Officers and Social Promotion
Strategies in the Lands of Isabel the Catholic (1470–1504)

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the body of administrators responsible for governing and controlling the territories granted to Isabel of Castile pro Camera, as a matrimonial assignment for being the consort of the next king of Aragon. The study of these manors in Catalonia and Sicily demonstrates the existence of certain political programs to place the confidants of the monarchy in a strategic position. Their presence in the towns, administrated by the queen, ensured strict control over distant cities and seaports in addition to the appropriate collection of her incomes and emoluments. At the same time, Isabel used the administrative posts as a reward and promotion for the families of her inner circle. We consider different officers and families in order to understand how the interests of the monarchy were intertwined with the local ruling class and their courtiers.

Keywords: Isabel the Catholic; Late Middle Age; Queen's Lands; Sicily; Catalonia

The queen’s lands: composition and administration

In Medieval Europe the queens consort had many prerogatives and rights because of their position and status. In a world where public and private spaces intertwined in an indissoluble way, the idea of power must be considered far beyond the simple definitions of formal and institutional authority. Kings, queens, infants, royal families, officials, and elites are all integral

components of an interconnected relational system for governing the realm.\textsuperscript{2} Research focused on officers and elites is crucial for a wider study of monarchy: in the last thirty years scholars have used methods of various threads of medieval history, such as court studies, economic history, gender studies, family history, and the history of emotions, showing the royal courts as meaningful administrative centres.\textsuperscript{3}

The economic sphere was linked to an immaterial capital, made of people, lineages, clients, prestige, and power, which allowed not only the sovereign but the entire monarchy to reproduce and propagate their authority in various parts of the kingdom, building a solid base of consent.

The households of the queens consort were highly involved in this process. Their treasurers had to manage a substantial flow of money, supported by the properties and the incomes they received, such as grants, purchases, inheritances, and dowers. The dowers generally were inalienable and the queens could enjoy them immediately after their weddings for their entire lives. They could not pass these properties to their successors like an inheritance, therefore after their death these possessions returned to the kingdom.\textsuperscript{4} Over the fourteenth century these donations became more frequent in various countries and were linked to court finances.\textsuperscript{5} Sometimes, the queens received large lands, creating a sort of stable territory administrated by them as ladies of the manor.


\textsuperscript{4} Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues and Manuela Santos Silva, “Private Properties, Seigniorial Tributes, and Jurisdictional Rents: The Income of the Queens of Portugal in the Late Middle Ages,” in Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe, ed. Theresa M. Earenfight (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 209–228.

\textsuperscript{5} Karl-Heinz Spieß, “European Royal Marriages in the Late Middle Ages. Marriage Treaties, Questions of Income, Cultural Transfer,” Majestas, no. 13 (2005): 19; Diana Pelaz Flores, La Casa de la Reina en la Corona de Castilla (1418-1496) (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2017), 31.
The same happened after the Catholic Kings’ weddings. A deep change in Hispanic policy occurred under their reign, caused by the configuration of a composite reign and a dual monarchical system. Their prenuptial contract—signed in Cervera in 1469—stipulated for Isabel of Castile an annual income of 100,000 florins and the lands that María of Castile and Juana Enríquez received years before, as their dowers: Borja and Magallón in the kingdom of Aragon, Elx, and Crevillent in the kingdom of Valencia; Tàrrega, Vilagrasa, Terrassa, and Sabadell in the principality of Catalonia; and Syracuse, Lentini, Mineo, Vizzini, and San Filippo in the kingdom of Sicily.\(^6\)

A few days after the marriage, Isabel sent an embassy to her father-in-law, Juan II of Aragon, so that he could consign those towns he promised to her during the negotiations,\(^7\) but her request was accepted only the next year, when the king of Aragon granted the *Diploma pro Camera* (8 May 1470).\(^8\) In this charter—nowadays we only conserve record copies and a few fragments in other documents—the sovereign gave a whole life *mero et mixto imperio* (full jurisdiction) over the cities and towns of Sicily to his daughter-in-law, along with the privilege of appointing, confirming, suspending, or revoking the officers of the local administration, issuing judgments, safe conducts, orders, and finally collecting incomes, ordinary and extraordinary emoluments. However, these rights were linked to other rules she had to respect in order to keep them: she could not alienate the properties or administer them in case of a second marriage after Fernando’s passing. Shortly after this donation, her designated *procurator* (attorney), Juan de Cárdenas, took possession of the Sicilian dower.

On the same day, Isabel obtained the charter for the Catalan towns that María of Castile and Juana Enríquez held before, except Vilagrasa, which was granted a

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\(^7\) María Isabel del Val Valdivieso, *Isabel la Católica, princesa, 1468-1474* (Valladolid: Instituto Isabel la Católica de Historia Eclesiástica, 1974), 200.

\(^8\) Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Cartes reials de Joan II, 30; Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Conservatoria del Real Patrimonio, Mercedes, 52, fols. 192r–198r; ASP, Protonotario del Regno di Sicilia, 69, fols. 93r–100r; ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3479, fols. 50v–55r, in Jaime Vicens Vives, *Fernando el Católico, príncipe de Aragón, rey de Sicilia, 1458-1478: Sicilia en la política de Juan II de Aragón* (Madrid: CSIC, 1952), 430–437, doc. 48.
month later. This document was very similar to the other mentioned for the island of Sicily and it provided the same prerogatives to the queen over the lands, manors, castles, mills, and taxes with the full jurisdiction. On 23 June 1470, Juan II of Aragon sent another charter in order to give Isabel of Castile the town of Vilagrassa, too, which is the only original diploma kept in the General Archive of Simancas. The council of Tàrrega, after having been informed by a litterae clausae of the donation, decided to challenge their antique privileges by which the kings and the lords could not sell, alienate or donate the city, refusing to swear an oath of loyalty before the new lady. In fact, in 1327 King Jaime II of Aragon granted to Tàrrega the perpetual privilege to not be separated from the Crown: only the kings of Aragon and the counts of Barcelona could govern the city. Pedro IV, Martín, and Juana Enríquez confirmed the same prerogative during their administrations. Isabel appointed a procurator for the negotiations with the city, Antón Rodríguez de Lillo, who confirmed all of the ancient rights and traditions of Tàrrega in the name of the queen and, consequently, obtained the loyalty of her subjects.

Terrassa and Sabadell at that time were under the power of the Consell de Cent of Barcelona, which was involved in the civil war that was tearing a large part of the Peninsular Crown of Aragon. When this conflict ended in 1472, the situation for both towns was largely the same and Sabadell requested the confirmation of the privileges of the city and the promise to always be part of the Crown, like Tàrrega a few years before. After those reassurances, in 1474 the procurator of the queen received

9 Archivo General de Simancas, Patronato Real, 12, 67.
10 AGS, Patronato Real, 12, 66.
11 Arxiu Històric Comarcal de l’Urgell, Llibres de Consell, 1470-1475, fols. 13v–14r.
12 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470-1475, fols. 15v–16v.
13 Lluís Sarret i Pons, Privilegis de Tàrrega (Tàrrega: Imp. F. Camps Calmet, 1930), 91–92, doc. 53.
17 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470-1475, fols. 16v–18v.
18 Arxiu Històric de Sabadell, Pergamins de Sabadell, 39.
Sabadell and the castle of Rahona. However, he did not obtain the govern of Terrassa, which continued to be part of the state domain.\footnote{19}

In 1498, at the end of the fifteenth century, Isabel’s dower was increased with some new annexations, like the port of Augusta.\footnote{20} In the charter, King Fernando also granted the county of Augusta, but it remained in the hands of the Moncada family for the next generations, despite the original intentions. With this increase, the sovereign wanted to compensate for the concession that Isabel made to Gutierre de Cárdenas: she granted him and his successors the manor of Elx and Crevillent in 1481,\footnote{21} which were part of this family’s properties for a long time after his death.\footnote{22}

The territories of her dower provided a large amount of money and vast financial resources for Isabel of Castile, in addition to the powers of command, justice, punishment, and taxation over these lands, as a real lady of the manor.\footnote{23} She needed to create an administrative structure capable of carrying out her competences and tasks, generating a significant impact on the local institutions and offices. The central treasury of the queen, responsible for money management—they used the incomes to bear the ordinary and extraordinary costs of the court—was connected to the local administration of those towns, creating different and individual systems in every kingdom where the cities were located.\footnote{24} The diverse local setting of the institutions

\footnote{19} Antonio Bosch i Cardellach, \textit{Anales de la villa de Sabadell desde el año 987 hasta el de 1770} (Sabadell: Fundació Bosch i Cardellach, 1992), 136–137.

\footnote{20} ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 186, fols. 163r–166v.

\footnote{21} Isabel gave these cities to her confident in 1471, but the donation became effective only ten years later: Arxiu Municipal d’Elx, Pàgines d’Or, Po-52, Po-45-2.

\footnote{22} AHME, Pàgines d’Or, Po-52, Po-45-2, Po-47-1.


responded to the diverse costumes and traditions of these geopolitical contexts. In the island of Sicily, the queens consort created a parallel court in Syracuse that became the new capital of the manor, where the highest offices and the tribunal of *magna curia* resided.

The governor was the head of this administration and represented the queen's authority, leading the jurisdiction and the local government, issuing decrees and statutes, receiving oaths, controlling finances and defences, appointing the officers, and publishing the *litterae extecutoriae* in order to validate the viceroy's orders in the queen's lands. He responded only to the queen, who could modify or reverse his decisions. This officer presided over the queen's council, consisting of the highest officers in charge, like the *magister rationalis*, the *magister secretus*, the treasurer, the judges of *magna curia*, and the secretary.\(^\text{25}\)

The *magister rationalis* led the financial department of the Sicilian manor and his tasks revolved around the control of the other economic offices, taxes, activities, and surveys.\(^\text{26}\) He was the responsible of the balance of the manor before the queen and the viceroy of Sicily, and for this reason he organized the tax levying for the voluntary contribution that the Sicilian Parliament offered periodically to the king.\(^\text{27}\) Another officer, the Sicilian *conservator reginalis patrimonii*, dealt with the territorial surveys and the proper exploitation of the queen's properties.\(^\text{28}\) His role was directly linked to Isabel's general *conservator patrimonii*, who had to control the administration of all the queen's assets. He leveraged the help of the local *conservatores* to guarantee the proper functioning of the system, although he could not travel to those lands very often. In this way the general *conservator* was able to easily conduct audits and identify inconsistencies or debts.\(^\text{29}\)

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25 Biblioteca Comunale di Siracusa, Liber privilegiorum et diplomatum nobilis et fidelissimae Syracusarum urbis, 2, fols. 208r–209r.
27 ASP, Real Cancelleria, 127, fol. 362; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 82, fols. 101v–102r.
29 ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 86, fol. 95v.
The treasurer kept the treasury of the Sicilian manor and managed the cash flow, paying for the expenditures and depositing earnings to Isabel's central treasury. He publicly declared the accounts every year, before the secretary and the notaries, reporting the profits of the secretiae (customs), the export taxes, the rights over the port and the manors, the maintenance costs of the defence system, the officers’ salaries, almsgivings, grants, and court expenses. The treasurer almost always received the appointment for the magister secretus office too, validating balance, tenders, payments, repairs, and controlling the activities of the others vicesecreti of the manor, who had the same duties in their local jurisdictions.

The magister credentiarius was another officer who monitored the incomes and the accounts of the gabelloti, who collected taxes over goods and merchandises every year for winning a proper tender. The magister credentiarius resided in the port of Syracuse, that was one of the most important trading posts in Eastern Sicily, where there were other officers, like the viceportulanus, who collected taxes and tributes, verified licenses, levied taxes on exports together with the portulanoti and the sergeants. Similar officers existed in the other ports of the manor too (Brucoli, Agnone, and Augusta).

Justice was dispensed in the queen’s tribunal of magna curia, installed in the castle Maniace of Syracuse and presided by the governor, with the collaboration of the fiscal lawyer, the magister juratus and two judges. These judges, initially selected

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30 Rosana de Andrés, El último decenio del reinado de Isabel I a través de la tesorería de Alonso de Morales (1495-1504) (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial, Universidad de Valladolid, 2004), 1034, doc. 5.921.
31 AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112, fol. 92r.
32 The vicesecreti were officers with the same functions as the magistrus secretus, but only for the city of their jurisdiction.
33 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fol. 22r.
34 The gabelloti were people who won the tenders for management of local taxation.
35 Caterina Orlando, Una città per le regine: istituzioni e società a Siracusa tra XIII e XV secolo (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 2012), 259; AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112.
37 This officer had economic and administrative functions, controlling the incomes and the tenders for the gabelle (duties).
and appointed ad beneplacitum, were officers for a term of two years, who dispensed all levels of justice except crimes that involved lese-majesty and feudal disputes, under the royal and viceroyal jurisdiction. The queen’s subjects were entitled to appoint the court of Syracuse and they used the viceroy’s tribunal of Palermo only for legal appeals, since Isabel’s central court was too far for them. On the other hand, the fiscal lawyer and the patronus fisci were expert jurists who defended the queen in the cases involving her properties on the island. Finally, in extraordinary circumstances, Isabel could appoint visitors, commissionners, and reformers, sent to the queen’s lands for select investigations, whereas she selected a capitanus armorum reginalis (captain of the weapons) for his skills in warfare, buying artillery, organizing defense, and administrating criminal justice ad beneplacitum. He had a role of primary importance and he was second only to the governor in terms of influence.

In Catalonia the administration of the queen settled in the territory in a completely different way, responding to the traditions that the cities of the principality had been building the last centuries. The institutions of the manor should have fit with the local representative organisms, handled by the urban running class. This administration consisted of less officers, and they were led by a general procurator of the manor of Catalonia and sometimes by extraordinary procuratores. They were the only officers with full jurisdiction over all the lands and towns belonging to Isabel in Catalonia. In this case, there was not a parallel court or a capital for this manor and the procurator had to interact directly with the local and independent officers of Tàrrega, Vilagrassa, and Sabadell.

In every city there was a court with a battle (mayor), a councillor, and a notary, dealing with the ordinary justice and the queen’s taxes and emoluments collection. The office of the mayor did not depend on the municipal institutions because he represented the superior authority's interests, which was the queen consort—at least, while the charters pro Camera were valid. At the beginning, his functions were directly connected with the incomes and assets of the lordship, but he also received judicial

38 Giuseppe M. Agnello, Ufficiali e gentiluomini al servizio della Corona: il governo di Siracusa dal Vespro all’abolizione della Camera regiale (Syracuse: Barbara Micheli, 2005), 168.
39 AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112, fol. 130r.
40 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 61v–62r.
41 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fol. 130.
tasks over time and for this reason he had many conflicts with the office of veguer (vicar), mostly in the cities that were capitals of vegueria (vicar’s district), like Tàrrega.\textsuperscript{42} The vicar worked closely with the king, for his military, legal, and police duties over the district. The offices of mayor and vicar were not incompatible and when the cities belonged to the king they were often unified. But it was different in the queen’s manors, since they used to appoint two different officers in order to represent both king and queen's authorities in the territory. Isabel’s officer instituted civil and criminal trials with the inner council, which participated in the penal cases.\textsuperscript{43}

The second level of justice was administrated by the judges of appeals, chosen ad beneplacitum by the queen in order to deliver a definitive judgment for the local trials. When their authority was not enough—such as when the cities or lords were involved—they resorted to the lieutenant of Catalonia, since the court of the queen was too distant from the principality.

The queen appointed a local treasurer, the receptor, for the administration of her finance and tax collection. He could be a specific officer or his tasks could be assigned to a person who already held another position, especially the mayor.\textsuperscript{44} Sometimes these officers managed the collection of municipal tributes, consigning the money to the local authorities only at a later stage. In this way Isabel could obtain all the incomes belonging to her, avoiding any manipulation of accounting books. The economic duties of the treasurer were flexible and dynamic, since the queen did not make stable appointments. The local institutions and lords usually protected their privileges, leaving the queen's officers with no leeway. The oïdors de comptes (literally “hearers of the accounts”) were elected every year by the citizens, and controlled the accounting books of each administrative office in the town as well as declaring balance and financial reports to the local council.\textsuperscript{45}

There was also another control system for queen and city's officers, the purga de taula (literally, “purge of the organization chart”), created at the end of the thirteenth century with the purpose of monitoring officers’ books and behaviours.


\textsuperscript{43} AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fols. 68, 120r, 124r; AHCU, Pergamins de Tàrrega, 321.

\textsuperscript{44} AHS, Llibres de la Cort del Batlle, 2591/4, fol. 58v; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470–1475, fol. 48r.

\textsuperscript{45} AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fols. 5v–6r.
after they have ceased their duties. These judges were nominated by the procurator of the queen and needed to build a case against the officers whenever they found irregularities, including the members of the mayor court. However, in 1493, following accusations of corruption among judges, the council of the city started appointing them.

There were two local representative organisms: the general council (consell general) and the inner council (consell particular). At first, all the citizens participated in the general council, although only the peers (paers)/jurors (jurats) and the councillors (consellers) joined the inner council, preserving the privileges, collecting some taxes and dealing with the ordinary administration of the towns, like the maintenance of irrigation and road systems. But later they radically reformed the general council’s composition, involving only the members of the inner council and thirty “good men” (probi homines), chosen according to their neighbourhood (Sant Antoni, Santa Maria, Santa Creu, and Falcó) and social class (mà major, mà mitjana and mà menor). The number of the members of the two councils changed many times, mostly because due to epidemics, famines, and demographic crisis. Isabel of Castile, for example, had to reduce those members too: the citizens could elect four peers, twelve councillors, and twenty-one good men for the general council, when only the mayor, the peers, and the councillors could join the inner council too.

The nobility in Sicily and the government of the queen
The administrative structures were fluid entities that could be moulded according to the policy and economy of each territory where they were installed. The officers of this system were not chosen at random, but rather there was a proper strategy with

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46 Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, “El ejercicio del poder real en la Corona de Aragón: instituciones e instrumentos de gobierno (siglos XIV y XV),” En la España medieval, no. 17 (1994): 70.
47 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470-1475, fol. 52v.
48 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 130v-131v.
50 Max Turull i Rubiñat and Jaume Ribalta Haro, “Entre la Universitas e el concilium generale. El consell general a Tàrrega (1313-1396),” URTX, no. 2 (1990): 42.
51 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470-1475, fols. 129r, 135r–136r, 147r–152v; Sarret i Pons, Privilegis de Tàrrega, 415–417, doc. 6; Gonzalvo i Bou, Els Llibres de Privilegis de Tàrrega, 1058-1473, 531–533, doc. 314.
many hidden facets that directly influenced the court and its connection to the
kingdom, as can be seen from the analysis of the people and families with offices in
the queen’s lands. When Juana Enríquez governed these lands (1458-1468) and Juan II
of Aragon continued to administrate her manor after her death (1468-1470)—he
maintained the same officers, waiting for his future daughter-in-law—most of the
local officers came from families belonging to the elite of the Crown of Aragon
peninsula, like the members of the queen’s court.\textsuperscript{52} Isabel of Castile encouraged the
substantial change in her organization chart: there was still a big percentage of
Aragoneses, but she promoted the presence of new people trained in the Castilian
court and the majority of the officers were Sicilian families loyal to the Crown.

Some native noble families continued serving the queen, as they did for
generations, like the Montaltos, who held nobility titles in Syracuse, Messina,
Palermo and were Barons of Buccheri.\textsuperscript{53} One branch of the family specialised in service
to the court, particularly in juridical offices.\textsuperscript{54} Francesco Montalto was a very
influential person at court, holding the positions of \textit{patronus fisci}, in 1490-1493 and
then in 1498-1500.\textsuperscript{55} From 1492 to 1494 he was a judge of \textit{magna curia} too, with his
colleague Nicola Cannarella.\textsuperscript{56}

The Selvaggios, Genoese nobles who had resided in Sicily since the thirteenth
century among the Aragonese party, were important to the municipal council of
Syracuse, since they were active members of this institution and for other offices they
administrated (they were captains, governors of castles, \textit{gabelloti}, and \textit{credentiarii}).\textsuperscript{57}
They owned many properties and the monopoly on slaughtering activities, thanks to

\textsuperscript{52} For the officers’ lists during the government of Juana Enríquez and Juan II of Aragon see: Agnello,
\textit{Ufficiali e gentiluomini al servizio della Corona}, 224–228.
\textsuperscript{53} In 1478 Giovanni Montalto was Baron of Buccheri and, when he passed, the heir was his son Cataldo:
ASP, Protonotario del Regno di Sicilia, 90, fols. 85v–86r and 126 fols. 83r–84r; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 139,
fols. 190r–191r and 170, fols. 102v–103v, 145v; ASP, Protonotario della Camera reginale, 2, fols. 88v–89r.
\textsuperscript{54} Giovambattista Montalto was \textit{magister secretus} of the queen in Sicily when the officer in charge was
absent. Antonio Montalto also attended the oaths of loyalty at Syracuse court: ASP, Protonotario della
Camera reginale, 2, fols. 68v, 71v, 112r–114v.
\textsuperscript{55} ASP, Protonotario della Camera reginale, 2, fols. 20, 24, 25v–28r, 65v, 68v.
\textsuperscript{56} ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fol. 81; AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112, fol. 130r; ASP, Protonotario
del Regno di Sicilia, 175, fol. 141.
\textsuperscript{57} Antonio Mango di Casalgerardo, \textit{Nobiliario di Sicilia} (Bologna: Forni, 1970), s.v. Grasso; Agnello, \textit{Ufficiali
e gentiluomini al servizio della Corona}, 140; Orlando, \textit{Una città per le regine}, 293–294.
one of the few authorised slaughterhouses they had, confirmed to Giovanna Selvaggio and her heirs in 1489,\textsuperscript{58} while Giovanni Antonio Selvaggio officially collected the slaughtering and flour milling taxes.\textsuperscript{59}

The Grassos came from high standing in Sicily and had worked for the queens since the first half of the fifteenth century. Francesco Grasso was juratus, judex,\textsuperscript{60} magister notarius (master notary), magister juratus, and magister rationalis in the queens’ manor since 1463.\textsuperscript{61} Despite his close relationship with Juana Enríquez—he joined the defence during the siege of Girona in order to protect the queen and the prince—after her passing, he demanded the abolition of the dower, for which he was arrested.\textsuperscript{62} The main argument for his rebellion was the promotion of the urban patricianship, favoured by the queens’ government, at the expense of the noble privileges. Isabel decided to forgive him and return him to the offices and rights he had enjoyed before his betrayal, securing his loyalty and support.\textsuperscript{63} In fact, the Grassos became one of the most important elements of this manor among the families devoted to the queen.

Francesco was magister rationalis of the queens’ manor of Sicily from 1470 until his death,\textsuperscript{64} including when he was condemned for the murder of Vicens Diamant in 1486.\textsuperscript{65} The victim’s family forgave him for the crime, facilitating the process to obtain a safe conduct, which allowed him to live in freedom, but forty-two miles away from Syracuse. He moved to Mineo, where he became magister carcerarius (master jailer) and French consul in the queen’s lands of Sicily.\textsuperscript{66} His son Enrico obtained the French

\textsuperscript{58} ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fol. 30r; BCS, Liber privilegiorum et diplomatum, 3, fols. 169r–170r.
\textsuperscript{59} ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fol. 82.
\textsuperscript{60} Both were members of the civic council.
\textsuperscript{62} Coll Julià, Doña Juana Enríquez, vol. 1, 32.
\textsuperscript{63} ASP, Protonotario della Camera reginale, 2, fols. 13v–14r.
\textsuperscript{64} ASP, Conservatoria del Real Patrimonio, Mercedes, 52, fols. 346r–347v; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 69, fols. 105v–106v; ASP, Real Cancelloria, 126, fols. 64r–65v.
\textsuperscript{65} ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 120, fols. 222v–223r.
\textsuperscript{66} ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fols. 88v–89r, 154; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 162, fols. 180v–181v.
consulate, in addition to the Catalan embassy of Syracuse and the office of *magister rationalis* of the manor. He had been senator of Syracuse and master notary of the captain of Mineo before, but his career was cut short when he was murdered by an enemy group in 1499. Francesco had other sons, too, like Giacomo, captain of Syracuse in 1479-1480, Maciotta, auditor of the weights and measures of Lentini, and Antonio, who dedicated himself to religious affairs, as chaplain in the church of Saint Lucy *intra moenia* and vicar of the bishop of Syracuse. Finally, Francesco Jr. in 1500 became the new *magister rationalis* after Enrico’s death and administrated the office for the rest of his life.

**The patricianism in Syracuse**

While some noble families ceased to work for the queen, like, for example, the Pedilepores and the Aricios, other groups of the urban patricianism, mostly merchants or traders, became close to the lady of the manor and her administration, taking advantage of the prestige and the influence that service to the court could provide. This class was the real protagonist during the government of Isabel of Castile in the second half of the fifteenth century and facilitated their social and political promotion. These families used the offices to ennoble their status and

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68 ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fols. 94r–95v.

69 ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fol. 90.

70 ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 184, fols. 22r–26r.


72 ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fol. 38.

73 ACA, Reial Cancelloria, 3687, fol. 11.

74 ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 119, fol. 92v; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 122, fols. 197v–198r; ASP, Protonotario della Camera reginale, 2, fols. 26r, 68v–69r.

75 ASP, Protonotario della Camera reginale, 2, fols. 68, 69v–70v, 84r–107r.

influence over the territory, absorbing the positions into their personal and familiar properties and becoming richer.

Francesc Oliver was a leading member of this class. He came from a family of Catalan merchants who lived between Barcelona and Tortosa with great power at court. In fact, Galceran Oliver had been Juan II of Aragon’s, Juana Enríquez’s, and the infant princes’ treasurer, reformer, and governor of the queen’s manor of Sicily during the years of María of Castile and Juana. Francis administrated the conservatoria of the queen’s heritage, the office magister credentiarius, master jailer of Vizzini, notary of Syracuse customs, Maltese consul, porter of the city, receptor of the wheat in the port of Brucoli, and magister juratus. His son Joan Antoni started in the local government assisting his father and, after his father’s death, inheriting his offices. The Olivers mediated for the purchases of the court and replaced the magister secretus when he was absent. They directly influenced the appointment of public offices, acting in an unscrupulous manner, selling the positions as well.

The Palaxinos also succeeded in their social advancement, thanks to the public offices in Syracuse and in the other towns of the manor of the queen. Nicola was master notary and archivist of the Sicilian queen’s lands for over thirty years, managing the same function for the municipal council of Syracuse. After his homicide, his son Selvaggio inherited the office of master notary of the city council, in addition to the duties he had as captain of San Filippo (1486-1487); Antonio and later his heir were appointed porters of the manor for all their life; Giovanni Matteo

78 ASP, Protonotario del Regno di Sicilia, 86, fol. 95r; ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 12r, 45r–46v, 89; AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112, fols. 15r, 17v, 94r.
79 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 48r, 55r–56v; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 183, fols. 248v–250v.
80 ASP, Protonotario del Regno di Sicilia, 180, fols. 117r–118r; ASP, Real Cancelleria, fols. 298v–299r; ASP, Protonotario della Camera reginale, 2, fol. 22v.
81 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 54r–55r, 63r.
82 BCS, Liber privilegiorum et diplomatum, 2, fols. 209v–225r.
83 He was murdered in 1479 by Giacomo Mirabella: ASP, Protonotario del Regno di Sicilia, 97, fols. 211v–213r.
84 BCS, Liber privilegiorum et diplomatum, 2, fol. 385r.
85 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fol. 7v.
86 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 18v–19v, 21, 81v–82r.
was captain of Vizzini in 1486-1487 and captain of Lentini in 1491-1492;\textsuperscript{87} Nunzio was chosen as captain of justice of Mineo in 1489-1490 and collector of slaughtering and flour milling taxes in Syracuse;\textsuperscript{88} and, finally, Francesco Palaxino obtained the office of viceportulanus in Brucoli, inherited by his son Giovanni Antonio after his death.\textsuperscript{89} This family were able to fit with society and the administration using the offices dependent on the queen and for this reason they led local policy, especially in 1480s and 1490s.

The government of Tàrrega: institutions and leaders

In the territories administrated by the queen in Catalonia during the fourteenth and fifteenth century, while the representative institutions of the city were consolidating, a small group of local families gained power, connecting their members to the councils’ offices. These political organisms were manipulated and moulded to the benefit of those who promoted the creation of an oligarchy.\textsuperscript{90} A few families settled in the government and prevented access to the institutions for the citizens who could not cover their economic and social requirements.\textsuperscript{91} It was a self-sustained system through the control of the decision-making power, kept by the municipal elites which, in turn, legitimized their prestige with public offices.\textsuperscript{92} By analyzing the members of the inner and general councils during the government of Isabel of Castile, we can clearly see that only a few families held all the offices of the administration,

\textsuperscript{87} ACA, Reial Cancellaria, fols. 8r, 85v–86r.
\textsuperscript{88} ACA, Reial Cancellaria, 3687, fol. 33r; AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112, fol. 3r.
\textsuperscript{89} ACA, Reial Cancellaria, 3687, fol. 8v.
\textsuperscript{91} Pau Viciano, *Regir la Cosa Pública. Prohoms i poder local a la vila de Castelló (segles XIV-XV)* (Valencia: PUV, 2008), 45–64.
leaving a little space for new aspiring officers. The queen of Castile supported and consolidated the careers of the oligarchy already in power and used their professional abilities and personal connections to further her own interests.

In 1470–1490 the Ponç family stood out from the other groups of the oligarchy for their careers and prestige. Joan was councillor in 1470–1471, peer in the successive mandate and then in 1478–1479, and finally good man for many years—in 1472–1473, later in 1477–1478, and in 1480–1481.93 Francesc also took part in the council, as a peer (1474–1475; 1487–1488), councillor (1478–1479), and ambassador of the city with the purpose of negotiating with the creditors.94 Isabel used Ponç’ experience and personal network, appointing them as her local officers often. Joan was nominated mayor in 1474–1476,95 as was Miquel in 1485–1487,96 and Francesc in 1470–1473—Franscesc was lieutenant of the mayor in the summer of 1479 and receptor of the queen’s emoluments in 1471 and 1481.97 He was very influential and the king decided to honour him too, granting to him the office of vicar of the district in the autumn of 1479.98

The Pruneras were elected many times for the local government. Damià was councillor in 1472–1474 and 1477–1481, good man in 1474–1475, 1478–1479 and 1481–1482, negotiated with the creditors of the city, kept the accounting book of the magister rationalis, and in 1495–1498 his career culminated when he became mayor for the queen Isabel.99 Tomàs, who was a great owner with a large property near the castle of Mor, was a good man in 1477–1478, councillor in 1481, and peer in 1481–1482.100

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93 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470–1475, fols. 2r–5r, 43v–45v, 76r–77r; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fols. 9r–17r, 46r–52r; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1480–1490, fols. 16v–23r; AHCU, Pergamin de Tàrrega, 321.
95 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470–1475, fols. 140v–141v, 166v–167v.
96 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1480–1490, fols. 215v–216r.
97 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470–1475, fols. 11v–12v, 48r; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fols. 107, 133.
98 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fols. 2v–3r; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1480–1490, fols. 3r–4r.
100 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fols. 46r–52r; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1480–1490, fols. 16v–23r, 127r–130v; AHCU, Pergamins de Tàrrega, 323.
Francesc Palau and Gaspar Vidal were two of the most powerful politicians that consolidated their position into both municipal and queen's administrations. Francesc was a very rich man, a great owner of the district of Mor, too, who had studied to be a notary. He attended to the councils with different offices, as a peer (1470–1471 and 1481–1482), councillor (1471–1472; 1474–1475; 1477–1479), and good man (1472–1474 and 1479–1481). He was a representative of the city at the Corts of Montblanc-Cervera in 1470, defending the rights to tax of the city, negotiating with creditors, and validating the accounting books when the procurator of the queen questioned their authenticity. His specialization was useful to administrate the municipal jurisdiction in 1471 and manage the office of notary of the vicar from 1481 onwards. Gaspar Vidal received a similar education too, and, thanks to the tools he learned during that time, he had an important career as King Juan II’s scribe. This experience, like the training he had for the municipal institutions—he was a good man in 1473–1474, 1477–1478, and 1480–1482, a peer in 1476–1477, and councillor in 1474–1475 and 1478–1480—helped him with his duties as notary (1478–1487) and lieutenant of the mayor.

The officers from the Iberian Crown of Aragon

Beyond the Sicilian families, the administration of the queen grew strong in the lands granted to her, thanks to the collaboration of a group of officers loyal to the Catholic Kings, who moved to the cities belonging to her manor and assisted her in controlling

101 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fol. 115; AHCU, Pergamins de Tàrrega, 319.
104 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470–1475, fol. 48v; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476–1481, fol. 97r; AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1480–1490, fols. 60r–61r.
105 Jaime Vicens Vives, Historia crítica de la vida y reinado de Fernando II de Aragón (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2007), 600.
and managing her rights. Many of them were members of families connected to the service or to the Court, who came from the peninsular kingdoms of the Crown of Aragon and specialised in economics or justice. Most had experience in different positions: they already had successful careers when they started working for the manor’s administration, although this type of role could also act as a stepping stone for their professions.

For example, the Sánchez family were one of the most important *conversos* at Fernando’s court. They gained the royal favor for their professional skills in commercial activities, economic offices, and royal treasury management. During the reign of Alfonso the Magnanimous they obtained privileges and influence, standing out and promoting their family socially. Among the various offices they received were the chancery, the general treasury, and the office of *magister rationalis*: their secret of success was the diversification of the activities and the implication of every member of the family in the affairs of the court. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Lluís Sánchez was Fernando’s treasurer, both when he was a prince and when he became King of the Crown of Aragon, and Lluís obtained the office of *procurator* and *receptor* for the kingdom of Sicily, while his brother Alfonso was made the lieutenant of the general treasurer of the kingdom of Valencia. Their two brothers, Guillem and Gabriel, held important positions within the queen’s administration in Sicily and Catalonia.

Guillem Sánchez was a businessman who had managed prestigious offices since the first half of the fifteenth century. He was Fernando’s master butler when the future King of Aragon went to Valladolid with the purpose of marrying Isabel of

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108 During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, *conversos* were Jews who converted to Catholicism in Spain or Portugal.


111 ASP, Real Cancelleria, 171, fol. 518.

Guillem was very close to the prince and due to his studies and experience was the perfect candidate for the principal position of the Catalan manor, the general procurator of the manor of Catalonia. His appointment in 1476 was protested by the council of the city of Tàrrega, which questioned his eligibility. They doubted he was really a citizen of Tortosa, since he had to reside in the principality in order to administrate the office, like the Constitutions of Catalonia established. However, his nomination was confirmed *ad beneplacitum* by the queen a few days later, with a wage reduction for the economic crisis that the Catalan towns were facing.

The local government put Guillem under pressure again in 1483-1485, building a case against him and the other officers of his court for arresting, interrogating, and collecting taxes when the queen was not in the principality, violating a city's privilege that defined the jurisdictional rights of the procurator. Around the same time, he participated in the murder of Pedro de Arbués (1485), together with his brothers Gabriel and Alfonso, with the purpose of slowing down the Inquisitorial institutions. Once again Guillem, after a long trial, was found innocent and received the confirmation of his position (procurator), which he administrated until 1495. His expertise in administration of the queen’s dower culminated in the office of the King’s *magister rationalis*, which was a very prestigious and powerful position he held from 1494 until his death in 1501.

Guillem's brother Gabriel was appointed *magister secretus* of the manor of Sicily during the short government of Juan II of Aragon and was also confirmed by Isabel of Castile. Gabriel was a loyalist of Fernando and carried out services for the Aragonese king: he ran his general treasury when he was prince of Aragon and King of Sicily, he was lieutenant of the general treasurer of the kingdom of Valencia—in these years his

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114 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476-1481, fol. 1r.
115 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1476-1481, fol. 4.
118 AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1480-1490, fol. 211r.
sibling Alfonso was the official treasurer in charge—and replaced his brother Lluís as general treasurer of the court. Gabriel, as treasurer of the king, had powerful tasks, managing the cash flow, seizing the debtors’ assets, and receiving reports of incomes and expenditures of the kingdom of Sicily. He built up a strong and stable network of relationships, reaching the highest levels of the nobility, and owning the castle of Roccella, with various incomes chargeable to the ports of Agrigento and Palermo.

Even if Gabriel Sánchez held the office of magister secretus of the queen’s manor of Sicily, it was only an honorary title and his real tasks were performed by Gaspar de Cervelló and then by Lluís Palau, both from Catalonia. Gaspar de Cervelló administrated the office from March 1471 to 1489. He was a business man with commercial and credit connections to the ruling class and a member of a family which served the Crown on several occasions. Guerau Alamán de Cervelló for example was the general governor of Catalonia during the reign of Martín the Humane. Lluís Palau was an important merchant, who supplied money to the viceroy and the nobles of the island and artillery to Sicily in order to strengthen the defense. He dealt with the customs of the queen’s manor from 1491 (and perhaps before) to 1504 and was

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123 ASP, Conservatoria del Real Patrimonio, Mercedes, 51, fol. 229 (first mention); ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 135, fol. 66v (last mention).

124 Germán Navarro Espinach, “Consejeros influyentes y personas de confianza en el entorno cortesano de los reyes de Aragón (siglos XIII-XV),” in La Corona de Aragón en el centro de su historia, 1208-1458: la monarquía aragonesa y los reinos de la Corona, ed. Ángel Sesma Muñoz (Zaragoza: Grupo de Excelencia de Investigación C.E.M.A, Universidad de Zaragoza, Gobierno de Aragón, Departamento de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2010), 160.

125 ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fols. 61v–62r; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 102, fol. 232; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 174, fol. 120; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 181, fols. 220r–221r; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 199, fols. 77r–78v.
officially appointed *magister secretus* for all his life by Germaine of Foix. He took the possession of the manor in the queen’s name when the governor Cárdenas died.

Three judges of appeals of Tàrrega came from the Catholic Kings’ inner circle. Antoni Riquer, Francesc Malet, and Jaume Deztorrent were part of the urban oligarchic party of Barcelona that assisted the sovereign in restoring obedience and managing the finances of Barcelona from the 1480s onwards. Antoni Riquer was a doctor in law and had been a member of Fernando’s chancery since 1469; Francesc Malet, native of Vilafranca del Penedès and citizen of Barcelona, was also a doctor in law, judge, fiscal lawyer of his court, and royal *patronus fisci*. Jaume Deztorrent studied law, was lawyer of the *Batllia general*, and *Generalitat, conseller en cap* (councillor-in-chief) of the *Consell de Cent* (1479-1484), ambassador of the king (1481-1487), and Catalan consul in Salerno and Castellammare. His political network helped the monarch keep the control of the city of Barcelona until 1490s, when Jaume Deztorrent was involved in several scandals and the King decided to part ways with him. Nonetheless, Isabel nominated him judge of appeals in 1491, inheriting the office that Antoni Riquer first (in 1473) and then Francesc Malet had administrated until that moment, with the power of replacing the queen’s court for the appeal processes or recourses when the ordinary officers of Tàrrega and Vilagrassa had given the judgement.

126 ACA, Reial Canselleria, 3687, fol. 104; AGS, Papeles de Estado, Sicilia, 1112, fol. 2r; ASP, Protonotaro della Camara reginale, 2, fol. 70v; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 253, fols. 879v–881v.
127 ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 174, fol. 179v.
130 The *batlle general* of Catalonia was an officer with various tasks, related to the royal treasury, incomes, taxes and rights.
133 ACA, Reial Canselleria, 3687, fol. 75v; Sarret i Pons, *Privilegis de Tàrrega*, 418, doc. 7.
The officers of the Crown of Castile and the dower
Since Isabel took control of the manor, we can see a significant presence of new members of the families loyal to the Crown of Castile with the highest positions of that self-sustaining system, well installed throughout the dower’s territories. Juan Cárdenas, for example, belonged to a family group very close to the queen. He was Gutierre Cárdenas’ son, who was in turn Gonzalo Chacón’s nephew. Thanks to Gonzalo Gutierre, he obtained the offices of maestresala (food taster) and Isabel’s contador mayor when she was an infant; councillor, comendador mayor (commander-in-chief) of León; mayor of Toledo, Carmona, Almería, and Chinchilla; la Mota of Medina del Campo; adelantado mayor of Castile, and Lord of Vizcaya.

Due to his special relationship with the future queen of Castile, Juan Cárdenas could personally take part in her prenuptial negotiations and he received many grants and incomes from Juan II of Aragon for these merits. He took also the office of the infant Juan’s master chamberlain, with other financial positions for the infant María. Finally, the queen gave to him huge benefits and privileges as a reward for his loyalty, including the full jurisdiction over the manor of Elx and Crevillent, belonging to her dower. When Juan Cárdenas died, in 1503, the court provided for the costs of

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134 High officers of the royal treasury of the Crown of Castile.
135 Title held by Spanish nobles in service of their respective kings.
136 Jaime de Salazar y Acha, La casa del Rey de Castilla y León en la Edad Media (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2000), 404; Francisco Martínez López, La casa del Príncipe de Asturias: D. Juan, heredero de los Reyes Católicos (Madrid: Dykinson, 2007), 213–214; Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real castellana entre 1480 y 1492 (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1967), 69, 74, 76; Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real de Castilla en el siglo XV (San Cristóbal de La Laguna: Universidad de La Laguna, 1973), 283, 309, 312, 315; María de la Soterraña Martín Postigo, La cancillería castellana de los Reyes Católicos (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1959), 197–200; Alvaro Fernández de Córdova Miralles, La corte de Isabel I: ritos y ceremonias de una reina, 1474-1504 (Madrid: Dykinson, 2002), 62, 135; Gonzalo de Fernández Oviedo, Libro de la cámara real del príncipe don Juan, oficios de su casa y servicio ordinario (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2006), 83.
138 García Carraffa, Diccionario heráldico y genealógico, vol. 53, 108–111; Salazar y Acha, La casa del rey de Castilla y León en la Edad Media, 404; Martínez López, La casa del príncipe de Asturias, 342. When he died, his heir was Diego, his son: ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fol. 144; AHME, Pàgines d’Or, Po-52, Po-45-2; Fernández Oviedo, Libro de la cámara real del príncipe don Juan, 193; Prieto Cantero, Casa y descargos de los Reyes Católicos, 517, 527–28; Soterraña Martín Postigo, La cancillería castellana de los Reyes Católicos, 201.
his funeral and the testamentary executions.\textsuperscript{139} His son Diego, Duke of Maqueda, \textit{adelantado mayor} of León and infant Juan’s master chamberlain and page,\textsuperscript{140} had to deliver Gutierre’s accounting books to the new \textit{contador mayor}, Álvaro of Portugal.\textsuperscript{141} Teresa Enríquez, Gutierre’s wife, was a member of the most intimate part of Isabel’s circle: as a lady, she took advantage of numerous grants, gifts, and benefits and she was at the core of a high level network which increased exponentially when the princess of Castile was proclaimed queen and her domestic environment became an important space of power.\textsuperscript{142}

Juan Cárdenas, heir of this family group, was chosen as a \textit{procurator} in order to take possession of the Sicilian manor assigned to Isabel and in 1471 he was appointed governor, holding the office for more than twenty-five years until his death on 30 March 1497.\textsuperscript{143} Usually the queens granted this position \textit{ad beneplacitum}, but in 1477 Juan Cárdenas obtained the office for his entire life, despite the numerous cases of accusations and trials in which he was involved.\textsuperscript{144} He received many privileges, too, like gifts for his daughter’s wedding, licenses to increase the family possessions in the island, the control of the castle Marquet of Syracuse, and the office of master notary and archivist of the manor.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{139} Prieto Cantero, \textit{Casa y descargos de los Reyes Católicos}, 108, 112, 345.
\textsuperscript{140} Martínez López, \textit{La casa del príncipe de Asturias}, 343, 353, 357; José Damián González Arce, \textit{La casa y corte del príncipe Don Juan (1478-1497). Economía y etiqueta en el palacio del hijo de los Reyes Católicos} (Seville: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2016), 312.
\textsuperscript{141} María Concepción Solana Villamor, \textit{Cargos de la casa y corte de los Reyes Católicos} (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1962), 57.
\textsuperscript{144} ASP, Real Cancelleria, 139, fols. 257v–258r.
\textsuperscript{145} ACA, Reial Cancelleria, 3687, fol. 97; ASP, Protonotaro del Regno di Sicilia, 115, fols. 29r–38v, 57r–66v; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 151, fols. 224v–225r; ASP, Real Cancelleria, 158, fols. 171r–177r.
Melchor Maldonado enjoyed the favour of the queen in her lands too, since he was Francisco Fernández Maldonado’s son. Francisco was the governor of the castle of Zagra (kingdom of Granada), Ferdinand’s ballestrero mayor (archer-in-chief), and governor of Loja. The other son of Francisco, Rodrigo, was a doctor in law and leading member of the Catholic Kings’ court, acting as captain in the conquest of Granada, councillor and lieutenant of the general treasurer, and conservator reginalis patrimonii.\footnote{Prieto Cantero, Casa y descargos de los Reyes Católicos, 119, 298, 329; García Carraffa, Diccionario heráldico y genealógico, vol. 53, 5–15.} His family was loyal to Isabel and actively participated at court, undertaking very important tasks.\footnote{Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real castellana Entre 1480 y 1492, 95; Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real de Castilla en el siglo XV, 301.} Melchor was capitanus armorum reginalis in the queen’s manor of Sicily (1485-1487, 1489-1490) and he tried to weaken Juan Cárdenas’ political influence with the purpose of obtaining the position of governor, but, despite of his many attempts, he did not succeed in depriving Juan Cárdenas of his office.

Finally, there was Antón Rodríguez de Lillo, one of the queen’s closest officers since the beginning. In 1468 he joined her court and in 1475 took part in the kings’ council because of his studies in law.\footnote{Fernández de Córdova Miralles, La Corte de Isabel I, 62.} He was also lieutenant of the chancellor in 1481, oidor de Audiencia,\footnote{The oidores were judges of the royal Audiencias and Chancillerías, the highest organs of justice in the Crown of Castile.} and concertador.\footnote{Soterraña Martín Postigo, La cancillería castellana de los Reyes Católicos, 153–154; Solana Villamor, Cargos de la casa y corte de los Reyes Católicos, 39–40; Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real castellana entre 1480 y 1492, 81, 88; Ladero Quesada, La hacienda real de Castilla en el siglo XV, 292. The concertador validated the confirmations of the royal charters.} In 1471 he received the prestigious position of conservator reginalis patrimonii for life,\footnote{AHCU, Pergamins de Tàrrega, 306.} becoming Isabel’s procurator in order to take possession of the lands she obtained in Catalonia, and he acted as an extraordinary procurator, administering justice, collecting, and keeping the incomes.\footnote{AHCU, Llibres de Consell, 1470–1475, fol. 65v.} She could not commit this task to someone else, because of the abuse and fraud that this significant flow of money could cause far from her view.

The queen’s governmental action was particularly effective thanks to her ability to integrate and forge links and alliances at her husband’s court, but it
increased when she succeeded in maintaining relationships with the entourage she had in the original environment of Castile. For this reason, Isabel involved those people in the lands she had as a manor.\textsuperscript{153}

**The link between the family strategies and the monarchs’ political programs**

The manors of the consorts and, in general, the dowers, sustained the queens’ status and their economic expenditures because these incomes allowed revenue diversification, stable administration of their finances and, finally, the maintenance of various ladies, servants, officers, and members of their staff.\textsuperscript{154} The splendour of the Court, the ceremonial, and the matronage’s activities were the most explicit manifestation of the complexity and the quality of the power emanated by the queen, so all of those elements deserved to be considered.\textsuperscript{155} The manors afforded the consort international prestige and the opportunity to reproduce her own power over the most remote places of the kingdom, by creating central and local institutions dependent


on her and by linking her interests with the goals of the leading class. Isabel of Castile chose her officers—especially for the economic department—with great care, and decided to rely on the closest families of her environment. These individuals took on complementary tasks at her court or Ferdinand’s, which connected them with the inner circle of the monarchy through a combination of loyalty and blood ties.156

At the same time, these ruling groups used the manors to exert their influence, obtain benefits, and maintain their status, tending to internalise the offices and adapting to the different local contexts.157 The elites controlled the political decision process thanks to the possession and the accumulation of the positions, strategically placing members of their family group in the central and peripherical structures and building a dense network beyond the national frontiers.158 The queen promoted the rise of the urban patricianship ennoble by the possession of public offices and a group of lawyers, jurists, notaries, and big merchants with important positions, who were able to act as a binding force among the territories.159

Above all, Isabel preferred the officers who came from the Crown of Castile and Ferdinand’s followers, installed in Sicily and Catalonia with prestigious positions, encouraging the internationalization of their families. If, on the one hand, they integrated in another country, on the other these officers remained extremely connected to their home countries.160 Thanks to this transnational experience, the

The prestige of their families increased, enriched by titles, assignments, grants, and clients acquired abroad, where new branches of the lineage were growing.

This human capital comprised of officers, nobles, soldiers, and merchants, absorbing the experiences and the abilities in various territories, added value to the municipalities of the manor and sometimes performed their functions with new methods and procedures, building bridges between different normative systems and traditions. The highest positions of the seignory were chosen among the member of a group of confidants very close to both sovereigns, with the best accounting and financial skills learnt at Castilian and Aragonese courts, providing new governance tools and organizational quality to the queen's administration. In the courtier system of the Catholic Kings there were no servants of the king or the queen, but of both.161 Once again, we see that the queen and her officials created a sort of symbiotic mechanism that ensured mutual benefits for all involved parties.162 These men were part of political groups that supported Isabel and Ferdinand’s programs and their consolidated partnership. Their intention was to reduce the uncontrolled power of the lineages previously promoted by the monarchy, creating a new party of allies of the Crown.163 The sovereigns helped urban patricianship and the most loyal courtiers in order to create a group capable of realizing their political plans with regards to their education and especially their personal and family contacts, extended beyond the frontiers of the huge territory that the monarchs governed.

161 Germán Gamero Igea, “Royal Household and Political Parties: The Configuration of Ferdinand the Catholic’s Entourage in Castile (1469-1516),” in Royal and Elite Households in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, 298.
162 Pelaz Flores, La Casa de la Reina, 19.
163 Simona Giurato, La Sicilia di Ferdinando il Cattolico: tradizioni politiche e conflitto tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento (1468-1523) (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003), 67; Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, España en 1492 (Madrid: Hernando, 1978), 110.