red silk threads were dyed with a mixture of kermes, madder root and tannins (often extracted from oak galls), while the yellow-green is a mix of yellow *Reseda luteola* (also known as yellow weed), indigotin (the principal colour in indigo), and Persian berries.<sup>30</sup> As these are common dye pigments throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, they do not help solve the riddle of whether the stole and maniple were made in Iberia or elsewhere.

There is no doubt that Queen Leonor was involved in the making of these vestments. In a triple register at the midpoint of the cloth, the inscription in metal thread on the

<sup>27</sup> Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 25–44.

<sup>28</sup> León, Museo de Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, inv. nr. IIC-3-089-002-0024 (stole) and inv. nr. IIC-3-089-002-0025 (maniple).

<sup>29</sup> For the technique of tablet weaving, see Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Nancy Spies, "Tablet Weave," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Crawford, and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 571–74. It is not an embroidery as Manuel Gómez Moreno suggested in his *Catálogo monumental de España. Provincia de León (1906–1908)*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, 1925–26), 1:211. The idea of embroidery also appears in José Manuel Cerda Costabal, "The Marriage of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Leonor Plantagenet: The First Bond between Spain and England in the Middle Age," in *Les stratégies matrimoniales*, 143–53 at 144.

<sup>30</sup> A scientific dye analysis was commissioned by Laura Rodríguez Peinado, of which the results have not yet been published.

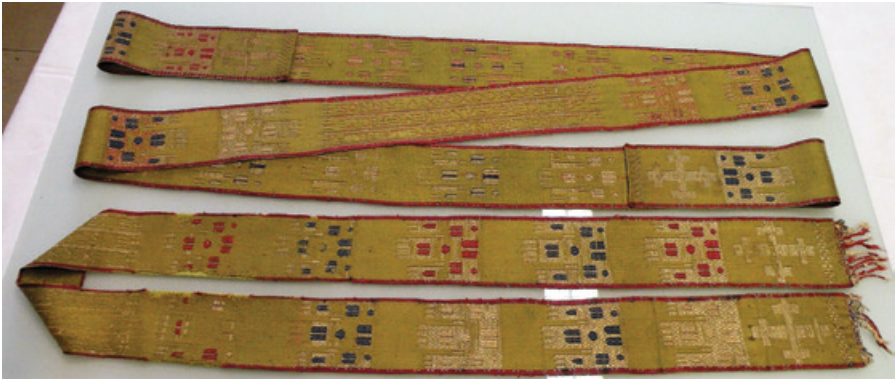


Figure 23. Stole (top) and maniple (bottom) 1197. León, Museo de Real Colegiata de San Isidoro. Photo: Therese Martin.



Figure 24. Inscription on the stole. Photo: Therese Martin.

front of the stole reads, “Leonor, queen of Castile, daughter of Henry, king of England, made me in 1197” (Figure 24).

+ ALIENOR: REGINA: CASTELLE: FILIA +  
 + HENRICI: REGIS: ANGLIE: ME: FECIT: +  
 + SVB: ERA: MCCXXXV: ANNOS: +<sup>31</sup>

The lettering is carefully composed, giving the names of Leonor and Henry in the first and second register respectively, followed by their titles and kingdoms. Even the *filia* and *fecit*, making up the end of each phrase, are laid out evenly. Because the maniple has been exposed to heavier wear through handling, its metal thread inscription is in worse condition; it is nearly identical to that on the stole, albeit without the words *sub* and *annos* because of the reduced space available for the inscription (the maniple measures 154.4 × 7 cm and the stole is 277 cm long).<sup>32</sup> The date of 1197 on both textiles supports

**31** “era 1235.” The use of “era” indicates the Hispanic system of dating, from which thirty-eight years must be subtracted to arrive at an Anno Domini date.

**32** + ALIENOR: REGINA: CASTELLE + / + FILIA HENRICI REGIS ANGLIE / + ME FECIT ERA M: CCX: XXV (Leonor queen of Castile, daughter of Henry king of England, made me in the era 1235). Notice



the notion that the two were made as a set, while the careful construction of each inscription shows that they were consciously contrived at the midpoint of each piece and intended to be visible, at least until the stole was covered by the priest's chasuble, which would partially obscure the maniple as well.

In the textile inscriptions, Leonor is styled queen of Castile and thus wife of Alfonso VIII, though the king himself is not named. The Castilian identification is underscored by the repeating pattern of castles, with their eye-catching red and blue windows and doors decorating the vestments. These heraldic devices are identical to the castle on the reverse of Alfonso's double-sided lead seal, which he employed from ca. 1175 onwards.<sup>33</sup> Alfonso VIII seems to have been the first to use the castle as an armorial emblem in Iberia, and the motif also appeared on textiles in his and Leonor's tombs.<sup>34</sup> In charters connected to the Castilian court, Leonor's role was always expressed through the phrase *una cum uxore mea Alienor*, suggesting her partnership with Alfonso, whereas the phrase *filia regis Anglorum* found on the stole and maniple were not common in Iberia.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps this deviation from the rule can be taken as an indication that the textiles were made in England where the connection between father and daughter was given prominence. Yet we should also consider the possibility that this English link was the result of Leonor's explicit involvement in the making of both garments.

Even though the inscriptions leave no doubt that Leonor Plantagenet was the driving force behind these liturgical cloths, we are still in the dark about her exact role in their making since *me fecit* might refer to the donor who financed them, the patron who ordered the work, the artist who created the pieces, or the recipient who owned them, all of whom could be considered makers.<sup>36</sup> It is tempting to consider Leonor the artist

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that when read in a triple register *Castelle* and *Anglie* are laid out in parallel as well. The date of the maniple had been published as 1198 rather than 1197, seeming to indicate that the set was produced in two consecutive years. However, recent first-hand analysis and detailed photography of the reverse of each piece has confirmed that both are dated 1197. I am grateful to the museum directors, Luis García Gutiérrez and Raquel Jaén, for giving me access to their collection. See Cristina Partearroyo Lacaba, "Estolas de la reina Leonor de Inglaterra," in *Maravillas de la España medieval*, ed. Bango Torviso, 2 vols. (León: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001), 1:357 and 2:129.

**33** Antonio Sánchez González, "Los 'Privilegios Rodados' originales del Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli: I. Alfonso VIII de Castilla (1158–1214)," *En la España Medieval* 35 (2012): 367–412 at 393–94.

**34** Kristin Böse, "Cultures Re-Shaped: Textiles from the Castilian Royal Tombs in Santa María de las Huelgas in Burgos," in *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages*, ed. Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 95–105 at 103–4. Böse says that the fabric was Alfonso's mantle. According to María Barrigón, however, the textile was not part of his mantle, but perhaps part of the coffin's lining: "Textiles and Farewells: Revisiting the Grave Goods of King Alfonso VIII of Castile and Queen Eleanor Plantagenet," *Textile History* 46 (2015): 235–57 at 243 and fig. 7.

**35** Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180–1246)*, 35.

**36** Therese Martin, "Contribuciones del mecenazgo multicultural a la autoridad de las élites femeninas en la península ibérica (s. X–XI)," in *Arquitectura y mujeres en la historia*, ed. María Elena Díez Jorge (Madrid: Síntesis, 2015), 115–44 at 119. Martin pointed out that the shorter cloth was a maniple rather than a stole, thus making a set to be worn by a single individual; previously they

because her name appears on the type of textiles that could have been produced in a domestic or courtly setting, especially if we assume that, as a royal daughter, Leonor would have received some training in the making of textiles.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, both surviving textiles and written references testify that women—secular and religious, real and fictional—did indeed weave, sew, and decorate liturgical vestments. Queen Margaret of Scotland, according to her eleventh-century *vita*, produced “caps for singers, chasubles, stoles, altar cloths, and other sacred vestments and decorations for the church.”<sup>38</sup> And in his *Chronica Slavorum* Helmold of Bosau narrates that when the blind woman Adelburg regained her sight she singlehandedly made a cover to be put on Bishop Vizelin’s grave as a testimonial to and reminder of her healing.<sup>39</sup>

Nonetheless, I want to challenge the assumption that Leonor was the weaver of these vestments. Although the basic technique of tablet weaving is relatively simple, here the patterns and inscriptions indicate a complex tablet structure. This complexity can be inferred from the slightly varying sizes of the castles and crosses, irregularities that are only noticeable when the work is examined in detail. The lavish use of silks and metal threads, as well as the fine execution and the readability of the inscription on both front and back, are indicative of the textiles’ high quality. It is not yet possible to establish with certainty how many tablets and warp threads were used, but following the data gathered by Valerie Garver for three Carolingian tablet weaves, it seems safe to assume the use of at least 90 tablets and 360 warp threads (90 tablets × 4 threads).<sup>40</sup> While there would have been tools that aid in working with so many tablets, crafting such high-end pieces requires both experience and the right equipment, which is why a professional weaver would have been commissioned to make these textiles. And as Maureen Miller and others have pointed out, it is very likely that this weaver was a woman: until the thirteenth century women were active makers of textiles, and although their roles changed when the profession became a professionalized and more lucrative industry, the connection of women with textiles continued.<sup>41</sup>

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had been published as two stoles. See also Martin, “Exceptions and Assumptions,” 1–33 esp. 2–4 and 12–17.

**37** Cerda Costabal, “The Marriage of Alfonso VIII,” 144; and Partearroyo Lacaba, “Estolas,” in *Maravillas de la España medieval*, 1:357.

**38** Griffiths, “Like the Sisters of Aaron,” 351.

**39** “Fecitque postmodum de manu propria velum ad operiendum sepulchrum pontificis in testificacionem et monimentum iluminaciones suae.” Von Bosau, *Slawenchronik*, 270.

**40** Garver, “Weaving Words in Silk.” Nancy Spies estimates that fewer tablets were used; see Nancy Spies, *Ecclesiastical Pomp and Aristocratic Circumstance: A Thousand Years of Brocaded Tabletweoven Bands* (Jarrettsville: Arelate Studio, 2000), 265 cat. A. I would like to thank Ana Cabrera Lafuente for her assistance with the analysis of the textiles.

**41** Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 141–76; Ruth Mazo Karras, “This Skill in a Woman is By No Means to Be Despised: Weaving and the Gender Division of Labor in the Middle Ages,” in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 89–104; Sharon A. Farmer, *The Silk Industries of Paris: Artisanal Migration, Technological Innovation, and Gendered Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

Leonor did not have to be the weaver of the stole and maniple for these items to show the relationship between women and textile gifts. The inscription gives her name as a sign of identity, defined both through her title as queen of Castile and her position as daughter of the king of England. Her name is also a sign of validation in the sense that no other than Queen Leonor was the maker. With her name, title, and descent as well as date woven in silk and gold, Leonor consciously fabricated textiles that remembered her not as just any Leonor, but as this particular high-born queen.

### Last Will: Three Hangings

While Matilda and Leonor gifted vestments during their lifetime, their sister Joanna bequeathed textiles on her deathbed; a version of her will is held by the Archives Départementales Maine-et-Loire at Angers (Figure 25).<sup>42</sup> The document belongs to the so-called series H (clergé régulier, before 1790), which contains charters from male and female religious establishments of different orders that were nationalized at the beginning of the French Revolution.<sup>43</sup> The document is one of the rare examples of women's wills that have survived from the twelfth century. No testament of Joanna's mother or sisters has come down to us.<sup>44</sup> And even though her brother King John had a will made when he was gravely ill, its content is very different as no references are made to specific movable items and no sums of money are mentioned.<sup>45</sup>

The text of Joanna's will has been written on a high-quality large single-sheet parchment measuring 43.5 x 23.5 centimetres. The bottom of the sheet is folded and contains one central slit to hold a seal tag that is now missing.<sup>46</sup> Divided into two columns

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**42** Angers, Archives Départementales Maine-et-Loire 101 H 55, no. 10. An English translation can be found in J. Horace Round, ed., *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 1, 918–1206 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1899), no. 1105, available at British History Online [www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/france/918-1206/pp372-394](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/france/918-1206/pp372-394).

**43** Justine Moreno informed me in personal communications that the will arrived at the archive in Angers from Fontevraud.

**44** Leonor's husband Alfonso VIII had several wills drawn up. Interestingly, his first and most extensive one, dated December 8, 1204, mentions that his silver should be used to make chalices that are to be distributed among cathedrals and specific monasteries. Gonzalez, *El reino de Castilla*, 3:347 (no. 768). For some twelfth-century Iberian wills related to women, see Georges Martin, "Le testament d'Elvire (Tábara, 1099)," *e-spania* 5 (2008); DOI: 10.4000/e-spania.12303; Carlos Reglero de la Fuente, "Los testamentos de las infantas Elvira y Sancha: monasterios y espacios de poder," in *Mundos medievales: espacios, sociedades y poder. Homenaje al Profesor José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre*, ed. Beatriz Arízaga Bolumburu et al. (Santander, Universidad de Cantabria, 2012), 1:835–47; and Miriam Shadis, "The Personal and the Political in the Testaments of the Portuguese Royal Family (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)," *Historical Reflections* 43 (2017): 77–92.

**45** Stephen Church, "King John's Testament and the Last Days of his Reign," *English Historical Review* 125 (2010): 1–24, in which copies of Henry II's testament as well as references to those of Richard are also mentioned.

**46** At the bottom left a hole is visible, perhaps meant for another seal to be appended.

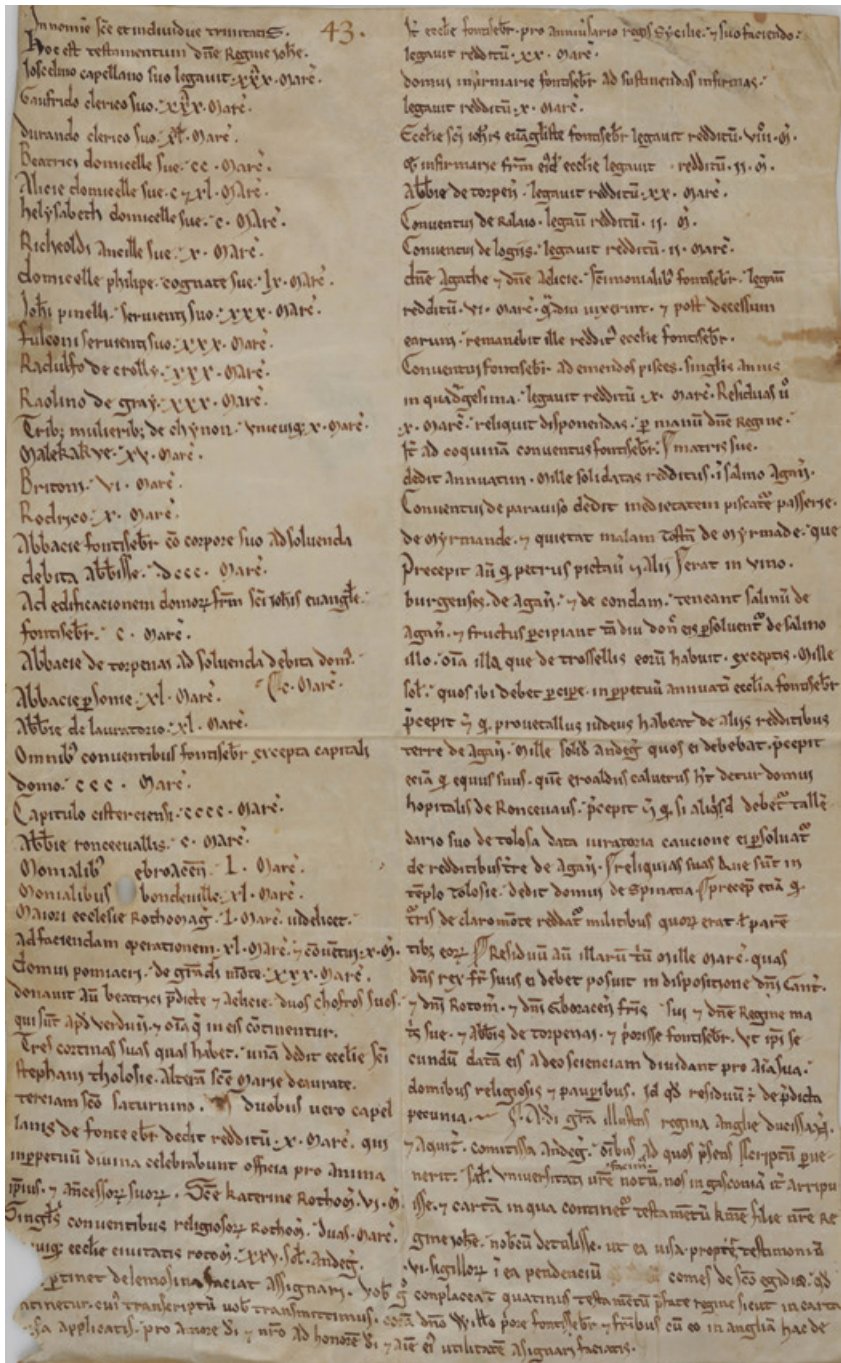


Figure 25. Testament of Joanna, 1199. Angers, Archives départementales Maine-et-Loire, 101 H 55, no. 10. Photo: © Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire.

with hardly any visible traces of ruling, the whole appearance is that of a carefully arranged text written in a clear gothic script. The testament's opening lines, *In nomine sancta et individue trinitatis. Hoc est testamentum domine regine Johanne* (In the name of the holy and indivisible trinity. This is the testament of the Lady [and] Queen Joanna), suggest that the document is not a first-person will. This is confirmed by a codicil at the bottom which states that her mother went to Gascony, "taking with her the original (*carta*) testament of her dearest daughter Queen Joanna, so that the count of St. Gilles may see it, for the testimony of the six seals attached to it."<sup>47</sup> The surviving copy of her will can perhaps be understood as a publication charter, a "commemoration record of a ceremony or court in which the testamentary desires of a deceased person were made public, sworn to or verified by testimony of witnesses and/or reading of a written will."<sup>48</sup>

Even though wills often provide information on the motives or circumstances of the testator, such as the poor health of King John, Joanna's testament does not.<sup>49</sup> Her will was issued when she fell mortally ill in Rouen, where she made known that she wanted to enter the abbey of Fontevraud as a nun despite being married and pregnant. In the end Joanna received the veil and died shortly thereafter, on September 24, 1199.<sup>50</sup> It seems that her son was removed (*extrahitur*) from Joanna's body after she passed away so that the boy could be baptized before he would die, and indeed he drew his last breath soon after he was baptized and was buried in the Notre-Dame at Rouen.<sup>51</sup> Most of Joanna's bequests concern money, rents, and revenues, whereas hardly any mobile objects or immobile properties are listed. We read about two coffers at Verdun with their contents given to her maids, Alice and Beatrice, and about Joanna's horse that should be left to the hospital of Roncevaux.

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**47** These seals may have been that of Joanna and those of the five mentioned persons in the inseximus by Vincent, archbishop of Tours, in 1261, of a document Joanna issued in 1199 (Round, *Calendar of Documents*, no. 1104): Queen Eleanor, Archbishop Hubert of Canterbury, Archbishop Walter of Rouen, Archbishop Geoffrey York (and not Geoffrey of Rouen as Round copied from his source), and L[ucas], the abbot of Torpenai.

**48** Nathaniel Lane Taylor, "The Will and Society in Medieval Catalonia and Languedoc, 800–1200" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1995), 46.

**49** Taylor, "The Will and Society," 41.

**50** Bowie, "To Have and Have Not," 37–38; and Bowie, *The Daughters*, 137, 188.

**51** *Clypeus nascentis Fontebraldensis ordinis*, containing transcriptions of medieval charters related to the Abbey of Fontevraud, mentions "Migravit ad Dominum Domina, ex cujus latere infans vivus extrahitur, ac Deo volente, qui bonis bona accommodat, a praedictis personis sacro sonte Baptismatis regeneratur, & Ecclesiae B. Mariae tumulatur. Igitur Priorissa, accipiens corpus venerabilis Joanna Reginae ac Monachae, apud Fontem-Ebraudi attulit." Jean de La Mainferme, *Clypeus Nascentis Fontebraldensis ordinis contra priscos et novos ejus Calumniatores*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1684–1692), 2:161. Roger of Howden makes no mention of this. The word "extrahitur" could suggest a *sectio in mortua* (Caesarean section), but the terminology is too general to ascertain this. For medieval Caesarean sections, see Steven Bednarski and Andrée Courtemanche, "'Sadly and with a Bitter Heart:' What the Caesarean Section Meant in the Middle Ages," *Florelegium* 28 (2011): 33–69.



She also stipulates that “her relics in the Temple at Toulouse” should be transferred to the “house of Spinatia.” Possibly the “temple” refers to the pilgrimage church of St. Sernin, which received support from Joanna’s great-grandmother Philippa of Toulouse (d. 1117), whereas “Spinatia” was the Fontevrist priory of Lespinasse (Toulouse), which had been founded in 1114 by the same Philippa.<sup>52</sup> If this identification holds true, it means that Joanna transferred her relics from one location promoted by her great-grandmother to another her great-grandmother favoured even more because it was affiliated with the abbey of Fontevraud. Perhaps she wished for the relics to be transferred at the time of her death to connect herself with her great-grandmother and to demonstrate her Fontevrist preferences.<sup>53</sup> In the will, it is explicitly stated that the relics—which remain unspecified—belonged to her, indicating that they were treasured in a way that was recognizably hers. The relics would have been encased in some sort of precious container, such as a shrine or a portable altar, likely inscribed with her name. Numerous examples of these caskets survive from the central Middle Ages.<sup>54</sup>

And then there are *tres cortinas suas*, Joanna’s only Toulousain bequests, namely to the churches of St. Etienne, Notre Dame de la Daurade, and St. Sernin.<sup>55</sup> Because the *cortinas* are specified as being Joanna’s, it may be that these hangings originally decorated her chambers. Hangings in secular and religious buildings served multiple purposes, from decorative elements that also protected against cold, to room dividers that created social and liturgical spaces, allowing visible or physical access to some while denying it to others.<sup>56</sup> As such, curtaining devices were powerful instruments in the hands of secular rulers and clergy for emphasizing divisions and hierarchy, which could lead to harmony or conflict.

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**52** For Lespinasse, see Jean-Marc Bienvenu, “Aliénor d’Aquitaine et Fontevraud,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 29 (1986): 15–27 at 16. Laurent Macé, who is currently studying Joanna’s will but has not yet published his findings, suggested to me in personal communication that the “temple” may also refer to the house of the Knights Templar, which was installed in Toulouse in the middle of the twelfth century.

**53** For the donations to Fontevraud houses mentioned in the testament, see Bienvenu, “Aliénor d’Aquitaine et Fontevraud,” 24n78.

**54** Jitske Jasperse, “Between León and the Levant: The Infanta Sancha’s Portable Altar as Material Evidence for Medieval History,” in *The Medieval Iberian Treasury in the Context of Cultural Interchange*, ed. Therese Martin, special issue, *Medieval Encounters* (2019): 124–49.

**55** In his translation of the testament, Round was not sure how to identify the Church of Our Lady and suggested it might be in Orleans. Given that the other two are clearly located in Toulouse, it makes more sense to identify the third as Notre Dame de la Daurade in Toulouse. The church of St. Sernin owns two large silk fragments made in Iberia that together make a chasuble (151 × 287 cm), which in 1258 was used to wrap the relics of St. Euxpère. See Dorothy Shepherd and Gabriel Vial, “La Chasuble de St. Sernin,” *Bulletin de liaison du Centre international d’études des textiles anciens* 1 (1965): 19–31.

**56** Umberto Bonhianino, “The King, His Chapel, His Church: Boundaries and Hybridity in the Religious Visual Culture of the Norman Kingdom,” *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 4 (2017): 3–50 at 18–20.



The donation of hangings to churches was certainly not unusual, but detailed specifications about their appearance or placement are rare. As we have seen, Bishop Conrad presented a beautiful one to Hildesheim, which “was usually hung in the north part of the choir.”<sup>57</sup> That the description was not more detailed has perhaps to do with the fact that hangings—that is, large textiles—were so quotidian in ecclesiastical settings that only special circumstances would give rise to a more precise description.<sup>58</sup> To this we should add that hangings, like other textiles, would often be reused. It is possible that Joanna’s own hangings were remade into other ecclesiastical items. The repurposing of luxury textiles is one of the reasons why twelfth-century donations recorded on parchment, like those of Joanna and Matilda, can rarely be connected to surviving objects, like the liturgical set of Leonor.

### Empowering Textiles

As discussed above, the connection between medieval women and textiles tends to be taken for granted. But such donations are not a given; we should always ask why an individual woman would have donated a particular textile. Rather than suggesting that there was one overarching reason for all women, it is crucial to keep in mind that there were multiple, complementary arguments for this kind of gift-giving. At first glance Matilda’s donation to Hildesheim appears to be out of place because the cathedral did not hold the same importance to the ducal family as did their church at Brunswick or St. Michael at Lüneburg. The entry in the cathedral’s chapter book, however, suggests otherwise since Matilda is lauded as “dedicated to our church.” And indeed, Matilda and Henry were familiar with this episcopal see in Saxony, as their church in Brunswick fell under Hildesheim’s ecclesiastical authority. This connection was made explicit in 1188 when Bishop Adelog of Hildesheim consecrated the altar of the Virgin in St. Blaise at Brunswick. We know of this event because of an inscribed pyx, which was hidden in the capital of the central column of the altar.<sup>59</sup> Its lid contains an image of an enthroned figure—in all likelihood Bishop Adelog who consecrated the altar—surrounded by an encircling inscription:

In the year of the Lord 1188 this altar was dedicated in the honour of the Virgin and Mother Mary by Adelog, the venerable bishop of Hildesheim, founded and supported by the illustrious Duke Henry, son of the daughter of Emperor Lothar, and by his most devout wife Matilda, daughter of Henry II, king of the English, son of Matilda, empress of the Romans.<sup>60</sup>

**57** “cortinam bonam, que suspendi solet in aquilonari parte sanctuarii,” see chap 4, note 25.

**58** Pastan, “Imagined Patronage,” 75.

**59** This lead box was rediscovered in 1966; see Hans-Herbert Möller, “Zur Geschichte des Marienaltars im Braunschweiger Dom. Ein Reliquienfund,” *Deutsche Kunst- und Denkmalpflege* 25 (1967): 107–18.

**60** Pyx, St. Blaise, Brunswick, diameter 21 cm: + ANNO. D[OMI]NI. M. C. LXXX. VIII. DEDICATV[M]. EST. HOC. ALTARE IN. HONORE. BEATE. DEI. GENETRICIS. MARIE. / + AB ADELOGO. VENERABILI. EP[ISCOP]O. HILDESEM[EN]SI. FVNDANTE. AC. PROMOVE[N]TE. ILLVSTRI. DVCE. HENRICO. / + FILIO. FILIE. LOTHARII. IMPERATORIS. ET. RELIGIOSISSIMA. EIVS. CONSORTE. MATHILDII. / +

This inscription has often been compared to that in the coronation miniature discussed in [Chapter 3](#), yet there are noticeable differences. First, Duke Henry is connected to both Lothar and his mother, but only the name of the emperor is given: his mother remains anonymous. Second, as in the gospel book, Matilda is the daughter of the king of England (or the English), but on the pyx her grandmother is styled empress rather than queen. Despite the differences, both coronation miniature and pyx name the most important family members in order to emphasize and remember the couple's illustrious backgrounds. In return for the consecration of the altar by Adelog, perhaps as an expression of gratitude, Matilda presented the liturgical vestments to Hildesheim.

Exactly how important vestments were for the communication of episcopal identity and status is evident in surviving seal imprints, such as that of Bishop Adelog ([Figure 26](#)).<sup>61</sup> One of his wax seals contains a clear representation of the enthroned bishop wearing an amice around his neck to protect the neckline of the alb; this was covered by a dalmatic with a central ornamental stripe and decorated hems. Over the dalmatic Adelog wears a chasuble, and on his left wrist a patterned maniple with fringes is visible.<sup>62</sup> Similar rich vestments, and more, were presented by Matilda at an unknown date before her death in 1189.

It may be that Matilda donated the textiles *pro memoria*, although the entry does not specifically state this. The donation made by Henry the Lion to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, discussed in [Chapter 3](#), has a *pro memoria* clause, as do many other twelfth-century documents. In Erin Jordan's study of the sisters Joanna and Margaret of Flanders, she pointed out that the creation and strengthening of bonds between the countesses and religious institutions was not simply an issue of liturgical commemoration but as much about claiming worldly power through the creation of personal bonds and relationships with clerics.<sup>63</sup> Matilda had every reason to try to improve the ties between her family and the Hildesheim episcopacy, as their relationship was tense. Because the diocese of Hildesheim was completely surrounded by Henry's lands, the duke and the successive bishops of Hildesheim during his reign were direct rivals in territorial ambitions. The strained relations between the two parties led to the destruction of large parts of Hildesheim by Henry the Lion in 1166–1167. The town also faced serious threats during the war that destroyed Halberstadt in 1179.<sup>64</sup> That the duke and

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FILIA. HENRICI SECVNDI. REGIS ANGLOR[VM]. FILII. MATHILDIS. I[M]P[ER]AT[OR]ICIS. ROMANOR[VM]. Cited in Niehoff, "D 26 Marienaltar," in *Heinrich der Löwe* 1:192–5.

**61** Brown and red wax, Ø 7.5 cm. Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität, Diplomatischer Apparat, Urkunde Nr. 64 (dated 1178). See Claus-Peter Hasse, "Siegel Adelogs von Reinstedt, Bischof von Hildesheim (1170/71–1190)," in *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit*, 1:G5.

**62** The coins issued under Adelog are very similar to his seals; see Bernd Kluge, "EGOSUM HILDENSEMENSIS—KunstGeld in Hildesheim," in *Abglanz des Himmels. Romanik in Hildesheim*, Katalog zur Ausstellung des Dom-Museums Hildesheim 2001, ed. Michael Brandt (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2001), 33–43 esp. 35–6.

**63** Erin L. Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

**64** Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 134; Hans Goetting, *Bistum Hildesheim 3. Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe von 815 bis 1221 (1227)*, *Germania Sacra*, Neue Folge 20 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 400–443 esp. 403–11 and 419–31.

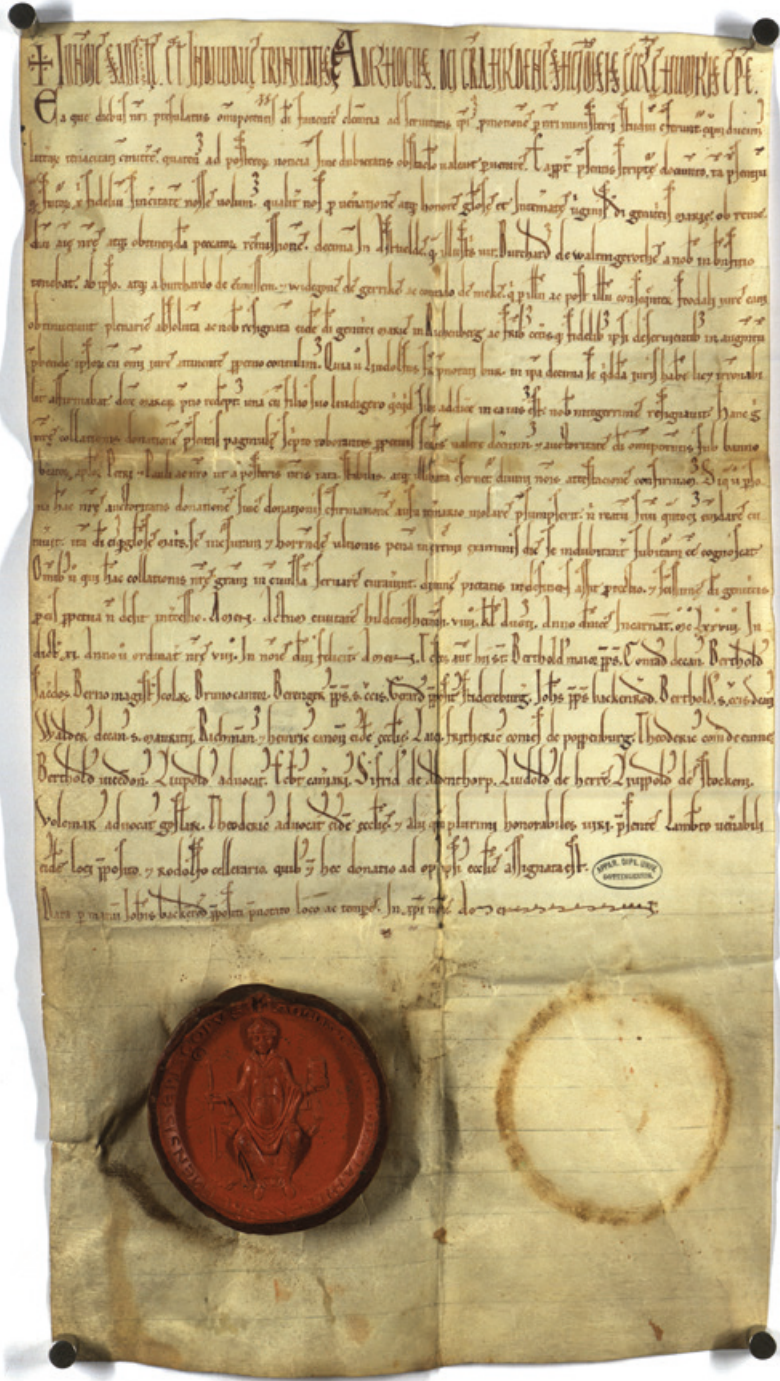


Figure 26. Seal of Adelg of Hildesheim, 1178. Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität, Apparatus Diplomaticus, Urkunde no. 64. Photo: Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen.

the Hildesheim chapter were not on good terms is indicated by Henry's absence from the cathedral's necrology, and by the parallel fact that only three Brunswick canons were included in Hildesheim's chapter book.<sup>65</sup>

It is conceivable that in these specific circumstances Matilda's donation of liturgical vestments was a gesture meant as a peace offering. Elite women are known to have played important roles as caretakers and mediators in the cause of peace during the Middle Ages.<sup>66</sup> The choice to give vestments rather than land was a sensible one, considering the constant territorial struggles: it was surely easier to alienate these movable items than landed property.<sup>67</sup> A trip to an important episcopal seat such as Hildesheim, as well as to other locations in the duchy of Saxony, would have been expected of her. Matilda was her husband's representative in 1172/1173, and she held dower lands in the north of the duchy; what is more, she was forced to leave Brunswick on several occasions during her husband's wars.<sup>68</sup>

The entry in the Hildesheim *Liber capitularis* suggests that Matilda acted as a peacemaker for the cathedral, as she had also done in the case of Ulrich of Halberstadt in 1179.<sup>69</sup> On September 23 of that year, in one of the Saxon wars, Henry the Lion burned down Halberstadt and its churches. After the destruction of the town, the duke imprisoned its bishop, Ulrich (d. 1180), and had him taken to Artlenburg (Ertheneburg), a castle located at the northern bank of the Elbe, not far from Lüneburg. There, according to Arnold of Lübeck (ca. 1210):

The very devout Duchess Matilda cared so much for him [Ulrich] that she, out of reverence for his sacred office, gave him plenty of good vestments [*vestibus bonis large*] and with great dedication she took care of all his needs, so that according to his position he would lack for nothing.<sup>70</sup>

**65** Freise, "Das Kapiteloffiziums buch," 244.

**66** Examples of such women are Clemence of Burgundy and Adela of Blois; see Hemptinne, "Les épouses des croisés," 83–95; and Kimberly A. LoPrete, "The Gender of Lordly Women: The Case of Adela of Blois," in *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women 3: Pawns or Players?*, ed. Christine Meek and Catherine Lawless (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003), 90–110; other cases are Judith of Thuringia and Bertha of Lorraine; see Jasperse, "To Have and to Hold," 83–104. German examples can be found in Elpers, *Regieren, Erziehen*.

**67** Miller, *Dressing the Clergy*, 185.

**68** For Matilda's regency, see chap. 2 and Jasperse, "A Coin Bearing Testimony," 169–90.

**69** For women as intercessors, see Caviness, "Anchoress, Abbess, and Queen," 105–54; Elpers, *Regieren, Erziehen*; Kristen Geaman, "Queen's Gold and Intercession: The Case of Eleanor of Aquitaine," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 46 (2010): 10–33; and Claire Richter Sherman, "Taking a Second Look: Observations on the Iconography of a French Queen, Jeanne de Bourbon (1338–1378)," in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 101–17.

**70** "Quem religiosissima ducissa Machthildis pietatis affectu complexa, quasi pro reverentia sacerdotali vestibus bonis large induebat et ita in omnibus necessariis ei devotissime ministrabat, ut in tali statu nichil ei deesse videretur." Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, 55.

Arnold depicts Matilda as loving and caring towards Bishop Ulrich, who received treatment commensurate with his rank. However, Arnold's statement allows for a more political interpretation as well, one in which Matilda's gift-giving actions are intended as a mediation. The duchess presented the imprisoned bishop with "plenty of good vestments" in the hope that it would calm the roiled waters stirred up by her husband. It is likely that Ulrich of Halberstadt would have taken these high-quality liturgical textiles with him after his release at Christmas 1179.

Interestingly, Halberstadt Cathedral possesses a dalmatic made of red samite—a fabric also found in Matilda's bridal treasury and in her donation to Hildesheim as "examite"—which is decorated with lions in gold thread and is dated to the second half of the twelfth century (Figure 27).<sup>71</sup> Its decoration, known as *opus Anglicanum*, belonged equally to religious and secular realms.<sup>72</sup> Here, the description given by the poet Ramón Vidal de Besalú of Leonor's mantle embroidered with a golden lion comes to mind again.<sup>73</sup> The golden lions are a reason to connect the dalmatic to Henry and Matilda.<sup>74</sup> Is it possible that this was the very cloth of samite Matilda brought with her from England in 1168? This would explain the lion motif, as King Henry II, as well as his sons Richard and John, selected lions as heraldic devices on the shields that were represented on their wax seals. Or might Henry have acquired it on his journey to or from the Holy Land in 1172/1173? As we have seen in Chapter 2, the duke appropriated the lion on small-sized coins and seals as well as in the monumental form of a giant bronze lion placed in front of his Burg at Brunswick. Perhaps the samite simply came into the ducal family's possession in Saxony at a later stage. The golden lions were embroidered at some point before the fabric was made into a dalmatic. If the precise context for the creation of this vestment and its arrival at Halberstadt remain elusive, it still represents exactly the sort of high-quality object that Matilda would have presented to Bishop Ulrich. In my opinion, the Halberstadt donation and the Hildesheim gifts demonstrate that Matilda was able to leverage her position as a wealthy daughter of the English king, a status that had accompanied her to Saxony when she married Henry the Lion, and one that was of paramount importance to the duchess, her husband, and their contemporaries, given that her descent is emphasized in all medieval sources.

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**71** Red dalmatic with lions, Halberstadt, Domschatz, second half of the twelfth century, 138 × 154 (sleeve width) cm and medallions Ø 21 cm. Barbara Pregla, "Rote Dalmatik mit gestickten Löwen," in *Der heilige Schatz im Dom zu Halberstadt*, ed. Hallard Meller et al. (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2008), 214–16.

**72** Elizabeth Coatsworth, "Opus Anglicanum," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles of the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth, and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 392–97.

**73** See above, p. 34.

**74** Jitske Jasperse, "Matilda of Saxony's Luxury Objects in Motion: Salving the Wounds of Conflict," in *Moving Women, Moving Objects 300–1500*, ed. Tracy Chapman Hamilton and Mariah Proctor-Tiffany (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 83–104.





Figure 27. Red dalmatic with lions, silk samite, second half of twelfth century. Domschatz Halberstadt, Inv.-Nr. 117. Photo: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt, Juraj Lipták.

As for Joanna's bequest of textiles to the Toulousain churches, it was made on her deathbed and so the motives behind her donation differed somewhat from Matilda's.<sup>75</sup> Joanna's testament was not merely a legal stipulation, but also a pious document and an autobiographical composition through which her posthumous reputation would be

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**75** Joanna's connection with the Toulousain churches remains enigmatic. Neither she nor her donation appears in the charter book of St. Sernin; see *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Saint-Sernin de Toulouse (844–1200)*, ed. Célestin Douais (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [1887]). Nor are Joanna and her gift recorded in the documents concerning La Daurade; see Jacqueline Caille (with Quitterie Cazes), *Sainte-Marie "La Daurade" à Toulouse—Du sanctuaire paléochrétien au grand prieuré clunisien medieval* (Paris: CTHS, 2007).



established.<sup>76</sup> We can read Joanna's gifts as a way of impacting the lives of those in the religious communities in Toulouse—as well as Fontevraud and its houses—who in return for Joanna's support were expected to pray for her and keep her memory alive.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, it is possible that Joanna gifted her *cortinas* to the three Toulousain churches in order to compensate for taking her personal relics from St. Sernin. If so, it is likely that the three hangings were high-quality textiles, perhaps decorated with gold. Shortly before her death, Joanna had her testament drawn up and managed to fulfil her wish to become a nun at Fontevraud, and later to be buried there, demonstrating her leverage. Colette Bowie concluded from Joanna's impoverished situation, her absence from charters concerned with landed wealth, and her unfortunate marriage with Raymond of Toulouse that she "appears to have exercised little if any authority during her lifetime."<sup>78</sup> Yet her possession of a salt pit in Agen, concerning which she issued a charter in the year she died, together with her seal (discussed in [Chapter 2](#)), urge a more nuanced interpretation of authority and power than one solely built on money and lands.

There is little doubt that Matilda and Joanna meant to establish, affirm, and strengthen secular and religious ties through the donation of costly items. We may assume that Leonor had the same intentions with the stole and maniple she had made. There are, however, no clues at San Isidoro that tell us when and how the textiles arrived in León. In fact, we cannot be sure that Leonor herself presented these textiles to this monastery. San Isidoro was at the heart of the kingdom of León, ruled by Fernando II (r. 1157–1188, and uncle of Alfonso VIII of Castile) and thereafter by his son Alfonso IX (r. 1188–1230), and there is nothing in the charters or chronicles that suggests that Castilian rulers took an interest in the Leonese monastery. Rather, their favoured institution was the abbey of Santa María la Real de las Huelgas in Burgos. How then did the vestments arrive at the royally sponsored monastery in León? Possibly, Leonor gave the textiles as a present to her daughter Berenguela (r. as queen consort of León 1197–1204, and as queen regnant of Castile in 1217) when she married King Alfonso IX of León in 1197, an arrangement that was actively advocated by Queen Leonor.<sup>79</sup> The coincidence of dates between the wedding celebrated in Valladolid and the inscription on the stole suggests this as the most likely option. From this point on, Berenguela maintained close relations with San Isidoro, first as queen of León and later as queen and regent of the reunited kingdom of Castile-León.<sup>80</sup>

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**76** Katherine L. Lewis, "Women, Testamentary Discourse and Life-Writing in Later Medieval England," in *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. Joël James Menuge (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), 57–75. For a gendered-status analysis of wills, see Crick, "Women, Wills," 17–37.

**77** For the will as a pious document, see Taylor, "The Will and Society," 30. For the will as an autobiographical document, see Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship*, 6. For wills as documents informing about political and personal family ties, see Shadis, "The Personal and the Political," 77–92.

**78** Bowie, "To Have and Have Not," 40.

**79** Jasperse, "Matilda, Leonor and Joanna," 536.

**80** Other women who supported the palatine monastery were Queen Sancha (d. 1067), Infanta Urraca (d. 1101), Infanta Elvira (d. 1099), Queen Urraca (d. 1126), Infanta Sancha (d. 1159) and Queen Berenguela (d. 1246). See Martin, *Queen as King*.

Even though the exact connection between Leonor and León can only be hypothesized, the maniple and stole still have something important to offer that the written donations directly connected to Matilda and Joanna are lacking: their inscriptions detailing Leonor's name, title, and connection to her father, King Henry II. In his study of the political and cultural exchange between the Plantagenet and Castilian kingdoms, José Manuel Cerda Costabal pointed out that the textiles reflect the queen's wish to be remembered as the daughter of the king of England, and that she did so after having been in Castile for almost thirty years.<sup>81</sup> It is possible to refine this statement further, for it was not only long after her arrival on the Iberian Peninsula, but also nearly a decade after her father had died that Leonor linked herself to him (and not to her brother King Richard), thereby demonstrating that it was still the old king who embodied the kingdom and determined her status as a royal daughter.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the inscriptions evoked the memories of both Leonor and her deceased father when the stole and maniple were used during Mass, manifesting the commemoration of donors and their families. To make her presence—and that of her relatives—felt at the altar, the queen gifted textiles and by doing so women became liturgical actors.

The variety of sources informing us about the textile artefacts Matilda and her sisters donated to ecclesiastical institutions unveils that through these gifts women sought to improve their own situation and that of their families. The ritual of investing the priest not only prompted his pastoral duties and visualized ecclesiastical hierarchy, but also affirmed that the making of a priest depended on wealthy benefactors who decided who was worthy of their aid and who not. The Hildesheim clergy, too, when they were dressing to set themselves apart, would have called to mind that they were supported by Matilda, who was their benefactress as well as the wife of Henry the Lion, as she is remembered in the *Liber capitularis*. Not only the performance of the gifting itself was an action of power; the vestments presented by Matilda and Leonor also carried authority through their precious materials (silks, gold, silver), their bright colours (red, yellow, blue), and inscriptions. By displaying the textiles, clerics offered the women who donated them a liturgical stage. It is important to realize, however, that women's presence at the altar through textiles was temporary and could also be erased when vestments were not visible, worn down, or simply no longer remembered. Yet through textiles women's presence remained in existence, both near the altar and in sacristies, where vestments and church furnishings were stored. On the surface, the making and donating of woven and embroidered fabrics simply belonged to the realm of the good and devout woman, but the reality was more complex. Through their donations, elite women like Matilda, Leonor, and Joanna forged meaningful spiritual and political relationships.

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**81** Cerda Costabal, "The Marriage of Alfonso VIII," 149.

**82** In commemoration of her father Henry II (d. July 6, 1189) Alfonso and Leonor donated an annual rent of 100 gold coins to Fontevraud on June 30, 1190. See González, *El reino de Castilla*, 2: no. 551.



## EPILOGUE: MATERIALIZING POWER AND ITS AFTERLIFE

**MATERIAL CULTURE OFFERS** a fruitful pathway for exploring the performance of power by elite women like Matilda and her sisters, filling out what little we know of these women by bringing their objects to bear. The study of surviving coins, seals, and textiles, as well as objects mentioned in the Pipe Rolls, a variety of chronicles, and a testament allows a more nuanced argument concerning women's agency, connections among siblings, and the preservation of family power. Material culture offers a productive direction for rethinking how medieval power was performed by the noblewomen who rarely surface in the written documents medievalists usually associate with the exercise of power.

Growing up at the Anglo-Norman court, Matilda had learned that the exhibiting and gifting of material items were calculated acts designed to make an impact on both recipients and the viewing public. On her journey to Saxony she would have ample opportunity to experience how to set a stage on which power could be displayed and wielded. Surely her much older husband Henry made use of the princess's presence and prestige as she significantly boosted his social standing and enlarged his political network. But it would be too limited to interpret the representations of Matilda and Henry on coins and in manuscripts as the outcome of an active duke and a passive duchess. Rather, these artefacts should be read as reflections of a genuine cooperation between the spouses, as is highlighted by the dedication poem of their gospel book. To the duke this was nothing new; his first wife Clementia had acted as a regent during his absence. And as a child Henry had been tutored by his mother Gertrud and his grandmother Empress Richenza, both of whom acted as regents for the young boy after his father had passed away. The case of Leonor and Alfonso VIII offers another example of partnership between ruling husbands and wives. And although scholarship has preferred to focus on the estrangement between King Henry II and Queen Eleanor, in the first decade after their marriage the queen frequently ruled in her husband's stead. And Matilda turned out to be a true supporter of her husband's cause. There were at least two occasions on which the duchess seems to have initiated actions to the benefit of her spouse: acting as a peacemaker, she donated sumptuous vestments to the bishop of Halberstadt—perhaps the very dalmatic that is still kept there—and to the Hildesheim Cathedral in order to calm the troubles that Henry had stirred up by waging war on both towns.

But making objects, gifting them to people, and promoting dynastic interests are only the first, albeit important, steps in the performance of power. Ideally, the recipients and their actions are taken into account in order to assess whether the intended messages have been successfully received. We can assess this through the silver coins on which the ducal couple was represented; if they cannot be read as straightforward evidence of Matilda's regency, they do tell us that she was considered a suitable partner in rule. Understanding these silver impressions in this way means that Matilda as a co-ruler

would have had the chance to act. During her husband's absence in 1172/1173 she could have done so with the support of Henry's trusted followers, who also assisted the duke on numerous occasions. There is nothing in the records that suggests much turbulence in Saxony at this moment in time. Perhaps this is because of the peace that Emperor Frederick Barbarossa had enforced, but since non-aggression pacts were easily broken it is equally possible that Matilda and her team were capable peace managers. It is doubtful whether Matilda's textile gift to Bishop Ulrich of Halberstadt had much effect in terms of a speedy reconciliation between the duke and bishop, as the bishop was a fierce opponent of her husband. In the end it was Henry's brutal force that made Ulrich return the territories that Henry held around Halberstadt.<sup>1</sup> Things were different in Hildesheim, where Matilda's lavish donation of "very beautiful ornaments fittingly decorated with gold and gold embroidery" was recorded and remembered in the *Liber capitularis*. A connection between Bishop Adelog of Hildesheim and the ducal couple can also be established through the consecration of the altar of the Virgin in the Church of St. Blaise at the behest of Henry and Matilda. By means of the gift of liturgical items, Matilda had become a member of the ecclesiastical community and a participant in the rituals of the liturgy. Vested clergy would remember her and her family through words and rituals, perhaps even into the fifteenth century when texts were still being added to the *Liber capitularis*. Matilda's power materialized through strategically handled textiles. This materialization also occurred when the ducal couple donated a deluxe gospel book to their Burg church at Brunswick, where both would have their final resting place. Even though it is a common liturgical book type, the inclusion within of a dedication poem and two miniatures in which the ducal couple was represented makes the manuscript stand out. The emphasis on their impressive royal and imperial lineages in the coronation miniature can be read as a testimonial to their personal and social identities: these were crucial to the construction and communication of power, wealth, and prestige. The canons were expected to promote this image and there indeed they did.

The carefully chosen members who appear in the small family tree in the gospel book recall the equally deliberate selection of signifying elements in the seals discussed here. These objects were very personal impressions of authority, status, and dynastic affiliation. That both women and men attached them to the grants and agreements they made demonstrates that they were instrumental in the communication of power. In the gospel book, the explicit inclusion of parents and grandparents highlights the absence of children, who would be of paramount importance to the continuation of the dynasty. I hold that the making and gifting of this book may be seen as a successful appeal to the Virgin and saints for the birth of an heir.

Some of the objects connected with Matilda, like the coins, were manufactured in local workshops and were based on older traditions, while others, such as the textile gifts, may have been made from fabrics she had brought from England. Matilda apparently managed to become well integrated into Saxon culture and politics, but she never ceased treasuring the ties with her natal family. Representations of her father Henry

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<sup>1</sup> Ehlers, *Heinrich der Löwe*, 334.

II and her grandmother Empress Matilda as well as St. Thomas Becket were included in the gospel book. And it was through Matilda's connections that her family ended up in the Anglo-Norman realm after Henry was exiled in 1182. Between 1182 and 1185 Matilda lived in close contact with her parents and her brothers Richard and John; she had the opportunity to be informed about recent political developments and to become part of her father's projects, such as the efforts Henry II made to find a suitable husband for Matilda's daughter Richenza (renamed Matilda in England).<sup>2</sup> Matilda's sisters Leonor and Joanna also fostered familial bonds, and these were expressed and strengthened through artefacts. Leonor is the first Iberian queen for whom a wax seal survives, and as I have shown, it was modelled after that of her mother. Joanna expressly styled herself as her father's daughter, something that Leonor also did when she had the stole and maniple made. Such examples confirm that it is through the visual rather than written sources that women emerge as important participants within a social, political, and religious network.

Did Matilda continue to exercise power from beyond the grave? Here a textual source would seem to indicate that she managed to do so. A charter issued in 1223 by Henry and Matilda's eldest son, Henry, confirms that Matilda was the actual instigator of the donation of the altar of the Virgin in the Church of St. Blaise. It states that:

We want to make known to all faithful, both living and future, that our very beloved mother Matilda of blessed memory, daughter of the king of England, duchess of Saxony, guided by her devout spirit and out of the wish to serve God, founded the altar of Holy Mary, which is located in the middle of the choir of [the Church of] St. Blaise, in devout commemoration of her soul and that of her loved ones.<sup>3</sup>

In the charter the prominent location of the altar is underscored so that there would be no doubt which of the altars had been founded by Matilda and at which the priest was expected to serve Mass. This charter is also of interest because it shows that, thirty-five years after the dedication of the altar in 1188, and its pyx with the inscription testifying to its dedication by the ducal couple safely stored within, the ducal couple's son publicly commemorated the event and the agreements made upon it. Further, Henry credited only his mother with the foundation of this altar and emphasized her lineage through King Henry II. Beyond the obvious prestige inherent in the association with his royal grandfather, perhaps the incentive to include Henry II was personal, as the younger Henry had spent time at the English court during his parents' exile from the Holy Roman

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<sup>2</sup> Bowie, *Daughters of Henry*, 105.

<sup>3</sup> "Notum esse volumus universis fidelibus, tam presentibus quam futuris, quod karissima mater nostra Mehthildis felicis memorie Anglorum regis filia ducissa Saxonie pie devotionis spiritu inducta obsequium deo prestare volens altare sancte Marie, quod est in medio choro beati Blasii, ob salutarem et piam anime eius et carorum suorum memoriam instituit." UU DD HL, 178-79, no. 121. The charter deals with the confirmation of earlier established agreements about the use of the altar by a priest.



Empire. This charter testifies to the importance attached to Matilda's patronage and her place in the making of dynastic identity and memory.

The appropriation of Matilda's prestige by her son fits the pattern through which medieval elite sons and daughters sought to define themselves socially and politically. In 1229 Joanna's son Raymond VII of Toulouse confirmed his mother's gift of 1,000 Angevin sows to the nuns of Fontevraud, the abbey where Joanna's father Henry II and her brother Richard had been buried and which Joanna had designated as her final resting place. In 1204 Eleanor of Aquitaine joined them in death, and when King Henry III visited the abbey in the thirteenth century, he found his relatives grouped together in the nuns' part of the choir, which was located west of the transept.<sup>4</sup> In Raymond's charter, Joanna is styled *regina* and "once his mother," emphasizing mother-son connection as well as highlighting that his mother was dead, which fits with the Fontevrist burial context.<sup>5</sup> Joanna's son knew how to make use of his royal pedigree; in thirty-three of the 107 acts connected to him, he ties himself to his mother as "Johane regine filius."<sup>6</sup> Seventeen of these thirty-three documents were issued after the death of his father Raymond VI in 1222, the moment from which Raymond disappears from the filiation clauses and only Joanna is mentioned. Clearly, "Joanna's symbolic capital shed dazzling light upon the Raymondine dynasty."<sup>7</sup> The former queen and finally nun evidently still held influence in the genealogical self-definition of her son, who also did homage to his mother by naming his eldest daughter and only child Joanna. Of course, this action was equally meant to tie him to the powerful Plantagenets. Raymond sought to strengthen this bond further when he himself was entombed against the north-east pillar of the transept in Fontevraud's church in 1250.

Sons and daughters were not the only ones making an effort to connect themselves to prestigious figures in their dynastic pasts. For Leonor we have an illuminated charter that was posthumously copied by the Order of Santiago in which her act of giving was recollected. Leonor and Alfonso VIII are represented in the cartulary of Uclés from the mid-thirteenth century, also known as the *Tumbo Menor de Castilla*.<sup>8</sup> The incipit on the opening page of the first book presents them as "the lord King Alfonso and the lady Queen Leonor" (Figure 28).<sup>9</sup> Below the rubricated incipit text, the nimbed royal couple

<sup>4</sup> For the Fontevraud burials, see Charles T. Wood, "Fontevraud, Dynasticism and Eleanor of Aquitaine," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 407–22 at 414.

<sup>5</sup> Macé, *Catalogues raimondins*, no. 557.

<sup>6</sup> This count is based on Macé, *Catalogues raimondins*.

<sup>7</sup> Macé, "Raymond VII of Toulouse," 141–42.

<sup>8</sup> *Tumbo Menor de Castilla*, mid-thirteenth century, 235 fols., 22 × 14.5 cm. Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Códices L.1046 B, fol. 15r. For this manuscript, see María del Pilar Calzado Sobrino, *Tumbo Menor de Castilla (siglo XIII): Estudio Histórico, Codicológico, Diplomático y Edición* (Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2016); and Wearing, "Holy Donors, Mighty Queens," 82–85.

<sup>9</sup> Pilar Calzado Sobrino, *Tumbo Menor de Castilla*, 15–17; and González, *El reino de Castilla*, 2: no. 195 (January 9, 1174); and Wearing, "Holy Donors, Mighty Queens," 82–85.



Figure 28. Tumbo Menor de Castilla, mid-thirteenth century. Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Códices L.1046, fol. 15r. Photo: Archivo Histórico Nacional.

is shown seated together on a double throne, each holding the cord of the seal that guarantees their donation. Next to Alfonso stands Pedro Fernández, the master of the Order, who clutches the seal with his right hand. Precisely because the donor iconography was meant to serve the monastery's purposes, certain realistic elements were included in the imagery, including the donated castle, from which flies the flag of Santiago, and the centrally placed seal. This representation of Alfonso's seal appears to be modelled after his double-sided seal and his *signum rodado* (drawn round seal).<sup>10</sup> The inclusion of Leonor as Alfonso's partner fits the pattern found in the opening clauses of the charters issued by the royal chancellery.<sup>11</sup> The sense of reality employed in the Tumbo Menor was meant to affirm that the properties held by the Order of Santiago had come into their possession through close cooperation with the crown of Castile, and so the miniature shows Leonor acting as a co-ruler. This was deemed important some three decades after she and Alfonso had passed away.

Matilda and her sisters—and plenty of other elite women could be added to the list—were remembered both visually and textually not only during their lifetime but also long after their deaths. In medieval social structures, women and their objects remained crucial players when it came to the creation and survival of dynasties and religious institutions. Material culture has proven to be a valuable avenue for approaching the relationship between power and elite women in the twelfth century. Through the visual record of material culture women's activities surface that are not recorded in textual sources. Their performance of power through objects brings to light that women were capable of impacting their own lives as well as that of others, even if charters and chronicles fail to mention so. This forces us to redefine assumptions about power for sparsely documented noblewomen. From an early age these women were instructed that the acts of making, giving, and displaying artefacts explicitly served to show off their status, promote their positions within the dynasty, cement ties with allies, and appease opponents as well as to forge relationships with religious institutions that were crucial to liturgical commemoration. Exactly this empowering impact of material culture has been at the heart of this study.

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**10** See also González, *El reino de Castilla*, 2: no. 195 in which "I Alfonso, by the grace of God King of Hispania with my wife Queen Leonor ... donate and concede ... Uclés with the castle and town, with lands, vineyards, meadows, pastures, streams, wind-mills." The closing statement mentions Alfonso only: "Et ego rex Ildefonsus, regnans in Castella et Toletu, hanc cartam propria manu roboro et confirm."

**11** "una cum uxore mea Alienor regina" is first found in a charter dated September 17, 1170. See González, *El reino de Castilla*, 2: no. 148.

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### Abbreviations

MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MGH DD HL	Die Urkunden Heinrichs des Löwen Herzogs von Sachsen und Bayern
MGH SS	Scriptores (in Folio)
MGH SS rer. Germ.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum seperatim editi
PR Hen II	Pipe Roll Henry II

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