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# Sovereign, Saint, and City: Honor and Reuse of Textiles in the Treasury of San Isidoro (Leon)

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## Abstract

The textiles currently housed in the treasury of the collegiate church of San Isidoro de León are part of a centuries-long process of collecting relics at the heart of an emblematic royal mausoleum. Instead of studying them through the prism of the “charter of 1063,” this investigation proposes a wider look at the place of luxurious textiles in Castile and León before and after the arrival of Saint Isidore’s relics. What emerges is an intricate relationship between the mythification of the city of León as a *civitas regia*, the Leonese monarchy’s concept of antiquity in legitimizing their rule, and the refinement associated with the royal court and its sacred performance of the cults of saints.

## Keywords

saints’ relics – textile reuse – Arabic epigraphy – *ṭirāz* – reliquary linings

## Supplementary Material



Figure 1  
*Textile lining the reliquary of San Isidoro*  
Photo: Ana Cabrera



Figure 2 *Embroidery lining the lid of the reliquary of San Isidoro*  
Photo: Therese Martin



Figure 3 *Textile fragment from Colls.* 11th century. Silk and gold thread. 51.8 × 58.5 cm.

Museo de Huesca, no. 1542.



Figure 4 *An assortment of liturgical treasures from Serradaui, Huesca*

Photo: Adolf Mas, c Arxiu Mas/Institut Amatller d'Art Hispanic



Figure 5 *Textiles with enamel casket ca. 1931, San Isidoro de Leon*

Photo: Adolf Mas, c Arxiu Mas/Instituto Amatller d'Art Hispanic



Figure 6 *Lining of the reliquary of San Juan Bautista and San Pelayo, San Isidoro de Leon*  
Photo: Ana Cabrera



Figure 7 Elephant fragment or so-called Baghdad Silk, San Isidoro de Leon  
Photo: Ana Cabrera



Figure 8 *Textile fragment with wrestling lions and harpies from the tomb of Pedro de Osma.*

Spain, probably Almeria, early 12th century. Silk lampas with supplementary discontinuous metal-wrapped patterning wefts, 50 × 43 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 33.371. Ellen Page Hall Fund.

Photo: c Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





Figure 9 Detail, *textile from the reliquary of San Juan Baustista y San Pelayo*  
Photo: Ana Cabrera



Figure 10 *Reliquary of San Marcelo/San Claudio, early twentieth century, with textiles still in situ*

Photo: Archivo Gomez-Moreno, CSIC



Figure 11 *Detail of San Marcelo/San Claudio, showing a standing male figure with a knife*

Photo: Therese Martin



Figure 12 *Detail of San Marcelo/San Claudio, showing a female figure on a beast*  
Photo: Therese Martin