THE ART OF THE CISTERCIANS IN GALICIA AND PORTUGAL:
A REVIEW ARTICLE

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In 1998, the nine-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of Citeaux prompted major exhibitions, symposia, and publications on Cistercian art and architecture in Iberia.1 In Galicia and Portugal, the Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza and the Fundación Calouste Gulbenkian jointly sponsored the exhibition, Arte de Cister em Portugal e Galiza/Arte del Cister en Galicia y Portugal, which travelled from the Portuguese cities of Lisbon and Porto to La Coruña and Pontevedra in Galicia between November 1998 and July 1999. It offered two hundred photographs and forty-one objects, dating from the twelfth to the eighteenth century. The artifacts included charters, manuscripts, metalwork, architectural sculpture, inscriptions, tiles, paintings, wooden reliefs, and statues. Its appearance in four cities, a symposium in La Coruña (April 14-16, 1999), and the accompanying volume publicized a field that has been the subject of several academic conferences in recent years.2


2 Besides those held in 1998, these conferences include: IX centenario do nascimento de S. Bernardo; encontros de Alcobaca e simpósio de Lisboa: Actas, Braga, 1992; Actas. Congreso Internacional sobre Citeaux: Commentarii cistercienses, t. 58, fasc. 3-4 (2007)
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with Clairvaux in the twelfth century. Despite the diversity of their plans, elevations, and vaults, the churches conform to the sober canons of twelfth-century Cistercian architecture, and several offer variations on the Bernardine plan of Clairvaux II. For Valle, this exemplifies the reach and effectiveness of Cistercian governance and the Order’s success in balancing rigorous oversight with a measure of local autonomy. Such supervision explains the Burgundian origin of numerous features which, as Valle stresses, depart sharply from local traditions. In fact, he sees on a reference to an “Albertus…faber,” sent by Bernard to Sobrado, and proposes a role for the foreigner in transmitting designs and supervising construction. Whether or not the notice bears such weight, the architectural evidence is consistent with Clairvaux’s early protagonist in Galicia where, in Valle’s view, Sobrado was the first Cistercian house (1142) in Iberia, and Oseira, Meira, and, possibly, Melón, were also linked with Clairvaux before Bernard’s death.

Valle charts a pattern of growing local influences. He relates the ambulatories of Oseira and Melón to Santiago cathedral, recognizes that the abbeys shared new architectural vocabularies with the Galician cathedrals, and identifies Mudéjar elements in the decorated portal at Armenteira and its ribbed crossing dome. Affiliates of the Galician abbeys, like San Clodio or Xunqueira de Espadafredo, adhered more closely to local traditional architectures. In the thirteenth century, the Cistercians lost their artistic individuality and, within Iberia, Galicia’s importance waned after the re-unification of Castile and León in 1230. The late thirteenth-century crossing dome at Oseira is a rare example of an architectural project at that time, while the modest church of Santa María da Franqueira, not affiliated until at least the late thirteenth century, is emblematic of the Order’s strained circumstances with its single-cell nave and rectangular chancel, dated 1343 by a portal inscription. The abbeys preserve few medieval dependencies, but the chapels for lay burials attached to the north transepts at Sobrado, Oseira, and Melón are noteworthy.


He argued for the priority of Sobrado in an important article in which he thoroughly reviewed the documents and claims surrounding other early affiliations: José Carlos VALLE PÉREZ, “La introducción de la orden del Cister en los reinos de Castilla y León. Estado de la cuestión,” in La introducción del Cister en España y Portugal, Santa María de Bajedo, 1991, pp. 133-161.

Recently, it has been plausibly argued that the supposed affiliation of San Clodio to Melón, c. 1225, did not take place until the thirteenth century: PÉREZ RODRÍGUEZ, “El monumento cisterciense,” p. 20-31.

These were treated in José Carlos VALLE PÉREZ, “La capilla de San Andrés, en el Monasterio de Oseira y las capillas funerarias en la arquitectura cisterciense de Galicia,” in Monacato Galego. Sexagésimenario de San Bieito, Actas del Primero Coloquio, Ourense, 1983 (Boletín Aurense; Anexo 6), Ourense, 1986, p. 83-119. He discusses other dependencies in “Los patios monásticos y capitulares en
Valle has done much to elucidate the decided protagonism of Clairvaux and the utter foreignness of the architecture of its Galician affiliates, and both points bear on current debates over the development of the Order’s governance and the degree of independence of the five proto-abbeyes and their “families”. In this context, dates are crucial, and Valle’s broad periodization of the Galician buildings, fully argued elsewhere, raises questions. He considers Sobrado (c.1150) and the modest church of Armenteira (with an inscription of 1167) the earliest projects, but clusters other churches in a second wave of building beginning c.1185-1195. The late dates rest on the silence of early documents, a postulated delay before the erection of permanent structures, thirteenth-century references to consecrations or continuing construction, and selected examples of artistically related rural churches dated by inscriptions. They are hard to reconcile, though, with the rapid work alleged for Sobrado, the generous patronage of the crown and local nobility, and the frenetic pace of rural construction in Galicia from the 1160s onwards.

Earlier dates in the 1170s for the commencement of several buildings deserve consideration. Meira, for example, was founded within a decade of Sobrado, and the decoration of its severe abbey church is related to what can be inferred of that of Sobrado’s medieval church, replaced in the seventeenth century.12 The marked archaisms of the church at Oia raises questions about the traditional date (1185) of the affiliation of a house known to be Benedictine by 1149. Finally, the closely related churches of Oseira and Melón have complex connections to local buildings with implications for their dates that await fuller investigation. Questions remain, too, about their place within the unusually large group of Cistercian churches in Iberia with ambulatories, their relationship to French churches inside and outside of the Order, and the consequences of the earlier dates, before Bernard’s death, advanced for the start of Clairvaux III.13 The dates of construction are significant as measures of the impetus behind Cistercian settlement and the degree to which a distinctive architecture was a marker of religious reform. Earlier dates than Valle accepts for most buildings would, in fact, confirm his fundamental intuition about the singular importance of Galicia for Clairvaux and the abbey’s close involvement in shaping the Order’s architecture in one of the most distant regions of Cistercian settlement.

The medieval Portuguese houses offer a different architectural landscape, dominated by the celebrated church and cloister of Alcobaça, but, otherwise, preserving fewer medieval churches, mostly of modest scale.14 For this reason, perhaps, Manuel Luís Reis (“A construção cisterciense em Portugal durante a Idade Média,” p. 42-97) focuses less on building types and chronologies. Synthesizing recent research, he furnishes a wide-ranging view of the Order’s history and buildings in medieval Portugal.15 He considers the arrival of the Cistercians, the geographic distribution of their houses, the importance of numeraries, and the continuing patronage of the crown and nobility in the late Middle Ages. Turning to architecture, he reviews the problems arising from the choice of sites, the functions of diverse dependencies and the internal divisions of churches, and the evidence for the methods and course of construction. He concludes with an extended discussion of the building campaigns and debated chronology of the church and dependencies at Alcobaça.

On the arrival of the Cistercians, Reis follows Maria Alegria F. Marques who argued for the identification of Lações and Tarouca as Cistercian by 1138 and 1140 respectively, breaking the earlier consensus on the affiliation of Tarouca in 1144.16 This challenges Valle’s contention that Sobrado was the first Iberian house, and exposes a methodological rift with broader implications. Valle makes explicit mention of the Cistercians or a known Cistercian house a key test for a community’s affiliation. Marques urges more flexibility, reading texts between the lines, as it were.


13 Leopoldus JANUSSCHEK, Originum Cisterciensium, Vienna, 1877, p. 185-186. Valle acknowledged the uncertainty about the date in La arquitectura cisterciense, I, 275, 290; PORTILLA SILVA let the 1185 date stand (La colonización cisterciense, p. 52-53), but had earlier suggested — without firm evidence — an affiliation of c.1149: “La propiedad, el trabajo y los frutos de la tierra en la Galicia Medieval,” in Galicia rural: la tierra y el hombre, marco de relación (Estudios Compostelanos; 5), Santiago de Compostela, 1978, p. 156-200, at p. 164; María del Carmen PALLARÉS MÉNDEZ and Francisquito PORTILLA SILVA, El bajo valle del Miño en los siglos XII y XIII: economía agraria y estructura social, Santiago de Compostela, 1971, p. 88-89. For the medieval and early modern buildings, see, most recently, Carmén MANSO PORTO, “El monasterio de Santa María la Real de Oia: estudio histórico-artístico,” Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos, vol. 49, 2002, p. 251-306.


considering contemporaries’ understanding of the Cistercian reform, and assessing the context in which documents were produced. This approach to the evidence stems, too, from a different view of the foundations or affiliations of houses in which, as Vicente Ángel Álvarez Palenzuela observed, that process is less easily reduced to a single date. In the end, different approaches to an incomplete documentary record may only lead to stalemate over the priority of one house or another. More fruitfully, these investigations might be redirected towards a historical problem that is fundamental to current discussions of the evolution of the Order and its institutions: what did it mean for a Iberian house to be Cistercian in the 1140s and 1150s?

Historical differences between medieval Portugal and Galicia explain differences in the history of the Order in each region. Real describes a geographic sequence of settlement shaped by the measured pace of Cistercian affiliations, the expanding frontier of twelfth-century Portugal, and the consolidation of the kingdom’s independence. The internal colonization of the Beira Alta was followed by the foundation of Alcobaca in newly conquered lands and later establishments near the northern border with Galicia. Real also underscores the vigorous royal patronage of Cistercian nunneries. The daughters of King Sancho I played key roles at Lorvão, Celos, and Arouca, and the placement of Celos in the outskirts of Coimbra set a pattern for locating the later thirteenth-century nunneries of Almourol, Odivelas, and Castris near cities hosting the court. By contrast, Cistercian nunneries remained rare in Galicia where patrons may have preferred less formal arrangements to avoid subjecting houses to the Castilian congregation of Las Huelgas. Finally, Real stresses the steady patronage of the crown and nobility in the later Middle Ages, most notably through the creation of noble pantheons, inspired by King Afonso II’s designation of Alcobaca as a royal burial place. The contrasting fortunes of the Cistercians in late medieval Galicia and Portugal suggest that the Order’s apparent decline in Galicia – as Valles presents it – was bound up with shifting networks of royal and noble patronage, a result of the region’s marginal place in the enlarged kingdom of Castile-León.

Turning to the buildings, Real uses archaeological investigations at Salzedas to illustrate the problems surrounding the definitive choice of a site. Identifying the ruins at Abadia Velha as those of the first Cistercian church of Salzedas, he argues that the building remained in use after the move to the new site, Abadia Nova, in the early thirteenth century.18 Real notes the importance of masons’ marks for distinguishing building campaigns and linking diverse sites, like those at Tarouca, Abadia Velha, and Salzedas. Like Valles, he stresses the foreign elements of the earliest designs, and, drawing upon the work of Virgolino Ferreira Jorge, he cites the use of French units of measurement at Tarouca and Alcobaca.20 His survey of the duration of construction underscores the variability of these projects and revises the traditional notion that nun’s churches were built before the nuns occupied the convents.

Lastly, Real traces the construction of the church of Alcobaca from its commencement in 1178 – recorded in a modern inscription – to its dedication in 1252.21 Following Artur Nobre de Gusmão, he rejects Cocherel’s view that the present church was built in the thirteenth century to replace an earlier one modelled on Clairvaux II and supposedly damaged by a Muslim incursion in 1195.22 Instead, he assigns the choir, transepts, and four eastern bays of the nave to a first campaign, c. 1178-1195, based on its close affinities to Clairvaux III and contemporary French models for the ambulatory vaults and pillar capitals. After an interruption, the upper parts of the

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20 For the pantheon and tombs at Alcobaca, see, most recently, José Custódio Vieira da Silva, O Pantheon Régio do Mosteiro de Alcobaca, Lisbon, 2003.
choir and transepts, and western bays of the nave and aisles were erected, largely
during the reign of Afonso II (1211-1223), in a second campaign with more links to
Portuguese buildings. Real's account of the completion of the church, cloister,
and dependencies remains somewhat confused, a testimony to on-going debates over the
architectural evidence and the interpretation of documents and key inscriptions, like
those in the cloister recording the monks' transfer to the new site in 1223 and the
laying of the first stone of the cloister in 1308 under the patronage of King Dinis and
Queen Elizabeth.23

Real's discussion is a tantalizing introduction to a church of universally recognized
importance that still cries out for thorough study.24 Matthias Untermann noted the
pressing need for a careful history of the fabric, and, in the most recent overview,
Jorge Rodrigues concedes "much room for speculation" on the dating of the medi-
eval buildings.25 Clark Maines has identified places where "the techniques of verti-
cal archology" yield a more refined understanding of successive building campaigns
as "construction phases...in three dimensions."26 Preliminary results of surveys of
masons' marks are also promising. They point to the overall unity of the choir and
eastern bays of the nave, making replacement or incorporation of an earlier church
unlikely.27 Restorations, cited by Real, also demand scrutiny at a site where the
weight of the monastery's medieval heritage led to the preservation and re-creation
of medieval elements in the early eighteenth-century façade and the building of a
neo-Gothic royal pantheon at the end of the eighteenth century.28 Finally, the fabric's
history is inseparable from the monastic liturgy. Clark Maines has cited production
of the abbey's customary in 1231 as "an indicator of the close of major construc-
tion", and several authors have related differences in the corbelled supports of the nave to
the demarcation of the monks' and lay brothers' choirs.29 Such manipulations of
architectural forms in relation to function are commonplace in the dependencies
where, for example, the simple and seemingly archaic adornment of the dormitory

23 Both inscriptions are reproduced in Maines, "Word and Image," p. 11, 15. For descriptions and
bibliography, see Barroca, Epigrafía, III/1, no. 289, p. 711-712; and III/2, no. 516, p. 1342-1348.
24 The building played a role in some of the earliest discussions of the "Gothic" style: see Maria Joã
Baptista Neto, "A arquitectura de Santa Maria de Alcobaça e a discussão em torno das origens do gótico
nos finais do século XVIII. Uma descrição inédita do mosteiro de 1760," in Cister: Espaços, Territórios,
Paixões, I, 271-282.
2007, p. 22.
27 José Carlos Valle Pêreza, "Presentación," in Arturo Nebre de Gomán, A Real Abadía de Alcobaça:
Estudo Histórico-Arqueológico, Lisbon, 1992 (2nd ed.), p. 13-15; Rodrigo de la Torre Martín-Romá,
"Aproximación a los constructores de Alcobaça a través de sus marcas de cantería," in Actas. Congreso
Internacional sobre San Bernardor y o Cister en Galicia y Portugal (as n. 2), II, 835-842.
28 The eighteenth-century work is discussed in this volume by José Fernando Pêreza, "Cister, a
arquitectura e a cultura artística na época Moderna," p. 505-506. See Real (p. 87), Maria
Adelaide Miranda also cites the restoration of capitals at Alcobaça in her contribution to this
volume, p. 145.

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contrasts with the more ornate and refined forms of the earlier chapterhouse
below.30

Together, Real and Valle draw attention to the importance of the late twelfth and
early thirteenth centuries in the history of the Cistercians and their architecture in
these regions. The buildings at Alcobaça, the patronage of the Portuguese royal
family, the flowering of Cistercian monasteries in Portugal, and the feverish building
programs at the Galician abbeys make these two generations a golden age for the
Order in both regions. Portuguese writers have readily recognized this, for the Cis-
tercians' close ties with the court have earned them special prominence in the story
of the forging of an independent kingdom. In fact, the Order's achievements in this
period were paralleled across the Iberian realms. Yet this success is typically over-
shadowed by interest in the arrival of the Cistercians in the 1140s and 1150s, the
obscene concern with dates of foundations and the priority of this or that house,
and the desire—kindled by early modern chroniclers—to link Spanish houses with
St Bernard and Alfonso VII, ruler of a united kingdom of Castile-León (1126-1157)
and self-styled emperor.

Traditional biases in both Spanish and monastic historiography explain this dis-
placement of interest. In Spanish national narratives of Christian reconquest and
peninsular unification, the years between the death of Alfonso VII in 1157 and the
union of Castile and León under Ferdinand III in 1230 are an awkward interrup-
tion. The Christian territories were split among five squabbling kingdoms, and noble
clans profited from shifting alliances. The Cistercians, however, thrived on the patronage
of rival courts and aristocratic households, and they served as peacemakers and
mediators with valuable international connections. Several houses were situated
strategically in frontier zones between the kingdoms, while others reinforced the
intricate web of aristocratic marriages across political boundaries.31

Spanish historians have concentrated, too, upon the Cistercians' accumulation and
administration of landed estates and their exercise of seigneurial authority.32 This
partly reflects the disproportionate weight of charters and cartularies among surviv-
ing texts, but also obviates the dominant ideological and methodological trends in late

30 The differences are remarked upon in Rodrigues, The Monastery of Alcobaça, p. 85.
31 On the politics of Cistercian patronage, see D'Emilio, "The Cistercians and the Romanesque
Churches," p. 313-316; D’Emilio, "The Royal Convent of Las Huelgas: Dynastic Politics, Religious
Reform and Artistic Change in Medieval Castile," in Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture, 6, ed.
Meridith P. Lulich, Kalamezzo, 2005, p. 191-202; esp. p. 193-200; Montserrat Torres Sevilla,
"Noblesa y Cister: un nexo de unión entre los reinos cristianos peninsulares," Cisterciense, no. 238, 2005,
p. 323-352; and Raquel Alonso Alvarado, "Los promotores de la Orden del Cister en los reinos de
Castilla y León: Familias aristocráticas y damas nobles," Anuario de Estudios Medievales, vol. 37/2,
2007, p. 653-710.
32 The emphasis in Spanish historiography on monastic domains and the neglect of other areas are
not limited to studies of the Cistercians or linked with their specific roles in economic development.
The resulting distortion of monastic history is frequently lamented: see José Carlos Valle Pêreza, "La
importancia de los reinos de Castilla y León en un reflejo monumental durante la Edad Media (siglos XII y XIII)," in Monjes y Monasterios (as n. A 1), pp. 35-41, at p. 35, and María Filomena
Corbel, Expresiones del Poder Feudal: El Cister Cenicio en León (Siglos XII y XIII), León, 2006,
twentieth-century Spanish historiography. For monastic historians, the resulting portrait of the Cistercians only magnifies the worldly entanglements which seem to compromise early ideals and depart from a heroic age — real or imagined — of Cistercian observance. Their political and economic power is too easily seen, paradoxically, as a symptom of spiritual laxity and a harbinger of the supposed eclipse of the Order in the face of new religious movements. Nor have such judgments been softened by the remarkable flowering of Cistercian nunneries in Iberia, culminating in the creation of the Castilian congregation of the royal nunnery of Las Huelgas and the patronage of the sisters of Asís de San Millán. Modern historians’ struggles to fit the nunneries into narratives of the Order’s development mirror the General Chapters’ own ambivalence towards women’s communities. Finally, the privileging of the Bernardine plan in the historiography of Cistercian architecture has dimmed earlier recognition of the monks as “missionaries of Gothic”, obscuring the impact of Clairvaux II, the rich experiments with choir design, and the creation of a distinctive Cistercian Gothic, all matters of crucial importance in the Iberian peninsula.

For all of these reasons, the dramatic expansion of the Cistercians in the time of St Bernard and the middle years of the century has attracted more interest than the Order’s remarkable vitality in the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Iberian kingdoms. The buildings discussed by Valle and Reay are reminders, however, that the Order’s wealth and its networks of patrons supported the spiritual and cultural life of the communities. Far less work has been done on the spirituality, liturgy, and culture of the Iberian houses in this period, and the next two articles in the collection make a start on this by surveying figural imagery, funerary sculpture, the arts of the sanctuary, and the activity of Cistercian scriptoria in medieval Galicia and Portugal.

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33 Roque Sánchez Ameijeiras ("Las artes figurativas en los monasterios cistercienses medievales gallegos", p. 98-139) turns to the figural arts of the Galician houses. She considers architectural sculpture, Marian statues, church furniture, and funerary monuments. The accidents of survival limited her field: the only example of medial metalwork is an enamelled cross from Meira, and the dearth of extant manuscripts remains a mystery. Not surprisingly, figural imagery in architectural decoration is exceptional. The ambitious program in the Romanesque apse at Ferreira de Pantón precedes the grant of the nunnery to the Cistercian abbey of Meira in 1175, but the evident impact of the bestiary and aviary is intriguing in the light of the popularity of Hugh of Fouilloy’s Aviary in late twelfth-century Portuguese monasteries, including those of the Cistercians. The Arthurian story of the knight and the lion which the author coaxes out of the tympanum at Penamareira may also have been carved before the monastery’s affiliation with the Cistercians, as the date of 1166 on the tympanum suggests. In a more recent and fully annotated study, however, she makes a case for a later date, near the house’s elevation to the rank of abbey in 1225, and for Cistercian patronage of a moralizing image directed at a lay public. A similar approach to isolated capitals at Oseira with commonplace representations of birds or harpsies seems forced, but her insightful analysis of the corbels at Xunqueira de Espadañedo is more revealing of the Cistercians’ creative response to
produced and exquisitely illuminated books from the monastic library. She presents giant Bibles, patristic texts, works of monastic spirituality, grammars and schoolbooks, Isidore’s *Etymologies*, liturgical books, and saints’ lives. Unfortunately, the description of a series of examples leaves interesting issues on the margins. Some manuscripts are of Burgundian origin, and one would like to see a more systematic accounting of the stocking of the library with imported books, the copying of such exemplars, and the historical development of the abbey’s own scriptorium. Intriguing hints of Iberian peculiarities in texts and imagery raise questions about the Cistercians’ links with other religious communities and their embrace of local artistic and intellectual traditions. The important findings of Ana Suárez González on the scriptorium and libraries of Castilian and Leonese houses offer a model for how such questions can be addressed successfully through close codicological and palaeographical studies of even fragmentary material, and the magnificent ensemble from Alcobaca – and those from other Portuguese houses – certainly supplies a promising field for further work.

The remaining six essays deal with the extraordinary flowering of art and architecture in the Cistercian monasteries of Galicia and Portugal during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, following the creation of the independent congregations and the Tridentine reforms. The Congregation of Castile was organized by Martín Vargas in the early fifteenth century and approved by Pope Eugenius IV in 1437. After the visit of the Catholic Kings to Galicia in 1486, Popes Innocent VIII and Alexander VI mandated the reform of the Galician monasteries and the

a descriptive inventory of 456 manuscripts from Alcobaca, see *Amos, The Fundo Alcobaca* (as in n. 22).


suppression of commendatory abbots. The Cistercian monasteries were affiliated with the Congregation of Castile. Sobrado led the way in 1498, and the last Galician houses to join, after considerable conflict, were Oseira and Oia, in 1545 and 1547 respectively.47

In Portugal, reforms were facilitated by the close connections of the royal house with the monastery at Alcobaça. Cardinal Henry, the brother of King John III, served as commendatory abbot of Alcobaça and initiated the reforms which led to approval of the independent Portuguese Congregation of St Bernard by Pope Pius V in 1567, the holding of the first general chapter in 1573, and papal confirmation in 1574. For sixty years (1580-1640), Portugal was ruled by the Spanish kings. After the expulsion of the Spaniards in 1640 and the recognition of Portuguese independence in 1668, the commendatory abbots at Alcobaça were definitively replaced by triennial abbots, and the monastery flourished as the head of the congregation, a center of learning, and an institution closely tied to the monarchy.

In both Galicia and Portugal, extensive building projects adapted churches and dependencies to new practices, and sought to remedy the neglect of buildings under the commendatory abbots of the late Middle Ages. The relaxation of the vow of stability and the election of triennial abbots fostered artistic connections among the houses of each congregation. This widened the divide between Portugal and Galicia and linked the Galician monasteries more closely to the houses of León and Castile and to the royal court. Architectural reforms accommodated new liturgical arrangements and other changes in the life of the Cistercian communities. Raised choirs were built at the west end of churches, and upper storeys were added to cloisters. The number of cloisters grew, as provisions were made for individual cells, and the promotion of education and learning required expanded facilities. While these projects were the outcome of the reforms, they also demonstrate that, throughout the troubles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the monasteries had retained the domains and privileges that made them among the wealthiest landholders in Galicia.

Three essays treat of architecture. María Dolores Vila Iato (“La arquitectura de los monasterios cistercienses en Galicia durante el Renacimiento,” p. 184-229) surveys Cistercian architecture in Galicia during the first century of reform. José Fernández Pereira (“Cister, a arquitectura e a cultura artística na época moderna,” p. 230-279) reviews that of Portugal from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Finally, María del Carmen Folgar de la Calle (“La arquitectura de los monasterios cistercienses de Galicia desde el Barroco hasta la desamortización,” p. 280-327) examines Cistercian architecture in Galicia from the mid-seventeenth to the eighteenth century, emphasizing the projects at Sobrado and Oseira.

All three authors stress formal analysis of the churches and dependencies, their place in the history of Renaissance and Baroque architecture in Iberia, and their attribution to particular architects, masons, and workshops. Vila Iato treats each part of the monastery separately beginning with the construction or renovation of cloisters and dependencies. For these, Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón’s cloister at the cathedral of Santiago and the Plateresque works of Juan de Badajoz el Mozo, exemplified by the cloister of the Benedictine house of San Zoilo de Carrión de los Condes, are key points of reference.48 Despite later alterations and the losses occasioned by the nineteenth-century secularization of the monasteries, several outstanding buildings of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century remain, including the monks’ and visitors’ cloisters at Montederramo and San Clodio; the sacristy, chapterhouse, and staircase of the “bishops” at Oseira; the chapterhouse at Oia; and the sacristy at Sobrado. Renovation of churches was more limited, although the early seventeenth-century churches of Montederramo (c. 1598-1620) and Monfero (c. 1620-1655) exemplify the classicizing style of Simón de Monasterio and the impact of the Jesuits’ Colegio del Cardenal in Monforte de Lemos.

Throughout, Vila Iato focuses on attributing architectural designs and identifying the artists charged with their execution.49 Her separate treatment of each type of building fragments the discussion of each community. For the audience of this volume, a clearer overview of projects at individual houses and a narrative based on historical – rather than typological – relationships would have been more helpful. Analysis of architectural forms in themselves is less crucial for students of the Order than the questions of how the institutions and practices of the new Congregation reshaped artistic projects, how these works did – or did not – express a distinctive outlook, and how artistic relationships between the building projects at Cistercian houses and those of the secular clergy and other congregations, including new Orders like the Jesuits, reflected shared or contested religious concerns in the wake of the Tridentine reforms.50

47 For the cloister at Santiago, see Andrés A. ROSDINE VALDÉS, “El siglo XVI: Gótico y Renacimiento en la catedral compostelana,” in Santiago, la catedral y la memoria del arte, ed. Manuel NÚÑEZ RODRÍGUEZ, Santiago de Compostela, 2000, p. 153-183. For the impact of Juan de Badajoz el Mozo in Galicia through his work on the Benedictine cloister at Celanova, see Ana Goy Díaz, “A piedad de Juan de Badajoz el Mozo en los claustros benedictinos gallegos: o concepto de modernidade arquitecónica a mediados do século XVI,” in Arte Benedetta nos Camiños de Santiago, p. 403-426.

48 Her approach follows that laid out in the classic monograph by Antonio BONET CORREA, La arquitectura en Galicia durante el siglo XVII, Madrid, 1966.

49 For an overview of the architectural consequences of the creation of the independent congregations, see Miguel Ángel GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, “Reforma y reformas en el Cister de los Reinos de Castilla: algunas consideraciones,” in Cister. Espacios, Territorios, Paisajes (in n. 1), I: 131-166. Ana Goy Díaz has offered a series of more fully contextual studies of the history, meaning, and function of the buildings of the Galician Benedictine houses, outside of the Cistercian congregation, in her “Los claustros benedictinos tras la reforma de los Reyes Católicos: Noticias sobre su construcción y sobre sus programas decorativos,” in Humanitas. Estudios en homenaje a Prof. Dr. Carlos Alonso del Real, Santiago de Compostela, 1996 (2 vols.), II: 876-897; “La imagen del Jardín del Edén en los claustros del
In his treatment of the architecture of the Portuguese houses, José Fernandes Pereira gives more attention to the Order’s culture, but the sheer number and variety of projects in this three-hundred year period turns the discussion, at times, into a litany of quickly sketched buildings and decorative programs. He stresses the importance of the medieval heritage — real or imagined — to the Portuguese Cistercians, whether in the spinning of legendary links between the monks and the first Portuguese king, Afonso Henriques, or their interest in accounts of the early history of the Order and the life of St Bernard. The relationship between tradition and innovation guides his classification of the buildings in three groups: late medieval projects incorporating a new classical vocabulary, the selective adaptation of medieval buildings, and new constructions, whether of existing houses like Arouca or at new sites.

Interestingly, he observes the intrusion of architectural forms from the court and urban public spaces into the designs of cloisters and monastic precincts, as they became sites of sociability rather than meditation.

Of most interest are the glimpses of a carefully orchestrated presentation of the history of the Cistercians in Portugal and their close relationship with the monarchy and Portuguese independence. This is consistent with the flowering of a school of Cistercian historiography at Alcobaça and the restored monarch’s own interest in the medieval past. Not surprisingly, Alcobaça exhibits the most striking architectural reminiscences in the preservation of its Gothic portal, the other historicizing details of its early eighteenth-century facade, and the Neo-Gothic pantheon completed by William Eilson in 1782 for the medieval royal tombs. The ideology behind such allusions was rendered explicit in the late eighteenth-century Hall of the Kings where terracotta figures of the Portuguese kings — omitting the period of Spanish rule — accompany a legendary narrative of the monastery’s foundation, based on the early seventeenth-century chronicle of Bernardo de Brito. In 1690, a chapel was built in the monastic precinct in honor of Our Lady of Exile (Nossa Senhora do Desterro), the patron of a prominent Cistercian house established in Lisbon in 1591. After the restoration, the devotion became a metaphor for the return of the Portuguese kings, and its popularity among the Cistercians tied them to the restored monarchy.

Maria del Carmen Folgar de la Calle examines the architecture of the Galician monasteries in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period of intensive building activity throughout the region. She briefly surveys architectural projects and changes in the stately design but largely focuses on Sobrado and Oseira. It is a wise choice considering the scale of building in this period. By the eighteenth century, Sobrado and Oseira each had three cloisters: the monastic cloister alongside the church, the visitors’ cloister to the west with a monumental entrance in the patio in front of the church, and the largest cloister, housing the school and the cells of monks and novices, to the east. Centering on two monasteries, the author carefully traces the evolution of designs, the supervision and execution of projects, the course of construction, and the different roles of diverse artists. Wide-ranging artistic parallels with buildings in Galicia, other parts of Spain and even the Spanish American colonies are adduced, mainly to support attributions or chart the careers of artists.

As in the other two essays on early modern architecture, the meanings behind artistic exchanges are hinted at, but beg for more attention. For example, the author relates the unusual arched bridges between the retables of the crossing at Oseira to the triumphal structure erected in Seville cathedral for the canonization of St Ferdinand (King Ferdinand III). Elsewhere she remarks that the new abbots of Santiago made their ceremonial entry into the diocese at the monastery of Sobrado where they were received by the chapter and mayor of Santiago. In the seventeenth century, St James was a contested figure. The apostle’s position as patron of Spain was challenged by the partisans of St Theresa, while doubts about his legend threatened the collection of the Voto de Santiago, a levy based on the apostle’s miraculous intervention at the legendary battle of Clavijo. In that context, architectural allusions or representations of the apostle acquired additional meaning.
Throughout, the author compares the architecture of Cistercian houses with that of Benedictine monasteries like Celanova and Lorenzana, establishments of the Jesuits and other Orders, the university and cathedral of Santiago, the lesser cathedrals, and the country houses (pazos) of local lords and wealthy landowners. One might conclude here—as in Vila Jato's piece—that the Cistercians had simply lost the distinctiveness that marked the Order in the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Instead, it seems that the lack of a broader framework for understanding the place of the Cistercians in the early modern church provides no alternative to the more familiar narrative of architectural history.

In the last three essays, the rich iconography of the figural arts facilitates consideration of spiritual and devotional life, changing visions of Cistercian identity, and the Order's place in the early modern church and society. Carlos Alberto Louzeiro Moura ("Da figuração à decoração. O percurso artístico dos mosteiros cistercienses em Portugal entre os séculos XVI e XVIII," p. 328-375) and Juan M. Monterroso Montero ("Las artes figurativas en los monasterios cistercienses gallegos durante la Edad Moderna," p. 376-431) discuss the figural arts in Portugal and Galicia respectively from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Luís de Moura Sobral ("Narrativa, história e mito em Santa Maria de Bouro," p. 432-464) concludes the volume by analyzing the narratives of the lives of Sts Benedict and Bernard in the choirstalls of Sta Maria de Bouro in the context of Cistercian ideology and iconography and the restoration of the Portuguese monarchy.

Carlos Alberto Louzeiro surveys an impressive array of figural art, commenting as well on destroyed or dispersed works, particularly from Alcobaca. Besides painted and carved reliefs, panel paintings, and choirstalls, the Portuguese houses are distinguished by mural decoration in blue and white glazed tiles (azulejos) and, at Alcobaca, large scale terracotta sculpture made by craftsmen at the monastery itself. Louzeiro describes stylistic changes, the contribution of foreign artists (especially in the sixteenth century), the patronage of the court and aristocracy, and a series of major commissions. Most importantly, he highlights the Order's embrace of key concerns of the Catholic Reformation, the ideological contribution of the chroniclers at Alcobaca, and significant themes in Cistercian iconography, many of them expressed in the decoration of the church and dependencies at Alcobaca.

Emblematic of several themes is a remarkable terracotta group, now in the Hall of the Kings at Alcobaca, which portrays the symbolic coronation of Afonso Henriques, the first Portuguese king, by Pope Alexander III and St Bernard. The fanciful allegory ties the independence of the kingdom to the papacy and St Bernard, and both were prominent in Cistercian imagery. The painting, at Alcobaca, of Christ giving the keys to St Peter and figures of St Peter and St Paul at other houses affirm an allegiance to Rome that had been strained by papal opposition to Portugal's struggle for independence in the seventeenth century. Cycles of the life and miracles of St Bernard proliferated, inspired by the wide circulation of books illustrated with engravings. At Salzedas and Bouro, parallel lives of Sts Bernard and Benedict stressed the Order's renewal of the Benedictine rule. The parallelism was extended to Sts Scholastica and Humeline, and other notable monastic saints. With the visionary theatricality of Baroque style, increasingly elaborate renderings of the Lactation of St Bernard exalted the saint and celebrated the Order's veneration of Mary. At Alcobaca, the full possibilities of the Baroque were realized in the profusely sculpted Sanctuary of Relics and the dramatic staging of St Bernard's death in lifesize terracotta figures before an apparition of Mary and a choir of angels. Within the range of Marian devotions, the popularity of Our Lady of Exile as a dedication for chapels and altars and the depiction of the Flight of the Egypt linked the restoration of the monarchy to the reforms of the congregation, and alluded to the monastic ideals of the desert and eremitic life.

The interweaving of the histories of the Portuguese and the Order was most notable at Alcobaca whose foundation was credited, in the Chronicle of Bernardo de Brito, to the vow made by Afonso Henriques before winning the city of Santarem from the Muslims. This tale was told in the tile decoration of the walls of the Hall of the Kings in the 1770s. Other houses promoted their own foundation legends and accounts of miraculous events. Four scenes recounted the foundation of Tarouca on the tiled walls of the choir. Perhaps the most complete union of the Order and the monarchy took place with the beatification of the daughters of King Sancho I. Queen Sancha and Queen Teresa were beatified in 1704, and Queen Mafalda in 1793. Two silver urns, commissioned for the remains of Sancha and Teresa in 1713, were installed in the main chapel at Lorvão in 1782. The convents of Arouca and Lorvão actively promoted these royal cults with hagiographies and imagery, echoed in other houses of the Order.  

58 For the terracotta sculpture at Alcobaca, see Carlos Moura, "A escultura nos costumes de Alcobaca do final da idade média no século XVIII," in Arte sacra nos antigos costumes (as in n 42), p. 64-81, at p. 74-75, and João de Bernardo, "A arte da cerâmica no Mosteiro e nos costumes alcobaceenses," in Arte sacra nos costumes antigos, p. 114-135, at p. 140-42.

59 For popular devotions and the cult of the saints in the monastic reserve of Alcobaca during the early modern period, see Pedro Penteado, "A vida religiosa nos costumes de Alcobaca nos séculos XVI e XVIII," in Arte sacra nos costumes antigos, p. 166-199.

60 These are discussed more fully in the contribution to this volume by Luís de Souza Sobral, "Narrativa, história e mito em Santa Maria de Bouro," p. 432-464.

61 For discussion of the Baroque iconography of monastic saints in Galician Benedictine houses outside of the Cistercian congregation, see Enrique Fernández Castiñeiras and Juan M. Monterroso Montero, "Assucritu, o figlo..." Orden, Mensaje y Devoción: Estudio sobre la pintura benedictina gallega de los siglos XVII y XVIII," in Opus Monasticorum (as in n 50), p. 281-349, at p. 282-324.


63 The scenes are described in Rodrigues, The Monastery of Alcobaca (as in n 25), p. 96-101.

64 For descriptions of the scenes at Tarouca, see Ana Cristina Fonseca, "A fundação do Mosteiro de San João de Tarouca e de Santa Maria de Alcobaca no programa iconográfico e artístico dos azulejos setecentistas," in Cister: Espaços, Territórios, Paisagens (as in n 1), II: 433-442.

65 For a biography of Queen Mafalda written in 1676 by a nun of Arouca, see Manuel Joaquim Moreira da Rocha, "Santa Rainha Mafalda: um modelo de perfeição. A construção da memória pelas monjas de Arouca no século XVII," in Cister: Espaços, Territórios, Paisagens, p. 239-259. For the art at Lorvão,
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Juan M. Monterroso Montero considers the iconography of retablos, choirstalls, and the painted or carved architectural decoration of churches, cloisters, and dependencies in Galicia in the same period. Characterizing the seventeenth-century Cistercians as a "new generation of pioneers", he asks how it was possible to harmonize the Baroque aesthetic and Cistercian ideals. Religious enthusiasm and the aristocratic culture of the Baroque came together in the magnificence and grandeur of the arts, and the statutes of the Congregation of Castile stressed a humanistic education, consistent with Tridentine concerns with the education of the clergy.63

Monterroso uses the Galician retablos as a measure of the implementation of the reforms, and he describes two principal patterns in their evolution. Following the Council of Trent, Marian altarpieces were preferred, but these gave way, first, to Bernardine dedications and, then, to a wider variety of patrons. Within this process, isolated images and programmatic ensembles of patron saints replaced narrative scenes and cycles. In a quick review of figural programs in choir-stalls, wall paintings and the architectural sculpture of cloisters and dependencies, Monterroso charts a similar course from theological programs focused on Christ or Mary to those centered upon the Order, but he is conscious of specific circumstances that informed particular programs. At Meira, for example, an early seventeenth-century cycle of murals displays a series of Cistercian saints and lengthy inscriptions in the "chirolet", the sacristy or chamber added to the east end of the main chapel of several Cistercian churches in Galicia. He attributes the cycle and the primor of the learned Alan de Lille to the establishment of a college of philosophy at Meira in 1590, one of the most important in the Congregation of Castle.

Monterroso's overall classification is somewhat schematic, but it affords the author a workable framework for a systematic review of programmatic themes in the retablos.64 In the main retable of the 1540s from Sobrado and those from the end of the sixteenth century at Xunqueira de Espadañedo and Oia, Mary had a dominant role within extensive Christological cycles stressing her relationship to Christ's divinity. In the dismantled retable of c. 1658-66 from Montederramo, episodes from the life of Christ framed the Marian scenes of the central section. The Lactation of St Bernard appeared among the Marian scenes at Montederramo, and the saint's vision was shown more frequently in late seventeenth-century retablos, as other narrative scenes from his life multiplied in retablos, wall paintings, and reliefs. The Bernardine cycles were analogous to those dedicated to Benedict in the choirstalls of the Benedictine houses at Celanova and San Martín Pinar. But, in Monterroso's view, Bernard's role in Cistercian history was overshadowed by his characterization as a mystic and doctor of the church. These qualities rivaled those of the founders and saints of the newer Orders of the Catholic Reformation, and the relationships among these Orders came to the fore in eighteenth-century retablos where notable Cistercians were paired with figures of more recent and powerful Orders.

Monterroso's survey introduces a fascinating and diverse body of material that will repay further study. The retablos and other works invite closer analysis of the selection of saints, the choice and arrangement of scenes within and among cycles, the details of their iconography, and their relationship to contemporary devotional texts and liturgical usages. The importance of cycles relating the Cistercians to other Orders, old and new, encourages investigation of the ways in which the Cistercians adapted their ideals and practices to conform with those of the new congregations of the Catholic Reformation.

In the final article in the volume, Luis de Moura Sobral looks closely at one Portuguese cycle, and provides insights into the Order's construction of its own past and its relationship to the Portuguese monarchy. Sobral cites several examples of paired images of Sts Bernard and Benedict to introduce the choirstalls of 1666-1668 at Sta Maria de Bouro where six scenes of St Bernard face six of St Benedict.65 Formal and thematic parallels encourage the viewer to read the two narratives together. Drawn from various sources, the two cycles use the similarities between the two saints to affirm the continuity between Cistercian observance and the Benedictine rule, but they also underscore distinctive features of the Cistercians, like their Marian devotion. Efforts to pair the two saints shaped the choice of scenes and the adaptation of traditional compositions in different ways. While the panels at Bouro, for example, focus on their "spiritual itinerary", late seventeenth-century paintings at Salzedas highlight miracles and devotional images.

Sobral underscores the importance of two scenes at Bouro illustrating the subordination of temporal to spiritual power: the homage of the Gothic king, Totila, before St Benedict, and St Bernard's submission of Duke William of Aquitaine, a partisan of the antipope Anacletus, to the authority of Pope Innocent II. The Bernardine scene is repeated on the tiled walls of the sacristy at Bouro and at the Cistercian houses of Cos and Castris, and the author ties these and the related scene of Bernard submitting King Henry I of England to the pope to the symbolic coronation of Afonso Henriques by Pope Alexander III and St Bernard at Alcobaça.

Against this background, he explores the political implications of the sculpture on the facade of the monastery at Bouro: statues of the Holy Family returning from

65 The author had published an earlier version of the study with somewhat different conclusions in Luis de Moura Sobral, "Os ciclos de São Bento e São Bernardo na capela-mor de Santa Maria de Bouro: sentido e narratividade," in Actas: Arte e arquitectura nas abadias cistercienses (as in n. 1), p. 233-246.
Egypt, Count Henry, King Afonso Henriques, King Sebastian, and King John IV. An inscribed plaque describes the sixteenth-century King Sebastian as the liberator of the monasteries from the commendatory abbots, and another relates the seventeenth-century restoration of the monarchy under John IV to a legendary prophecy given to the first Portuguese king, Afonso Henriques. Together, the figures link the history of the Portuguese kingdom and its restoration to that of the Cistercians in Portugal and the monastery of Bouro, while the image of the Holy Family’s return from Egypt announces a new epoch for the Portuguese Congregation of St Bernard and the kingdom.69

This volume and the exhibition from which it derived brought a remarkable artistic patrimony to the attention of a wide public, and it is to be hoped that this rich heritage at the edge of Europe will claim a more central place in studies of the Cistercian Order, its communities, and its art. The Galician foundations of the twelfth century evidence early, close, and continuing ties to Clairvaux, as Valle has expertly shown. The medieval buildings of the Portuguese abbey of Alcobaça are monuments of the first rank, and the church is a crucial example of the impact of the second generation of Cistercian monumental architecture, represented by Clairvaux III. The manuscripts from Alcobaça await full exploration for the evidence they offer of a Cistercian library and scriptorium, the circulation of manuscripts within the Order, and the monks’ receptivity to other currents of religious and intellectual culture. The buildings, retables, and other decoration of the Galician and Portuguese monasteries in the early modern period attest to the second flowering of Cistercian art and culture in the era of the independent congregations.

The articles on the medieval buildings and works of art point towards important issues concerning Cistercian art and architecture, and, more broadly, the early history of the Order: the circumstances surrounding foundations and affiliations, the organization and execution of building projects, the oversight of the mother houses, the Cistercian response to figural decoration, and the nature of a Cistercian library and scriptorium. While most attention is directed towards the golden age of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there is sufficient material on the later medieval period in both Galicia and Portugal to invite some reassessment of conventional notions of the Order’s decline.

For the early modern period, the picture is somewhat different. The organizers deserve credit for highlighting a period often overshadowed by the emphasis in Cistercian historiography on the distinctiveness of the Order in the context of the twelfth-century reform movements. The monumental heritage of Galicia and Portugal and the well-documented history of these abbeys in early modern times offer a promising field for evaluating the Order’s evolving identity, the place of the inde-

69 The paintings by Bento Coelho, installed as triptychs in the cabinets of the sacristy at Salzedas, also link Cistercian and Portuguese medieval history and the restoration of the monarchy: see Luís de Moura Soeiral, “Um ciclo emblemático de Bento Coelho em Salzedas: A Ordem de Cister e a restauração,” in id., Do sentido das imagens: ensaios sobre pintura barroca portuguesa e outros temas ibéricos, Lisbon, 1996, p. 67-79.