“That Kingdom is Mine”: On Spain’s Early Modern Polemics of Possession Over Jerusalem, circa 1605

Chad Leahy

University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra

Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, History Commons, Philosophy Commons, and the Renaissance Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol41/iss1/6

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quidditas by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Spanish claims to the throne of Jerusalem in the early modern period have often been viewed in light either of royal mythologies connecting the Habsburgh monarchy to the biblical kings David and Solomon or to prophetic discourses of imperial Messianism relating to universal monarchy. This paper broadens our understanding of Spanish claims to Jerusalem through close reading of two archival documents produced in 1605. In defending Spanish preeminence and sovereignty in Jerusalem, I argue that these documents participate in a “polemics of possession” that crucially informed cultural production related to the Holy City in the period more broadly. These documents further urge us to recognize Jerusalem’s role within early modern Spanish culture and politics as a location bound up in pragmatic geopolitical, diplomatic, economic, and material concerns that demand our attention. This novel recontextualization of Spanish cultural production surrounding Jerusalem ultimately advances scholarly conversations by mapping the contours of Spain’s Jerusalemite “polemics of possession,” thereby inviting us to consider new relationships between otherwise disparate material and textual phenomena.

The idea that the king of Spain is also king of Jerusalem was propagated widely in the 16th and 17th centuries in Spain. The claim appears in devout histories, travelogues, and descriptions of the Holy Land; in epic poems; in architectural treatises; in works of royal counsel (arbitrios), political histories, and mirrors of princes;  

1 For example, Aranda, Verdadera informacion; Buyza, Relacion nueva, verdadera, y copiosa; and Castillo, El devoto peregrino.

2 For example, Vega Carpio, Jerusalén conquistada and Vera y Figueroa, El Fernando.

3 For example, Amico, Trattato; Pedrosa, Relacion sumaria; and Villalpando, In Ezechiel expanations and De postrema Ezechielis (selected texts edited in Villalpando, El templo de Salomón).

4 For example, Salazar, Política española and Cevallos, Arte Real. Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 159-64 and 176-181, includes translations of pertinent passages.
in prophecies;\(^5\) in works of theater;\(^6\) in anti-\textit{morisco} polemics;\(^7\) in sermons;\(^8\) in numismatics and heraldry.\(^9\) As Diego de Valdés puts it in \textit{De dignitate regum regnorumque} (1602), on the question of the legitimacy of Spain’s rights to the throne of Jerusalem, “non est dubitatio” [“there is no doubt”].\(^{10}\) A century earlier, even before the 1510 Papal investiture that would formally recognize Ferdinand the Catholic as King of Jerusalem and the Two Sicilies, authors such as Cristóbal de Santisteban in his \textit{Tratado de la sucesion[n] delos reynos de Jerusalen y de Napoles} (1503) argued that “el derecho de vuestra alteza” [“the right of your Highness”] to those kingdoms is “justo y cierto” [“just and certain”].\(^{11}\) Despite the ubiquity of this idea in such diverse genres and media, however, the history of Spanish claims to the throne of Jerusalem—and especially the influence of such claims on the political, religious, and literary culture of 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) century Spain—is a story that remains largely untold.\(^{12}\)

The present article addresses just one small chapter in that story by focusing on a unique articulation of such claims contained


\(^6\) For example, Bances Candamo, \textit{El Austria}; Cervantes, \textit{La conquista}; and Collado del Hierro, \textit{Jerusalem restaurada}.

\(^7\) For example, Aguilar, \textit{Expulsión de los moriscos}; Bleda, \textit{Defensio fidei}; Guadalajara y Xavier, \textit{Memorable expulsión}.

\(^8\) Quaresmius, \textit{Ierosolymae Afflictae}. On this work, Leahy and Tully, \textit{Jerusalem Afflicted}.

\(^9\) See Leahy, “‘Dinero en cruzados.’”

\(^10\) Valdés, \textit{De dignitate}, f. 146r. For a transcription and study of Valdés’s chapter 17, entirely dedicated to defending Spanish prerogatives in Jerusalem, see Leahy, “‘Making the Case.’” All translations in the present article are my own.

\(^11\) Santesteban, \textit{Tratado}, n.p. The incunable is not paginated. This quotation appears toward the end of the text’s dedication to Queen Isabel the Catholic. Doussinague, \textit{La política}, 620–635, provides a Spanish translation of the Bull investing Ferdinand with these titles. The Spanish monarchy still today under Philip VI maintains its claims to the title, a right enshrined in Article 56.2 of the Spanish Constitution, “Constitución,” of 1978.

\(^12\) For general overviews, see Arciniega García, “Evocaciones”; García Martín, “La Jerusalén”; and Leahy and Tully, \textit{Jerusalem Afflicted}, chapter 2. Though Wacks’ recent \textit{Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction} focuses on the centuries preceding the period under consideration here, and though Wacks does not focus specifically on formulations of Jerusalemite kingship, this last monograph offers essential context as well as key corrections to dominant historiography relating to the place of crusade in the Iberian context.
in two documents from 1605. The first is a Council of State report (*consulta*) offering advice to King Philip III; the second is a diplomatic communique from the monarch to his Ambassador to the Holy See in Rome. Both documents make a case for the Spanish crown’s legitimate authority as sovereign in Jerusalem, at the same time arguing for Spanish preeminence ahead of France as ‘first’ in the Holy City. The arguments deployed in these documents oblige us to take Spanish pretensions to sovereignty in Jerusalem seriously. Spanish claims emerge here as potent tools through which to manage Iberia’s Muslim past, to assert historical ties to the Holy Places in the eastern Mediterranean, and to graft Catholic Spain’s local narrative of ‘reconquest’ onto the practices of Christian sacred violence associated with ‘crusade’ in the Holy Land. Perhaps less predictably, these documents further lay bare the pragmatic role that pretensions to Jerusalemite kingship played in the broader negotiation of Spain’s place in the geopolitical order circa 1605.

In what follows, I first offer some theoretical and historical framing for approaching these documents, arguing that they form part of a broader early modern Spanish “polemics of possession” over Jerusalem. The remainder of the article turns to a close reading of the specific arguments that these two documents present. I suggest that both texts give voice to ideas that are central to such a “polemics” over the Holy City, pointing to essential ways in which Spain’s connections to Jerusalem, both historical and contemporary, were imagined and leveraged by cultural producers—including the very center of power itself—at the beginning of the 17th century.

13 The *consulta* is housed in the Archivo General de Simancas (Estado 1858/12), with an authorized copy also available in legajo 170 of the Archivo de la Obra Pia section of the Archivo Histórico Nacional of Spain. Legajo 170 also includes the letter from Philip III to the Spanish Ambassador in Rome. Spanish transcriptions are available in Arce, *Documentos y textos*, 106-110; Eiján, *Hispanidad*, 38-42; and García Barriuso, *España*, 385-387. In the present article, I cite always from the English language translation of these documents included in Leahy and Tully, *Jerusalem Afflicted*, 164-168, which is based on the manuscript originals listed above.

14 Reyes, “En torno,” 120, characteristically dismisses the title as “meramente honorífico” (“merely honorific”). Much more recently, Arciniega García tellingly entitles his thorough and serious review of early modern Spanish claims to Jerusalem “Evocaciones y ensañaciones hispanas del reino de Jerusalén.” The term “ensañaciones” points to the symbolic realm of fantasy, illusion, or dreamy aspirations. More charitably, Wacks, *Medieval*, 7, refers to the title as “ephemeral.”
Towards an Early Modern “Polemics of Possession”
Over Jerusalem

In *The Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative*, Rolena Adorno contends that debates over the proper limits of authority, dominion, or possession in the New World fundamentally inform cultural production from the earliest days of colonization up to the present. How was authority imagined, narrated, instrumentalized, contested? In what follows, I adapt Adorno’s vital insights to reframe how we might understand early modern Spanish cultural production surrounding Jerusalem. I offer that by reading cultural production related to Jerusalem as part of a heated debate over how power can be imagined, asserted or subverted in the eastern Mediterranean, we are able to read otherwise disparate textual and material phenomena more holistically, as part of a broader political and cultural problematic.

In making this case, I also seek to push the temporal boundaries implied in Andrew Devereux’s recent *The Other Side of Empire: Just War in the Mediterranean and the Rise of Early Modern Spain*. Devereux urges us to recognize that “during the early decades of overseas expansion, Spain looked to the east as much as it did to the west.” Devereux’s call to recenter the Mediterranean within Spain’s early imperial imaginary—at the same time placing the Mediterranean in dialogue with the Atlantic—makes a great deal of sense in view of Spain’s persistent claims to Jerusalemit patronage and kingship throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. I argue that such recurrent claims demand to be acknowledged as critical interventions in a “polemics of possession” over Jerusalem that in fact far outlasts “the early decades of overseas expansion.”

This enduring, east-facing polemics came to generate a vast body of works aimed at constructing identities through the fraught...
process of claiming or contesting the sacred territory of Palestine as a naturalized component of Spanish national or imperial power. As Betsy Wright has noted, the cultural field in early modern Spain confronts us with “a specific, Spanish textual economy built around the Jerusalem theme,” noting in this context that “Jerusalem signified the Habsburg claims to being a universal monarchy; consequently, large, ambitious projects that related biblical history to the Spanish monarchs gained crown patronage.” While I agree unreservedly with Wright’s characterization, I would add that this “economy” should be recognized as rhizomatic in its nature, extending wildly into all manner of cultural production, both textual and material, popular and elite, literary and non-literary, over very considerable periods of time, and affecting questions that go far beyond Spain’s pretensions to “universal monarchy.” This is an economy that is not just about epic poems or sacred antiquarianism. It is also about altar cloths and chalices, shipments of candles and wine, sermons, popular pamphlets, architectural projects, heraldry and numismatics, diplomacy and international relations. And it is an economy that must be read as always deeply enmeshed in the kind of polemics that Adorno ascribes to debates over possession in the Indies: a polemics that necessarily refracts, and at the same time produces, a broad range of complex historical and material practices and experiences tied to the business of staking claims. The documents to which we shall turn our full attention below give powerful voice to the polemics outlined here, asking us to re-orient our understanding of Spain’s national and imperial projects in the period towards Jerusalem.

Texts in the period themselves overtly call on us to embrace such a re-centering of the Holy City. Lope de Vega in the dedication to Philip III of his epic Jerusalén conquistada: epopeya trágica (1609), for example, reminds the monarch that of all his royal possessions, Jerusalem is the best:

> Si entre los títulos de Vuestra Magestad resplandece más el de rey de Jerusalén que el de emperador de las Indias Orientales y Antárticas, justamente se le debía dedicar la historia de su conquista.

[If among the titles of Your Majesty that of King of Jerusalem shines more than that of Emperor of the Oriental and Antarctic Indies, justly should one dedicate to you the history of its conquest.]¹⁸

It may be easy to disregard this idea as the kind of topical silver-tongued bombast typical of royal dedications.¹⁹ What happens, however, if we take this assertion on its own terms as genuinely reflective of the symbolic cartography of the empire as it was imagined and experienced in the 16th and 17th centuries in Spain? First off, let us pause to consider the unexamined supposition driving Lope’s sentiments here. The idea that Spain unquestionably possesses Jerusalem operates as a given; for Lope and his royal dedicatee alike, the claim needs no further explanation because it is nothing less than self-evident. The territorial hierarchy that the poet subsequently constructs places the throne of Jerusalem as a glimmering beacon that outshines the other diverse territories that comprise the Spanish crown’s “polycentric” global colonial-imperial machine.²⁰ Given that Jerusalem is considered within Christian conceptions of time and space to be the most sacred location on earth, Lope’s suggestion makes sense: Philip III is king of the most precious and sacred territory on earth, the very place wherein the redemption of humanity was wrought, a special location sanctified by the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ.²¹ In possessing the throne of such a territory, Philip naturally communes with the aura of sacrality that is basic to it. In view both of Catholic cosmology and of Spanish readings of political history, then, there can be no

---

¹⁸ Vega, Jerusalén conquistada, 6.

¹⁹ In his 1954 introduction to Lope de Vega’s epic Jerusalén conquistada, Entrambasaguas asks with dripping sarcasm, “¿qué le importaban a él [Felipe III] Jerusalems…?” [“what did Philip III care about Jerusalems?”]. Vega, Jerusalén, 32.

²⁰ On the complex and sprawling early modern Spanish monarchy as “polycentric” or “composite,” see Cardim at al, Polycentric Monarchies and Elliot, “A Europe.”

²¹ As Pedro Mexía puts it in his popular Silva de varia lección, 865, of 1540: “Ningún pueblo ni ciudad hay en el mundo que tantas preeminencias, y gracias haya alcanzado de Dios, ni gozado de tantas excelencias y misteries, como la Santa Ciudad de Hierusalem, pues haber sido allí sido Cristo crucificado, muerto y sepultado y celebrado nuestra redempcion” [“There is no town or city in the world that has achieved as many preeminences and graces from God, nor enjoyed so many excellences and mysteries, as the Holy City of Jerusalem, for Christ was crucified, died, and buried and our redemption celebrated there”]. Similar descriptions populate countless works in the period. See, for example, Adricomio, Breve descripción; Alózdo Avellaneda, Jerusalen cártiva; Buyza, Relacion; Castillo, El devoto peregrino; and Quaresmus, Ierosolymae Afflictae, among countless others. For an introduction to the Christian theology of place on display here, see Levine, Jerusalem; Walker, Holy City; and Wilkens, The Land Called Holy. Valdés, De dignitatate, f. 141v, explicitly connects Spain’s possession of the coveted royal title with the spiritual capital associated with Jerusalem.
other conclusion than that Lope’s symbolic hierarchy is rigorously factual: Spain owns Jerusalem, and Jerusalem outshines all other locations on earth.

Spanish claims to possession of the Holy City, like this one, of course butt up against practical walls, such as the material realities of Ottoman dominion in the Levant. And this is perhaps what makes the idea of Spanish sovereignty in Jerusalem so easy to dismiss as something akin to a millenarian pipedream or a triumphalist delusion. The two documents under review in the present article serve to complicate that intuitive reading by confronting us both with the material facts of Spanish entanglements in the eastern Mediterranean, and with the complicated role that Jerusalem played in more practical terms as a site for negotiating interimperial and international relations. In other words, the polemics of possession that I have traced above should be read not just as a locus of narrative or symbolic tension through which words and images manifest (or contest) Spain’s claims. It is, furthermore, a polemics that is equally material, grounded in tangible positionings that are at once territorial, economic, political, and diplomatic in nature. The documents presented below manifest both sides of this metaphoric coin. And while they may do so by speaking in the relatively staid language of diplomacy and state bureaucracy, the sentiments these texts express are basic to many assertions of Jerusalemite kingship in the period. When epic poems, plays, chronicles, or accounts of travel reference the Spanish crown’s legitimate rights to Jerusalem, they may speak instead in the languages of poetry or law, history or performance, but they ultimately commune with the same polemics.

**Early Modern Rivalries and the “Polemics of Possession” over Jerusalem**

Such a polemics resonates perhaps most forcefully in light of the dynamics of national and imperial rivalry which numerous scholars in recent years have considered to be key drivers of cultural
processes in the early modern Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Europe. These are debates in which diverse diplomatic, economic, religious, and political interests interact, overlap, or conflict, playing out at once in the complex contact zones of the eastern Mediterranean and in the spheres of European court culture. The central players in the drama enacted specifically in the documents under consideration here are the crowns of Spain and France, the Vatican, the Franciscans living in the Holy Land, and the Ottoman authorities governing Palestine. The central thesis that these documents defend is that—regardless of the vicissitudes of the past (in which France played a key role in the historical drama of the crusades) or the uncertainties of the present and future (in which Jerusalem remains under Ottoman control)—the Spanish crown is the one and only legitimate sovereign power in the Holy City.

Not surprisingly, such claims are driven by the increasingly acute sacralization of national peoples, territories, and cultures that characterizes the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe. As Norman Housley and others have argued, opposing—and fundamentally incompatible—claims to a providentially-ordained superior essence yielded divergent aspirations to embodying new Chosen Peoples in new Holy Lands, imagined by reference to the model Holy Land in Palestine. The inter-national and inter-imperial rivalries that are

22 As Hirschi, The Origins, 47, puts it in his work on early modern nationalisms, “Nations are… products and producers of a competitive culture and engage in endless contests about material and symbolic values.” See, for example, Griffin, English Renaissance, on the “ethnopoetic” racialization of Spain and Spaniards in the early modern construction of English nationhood; Fuchs’ various monographs on the tensions of “cultural mimesis,” “emulation,” or early modern “orientalism” as generative of problematic forms of imagined national distinctiveness in the imperial rivalries between Spain, England, and the Ottoman Empire (Exotic Nation; Mimesis; Passing); the work of Cañizares-Esguerra in reframing how we understand the relationship of competition and imitation between Atlantic empires (Entangled Empires; Nature, Empire, and Nation; Puritan Conquistadors); the collection curated by Fuchs and Weissbound on Representing Imperial Rivalry in the Early Modern Mediterranean; and Schaub’s La France espagnole on Franco-Spanish rivalry as generative of political forms in France. See also the important theoretical work of Doyle on “interimperiality” and Fuchs, “Another Turn” and “Imperium Studies” on “imperium studies.”

23 See Housley, Contesting the Crusades 122–43; “The Crusading Movement”; Documents on the Later Crusades; “Holy Land or Holy Lands?”; “Pro dei et patria mori”; The Later Crusades; and Religious Warfare. See also Cañizares-Esguerra, Puritan Conquistadors; Fuchs, “Religion and National Distinction”; and Gorski, “The Mosaic Moment.”
underwritten by such narratives logically contributed to reinforcing proprietary claims over the Holy Land itself, and such is precisely the case in the documents under review here.

The specifically Franco-Spanish polemics of possession over Jerusalem given expression here forms part of a wider story of rivalry, tension, conflict, and imitation between France and Spain stemming from the colonial expansion of the Aragonese dynasty across the Mediterranean in the 14th and 15th centuries. When Alfonso the Magnanimous conquered Naples in 1449, he appropriated for the Aragonese dynasty two key claims, both deriving from the legacy of the 14th-century Angevine monarchs of Naples: Robert of Anjou, and his wife, Sancia of Mallorca. On the one hand, Robert was titular king of Jerusalem. On the other hand, Robert and Sancia were foundational benefactors and patrons of what would come to be known as the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, negotiating and financing the purchase of key properties in Palestine that would lay the foundation for the enduring Franciscan presence in the Christian Holy Places from the 14th century onwards. Royal patronage over the Holy Places, along with claims to Jerusalemite kingship, thus formed part and parcel of the Angevine dynasty that Aragon—and later Spain under the Catholic Monarchs—would consider basic to the monarchy’s royal patrimony.


26 These are narratives that are still perpetuated today in Spain through the instrument of the *Boletín Oficial de Estado* (Official State Bulletin). See for example, the following Royal Decree, “Real Decreto 1005/2015,” published in 2015:

Fruto de la presencia histórica de España en Tierra Santa y del intenso esfuerzo económico y diplomático que la Corona española llevó a cabo en el sostenimiento de los santuarios allí presentes, existe hoy en día adscrita al Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación, una institución singular en la Administración española como es la Obra Pía de los Santos Lugares.
Spain’s ties to this Angevine-Jerusalemite legacy become a story of specifically Franco-Spanish rivalry at the close of the 15th century, when Charles VIII of France crossed the Pyrenees to assert his own claims to the dynastically fused crowns of Naples and Jerusalem, kicking off the protracted military and diplomatic conflicts of the Italian Wars (1494-1559). For our purposes here, the knotty details of such conflicts are secondary to the story that these documents tell, to which we shall turn presently. For now, what is unquestionably relevant is that in 1510, Pope Julius II moved to settle the matter by issuing a bull formally investing Ferdinand II of Aragon with the throne of the Two Sicilies and Jerusalem.27 From this point forward—and to the chagrin of French authorities—whether through reference to the investiture of Spain’s monarch with the title ‘king of Jerusalem’ in 1510 or through reference to the earlier bulls of 1342 relating to ties of royal foundation and patronage in the

Ya desde los siglos XIII y XIV los monarcas aragoneses envían las primeras embajadas al Egipto mameluco, para interceder ante el Sultán por los santuarios y sus moradores. En el año 1342 los reyes de Nápoles, Roberto y Sancha, obtienen del Papa Clemente la bula «Gratias Agimus», por la que adquieren los derechos de Patronato sobre algunos santuarios, derechos que con la incorporación de dicho reino a la Corona española, pasan a constituir la base de una reivindicación ininterrumpida de nuestros monarcas sobre los Santos Lugares. Ello se ve fortalecido por la bula de 1510 por la que el Papa Julio II reconoce a Fernando el Católico como rey de Nápoles, heredando por esta vía el título de Rey de Jerusalén que desde entonces han ostentado los reyes de España.

[Fruto del histórico presencia de España en el Santo Lugare y de la intensa labor económica y diplomática que el Tesoro español realizó en el sostén de los Santos Lugares, existe hoy, anexo a la Secretaría de Estado y Cooperación, una singular institución dentro del Tesoro español, que es el Pio Trabajo de los Santos Lugares.

Already from the 13th and 14th centuries, the Aragonese monarchs sent the first embassies to Mameluk Egypt in order to intercede before the Sultan on behalf of the sanctuaries and their inhabitants. In the year 1342, the monarchs of Naples, Robert and Sancia, obtained from Pope Clement the Bull ‘Gratias Agimus,’ through which they acquired rights to Patronage over some sanctuaries, rights that with the incorporation of said crown into the Spanish Crown, come to constitute the basis of an uninterrupted claim of our monarchs over the Holy Places. This is reinforced by the Bull of 1510 by which Pope Julius II recognized Ferdinand the Catholic as King of Naples, inheriting by this line the title King of Jerusalem, which the kings of Spain have held since then.]

27 See references in note 11, above.
Christian Holy Places, Spanish claims to the throne of Jerusalem could be justified simply by leaning on the supreme authority of papal endorsement.

In short, from the Spanish perspective circa 1605—when the documents under survey here were produced—Jerusalem not only belonged legally to Spain but Jerusalem was also under the particular protection of the Spanish crown. And those claims, on their face, represent a firm rebuke of French authority in the Holy City. Such are the basic historical and legal assumptions informing the polemics of possession of Jerusalem that is manifested in the 1605 Council of State report and diplomatic communiqué to which we shall now turn our full attention.

The *pro rege* Dispute of 1604-1605

On October 19, 1604, the Spanish Ambassador to the Holy See, the Duke of Escalona, wrote to Madrid to raise the alarm over a scandalous petition presented by the French Ambassador, requesting that the Pontiff order the Franciscans in Jerusalem to pray first for the Most Christian King of France ahead of the Catholic King of Spain in their *pro rege* prayers. The French proposal implies a significant rupture of tradition, as the king of Spain was customarily invoked in the Custody’s *colecta* prayers not only as the first among the crowns of Europe but, even more significantly, as *regem nostrum* [our king], the possessive being a nod to the king’s dual claims as king and patron of Jerusalem, outlined above.28 By urging for a papally-mandated inversion of this *pro rege* order, France is playing at a game that may seem trivial but that in fact goes to the heart of long decades of Franco-Spanish tension over the Holy City.

Two key documents register Spain’s fulminating response to the French proposal. One is a *consulta* (or document of advice) prepared by the Council of State for Philip III, and the other is a diplomatic dispatch from Philip III to his Ambassador to the Holy

28 Writing in 1955, Cayuela, “Un caso,” notes that this specific *pro rege* order remained in effect well into the 20th Century, with a small modification to the language to accommodate the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, invoking him not as *Rex noster* but as *Dux noster.*
See, informed by the earlier consulta. Both the consulta and the later dispatch make impassioned pleas for maintaining Spanish preeminence in the Holy Places, invoking weighty historical, devotional, legal, and financial arguments, underwritten by some rather nuclear-option threats.

In what follows I offer a survey of the sweeping arguments that these documents lay out in order to present them as a roadmap for tracing the reasoning that animates the polemics of possession outlined above. These are arguments that surface in varied forms again and again in all manner of cultural artifacts in the period. I suggest that the “many reasons that exist on behalf of Your Majesty, and the customs maintained until now to be preferred above all others, without distinction and collectively”—as the consulta puts it—offer us in condensed form an index of the key narratives used recurrently in Spanish sources to assert Spanish preeminence in the Holy Places. While the narratives here are articulated directly by the center of power itself, any approach to engaging in the polemics of possession over Jerusalem in the context of imperial Spain necessarily demands engagement with some variation of these same narratives, even in cases where Spanish possession is being challenged or contested in some way. These are the pillars upon which the polemics of possession is built. For ease of analysis, I have reduced the key arguments to four points, which appear enumerated below.

29 The Real Academia Española’s Diccionario de Autoridades defines a consulta as a “representación, informe, dictámen, parecer, que se hace ú dá al Soberano, sobre algun negocio ú otra materia” [“representation, report, judgement, opinion that is made or given to the Sovereign regarding some business or other matter”]. In many regards the consulta also reads as minutes of a meeting, with the specific interventions of individual members of the Council recorded. The members of the Council of State comprise the innermost circle of confidence of the monarch, representing a body tasked with crafting royal policy at the highest level. Those mentioned by name who intervene in the present document include the king’s Favorite, the Duke of Lerma, the Count of Olivares (Viceroy of Naples and father of the better known Count-Duke of Olivares who would later replace Lerma as Favorite), the Duke of Sessa, the Duke of Escalon, and the Comendador Mayor of Castile, along with three other members who were present for the meeting but not mentioned by name.

30 Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 166.
1. On Santiago, the Holy Land, and the Antiquity of Spanish Catholicism

Perhaps the most indirect argument in favor of Spanish preeminence in Jerusalem invoked in these documents is the claim that Spain enjoys older, and hence deeper, ties to Catholicism than France. The Council of State report contends, on this front, that if France’s petition to demand recognition above Spain in Jerusalem is made on the grounds of “antiquity of faith,” this argument cannot hold because “this was first received in Spain before other parts of Europe.”\(^\text{31}\) The evangelization of Iberia by the Apostle James (Santiago), alluded to here, of course constituted a core tenet of national mythology in early modern Spain.\(^\text{32}\) But what might such a narrative have to do with the specific problem of defending Spanish sovereignty over France in Jerusalem? I would suggest that the figure of Santiago served as a powerful vector for insinuating connections between Spain’s national history and that of the Holy Land in early modern Spanish texts.

As an Apostle of Christ who first came to Iberia to evangelize in the first century and whose body was later miraculously transported to Iberia following the Apostle’s martyrdom, Santiago’s westward journeys inscribe a translation (\textit{translatio}) from Palestine to Iberia not only of the saint’s mortal remains but also of the materiality and sacred aura of the Holy Land that those remains embody.\(^\text{33}\) Such a logic of association is made explicit in Spanish interpretations of Matthew 24:27: “Sicut enim fulgur exit ab oriente, et paret usque in occidentem: ita erit adventus Filii hominis” [“For as lightening cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west: so shall

---

32 Rowe, \textit{Saint and Nation}, especially chapter 1.
also be the coming of the son of man”). For example, in his *Prveva evidente de la predicacion del Apostol Santiago el Mayor en los Reinos de España* (1648), Miguel de Erce Ximénez is paradigmatic in reading this verse as prefiguration of the translation of the word of God directly from the Holy Land to Iberia via Santiago:


[just as the lightening and flash that come from the thunder cross entire regions with swift speed and efficiency, so too did they cross these two columns of the Church, from the East to the West sewing and planting the Gospel law. And this author ponders well, advising that Jesus Christ giving Santiago the name of son of thunder was to say that he was to come from the East to Spain, a place so Western that they called it the end of the earth (ie. Finisterre)].

The westward expansion of the Gospel is thus particularized in a refiguring of Santiago’s evangelizing mission and subsequent *translatio*, reading these physical displacements as signs of Spain’s providential preeminence over other Christian places. Spain and Palestine here are the two columns (“dos columnas”) upon which the entire “Gospel law” (“lei Evangelica”) rests, and Santiago as “Son of Thunder” is the embodied vector linking those two sacred poles.

This idea is reflected graphically on the title page of Francisco de Jesús Xodar’s *Cinco discursos con que se confirma la antigua Tradicion que el Apostol Santiago uino i predicò en España* (1612):

---

34 I cite here from the Vulgate and Douay-Rheims versions.

35 Erce Ximénez, *Prveva evidente*, f. 6r.
Here, a fragment of the same verse from Matthew mentioned above frames an image of Santiago behind which we see a brilliant flash of light representing the holy “fulgur” associated with the Apostle. The allegorical figures of “Religion” and “Spain” that stand on pedestals flanking the title are positioned to align with the trajectory of the Apostle’s sacred lightning bolt. Santiago’s “fulgur” thus originates from the spatial position occupied by Religio ("exit ab oriente"), material fountain of the faith in the biblical east, traveling directly from there to illuminate Hispania ("paret... in Occidentem"), the sacralized nation that receives the faith before all others.

Such an idea is also evident beyond the confines of hagiographies and apologies of Santiago’s preaching. For example, the westward trajectory of the Apostle is poeticized in a central passage of Lope de Vega’s epic Isidro: poema castellano (1599), in which the poem’s protagonist, Isidro, encounters an anonymous
pilgrim who is traveling from Jerusalem to Santiago de Compostela in order to venerate the tomb of the Apostle. Isidro is immediately struck by the sight of the pilgrim, and

Trabaron conversación  
del Calvario y de Sión,  
de la gran Jerusalén,  
del Sepulcro y de Belén,  
que Ocaso y Oriente son.  

[They struck up conversation  
about Calvary and Zion,  
and the great Jerusalem,  
about the Sepulcher and Bethlehem,  
which are West and East.]36

The pilgrim’s voyage from east to west, from Jerusalem to Santiago de Compostela, mirrors the biography of Christ himself here, whose metaphorical sun rose in the east of Bethlehem to set in the west of the Sepulcher. At the same time, however, this westward trajectory from Palestine to Iberia further reinscribes the message that Spanish ties to Santiago bring with them weighty historical, spiritual, and material linkages specifically binding Spain to the Holy Places. The pilgrim in Lope’s poem serves to reify the message that the very body of the Apostle in Spain stands as a powerful signifier of the material sacrality of the Holy Places re-placed in Iberia.

In the context of the documents under survey here, the nuance of such a message is perhaps left for the Ambassador in Rome to intuit. The broader point, however, is clear. The Apostle James evangelized Iberia before the word of God ever reached France. It is thus a fact that Spain is not just a better Catholic nation than France but also an older one, with direct historical connections to the biblical east. Such an argument is the least developed of the arguments presented in these documents in favor of Spanish preeminence over France in Jerusalem. But it is an argument that I would suggest demands recognition as an ingredient in the polemics of possession over the Holy Places.

36 Lope de Vega, Isidro, IV, vv. 826-830.
2. On Spain’s historical commitment to crusading

Both documents take care to insinuate important connections between historical Holy Land crusading in the eastern Mediterranean and the more local history of sacred warfare—whether formally declared as ‘crusade’ or not—that was waged by Iberian Catholic powers against Iberian Muslims throughout the Middle Ages, in the historical process often problematically labeled as *reconquista*. They additionally assert that Spain’s historical commitment to the defense of the faith continues to manifest itself in Spain’s contemporary relationship to the Ottoman empire. On both fronts, Spain’s crusading spirit as bastion and defender of the faith contrasts pointedly with France’s hypocritical actions, framed as undermining the collective interests of Christendom.

The *consulta*, on this front, begins its *refutatio* of French claims by first granting that “some Frenchmen went to the conquest of that Holy Land,” while the king’s instructions to his Ambassador, for their part, do openly admit that “Godfrey of Bouillon of the House of Lorrain won that Kingdom.” Nevertheless, the *consulta* subsequently insists that Catholic Spain’s own local crusade against Andalusi Muslims should not be read in any way as inferior to Frankish exploits in the east: “it is no less to the glory of the kings of Spain, ancestors of Your Majesty, having been occupied at the same time ejecting the Moors from these your realms.”

Beyond this suggested equivalency of Iberian and Holy Land crusading, however, the *consulta* clarifies that while Spain’s engagement in the business of sacred violence is directed against Muslim enemies in

---


defense of Christendom, this is not the case with France. Indeed, as Spain was in the midst of “ejecting the Moors,” at the same time “the French were off invading the English.” The implication is that France’s claims to the symbolic mantle of crusading nation *par excellence* are at once false (because Spain was engaged in equally meritorious conflicts in Iberia) and hollow (because unlike Spain, France used violence against fellow Christians even as Spain was battling on behalf of the faith).

This latter problem of French hypocrisy is cast in even sharper relief in describing the differential relationships that Spain and France maintain with the Ottoman Empire:

Your Majesty and your progenitors not once but many times have taken up arms against the Turks on behalf of the faith and in defense of those who profess it, while those of France have had peace with them and taken advantage of their forces, on occasion against Christians.

The Franco-Ottoman alliance alluded to here serves as yet another potent argument against France and in favor of Spain’s crusading *bona fides*. The *consulta* makes plain that whatever claims France might have had to a glorious past of Holy Land conquest have been rendered moot by France’s dangerous dalliance with the enemy in the present, which, again, has also brought with it contemptible acts of violence against fellow Christians. Spain is thus positioned in the *consulta* on a moral highground that lends legitimacy to Spanish pretensions to Jerusalem. The original crusaders, the Franks, are now sleeping with the enemy and are in league against the faith. In a final dig against France—and reaffirmation of Spain’s superior commitment to the idea of crusade—the *consulta* further suggests that if Spain were not so burdened by other wars in defense of the


41 In *De dignitate*, Valdés makes similar arguments. See Leahy, “Making the Case.” See also Devereux, “The ruin” for an example of similar anti-French logic being deployed in Spanish sources in the context of the Italian Wars.


43 On the strategic alliance of France and the Ottoman empire, see Heath, “Unholy Alliance” and Malcom, *Useful Enemies*. 
faith, perhaps she would finally be able to undertake a new crusade to restore Jerusalem once and for all to the Latin West: “if God were pleased to unburden Your Majesty of the wars and expenses of other parts, you would be able to proceed further along in that matter.”

As with arguments about the superlative antiquity of Spanish Catholicism, the narrative that Spain has always been committed to crusade, even as France faltered by allying with the Turks or attacking fellow Christians, is a contentious narrative grounded on specifically Spanish interpretations of the national past. The claim works doubly by effacing France’s own crusading history while insinuating key connections between the crusading endeavors of the east and Spain’s own crusading activity in the past, present, and imagined future, not only in Iberia but also across the Mediterranean against the Turks and even in Palestine. Such arguments contribute significant ideological ammunition in Spain’s early modern polemics of possession over Jerusalem.

3. On Spanish royal patronage of the Holy Places

Arguments related to Spanish patronage and protection of the Holy Places, to which we shall now turn, are rooted as much in the quantifiable, material domains of finance, diplomacy, and material exchange as they are in the more squidgy terrain of contentious nationalist historiography. The polemics of possession of Jerusalem overflows the bounds of narrative imaginary here, sinking its roots in contemporary connections between Spain and the eastern Mediterranean that are significantly more tangible. In highlighting this more material, pragmatic element of the polemics of possession, I do not intend to imply that exclusivist Spanish claims to patronage over the Holy Places are any less contentious or propagandistic than Spain’s better-known pretensions to “universal monarchy,” which Betsy Wright justly highlights as a key component of Spain’s broader “textual economy built around the Jerusalem theme.” I would insist, in fact, that both of these narratives are


45 Wright, *From Pilgrimage to Patronage*, 91-92.
intimately related in that both claims to patronage over the Holy Places and to “universal monarchy” as symbolized in the throne of Jerusalem ultimately serve as powerful signifiers of Spanish Catholic grandeur and supremacy in the period. Nevertheless, I would argue that Spain’s claims to patronage over the Holy Places are uniquely eloquent in gesturing toward the overtly material, real-world implications of Spanish claims over Jerusalem more generally. Such claims are complicated and interesting precisely because they both commune with, and exceed, the bald mythologizing that we are accustomed to locating in Spanish claims to universal monarchy, or to the related ideas—surveyed in points one and two above—of Spain’s superior credentials as a crusading nation or Spain’s preeminence as first Christian nation in Europe. Unlike these latter narratives, Spanish pretensions to patronage over the Holy Places demand that we acknowledge at once the unfamiliar materiality of Spanish connections to Jerusalem in the early modern period and the surprisingly concrete ways in which such connections could interact with Spain’s practical strategies in the context of geopolitics in Europe and the Mediterranean.

The documents under survey here are unequivocal in their insistence on the protagonism of Spain as principle benefactor and defender of the Christian Holy Places in Palestine:

Your Majesty expends a great quantity of money in the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily in order to sustain the friars that inhabit that Holy Land, and in repairs to the Holy Places of those parts, and this, every year, aside from other miscellaneous alms. […]

Your Majesty with his alms and generosity sustains all those Holy Places of the Holy Land. […]

Those Holy Places of that Holy Land have been sustained for many centuries up to now with the alms and generosity of the kings, my progenitors. Particularly ever since the Catholic Monarchs and, after my-great grandparents, by the Emperor my grandfather and by the King my father, who are in heaven, and now I sustain them in the same way.46

46 Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 167-168.
In mounting this defense of the preeminence of Spanish protection over the Holy Places, the consulta is explicit in rebutting the suggestion that the French “had been the reason that the said religious today possess and have their convent and other holy places there, under the protection of the Most Christian King, to whom they turn for all their needs.” The royal genealogy of “many centuries” of “progenitors” all uniformly dedicated to maintaining and upholding the Holy Places positions the Spanish crown as exclusive inheritor of the foundational legacy of the Neapolitan monarchs Robert of Anjou and Sancia of Mallorca, an authority that lies at the origins of the Franciscan and Catholic presence in the biblical east and that continues to represent the only Catholic presence in early modern Palestine.

The “generosity and alms” to which these documents refer appear archived in the financial registers and shipping inventories of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, and they also appear substantiated by contemporary accounts penned by Franciscan friars living in the Holy Land in the early modern period. Financial records from the 16th and 17th centuries indicate that a sizeable majority of the Custody’s financial support was in fact received in the form of cash donations from the Spanish monarch. Spain was also responsible for important capital investments in the Custody, such as the reedification of the cupula of the Church of the Holy

47 Italics are my own. Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 166.

48 For transcriptions of relevant documents, see García Barriuso, España, 87-104, 157-76, and 219-30.

49 Two particularly rich sources of archival documentation on this front are the Archivo de la Obra Pía (AOP) section of the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN) in Madrid and, especially, the Historical Archive of the Franciscan Custody in Jerusalem. In the latter archive, the section of “Procura Generale” includes manuscript registers of donations received in Jerusalem from across Europe, documented by year by the Order’s Procurer in the Custody, which tended to be a Spanish friar. Of particular relevance are “Condotte” numbers 5, 6, 8, and 9, which cover the years 1615-1909. On these documents, see Quecedo, “Cooperación económica de España,” Cooperación económica internacional, “Influencia diplomática y económica,” as well as García Barriuso, España, 189-200, 219-30, and 281-6. Quecedo also transcribes and occasionally translates sections from these same “Condotte.” See also the “Libro de las cuentas de la Procura general,” which covers the years 1665-1673 in the VVAA section of the Custody Archive.
Sepulcher in 1557. Spanish donations to the Franciscan Custody further included a steady contribution of Franciscan personnel as well as supplies and material goods like candles, wine, grain, and oil, and objects of cult including liturgical vessels, altar cloths, candelabras, and vestments, which invariably appear adorned with the royal insignia of the Spanish crown.

It is on the basis of such evidence that Spain offers its most rhetorically explosive argument in these documents:

if Your Majesty were to lift his hand, of necessity they would have to abandon those Holy Places because they would not be able to conserve nor maintain them, with which the piety and religion that is exercised there would cease. […]

Your Majesty should order Escalona [the Ambassador] that on your behalf he tell His Holiness that if he listens to this request [made by France], [Your Majesty] will let the religious of Jerusalem suffer, abstaining from giving them the alms that you are accustomed to giving.

The threat of retaliation implied here is palpable. If the Pope acquiesces to the French request to recognize France ahead of Spain, then Spanish support for the Christian Holy Places and the Franciscans who administer them will dry up, and if that were to happen, the Holy Places themselves would surely be doomed, falling

50 García Barriuso, España, 157-75 provides an overview of the extensive archival material relating to this episode, including reproductions and transcriptions of relevant documents. See also an epistle of Bonifacio Stefano de Ragusa, incorporated into his Liber de perenni cultu Terrae Sanctae of 1573 in the 19th-century edition of the work, 278-84. Eiján, Documentos, 25-29. Another major building project, the construction of the lead roof of the Church of the Nativity, is attributed to the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. Arce, Documentos, 65.

51 Aside from the regular presence of Spanish friars serving in the Holy Places, of particular importance here is the naming of Spanish Commissaries and Procurators, a process over which the Spanish crown sought to exercise control. See García Barriuso, España, 261-336.

52 See Arce, Documents, 166, 184-90 and García Barriuso, España, 205-17.

53 I would like to express my gratitude here to Fr. Stéphane Milovich for allowing me to view a number of these latter items in person in the convent of Saint Savior in Jerusalem, including an imposingly ornate, six-foot tall Eucharistic baldachin of bejeweled silver and gold featuring the Habsburg bicephalous eagle with the Spanish royal arms on its breast and the name ‘PHILIPVS IIII’ at the base. For images of pertinent objects, see Hoyaux, Trésor du Saint-Sépulcre, 119-49.

54 Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 167.
into the hands of the malevolent Muslim and Jewish antagonists that populate early modern Franciscan narratives centered in the Holy Land. On a personal level, this passage has always struck me as reminiscent of the kind of stereotypical mobster extortion found in popular film: ‘it would be a real shame, Your Holiness, if something were to happen to your Holy Places.’ The threat is breathtaking in its implications, not only for the soft power that Spain seeks to exercise here equally against France and against the authority of the Vatican in defense of Spanish prerogatives in the Holy Land, but also for the way in which the Holy Places themselves are instrumentalized as a bargaining chip. If we reduce this formulation to its essence, Spain is arguing that it would prefer to surrender the Holy Places to the Ottoman authorities in Palestine rather than assent to allowing the friars in Jerusalem to pray for the king of France ahead of the king of Spain. Spain’s seriousness in defending its stake in Jerusalem here is drilled home in a final diplomatic threat to sever ties with the Vatican if the Pope decides to agree to the French petition: “if His Holiness commits any novelty, this would be a case for Your Majesty to make a great demonstration, even recalling your Ambassador from Rome.” As these examples make clear, Spain unwaveringly adopts scorched-earth tactics in rebutting French pretensions in order to defend Spanish prerogatives in the Holy City.

Beyond the particulars of this exchange, the Spanish claims expressed in these documents ultimately point both to the material entanglement of the Spanish crown with the Franciscan Custody in Jerusalem, and the power that that relationship itself represents as a tool for negotiating international relationships between Spain, France, and the Vatican. Spain’s economic and material ties to the Holy Places are leveraged here in order to negotiate a diplomatic and political victory for Spain over France at the Papal court in Rome, which would result in a reaffirmation by the Pope of Spanish

55 Examples are hyper-abundant. See Almia, Carta; Alzedo Avellaneda, Jerusalem cavtiva and Memorial; Aranda, Verdadera informacion; Calahorra, Chronic; and Quaresmius, Ierosolymae afflictiae.

56 Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 168.
preeminence over France in Jerusalem. We are far afield here from
the vagaries of simply declaring that Spanish Catholicism is older
than French Catholicism or that Spanish crusading is more laudable
than French crusading. Here the concrete trans-Mediterranean flow
of material, goods, letters, and people between Palestine and Spain
lends a pragmatic and tangible character to Spanish assertions
of an intimate connection to the Holy Land. This entanglement
of the Custody and the Crown is further predicated on Papal
acknowledgement of Spain’s pretensions to the mantle of royal
protection over the Holy Places, first recognized in the foundational
bulls of 1342 through which the Angevine role in the establishment
of the Custody is acknowledged, and which the Crowns of Aragon
and later Spain would make their own. In short, the arguments
articulated here around the notion of Spanish patronage over the
Holy Places are some of the most recurrent and potent arguments
deployed in texts in the period to insinuate Spanish connections
between Spain and Jerusalem.

4. On Spanish sovereignty in Jerusalem

Among the “many reasons that exist on behalf of Your Majesty…
to be preferred above all others, without distinction and collectively,”
the simplest and also most unassailable claim that these documents
present is the plain fact that the king of Spain is in legal possession
of the title “King of Jerusalem.” This claim is rearticulated as a
widely-acknowledged fact throughout both documents:

Your Majesty is titled king of Jerusalem, and that kingdom is yours, and in
your own house it is unjust that anyone should be preferred over you against
your will […]

being the good right of Your Majesty so well known, it would be an affront
that His Holiness would commit against Your Majesty in allowing novelty in
this, and [Your Majesty would have] a just complaint in taking offense […]

although Godfrey of Bouillon of the House Lorrain conquered Jerusalem,
Your Majesty has the just title of that Kingdom. Thus it is good that our
Majesty order Escalona [the Ambassador] to tell His Holiness that what
France has hinted at wanting to try in this place is the same as asking that

57 Leahy and Tully, *Jerusalem Afflicted*, 166.
in Your Majesty’s other kingdoms they pray naming the King of France. Because this is so beyond reason, [the Duke of Escalona] should not inform anyone because Your Majesty will not permit that this be discussed because you are legitimate king. […]

For he [the Pope] knows that that Kingdom is mine by just and renowned titles, and he knows the insult that is done in hearing a request that goes against this. […]

I would take anything that might be attempted in praying there for any other temporal prince to be the same as pretending it in the other kingdoms and states that, by the grace of God, I possess, and I would take offense in the same way to any such novelty that might arise. […]

I am assured of the holy and prudent mind of His Blessedness, which will completely disregard that petition, as its exorbitance and inappropriateness merit.

As both documents insist, Spain’s “just” rights to the throne of Jerusalem are widely recognized by competent authorities, including the Vatican itself, responsible for investing Spain with the title King of Jerusalem in the first place. Given that Jerusalem is thus sovereign Spanish territory, it only makes sense that the subjects living there should revere the king of Spain preeminently as their only sovereign. Are subjects living in Manila or Mexico or Milan or Madrid called upon to invoke the king of France? Of course not. The same logic applies here. Jerusalem is indistinguishable from such places because it, too, falls under the authority of the Spanish crown and is simply part of sovereign Spanish territory.

What is perhaps most notable about such claims is that they locate effective Spanish sovereignty in Jerusalem in the present-day. The temporal qualification of the claim here—the insistence that the king of Spain is already the undisputed king of Jerusalem now—operates in clear contradistinction equally to the popular discourses of Millenarian prophecy or calls for crusade, which both locate effective Spanish kingship in Jerusalem in the abstractions of an unachieved providential future, and the similarly popular royal

58 Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 166-168.

mythology of the king of Spain as inheritor of the biblical kings David and Salomon, a discourse that in connecting the Crown to a remote biblical lineage locates royal ties to the Holy Land in the misty imaginary of national deep time. Thanks to the 1510 papal investiture of Spain with the title, Spain’s pretensions rest on firm legal footing as a rigorously contemporary reality that is simply beyond dispute. What is further noteworthy here is Spain’s insistence that the Pope himself knows this to be true. Like Lope’s casual invocation of Philip III’s title as king of Jerusalem, these documents eloquently manifest a shared horizon of expectations in which the throne of Jerusalem is self-evidently Spanish.

Conclusions

The four arguments outlined in the preceding pages are not the only ones used to assert connections between Spain and Jerusalem in the early modern period. For example, claims to a universal Christian monarchy with Spain ruling from Jerusalem over a united global Church, as foretold in prophetic discourse, are very common. No less common are narratives linking Spain’s monarchy to the heritage of kings David and Solomon, rendering the king of Spain inheritor of a throne possessed by his biblical ancestors. Nevertheless, the arguments surveyed here complement those better-studied phenomena in key ways by furnishing a far more robust array of points of contact linking Spain and Jerusalem. The narratives surveyed here insinuate historical, economic, and legal connections tying Spain to the Holy Land in concrete, ostensibly verifiable ways, stretching from the first-century evangelization of Iberia by the Apostle James, to Spain’s engagement in autoctonous holy war and crusade throughout the middle ages, to Spain’s firm embrace of the legacy of the throne of Naples, which implies both measurable, material practices of royal patronage over the Christian

60 The most notable expression of this idea relates to associations between the Escorial palace, constructed under Philip II, and the biblical Temple of Solomon. The patio of the imposing palace includes statues of David and Solomon, who stand as forebears of the dynasty. See Lazure, “Perceptions’ and “Possessing”; and Tanner, The Last Descendant, chapter 9. A particularly succinct expression of this idea can be found in Luis de Góngora’s sonnet “Sacros, altos, dorados capiteles.” On this, Chaffee-Sorace, “Salomón Segundo.” See also Villalpando, In Ezechielem explanationes et Apparatus Vrbis, ac Tempil Hierolsolymitan and De postrema Ezechielis prophetae visione, dedicated respectively to Philip II and Philip III (in El templo de Salomón).
Holy Places and also legally-certifiable possession of the throne of Jerusalem itself up to the present day.

In early modern Spain, the polemics of possession over Jerusalem is consistently expressed in and through the arguments outlined above. When Philip III sends a massive silver lamp to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher bearing the arms of Spain, that gesture not only expresses private royal devotion to the Holy Places; it also serves to publicly manifest a concrete assertion of patronage over and possession of those very sacred places where the lamp will hang.\(^\text{61}\) When Spanish coins in the period are minted bearing the heraldic marker of the kingdom of Jerusalem this gesture visually and materially manifests Spain’s possession of the throne of Jerusalem for all those who globally interact with that currency.\(^\text{62}\) When López Pinciano poeticizes a pilgrimage of the great national hero of reconquest mythology, Pelayo, sending him to Jerusalem where he receives a vision of his providential mission to “reparar los daños / De la misera nacion destruyda” [“repair the damage / of the miserable destroyed nation”] while kneeling literally within the Holy Sepulcher itself, the poet is at once reifying the image of the Spanish royal body as belonging within that place as proper and natural to it, and also mediating Spain’s local history of sacred warfare against Islam through the paradigm of Holy Land crusade, even drawing explicit parallels between the “santa cueua” [“holy cave”] where Christ was laid to rest and the holy cave from which the reconquest was mythically launched at Covadonga.\(^\text{63}\) When Franciscans like Bernardino Amico, Blas de Buyza, or Antonio del Castillo dedicate descriptions of the Holy Land to the king of Spain, they do so with the expectation that their works will remind the monarch of his royal obligations to continue protecting and supporting those Holy Places, and in view of the fact that there is nothing more appropriate than

---

61 For contemporary sources describing this imposing gift, delivered to Jerusalem in 1615, see García Barriuso, España, 216-217.

62 See Leahy, “Dineros en cruzados.”

63 López Pinciano, El Pelayo. See, for example, ff. 2r-3v and 145v.
to give the king of Jerusalem a textualized simulacrum of the Holy City he already possesses.⁶⁴ When Villalpando sends a scale model of the city of Jerusalem to Philip II, he similarly makes possible a public performance of the king’s possession of that same city.⁶⁵ When Franciscans like Franciscus Quaresmius and Baldassar de Roma call on the king of Spain to undertake a new crusade, they do so by explicitly invoking the monarch’s royal obligations to embrace holy war both as patron and sovereign of Jerusalem.⁶⁶ Examples such as these could be easily multiplied. What all of these examples share is a commitment to polemicizing, to staking claims, to manifesting the myriad ways in which Spain belongs to Jerusalem.⁶⁷ They each put Spanish claims to work for different purposes, pursuing different objectives, addressing different audiences, but they each take as their point of departure a core set of suppositions about Spain’s relationship to Jerusalem. The broad arguments outlined in the documents surveyed above cut a wily through-line across the diverse variety of cultural artifacts centered on Jerusalem in the period that these last examples embody. Thanks to the documents produced in the context of the pro rege dispute of 1604-1605, the act of naming these arguments allows us to map the rhizomatic connections that give structure more broadly to Spain’s early modern polemics of possession over Jerusalem. These arguments ultimately allow us to see and recognize the dense, unruly network of connected texts and artifacts that until now has only been glimpsed in selective, fragmentary ways.

Before concluding, we should ask one final question: why does any of this matter? I would argue, in closing, that the

⁶⁴ Amico, Trattato; Blas de Buyza, Relacion; and Castillo, El devoto peregrino.
⁶⁵ Pedrosa, Relacion.
⁶⁶ See Leahy and Tully, Jerusalem Afflicted, 89-159.
⁶⁷ I have not addressed counter-claims to the Spanish position in the present article. These come from diverse quarters, including Jewish and morisco authors writing in Spanish, as well as rival Christian authorities such as France and Venice, and even from Spanish and Italian Franciscans who thread a delicate balance between recognizing Spanish royal authority in Jerusalem and making plain the patent limits of that authority in ways that are sometimes critical of the crown.
arguments described here above all serve to reinforce a dominant imaginary of imperial and national exultation and supremacy that hinges on powerful ideas of historical Spanish Catholic purity, ideas that we should recognize at once as religious or cultural and also as powerfully racialized and racializing. From this vantage, the very invention of historical notions of what Spain and Spanishness are in no small measure traces a path through the Holy City. Through Jerusalem, Spanish Catholic identity is defined in opposition to diverse internal and external others: Muslims and Jews, moriscos, the diverse indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. It is Catholic Spain and Catholic Spain alone that owns and protects the literal spaces of earthly Jerusalem, and it is also Catholic Spain and Catholic Spain alone that is tasked with gatekeeping the spiritual entrance to the celestial Jerusalem. Indeed, the global Catholic colonial-imperial machine is positioned often as arbiter of who belongs and who does not belong within the Holy City, both here on earth and also in heaven. Spain’s pretensions to exclusive possession of Jerusalem can thus work equally to imagine the violent exclusion or destruction of certain groups, such as Muslims and Jews and their descendants both across the Mediterranean and in Iberia, and also to imagine a mediated or subordinated colonial position for groups folded within Spain’s sovereign body by means of inquisitorial control, territorial conquest, slavery, and/or forced conversion. As we have seen, these same ideas can also serve to powerfully assert Spain’s essentialized superiority both over and against Christian rivals, such as France or Venice. And Spanish ties to Jerusalem themselves can operate as a locus for negotiating Spain’s geopolitical position in Europe and across the Mediterranean. As these multiple fronts suggest, the polemics of possession that I have traced in the preceding pages encompasses, and is generative of, radically diverse practices and experiences in the early modern world whose reach we have only begun to grasp.

Chad Leahy is Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Denver. He is author of Jerusalem Afflicted: Spain, Quaresmius, and the Idea of a 17th-
Century Crusade (Routledge, 2019) and is currently completing a monograph entitled Jerusalem and the Early Modern Invention of Spain. His research has appeared in journals including Anuario Lope de Vega, Bulletin of Spanish Studies, Cervantes, Criticón, Hispanic Review, Lemir, Revista de Literatura Medieval, Romance Notes, Translat Library, and Symposium.

Bibliography


Almia, Salvador de. Carta que el Padre Predicador fray Saluador de Almia, Hijo de la Santa Prouincia de Cantabria de la Orden de nuestro Serafico Padre San Francisco, escrive al Padre Comissario General Fray Antonio del Castillo, desde la Santa Ciudad de Ierusalen a 23. de Nouiembre de 1656. en la qual le da raison del estado miserable, y graue peligro en que se han hallado los Hijos de nuestro Padre San Francisco, y los Santos Lugas donde nacio, y padecio el Salvador de las Almas, y estan oy en dia, si no son socorridos de las limosnas de los Fieles Christianos. N.p.: n.p., 1656.

Alzedo Avellaneda, Mauricio de. Irevsalen cavtiva, y motivos sobre sv destruicion: svcessos, y entrega de los Santos Lugas de Palestina, a la Serafica Religion de S. Francisco, y el directo dominio que sobre Ellos tiene sv Rey y Señor nvestro, la Magestad Catolica de Filipo Qvarto Rey de las Españas, y Emperador del Nuevo Mundo. Discvrsos en declaracion de cvan aceta es à Dios la limosna que hazen los Fieles a su S. Sepulcro. Madrid: Maria de Quiñones, 1642.

Alzedo Avellaneda, Mauricio de. Memorial en favor de los misteriosos lugares de Ierusalen, y tierra Santa, y en recuerdo de su socorro, para su conservacion. Madrid: Iuan Gonzalez, 1630.


Aranda, Antonio de. Verdadera informacion de la Tierra Sancta. Toledo: Juan de Ayala, 1537.


Buyza, Blas de. Relacion nueva, verdadera, y copiosa, de los sagrados lugares de Jerusalem, y Tierrasanta. De las misericordias divinas, que en ellos resplandecen. De los muchos trabajos, y aflicciones, que por conservarlos en piedad Christiana padecen los Religiosos del Serafico Padre san Francisco, que los habitan: y de los grandes gastos que tienen con los Turcos. Madrid: Viuda de Alonso Martin, 1622.

Calahorra, Juan de. Chronica de la Provincia de Syria, y Tierra Santa de Gervsalen. Contiene los progressos, que en ella ha hecho la Religion Serafica, desde el Año 1219. hasta el de 1632. Madrid: Iuan Garcia Infançon, 1684.


Doussinague, José María. *La política internacional de Fernando el Católico*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1944.


Gómez de Aguilera y Saavedra, Rodrigo. *Ierusalem libertada, y restauración de toda la Palestina.* Barcelona: Antonio y Balthasar Ferrer, n.d.


Jensen, Kurt V. “Crusading at the End of the World. The Spread of the Idea of Jerusalem after 1099 to the Baltic Sea Area and to the Iberian Peninsula.” *Crusading on the


López de Cañete, Cristobal. Compendio de los pronosticos y baticinios antigos y modernos que publican la declinacion de la secta de Mahoma y libertad Hiervsalem. Granada: Francisco Heylan, 1630.


Milhou, Alain. “La chauve-souris, le nouveau David et le roi caché (trois images de


Navarro, Francisco. *Discurso sobre la coniunción máxima, que fue en Deziembre del Año 1603. En el quil se pronosticaron los felicísimos sucesos y victorias que señala al Rey Don Phelipe III, nuestro señor, y a su gente Sagitaria, que son los Españoles*. Valencia: Juan Crisóstomo Garriz, 1604.


Xodar, Francisco de Jesús. *Cinco discursos con que se confirma la antigua Tradicion que el Apostol Santiago uino i predicó en España*. Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1612.