


74. For an eighteenth-century description of the old altarpiece, displaced and moved to the chapter house, see José Tórtola, Capítols y apuntes del Real Convento de Predicadores de Valencia: Acervo Bibliográfico Valenciano, 1949) 2: pp. 618 and 424.


77. Joan Molina Figueras, Un reino en llamas por el su, La metamorfosis caballeresca de Alfonso el Magnanimus, Rassegna storica valenziana, 28: 56 (2011): pp. 11-44. here pp. 28-30.


Inventio and Imitatio: The Appropriation of Valois Style by a Converso Contador Mayor

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The magnificent funerary chapel of Contador Saldaña in the Royal Monastery of Santa Clara de Tordesillas—built between 1430 and 1435, according to the painted frieze on its walls—is without local precedent (Figs. 6.1 & 6.2). In contrast to the classic Gothic and Mudéjar styles characteristic of most contemporaneous buildings, its flamboyant tracery, gabled niches, figured corbels, and shield-bearing angels recall those from Charles VI’s programme at the Sainte-Chapelle de Vincennes; its carved and gilded retable with folding wings is of the same type as those installed by Duke Philip the Bold at the charterhouse of Champmol; its naturalistic alabaster effigies are in the style of those commissioned by members of the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Valois courts; and its limestone apostles—described by Clementina Julia Ara Gil as one of the ‘purest’ manifestations of Burgundian influence in Castile—are comparable with those in the Duke of Berry’s Saint-Chapel in Bourges.

Although historians have been fascinated by this chapel since the middle of the nineteenth century, little is known about its commissioning and construction, and many questions relating to its original appearance remain outstanding. This essay seeks to answer some of them by focusing on the physical evidence, interpreting it in relation to the rise and fall of the chapel’s patron, an ambitious converso at the court of John II of Castile. Reassessing what the chapel’s interior originally looked like, the essay considers what the mix of imitation and invention tell us about Contador Saldaña’s efforts to make his mark during one of the most turbulent periods of Castilian history.

Fernán López de Saldaña (c. 1400–1456) was one of several converts from middle-class Jewish backgrounds who, under Álvaro de Luna’s patronage, became the backbone of John II’s new court apparatus. Named secretary to the king in 1422, Saldaña soon married the daughter of a member of the Royal Council, Elvira de Acevedo, and by 1429 he was Contador Mayor (chief comptroller) and on the Royal Council himself. By this time he had also amassed a great deal of land and income, and he soon secured permission to construct a funerary chapel at Santa Clara de Tordesillas. Elvira died in 1433—as we know from the painted frieze—leaving Saldaña with four surviving children; within a decade he had not only fathered two more children by his second wife, Isabel Vélez de Guevara, but also defected to the cause of the Infantes (John II’s cousins) who were determined to wrest power from the king. When King John’s forces won a resounding victory at the Battle of Olmedo in 1445, Saldaña was forced to flee to Aragon where he died eleven years later. Pérez de Guzmán, the well-known converso chronicler and loyalist, described him soon afterwards as ‘a small and base man (un pequeño e raez hombre) to whom too many people had shamefully bowed down’.

Funerary chapels like Saldaña’s enabled wealthy Castilians to seek salvation at the same time as making extravagant displays of material wealth and heraldry. Perhaps the most ostentatious was the chapel of Santiago in Toledo Cathedral, commissioned by Saldaña’s mentor, Álvaro de Luna. Saldaña’s selection of a site at Santa Clara was inspired: not only was this one of the most important royal foundations, but the new chapel’s river-frontage enabled the young contador to show off his newly-acquired status in a highly visible location. The contract between the nuns and Saldaña’s nominees refers to ‘well-polished and expensively-worked stone’, which emphatically contrasts with the brick from which the rest of the monastery was built and confirms the importance to the ambitious courtier of material display. As in early Renaissance Italy, such display was associated by fifteenth-century Castilians with magnificence and nobility. Saldaña’s fellow courtier and converso, Alonso de Cartagena, had in 1422 discussed the concept of magnificence in a compendium of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, asserting that expenditure on objects was both pleasing to God and beneficial to society.

Commissioning a tall northern European structure, Saldaña was clearly looking to fashion himself as a new kind of noble, deserving of status thanks to his service to the king, just as Burgundian figures such as Nicolas Rolin were honoured for serving John II’s contemporary, Philip the Good. Despite the import of increasing quantities of Flemish tapestries and other luxury goods, many chapels commissioned by wealthy Castilians in the first half of the fifteenth century were built in the Mudéjar style, out of inexpensive brick and stucco. Saldaña’s chapel was built out of limestone, with slender buttresses, large windows and a pitched roof, and its gabled interior niches (Fig. 6.3) and shield-bearing angels (Fig. 6.4)—a motif directly associated with the Valois monarchy—imitated those at the Sainte-Chapelle at Vincennes and the Palais des Comtes at Poitiers. It is likely to have influenced the choices made by Álvaro de Luna, who was granted permission to demolish three existing chapels in Toledo Cathedral for his own
working in a number of sites that includes the cathedral of Pamplona, then being rebuilt by Charles the Noble, grandson of the Valois king, Jean II.22

Scholars have long been intrigued by several questions relating to disruptions, breakages, and apparent lack of finish in some areas of the Saldaña Chapel, and by the combination of diverse materials and styles. What are the identities of the four effigies, and why is one of them made from limestone while the other three are alabaster, smaller, and carved by a different workshop? Were the four tomb-niches, with their blank armorial shields, originally polychromed? What was the function of three seated limestone saints, now free-standing but clearly designed to be attached to a stone surface (Fig. 6.5)? Begoña Alonso Ruiz has hypothesised that a break in the building line visible on the external wall and a diagram on the corresponding wall inside may relate to the death of Guillém de Rouen.23 Ara Gil has speculated that Guillém’s death might also explain the change in style between the shield-bearing angels and apostles, and that the incompleteness of the set of apostles might indicate this aspect of the original project was left unfinished.24 A carved relief on the outside wall, which displays the heraldry of the king, Saldaña, and his wives, includes an intriguing depiction of the arms of Álvaro de Luna at the centre of the relief with Saldaña’s hanging from them (Fig. 6.6). This striking armorial reference to Saldaña’s patron has led to the suggestion that Luna’s first wife, Elvira de Portocarrero, might be buried in the chapel.24 However, such an unusual arrangement would surely have been mentioned in Saldaña’s contract with convent (signed in 1432, several years after Portocarrero’s death) which specifies only that the chapel should house those tombs and funerary monuments to the heir to his mayorazgo.25 Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza has written about the southern portal to the main church, which bears the arms of the family of Isabel de Guevara and was shifted, probably in the eighteenth century.26 One problem with some of these arguments may be the assumption that the chapel as it appears now is largely intact, and that the date inscribed in its frieze marks the end of work.27 This assumption is likely to be false. Isabel de Guevara—first documented as Saldaña’s new wife in December 1436—is not mentioned in the frieze (which was presumably completed by the end of 1435), but her arms appear inside the chapel and on the stone relief on the exterior wall.28 Close reading of the physical evidence indicates that work may have continued well beyond 1435, and, when examined in relation to biographical information, can help to answer some of the outstanding ques-
tions and to understand Saldaña’s programme as one of appropriation, rather than pure imitation, of the Valois model.

The Identity and Original Location of the Effigies

With nothing painted on the shields above the tombs and no epitaphs, there has been considerable debate about the identity of the portrait-like effigies in the chapel’s four niches. These effigies are laid directly on the plinths rather than on raised beds, as was conventional. The limestone effigy, representing a man in his late forties or early fifties dressed in a full-length formal gown, measures 205 by 67 by 52 centimetres; two of the alabaster effigies, representing young adult women, measure 190 by 47 by 30 centimetres; the third alabaster represents a man in his late thirties or early forties. The alabaster effigies are thus considerably smaller than the limestone one and, as Ara Gil remarked, appear too small for their niches. The female effigies are dressed in hopas belted above the waist (as was fashionable from about 1440) worn over laced briales, with elaborate head-dresses and necklaces, and chapines on their feet. The male alabaster figure is dressed in a knee-length ropa, with short gathered sleeves and a belt at the waist, as was fashionable in the late 1430s and 1440s. All four effigies are carved with great skill, although the limestone figure is stylistically very different to the other three, which all appear to have been carved by the same hand.

At least one of the male effigies almost certainly represents Fernán López de Saldaña, whose name is inscribed in the frieze above the tombs, and whose heraldry features prominently in and outside the building. Although Saldaña was originally buried at the convent of San Francisco in Borja (Aragon), it is known from the will of his son Pedro Vélez de Guevara that he had been reburied in the chapel by 1477. Another of the effigies is likely to be Elvira de Acevedo, who is also mentioned in the frieze. The couple’s shields figure on the stairs leading down to the crypt beneath the chapel. The second female effigy is intended to represent Isabel Vélez de Guevara, Saldaña’s second wife whose arms also appear on the crypt stairs. The first scholar to publish illustrations of the chapel, Valentín Carderera y Solano, writing in the 1850s, identified the male alabaster effigy wearing the knee-length ropa as Saldaña. However, in the 1860s, José María Quadrado claimed that Saldaña was instead represented by the limestone effigy wearing the more traditional ropaje talar associated with a contador. Most scholars have accepted Quadrado’s identification, although the figure appears to be considerably older and dressed differently to the donor in the retable on the chapel’s altar, which has been dated, like the alabaster effigy’s knee-length ropa, to the mid-1430s. In this painting, Saldaña is dressed identically to the alabaster effigy, with the same distinctive haircut, and it is difficult to disagree with Carderera that the alabaster effigy is intended to represent Saldaña himself. Alabaster was, after all, the material chosen by high-status Castilians for their effigies.

Is it possible that both the alabaster and the limestone figures represent the contador? The limestone figure appears to have been carved by the same sculptor as that of the polychromed limestone effigy of Francisco de Villaespesa (d. 1421), Chancellor of Navarre under the Valois-born Charles the Noble, in the Chancellor’s funerary chapel in Tudela Cathedral. The relationship between the design of Villaespesa’s tomb niche—produced by a team of northern-European masons who had worked under Isambart in the chapel of the Sagrados Corporales in Daroca—and that of the niches in Tordesillas was first highlighted by Ara Gil (Fig. 6.7). Although the latter are not polychromed, they reprise not only the decorative tracery but also the innovative display of heraldry in the spandrils. Saldaña is likely to have visited Tudela in the late 1420s as part of negotiations with the infante Juan, who was by then consort of Juana of Navarre. Saldaña may have commissioned his effigy at that time, long before he commissioned the alabaster figures, which, as discussed below, were probably not made until approximately 1440. Given Saldaña’s apparent admiration for all things related to the Valois, this hypothesis is worth further investigation.

These issues beg the question of whether the current position of the effigies is original. The description and illustration published by Carderera in the 1850s implies a different arrangement to that known since the early twentieth century, when the first photographs of the chapel were published. One of the most consistent features of the monuments commissioned by well-to-do early fifteenth-century Castilians such as Aldonza de Mendoza and Gómez Manrique was their placement directly in front of the altar, often almost touching the steps below it and accommodating both the donor and his or her spouse(s). The disruption of the neatly laid paving stones in the centre of the eastern half of the Saldaña Chapel indicates that there was originally a structure which stood there, between the altar and the entrance to the crypt (see Figs. 6.2 and 6.8). The measurements of the relaid area, approximately 237 by 307 centimetres, are consistent with a large tomb accommodating the three alabaster effigies. Saldaña would lie in the middle, with Elvira dexter (as his first wife) and Isabel sinister (as his second).
Although there is no documentary evidence of a central tomb and its destruction, there is physical evidence of undocumented change within the chapel (such as the displacement of the seated saints from their original location) as well as in its vicinity (such as the movement of the entrance portal with the arms of the Vélez de Guevara family). There are also many precedents for the re-siting and removal of tombs in the decades and centuries following their construction. The tombs of Pedro Fernández de Velasco and Juan Fernández de Velasco in the monastery of Medina de Pomar, for example, were re-sited from the middle of the capilla mayor into niches by Juan's son when he rebuilt the church in 1436. Monuments could be removed to make way for new benefactors or if the chapel was to be re-dedicated. Burial rights were an important source of income, and the forfeiting of patronage rights if donors did not maintain private spaces according to the terms of their contracts was common. Royal confirmations of the López de Saldañas' rights in the chapel issued in 1489 and in 1509 may have been instigated by the nuns to remind Saldaña's descendants of their obligation to pay the annual fee.

The siring of important tombs featuring portrait-like alabaster effigies in front of altars was also a feature of Valois funerary chapels such as the Duke of Berry's Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges and Philip the Bold's tomb at Champmol, designed, like Saldaña's, to be seen on all four sides and centrally positioned in the monks' choir facing an altar. Given the regular diplomatic and mercantile exchanges between Castile and Flanders, eyewitness reports brought back by travellers such as Pedro Tafur, and growing fascination with **vivre noblement** in the Burgundian fashion, Saldaña must have heard about Champmol even if, to the best of our knowledge, he never left the Iberian Peninsula. He must certainly have known about the magnificent and innovative carved and gilded **Altarpiece of the Crucifixion** in the choir at Champmol, as he commissioned a similar work for his own chapel (see Fig. 6.2). This object was the first of its kind in Iberia and one of the earliest T-shaped carved retabes of the type which would be exported to Castile from the southern Netherlands in large numbers from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. Given the proximity of the no-longer-extant tomb-chest to the altar, the Saldaña group effigies would likely have been closer to it than Philip the Bold's in the larger and more formal space of the monk's choir in Champmol. Saldaña thus succeeded in referencing the grandeur of the Burgundian duke whilst at the same time placing himself and his spouses in almost direct physical contact with site of the transubstantiation.

The existence of a central tomb would, furthermore, make sense of the chapel's four niches which would have remained empty according to our hypothesis. When building started in 1430, Saldaña must have anticipated burial spaces not only for himself and Elvira in a central tomb but also for their four surviving children: Fernán (a.k.a. Ferrando, c. 1428–1496), Sancho (d. 1444), Elvira (d. 1454), and Marta (d. 1491). His contract with the monastery specifically mentions the burial rights inherent in his case, so it is likely that he planned space for the four surviving children from the outset. However, Saldaña's daughters Elvira and María both appear to have been buried in the convents in Toledo and Salamanca where they died, and his son Sancho, who died fighting with his father and the rebels at the Battle of Olmedo, would not have been granted burial in the chapel after his father's betrayal of the king. The only son by Elvira whose bones may be amongst those in the crypt is Fernán, who left two wills, one asking to be buried in Tordesillas, the other in Salamanca. The absence of effigies corresponding to these individuals and the lack of polychromy on the shields above the niches tends to confirm that none of them were ever buried in the chapel.

**Inventio and The Seated Saints**

The existence of a central tomb also answers the question about the original location and function of the seated saints representing Andrew (Fig. 6.9), an unidentified Franciscan, and an unidentified female (see Fig. 6.5). On one side of each sculpture, a rough-surfaced square of stone projects outwards, clearly designed to anchor the figure to another stone surface. The detailed carving on all three other sides indicates that they were designed to remain visible: for example, a long braid hangs down the female saint's back. **Saint Andrew**, whose right elbow is bent, with a ledge cut out from its underside, would have leant on the left side of the tomb chest. Although this ensemble represents an unprecedented design, the tradition of saints praying for the effigy—often rea-
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...ting from the scripture—was well-established, featuring, for example, in Queen Beatriz de Portugal’s tomb at the nearby monastery of Sancti Spiritus at Toro (c. 1420). The design can, furthermore, be related to that of the tomb of Sancho Sánchez de Oteiza in Tudela, attributed to Jehan Lome, where two young deacons, on either side of Oteiza’s head, read the scripture (one of them holding a hand to his face, like one of the angels on Claus Sluter’s Well of Moses) (Fig. 6.11). The parallel between the bent elbow resting on the bible held by one of the Tudela deacons and Saint Andrew’s elbow resting on the tomb in Tordesillas seems too close to be coincidental.

The reconstruction of the tomb proposed on this basis is illustrated in Figs. 6.12 and 6.13. Saint Andrew, on the left of the tomb chest, prays for Isabel, whose arms prominently figure the saint’s cross. The Franciscan is likely to be Fernán’s name saint, Saint Anthony of Padua (who was baptised by the name of Fernando), often represented with a book. The female saint, who prays for Elvira, may represent Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a model of wifely virtue whose monastery on Mount Sinai was a popular destination for fifteenth-century pilgrims. The sculptors of these figures must have had the opportunity to see the finished effigies as the seated Saint Catherine wears the same laced Bridal and belted hopa as those worn by Elvira de Acevedo and Isabel Vélez de Guevara. The result is both imitative of the contemporary Castilian and Valois preference for a central tomb with alabaster effigies, and inventive in its inclusion of the three seated saints.

The ledge under Saint Andrew’s arm, approximately 95 centimetres from the ground, indicates the height of the tomb chest. This corresponds approximately to the height of the chest of the near-contemporary tomb of Gómez Manrique and Sancha de Rojas, now in the Museum of Burgos. The fact that the seated figures of Saints Andrew, Anthony and Catherine gaze in the direction of their respective namesakes confirms this arrangement. As Jeffrey Hamburger and others have underlined, seeing was an important vehicle for salvation, and gaze was important element in the empathic meditation which became popular in the Iberian Peninsula in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The accuracy of the arrangement is confirmed by the effigies’ gazes too: Saldaña’s looks straight ahead at the altar, while Elvira’s and Isabel’s look towards the altar from their respective sides. Although this design was clearly unconventional, the tomb of Alfonso Enríquez, admiral of Castile, which featured a similarly unconventional boat, was built around 1431 in front of the altar in the monastery of Santa Clara de Palencia.

The Apostles: Unfinished Imitatio or Inventio?

On the walls above the niches in the Saldaña Chapel are seven unpolychromed limestone sculptures of the apostles, all approximately 180 centimetres in height. They are stylistically different to the relief carvings around the tomb niches and alabaster effigies but appear to be by the same workshop as the seated saints. Whereas stone apostles had often featured on Iberian cathedral portals and were depicted on columns in the Cámara Santa in Oviedo, their placement against the interior walls of churches was strongly associated with Valois structures such as the Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges which Saldaña’s northern craftsmen are likely to have known. Ara Gil concludes, no doubt correctly, that Saldaña’s intention was for a set of twelve. It is possible that one of the missing apostles is the seated Andrew, and that the other four were intended for the four empty niches on the piers between the chapel and the main church (see Fig. 6.3). These niches are approximately 210 centimetres high, the right size to have accommodated the sculptures...
A New Chronology of the Saldaña Chapel

Previous scholarship on the Saldaña Chapel has taken the inscription in its frieze at face value, concluding that the structure and all its contents were completed by 1435. The text should, however, be treated with caution. The difficulty of evaluating inscriptions is well-known, and not only are the opening words missing here but the circumstances of its production are unknown. The start of construction in 1430 is confirmed by a papal bull issuing indulgences to visitors, by a contract between Saldaña and the monastery of 1432, and by the no-longer visible epitaph of ‘maestro Guillen’, who died in 1431. Despite the fact that of maestro Guillen’s death, given the scale and nature of the work there is no reason to doubt that the basic structure was indeed complete by 1435. This would include the four tomb niches and most of the integral decorative carving on the arches and corbels, although certain tasks, such as the painting of the heraldry pertaining to the niches, appear to have been left unfinished. The inscription itself must have been carved in 1435: Elvira had died by then but the inscription does not mention Isabel, who is first named as Fernán’s wife in a legal document of December 1436. The Saldaña Retable, in which Saldaña is accompanied by neither Elvira nor Isabel, is likely to have been produced sometime between the middle of 1433 (after Elvira’s death) and early 1436.

Additional work must have been carried out between late 1435 and 1445, the year in which Fernán and Isabel fled to Aragon with two young children (Pedro Vélez de Guevara, 1442–1477, and Costanza Vélez de Guevara, c. 1443–1505). This included the arms of Isabel Vélez de Guevara and other heraldry on the chapel’s exterior west wall (see Fig. 6.6). The fact that the display sits under a load-bearing arch indicates that the tablet on which it is carved replaced the original one installed in around 1430 when Saldaña was still married to Elvira de Acevedo. Isabel’s arms provide a terminus post quem for the display as it appears now of late 1435 or 1436, and Álvaro de Luna’s shield at the centre of the relief provides a terminus ante quem of June 1441 (the date of Luna’s exile). Work carried out after 1435 would also have included the installation of the central tomb and limestone apostles. The effigies may have been commissioned soon after Saldaña’s betrothal to Isabel in 1436, but the

which are 180 centimetres high. Whether these sculptures were produced (and, if so, destroyed or removed), or whether the project was left unfinished, is unknown.

The question of whether Saldaña intended the sculptures of the apostles and seated saints to be polychromed is also intriguing. The stone apostles commissioned by the Duke of Berry for the Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges were polychromed, as were those from the same period in the Sint-Martinusbasiliek in the Flemish town of Halle, although those in Saint Peter’s in Liège (as depicted in Rogier van der Weyden’s Exhumation of Saint Hubert) were not. According to a 1988 communication from the Patrimonio Nacional, no traces of polychromy were found on any of the limestone sculptures during the 1988–90 restoration campaign. As noted above, showing off the cost of the stone and the skill with which it was carved was clearly an important consideration for Saldaña, and it may be that he intended minimal polychromy from the outset. This would have been a bold choice in a visual culture which expected and valued colour.

Nevertheless, considering the absence of polychromy on the shields and the surprising lack of decoration on the tomb fronts, it seems more likely that the work was left unfinished when Saldaña fled to Aragon in 1445. The blank shield on the pillow of the limestone effigy in the Saldaña Chapel indicates that the original intention must have been to polychrome at least that. As Kim Woods and others have underlined, most early fifteenth-century sculpture in northern Europe was fully polychromed or intended for polychromy. Susie Nash stresses the vital contribution polychromy made to effect and meaning. It is possible that the polychromy of the shields was left for completion when Saldaña’s children were buried in the chapel which, as we have seen, did not happen.
production of the seated saints must have come a year or two later given the relationship between the garment worn by San Catherine and those worn by the effigies representing Elvira and Isabella. It may be that the tomb with the saints around it was signed in 1441, when the couple’s marriage contract was signed. Even if Saldaña had intended to commission a central tomb earlier, Elvira’s sudden death and the pressures of political life in the 1430s may have prevented this. As noted above, the production of the effigies between 1436 and 1438 fits well with the clothes and hairstyles, and that of the seated saints and apostles towards the end of the decade explains the change in style noted by Ara Gil between them and the shield-bearing angels produced eight or nine years later. 77

When the couple fled, they would thus have left behind their finished tomb, the apostles, and the altarpiece (commissioned, as noted above, before 1435), but the four niches appear to have been left empty. We can infer this from Pedro Vélez de Guevara’s wish to be buried there with his own alabaster effigy, and from a similar request in 1496 by Saldaña’s son by Elvira de Acevedo, Ferrando López de Saldaña. Why, then, were none of the children commemorated in the chapel? The answer may relate to the confusion which reigned for several years after Saldaña’s exile over who had the right to be buried in the chapel, as well as to continuing political upheaval. García de Salazar’s account states that Saldaña lost all his assets upon fleeing Castile. 78 Ceballos-Escalera y Gila provides a breath-taking summary of these assets as well as an account of their expropriation. 79 Ferrando, who had remained in Castile, had a long-running dispute with the monarchy over his father’s estates, although it is not clear whether Saldaña’s rights in the chapel at Tordesillas were part of this. 80 In 1455, just before Saldaña died, those rights were confirmed in a royal charter, probably as a result of an extraordinary ‘deal’: shortly after the beheading of Alvaro de Luna in 1454, Saldaña sent word from Aragon to John II asking for pardon and the return of his position and assets in revenue where Luna had hidden some of the treasure he had accumulated in office, said to be worth more than 800,000 gold doblas. 81 Castile’s political situation continued to be difficult after Saldaña’s death and things only began to settle down in 1474, when Isabella of Castile ascended to the throne.

Whether or not Pedro was interred in the crypt in 1477, the arms that appear on the surviving entrance to the monastery church appear to be his (Fig. 6.14). 82 This entrance may have also been commissioned after Saldaña fled to Aragon. Although it repeats some elements of the imperial portals, its decorative scheme is simpler, not unlike the portals Juan Guas produced for Ávila Cathedral in the 1460s. By this time Pedro was maestrase to Enrique IV. 83

In conclusion, the revisions proposed here provide possible answers to questions relating to the physical evidence remaining inside the Saldaña Chapel. They make sense, for example, of the seated saints and unfinished appearance of the tomb niches. But they also help us to understand the chapel’s design more clearly as an expression of Fernán López de Saldaña’s dynastic ambitions, and as part of his efforts to ensure that he stood out in relation to his peers. By highlighting not only those features in the existing ensemble that were modelled on Valois coffins but also features that would not survive the revisions allow us to reconsider this connoisseur’s use of imitation and innovation as part of a strategy to mould himself as a new noble serving the emerging Castilian state.
28. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

29. For Álvaro de Luna, see Reales Sitios 

30. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

31. For Álvaro de Luna, see Reales Sitios 

32. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

33. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

34. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

35. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

36. This crypt contains the remains of five unidentified 

37. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

38. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

39. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

40. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

41. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

42. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

43. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

44. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

45. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

46. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

47. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

48. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

49. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

50. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

51. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

52. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

53. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

54. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

55. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.

56. For the marriage, see M-71, fols. 193v-197, Colec- 

tión y semblanza', p. 179.
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67. The Castilian convention of decorating tomb chests with narrative imagery, saints, weepers, and heraldry is demonstrated, for example, in María Jesús Gómez Bárcena, Escultura gótica funeraria en Burgos (Burgos: Diputación Provincial de Burgos, 1988).


70. See, e.g., Molina de la Torre, Valladolid, pp. 40-41. The ongoing debate over the quatrain on the Ghent Altarpiece illustrates the difficulties inherent in evaluating medieval inscriptions.

71. Caja 7, Exp. 13, ASCT, and Caja 2, Exp. 22, ASCT. Villaseñor claims that construction must have been started by 1431 on the basis the bull, but it seems more likely that the bull was obtained in advance of the chapel’s completion. See Villaseñor Sebastián, ‘Nuevos aportaciones’, p. 1039.

72. See above and note 28.

73. Nicolás Francés, to whom the Saldaña Retable is attributed, is documented as having completed the huge marble reredos of León Cathedral by 1434, making another commission in the run up to its completion unlikely. See Sánchez Carrio, Nicolás Francés, p. 9.

74. These children were Pedro Vélez de Guevara, circa 1442-1477; and Constanza Vélez de Guevara, circa 1443-1505.

75. My thanks to Javier Martínez de Aguirre and Tom Nickson, whose explanations about the construction process and possible revisions to it have been extremely helpful.

76. The shields are unlikely to have been commissioned after Luna’s return to court in 1443 as by then Saldaña had gone over to the rebels.


78. It may be that Pedro’s and/or Ferrando’s bones were interred in the crypt where at least five skulls have been found. Only the arms of Fernán López de Saldaña and his two wives appear on the stairs leading down to the crypt.

79. García de Salazar, Las bienandanzas e fortunas, pp. 58.


81. This is documented in F-6, fols. 1-42v, CSyC RAH; M-71, fols. 214-218, CSyC RAH; and M-108, fol. 14, CSyC RAH.

82. Gonzalo de la Hinojosa, Continuación de la crónica de España, ed. Feliciano Ramírez de Arellano (Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, 1966), p. 137. A Castilian dobla was worth 200 maravedis, and it was clearly considered at the time to be an extraordinary sum.

83. The right spandrel displays the arms of the Vélez de Guevara and Ayala families impaled dexter with the castle and lion of the monarchy. As this quartering is not found elsewhere in relation to Isabel Vélez de Guevara, these arms are likely to belong to Pedro, perhaps granted to him on account of the military service which led to his premature death in 1477. On this type of concession, see A. García Carraffa, Enciclopedia heraldica y genealógica ibero-americana (Madrid, 1919), 5, p. 204. These arms do not appear on the steps leading down to the crypt.