



## Women to the Forefront: A Case for Digital Medieval Prosopography

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Despite the growing number of medievalist projects, it is difficult to identify the ones that use Iberian chronicles to study people from the gender perspective in a digital setting. To bridge this gap, a prosopographical database of all women mentioned in the *Crónica de Castilla* (ca. 1300) has been produced. This article documents its development from the initial interests to the practical considerations of its published online version. On the one hand, carefully chosen examples illustrate various issues of the systematic approach, therefore firmly reminding us that the generated data sets are neither simply extracted nor neutral. On the other hand, the included visualizations and the preliminary observations help uncover new and engaging avenues for examining the women in the *Crónica de Castilla* and, by extension, in other historical narratives.

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Malgré le nombre croissant de projets médiévaux, il est difficile d'identifier ceux qui utilisent les chroniques ibériques pour étudier les individus sous l'angle du genre dans un cadre numérique. Pour combler cette lacune, une base de données prosopographique de toutes les femmes mentionnées dans la *Crónica de Castilla* (vers 1300) a été créée. Cet article documente son développement, depuis les intérêts initiaux jusqu'aux considérations pratiques la version qui a été publiée. D'une part, des exemples soigneusement choisis illustrent divers enjeux de l'approche systématique, rappelant ainsi fermement que les ensembles de données générés ne sont ni simplement extraits ni neutres. D'autre part, les visualisations incluses et les observations préliminaires permettent de découvrir de nouvelles pistes stimulantes pour examiner les femmes dans la *Crónica de Castilla* et, par extension, dans d'autres récits historiques.

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As I prepared for an in-class exercise on women from the kingdoms of Castile and Portugal, I expected to see their limited presence in Wikipedia profiles (the first place students would search), but I was surprised to note how often even well-documented women were mentioned in passing in online encyclopedias such as *Britannica*. This persistent gender gap gave rise to an idea to create a tool that would place women at the forefront while shedding light on different facets of their representations. The first goal was to find a work in which they have been understudied.

Early medieval Hispano-Latin accounts were, expectedly, almost exclusively focused on courts, leaving most noblewomen behind (see, for example, Pick 2004). Despite notable exceptions such as the *Chronica Naierensis* (CN), it took some time before women, royal or not, became more “stable” characters in historical narratives. Take, for example, the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* (CAI), according to which Alfonso VII first marries “filiam Raymundi comitis Barcinonensis nomine Berengariam” (CAI I,12), who bears him sons, while the “filiam nomine Vrracam” (CAI I,32), whom he shares with a noble Guntroda, eventually marries García Ramírez of Navarre (CAI I,91) (see, for example, Martin 2013). However, in the Navarrese *Libro de las generaciones y linajes de los reyes*, better known as *Liber Regum* (LR 210–212), only Alfonso’s legitimate wives are mentioned—none of them by name—and García Ramírez’s wife, who was born out of wedlock, is written out of the account.

In my search for a promising corpus to digitally explore the peninsular society through the lens of women, reducing the distance between the source material and the produced data by including direct quotes was a significant factor. Among open access historiographical works that are relevant from the women’s perspective, one stands out: *Crónica de Castilla* (hereinafter CC), composed around 1300, that is, during the regency of María de Molina (d. 1321), widow of Sancho IV of Castile (d. 1295) and mother of the future king Fernando IV. This couple’s reign was fraught with difficulties from the start, due to the circumstances under which Sancho assumed the throne and the fact that their marriage was not granted a matrimonial dispensation for kinship (see Pepin 2016; Arias Guillén and Reglero de la Fuente 2022). This context of legitimacy issues is also the one in which the court propagated a pious royal image, chivalric ideals, and a return to Christian orthodoxy, among other goals, movements usually referred to as *sanchismo* and *molinismo*. (Despite the criticism it received due to its scope, the latter term, coined and propagated by Gómez Redondo [Gómez Redondo 2012, 45–55], is certainly more appropriate when talking about the CC.)

Seen as representative of that program, the CC is one of the most influential works of the peninsular historiography. (As its editor Rochwert-Zuili [Rochwert-Zuili 2010, 2.2] pointed out: “[L]a Chronique de Castille porte donc en elle les trois

principaux traits de l'idéologie molinienne: la castillanité, destinée à fonder l'identité linguistique et lignagère de la royauté, l'affirmation de la dimension spirituelle de la royauté—un domaine qui semble réservé tout particulièrement aux femmes—et enfin, l'union idéale de la royauté et de la chevalerie—dont les attributs sont redéfinis—à travers la valorisation du service.” See also Rochwert-Zuili [Rochwert-Zuili 2016, §§19–23].) With nineteen preserved manuscripts, in many ways it is a reaction to the historiographical enterprise of Sancho's father, Alfonso X. Leaving the kingdom's comital past behind to begin with Fernando I's claim of León (r. 1037–1065), the chronicle ends with praise for Fernando III (d. 1252), but not before it integrates the most diverse materials centred on Rodrigo Díaz, best known as the Cid (d. 1099). This compositional openness also led to a higher number of women in the narrative and, in terms of queenship, Rochwert-Zuili made the following observation: “La *Chronique de Castille* accentue ce modèle en faisant de Sancie et de Bérengère le premier et le dernier maillons d'une lignée de femmes puissantes dont Marie de Molina apparaît comme la digne descendante” (Rochwert-Zuili 2006, §47). (Similarly, Gómez Redondo [Gómez Redondo 2012, 79] described the work as one in which “se inscriben las huellas de una voluntad regia femenina.”) These observations are fully in line with the recent and ongoing research on *reginalidad* within the peninsular context, but the chronicle's gender perspective remains underexplored (see, for example, Rochwert-Zuili 2008 and Rochwert-Zuili 2017, §§17–19, 33–34).

Digital prosopography, broadly understood as a research approach that relies on computational techniques to systematically gather data of groups of people, has been on the rise since the 1990s (see, for example, Keats-Rohan 2007; Verboven, Carlier, and Dumolyn 2007; developments in digital prosopography have recently been outlined in Hammond 2021). The field has showcased representatives such as *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, *The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, *The People of Medieval Scotland*, *Medieval Londoners*, and, more recently, *HILAME*, focused on late medieval people from northern Spain (in particular, on *hidalgos*, *labradoras*, and *mercaderes*). Considering that major projects such as these have successfully paved the way, Mathiesen has rightly warned us: “Anyone proposing to construct a large P[rosopographical] D[ata]B[ase] would be well advised not to try to re-invent the wheel” (Mathiesen 2007, 124). Consequently, the data design in this project aimed for a balance between approaches of large-scale projects and the particularities of gender, whether they come from the historiographical or cultural perspective.

Within the realm of digital humanities, the concept of data modelling contains many facets. The following definition summarizes the ones that are relevant for the purpose of this article:

1. A process of signification and reasoning in action, a heuristic strategy of coming to know spanning multiple scientific cultures and epistemic traditions, where meaning is negotiated through the creation and manipulation of external representations combined with an imaginative use of languages with different levels of formalisation and modes of expression; [...] 2. Context-dependent and object-oriented dynamic process (the act of modelling) of selection of features (or salient qualities), motivated by the aims and the purposes of the modeller, to establish a partial mapping between the model and the object being modelled. (Ciula et al. 2023, 11–12)

In the following pages, the development of the CC prosopographical database is outlined from the initial research interests to the final considerations aimed at improving the experience of the website by non-specialist users. Leaving the technical aspects of this process aside, specific examples illustrate how database design challenges were approached with various objectives in mind. Their breakdown leads to a better understanding of the selected visualizations, which further point to innovative ways of looking at women in the CC, the chronicle itself and, by extension, other historical accounts.

### **From text to data: Beginner's struggles**

Unlike charters and wills that have a predefined structure, historiography is not shaped by similar principles. The information recollected in chronicles is often incomplete, heterogenous, and, therefore, difficult to organize. Initially, I was interested in elements used to construct women's identities such as title, genealogical information, confessional and cultural belonging, their interactions, the context in which they appear, et cetera. By structuring aspects of women's lives into categories and observing their distribution in the CC, the goal was to identify underlying patterns and eventually shed light on the roles of the element employed for sociopolitical and familial order in the work. It was clear from the beginning that increasingly popular methods, such as social network analysis, would answer some questions, but because the women are greatly outnumbered, their visibility would not be significantly improved. Instead, profile views, that is, privileging individuals while highlighting some of their ties to other people, seemed like a more fruitful path.

Another aspect that required acknowledgment in the database design was historiography's social role in a larger context. As Assmann concluded, relying on Halbwach's contributions: "memory operates simultaneously in two directions: backward and forward. It not only reconstructs the past but it also organizes the

experience of the present and the future” (Assmann 2011, 28). Therefore, distortions, however subtle they may be, help us better understand the work’s context, as writing is often infused with contemporary topics and anxieties. However, if the goal is to embrace the work’s own “truth,” veracity cannot not be determined at the level of data generation.

This position led to adopting the factoid framework. Common in the previously mentioned projects, this approach encodes claims in source materials with the following objective:

Our data about a person is not, then, so much a narrative that presents a summary written by the prosopographer as a collection of information about what the sources say about him/her, and can represent the multiple, perhaps contradictory, voices of the different sources simultaneously. (Pasin and Bradley 2015, 4; see also Bradley and Short 2005, 8–11)

By way of illustration, the CC database contains a record of Leonor, a Portuguese *infanta* who is married to an unnamed Danish king (CC V,2). (The references are from the CC’s 2010 edition by Rochwert-Zuili, with the Roman numerals referring to different reigns and the Arabic numbers to chapters.) The chronicle also states that she was a daughter of (Infante) Fernando, who, historically speaking, was her brother, and their parents were Afonso II of Portugal and Urraca of Castile. This parental confusion, not exclusive to this work, seems to point back to the *De Rebus Hispaniae* (DRH), but the CC database does not attempt to correct the text. (When Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada enumerates the offspring of Afonso II and Urraca, Infante Fernando is their third son, “qui in Castella duxit uxorem Sanciam filiam comitis Fredinandi,” and this phrase is followed by the statement: “habuit etiam filiam Alienor, qui nupsit regi Dacie et ibi fuit mortua sine prole” [DRH VII,v].) Gaps, silences, even ambiguous expressions are taken into account and, if distortions can be identified by relying on other sources, a note is added to facilitate the user’s experience.

Since men, particularly kings, were the organizing principle of the CC, women’s presence is inevitably limited, and their depictions are disproportionately affected. In accordance with the factoid framework, the database should be free from interpretation, but recording only explicit statements would lead to significantly smaller data sets (as I will illustrate shortly). By incorporating uncertainty and addressing the missing information, the final model acknowledges the work’s selective approach to composition, which provides further insight into its tendencies from the gender perspective.

The first database model consisted of three Excel spreadsheets-turned-tables: A table containing entries of women with basic information (not to be found in the corpus) and a table of textual excerpts that refer to women were linked with a joint table recording various elements of women's representations as detected in the CC. The following information was chosen for extraction in a systematic way: names that apply to the same individual, title, origin, mother, father, siblings, being first- or last-born, husband(s), children, religion, traits, materiality, emotions, places, speech/thought representation, and appearance. It took several months to produce data based on the first three reigns of the chronicle (Fernando I, Sancho II, and Alfonso VI) and, despite having defined values within each field, extracting data was not as straightforward as most of these categories suggest. Take, for example, the category of Places. Due to rare explicit mentions, the locative information was often inferred from the earlier textual reference, as long as nothing in the chronicle implied there was a change of site or time. Furthermore, the CC's narrator names locations but sometimes overtly describes them as only possible, without ever providing a definite answer. For this type of uncertainty—which points to conflicting (and not always named) source material—flag fields were introduced to indicate the probability, credibility, or quality of recorded information.

Testing these data sets via filters and visualizations led to further modifications, because most categories were not applicable to the majority of women or were not optimized for machine reading. For instance, entering names of every woman's parents, siblings, husbands, and children to compare which people and ties were omitted in the chronicle was rather time-consuming, both in relation to the number of people and their name variants across the manuscripts. To optimize the conversion of unstructured and irregular information into data, the entry of names was replaced by the entry of types of consanguineal relations. This way, it was possible to quantify the produced data and visualize their distribution across the chronicle, while providing a solid basis for social network analysis at a later point.

Throughout this process, it was crucial to identify overlaps in women's representations and the optimal level of granularity, while considering time constraints and the iterative nature of modelling efforts to prevent redundancies and inconsistencies. (These efforts include not only ensuring consistency after changing values, their definitions, and criteria for their entry, but also a search for new, appropriate hypernyms to function as categories as a result of these modifications.) The final version of the database has two tables, named *People* and *Cases*. The *People* table (see **Table 1**) was modified only slightly in relation to the first draft, and the latter one is now exclusively based on the information provided in the CC.

PersonID
Standard Name
Wikidata
Recorded Names
About
Chapters

**Table 1:** *People* table fields.

Before commenting upon some of their fields, it is worth mentioning what this prosopographical database offers and what it disregards. Its objective is not to provide the widest possible range of categories and values that would capture every facet of women’s depictions. Instead, the goal is to design a solid structure that can be further expanded by incorporating other works while serving as a starting point for a broad range of inquiry and analysis. For this reason, although analyzing narrative presence—and absence—can be a relevant research question, not every mention qualifies for a record in the *Cases* table. Additionally, this database is not the result of an elite prosopography. Despite having a royal chronicle as its source, the current design increases the visibility of non-noble and anonymous women as well.

Since the *CC* can refer to the same female character more than once, the relationship between the two tables is one-to-many. The *People* table, with 133 records, provides an overview of all women mentioned in the chronicle, whether as individuals or as a clearly identified group. Each individual and group has a single entry in the *People* table, regardless of how often the *CC* refers to them or if it does so in only one manuscript. (Here, I follow the editorial decisions of Rochwert-Zuili, who chose manuscripts *P* and *G* as the most representative testimonies. For a commented list of the preserved manuscripts, see Rochwert-Zuili [Rochwert-Zuili 2010, 3.1].) The data in the *Cases* table refers to various aspects of women’s representations, with a case being defined as a record based on one or more text passages with information on a woman or group of women that matches the predefined criteria of at least one of the following fields: Record Name, Consanguineal Kinship, Religion, Traits, Partnership, Motherhood, Physical Violence, and Decease (see **Table 2**).

A unique PersonID, numbered in order of data entry, is assigned to every identified individual or group. This identifier functions as the primary key in the *People* table and as the foreign key in the *Cases* table. This means that, as a match field, it links the *Cases* records to the corresponding individuals/groups. If a passage refers to multiple individuals or groups, separate entries are created for each PersonID. Considering that some statuses, such as marriage or motherhood, can last or have multiple references,

their first mention in the CC is recorded, and it can serve as a starting point to further explore this topic in the primary source. To prevent errors in this one-person research endeavour, one *Cases* field may contain multiple values, but they must not be repeated. Therefore, if a passage refers to someone's multiple marriages, these relationships are recorded with different *CasesIDs*. This modelling decision also illustrates why the mere number of cases is not necessarily analytically relevant.

Field	Field values (or their explanation)
CasesID	(unique identifier for the <i>Cases</i> records)
PersonID	(unique identifier for the <i>People</i> records)
Record Name	(contains either names and variants or the value none)
Record Name Flag	OM (for omitted names); DI (when different from the <u>Standard Name</u> ); MS (when different across the manuscripts)
Consanguineal Kinship	mother, father, sister(s), brother(s), other(s)
Religion	Christian, Muslim, Jewish, uncertain
Religion Flag	saint, explicit, action/attitude, implicit, probably, lacking information
Traits	intellectual, physical, moral
Partnership	none, liaison, marriage arrangement, marriage, unclear
Motherhood	no children, pregnancy, children, unclear
Physical Violence	assault, rape, murder, mourning, captivity
Decease	death, resting place, funeral, translation
Case Summary	(summary of the quote with relevant information)
Excerpt	(quote from the primary source)
Reference	(reference of the quote)
Notes	(helpful information)
Problems	(unresolved issues)

**Table 2:** Fields and values in the *Cases* table.

Generally, excerpts quoted in one case derive from the same chapter, but it is still possible to find quotes belonging to different passages. On the one hand, this approach is based on storytelling that is not always linear. Interpolated, male-centred information often renders the context and the implications for representations of women difficult to understand. On the other hand, incorporation of longer quotes ensures a better understanding of the logic behind the entered values.

### **Assigning IDs: Identification and disambiguation**

All records are created manually, and close, contextualized reading is used to identify and disambiguate among people. (In the CC, establishing identity of even well-



documented men can be challenging. For instance, Count Raymond of Burgundy, husband of Urraca of León, is not only introduced as “conde don Remondo, fijo que fue de don Jordán” [CC III,7] but also is misidentified as “conde don Remondo de Tolosa” [CC III,45]. Moreover, he appears in the same passage as the actual Count of Tolosa, who is briefly described as “conde don Remondo de Sant Gil” and the husband of Urraca’s stepsister Elvira Alfónsez [CC III,7].) As long as women are recognized as individuals by the narrator or other characters, they are assigned different PersonIDs. When women appear as indistinguishable members of a group—such as wives of vassals, servants, and the like—they are assigned one PersonID in the *People* table.

The database makes no distinction between documented and non-historical women, but no IDs are assigned to generic masculine words, expressions that refer to hypothetical women, or references that speak of them in general terms. (By way of illustration, no entry is made based on the following and similar phrases: “ca yo non me aparto con mugeres nin a yantar nin a beuer commo han de costumbres vuestros señores” [CC III,132], or “nunca le mostró las costumbres nin las cossas que pertenecían a las mugieres” [regarding Berenguela’s upbringing of Fernando III in CC XI,3].) Given this insistence on a clear gender designation, it might be surprising that one anonymous group referred to as *compaña(s)* was assigned an ID number. This collective noun designates knights on numerous occasions, but the context of this particular use seems to tell a different story. The group is first alluded to when the dying Cid tells his wife: “E vós, hermana dona Ximena, e vuestras conpañas, guardádevos que non dedes bozes nin fagades duelo por mí por que los moros ayan de entender la mi muerte” (CC III, 208). Other examples of *fazer (grant) duelo* (see CC III, 71 and 168) confirm that expressions of grief were expected not solely from women. Nonetheless, after the hero dies, the inhabitants of the besieged Valencia decide to abandon the city. The procession at midnight begins with five hundred knights following the Cid’s standard bearer, “e en pos éstos otros quinientos caualleros otrosý muy bien guisados; e a sus espaldas dona Ximena con todas sus conpañas, e en pos ella seçientos caualleros que la guardauan” (CC III, 211). Finally, upon reaching San Pedro de Cardena, “doña Ximena e su conpañia e Gil Díaz” remain there (CC III, 216). Maidens and noblewomen serve people throughout the chronicle, but the physical separation of Jimena and the people in her service in the second quote is particularly telling. The decision to include this group in the database seems further justified, since the Cidian women appeared with “grant conpañia de donzellas” on an earlier occasion (CC III,143).

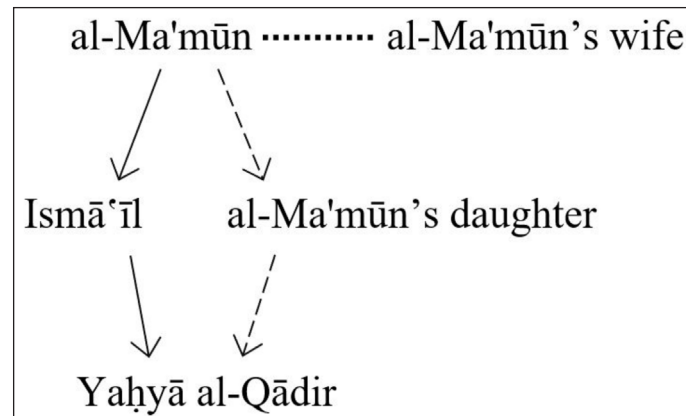
As praiseworthy as it is, the CC’s tendency to include women can create additional challenges at times. Take, for instance, a rare example of material culture: A precious string of the Valencian ruler al-Qādir (Yhaya), whose previous owners are listed as follows:

Et segunt cuenta la estoria, aquel sartal fue de la rreyna Çabayda, que fue muger del rrey Araxi Drechen, que fue alyfante de Baldaque, que es en tierra de Vltramar. Et después d'esto passó este sartal a los rreyes de Ben Hut, que fueron señores del Andaluzía, et después óvolo este Alymaymón, rrey de Toledo, et diolo a ssu muger, madre de este Yhaya, rrey de Valençia, et óvolo [G: de] su madre, que fue fija d'este Alymaymón. (CC III,91)

If we compare the passage to other chronicles, we see there is no similar object biography in the *Versión crítica* of the *Estoria de Espanna* (VC, ca. 1282; chap. cccxxvii). Fortunately, the “Cidian Interpolation” (“CI”), integrated into the *Versión sanchina* (VS, ca. 1289), is more elaborate: “Et diz que fue de zebda muger de bacan arraxir el que fue sennor de belca [...]. Despues fue este sartal de almemon el que fue sennor de Toledo et ouieralo yahia Rey de valencia de su madre que fuera fija de almemon” (“CI” chap. 910).

The two post-Alfonsine versions of the past introduce not only Zubaida, wife of the Caliph of Baghdad, but also members of al-Ma'mūn and al-Qādir's family. However, this inclusion of women creates problems when it is compared with the previously expressed lineage in the CC, according to which, following the deaths of al-Ma'mūn and “Yssén su fijo” (CC III,39), it was “Yhaya Alcardubile, que era nieto de Alymaymón” who assumed the throne (CC III,40), similarly to the VC (VC ccxciii) and VS (VS 877). (Although the CC manuscripts coincide in referring to al-Qādir as Ismā'il's son [CC III,40], manuscript P confusingly states a few lines earlier that, when Ismā'il's died, “en pos él su hermano [sic] Yhaya, su fijo e nieto de Alymaymón” became the new ruler [CC III,39].)

To refer to al-Ma'mūn's daughter as al-Qādir's mother, as the “CI” does, suggests that al-Qādir is a result of not just endogamy, but of an incestuous interaction between half or full siblings. The problematic yet uncommented family tree seems to be an oversight, probably based on Ismā'il's very brief reign, but the CC makes the matter more complicated by adding al-Ma'mūn's wife into the picture (see **Figure 1**). This raises a question of whether the awkward phrasing is a very refined way to defame this bloodline or if it is better to read it as a scribal error, without ascribing any additional meaning to it. Possible intentions aside, since they are not discussed at a data level, the CC passage contains grammatical issues that deeply affect the prosopographical perspective. If the two women are recorded as separate individuals, the quoted passage—the only one that refers to them—does not clarify their relationship. Written to explain the origin of a valuable string, this familial account sheds light on intratextual claims that are not reconciled but that cannot be ignored in the modelling process.



**Figure 1:** Evolution of al-Ma'mūn's and al-Qādir's ties (solid lines mark the usually expressed kinship; the directed dashed ones the ties in the CC and "CI"; the dotted line marks the CC particularity).

Determining whether a mention requires a new identifier or refers to an already existing one is a frequent issue in prosopographical studies, so an array of elements must be considered: name, familial information, husband's identity, title, the adjoining coronyms or toponyms, and the context of the mention. This step is more challenging when a woman is not foregrounded in the account and when no narrative continuity exists between the references. By way of illustration, Aurembiaix, the last countess of the house of Urgel, is first mentioned in the CC as an unnamed "fija del conde don Vrgel" who has a childless marriage with Infante Pedro, son of Sancho I of Portugal (CC V,2). Her subsequent reference is many chapters later, as "la condessa doña Eremias, mugier de don Álvaro Pérez" (CC X,13). While the mention of two husbands is not an error, historically speaking, it is also a significant example of how fragmented and disconnected women's representations can be. Somewhat similarly, Sancha, daughter of Alfonso IX de León and Teresa of Portugal, is mentioned as deceased (CC V,2), and then is reintroduced into the narrative as a potential bride of the Castilian King Enrique I (CC IX,5). Due to a great variety of elements that contribute to someone's identity, these instances are judged on a case-by-case basis.

### What's in a name? Standard and record names

Omitting names is an effective way to erase people from cultural memory, and the CC clearly recognizes that by stating: "non deuen ser oluidados los que bien fazen" (CC III,53). While the chronicle applies this reasoning to numerous minor figures, such as Johan Rruyz, the champion who defeats the unnamed king's knight (CC III,53), it remains to be seen if and how the principle of *fazer bien* was applied to women.

As medieval sources did not use standardized names, and women's patronymics rarely appear in historiography, it is of utmost importance to address them in a consistent way across the database. This is the purpose of the Standard Name field, while notations of the name(s)/name variant(s) used to refer to them in the CC is done via the Record Name field. To prevent confusion, women with the same forename, as well as anonymous individuals and groups, are assigned Arabic numbers according to the order of entry. Since the chronicle includes lesser-known women and women recorded for the first time, when compared to the earlier historiography, descriptors such as "wife of" or "daughter of" are integral to their Standard Names to improve their findability (e.g., "Anonyma4, daughter of Count Gómez"). Regarding anonymous groups who are not related to anyone, names of well-documented individuals, places, or events are added to increase users' chances of finding them.

Due to different languages and spelling variants, medievalists use patronyms, toponyms, and regnal numbers to ensure proper identification and facilitate the readers' experience. Next to avoiding Latinate forms, people's names often appear in the language of the territory over which they ruled. Similar attempts have been made to refer to (royal) women in a consistent way, such as relying on the language of the realm into which they married, as opposed to the kingdom from which they originated. (However, even this practice remains flexible. Take, for example, Leonor of Aquitaine who, despite being a French and English queen consort, is today almost exclusively related to her native duchy. Similarly, her daughter of the same name is better known as Leonor Plantagenet or "of England," and not as Leonor "of Castile," despite her long-term marriage to Alfonso VIII.) While stylistic decisions seeking to avoid repetitiveness make sense for linear readings, in a digital setting, all name variables must be properly linked to the correct individual. Given that the need for precise or specific searches outweighs the need for linguistic and cultural authenticity, in the final version of the database, the Standard Names appear in Spanish (e.g., Isabel instead of Elisabeth; Juana instead of Joan; Dulce instead of Aldonça). On the one hand, by knowing that they should use the most common spelling, users are more likely to find the people in whom they are interested. On the other hand, the CC's perspective is Castilian, and the use of names in native languages would create a false impression that the chronicle made these distinctions, when, in fact, its pool of names is rather small. However, to somewhat counter this homogenizing tendency that opposes the documented realities, the field About contains names used elsewhere to refer to the recorded individual.

In most cases, the CC does not deviate from the earlier historiography, and the database is aligned with this tendency. For women who are neither documented nor mentioned prior to the CC, the name that appears in the work is used as their Standard

Name. Should manuscripts preserve different names, these are alphabetized and hyphenated (e.g., Elvira-Teresa). Considering that some women were recorded with different names throughout history, the name deemed most recognizable is used in the database. For instance, the documented names of the Cid's daughters were María and Cristina, but ever since the *Cantar de Mio Cid* was integrated into the official royal accounts, they are called Sol and Elvira. Therefore, from the perspective of cultural memory, these names cannot be mistaken for scribal errors. Something similar happens when the CC consistently refers to the mother of Fernando I as “la Reyna doña Elvira” (CC I,30). It was Munia or Mayor, a Castilian countess who married King Sancho of Pamplona, but her name varied in historiography: She is “infant dona Albira” in the *Liber regum* (LR 209), Urraca in the *Chronica Naierensis* (CN III,1), Mayor and Elvira in *DRH* (DRH IV, xx), and again Elvira in the *VC* (VC ccviii). Despite this medieval tendency, from today's point of view, arguably the most recognizable way to refer to this individual is Munia.

A separate but related issue in the database design was how to store the actual form of the women's names and patronyms as used in the chronicle. Currently, two categories serve this purpose: Record Name and Record Name Flag. The first one contains entries for every name or name variant, and it notes whether the first mention of a woman is anonymized. The values of the second category indicate whether the name is omitted throughout the chronicle, whether different names appear in the same passage of the CC manuscripts, or if there is an intratextual inconsistency (phonetically similar names are disregarded).

### **Familial situatedness from her perspective**

This chronicle is neither the first nor the last historical narrative to strategically honour certain people or ties to the detriment of others. Referring to the initial example of Alfonso VII's wives, this is how the CC remembers—only—one of them: “E desý don Alfonso, rey de España, tornóse para León e púsose corona de enperador. E fue cassado con doña Berynguella, fija del conde de Barçilona, e ovo en ella dos fijos, don Sancho e don Fernando, e fijas, doña Ysabel e doña Beatriz” (CC V,4). Both the medieval and the modern reader would have no issues identifying ties in this quote. However, despite the frequent use of the male-oriented *ovo en* formula, kinship information is expressed differently throughout the CC. Take, for example, Juana, the second wife of Fernando III, whose familial background is explained in the same passage in the following way: “E doña Ysabel fue cassada con don Luys, rey de França, e ouo en ella vna fija a que dixieron Adebriz, e fue cassada con el conde don Ponze. E aquella condesa Adebriz ouo vna fija a que dixieron María, que fue madre de doña Juana, que fue después rreyna de Castilla e de León” (CC V,4).

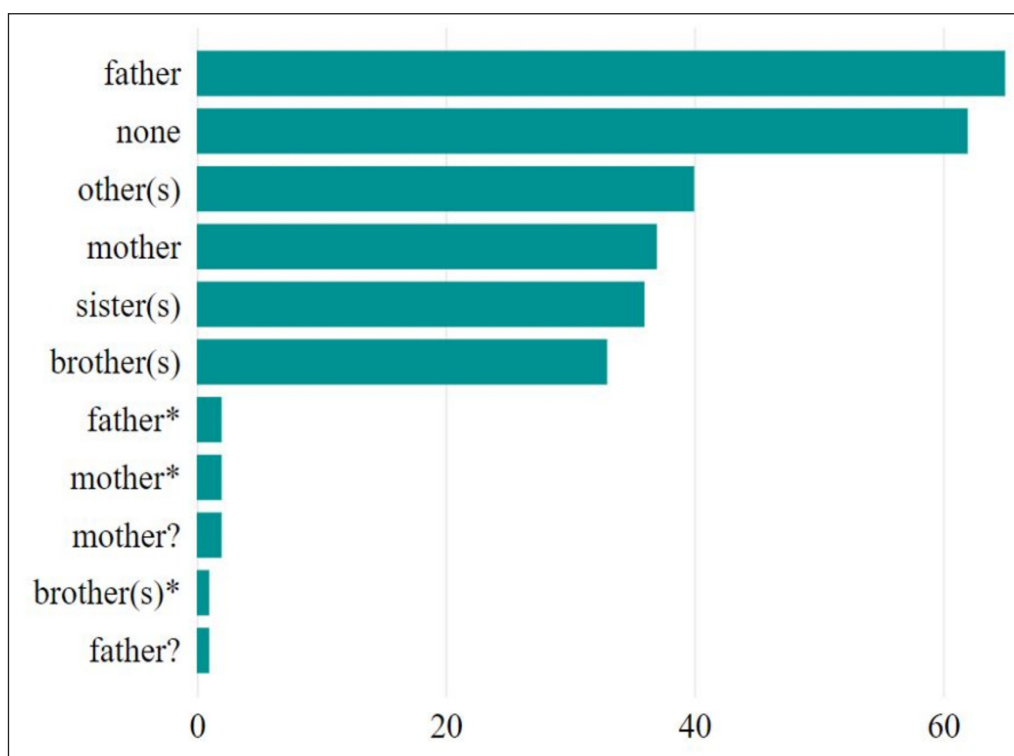
More interesting than noting that Juana's great-grandmother is mistakenly named Isabel instead of Constance is that the genealogical account becomes matrilineal, leaving the Count of Ponthieu's fatherhood merely implied and failing to state who Juana's father is. Fortunately, this bond is addressed in the final part of the CC, when Queen mother Berenguela arranges a marriage for her son Fernando III: "E católe vna noble donçella de grant linage con quien cassase, sobrina del muy noble don Luys de Francia, fijo que fue de don Ximón, el noble conde de Pontes; e de la otra parte, doña María, mugier d'este conde don Ximón; e la donçella avía nonbre doña Johana" (CC XI,4).

This time, being a niece to the French court seems to be Juana's most important blood tie. Both parents are included in the narrative, but the mother is deprived of her title, defined solely via her husband, and relegated to the end. Furthermore, a cursory comparison of the two passages might lead to an impression that they refer to the same French monarch, when, in fact, the first ruler is Louis VII, and Juana's uncle is Louis VIII, that is, Louis VII's grandson. Therefore, re-readings are inevitable to prevent mistaken attributions, especially in the case of information-dense passages or the ones that suddenly refer to the wrong person or use the wrong gender. (In addition to the last quoted passage referring to Juana as "fijo" instead of *fija*, Estefanía, illegitimate daughter of Alfonso VII, is represented as follows: "E el rey don Alfonso casó don Fernán Ruyz con doña Esteuanía, su hermana de padre, e ovo en ella a don Pero Fernández el castellano, que fue de grand fazienda, e omne muncho honrrado" [CC VII,12]. Here, the text contains a scribal error, since the monarch alluded to should be Fernando [II] of León, not his/their father Alfonso.)

In the current data model, possible values of consanguineal kinship are **mother**, **father**, **sister(s)**, **brother(s)** (both including step-siblings), **other(s)** (used, for example, for relatives such as grandparents, cousins, uncles, aunts, etc.), and **none** (which signifies that this work offers no kinship information on that individual or group). Multiple values per record are possible and, as the goal is to track relationship types, three of the six values can refer to one or more people. Values are entered when a woman's relatives are mentioned for the first time in the CC. Due to the male-oriented narrative, this type of data can be explicit or inferred from genealogical and other passages, as long as women are mentioned in them. Whenever there is additional information in women's subsequent mentions, the corresponding value is entered.

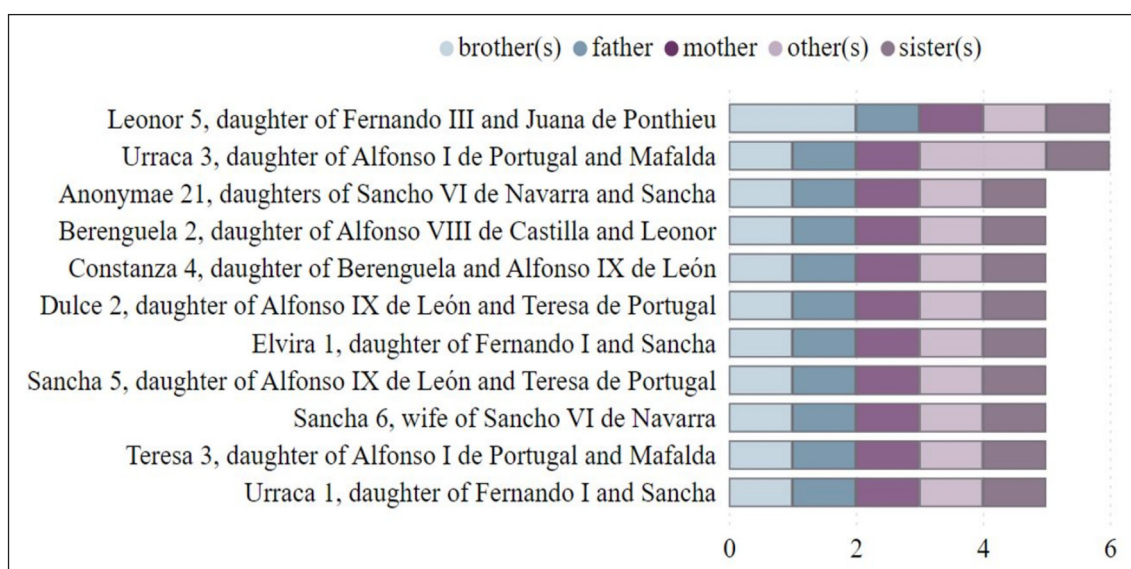
It is noteworthy that entries are also made when women's subsequent passages contradict previously recorded statements. In the post-coding phase, these incoherencies were highlighted with an asterisk (\*) to improve the user experience. One, previously quoted, example is when the Cid suddenly refers to his wife Jimena as

“hermana” on his deathbed (CC III,208), an expression probably based on a scene that was imbued with religious undertones. Another example is Beatriz, the fifth wife of Alfonso VI, who is introduced as “fija del enperador de Alemaña” (CC III,7), only to be referred to later as “fija del rey de Ynglaterra” (CC III,67). While the change might have derived from a confusion with Elisabeth of Swabia, “la fija del emperador de Alemaña” (CC X,5), both CC statements—recorded separately as **father\***—contribute to the evolution of Beatriz’s origin, initially marked as foreign by Pelayo and then specified as French by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (“ex partibus Gallicanis,” DRH VI,xx). (In a cursory fashion, Bishop Pelayo notes in the *Chronicon regum Legionensium* that, following the death of Alfonso VI, she returns to her homeland: “quintam Beatricem, que, mortuo eo, repedauit in patriam suam” [CRL 36].) By contrast, when the information on parents is inconclusive, as it happens with María and the Count of Ponthieu in V,4 (see the quotation above), a question mark (?) is placed after the recorded value. As can be seen in **Figure 2**, which depicts the frequency of the recorded values, instances of problematic kinship attribution have a significantly low occurrence rate. The same graphic also demonstrates that the most frequent blood tie is fatherhood, closely followed by the value of no familial affiliation.



**Figure 2:** Frequency of kinship values.

**Figure 3** presents individual PersonIDs and focuses on the people who have at least five different Kinship values. The significant presence of Castilian(-Leonese) *infantas* is hardly surprising, but in a wider peninsular context, the absence of Aragon is difficult to ignore. Here, it is worth mentioning that these women are not equally represented in the CC: Despite their diverse familial background, other aspects of the unnamed royal daughters of Sancho VI and Sancha have little to no analytical potential, because they are mentioned only once in manuscript G (CC V,4). Similarly surprising is the opposite, kinship-free side of the chart, which features not only anonymous women but also several consorts.



**Figure 3:** Distribution of kinship values by Standard Name.

One drawback of the current kinship model is that it departs from women's mentions; in other words, it does not extrapolate familial information from male-only passages. While the inclusion of these ties would amplify the results, a record of what is made evident to the audience when women are introduced relies on narrative co-presence as a powerful technique to strengthen familial situatedness even when no interactions are included in the account. Moreover, considering passages in which women are not even alluded to would not support the CC's selectivity and the treatment that women in it receive. By way of illustration, Queen Sancha I and her brother, King Bermudo of León, who are mentioned in the CC first chapter (CC I,1) are never linked to their father Alfonso V. The only time the chronicle refers to this Leonese ruler is when it expresses Fernando I's desire to take vengeance, because the Muslims "mataron ende al rey don Alfonso su suegro de una saeta" (CC I,12). This instrumentalization of Sancha's kinship

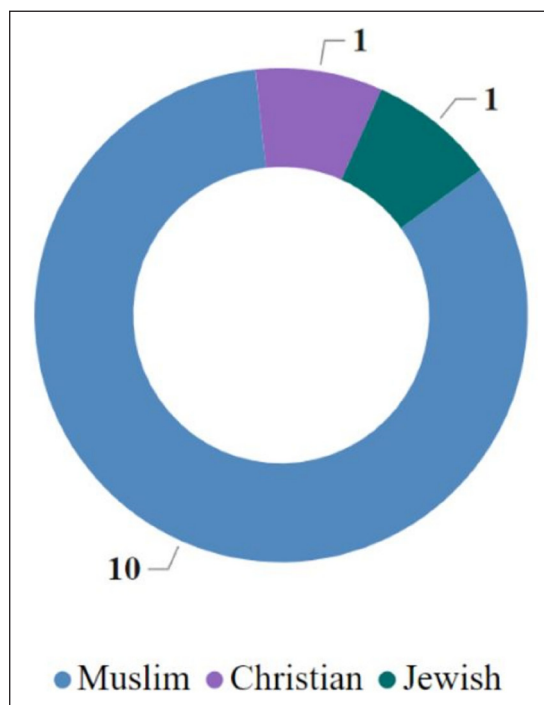


connections successfully isolates her in this regard while virilizing and aggrandizing Fernando’s image, possibly because he took the Kingdom of León by the right of his wife.

By underlining women’s familial situatedness—or the lack thereof—the recorded values make comparisons possible, and the included excerpts further enable the tracking of kinship vocabulary in the CC. Finally, users can find comments and explanations in the field Notes for everything that the current model does not accommodate, and these issues will be revisited later in the project.

### Labelling and flagging religious affiliation

Considering the importance of religion in medieval culture, it may be surprising to realize that it is one of the most under-reported aspects in the CC. The chronicle relies on the implicit knowledge of its contemporary audience while taking notice of the religious other. **Figure 4** indicates that explicit statements on someone’s religious affiliation can be found only in 12 PersonIDs, and the one example of Christianity is related to a conversion (outlined below). Therefore, to explore this category, the factoid-based framework needed to be modified and expanded with values that express various degrees of probability.



**Figure 4:** Number of PersonIDs with explicitly expressed religion.

Next to the field Religion (whose possible values are **Christian**, **Muslim**, **Jewish**, and **uncertain**), there is another category, Religion Flag, which indicates how faith is determined: **saint**; **explicit** (for non-saints); via **action/attitude** (such as prayer); **implicit**; **probably**, and **lacking information**.

Specific criteria were determined for the value **implicit**. For its entry, two of three conditions must be fulfilled, and there must not be any contradictions:

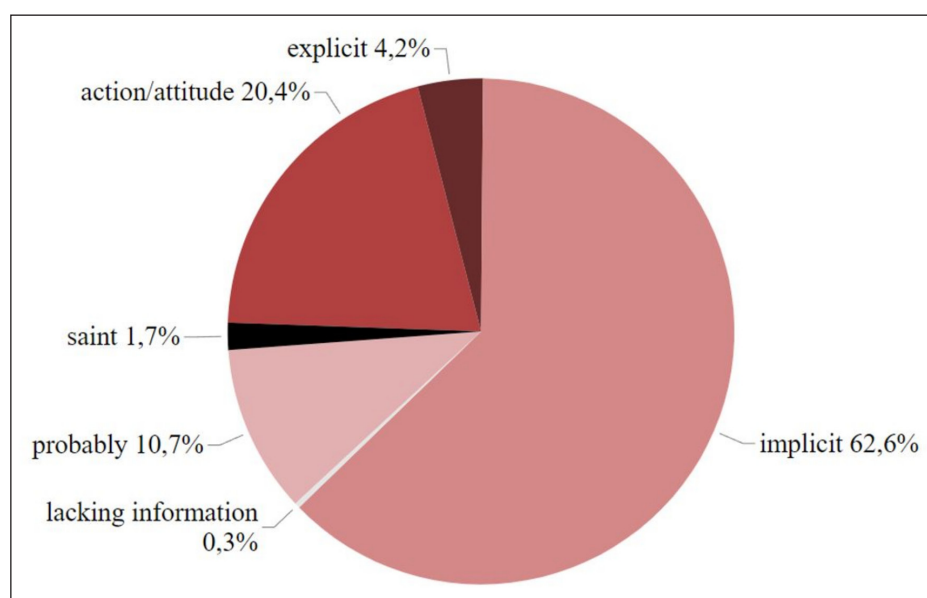
- The woman's name is typical for that religious community. This is the case even if there is a scribal error, as long as the names belong to the same community.
- A woman is related by blood or marriage to people who are represented as members of a certain religious community. If available, patronymics can act as a substitute for an unidentified father (in case of anonymous groups of women, the men related to them need to be explicitly labelled as Christians, Muslims or Jews).
- A woman is linked to places that are represented as within certain realms and, therefore, as belonging to one of the religious communities. Due to the shifting frontiers in the CC narrative, the spatial aspect of the quoted chapter needs to be contextualized.

In accordance with these principles, the religion-centred fields remain empty in the first mention of Zaida as Alfonso VI's last legal wife (III,7), since the information provided—her name and her marriage to a Christian king—has cross-cultural implications. Zaida's subsequent mentions make it evident that she is the only female character in the CC who goes from Islam to Christianity, but caution is advised. According to the CC, she is so in love with Alfonso's deeds that she arranges a meeting with him: “E dixo ella que si casase con ella, que le daría quanto ella auía. Et dixo el rey:—Pues conuiene que sseades christiana. Et ella dixo que lo faría muy de buenamente e que faría quanto él mandasse. [...] Et tornóla estonce christiana e casó con ella” (CC III,68). Compared to Lucas de Tuy's *De miraculis Sancti Isidori*, in which Zaida's Christian fervour makes her father so worried that he sends her away (Chapter 2; given that this work has not been edited, the referred chapter from León, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro ms. 63, f. 2<sup>v</sup>, can be found in Henriet 2001, 265, n. 65), the CC version of this character is closer to the DRH (DRH VI,xxx), as it is love that moves her actions, and religion is treated as a necessary step toward the marriage.

The value **probably** is usually reserved for anonymous servants and non-nobles, that is, when religious affiliation in the women's first (and often the only) mention is suggestive based on the context in which they appear. As for the value **lacking**

**information**, paired with the Religion value **uncertain**, it has been applied to only one person: “barragana muy vil” (CC V,6), with whom Alfonso VII supposedly had a daughter who marries King Louis VII. The rumour turns out to be false, and the men in question soon put the matter to rest, leaving this unnamed woman of low status lacking any context from which to draw data.

Defining values within the field Religion Flag is necessary to facilitate directed searches, planned both for the website and further investigation. As **Figure 5** demonstrates, the dominant value is the one of implied religious affiliation, constituting slightly more than 62%, that is, being applied to 83 of the total of 170 records.



**Figure 5:** Percentage of Religion Flag values.

The same graphic reveals that the value **action/attitude** has the second highest percentage. This value, the only one to be entered more than once per ID number, has the greatest analytical potential, as it represents the most personalized way of expressing someone’s beliefs.

Generally, these ways vary greatly in the CC, from women being pleased with church renovations (CC I,24) and accompanying a crusading husband to the Holy Land (CC III,7) to paying ransom so that their child does not convert to Christianity (CC III,205). Within this context, it is noteworthy that the CC contains scenes with religious tenor that are not necessarily expressions of one’s faith, such as merely being at a monastery or even being placed under papal custody. (This is the fate of an anonymous French noblewoman who has a child with Fernando I after her father gave her to the Cid instead

of paying ransom [CC I,22]. This character is extremely passive, being sent from one to the next man in power, and it is under the Pope's custody that she gives birth to a son, never to be mentioned again.) Similarly, attending a Mass before a wedding ceremony or receiving the nuptial blessing are not considered, unless the narrator describes the person's initiative or inner state. (The wedding examples would include the wife and daughters of the Cid [CC I,4; CC III,156; CC III,201], but the nuptial custom is also implied in the expression "mugeres de bendición" [CC III,7], which is used inconsistently in the CC. By contrast, when Berenguela asks Count Álvaro de Lara to take an oath "sobre la Cruz e los santos Evangelios" [CC IX,1], this is an expression of her agency [despite swearing allegiance being carried out in a similar manner on other occasions; see CC III,3 and CC III,10].)

It is certainly valid to question the extent to which some of these events are examples of women's personal decisions, especially when details of the account are scarce. However, if some were given religious agency, these depictions call for further investigation, especially considering that spirituality in the CC is "un domaine qui semble réservé tout particulièrement aux femmes" (Rochwert-Zuili 2010, 2.2). Going beyond the explicit statements has allowed for a scaled picture of women's faith, with 101 PersonIDs linked to Christianity; 29 to Islam, with one referring to a woman who converts; another one whose religion is unknown; and only one woman linked to Judaism. For analytical purposes, the value **action/attitude** can be further differentiated to indicate whose profiles are downplayed or overemphasized from this particular perspective. Moreover, with the current database design, it is possible to change perspectives and use the list of chapters in which female saints appear to track who among the CC figures interact with them and in what context.

### **Where to next? From modelling efforts to (un)foreseen dimensions**

This source-driven database has been designed with multiple objectives in mind: (a) to provide new angles and points of entry into the women's depictions in the CC; (b) to instigate public engagement at an international level and across the fields by providing an openly accessible and intuitive website; (c) to present the content in such a way that fosters debates on data modelling and the benefits and limitations of digital tools; and (d) to increase the visibility of the chronicle in which gender aspects generally have been disregarded.

Prosopographical ambiguities, incoherencies, and outright contradictions in the CC are not exclusive to women, but the work's narrative creates additional challenges when it comes to their representations. It would be wrong, however, to think that male-oriented statements are inherently problematic, as the frequently employed *ovo*

*en* formula has a structuring effect that facilitates kinship attribution. A useful example of other underlying interests that may guide the chronicle's account is the previously mentioned Munia and her motherhood. Historically speaking, she gave birth to García of Navarre and Fernando of León, but not to the Aragonese King Ramiro, whom Sancho III had fathered out of wedlock. Nonetheless, according to one CC passage: “diz qu'el <rey> don Sancho de Navarra, el que dixieron el Mayor, fue el primero rey de Castilla, por rrazón de su mugier que la heredó, e este rey don Sancho fue padre del rey don Fernando e del rey don Ramiro de Aragón e del rey don García de Navarra” (CC IV,1). The order of names indicates a clear preference to Fernando, previously described as Munia's son who inherited the kingdom (not the county!) of Castile from her (CC I, 30). This kinship representation confirms the work's pro-Castilian attitude while leaving Munia's motherhood in relation to both Ramiro and García unclear at best, which is precisely the attributed value in this and similar cases, including the one of al-Ma'mūn's wife.

Given that non-specialists would be unfamiliar with most of the CC content, the database and website were designed in alignment with the widespread search techniques. (As Bradley recently pointed out in relation to the Roman Republic project: “This faceted search approach implements interface strategies used in other commonly used sites such as Amazon's, and is designed to help users with a limited knowledge of a field to find things that they want” [Bradley 2020, §19].) Thanks to this effort, it is possible to explore and compare previously discussed and other aspects of women's depictions, such as marriage arrangements, praised traits, instances of violence done to or by women, and details related to their deaths. Although it is difficult to anticipate users' interests, a preference for values with a plausible likelihood of reappearance in other PersonIDs over interesting one-time occurrences generally enhances the data query potential and aims for a more engaging experience.

Compared to the database format, additional practical adjustments were conducted for the user interface design (Blašković 2024). For example, browsing for recorded names in the free-text search would require expert knowledge. Therefore, rather than being presented as separate cases, a list of all recorded names and variants with corresponding references is provided, which is always on display below the person's Standard Name. As the example of Juana 2 in **Figure 6** illustrates, there is a profile view for every individual or group, and Wikidata identifiers were added whenever available to enhance the database's connectedness to other open linked data. Requested results are in bold, while other recorded values from the same case remain visible. Additionally, links to other women, references to men, and the included excerpts provide context and make users aware of other possible angles of looking at the data sets.

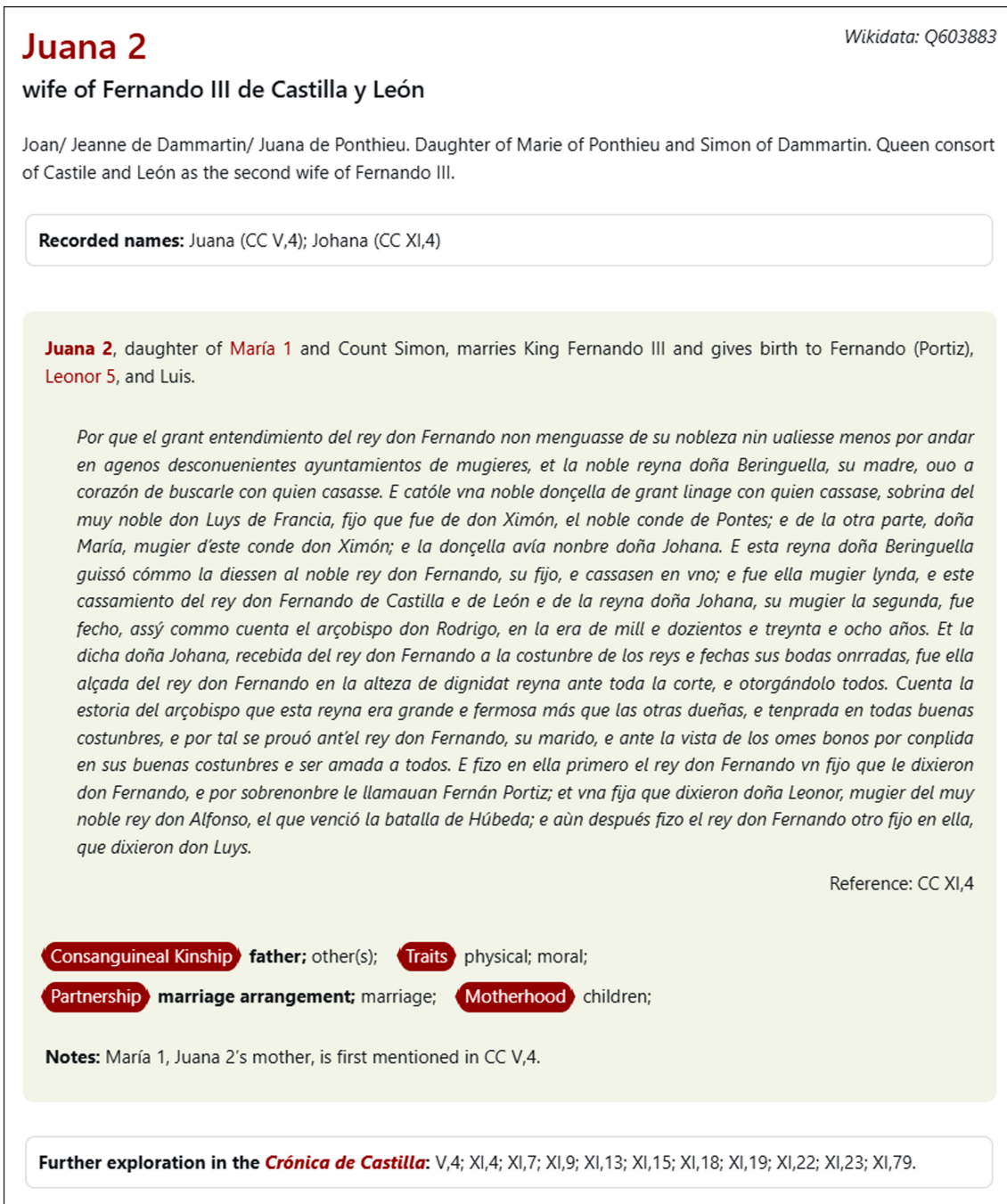
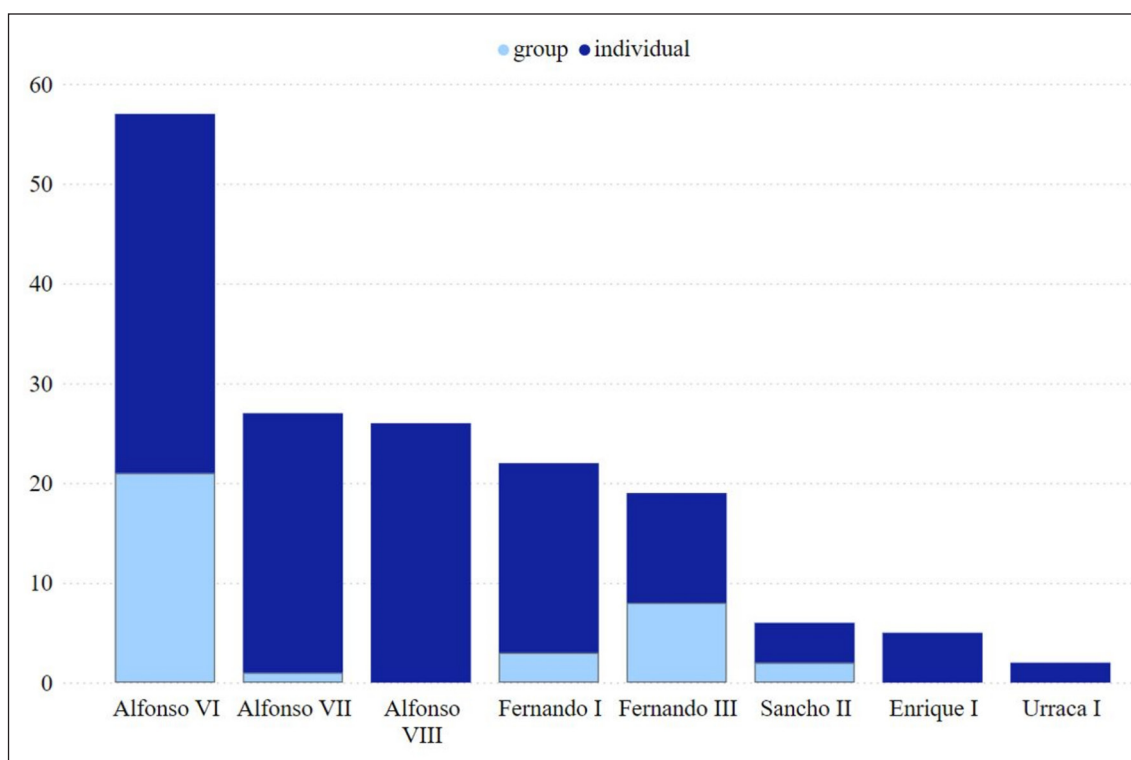


Figure 6: Cropped view of Juana 2's profile.

A detailed analysis of the results will be conducted in a separate study, but insightful visualizations are already possible. **Figure 7** depicts the presence of women throughout the chronicle, separated according to the reign in which they are mentioned and

subdivided into individuals and groups. (The division in eleven reigns by Rochwert-Zuili included changes on the Leonese throne in the periods when Castile and León were separated. By disregarding that aspect, the number has been reduced to eight to refer to one [Castilian] ruler.) The highest bar, however, has little to do with King Alfonso VI's long reign and more with the fact that it is intertwined with the Cid's trajectory. Additional filtering can lead to other interesting results, such as Urraca I being the only woman who experiences imprisonment twice (CC IV,2 and CC IV,5), while other female captives and hostages are only related to the activities of Fernando I, the Cid, and Fernando III. Moreover, by including the variants from manuscripts *P* and *G* (see above), it is possible to determine which one refers to more women, under which circumstances, and whether there are lacunae or misplaced passages, thereby providing clues for the work's manuscript tradition.



**Figure 7:** Distribution of PersonIDs in each reign.

There is certainly merit in focusing on secondary characters, whether intra- or intertextually. Precisely because these women often were not the centre of the narrative, changes in their depictions can be indicative of the work's underlying tendencies. Due to the *CC*'s particular place in the historiographical milieu—a post-Alfonsine work that

was highly influential for Portuguese accounts—the gender-oriented approach could shed light on undetected disagreements or unexpected similarities. Alternatively, women can be a useful lens through which to explore the men who surround them. If we revisit the issue of al-Qādir’s family, he is also the only Muslim who cross-dresses and hides “*enbuelta de sus mugeres*” to escape the enemy (CC III,90). In a work so attentive to the chivalric values, to introduce a character as “*muy mal rey*” (CC III,40) and to then include these elements seems to be an attempt to delegitimize the last ruler of that dynasty.

At a later stage, any of the given categories and values can be applied to other works, expanded or further differentiated to pursue more specific research questions. Due to time-limited funding, publication of the website has been prioritized over conceptualizing and adding other categories such as agency and transgressions to the database. Not only would they be applicable to just a handful of women, but they also would pose a new set of challenges. Next to the iterative nature of data generation, the complexity of implementing a women-centred perspective in a digital setting and the existence of the CC’s narratorial biases suggest that these aspects would best be served if done in a collaborative and interdisciplinary environment. (For instance, returning to the unnamed French woman who has a child with Fernando I [CC I,22], the King is not condemned even though he is married to Sancha at the time. In fact, the Pope himself is the child’s *padrino*, and the child grows up to become a cardinal. By contrast, when Alfonso VIII temporarily leaves his wife to be with a beautiful Jewess from Toledo, he receives a harsh punishment of losing male heirs, and she is murdered. Both stories include extramarital activity, but only the interfaith one is represented as a cautionary tale. For these and other stories to be turned into datasets, values would need to accommodate different narratological criteria: Are the events related in a neutral or condemning tone? Is the woman is passivized or ascribed agency? What other variables are included in the account? etc.)

Digital tools might be a novel way of engaging with historiographical representations, but the above-outlined examples have proved that a close and contextualized reading is crucial for capturing—that is, identifying and interpreting—their various facets. With regard to possible findings, it would be inconceivable not to document whether they are read through the lens of the (gender-related) medievalist concepts, the work’s socio-political sensitivities, and/or within the historiographical genre. Likewise, data modelling, which is understood as a multifaceted resignification of generally unstructured information, must be transparent, because colourful visualizations and data quantification tend to obscure the many interpretative steps that lead to the recorded values in the first place. Women’s visibility may be raised through the creation



of a digital platform, but it is much more relevant for the under-researched aspects of medieval Iberian studies to lay out the invisible work in such a way that fosters debates and invites questions, corrections, and critical reflection. (As relevant as it is, the topic of interoperability cannot be properly addressed in this article. Much work remains to overcome the isolated nature of projects, as metadata schemes are usually applicable in team-projects or when the corpus consists of multiple works.) By documenting the database design and its analytical possibilities, this article has aimed to underscore why these and similar digital approaches should be pursued further.

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CC = *Crónica de Castilla*. 2010. Edited by Patricia Rochwert-Zuili. Paris: E-Spania Books.

“CI” = *Estoria de Espanna Digital*. 2020. Edited by Aengus Ward. v.1.1.1, Ms. E2d. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. Accessed November 28, 2024. <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/estoriadigital/>.

CN = *Chronica Hispana saeculi XII. Pars II: Chronica Naierensis*. 1995. Edited by Juan A. Estévez Sola, 3–181. Turnhout: Brepols.

CRL = *Pelayo de Oviedo: edición crítica de la Chronica y su pensamiento político*. 2020. Edited by Francisco Javier Fernández Conte. Gijón: Trea.

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