

## CHAPTER 7

# Circulation of Books and Reform Ideas between Female Monasteries in Medieval Castile: From Twelfth-Century Cistercians to the Observant Reform

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### *Processes of Reform in Female Monasteries in Medieval Castile: A World of Diversitas*

THE revision of the traditional rhetoric of religious reform by recent scholarship has acknowledged the lack of a clear definition.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there were many reform movements, all of them distinct from one another and closely related through the contingencies of time and space.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we must analyse the peculiarities of each of these reforms, avoiding preconceived ideas about the uniformity of these movements which have shaped modern scholarship's vision of reform.<sup>3</sup> As Steven Vanderputten has argued, reforms of individual institutions have to be

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<sup>2</sup> See Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100* (Ithaca, 2013); Michael Vargas, *Taming a Brood of Vipers: Conflict and Change in Fourteenth-Century Dominican Convents* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 16–22; and also Michael A. Vargas, 'Administrative change in the 14th century Dominican Order. A Case Study in Partial Reforms and Incomplete Theories', in Christopher M. Bellitto and David Zachariah Flanagan (eds), *Reassessing Reform. A Historical Investigation into Church Renewal* (Washington, 2012), pp. 84–104.

<sup>3</sup> Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform*, pp. 3 and 11.

analysed and understood as processes, rather than as ‘flashpoint events’.<sup>4</sup> Hence, they should not be seen as a result of the agency of a charismatic reformer, nor as the simple implementation of a reformist programme. On the contrary, reform was normally a long-term process, with different phases, and in which the tension between structure and agency, and between the institution’s past and present, were a constant.<sup>5</sup> It was a negotiated, collective endeavour, which evolved through time, in response to changing circumstances. Claire Taylor Jones has reached similar conclusions in analysing the specific case of the Observant reform of the German Dominican Order, and in particular of Dominican nuns. She proved how the traditional narrative presenting the Golden Age at the order’s founding in the thirteenth century, the decline in the fourteenth century and renewal by Dominican ‘Observants’ was a preconceived scheme that does not reflect reality.<sup>6</sup>

Every reform movement can only properly be understood in a broader and comparative framework. At present this comparative approach is hampered by the imbalance in the state of research into different territories, religious orders and timeframes. Whereas a high number of studies have focused on Central and Northern Europe, as well as on Italian convents,<sup>7</sup> research into reform processes for the Iberian Peninsula, and particularly in Castile, has remained fairly under-developed.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in Castile, traditional historiography has approached these questions from the perspective of the ‘official’ reformers, offering a vision of false homogeneity. For instance, regarding the Observant reform, the majority of studies have focused on the late period coinciding with the reign of the Catholic

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–13.

<sup>6</sup> Claire Taylor Jones, *Ruling the Spirit. Women, Liturgy, and Dominican Reform in Late Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles. Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, 2004); Alison I. Beach, *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture: Reform and Renewal in Twelfth Century Germany* (Turnhout, 2007); Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia, 2007); *Id.*, ‘Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages’, in Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 447–63; Jones, *Ruling the Spirit*. On Italian female monasteries: Sylvie Duval, ‘Comme des anges sur terre’: *Les moniales dominicaines et les débuts de la Réforme observante* (Rome, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> In Portugal, the subject of women and Observant reform has been only recently approached. Paula Cardoso, ‘Unveiling Female Observance: Reform, Regulation and the Rise of Dominican Nunneries in Late Medieval Portugal’, *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* (2020), 365–82. In 2021 an international conference approached these matters in a broader context: *Political and Ecclesiastical Agents in the Reform(s) of the Religious Orders in Europe during the Late Middle Ages (c. 1250–1500)*, Complutense University of Madrid, November 24–6, 2021.

Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella (r. 1475–1516).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, although their role cannot be denied, the monarchs were not the only agents of reform and, as we will see later, they acted only in the later phase of a long-term reform process.

In fact, during the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century, both nuns and female patrons actively promoted the introduction of Observant reform in Castilian female monasteries. However, as we will see and in contrast to what we normally would expect, these women kept some privileges and the control over these religious foundations, which may have been a strong reason for them to promote these ideals, and at the same time to avoid subjection to male reformers. This makes evident the necessity of a gendered perspective, revising women's role as agents in these processes of reform long before the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, to offer a more nuanced panorama.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, our analysis should consider the concept of 'intersectionality': that is to say, gender's relationship with other markers of difference, such as religious order, social class, race or place.<sup>11</sup> This relates to Judith Butler's concept of 'gender performativity', which explains that gender identities were constructed in performance, they were in constant change, thus, they cannot be understood separately from the cultural intersections that produced and maintained gender.<sup>12</sup> Status and place were both important markers for most of the women considered in this article. Unlike the majority of their northern European counterparts, Spanish royal and aristocratic women kept rights over their family inheritance during the high and late Middle Ages. They had access to and control over important goods, including female monasteries, which, in Castile, worked as platforms for the power of the nobility. This close connection between female monasteries and aristocratic women implied a heterodox adoption of reformist ideas, creating distinct differences to the Italian or German Observant monasteries.

<sup>9</sup> The early foundational studies were mainly by members of religious orders, such as Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, *Historia de la Reforma de la Provincia de España (1450–1550)* (Rome, 1939), for the Order of Preachers, to the more recent scholarship: Guillermo Ocampo, 'La creación de la observancia regular en el convento de San Esteban de Salamanca durante el reinado de los Reyes Católicos', *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 80 (2006), 91–126.

<sup>10</sup> The complexity of these processes has been clarified in the case of Observant Dominican nunneries in North and Central Italy. Duval, 'Comme des anges sur terre'.

<sup>11</sup> A concept introduced by feminists of colour, who fought hard to displace hegemonic and reductive discourses supporting the equation women = gender. The term is commonly attributed to Kimberle Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1 (1989), 139–67.

<sup>12</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990), pp. 6–7.

Furthermore, although it is necessary to reassess women's roles in these reform processes, we must avoid interpretations that disregard how they intervened with other agents. Recent studies, in the Iberian Peninsula and elsewhere, have shown the prominent role of women as agents in reform processes, but they have also shown that they did not act alone but collaborated with other agents: the bishops, the regular clergy, the nobility, the monarchs and other lay patrons.<sup>13</sup> As the agents involved in these intersections were different from one nunnery to another, the consequences in all aspects of monastic life varied also from place to place, and from one reform process to another, showing the complexity of these processes, and also the diversity of gendered responses.

In late medieval Castile, we can distinguish two major turning points for reform processes. The second half of the twelfth century and the turn of the thirteenth century coincided with a renewal of monastic life throughout the kingdoms of Christian Spain. This period saw the appearance of new religious orders: notably the Cistercians, the mendicants, the Military and Hospitaller orders, and the foundation of female communities associated with them. One of the more remarkable aspects of this moment was the progressive orientation of 'family monasteries', which were monastic seigneuries, properties of lay aristocratic families, towards Benedictine monasticism, until their disappearance at the turn of the thirteenth century.<sup>14</sup> This was the third and last stage of this evolving process of monastic family institutions and, as well as being Benedictine, patrons also favoured the adoption of the reformed practices of the Cistercian Order.<sup>15</sup> The second turning point was the so-called Observant reform that, between the end of the fourteenth century and the turn of the sixteenth century, brought about significant changes

<sup>13</sup> Diana Lucía Gómez-Chacón, 'Reinas y Predicadores: el Monasterio de Santa María la Real de Nieva en tiempos de Catalina de Lancaster y María de Aragón (1390–1445)', in María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, María Victoria Herráez Ortega and María Concepción Cosmen (eds), *Reyes y prelados: la creación artística en los reinos de León y Castilla (1050–1500)* (Madrid, 2014), pp. 325–40; *Id.*, 'Religiosidad femenina y reforma dominicana: el sepulcro de Beatriz de Portugal en el monasterio del Sancti Spiritus de Toro', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 47:2 (2017), 607–45; Duval, 'Comme des anges sur terre'. See as well the papers presented at the conference *Political and Ecclesiastical Agents in the Reform(s) of the Religious Orders in Europe during the Late Middle Ages (c. 1250–1500)*, Complutense University of Madrid, November 24–6, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Pascual Martínez Sopena, 'Aristocracia, monacato y reformas en los siglos XI y XII', in *El monacato en los reinos de León y Castilla (siglos VII–XIII)*, X Congreso de Estudios Medievales 2005 (Ávila, 2007), pp. 67–100, at p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> Gregoria Cavero Domínguez, 'Spanish Female Monasticism: "Family" Monasteries and Their Transformation (Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries)', in Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (eds), *Women in the Medieval Monastic World* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 15–52, at pp. 26 and 46.

in devotional, liturgical and religious life. Despite the significant differences between these two processes, they shared some elements that constituted the vehicles and threads through which reform advanced, namely liturgical books and female aristocratic networks. Unfortunately, women's active role in liturgy as well as in the commission and circulation of liturgical books remains an understudied topic for the Iberian Peninsula, one which is only now being addressed.<sup>16</sup> Thus, studies on reform for the Iberian region have mainly considered written official documents, overlooking, with some exceptions, other types of written sources, such as liturgical and devotional books, as well as material sources, like images, artworks and other artifacts.<sup>17</sup>

In this paper I will focus on the circulation of liturgical sources as a prism through which reform processes in female monasteries in late medieval Castile can be analysed. As mentioned, this was a common feature shared by the two major reform processes. Books were crucial for the shaping of these new Cistercian communities in the second half of the twelfth century and well beyond the turn of the thirteenth century, as well as for the spread of Observant reform ideas and practices. Thus, a broader comparative framework will allow us a better understanding of the key role of these sources, of the continuities and changes in their use over time, and of women's role in promoting liturgical and religious reform. We can pose many questions: who promoted these book transmissions and exchanges between communities and how did this operate in the reform in female monasteries in Castile? How do these books allow an analysis of these networks of monasticism and patronage? What was their function? I will try to answer some of these in the following pages, although, due to the emerging state of the research, and the limited number of examples here studied, only partial conclusions can be drawn. Finally, I will also consider other sources that at some point had a liturgical use and can be linked to processes of monastic renewal, such as the *Book of Devotions and Offices* [*Libro de Devociones y Oficios*] by Constanza de Castilla, and two illuminated copies of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by

<sup>16</sup> In particular, I'd like to mention the project of Pablo Acosta WiMPACT. *Late Medieval Visionary Women's Impact in Early Modern Castilian Spiritual Tradition*, hosted at the University of Düsseldorf (2019–2021), as well as Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'La liturgia en la encrucijada de la reforma religiosa en los monasterios femeninos castellanos', paper presented at the conference *Political and Ecclesiastical Agents*.

<sup>17</sup> The importance of reform movements in relation to art and architecture has not been taken into consideration for Iberia until recently. See for instance Diana Lucía Gómez-Chacón, *El Monasterio de Santa María la Real de Nieva: reinas y predicadores en tiempo de reforma (1392–1445)* (Segovia, 2016); the project *Arte y reformas religiosas en la España medieval* (HAR2012–38037) at the Complutense University of Madrid; and, more recently, Mercedes Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia en los monasterios de Dominicas en Castilla. Desde los orígenes hasta la reforma observante (1218–1506)* (Gijón, 2021).

Beatus of Liébana – the Las Huelgas Beatus and the Lorvão Beatus.<sup>18</sup> Although the stylistic and iconographic features of these Beatuses have been widely researched, neither their use in nuns' liturgy in this context of reform, nor the role played by women in this reform, have hitherto been analysed.

### *Books and Networks in Cistercian Renewal*

As stated, Cistercian foundations were the most popular at this moment of renewal during the second half of the twelfth century. The first monastery of Cistercian nuns in the Iberian Peninsula was Santa María de La Caridad (Tulebras), established in 1147, which in turn was the impetus for founding several other Cistercian nunneries in the second half of the twelfth century: Perales (near Palencia, 1160), Gradefes (near León, 1169), Cañas (in La Rioja, 1170), Vallbona (near Lleida, 1173), Trasobares (near Zaragoza, 1182) and Las Huelgas (Burgos, 1187).<sup>19</sup> However, we should remember that during the twelfth century, when the Cistercian Order, in the current sense of the term, was still taking shape, the reference to the *Ordo cisterciensis* when founding female communities was a way to adopt certain practices and to claim a particular religious identity, but did not necessarily imply an institutional relationship with Cistercians. This was the situation before 1213 when, with the aim to centralise administrative control, the General Chapter assumed responsibility for the admission of female communities.<sup>20</sup>

Circulation of books was considered fundamental in these foundational processes, and was something that had been established since the origins of the Cistercian Order to assure liturgical uniformity. Indeed, the Cistercian General Chapter Statutes [*Instituta Generalis Capituli*] determined which liturgical books should be carried to a new foundation, and this remained in the *Statuta Capitulorum* at least until 1400: 'Missals, book of the epistles, rules and customs, psalters, hymnaries, collectaries, antiphonaries, lectionaries and graduals' ['Missali, Epistolari, Textu Regula libro usum, Psalterio, Hymnario, Collectaneo, Antiphonario, Lectionario, Graduali'].<sup>21</sup> However, this was the theoretical and ideal situation; reality was frequently very different, and this desired uniformity

<sup>18</sup> See further, pp. 162–8.

<sup>19</sup> Raquel Alonso Álvarez, 'Promotores de la Orden del Císter en los reinos de Castilla y León: familias aristocráticas y damas nobles', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 37:2 (2007), 653–710.

<sup>20</sup> Ghislain Baurly, *Les religieuses de Castille: Patronage aristocratique et ordre cistercien (XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Rennes, 2012), pp. 117–26.

<sup>21</sup> A.R.P.D. Juliano, Solesmis, E. Typographeo (ed.), *Instituta Capituli Generalis Ordinis Cisterciensis Nomasticon Cisterciense, seu Antiquiores ordinis Cisterciensis constitutiones* (Sancti Petri, 1892), p. 215.

was not achieved in many cases.<sup>22</sup> In twelfth-century Castile, convents were thinly populated and their members came from the local aristocracy who, as stated, controlled these institutions. The small size of the convents might have been expected to hamper the circulation of books, as well as nuns, from one monastery to a new foundation.<sup>23</sup> As we will see, it is indeed very likely that such exchanges did not occur only through the network of the Cistercian Order.<sup>24</sup> Hence, we must consider other networks operating at a local, national and international level: aristocratic networks, female networks and those based on kinship. An overlapping interaction of networks was not only frequent, but indeed the historical norm.<sup>25</sup> The study of this interplay will illustrate the multidirectional interactions generated by institutional reform, and the liturgical, cultural and artistic exchanges linked to them.

We can easily see how this complex interaction between different networks operates in the case of the monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos. The books preserved from this foundation circulated through different networks: that of the Cistercian Order, operating at different levels, and with different centres (not only Cîteaux, but in our case also the male Cistercian monastery of Alcobaça, in Portugal); and the aristocratic networks created by some noble women or nuns. Some of these books had a foreign origin and underwent a long journey before reaching the monastic institution which now holds them, in this case, Las Huelgas.<sup>26</sup> A known example is the manuscript now known as Martyrology I, which was actually a *Liber Capituli* that made its way to Burgos from Cîteaux.<sup>27</sup>

The late twelfth-century antiphony (now Las Huelgas Ms. 10) also had a provenance outside of Las Huelgas, and it, too, probably circulated through

<sup>22</sup> Catarina Fernandes Barreira, 'Um missal alcobacense dos micios do séc. XIV (Alc. 26)', in Gerardo Boto Varela, Xavier Barral Altet and Alessandra Bilotta (eds), *Medieval Europe in Motion: The Circulation of Artists, Images, Patterns and Ideas from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Coast (6th–15th centuries)* (Palermo, 2018), pp. 151–68.

<sup>23</sup> Baurý, *Les religieuses de Castille*, p. 123.

<sup>24</sup> Studied by the projects *Cistercian Horizons* (PTDC/ART-HIS/29522/2017), or *Aragonia Cisterciensis* (HAR2015–63772–P).

<sup>25</sup> Caroline Levine, *Forms. Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton, 2015), p. 113.

<sup>26</sup> On the books from Las Huelgas see Ana Suárez González, 'Entre renglones y al margen (de libros y monjas cistercienses en los siglos XII–XIII)', in Daniele Arciello, Jesús Paniagua Pérez and Nuria María Rosa Salazar Simarro (eds), *Desde el clamoroso silencio. Estudios del monacato femenino en América, Portugal y España de los orígenes a la actualidad* (Berlin, 2021), pp. 69–104, at pp. 84–91.

<sup>27</sup> Ana Suárez determined that it was made between 1236 and 1247 for Cîteaux, where it was used, as marginal notes show. Later, the book travelled to Burgos, sometime between 1240 and 1287, probably during the abbatiage of the abbess Eva (1261–2): Ana Suárez González, 'Un ex libris y algunas respuestas sobre el "MS.1" de las Huelgas de Burgos', *Cistercium*, 245 (2006), 587–614.

networks created by aristocratic women involved in religious reform. Despite other previous interpretations, more recent studies have shown how the musical notation of this manuscript was modelled on that of Clairvaux whereas its artistic features point to the male Cistercian monastery of Alcobaça in Portugal as its probable origin.<sup>28</sup> How did it come to Las Huelgas? We have no evidence, although its illumination shows affinities with other Portuguese manuscripts from female Cistercian monasteries, namely two antiphonaries from Arouca and a gradual from Lorvão.<sup>29</sup> All of them are examples of a regional interpretation of the so-called ‘1200 style’.<sup>30</sup> Due to their stylistic affinities, these manuscripts seem to have been produced in Alcobaça, from whence they would have been disseminated to the Cistercian female foundations of Lorvão and Arouca.<sup>31</sup> Although all three monasteries were incorporated into the Cistercian Order in the second or third decade of the thirteenth century,<sup>32</sup> the agents or promoters of this circulation seem to have been different women of the Portuguese royal house who had a close relationship with these monasteries, as well as with the kingdoms of León and Castile. They were the *infanta* Mafalda, her sister, the *infanta* Teresa, and Branca de Portugal. Mafalda (c. 1195–1256), introduced Cistercian observance in the previously Benedictine foundation of Arouca.<sup>33</sup> She left bequests of books in

<sup>28</sup> Manuel Pedro Ferreira, ‘Early Cistercian Polyphony: A Newly-Discovered Source’, *Lusitania Sacra*, 2a série, 13–14 (2001–2), 267–313.

<sup>29</sup> Arouca, Museu de Arte Sacra, Antiphonary temporale, Ms. MASSAM 21, and Antiphonary santorale, Ms. MASSAM 25; Lisboa, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Gradual, PT-TT-MSML-B-15. Luís Correia da Sousa and Adelaide Miranda, ‘Confluências artísticas em torno de 1200: manuscritos iluminados cistercienses – Alcobaça e Las Huelgas Reales de Burgos’, in Marta Poza Yagüe and Diana Olivares Martínez (eds), *Alfonso VIII y Leonor de Inglaterra. Confluencias artísticas en el entorno de 1200* (Madrid, 2017), pp. 423–43.

<sup>30</sup> The term ‘1200 style’ was coined by the exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1970, ‘The Year 1200’, to distinguish the uniqueness of the art produced during the decades around this year, between 1180 and 1230. This innovative style was characterised by a stylistic proximity with the works of Antiquity combined with the use of Byzantine motifs. See Willibald Sauerländer, ‘Entre le roman et le gothique: style de transition, Alternativgotik et “style 1200”’, *Perspective*, 4 (2008), 756–61.

<sup>31</sup> Fernando Galván Freile, ‘El proceso de internacionalización de la miniatura en torno al año 1200 en la Península Ibérica: el antifonario de Las Huelgas Reales de Burgos’, in Juan Ignacio Ruiz de la Peña Solar (ed.), *El monacato en los reinos de León y Castilla (siglos VII–XIII)* (Ávila, 2007), pp. 437–56.

<sup>32</sup> Alfonso VIII placed Las Huelgas in the direct filiation of Cîteaux in 1199: Baury, *Les religieuses de Castille*, pp. 145–9.

<sup>33</sup> Arouca was incorporated into the Order by the General Chapter in the 1220s. Luís Rêpas, ‘As abadessas cistercienses na Idade Média: identificação, caracterização e estudo de trajectórias individuais ou familiares’, *Lusitania Sacra*, 2a série, 17 (2005), 63–91, at p. 65.

her will: she ordered the return of a portable bible (Bibliotheca Nacional de Portugal, Alc, 458), to the monks of Alcobaça, from whom she had borrowed it; she donated a psalter to Arouca and a Book of Hours to her sister, Doña Urraca Sanches.<sup>34</sup> Her sister, the *infanta* Teresa Sanches (c. 1176–1250), was patron of the Benedictine male monastery of São Mamede de Lorvão. In 1206, the Benedictine monks were forced to leave, and they were replaced by a community of nuns who were officially recognised as Cistercian by papal decree in 1211.<sup>35</sup> Finally, at a later date, the *infanta* Branca de Portugal (1259–1321) became *senhora* of Lorvão in 1277 and later of Las Huelgas (from 1295 to her death in 1321).<sup>36</sup> We have no additional evidence, but this connection suggests that Branca may have donated the aforementioned antiphony to Las Huelgas.<sup>37</sup> Thus, this network of female kinship overlapped the Cistercian network, or it was even more important, reinforcing it or creating new relationships, bonds and intersections. Also, as we have seen, and we will see in further examples, these networks extended to the neighbouring kingdom of Castile.

Together with liturgical books, we must also consider sources not specifically liturgical, but used at some point in the liturgy, for example some hagiographical or exegetical texts that were also commissioned by and for women and can be linked to the implementation of reform.<sup>38</sup> A good example of this category of source are the several copies of the illuminated *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, by Beatus of Liébana, that were produced between the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century, mainly in or for royally favoured monasteries of Cistercian nuns.<sup>39</sup> These manuscripts seem to have been related to a movement based on renewal in Cistercian nunneries; however, neither the meaning of the

<sup>34</sup> Correia da Sousa and Miranda, 'Confluências artísticas em torno de 1200', p. 430.

<sup>35</sup> Rêpas, 'As abadesas cistercienses', p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> Luis Rêpas, 'Esposas de Cristo: as comunidades cistercienses femininas na Idade Média' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Universidade de Coimbra, 2021), vol. 1, pp. 280 and 396; Araceli Castro Garrido, *Documentación del Monasterio de las Huelgas de Burgos (1307–1321)* (Burgos: 1987), pp. 322–33.

<sup>37</sup> Ferreira, 'Early Cistercian Polyphony', 269; Galván Freile, 'El proceso de internacionalización', pp. 449–50.

<sup>38</sup> On exegesis among Cistercian monks and nuns in the Iberian Peninsula see Ghislain Baury, 'Singuli in singulis libris legentes. Exégèse et lectio divina dans les cloîtres cisterciens ibériques, XII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 49-1 (2019), 85–106 (Online: <http://journals.openedition.org/mcv/10298>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/mcv.10298> [both accessed 7 May 2022]).

<sup>39</sup> The Cistercian monks of Alcobaça, and those of Poblet, also had copies of the Beatus. Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Ms. 247, and Universidad de Salamanca, Ms. 2632. As pointed out by Ghislain Baury, the significant presence of Commentaries on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liébana was an Iberian peculiarity. Ghislain Baury, 'Singuli in singulis libris legentes', 85–106.

circulation of these copies and their use in nuns' liturgy in this context of reform, nor the role of women in all this, have hitherto been examined. I will focus here on two of these copies: the so-called Las Huelgas Beatus and the Lorvão Beatus.

The Lorvão Beatus, now in the Archivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, was illuminated by Egeas and finished in 1189, according to the colophon. Although the colophon did not mention the origin, a comparison with other manuscripts produced in Lorvão's scriptorium around this time makes it clear that the Beatus was also copied there, when it was still a Benedictine monastery. Stylistically and iconographically it followed a much older, unknown version of the Beatus's commentary, making it unique.<sup>40</sup>

Although belonging to a different group or *stemma* in the Beatus family, the so called Beatus of Las Huelgas, now in the Morgan Library (Ms. 429) and completed in 1220, was also inspired by an older version, namely the Beatus of Tábara, finished in 970 in a mixed community (including monks and nuns).<sup>41</sup> We know that this Beatus was in Las Huelgas in the eighteenth century when it was studied by Enrique Flórez.<sup>42</sup> However, the question of where it was produced has not been settled.<sup>43</sup> According to David Raizman, this copy may have been commissioned for a political-dynastical purpose by Queen Berenguela (1180–1246), daughter of the founders of Las Huelgas, Alfonso VIII and Leonor Plantagenet. Berenguela lived in the monastery after the dissolution of her marriage with Alfonso IX of León in 1204.<sup>44</sup> However, this attribution lacks strong arguments. Berenguela is not mentioned in the colophon or anywhere else in the manuscript, and this is difficult to explain if she had commissioned it. On the other hand, Raizman himself has considered that the characteristics and style of the miniature and the script of the manuscript point towards an origin in Toledo.<sup>45</sup> At this point, a cross checked analysis with monastic inventories could help to establish its origin. The female Benedictine monastery of San Clemente de Toledo was another monastery generously supported by the founder of Las Huelgas. In 1175 Alfonso VIII placed

<sup>40</sup> Anne de Egry, *Um estudo de o Apocalipse de Lorvão e a sua relação com as ilustrações medievais do Apocalipse* (Lisbon, 1972), p. 21.

<sup>41</sup> Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Cod. 1097B.

<sup>42</sup> Enrique Flórez (ed.), *Sancti Beati Presbyteri Hispani Liebanensis in Apocalypsin Ac Plurimas Utriusque Foederis Paginas Commentaria* (Madrid, 1770), p. xxxviii.

<sup>43</sup> John Williams and Therese Martin, 'Women's Spaces – Real and Imagined – in the Illustrated Beatus Commentaries', *Arenal*, 25:2 (2018), 357–96.

<sup>44</sup> David Raizman, 'Prayer, Patronage, and Piety at Las Huelgas: New Observations on the Later Morgan Beatus (M. 429)', in Therese Martin and Julie A. Harris (eds), *Church, State, Vellum, and Stone. Essays on Medieval Spain in Honor of John Williams* (Leiden, 2005), p. 242.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

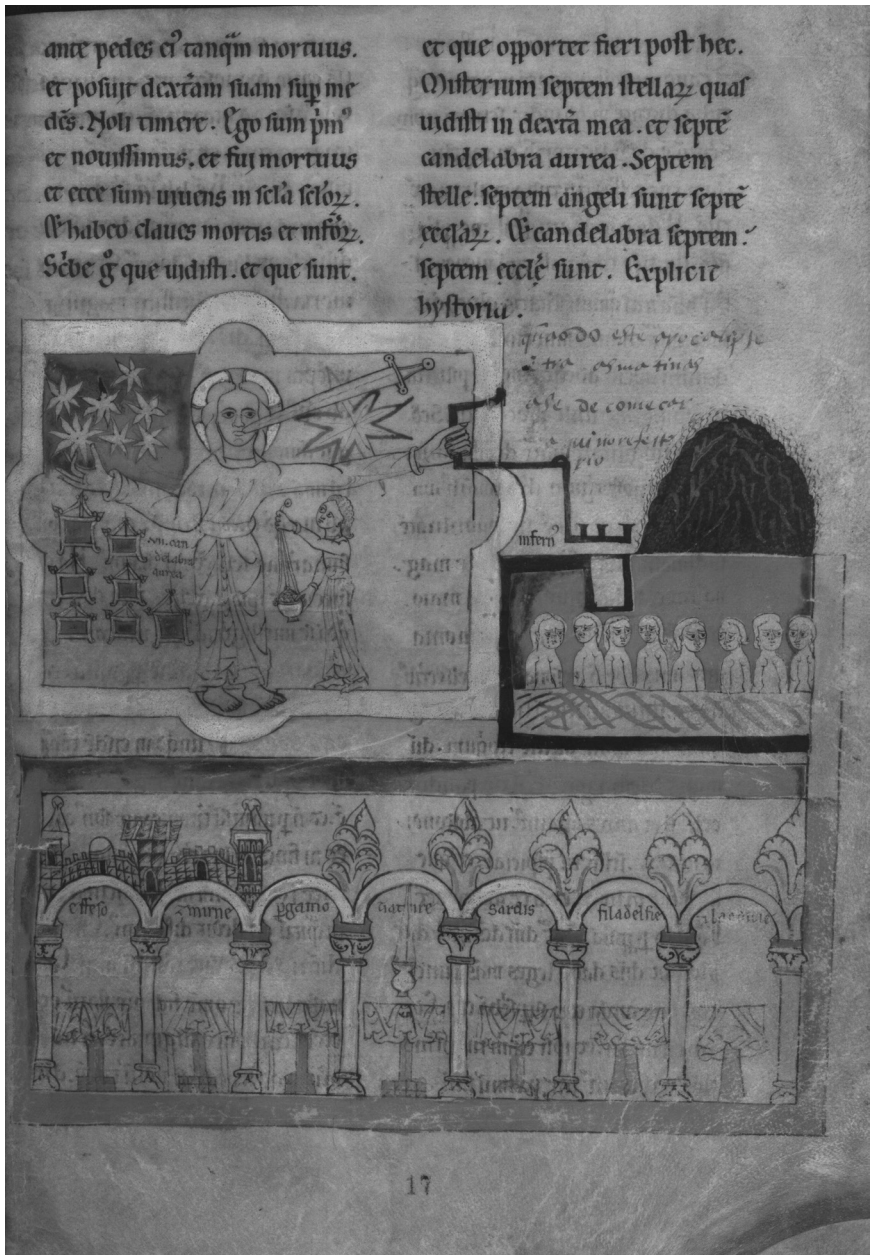


Fig. 7.1. The Lorvão Beatus. São Mamede de Lorvão, codex 44, PT/TT/MSML/B/44, f. 17r. 'Quando este apocalypse entra as matinas a se de começar aqui no Refeitório'. © Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisboa.

this monastery symbolically under the authority of the abbot of Cîteaux.<sup>46</sup> One of the earliest inventories preserved from female monasteries in the whole Iberian Peninsula comes from San Clemente. It was made in 1331 by the ‘caput scholae cantorum’,<sup>47</sup> Urraca López, and it lists sixty-four books and fifteen individual quires that were kept in different places: in the enclosure area, in the nuns’ choir and in the refectory.<sup>48</sup> Among the latter, we find a volume of the Apocalypse: ‘un libro que dicen Apocalipsi’ [‘a book called Apocalypse’]. Although it has been recognised as the *Expositio in Apocalypsim* by Joachim of Fiore (m. 1201–2),<sup>49</sup> I would like to suggest a possible identification with the Las Huelgas Beatus. This last was sold to the Morgan Library in 1910 by the nuns of San Clemente de Toledo.<sup>50</sup> Could it have been in San Clemente de Toledo at least in 1331, being subsequently moved to Las Huelgas and later returned to Toledo? We would need more evidence to confirm this suggestive hypothesis, but, as we have seen, the circulation of books between Cistercian foundations was common, even more so between two important female houses both under royal protection.

Regarding the function of these Beatus manuscripts, we should not forget that the particular use of a book cannot always be safely inferred from the text alone, but we should consider other material evidences of the manuscripts: additions, annotations of scribes, ex libris, etc. Some marginal notes, added at a later moment in both Beatus manuscripts, provide interesting information regarding this point. First Anne de Egry and then Peter Klein have pointed out that, at least by the later Middle Ages, each copy had been adapted to be read in the refectory

<sup>46</sup> Baur, *Les religieuses de Castille*, p. 131

<sup>47</sup> The monastic *cantrix* was the nun who supervised all aspects of music-making and liturgical performance. She was also in charge of the library in the absence of a librarian. About this office in female monasteries in medieval England see Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, ‘Female Monastic Cantors and Sacristans in Central Medieval England: Four Sketches’, in Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, A. B. Kraebel and Margot. E. Fassler (eds), *Medieval Cantors and their Craft, Music, Liturgy and the Shaping of History, 800–1500* (York, 2017), pp. 151–71.

<sup>48</sup> Ramón Fernández Pousa, ‘Catálogo de una biblioteca española del año 1331: el monasterio de San Clemente, de Toledo’, *Revista de bibliografía nacional*, 1 (1940), 48–50. Nevertheless, the original inventory has not been preserved but this was copied in a Cartulary from 1753 from this monastery, and then in a manuscript by the Jesuit Andrés Marcos Burriel (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Ms. 13058, fols 158–9 and fols 2–3).

<sup>49</sup> Pedro M. Cátedra, ‘Lectura femenina en el claustro (España, siglos XIV–XVI)’, in Dominique de Courcelles and Carmen Val Julian (eds), *Des femmes et des livres: France et Espagne, XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1999), pp. 7–54, at pp. 19–20.

<sup>50</sup> John Williams, *Visions of the End in Medieval Spain: Catalogue of Illustrated Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse and Study of the Geneva Beatus* (Amsterdam, 2017), p. 135.

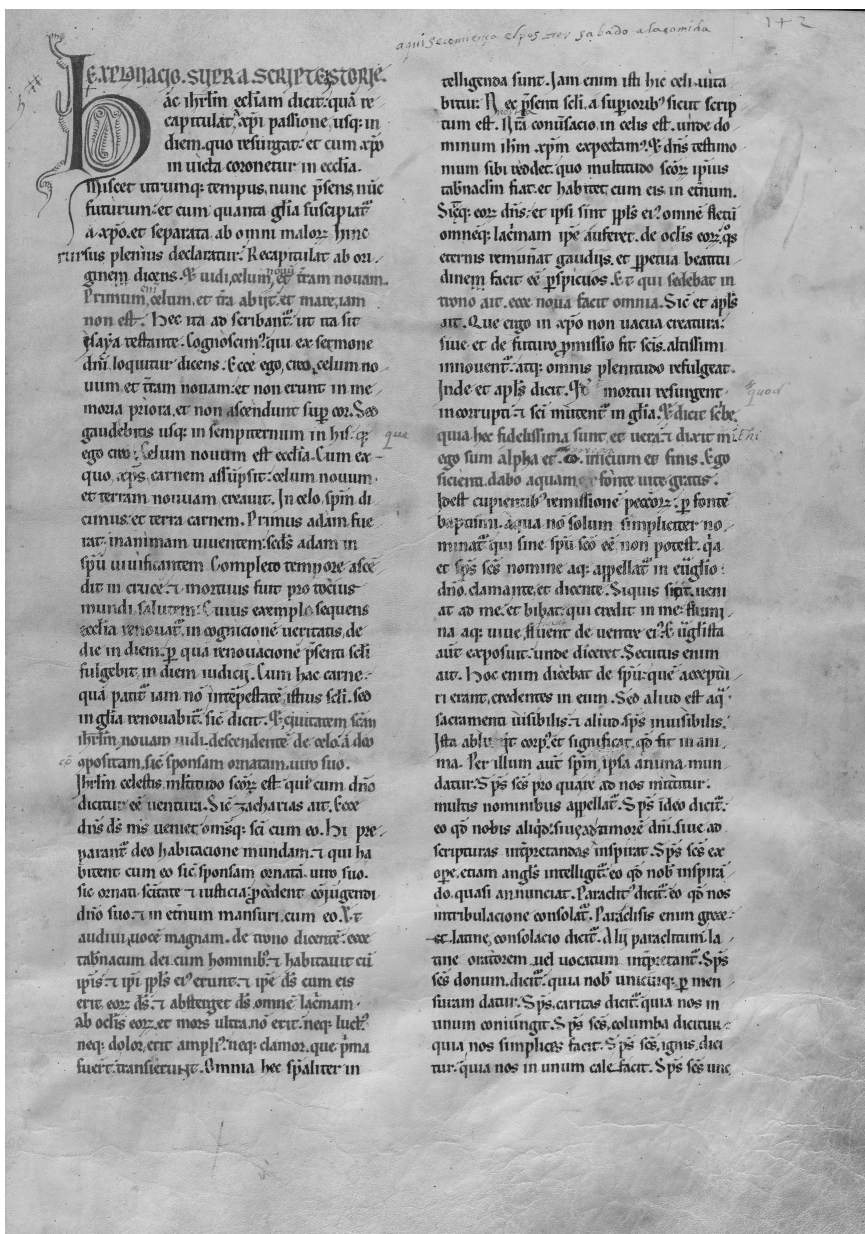


Fig. 7.2. Beatus, Saint, Presbyter of Liébana, Commentary on the Apocalypse. Spain, probably Toledo, c. 1220; Las Huelgas. The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.429. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1910, f. 142r. Photo: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

at the respective Cistercian nunnery.<sup>51</sup> The Lorvão Beatus has marginal notations on folios 12 and 17, made at the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth century, which prove not only that this manuscript was still in use, but also that it was to be read in the refectory at matins: ‘Quando este apocalypse entra as matinas a se de começar aqui no Refeitório’, that is to say: ‘when the Beatus was read at Matins the reading should start here in the refectory’.<sup>52</sup> Klein interpreted a marginal note in the Las Huelgas Beatus (fol. 142r) in the same way.<sup>53</sup>

When did this liturgical practice commence, and what was its meaning for these religious communities? The reading of the Vulgate Apocalypse in the church had already been established at a very early date in the Visigothic Kingdom. The Fourth Council of Toledo (633) ordered that this would take place during the Mass, from Easter to Pentecost: ‘aut a Pascha usque ad Pentecosten mis-sarum tempore in ecclesia’.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the reading of the Apocalypse (and we assume that this includes also the Commentaries on the Apocalypse), was a common practice, attested by a number of *Libri ordinarii* and customaries from Rome, Cluny and other abbeys and cathedrals in Central Europe.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, due to the impossibility of carrying out all these readings in the church, they were read in the refectory.<sup>56</sup> We do not know from what date this practice was current in these Cistercian female monasteries (Lorvão, and either Las Huelgas in Burgos, or San Clemente de Toledo), but the date of the mentioned additions suggests a possible relationship with the introduction of the Observant reform. Why the Apocalypse or its Commentaries were important for the Observant agenda is a question that deserves further analysis. In any case, we know that these texts

<sup>51</sup> An example of an alternative purpose can be found in the glossed Apocalypse that is listed in the inventory from St Mary in Lemgo, compiled fifty-five years later (1386). It was listed among the schoolbooks, so apparently had an educational rather than liturgical purpose. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, Eva Schlottheuber, Susan Marti and Margot Fassler (eds), *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning at Paradies bei Soest, 1300–1425* (2 vols, Münster, 2016), vol. 2, Appendix B, n. 60. See also vol. 1, p. 84.

<sup>52</sup> Egrý, *Um estudo de o Apocalipse de Lorvão*, p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Aquí se comienza el postrer sábado a la comida’: Peter Klein, *Beato de Liébana. La ilustración de los manuscritos de Beato y el Apocalipsis de Lorvão* (Valencia, 2004), p. 48.

<sup>54</sup> José Vives, *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos* (Barcelona, 1963), p. 198.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Klein, ‘Circulation, Popularity and Function of Illustrated Apocalypses from the Late Antiquity to High Medieval Europe’, in Alicia Miguélez Cavero and Fernando Villaseñor Sebastián (eds), *Medieval Europe in Motion: La Circulación de Manuscritos Iluminados en la Península Ibérica* (Madrid, 2018), pp. 201–14, at p. 205.

<sup>56</sup> This is clear already in some eleventh- and twelfth-century customaries. Teresa Webber, *Reading in the Refectory. Monastic Practice in England, ca. 1000–ca. 1300* (London, 2010), p. 22.

were still very popular in 1572, judging by the numerous copies that Ambrosio de Morales saw on his trip through León, Galicia and Asturias in 1572.<sup>57</sup>

As we have seen, readings in the refectory were also part of the liturgy and, indeed, were to be performed with the same solemnity as the Divine Office in the choir. Reformers insisted on that point, as we can read for instance in the treatise that Hernando de Talavera (1428–1507) wrote at the end of the fifteenth century to Cistercian nuns in Ávila: ‘de vagar, bien entonada, bien pausada y pronunciada, como se dice en el choro quando más sollennemente cantáis los maytines’ [‘Well-toned, well measured and pronounced, as it is said in the choir when you sing more solemnly matins’].<sup>58</sup> Talavera’s work was one of the few texts written specifically to guide a community of nuns. However, it had a much wider dissemination, beyond Ávila and the Cistercian Order. For instance, one of its preserved copies is included in a miscellaneous volume from Sancti Spiritus in Salamanca, a female foundation of the Spanish Order of St Jacques, together with the *Rule* of St Augustine, the constitutions of the order of St Jacques, a report on the reform of the monastery and some regulations on liturgical celebrations.<sup>59</sup> This literature of formation circulated widely among communities inspired by religious reform at the end of the fifteenth century. Although more examples would be needed to draw solid conclusions about the specific meaning and function these manuscripts had for religious communities, the examples here discussed have shown that liturgical and other books with a liturgical function or use circulated broadly among Cistercian nuns in Castile. Female royal patronage was often an important (but not exclusive) vector in the circulation of these manuscripts. As several of these manuscripts can also be linked with the late twelfth- and thirteenth-century reform movement in Castile, they show a network of female kinship coinciding with a Cistercian network in spreading reformist ideals. Furthermore, as the *Beatus* manuscripts have shown, there are also clear indications that these manuscripts equally influenced women’s adoption of later reform movements, like the Observant reform. The following section will explore this further to better understand the pioneering role of women as promoters of religious change.

<sup>57</sup> Ambrosio de Morales, in Enrique Flórez (ed.), *Viage de Ambrosio de Morales por Orden del Rei D. Felipe II a los reinos de León y Galicia y Principado de Asturias* (Madrid, 1765).

<sup>58</sup> Cécile Codet (ed.), ‘Suma y breve compilación de cómo han de bivar y conversar las religiosas de Sant Bernardo que biven en los monasterios de la cibdad de Ávila de Hernando de Talavera (Biblioteca del Escorial, ms. a.IV–29)’, *Memorabilia*, 14 (2012), 1–57, at p. 34.

<sup>59</sup> Salamanca, Library of the University of Salamanca, Ms. 2236.

## Women as Pioneers of the Observant Reform

In Talavera's list of books to be read in the refectory we find St Jerome's works: the *Epistola ad Eustochium de virginitate servanda*, the *Life, death and miracles* [*Vida, muerte y Milagros*] and his *Regula sanctimonialium*. The influence of St Jerome, through his letters, on the Observant movement's conception of female monasticism is undeniable.<sup>60</sup> In particular, copies of the *Epistola ad Eustochium* were common in reformed monasteries.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the Observant movement took Paula and Eustochium as a model for nuns, and we find for instance nuns with these names in the reformed community of Santo Domingo de Toledo at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>62</sup>

Some scholars have recently pointed out the necessity of reconsidering the active role of women in the implementation of Observant reform in Castile as well as the relationship between some queens, other members of the household of the queen, and certain royal monasteries in promoting the ideals of religious reform.<sup>63</sup> But what were these ideals? The movement for monastic renewal known as the 'Observance' promoted the return to a fundamental monastic value: obedience. In the case of the female monasteries, the application of this precept had a series of implications including strict enclosure, common life, the presence of friars-vicars,<sup>64</sup> or the liturgical uniformity within a religious order.<sup>65</sup> In the

<sup>60</sup> Duval, 'Comme des anges sur terre', p. 51

<sup>61</sup> For instance, a vernacular translation of the *Epistola ad Eustochio* was copied in an interesting miscellaneous codex from the Benedictine nunnery Santa Maria di Porciglia in Padua, together with the episcopal act of visitation in 1487: Padua, Biblioteca Civica of Padua, 893.

<sup>62</sup> Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'La Reforma de los monasterios de dominicas en Castilla. Agentes, etapas y consecuencias', *Archivo Dominicano*, 36 (2015), 197–237, at pp. 214–17; Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia*, p. 80.

<sup>63</sup> Felipe Pereda, 'Liturgy as Women's Language: Two Noble Patrons Prepare for the End in Fifteenth-Century Spain', in Therese Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* (2 vols, Leiden, 2012), vol. 2, pp. 937–88; María del Mar Graña Cid, 'Favoritas de la corona? Los amores del rey y la promoción de la orden de Santa Clara en Castilla (ss. XIII–XIV)', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 44:1 (2014), 179–213; Pérez Vidal, 'La Reforma de los monasterios'; Juan Antonio Prieto Sayagués, 'El mecenazgo femenino en los monasterios y conventos de Castilla (1350–1474): poder y espiritualidad', in Miguel García-Fernández and Sylvia Cernadas Martínez (eds), *Reginae Iberiae. El poder femenino en los reinos medievales peninsulares* (Santiago de Compostela, 2015), pp. 193–211; Lucía, 'Religiosidad femenina y reforma'; García Herrero, María del Carmen and Ángela Muñoz Fernández, 'Reginalidad y fundaciones monásticas en las Coronas de Castilla y de Aragón', *Edad Media: revista de historia*, 18 (2017), 16–48.

<sup>64</sup> Duval, 'Comme des anges sur terre', pp. 572–3.

<sup>65</sup> Jürgen Bärsch, 'Liturgy and Reform: Northern German Convents in the Late Middle

following, I will analyse some of the early efforts to introduce Observant ideas promoted by certain prioresses and patrons in mendicant monasteries in Castile, both Poor Clares and Dominican nunneries.

Bert Roest distinguished at least six or seven Observant reform movements among Franciscan nuns, of which the first was the Castilian Congregation of Tordesillas, started in 1380 at the eponymous monastery, and that constituted a network of monasteries under the control of a permanent visitor.<sup>66</sup> Significantly, however, both Maria de Padilla (c. 1334–61) and her daughter Beatriz earlier had used the expression ‘regularis observantia’ in the documents addressed to their respective monasteries of Poor Clares in Astudillo and Tordesillas.<sup>67</sup> Queen Juana Manuel promoted the reform in this last, between 1376 and her death in 1381. She did it not alone but in collaboration with other women (her sister-in-law, her niece, the abbess and the nuns), as well as friar Pedro Fernández Pecha, founder of the Order of St Jerome.<sup>68</sup>

Although less well known, some Dominican nuns, both prioresses and patrons, also fostered reform in their nunneries at an earlier time.<sup>69</sup> Catherine of Lancaster (1373–1418) had a strong devotion to the Order of Preachers. She founded the female monastery of San Pedro Mártir in Mayorga de Campos (1394) and the male convent of Santa María la Real de Nieva (1392). She was also protector of Santo Domingo de Toledo, to which she made generous donations, as she also did to Santa Cruz la Real in Segovia. She was stepsister of Philippa of Lancaster (1387–1415), queen of Portugal, where the first Observant Dominican foundations were established at the end of the fourteenth century: São Salvador of Lisbon (1391) and São Domingo of Benfica (1399). As Diana Lucía has pointed out, this relationship may have contributed to an earlier introduction of Observant reform in Castile, even before the Council of Constance (1414–18).<sup>70</sup> Although these are convincing indications that Queen Catherine was strongly devoted to the Order of the Preachers, we should, however, be cautious to brand her as the initiator of Observant Dominican life in Castile. Lucía has asserted that San Pedro Mártir in Mayorga de Campos, founded by Queen Catharine, was the first Observant Dominican female foundation in Castile,

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Ages’, in Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann and Anne Simon (eds), *A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 21–46, at pp. 22–3.

<sup>66</sup> Bert Roest, ‘Observances “féminines” dans la famille franciscaine: phénomènes bouleversants, pluralistes et multipolaires’, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome Moyen Âge*, 130:2 (2018) (<https://doi.org/10.4000/mefrm.4250>) [accessed 10 December 2022].

<sup>67</sup> Graña Cid, ‘Favoritas de la corona?’, p. 198.

<sup>68</sup> Cynthia Robinson, ‘La Orden Jerónima y el Convento de Clarisas de Santa María la Real de Tordesillas’, *Reales sitios: revista del Patrimonio Nacional*, 169 (2006), 13–33.

<sup>69</sup> On the Observant reform in Dominican female monasteries in Castile, see Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia*, pp. 71–84.

<sup>70</sup> Lucía, *El Monasterio de Santa María la Real de Nieva*, pp. 57–8.

describing her as the promoter of the Observance in Castile.<sup>71</sup> However tantalising, this claim might go too far, as none of the original foundational documents have been preserved. Moreover, the alleged influence exerted by friar Álvaro de Córdoba on the reformist ideas of Queen Catherine of Lancaster, and thus his role in the foundation of San Pedro Mártir de Mayorga de Campos, is not clear.<sup>72</sup> Although it is true that this Dominican reformer was also a royal confessor, he held this office at later dates, between 1418 and 1422. It is a reminder to always take the complexity of reform initiatives and dynamics into mind.

Another example brings us to Sancti Spiritus de Toro. The *Libro Becerro* of this community states that Leonor Sánchez de Castilla, the illegitimate daughter of the *infante* Sancho de Castilla, prioress of Santi Spiritus de Toro (from c. 1411 to 1444) reformed the spiritual life of this Dominican monastery.<sup>73</sup> According to Lucía, this prioress was arguably one of the designers of the iconographic programme of Queen Beatriz of Portugal's tomb, together with the former queen herself. The sepulchre's decoration includes one of the first depictions of St Catherine of Siena in Castile, with the stigmata, which may imply an earlier devotion to St Catherine in those territories than hitherto considered, probably through the circulation of manuscripts containing her *vita*.<sup>74</sup> Although this has been considered unlikely,<sup>75</sup> it is the only way to explain the iconography of the sepulchre.<sup>76</sup> I would add that, though medieval documents attesting to Leonor's role as reformer have not survived, we have an interesting miscellaneous volume, whose contents can be only explained in an Observant context.<sup>77</sup> This includes several texts, among which are the translation of Guillaume Perrault's *De eruditione religiosorum libri VI* (c. 1260–5) by Pablo de Santa María, bishop of Burgos, made in 1421 and dedicated to this prioress, and a translation of Chapter XX of the *Summa de virtutibus et*

<sup>71</sup> Lucía, 'Reinas y Predicadores', pp. 325–40.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 334–7.

<sup>73</sup> Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Clero, Libros, 18314, Libro de Becerro para este Real Convento de Sancti Spiritus de Toro. Compuesto por el Padre Fray Vicente Velásquez de Figueroa, A.1775.

<sup>74</sup> Lucía, 'Religiosidad femenina y reforma dominicana', pp. 629–30 and pp. 634–6.

<sup>75</sup> Jeffrey Hamburger and Gabriela Signori (eds), *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 7, 11.

<sup>76</sup> As pointed out by Pablo Acosta, we still need a systematic study about any early dissemination of 'mystical' literature in either secular or religious contexts in Castile before the printed editions promoted by Cardinal Cisneros: Pablo Acosta García, 'On Manuscripts, Prints and Blessed Transformations: Caterina da Siena's *Legenda maior* as a Model of Sainthood in Premodern Castile', *Religions*, 11:1 (2020), 33.

<sup>77</sup> Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Ms. 21626. A description of the contents in Juan Carlos Conde, 'De nuevo sobre una traducción desconocida de Pablo de Santa María (y su parentela)', *Quaderns de Filologia, Estudis Literaris*, 8 (2003), 171–88. I am grateful to Silvia Bara Bancel for bringing this book to my attention.



Fig. 7.3. Sancti Spiritus de Toro. Beatriz de Portugal's tomb, first quarter of the 15th century, detail of Saint Catherine of Siena. Alabaster (155 x 229 x 71cm). © Diana Lucía Gómez-Chacón.

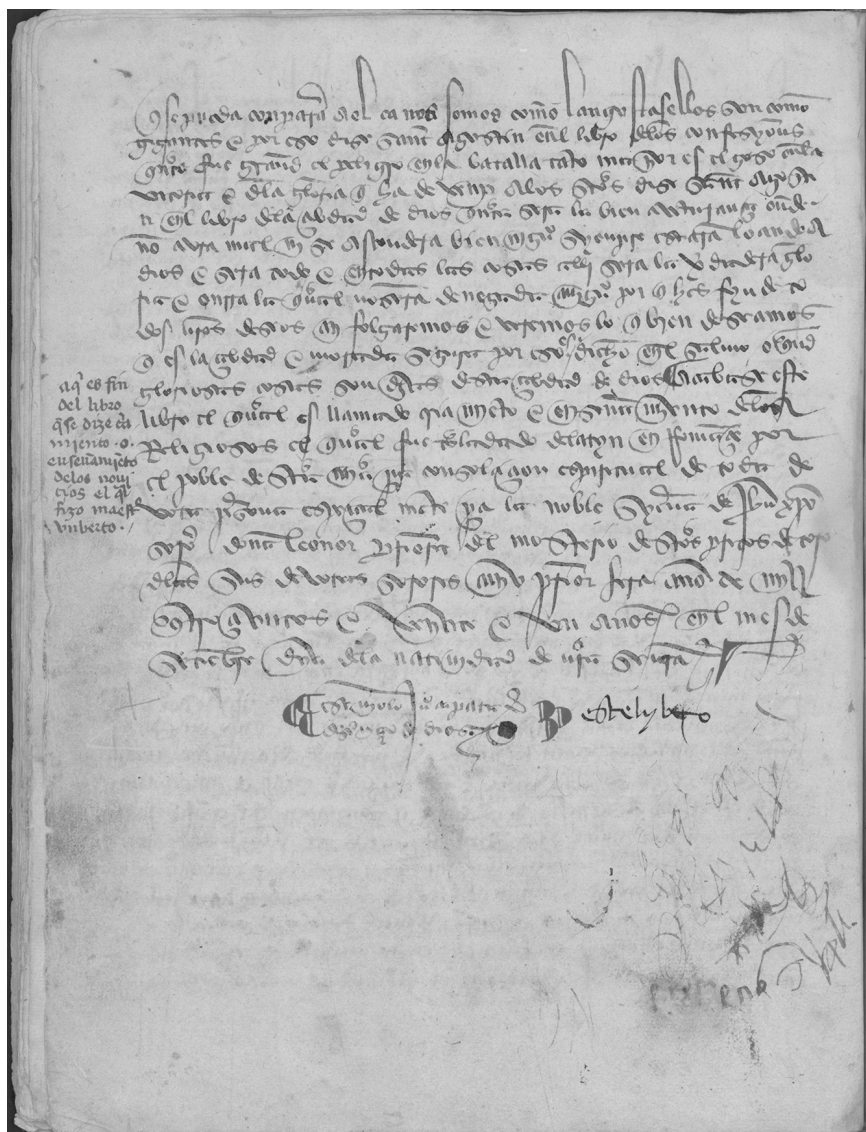


Fig. 7.4. Miscellaneous volume, Guillaume Perrault, *Libro del criamiento e enseñamiento de los religiosos*, translated by Pablo de Santa María in 1421, and dedicated to ‘soror doña Leonor priora del mosterio [sic] de santospertos [sic] de toro’, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MSS/21626, fol. 100v. © Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid.

*vitiis*, also by Perrault. Both works had a great diffusion both in manuscripts and printed exemplars (incunabula) in the Late Middle Ages. They were also quite successful among Observants, and the first was listed by Hernando de Talavera among the books to be read by nuns after compline.<sup>78</sup> The volume includes also the *Horologium Sapientiae* by Heinrich Seuse (1295–1366), whose devotional works were widely transmitted in communities of Observant nuns.<sup>79</sup>

In 1418, Queen Eleanor of Albuquerque, stepsister of the prioress Leonor of Sancti Spiritus de Toro, donated buildings she owned that adjoined another Dominican nunnery, Santa Maria in Medina del Campo, to this monastery.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, around this time she wrote a letter to her cousin, María de Castilla, prioress of Santo Domingo in Toledo, with a request to borrow an Ordinary in vernacular to make a copy. This copy was most likely intended as a gift for Santa María in Medina del Campo.<sup>81</sup> The Ordinary was a fundamental book, as any modification in it had to be approved by a General Chapter, like the Constitutions, so as to ensure the liturgical uniformity of the Order.<sup>82</sup> We do not know if this Ordinary was copied by the nuns themselves, but what is clear is the interest of the queen in maintaining uniformity with the Dominican liturgy, and in particular with the liturgy of Santo Domingo de Toledo, a monastery ruled by her relative.

Constanza de Castilla (d. 1478), prioress of Santo Domingo el Real de Madrid, was also a relative of these women, through her grandfather King Pedro I (1334–69). During her long priorate she undertook a fundamental renovation and enlargement of the monastery, rebuilding the refectory, the dormitory, perhaps the principal cloister, and the church. The main apse was transformed into a funerary chapel for King Pedro I and other members of her lineage, the Castilla.<sup>83</sup> The powerful Constanza was certainly a charismatic prioress and somewhat contradictory, since notwithstanding that she was characterised by her devotion and by her observance of the Dominican customs, she also obtained special licences

<sup>78</sup> Codet, 'Suma y breve compilación', p. 34.

<sup>79</sup> Jones, *Ruling the Spirit*, pp. 27–8.

<sup>80</sup> She kept for herself some dependencies in which she lived for five years, until she professed as nun: Juan López, *Tercera parte de la Historia de Sancto Domingo y de su Orden de Predicadores* (Valladolid, 1613, ed. Facsimile; Valladolid, 2003), fol. 28.

<sup>81</sup> Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'The Art, Visual Culture and Liturgy of Dominican Nuns in Late Medieval and Early Modern Castile', in Sheila Barker and Luciano Cinelli (eds), *Artiste nel Chiostro. Produzione artistica nei monasteri femminili in età moderna* (Firenze, 2015), pp. 225–42, and 328–31, at p. 230.

<sup>82</sup> Raymond Creytens, 'L'ordinaire des Frères prêcheurs au Moyen Âge', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 24 (1954), 108–88.

<sup>83</sup> José María Eguren, *Memoria histórico-descriptiva del Monasterio de Santo Domingo el Real de Madrid* (Madrid, 1850), p. 21

from prelates of the Order to conduct a life that had more in common with the influential *señoras* than that of an Observant nun.<sup>84</sup> Apart from this renovation of the building, she had also an active role in the liturgy. She personally compiled her *Book of Devotions and Offices* [*Libro de Devociones y Oficios*]<sup>85</sup> and she identified herself as the author of the content, which includes original elements in Latin and vernacular.<sup>86</sup> At least some parts of this book, in particular the bilingual *Office of the Nails* [*Oficio de los Clavos*], was not intended for her personal devotion but to be performed in the nuns' choir, with the dispensation of the pope and the Master General of the Order.<sup>87</sup> In 1451, the provincial Esteban de Sotelo (1449–54) authorised the nuns of Mater Dei to recite the Divine Office on feast days in the way that Constanza had directed.<sup>88</sup> Mater Dei was a new nunnery 'sub regulari observantia', whose foundation had been entrusted to Constanza by Pope Nicholas V between 1449 and 1451.<sup>89</sup> These concessions prove Constanza's reputation as Observant of the Dominican way of life among Dominican superiors and the pope, who at the same time recognised her authority in shaping the liturgical life of these communities to reflect her spiritual preferences.

In apparent contrast with Observant ideals, Constanza was permitted to live separately from the community, in her own lodgings around a secondary cloister, and she was allowed to leave the nunnery, when necessary, in order to visit her relatives or to address personal issues at the royal court.<sup>90</sup> This was not the only

<sup>84</sup> The *señoras* were traditionally linked to the Cistercian monastery of Las Huelgas, but recent scholarship has found more examples in other Cistercian, as well as in mendicant, monasteries. They oversaw the administration, having great power over the abbess, they acted as intermediaries, and they were in charge of keeping their lineage's memory. For a further discussion see Baurý, *Les religieuses de Castille*, pp. 46–7 and 59–72.

<sup>85</sup> Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Ms. 7495.

<sup>86</sup> A complete modern edition of this text in: Constanza de Castilla, *Book of Devotions – Libro de devociones y oficios*, ed. Constance L. Wilkins (Exeter, 1998).

<sup>87</sup> Ronald E. Surtz, 'Las oras de los clavos de Constanza de Castilla', in Liliana Von Der Walde Moreno, Concepción Company and Aurelio González (eds), *Caballeros, monjas y maestros en la Edad Media. Actas de las V Jornadas Medievales* (México, 1996), pp. 157–67.

<sup>88</sup> Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Clero, Libros, 7296, Libro de las licencias y gracias que los sumos pontífices y los Maestros Generales de la Orden de Predicadores concedieron a la Serenísima Señora Doña Constanza Nieta del Rey Don Pero y al Monasterio de Santo Domingo el Real de Madrid donde fue priora 38 años.

<sup>89</sup> The pope issued two bulls, the first on the 5 July 1449 and the second on 18 May 1451: Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Clero, Pergaminos, 1365/15, doc. n° 1713. Bull issued by Nicholas V on the 18 May 1451.

<sup>90</sup> All these privileges were collected in the aforementioned book: Archivo Histórico Nacional, Clero, Libros, 7296, Libro de las licencias y gracias.

case, as we find many other examples in Castile, starting with the aforementioned Queen Juana Manuel, and her sister-in-law, Leonor de Castro, who retired to Santa Clara de Tordesillas where they lived in her own lodgings outside the enclosure but connected to it.<sup>91</sup> Beatriz de Manrique (1405–71), wife of Pedro Fernández de Velasco, count of Haro, both of whom were promoters of Franciscan observance in Castile,<sup>92</sup> retired after her widowhood to the Poor Clares nunnery of Medina del Pomar. There, she built a house in the orchard to lodge some laywomen who came with her, as well as other pious women who could live at the nunnery without taking the vows.<sup>93</sup> Thus, as all these examples prove, there was no contradiction between promoting Observant ideals and aristocratic women living in their own lodgings in a convent. On the contrary, this custom was explicitly authorised in some cases and it had a continuity even after the Council of Trent, as did nuns' involvement in the secular world.<sup>94</sup>

The Dominican Provincial of Spain, Luis de Valladolid (1419–13), who granted Constanza de Castilla the aforementioned and other privileges, also encouraged reformist aims. On 5 February 1418, Martin V authorised him to create six male Dominican convents and four nunneries, although apparently only one of these, the foundation of Scala Coeli by Álvaro de Córdoba, was completed. All these attempts of reform were a consequence of the Council of Constance, in which all the aforementioned prelates – Álvaro de Córdoba, Luis de Valladolid and Martin V, who was elected pope by the Council – participated. However, the process of reform of the Order of Preachers in Castile was interrupted after the deaths of its main proponents Álvaro de Córdoba and Luis de Valladolid in the 1430s, and only resumed in the 1460s by Juan de Torquemada, albeit with a clearly different accent, in which the tradition inspired by Thomas Aquinas's theological thought had a significant weight.<sup>95</sup> The Congregation of the Observance was

<sup>91</sup> Leonor de Castro received authorisation by the pope, Gregory IX, in 1376, whereas the queen was authorised two years later by Urban VI. Robinson, 'La orden Jerónima y el convento de Clarisas', 26–7.

<sup>92</sup> Adeline Rucquoi, 'Los franciscanos en el reino de Castilla', in José Ignacio de la Iglesia Duarte, Francisco Javier García Turza and José Angel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre (eds), *VI Semana de Estudios Medievales: Nájera, 31 de Julio al 4 de agosto* (Logroño, 1996), pp. 65–86, at p. 79.

<sup>93</sup> Will of Beatriz Manrique (given on 6 September 1471): Madrid, Archive Histórico Nacional, Sección Nobleza, Frías 598/38/fol. 5r; cited in Pereda, 'Liturgy as women's language', pp. 974–88.

<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 105–6.

<sup>95</sup> Luciano Cinelli, 'Juan de Torquemada', in F. Troncarelli (ed.), *La città degli angeli, Catalogo de la Mostra* (Firenze, 2003), pp. 74–9.

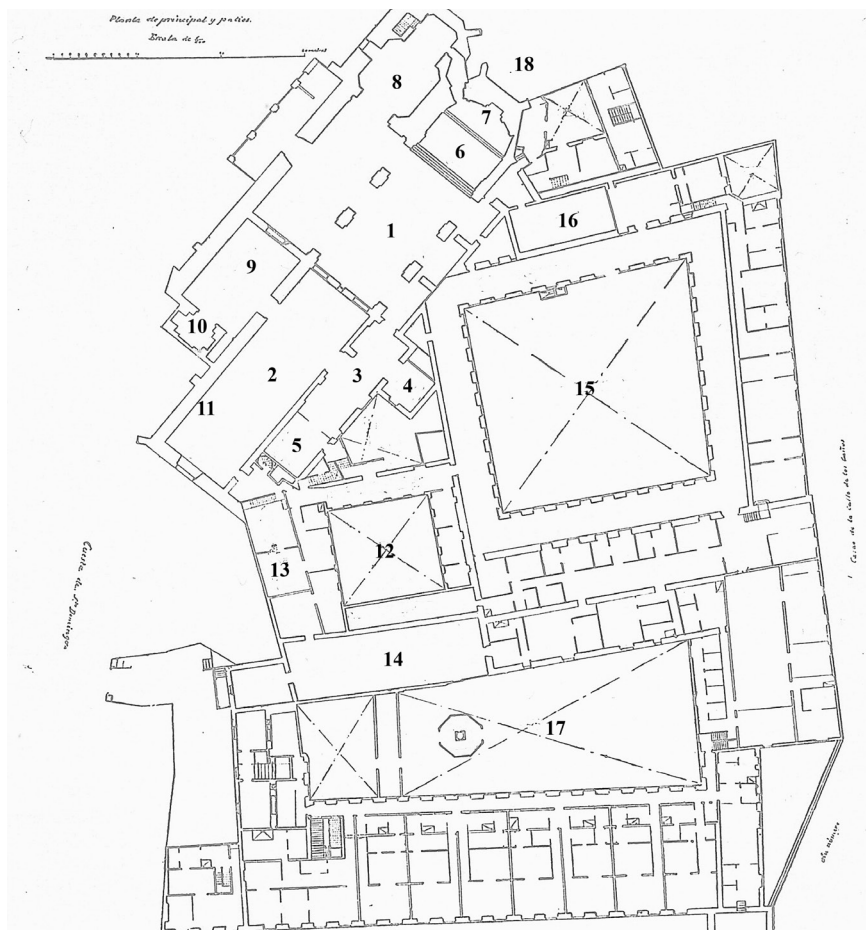


Fig. 7.5. Ground plan of Santo Domingo el Real de Madrid, hypothetical reconstruction of the state of the monastery in the mid-16th century with lodgings of Constanza de Castilla. Source: Author's reconstruction based on the ground plan of 1869. Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Museo de Historia de Madrid, Inv. No. 2695.

1. Church. 2. Nuns' choir. 3. Antechoir. 4. Chapel of St Dominic. 5. Chapel of St John the Baptist. 6. Chapel of Pedro I. 7. Sacristy. 8. Chapel of Alonso de Castilla. 9. Chapel of St Thomas Aquinas. 10. Chapel of St John the Evangelist. 11. Tomb of Constanza de Castilla. 12. Cloister of Constanza de Castilla. 13. Lodgings of Constanza. 14. Refectory. 15. Large Cloister. 16. Chapter house. 17. Cloister of St Dominic. 18. House of chaplains.

established in 1467 with the approval of the General Master, and its first chapter was held at San Pablo de Valladolid in 1477.<sup>96</sup>

The next big step in the implementation of Observant Dominican reform was taken in 1493, when Alexander VI granted wide powers to the Catholic Monarchs to guide the implementation of the reform through the bull *Exposuerunt nobis*. This led to the appointment of a series of reformers for the female monasteries of Castile. Friar Pascual de Ampudia, former vicar of the Congregation of Observance (1487–90), was in charge of the reform of the Dominican nuns.<sup>97</sup> However, as we have seen, although these events remain the better-known moment or phase in the Observant reform movement, they were only the last step in a long-term process that started much earlier, in which women's agency was fundamental. Furthermore, and to conclude, some of these communities of women religious offered a strong opposition to the reformers sent by the Catholic Monarchs. Although these instances were frequently silenced in the chronicles, they are known through other documents, such as the case of the Dominican nunneries of Caleruega and Quejana.<sup>98</sup> These conflicts are also well documented in some male convents, like San Esteban de Salamanca, and they have been studied by Guillermo Nieva Ocampo,<sup>99</sup> but in the case of female monasteries they still deserve further research.

## Conclusion

When approaching the different processes of reform of female monasteries in late medieval Castile, traditional historiography offered a vision of false homogeneity. Women's agency in these reformist attempts, acting in collaboration with other agents, has often been overlooked, as women's activities were seen as isolated endeavours, carried out in a particular monastery, and not systematically, at the level of a religious order or of a kingdom.

However, as this critical revision has showed, paying close attention to other kinds of sources, often overlooked, such as liturgical books or books with a liturgical use, can reshape our vision and amend previous assumptions about these

<sup>96</sup> Beltrán de Heredia, *Historia de la Reforma*, p. 160. For a deeper analysis of the Observant reform among Dominicans in Castile see Guillermo Nieva Ocampo, 'Reformatio in membris: conventualidad y resistencia a la reforma entre los dominicos de Castilla en el siglo XV', *En la España medieval*, 32 (2009), 297–341. As for the Dominican nuns, Pérez Vidal, 'La reforma de los monasterios'.

<sup>97</sup> Ramón Hernández Martín, 'Actas de la Congregación de la Reforma de la Provincia de España (I)', *Archivo Dominicano*, 1 (1980), 7–140.

<sup>98</sup> Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'La Reforma de los monasterios', 208–12.

<sup>99</sup> Nieva Ocampo, 'La creación de la Observancia'.

processes. The gender perspective adopted here has shown that many of these books were commissioned by aristocratic women, both patrons and nuns, who also promoted their exchange between different monasteries. The comparative approach here proposed has shown similar dynamics in the circulation of books between female monasteries in the two major reform movements in late medieval Castile. In both cases, women did not act alone but through different networks, involving a diversity of agents. Women thus acted not only through networks constituted by the respective religious order, but also through those based on kinship and the legitimisation of lineage. Castilian aristocratic women used these books to convey religious ideals of reform, and to bond, at the same time, their monastic foundations with others controlled by their female relatives. The shifting nature of books' functionality has been also proven by some examples, like the two *Beatus* copies, that were used in the two major moments of reform studied here, showing how familiar texts were adapted to new circumstances and with reimagined goals.