

*Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms*, by Lucy K. Pick. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017. ISBN 9781501714320.

Given the extensive historiography on queens and female lordship, it has become clear that medieval women wielding political power were not simply occasional exceptions who rose above their gendered circumstances. Yet methodologies by which to produce analyses of female power beyond exceptionalism have been harder to come by. In her groundbreaking work, *Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms*, Lucy Pick proposes that medieval political power was not rooted in a single person such as a king or queen (11), but rather in networks of power exerted through royal and aristocratic dynasties, with particular roles available to daughters and sisters of kings (as well as lords and counts) in relation to ecclesial property and authority.

In her study of the kingdoms of León and Castilla beginning in 711 (the Muslim conquest) and ending just before the first queen's accession to throne (Queen Urraca, 1109), Pick examines the "consecrated" royal daughters (18) and their role in the kingdom's politics. The Spanish institution of the *infantazgo* (termed so in the twelfth century but existing *de facto* since the ninth, according to Pick) referred to a number of "ecclesial properties . . . held and passed down to royal daughters and sisters who lived unmarried" (15). She argues that previous work by Teofilo Ruiz identifying royal authority in this kingdom as "unsacred monarchy" (16) overlooks its reliance on these religious institutions to cement power relations. Pick's attention to religious patronage builds on the many studies demonstrating that medieval women often gained some type of agency through religious vocations but redirects attention both to the legal authority exerted through the donation of monastic property and to the ways that royal "gift-giving" through donations of monastic property to daughters who controlled the convents served to cement a royal network of authority.

Pick begins with a chapter on the specifics of Visigothic and medieval Spanish inheritance patterns that she considers central to the formation of dynastic networks rather than patriarchal power passed through male inheritance. In Visigothic Spain, children rather than spouses inherited, and daughters inherited equally with sons, i.e., "cognatic lineage" (33-34). In northern Spain after the Muslim Conquest, scholars have argued that matrilineal and patrilineal systems were in dispute, and Pick contributes the point that analysis of commemorative inscriptions on funerary *stellae* throughout the North indicate that men in public power were linked through women in their family (wives, sisters,

mothers) rather than directly to each other. It is from the successions and dynasties of León-Castilla, however, that Pick starts to develop her two main themes. She identifies the fact that kings of León would marry “women of lower status” (56) but refused to marry their daughters to men of lower status as a change in the nature of medieval gift-giving, in which fear of potential dynastic struggles marshaled by the husband of a royal daughter led kings in León-Castilla to retain their female kin as part of their own family and to channel their virginal daughters’ authority towards monastic properties.

In chapter 2, Pick examines the royal daughters’ control of monastic properties not just as economic capital—that is, as properties that provided funds and authority to the daughters who inherited them—but as “spiritual capital” by which the daughters supported their family network through prayer, intercession, and memorializing the dead. For example, Elvira Ramírez was daughter to King Ramiro II and sister to Sancho I (among other family connections) and ruled her nephew Ramiro III’s kingdom for nine years. She appears in the records as *deo voto* from early on, and in her later association with the palace-monastery of San Salvador she is designated its *domina* (female lord) rather than its abbess (70). A *domina* could act as abbess, but also could be in charge of multiple properties, whether economically or spiritually, and this religious role seems to have been a primary justification for Elvira’s role of ruler for her nephew (71-72). Pick then turns to the politics of virginity, examining late antique theological writings and hagiographies available in manuscript in medieval Spain. She identifies various themes within the gender politics of virginity that may have influenced the authority of virginal royal daughters, such as virgins avoiding female sinfulness (85), the pattern of *viragos* transcending their gender (96), or the importance of a local male saint honored for resisting the sexual advances of kings as a rationale for royal daughters being consecrated rather than being given in intermarriage with Muslim kings (92-94).

Chapters 3 and 4 apply two distinct methods to further establish the contours of power available to royal daughters in León-Castilla. In chapter 3, Pick argues that charters from the tenth and eleventh centuries are “snapshot[s] of a network . . . often around particular properties or religious institutions” (105). Drawing on recent historiography that reads charters as performances of power, Pick suggests that they are in fact liturgical dramas by which women performed “both royalness and femaleness” (106). Her close reading of a charter by Urraca Fernández (daughter of King Fernando and Queen Sancha that reestablished the bishopric of Túy in 1071) includes careful attention to Urraca’s use of the first person in rhythmic phrases that echo liturgy, while also emphasizing the

multiple members of the royal family in relation to whom Urraca is claiming a certain authority. This and a number of other readings lead Pick to redefine the *infantazgo* not as a set of properties inherited by specific women, but rather as a set of women with particular kinds of dynastic roles “to which property accrued” (147).

In chapter 4, Pick continues to focus on Urraca Fernández, proposing that careful study of Spanish dynastic networks can usefully engage anthropological discussions of gift-giving or studies of medieval mnemonics or political memory (by Carruthers and Geary, among others). Pick suggests that kings endowed their virgin daughters with authority over monastic institutions as a way to provide the kings with effective intercession in the afterlife through gifts of prayers that memorialized them, thus drawing their daughters into their attempts to use power to ensure salvation (180). Pick rounds out her discussion by turning to material culture, examining the extensive set of reliquaries gifted by Urraca and the manuscripts commissioned by Queen Sancha and annotated by Urraca. These material objects were shaped by the gender of their commissioners, and Pick carefully mines the images and choice of texts for how they reveal Urraca and Sancha’s concern for—and authority to directly address—the salvation of their male relatives.

Although a study of León-Castilla in particular, Pick’s methodology concerning dynastic networks wielding holy power is intended to replace the outdated division often used in studies of medieval queenship between public (male, political) spheres of power and private (female, familial) ones (9). In her conclusion, she examines several parallel kingdoms, particularly Ottonian Germany, where her innovative method could serve to remap medieval authority as we know it.

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