The Transmission of Well-Being
Gendered Marriage Strategies and Inheritance Systems in Europe (17th–20th Centuries)
Cousin Marriage and Well-Being among the Portuguese Royal Family during the 15th and 16th Centuries

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This study deals with two separate issues: in the first part, royal marriages will be set in historical context, and I shall argue that cousin marriage was often among the causes for bitter conflict and violence among branches of the same family. Those situations became particularly explosive when such alliances took place among branches of the same family competing within the kingdom itself, because the dangers of internal war arose.

The second part will deal with the ways in which princesses and queens could adapt to their difficult situation of sequential child bearers in foreign courts. My purpose is to demonstrate how property, especially in what concerns domestic goods, contributed to the well-being of these women, who, in spite of their royal status, enjoyed subaltern positions in relation to their husbands. I shall argue that the control women exerted over their dowries was limited, and that they lived mainly on annual rents paid by their husbands; on the other hand, the trousseau constituted their full property and played a crucial role in the construction of their identity.

Cousin Marriage among the Portuguese Royals in Historical Context

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries cousin marriage became a constant among royalties. Motives for marrying within the same family were various, but they rested mostly on dynastic interests. Within the Portuguese royal family, these marriages started to take place within several branches of the same family, all of them within the Portuguese kingdom.
From 1490 onwards, these inbreeding marriages would take an international character, as marriage partners were increasingly chosen outside the kingdom, especially in the Spanish Habsburg monarchy. Cousin marriage did not disappear; neither did conflicts among kin, but the dangers of internal armed conflict ceased.

These alliances began with João I, the founder of the new dynasty of Avis, who married Philippa of Lancaster in 1387. Some of his grandsons and granddaughters married between themselves (see family tree Figure 1), mainly because he endowed his children with vast seigniorial estates that created the need for alliance, or at least required reciprocal neutralization, so that the royal family would not be out-shaded by their relative’s households. Let us give some examples: João I and Duarte I, the first two kings of Avis, married foreign princesses. João I married Philippa of Lancaster, and several of his sons survived until adulthood, each having his own duchy. João’s heir, Duarte, married Leonor, the daughter of king Ferdinand of Aragon (died 1416), but already in his generation a marriage between cousins took place. His younger brother João (1400–1442) married in 1424 Isabel (1402–1465), the daughter of the duke of Braganza, Afonso. Such marriages became systematic in the following generation. The next king Afonso V, married his uncle Pedro’s daughter, Isabel, whilst his brother Fernando, second in line to the throne, in 1447, married Beatriz, daughter of infante João (died 1442) and Isabel of Braganza (died 1465).

Let me start by referring, although briefly, the reasons why the king of Portugal, Afonso V married infante Pedro’s daughter. The latter was regent during Afonso’s minority (who was left orphan at six years old), but he was reluctant to give up his regency, as he had created a pool of enemies. Two “factions” had appeared, and Pedro’s opponents were led by the duke of Braganza, Afonso, who felt defrauded by the fact that his own daughter, Isabel, had not been appointed to marry the heir to the throne, Afonso V. By the time Afonso V’s heir, prince João (future João II) married, in 1471, marriages were celebrated within the king’s family and the two existing ducal houses, the Braganza and the Beja-Viseu, offered a pool of brides to choose from.

The Braganza family originated from an illegitimate son of king João I, Afonso, who had married Beatriz, the daughter of the constable Nuno Álvares Pereira, whilst the Viseu-Beja family corresponded to the second son of Duarte, Fernando (1433–1470), who had married Beatriz,
the daughter of his uncle João and Isabel of Braganza. The fact that Fernan-
dodo was designated as the adoptive child and heir to Henry the Naviga-
tor (died 1460), and became the only heir to João, his father-in-law, plus
his own ability to generate assets, transformed the house of Viseu into one
of the powers competing for the throne in the following years.

Enmeshed family interests motivated bitter rivalries, often leading to
violence. This social and political turbulence has been one of the favorite
subjects of Portuguese historiography, especially among medievalists, and
it will not be further explored in this paper. Many historians have explored
these dynastic wars and upheavals thoroughly.¹ Dynastic marriages were
appeasing in so many ways, as they deflected danger of internal wars
through alliances between potential enemies, but they often had the oppo-
site effect of actually promoting uneasiness and bitter conflict. When ne-
gotiated in international arenas, they were strategically arranged in order
to achieve the absorption of kingdoms into composite monarchies, espe-
cially as a result of Habsburg dynastic policies. These incorporations, as it
is known, were at the root of revolts and wars, where the goals of the con-
spirers and rebels were invariably the independence of their nations. As
examples, we could refer to Catalonia, Naples or Portugal, not to mention
the Lower Countries and Holland, if we limit ourselves to the example of
the Spanish composite monarchy. These marriages could thus be the cause
for collective dissatisfaction, but they also gave origin to individual mal-
aise, namely in what concerns the quality of life that princesses and
queens had to endure. Although several devices were set in order to create
well-being for queens and princesses, we must note that their subaltern
condition as wives to kings and princes, as well as their role in dynastic
biological reproduction, often meant harsh living conditions and personal
unhappiness. As their main purpose in life was pregnancy and childbirth,
their health could be devastated as a result. Bartolomé Bennassar has well
illustrated this issue in a recent book (Bennassar 2006).

¹ The recent biography of João II includes accounts of these conflicts, and a vast bibli-
obography on the subject (Fonseca 2005).
Figure 1: The Avis Dynasty, the Ducal Houses of Braganza and Beja-Viseu of Portugal, and the Trastamaras of Spain (1385-1400)
Let us go back to the initial marriage of the Avis dynasty,² that of João I with Philippa of Lancaster. Ten children would be born to the couple; the youngest, João, would marry Isabel, the daughter of his father’s only illegitimate son Afonso. In 1401, Afonso had married Nuno Álvares Pereira’s daughter, Beatriz; Pereira was then the kingdom’s hero as the war commander who had led the Portuguese to victory against Castile in the previous war of independence (1383–1385). The marriage of his daughter Beatriz with the illegitimate son of the king is at the root of the creation of a lineage second in importance after the king’s, as Afonso would become the first duke of Braganza.

In this first Avis generation of the new Portuguese dynasty, this 1424 alliance between João, duke of Beja and Isabel de Braganza would be the only consanguineous marriage. But among king João I’s grandchildren, there were two marriages between first cousins: in 1448, the successor to the throne, Afonso V (1432–1481), married Isabel de Coimbra (1432–1455), the daughter of his older uncle, who had been regent of the Portuguese kingdom during his minority, Pedro, duke of Coimbra. In 1447, Afonso’s brother, Fernando, duke of Viseu (born 1433), had married his cousin Beatriz (c. 1430–1506), daughter of his uncle João, duke of Beja, referred to above, thus joining this branch of the family once again to the Braganzas. At next generation, in 1471, the only son of Afonso V, prince João (1455–1495), future João II, would in turn marry Leonor (1458–1525), one of the daughters of Fernando, duke of Viseu-Beja, and Beatriz.

Married within the Portuguese royal family, two of the entirely Portuguese queens lived during the period under our analysis: Isabel (1432–1455), wife of Afonso V, and Leonor (1458–1525).³ As we shall see, both lived through bitter family feuds.

A first wave of family violence took place during the late 1440s when two factions collided, one reuniting Afonso V’s supporters, and those of his uncle and father-in-law, Pedro (1392–1449). The two armed forces clashed at the battle of Alfarrobeira (20 May 1449), where Pedro was killed and his small army defeated.⁴ This battle had a negative effect on

² João was the natural son of king of Portugal Pedro I (1320–1367). He was Grand Master of the Order of Avis and was declared king of Portugal by the Portuguese Cortes in 1385, after his brother Fernando I, unique legitimate male heir, died in 1383 without a male descendant.

³ The other queen, from the 14th century, is Leonor Teles (1350–1386), second wife of Fernando I (1345–1383) (see Barbosa 1727, p. 364 onwards).

⁴ For the most comprehensive study of the battle of Alfarrobeira, see Moreno 1979.
the image of the king, raised and devoted to the ideals of chivalry, because he had allowed his uncle’s corpse to remain unburied in the field during several days. His daughter, Queen Isabel, made her best efforts to grant her father a decent burial place but she died in 1455, at the age of 23, soon after having given birth to their son João. Chroniclers state that there was suspicion of poisoning: whether this is true or not is neither relevant, nor possible to verify, but it informs us about the bitter scars that followed civil war. Alfarrobeira was to have an international resonance, as one of Pedro’s sisters, Isabel (1397–1471), had married the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1396–1467), and she assumed the task of protecting her brother’s allies, as well as hosting some of his orphaned children in Burgundy’s court, and thus Bruges became a place of refuge for his supporters (Sousa Viterbo 1905; Apfelstadt 2000, 183–184). By then, the Braganzas were already major actors in the political scene, as the young king Afonso V had relied on the duke of Braganza’s substantial military help against the regent (Gomes 2006, 65–67).

Family problems would continue during the next generation. In the 1480s more cousin blood would be shed. As mentioned above, Prince João married into his uncle Fernando’s family, having wed Leonor in 1471. Fernando, duke of Viseu, was also duke of Beja after marrying Beatriz in 1447, and he had inherited Henry the Navigator’s estate after his death in 1460. At the time of his own death in 1470, not only his assets had notably increased (Lopes 2003, 24–106), but also his political influence through marriage. In 1447, Isabel, his wife’s sister, had married Juan II of Castile and would be the mother of Isabel la Católica. Later, in 1472, his own daughter, Isabel, would marry the 3d duke of Braganza, Fernando II. The scene was set again for conflict: the Viseu-Beja were united to the Braganzas and developed in the meantime strong affinities with the Castilian court. Three main contenders were in place: the Braganzas, the duke of Viseu and the king. The Braganzas were the most politically and socially influential, while the household of the duke of Viseu was the wealthiest (Cunha 1988, 269–290). With the two ducal households united, and linked to the Castilian monarchy, trouble awaited João II when he became king in 1481.

Fernando II, third duke of Braganza, and Diogo, duke of Viseu, both brothers-in-law to king João II, were accused of conspiring against the

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5 On this chivalric “stain”, see Gomes 2006, 78–79.
6 João II will reign from 1481 to his death, in 1495.
king on two occasions (1483 and 1484). Both died, Fernando being tried and executed, and Diogo being killed at the hands of the king himself without formal legal formalities. Their allies also suffered the consequences of treason: more than 50 persons were executed, escaped from the kingdom, or faced harsh imprisonment leading to death. Both conspiracies bear the suspicion that the queen of Castile Isabel la Católica gave support to the rebels. The involvement of the Catholic kings, as far as sources go, if they actually gave their support to any conspiracy, was marked by prudence. There are no sources that actually prove that Isabel and Fernando acted with the conspirators, but they might have joined them if they had been successful.

Friction between the two kingdoms, Portugal and Spain, has again to be set in context: they were still enjoying a fragile peace after a disastrous attempt of João II’s father, Afonso V, to take part in the succession war that divided supporters of Isabel’s rights to the throne against the supporters of Juana the Beltraneja (1462–1530), daughter of Afonso’s sister Joana and Enrique IV of Castile. After the battle of Toro in March 1476, a peace treaty followed, but mutual fear would end only with the marriage, in 1490, of Afonso, João’s only son and heir, to Isabel, the eldest of the Catholic kings’ four daughters. This wedding had been a part of the peace negotiations, and it was preceded by a long period of waiting because they were small children at the time of the peace treaty. While they were too young to marry, a solution had to be found in order to prevent the re-start of war. In fact, between November 1480 and May 1483, both royal families held each other’s heirs as hostages in the town of Moura, under the responsibility of the widowed duchess of Viseu-Beja, Beatriz, in what became known as the terçarias agreement. A few days after they were terminated, and king João II had regained possession of his only child, he ordered the imprisonment of the duke of Braganza, Fernando II, under the accusation of conspiracy.

The duke was sentenced by a grand jury who demonstrated his treacherous contacts with the Castilian courts with the purpose of dethroning João II. It is not known whether Isabel la Católica ever dreamt seriously of incorporating the kingdom of Portugal; although it is a fact that the conspirers were members of her family. Duchess Beatriz, mother-in-law both to Fernando II duke of Braganza and to João II, was her mother’s sister; no wonder Queen Isabel took care of the exiled Braganzas in her court after the brutal suppressing of the duchy of Braganza by João II in 1483
(Córdova Miralles 2002, 138). The fact that both women were in good terms is shown by the fact that the initial peace negotiations after Toro took place between them in Alcantara, a modest town just outside the Portuguese frontier with Castile (Costa 2005, 46–47).

Both conspiracies were actually accompanied by king João II’s measures against eventual military reactions against himself either after he imprisoned the duke of Braganza or when he killed Diogo duke of Viseu. Such conspiracies could not, at any cost, be transformed into rebellions. In the first case, the towns and castles held by the duke of Braganza were summoned to confirm his allegiance to the king. In the following months, João II traveled up north, to the domains of the duke, in order to make his authority effective as their new lord, as the duchy was suppressed in consequence of the conspiracy (Pina 1977, 918–919, 926; Resende 1973, 60, 73–74). During the night of the murder of the duke of Viseu, in Setúbal, he ordered the city walls to be closed and the streets patrolled (Resende 1973, 80). During the next weeks, the king departed on a military venture to the castle of Sabugal, where the alcaide’s wife had refused to surrender the fortress (Pina 1977, 932; Resende 1973, 85–86). It is the case of Diogo’s mother, who ordered the immediate surrender of the town of Moura, which used to be one of her son’s towns (Chaves 1983, 182–183).

Endogamous Alliances: Family Problems but Collective Security

Most historians have stressed the political meanings of these conflicts, but I would like to call attention to the fact that these were family matters. Most contenders were relatives before marrying into one another’s families; consanguinity would enmesh conflicts further. Furthermore, these episodes bear little resemblance with justice: even if there was a trial in the case of the duke Fernando II of Braganza, apparently abiding to the existing laws and juridical procedures, what happened to most suspects was pure revenge, the latter being perceived by contemporaries as a right of the offended (Moreno 1970, 47–103; Liss 2004, 79). Instead of insisting on political issues, I would like to stress the emotional character of
these conflicts. As we know, the word “family” had an extended meaning, embracing not only blood relatives, but also the members of the household, especially *criados*, that is, those who had been entrusted as children to another household in order to be raised and educated (Gomes 2003, 205–208). King João II is said to have expressed his sadness for having been betrayed by his relatives on the occasion of both conspiracies, especially in what concerns the duke of Viseu, Diogo. Chroniclers mentioned that he had been brought up as a son, and was his first cousin, and his wife’s brother. Anger and thirst for revenge were not only derived from offended pride, but could also mean a genuine sense of loss at being betrayed by a close relative. A Polish traveler, Nicolaus von Popplau wrote, after having been at the Portuguese court at the time Diogo was killed, it was rare that the devil did not interfere in marriages arranged between close kin and as such he could not approve of papal dispensations (Liske 1878, 37).

Cousin marriage thus, being incorporated in such endogamous alliances, was one of the sources of constant internal trouble, and could stir up conflicts, instead of creating balanced power relationships between households. During the sixteenth century, the number of marriages arranged among Portuguese households would diminish, at least in what concerns the most probable heirs to the throne, but first-cousin marriages would continue between Portugal and Spain. The fact that internal cousin marriages tended to be less frequent is significant, as it means that monarchs had consolidated their position of superiority vis-à-vis their internal rivals and dispensed with the need to incorporate them further in their blood.

The most important royal marriages in Portugal during the sixteenth century would be negotiated exclusively with the Spanish royal family. Eight such marriages followed until 1580: King Manuel I was to marry Isabel of Aragon on her second marriage (her former husband Afonso had died tragically in a horse accident in 1491), and later her sister Maria. His third marriage would be to Charles V’s sister Leonor. As to his son and heir João III (1502–1557), he would marry another one of Charles’s sisters, Catherine of Austria (1507–1578), whilst his own sister Isabel

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8 Travels of Nicolás de Popielovo (1484), Joannes Dantiscus (1519–31), Enrich Lassota de Steblovo (1580–1584) and Jacobo Sobieski (1611).
(1503–1539) would acquire the title of empress through her marriage with Charles himself. By 1543, his daughter Maria (1527–1545) would marry the prince of Castile, Philip (later Philip II), whilst his son would marry Juana. By 1565 the last alliance between the Avis-Beja family and the Habsburgs would take place, when Maria, daughter of prince Duarte and granddaughter of Manuel I, married the prince of Parma, Alessandro Farnese, grandson of Carlos V’s illegitimate daughter Margarida de Austria (Bertini 2000, 45).

The dynastic game was similar to a Russian roulette: the first branch of the family that did not have an heir to succeed would be taken over by the other. In fact, this was similar to what happened after João II’s death in October 1495: his only son Afonso having died in 1491, the crown passed on to the brother of the duke of Viseu, the duke of Beja, who became Manuel I (1495–1521).9 Again, it happened in 1580 when Philip II became king of Portugal using his legitimate right to inherit the Portuguese throne. If his use of force through the invasion of Portugal in the course of that year can be questioned, he was no doubt the best positioned contender according to the existing rules of succession. These were in fact inheritance rules, and kingdoms simply passed on to their heirs. The dynastic demographic roulette set the destiny of Portugal for the next sixty years, as it did with several other political units of early modern Europe.

Gender, Transmission of Property and Well-Being

So far, we have dealt with collective expectations provided by cousin marriage, such as peace prospects, alliance against enemies, and dynastic prosperity. In short, such marriages were supposed to provide collective security for entire kingdoms and their peoples. Failure of reaching these goals often meant war, conquest or incorporation. Let us consider now the individual level, mainly what concerned the well-being of brides by way of what was exchanged in marriage deals. As we know, their reproductive capabilities were at the core of the success of the system. How could their

9 As a result of this dynastic shift, the dynasty of Avis is designated as Avis-Beja after 1495.
situation as child bearers be eased? How did they cope with the disadvantages of expatriation to foreign courts? How were they to escape the misfortunes of rejection, widowhood or infertility?

If these marriages were devised to ensure political security, they implied all the misfortunes that are well known to historians, and that French historian Bartolomé Bennassar has recently studied (Bennassar 2006, 71–158). Having babies was the queens’ purpose in life, often at the risk of death. In times of heavy child mortality, the future of their offspring was worsened by the fact that consanguinity carried out increased danger of disease, either mental or physical, to their children. Catherine of Austria, married to her first cousin João III, was not herself the daughter of a consanguineous marriage. Her mother was Juana the Mad who had married Philip the Fair, duke of Burgundy. But João III’s consanguineous relatives went way up to his great grandparents. In any case, of the nine children of the couple, only two of them would survive until adolescence, but they would be dead aged less than twenty by the time their own father died in 1557. A single grandson would survive, Sebastião (1554–1578), the posthumous son of prince João and Juana de Austria. Even if queens succeeded in having children who lived until adulthood, many died during child labor or its sequels. It was the case of Isabel, first wife of Manuel in 1496, of her sister Maria in 1517, following the birth of her tenth child, and again Maria (1527–1545), first wife of Philip II, giving birth to Don Carlos.

Besides their life-consuming task of bearing children, most royal marriages meant queens consort would live as expatriates. In the Portuguese case, most marriage contracts stated that they would acquire the groom’s nationality upon marriage. Travel to the court of the groom would rarely be followed by a return trip: most would not see either father or mother again, nor their brothers and sisters. Neither would most marriages provide the comfort of conjugal affection, as they were arranged to pursue the interests of the families. If Empress Isabel (1503–1539) seems to have enjoyed the respect and love of her husband Charles V, neglect and contempt were more likely than otherwise. In such circumstances, how were princesses to create security devices that would lead them to live through all those misfortunes in strange places?

It is difficult to give a single answer to this question. Many factors might provide them with a sense of security and well-being. We shall name only just a few:
1) A sense of fulfilling their duty conforming to God’s will. Religion was a key feature in the way these princesses lived through their frequently unhappy lives. No wonder that attendance to mass in court chapels, private prayers in their oratories, the assistance of confessor priests, and the staging of elaborate religious rituals never ceased to increase during the sixteenth century. Spiritual comfort, Crowley tell us, was more important than physical well-being before the 18th century; it certainly helped them to face adversity (Crowley 2001, 3–4).

2) A sense of fulfilling duty as daughters of kings and kings’ consorts. Obeying the authority of patria potestas, as well as God’s will, prevented them from bearing the weight of the consequences of their own decisions.

3) Contact with family through frequent correspondence, often accompanied by gift exchange. Among the latter, the importance of foodstuffs that could not be found locally must be stressed. To exchange delicacies became a sign of mutual affection and letters often refer to it. For instance, even if Catherine of Austria, wife of John III had grown up apart from her brothers and sisters, she took part in a gift and counter-gift practice together with her siblings Maria of Hungary, Charles V and Ferdinand (Viaud 1994, 73). In what concerns the use of letters, some could be foundational, such as the instructions for their daughters’ married lives as princesses and queens that parents often wrote before they left home. One of such examples is the letter Manuel I gave his daughter before leaving to Piedmont. Very significantly, the letter ended by advising Beatriz to live by the examples of her two grandmothers: Beatriz, duchess of Beja-Viseu, and queen Isabel of Castile.

4) The fact that princesses lived in foreign countries should be eased by the company of ladies-in-waiting also originating in the same court, as well as the male staff of their households. The latter often traveled to and from home, bringing fresh news. Also, they shared the same language, the same memories, identical manners, and sometimes the same

10 See also Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo (henceforth IAN/TT), Corpo Cronológico, parte I, maço 88, doc. 77 [1552.08.02, Lisbon], whereby Catarina of Austria sent bird game to her sister Maria.

“national” dress codes. This tradition can be found since the Middle Ages; Isabel, duchess of Burgundy (1397–1471), not only took her wet-nurse to Bruges, but also men and women who would perform duties in her chamber (Sousa Viterbo 1905). The Portuguese women who became queens of Castile, Isabel (married in 1447) and Joana (married in 1455) also kept a Portuguese entourage with them; Catherine of Austria (1507–1578) lived with the household she brought from Tordesilhas during most of her married life in Portugal.

5) The princess’ trousseau was also formed by elaborate groups of objects that were carried from home to her new court. Jewelry, clothing, tableware, and liturgical apparatus, often passing on from mother to daughter or from aunt to niece formed a very significant element in providing the princess or queen with a sense of identity. They were not only symbols of power and magnificence, representing the dynastic importance of their family, but also were meant to make the princess/queen feel at home, or at least keep a sense of her identity through memorabilia.

6) The increasing importance of bodily care, materialized either in objects connected with well-being, or in the attendance of barbers, surgeons and doctors. Trouseaus were increasingly composed of utensils used for the care of the body; professionals in health care constantly supervised the princesses’ well-being, often through the monitorization of every bodily function.

7) Marriage contracts provided queens with assets that allowed them to live according to their status, and dowers prevented them from being either rejected or widowed without financial compensation. King João I organized and institutionalized the “Casa da Rainha”, a group of rents, lands and towns granted to the queens consort (Rodrigues 2007a, 5). Queens could also receive money allowances in rents perceived by royal financial institutions.

Most of these devices that provided comfort in alien lands were included in the marriage contract. Besides making arrangements concerning the political well-being of the countries concerned, such contracts tried to further the bride’s interest. The property exchanged through these marriages could be formed by several elements: the dowry, a sum the bride’s family should pay to the groom; the trousseau, that is, the list of equipment that the household of the princess would need; the dower, a sum that
the husband should pay in case the marriage was off through annulment or childless widowhood; the lands, rents and towns belonging to royal property that the queen would possess during her lifetime; and the amount of the annual allowance available to the wife’s expenses and maintenance of her household. The control that women could exert over these different elements of property varied. If it was virtually inexistent in what concerns the dowry, it could be almost total when it came to exerting seigniorial rights over their lands, administering its rents, spending the allowance or disposing of the trousseau (Rodrigues 2007b, 143–145).

Dowry and Trousseau: Material and Symbolic Values

The dowry, always the most significant sum, was entirely due to the husband and would be returned to the bride’s family only if the wife did not bear children. Most royal husbands considered it as their own: the case of Charles V is well known, using dowry money in order to finance his war enterprises (Lozano 2005, 157). Very significantly, the most valuable part of the trousseau, that is, jewelry and objects made of precious metal or stones were also part of the dowry and not entirely available to the woman. Proof is that a committee formed by representatives of the two contractors was due to assess their value and agree on the amount of money they were worth. This procedure was to take place after the wedding and upon arrival of the princess to her court of destiny. Again, Charles V is known to have disposed of Isabel’s jewelry on behalf of the economic needs of his army. Being so, we must suggest the ambiguous nature of precious valuables within the bride’s property, since they were half between the dowry and the trousseau.

After the husband’s withdrawal of the dowry’s money and jewelry, everything included in the trousseau was considered as being the wife’s property. She could bequeath it, give it away or dispose of it in any other

12 On the complexity of the denominations of matrimonial assets, as well as their variance over time, see Debris 2005, 395–468.
13 IAN/TT, gaveta XVII, 9-16. “Quitação das jóias do dote da princesa D. Maria. 1544.07.06”
way she wanted. These were in fact the queens’ private possessions: they included her books of prayer and devotion, the liturgical apparatus needed for their chapel and sometimes also their private oratory, bed linen, table cloths, clothing, kitchenware and objects concerned with personal hygiene and bodily care. Another significant feature of the trousseaus is that they were elaborated as collective equipment, that is, they should serve the queen’s entourage, formed mainly by women but also by some men, normally devoted to writing and account activities or to the religious cult. If some of these objects were to be exhibited at public ceremonies as testimonies to the wealth of the original courts of the princesses, others were exclusively concerned with domestic private use. It is not impossible that expatriated princesses and queens relied on them to create a friendly environment in often hostile and harsh foreign courts.

We can think that queens enjoyed a similar independence in what concerns administrating the annual allowances they were given in order to support their household. These monies originated mostly in land revenues, but there were cases in which the royal treasury was so strained by expenses that other arrangements had to be made, or even marriages avoided. In Portugal, there was a period in the sixteenth century when the lands traditionally allocated to ensure the queen’s revenues were held by the widowed queen Leonor, who lived until the end of 1525 (Braga 1992, 74).\(^{14}\) As a result, allowances for the successive queens of Portugal had to be paid by the Spanish monarch or compensated by other provisional arrangements: it was the case of Isabel, Maria, Leonor and Catherine. There was also a difference between the allowances a royal wife was given according to her status, the sum increasing the moment her husband became king. This was no doubt caused by increased expenses due to heavier pressures in what concerns conspicuous displays of wealth.

Marriage contracts were explicit on all these issues in order to prevent these women from being deprived of means of support, as it was unthinkable that they would ever return to their countries or live in foreign ones in dire straits. Nevertheless, such situations might happen episodically: Catalina of Aragon is known to have lived in poverty in England, and princess

\(^{14}\) On the arrangements made to compensate the three Manuel I’s successive wives, see Rodrigues 2007a, pp. 9–10.
Maria of Portugal faced delays in her allowance that motivated panicked letters to her father king João III (Ferrandiz 2005, 225–292).15

To marry a daughter, however, might be unaffordable altogether for royal families in times of financial difficulties. During the late fifteenth century, expenses could be somewhat cut if these princesses entered convent, but even so they could be expensive to the royal treasury. In fact, they held small courts in convent, having to provide for their household members such as servants and slaves in all life’s needs (clothing, food, marriage and old age) as well as keeping a train of life in accordance with princely status, even if the observant mendicant rules they often entered denied them the right to luxury.16

Also, we must keep in mind that marrying a bride meant other significant expenses related to lavish weddings or travel to another court. Princesses not only carried numerous trunks with their trousseaus, but were also accompanied by an extended entourage. In pre-fiscal states, meeting those expenses often meant assembling parliaments and obtaining permission from the representatives of the third estate to raise money to finance the wedding.17 Needless to say, the cost of such marriages was much higher on the bride’s family than on the groom’s. Families had to compensate for the heavy costs of marrying their daughters through forms of capital other than economic profit. These compensations were thus mainly political: either reassurance of peace between the two contractors, alliance against common enemies, or just the satisfaction of marrying daughters to prestigious dynasties. In any case, the wedding festivities, often lasting weeks, became prized moments for parents’ families to boast their prosperity, even if sometimes artificially or with ruinous consequences.

Dowries could be worth many years of royal annual revenues: when Manuel I married his daughter Beatrix to Charles III, duke of Savoy in 1521, he spent 60 million réis in her dowry, and 60 million in her wedding and travel expenses to the city of Nice (Resende 1973, 319–334). This was more than the total of the royal revenues in 1518 – 114 contos de

15 On the difficulties of providing financially for Maria of Portugal’s household in Spain, see IAN/TT, Corpo Cronológico, part I, maço 73, doc. 23 [1544.06.25, Valhadolid], and part I, maço 75, doc. 80 [1544.10.26, Valhadolid].
17 João II had to assemble a hundred thousand cruzados reuniting the parliament and asking the people for a monetary contribution (Resende 1973, 144–145; Pina 1977, 961).
réis —, and only the fact that the king exacted high profits from Asian commerce allowed for such expenses. By the end of that year, when Manuel I died leaving his third wife Leonor as a widow with a baby daughter, Maria (1521–1577), the people of Lisbon demanded that she did not return to France with her child in order to avoid her dowry money from leaving the country (Góis 1955, 180).

João III’s policies concerning marriage and dowry were even more expensive, as he insisted on making repeated ruinous deals with Charles V in what concerns the well-being of the royal treasury. The dowry he received in 1525 for having married Charles V’s sister, Catherine, was 4.5 times inferior to the sum he was to give his sister, Isabel, to wed the emperor at the same time. Both affairs became difficult on the account of the Moluccas’ problem. Magellan and Elcano circumnavigation trip had raised the problem of Portugal’s right to the Moluccas, where the Portuguese were already trading. We know today that the archipelago was within the limits of the Portuguese territory according to the treaty of Tordesilhas (1494), but since there was no way of calculating longitude at the time, the problem was not solved even with the astronomic sum paid by João to marry his sister to Charles V. Four years later, a payment of 350 thousand ducats to the latter would finally settle the dispute. Well-being between monarchs came at a price, and it is well known that dynastic interests took the lead. Obviously, no discounts for family were available in such marriage deals. The two monarchs negotiated the next wave of marriages during the 1540s, having agreed on a double affair: João’s daughter Maria would marry Charles’s heir, Philip and the latter’s sister, Juana, would wed João, the heir to the Portuguese throne. Bartolomé Bennassar has counted nine double cross marriages in Early Modern European monarchies, most of them being actively promoted by the Spanish branch of the Habsburg kings.

18 More information concerning the revenues of the Crown can be obtained in Godinho 1978, pp. 33–74.
21 They corresponded to eighteen weddings which took place between 1497 and 1615 (Bennassar 2006, 53).
Body-Care, Well-Being and Female Identity

The proportion of jewelry and trousseau in the dowries varied, but it rarely exceeded 30 percent of the total value. There is an evolution concerning the number and type of objects that composed the trousseau. By 1447, the inventory of the trousseau of Manuel I’s mother, Beatriz the duchess of Beja-Viseu, married in 1447, was composed of circa 34 boxes (trunks and coffers) and included few pieces of furniture; personal objects included some mirrors and combs, as well as a wash basin for hair. There were many saltcellars but few pieces of cutlery, and only knives and spoons. Textiles made the bulk of the objects included in her trousseau, which also included a chessboard, a typical luxury item feature in this period. Her books of devotion were only two, a missal and a breviary. The trousseau also included equipment to dress mules and horses. At the end of the inventory there was a statement concerning the total weight of silver and gold included in the objects listed (Sousa 1947, 289–296).

Her homonymous granddaughter Beatriz (1504–1538) would take a more diversified array of objects to Piedmont when she married the duke of Savoy in 1521: three books of hours of gold and silver, a psalter, and six non-specified books in parchment also decorated with gold and silver. Her trousseau included the entire furnishings and liturgical apparatus needed for a private chapel, the usual jewelry and textiles for bed and table, and the usual chessboard. Novelties concerned tableware that included numerous forks and knives and all sorts of silverware to serve food and drink. Furniture included several portable tables and writing desks. Objects concerned with body care and physical well-being boomed, in accordance with what is known of objects in the Renaissance household (Cavallo 2006, 174–187). Beatriz’s possessions even included a sixteenth century novelty, the fan, whose use had been recently imported from Asia. Body care was entrusted to a variety of wash basins with diversified purposes (feet, hair, hand, etc.). There was also a beauty case (estojo de toilete), perfuming pans, several chamber pots and a toilet box. Altogether, her bridal assets required an amount of 53 boxes and trunks as containers.

By the time princess Maria married Philip (later Philip II), the 1544 inventory of her trousseau listed only objects containing silver, gold or precious stones. Less valuable objects such as textiles meant for daily use or kitchenware disappeared from the lists. It is probable that a separate in-
ventory was elaborated to include those; in any case, only the list of the most precious objects has survived until today. By the 1540s, a new distinction took shape: the liturgical equipment of such a trousseau was divided between the objects dedicated to the bride’s chapel and those that would furnish her private oratory. The latter already existed during the fifteenth century and was generally placed near beds in princely chambers, but this inventory points to a specific room dedicated to Maria’s personal use.

Many sources are lacking concerning inventories of trousseaus, as these three were the only ones found for this period, and the third, as we have seen, is little more than a section of the dowry, as it listed exclusively the objects with high market value. Nevertheless, their contents suggest the increasing importance of the care and the well-being of the body, as well as the emergence of the need for a place which the princesses could use as refuges from the indiscretions of court life, even if it was only for the purpose of praying.

Conclusions

During most of the fifteenth century, the absence of the principle of primogeniture in what concerns distribution of property among the kings’ siblings, created a need to re-establish equilibrium through rather unpredictable rearrangements, one of them being cousin marriage. Although not all marriages were consanguineous and the Crown continued to marry its brides with European allies, members of legitimate and illegitimate branches of the Portuguese royal family inter-married, creating tensions that often could lead to danger of internal armed conflict. However, from the 1490s onwards, marriage alliances tended to be systematically deflected abroad, although the Portuguese crown tended to concentrate marriage deals within the Spanish court, thus transferring endogamy to an Iberian setting. It soon became a dynastic game whose predictable consequence would be incorporation in a composite monarchy. Marriages within close family would prove to stir conflicts and violence that could be deflected abroad, even at the risk of a demographic lottery that would
leave one of the dynasties without heirs and force it to be incorporated into another.

Princesses and queens were thus often dislocated to foreign courts and harsh environments, where kin relations were of little comfort. They had little control of their dowries, which was their husbands’ property, living out of their rents, allocated by husbands or parents. On the other hand, these women were in full control of their trousseaus that, besides testifying to their high rank and status, must have played an important role in securing well-being and a sense of identity to their lives. Together with the company of their entourage, mainly formed by ladies-in-waiting and other staff that accompanied them, the importance of material possessions must be taken into account in what concerns the adaptation of these women to their new environments. As the sixteenth century went on, the number and variety of items in the trousseaus increased, namely in what concerns objects related to bodily hygiene and devotion. Care of the body and of soul represented islands of privacy in rather public court lives.

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