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Exploring a 14th-century codex



A researcher in the UAB's Department of Arts and Musicology has analysed a 14th-century codex called "Libro de la Coronación de los Reyes de Castilla", the only surviving liturgical document for the coronation of a Spanish king. Exploration of this manuscript, preserved in the Real Biblioteca El Escorial, reveals that it is an adaptation of another manuscript called "Ordo of Constantinople", of which, curiously, a copy is kept in the Archivo Capitular in Toledo. Finally, the codex also shows that Santiago de Compostela was the site originally chosen for the coronation of King Alfonso XI of Castile, who was actually crowned in the monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos.

The Libro de la Coronación de los Reyes de Castilla is an extraordinary manuscript that combines two fourteenth-century coronation ordines of the kings of Castile and Aragon.

The first was seemingly prepared for the coronation and anointing of Alfonso XI of Castile, an event that eventually took place in 1332. It is the only such liturgical codex preserved for a Castilian king. Its status as a historical and codicological *unicum* reflects the Castilian monarchy's lack of interest in such ceremonies or their sacred character.

The text is, first, an introduction intended to highlight the virtues of the king and his consecration, and, second, the ceremony itself, which adapts an imperial coronation *Ordo*, the so-called *Ordo* of Constantinople.

The text remained unfinished after the description of the ceremony of the king's taking up of arms. Its twenty-four full-page miniatures and one decorated initial illustrate key elements of the ceremonial, but they too were left unfinished. The manuscript describes and illustrates a coronation and anointing ceremony in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela that did not occur because, in the end, the king was only knighted in Santiago, and was instead crowned at the monastery of Las Huelgas de Burgos.

In this article, some of the peculiarities of the codex are discussed, including the original choice of Santiago de Compostela as the location for coronation.

Eduardo Carrero Santamaría

Eduardo.carrero@uab.cat

References

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