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NOBILITY, KINSHIP AND MEMORY  
IN SANTA EUFEMIA DE COZUELOS,  
THE FIRST FEMALE CONVENT  
OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF SANTIAGO\*\*

KEYWORDS

*history; the Middle Ages; military orders; Order of Santiago; freila; patronage networks; Santa Eufemia de Cozuelo; Sancha Alfonso*

ABSTRACT

This paper refers to the noble patronage around Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, the first female house of the Military Order of Santiago since 1186, based in the north of the Kingdom of Castile, during the second half of the thirteenth century. This patronage provided the convent with funerary spaces to perpetuate the memory of some noble Castilian and Leonese families whose members effected important land donations to the monastery, thus assuring prayers for the salvation of their souls.

Unlike the vast majority of the many female monastic houses founded in the kingdoms of Castile and León in the Middle Ages, the lack of aristocratic founders, patrons or benefactors in all the female

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\*\* This study has been carried out within the framework of the research project “Reinas e infantas de las monarquías ibéricas: espacios religiosos, modelos de representación y escrituras, ca. 1252–1504,” with reference PGC2018-099205-B-C21, granted by the MICINN and co-financed by the State Research Agency and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This project is integrated into the coordinated project, “Las mujeres de las monarquías ibéricas: paradigmas institucionales, agencias políticas y modelos culturales”.

Jacobean convents in Castile and León since their founding until the second half of the thirteenth century, Santa Eufemia among them, is striking.

The subject of this paper aims to determine how the Military Order of Santiago managed to attract to its first female house a whole group of noble lineages. The patronage of these noble families along the second half of the thirteenth century provided the Jacobean monastery with the noble prestige that many other Castilian female convents had from their origin and of which Santa Eufemia lacked, and furthermore, also provided the Jacobean convent with the most relevant territorial expansion of its monastic domain, precisely along this same period. A detailed revision of the available source material and bibliography allowed us to put together enough information to follow and verify this process.

**A**long the twelfth century, the foundations of a great number of female monastic institutions in the Castilian and Leonese kingdoms (including a few that belonged to the military orders) were affected, inducted and/or promoted by members of the high nobility. This was not the case of the Castilian-Leonese female convents of the Military Order of Santiago until the second half of the thirteenth century, when the Jacobean master Pelay Perez Correa attracted to its two main female monasteries in these kingdoms the lineage coming from the last concubinary union of Alfonso IX, king of León, and some of their relatives and acquaintances. This paper intends to establish the origin, nature, and the evolution of this noble patronage over time and related, specifically, to Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, the first female Jacobean monastery in Castilian lands.

## 1. THE INSTITUTIONAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

### *1.1. Women in the Military Order of Santiago*

The presence of women in the Military Order of Santiago is attested in the primitive rule of 1171, a moment historically matching with the period when the Santiago militia was born as a religious-military brotherhood:

*Ab illis mulieribus que viros non habuerint, queratur si maritos velint accipere. Volentibus liecat nubere. Nolentes locabuntur locis aptis et monasteris que sunt de domo, ubi necessaria eis administrabuntur.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Jean Leclercq, "La vie et la prière des chevaliers de Santiago d'après leur règle primitive," *Liturgica*, no. 2 (1958): 354.

There are discrepancies in the interpretation of the scope of the word “mulieribus” in this fragment. Eutimio Sastre understands that it refers to the widows of married knights of the Order.<sup>2</sup> María Echániz advocates understanding it in a broader sense, being thus possible for women to belong to the Order with or without family ties to the knights of Santiago. This is precisely why the wording of the Rule included in the founding bull of 1175 will insist, the author maintains, on the integration of women related by kinship ties with the knights of the Military Order.<sup>3</sup>

The first preserved text of the Santiago Rule in a romance language, collected by Professor Derek W. Lomax, clearly establishes in its first paragraph the definition of the three vows that every member of the Order should promise to fulfil, among which there is the one of conjugal chastity.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, we are facing a central element of the new militia. We need to recall here that its founder, Pedro Fernández de Hita, first master of the Order of Santiago, was married. The count don Rodrigo Álvarez de Sarria, another of the first members of the Order, was also married to doña María Ponce de Minerva, a Leonese noblewoman.<sup>5</sup> This last couple, desiring more Christian perfection, parted ways by mutual agreement to embrace the Cistercian Rule, with María entering the monastery of Carrizo, and Rodrigo founding the Order of Monteagudo. Pedro Fernández is also credited with the founding of the Premonstratensian monastery of Santa Cruz de Valcárcel so that his wife, doña María Pérez, could live there in the company of their daughter, Elo, and so that he could fully dedicate himself to the founding of the new religious militia.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Eutimio Sastre Santos, “La Orden de Santiago y su Regla” (PhD Diss., Universidad Complutense, 1982), 18–40.

<sup>3</sup> María Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres de la Orden Militar de Santiago en la Edad Media* (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 1992), 47.

<sup>4</sup> Derek W. Lomax, *La Orden de Santiago (1170–1275)* (Madrid: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973), 221–231 (Source edition no. 1, traducción castellana de la Regla de la Orden de Santiago, mediados del siglo XIII).

<sup>5</sup> On doña María Ponce de Minerva, see: Gregoria Cavero Domínguez, “Las condesas Estefanía Ramírez y su hija María Ponce: estrategias familiares femeninas,” in *Fémina: mujeres en la historia*, ed. Cristina de la Rosa Cubo, María Isabel del Val Valdivieso, María Jesús Dueñas Cepeda, and Magdalena Santo Tomás Pérez (Valladolid: Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid, 2015), 49–70.

<sup>6</sup> José María Canal Sánchez Pagín, “Don Pedro Fernández, primer maestro de la Orden Militar de Santiago: su familia, su vida,” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* no. 14 (1984): 56–58. On this same master, a classic study: José López Agurleta, *Vida del fundador de la Orden de Santiago y de las primeras casas de redención de cautivos* (Madrid: 1731).

In our opinion, it is precisely this conjugal chastity vow which allows married knights to enter the militia and lay friars of Santiago to freely get married. Thus, the presence of women within the institution generated the need for the Order to assume the responsibility of taking care of and providing protection to the female relatives of its members.

The female monastic model of Santiago would essentially respond, therefore, to the need to provide temporary secure shelter and maintenance to the wives and daughters of the knights of the Order while they participated in military campaigns, along the parting couple periods established by the Rule – mainly Lent and Advent – and when they died, whether or not in combat, thus complying with the militia regulations. In addition, the channelling of the female conventual vocation is a logical consequence of the previous process, especially when this was the status that many of the knights' widows sought, and that the Rule also contemplated. Generally, and independently of their marital status, they were identified with the name of *freilas*, derived from their male namesake.<sup>7</sup>

The presence of secular *freilas* not blood related to any other member of the Order, and not attached to any specific convent, although they were admitted from the beginning,<sup>8</sup> seems to be the one with the shortest life within the organization, due to its difficult fit within the monastic structures that will be imposed over time.<sup>9</sup> This was at least the case in the Kingdom of Castile and León.

Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, the first female convent of the Order of Santiago, was founded as such within a period of renewal and intense vitality of female monasteries in the Iberian Peninsula. These were formed as entities of great social, political, and territorial power. Proof of this is the important emergence of female Cistercian foundations in the kingdoms of Castile and León, which were also highly concentrated in their northern area where, between 1160 and 1190, no less than 11 female Cistercian monasteries were founded.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ángela Muñoz carries out a very interesting analysis on the terminological field of the *freila* denomination, with imprecise semantic borders in: Ángela Muñoz Fernández, "Las expresiones femeninas del Monacato y la devoción: reclusas, monjas, freiras y beatas," in *Mujeres en silencio: el monacato femenino en la España medieval*, ed. José Ángel García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre, and Ramón Teja Casuso (Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico de la Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2017), 56–60. Although they appear also as *sorores*, *dueñas*, and *religiosas* in the sources – quite seldom as nuns – we shall mainly use the name *freila* to identify the Jacobean women in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–56.

<sup>10</sup> Gregoria Cavero Domínguez, "El Císter femenino en los reinos de León y Castilla en los siglos XII y XIII," in *Mujeres en silencio: el monacato femenino en la España medieval*, ed. José Ángel

Only one year after the transfer of Santa Eufemia to the Military Order of Santiago, Sigena, the first female convent of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem in the kingdom of Aragon, was founded in 1187. It was meant to gather in a single house all the Hospitaller sisters belonging to the castellanía of Amposta.<sup>11</sup>

It seems clear, at least with regard to Santiaguistas and Hospitallers, that these female foundations responded to needs arising from the situation of women within the institution. Once the problem in short-term practice with a single female founding was solved, there seems to be no interest for the generalization of more foundations of this kind.

Apart from the two above mentioned examples, no more female monastic foundations of military orders are known in the Iberian Peninsula until well into the thirteenth century. San Salvador de Pinilla and San Felices de Amaya, which belonged to the Order of Calatrava, would be the first ones. They are both dated to around 1220,<sup>12</sup> while the foundations of the rest of the female convents of the Order of Santiago – (two in Catalonia, two in the old kingdom of León, and one more in Castile),<sup>13</sup> together with two more belonging to the Hospitaller Order – took place from 1230 onwards. It is also along these years when Santa Eufemia, the oldest of the ones belonging to the Order of Santiago, reached its zenith in power and splendour. The lack of a documented date about the founding of the female convent of the Santiago Order at Santos, near Lisbon, whose church was given to the Order in 1194 by Sancho I and which was initially occupied by a male com-

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García de Cortázar y Ruiz de Aguirre, and Ramón Teja Casuso (Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico de la Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2017), 151–183, and 156–157. The 11 monasteries which Gregoria Caveró refers to in this paper should be San Salvador y Santa María de Ferreira de Pantón, Santa María de Haza, Nuestra Señora de la Consolación in Perales, Santa María del Escobar in Torquemada, Santa María de Carrizo, Santa María la Real de Gradefes, Santa María and San Andrés de Arroyo, Nuestra Señora del Valle de Armengil in Fuentecaliente, Santa María la Real de las Huelgas in Burgos, Santa María la Real de Cañas and San Salvador de Santa Colomba in Benavente.

<sup>11</sup> Mayra Miranda Bom, *Women in the military Orders of the Crusades* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 82–89.

<sup>12</sup> Carlos de Ayala Martínez, *Las órdenes militares hispánicas en la Edad Media (siglos XII–XV)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), 178. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, “San Felices de Amaya, monasterio medieval de la Orden de Calatrava,” in *Medievo Hispano. Estudios in memoriam del Prof. Derek W. Lomax*, (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 1995), 17–34. Enrique Daza Pardo, “San Salvador de Pinilla durante el siglo XIII (1218–1300). Aportaciones para su estudio,” *Wad-al-Hayara: revista de estudios de Guadalajara* 29 (2002): 41–56.

<sup>13</sup> María Soledad Ferrer-Vidal Díaz del Riguero, “Los monasterios femeninos de la Orden de Santiago durante la Edad Media,” in *Las Ordenes Militares en el Mediterraneo Occidental: siglos XIII–XVIII* (Ciudad Real: Instituto de Estudios Manchegos; Madrid: Casa Velázquez, 1989), 41–50.

munity of clerics of the Order, has originated some historiographic discrepancies. However, it seems that there were conventual *freilas* in Santos around 1226.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, we can affirm that of all the international and Hispanic military orders, the female monastic geography of the Military Order of Santiago is the one with the greatest implantation in the Iberian Peninsula throughout the thirteenth century. As such, it presents a significant number of convents spread around all the peninsular kingdoms which seem to respond to a territorial logic promoted by the Order that has no parallel in any other religious militia implanted in these territories.

### 1.2. *Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos*

The monastery of Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos is located in the Ojeda valley, north of the province of Palencia and along the Burejo river (Fig. 1). This area is known by the harshness of its temperatures, halfway between those of the high mountain climate and those of the continental plateau. This valley, together with those of the Boedo and Valdavia rivers, make up the intermediate territory between the last foothills of the Palencia mountains to the north and the great plain of Tierra de Campos to the south, lands that in the Middle Ages were part of the Castilian kingdom.

The physical and geomorphological characteristics of this region in which the territorial domain of Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos was concentrated defined and conditioned its economy. In the higher lands, livestock exploitation with shelf and transhumant cattle and logging have been, until a few years ago, the subsistence basis of a sparse population distributed in small and dispersed rural nuclei. In fact, the only urban foundations in the region that represent a minimum territorial planning are those of Aguilar de Campo, Cervera, and Herrera de Pisuerga, all of them dating to the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> In the southernmost valleys, such as those of La Ojeda, Boedo, and Valdavia, the arable area was – and continues to be – used for sowing cereal, although low temperatures greatly limit the agricultural potential of the territory.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Joel Silva Ferreira Mata, *A comunidade feminina da Ordem de Santiago: a Comenda de Santos na Idade Média* (Lisboa: Universidade Lusíada Editora, 2016), p. 22–23.

<sup>15</sup> José Ortega Valcárcel and Milagros Alario Trigueros, *La Montaña Palentina* (Valladolid: Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid, 1999), 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

The monastery of Santa Eufemia presents a long-lasting diachrony.<sup>17</sup> With a remote origin that is lost in time, we know that in 946 a monastery already existed in Cozuelos, housing a male community which was ruled by an abbot.<sup>18</sup> According to Julio González, the founding of this convent, initially dedicated to saints Cosme and Damián, together with the stable consolidation of the population throughout the Ojeda valley, must have taken place at the beginning of the tenth century.<sup>19</sup>

From its foundation until 1100 the monastery of Cozuelos remained as an entity independent of any kind of superior domain. The abbot and the community of Cozuelos acquired a certain pre-eminence in the region over the years and the monastery, as an object of the devotion of the faithful who lived in the surrounding area, was enriched with land donations and personal commendations which increased the monastic economic capacity. The territorial expansion of the monastic domain is limited to its surrounding and bordering areas. The central nucleus of what, over the years, became an important convent of the Order of Santiago in northern Castile was coming into existence.

Located near the Pisuerga river, the Cozuelos monastery is placed very close to the line dividing the dioceses of Burgos and Palencia since the tenth century. In 1100, Alfonso VI gave the monastery of Cozuelos, which was already under the sole dedication of Santa Eufemia virgin, to the bishop of Burgos.<sup>20</sup> The mon-

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<sup>17</sup> On Santa Eufemia's history, including a historical reconstruction of the medieval monastic buildings, demolished in nineteenth century, its inhabitants and the daily life within the monastic walls, see: – María Ferrer-Vidal, *Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, el primer convento santiaguista femenino; puertas adentro* (Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> María donates a vineyard, near the one of Santa Leocadia, to Egregio, abbot of the monastery of saints Cosme and Damian in Cozuelos, 946, Madrid. Biblioteca Nacional de España (henceforth as: BN), Manuscripts (henceforth as: Mss.) 13065, fol. 208r. The manuscript volumes 13063, 13064 and 13065 of the above-mentioned library collect verbatim copies of a good number of documents of Santa Eufemia convent archive – preserved in the convent of Santa Fe, in Toledo – ordered by the Consejo de las Ordenes Militares and produced in the second half of eighteenth century under the supervision of the Jesuit Andrés Marcos Burriel, in order to support the beatification process of doña Sancha Alfonso. Almost the whole of Santa Fe's archive was lost in nineteenth century, so these copies have been essential elements to elaborate the historiographical account of the first female Jacobean convent.

<sup>19</sup> Julio González González, “El monasterio de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos” *Studia Silensia* 4, no. 2 (1977): 409–10.

<sup>20</sup> Luciano Serrano, *El obispado de Burgos y Castilla primitiva desde el siglo v hasta el XIII*, vol. III (Madrid, Instituto Valencia de don Juan, 1935), 110 (Source edition no. 53, Alfonso VI da al obispo de Burgos el monasterio de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, con obligación de dos capellanías, que han de establecerse, una en el dicho monasterio, y la otra en la catedral de Burgos, Burgos, 20 Agosto 1100).

astery was transferred to the bishop with the whole of its properties. In exchange for the donation, two chaplaincies of the income provided by the monastery to the bishopric were endowed to pray for the soul of the king and his relatives, one in Cozuelos and the other in Burgos' cathedral. The reasons why the monastery of Santa Eufemia became dependent on the Burgos diocese are not specified in the sources. The belonging of the monastery of Santa Eufemia to the Burgos bishopric was ratified by Paschal II in a bull establishing the limits between this diocese and that of Osma, issued in 1109.<sup>21</sup>

On 4 December 1186, King Alfonso VIII donated the monastery of San Pedro de Cervatos to the bishop of Burgos, in exchange for that of Santa Eufemia.<sup>22</sup> Two days after the writing of the previous document, the same Castilian king gave the monastery of Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos to Sancho Fernández, third master of the Military Order of Santiago.<sup>23</sup> The location of the monastery of Santa Eufemia, with open access to the Polaciones valleys where the summer pastures of the Order's cattle herds were concentrated developed a privileged situation also with regard to the popular pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela and Santo Toribio de Liébana in the rear. It was therefore protected from the risks of the Muslim border areas and, above all, ready to be occupied immediately, which would undoubtedly be determining factors for it to be the master of the Order of Santiago himself who promoted the necessary barter so that it was Cozuelos and not Cervatos the monastery transferred to the Order by the Castilian king.

Although the intention that Santa Eufemia was occupied by women of the Order seems clear, the truth is that its master installed in Cozuelos a clerical male

<sup>21</sup> Serrano, *El obispado*, 136 (Source edition no. 70, Pascual II ratifica los límites de la diócesis de burgos en relación con la de Osma, establecidos en el concilio de Husillos; declara que pertenecen a su obispo la villa de Henar, la granja de Rabanera y el monasterio de Santa Eufemia de ozuelos, con sus pertenencias, el de Berlangas y conforma todas las donaciones hechas a la catedral, Roma, 30 Noviembre 1109).

<sup>22</sup> José Luis Martín, *Orígenes de la Orden Militar de Santiago (1170–1195)* (Barcelona: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1974), 392–93 (Source edition no. 212, Alfonso VIII da a Marino, obispo de Burgos, el monasterio de Cervatos y recibe a cambio el de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, Plasencia, 4 diciembre 1186). On the lordship of the Burgos bishopric in this area, see: Carmen Díez Herrera, "El señorío del obispado de Burgos en Cantabria en la Edad Media," *Hispania Sacra*, LXIX, no. 140 (2017): 442.

<sup>23</sup> María Dolores Guerrero Lafuente and María Angustias Álvarez Castillo, "Documentación medieval sobre el monasterio de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos contenida en el Ms. 13063 de la Biblioteca Nacional." *Cuadernos de Historia Medieval y /Ciencias y Técnicas Historiográficas* 18–19 (1993–1994): 322–23 (Source edition no. 5, Alfonso VIII y su esposa, doña Leonor otorgan a don Sancho Fernández como maestre de la Caballería de Santiago el monasterio de Santa Eufemia con todas sus posesiones, Plasencia, 6 diciembre 1186).



community ruled by a prior, already documented in 1188.<sup>24</sup> Both the liturgy and the daily life of the new female community were yet to be created and defined, and this would prevent the stable establishment of a community of *freilas*. At the same time, it could help to explain the stay of the Order's clerics who, commanded by their prior, would undertake this task as important and necessary, for it was urgent. It also seems clear that the Order did not consider the possibility that there were women taking charge of or collaborating in this essential task for the future of female monastic life within the Order, especially in this early period. Four years later, in 1192, a sale charter carried out by the prior of Santa Eufemia certifies the stay in Cozuelos of the male community with important news: among the witnesses, there is one only woman, doña Gotroja. We are, doubtless, before a novel piece of information, a transcendental data for the history of the Order of Santiago and for our monastery. This is the first conventual *freila* to be established in the new convent from whom news has reached us. Furthermore, we know that she was the first commander – or head – of the community of *freilas* in the convent.<sup>25</sup>

In 1195 we again record a relevant event in the history of the monastery. The church of Santa Eufemia received the donation of some nearby plots of land.<sup>26</sup> The beneficiaries, as specified in the document, are *ecclesia Sancta Eufemiae et religionis foeminis et viris*. We identify for the first time an organized religious female community in Santa Eufemia, sharing the same monastic space with the Jacobean clerics who were already there at least since 1188. There are women confirming the donation, referred to as some of the sisters – *sorores* – who live in Santa Eufemia under the authority of a commander – *commendatrix* –, named domna Guntroio, whose presence we already knew of since 1192. In addition to her, the other six documented *freilas* are called Sancia Roderici, María Matana, María Sancti Iacobi, María Adefonsi, Urraca Pelagii and Elvira Martini, although the female community would for sure be larger.

In the last years of the twelfth century, the male community of our convent disappeared, and since that time, it would host secular and conventual women of the

<sup>24</sup> Martín, *Orígenes*, 417–18 (Source edition no. 241, Pedro Franco, comendador de Uclés e Iñigo, “tenente” de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos dan a Domingo una heredad en San Pedro de Tudes, por la que Domingo pagará anualmente cuatro áureos el día de San Juan Bautista y una “ofercionem” de dos carneros, una carga de vino y otra de sidra; a la muerte de Domingo, la mitad de sus bienes pasará a la Orden, 17 Agosto, 1188).

<sup>25</sup> Juan Abad and Mari Pérez, from Payo, give a plot in Tapiola to prior don Eneco and the friars of Santa Eufemia, 1192, BN, Mss. 13063, fol. 73r. –73v.

<sup>26</sup> Armildo Gutierrez and others give some land in Medina and Quintanatello to the religious – men and women – of Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, 31 August 1195, BN, Mss. 13063, fol. 75r. –76r.

Order of Santiago under the spiritual authority of a female commander, and at least until the end of the thirteenth century, a male figure, appointed by the master among the knights of the Order, oversaw economic affairs and was entrusted with authority in those matters.

Throughout the thirteenth century, the monastery of Santa Eufemia continued the clear expansive process previously started. The monastery acquired a sufficient degree of relevance to justify the fact that its inhabitants received large tax exemptions from the Crown. The territorial domain of Santa Eufemia grew incessantly along these years thanks, mainly, to the generous private initiatives and to the properties given by the Santiago masters, in addition to the noble patronage that took place during the second half of the century, a direct object of study in the present paper.

Throughout the fourteenth century, our monastery faced a tumultuous period throughout the kingdom of Castile. This was characterized by years of adverse weather conditions which caused poor harvests and famine in the population in 1339 and 1340.<sup>27</sup> We also know of the existence of destructive locust plagues that ravaged Castile in 1325 and 1326.<sup>28</sup> On this weakened health population, by the middle of the century, the Bubonic Plague raged in the Iberian Peninsula, in particular along coastal areas, decimating its inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, there was a generalized insecure environment both within the Castilian kingdom, with the civil war which ended with the Burgundian dynasty and established the Trastamaras on the Castilian throne, as well as beyond our borders with Hundred Years War. The lands of Palencia were, like all, affected by these crises.<sup>30</sup>

Within this general juncture, the fact that most influenced the historical development of our monastery along these years was the transfer to the south of the Order's political, economic, and military activities. The Order of Santiago accumulated enormous territories with the definitive conquest of Extremadura and Andalusia, properties that needed urgently to be defended, controlled, and con-

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<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, *The Black Death* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Julián Montemayor, "Les invasions de sauterelles dans l'Espagne interieur," in *Les catastrophes naturelles dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne. Actes des XV Journées Internationales d'Histoire de l'Abbaye de Flaran*, ed. Bartolomé Bennassar (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1996), 262.

<sup>29</sup> David Herlihy, "The Black Death and the Transformation of the West," in *The Black Death*, ed. Elizabeth A. Leffeldt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Julio Valdeón Baruque, "La crisis bajomedieval en las tierras palentinas," in *Actas del III Congreso de Historia de Palencia*, ed. María Valentina Calleja González (Palencia: Diputación Provincial de Palencia, 1995), 333–46.

solidated both demographically and economically. The northern properties of the Order remained, therefore, quite isolated and their growth was stagnated.

The documents of these years show a slowdown in the territorial expansion of Santa Eufemia convent, which in turn would provide the monastery with evident stability features. On the other hand, the economic prosperity of the monastic domain is maintained and, although it does not increase greatly, there are no significant changes in it. In contrast, and explainable in the sense that the prestige of the monastery had already reached high levels, both the monarchs and the highest leaders of the Order frequently took special care to provide the monastery with benefits, which at the end of the century reached the optimum point in the field of taxation from which, due to different privileges, it is exempt. Even so, and in general, the beginning of a recession process is also perceived, incipient in these years, which will continue along the following ones.

Throughout the fifteenth century, practically the entire peninsula was already Christian: the Muslims only controlled the kingdom of Granada which, by the end of the century, fell for good. The Military Order of Santiago, which was born as a brotherhood of lay knights and was defined by the values of the crusade and war against the infidel, possessing its own spiritual ideal by sanctioning the religious character of a secular life,<sup>31</sup> gradually lost this characteristic feature. This led to a process of aristocratization of the Order, a phenomenon that was not exclusive to the Santiago order, but also occurred in the rest of the military religious orders, both Hispanic and international. All of the military orders developed until they became large and powerful political and economic institutions. Their political utility came to relegate their religious character and chivalric elements to the background, while their economic saturation in turn absorbed their political utility and led to their evolution into class or state organizations.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, founded and born on the basis of a military and religious ideal of war against Islam, with the predominant military activity disappearing from the scene, the principles on which the military orders were institutionally built faltered. As such, an organizational readjustment or institutional reform to guarantee its future survival was of prime importance.

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<sup>31</sup> Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 289.

<sup>32</sup> Johan Huizinga, *El Otoño de la Edad Media*, trans. Jose Gaos (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1973), 131. On the aristocratization process of the military orders in Portugal, see: Luis Filipe Oliveira, "A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores: As Ordens Militares de Avis e de Santiago (1330-1449)" *Medievalista – em linha* –, 5 (2008): 1-5, review of the PhD by the author.

In the case of the Order of Santiago, lay members were integrated into the court nobility while male monasteries were reformed, adopting the Augustinian Rule.<sup>33</sup> In this new situation, female convents, without their own fitting place, became spaces of indefiniteness that, according to the Order, required further regulation and control. The chosen way – not a new one – was the imposition of the monastic enclosure in all of them. The instrument used by the Order to carry out this spatial confinement, and also the imposition of internal and external personal closure are the visitations periodically effected to all of its convents. These began in the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup>

The process of forced cloistering of women by the Military Order of Santiago culminated with the imposition of the monastic reform of the Catholic Monarchs which the Trent council consolidated, unifying the conventual life of all female monasteries, subject to closure and with strict vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and community life.<sup>35</sup> This was not without tough resistance from the conventual female communities of the Order.<sup>36</sup>

Santa Eufemia's community had to endure the interference of the Master of the Order of Santiago in its affairs with some frequency. These affected both the assets and income of the monastery and the appointment of its commander over the years. Such actions were not always detrimental to the convent, although they were, in our opinion, and according to María Echániz, an obvious sign of the marginality of female spaces within their own institution in the Castile and León

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, "La Reforma de la Orden de Santiago," *En la España medieval*, 9 (1986): 960.

<sup>34</sup> Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 253.

<sup>35</sup> Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 61. On the ecclesiastical reform of the Catholic Monarchs, see: José García Oro, *La reforma de los religiosos españoles en tiempo de los Reyes Católicos* (Valladolid: Instituto Isabel la Católica de Historia Eclesiástica, 1989); José García Oro, "Conventualismo y observancia. La reforma de las órdenes religiosas en los siglos XV y XVI," in *Historia de la Iglesia en España*, ed. Ricardo García-Villoslada (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1979), 3, 211–349; José García Oro, *Cisneros y la reforma del clero español en tiempo de los Reyes Católicos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1971); Juan Antonio Bonachía Hernández, "La iglesia de Castilla, la reforma del clero y el concilio de Aranda de 1473," *Biblioteca: Estudio e Investigación*, no. 25 (2010): 269–298.

<sup>36</sup> On the resistance to the reform in the convent of Santa Eufemia: María Soledad Ferrer-Vidal Díaz del Riguero, "Resistencia a la imposición de la clausura femenina en la Orden Militar de Santiago: el caso de doña Berenguela Bernal, comendadora de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos en 1482," *Hispania Sacra*, 72, no. 146 (2020): 439–450. On the persistence of this resistance over time in the female convents of the Order of Santiago: Ángela Atienza López, "Las grietas de la clausura tridentina: Polémicas y limitaciones de las políticas de encerramiento de las monjas... todavía con Felipe IV," *Hispania*, 74, no. 248 (2014): 807–834.

kingdoms. This is reflected in the greater vulnerability and decrease in autonomy, especially in convents located in rural settings, like the one under study in this paper, and in a more pronounced way along the fifteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

Halfway through this century, the Order started considering the possibility of moving the convent of Santa Eufemia to a new place. This transfer was difficult to achieve, since it required explicit authorization from the Pontifical See in Rome, and such procedures with the Holy See were normally long and tiresome. Master Alonso de Cárdenas, after making the decision in the General Chapter of 1485, wrote to Rome requesting permission on behalf of his Order to move certain convents – San Marcos de León, Sancti Spiritus de Salamanca and Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos – all of them belonging to the Military Order of Santiago.<sup>38</sup>

In a singularly rapid way, by 1486 Pope Innocent VIII authorised the transfer of these three convents to the places that the Order considered most convenient.<sup>39</sup> Their new destinations would be Llerena, Ocaña and Guadalcanal, places located to the south, much closer to the new and extensive Santiago properties in Extremadura, La Mancha, and Andalusia. However, the initial relocation plans were never fully implemented. Neither San Marcos nor Sancti Spiritus changed their location, and only the monastery of Santa Eufemia was moved. It was relocated not to the initially planned place (Ocaña), but to the city of Toledo, which did not take place until 16 years after the achievement of the papal permission to do it.

On 15 December 1500, queen Isabel I, life administrator of the Order since 1493,<sup>40</sup> commended Fray Juan de Tolosa, a Franciscan friar of her trust, with the task of taking care of the transfer of the *freilas* from Santa Eufemia to Toledo. He was instructed that this should be carried out as soon as possible.<sup>41</sup> That same day it is registered by the queen that the destination of the *freilas* of Santa Eufemia in Toledo would be the monastery of Santa Fe.<sup>42</sup> Most probably, although we lack documentary evidence, the transfer order would arrive at Santa Eufemia, totally

<sup>37</sup> Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 61.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 263–264.

<sup>39</sup> Pope Innocent VIII allows the transfer of Santa Eufemia convent to a more convenient location, 1486, Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (henceforth as: AHN), OM, c. 95, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 281.

<sup>41</sup> Queen Isabel I lets her confessor know about her command to Fray Juan de Tolosa for the urgent transfer of Santa Eufemia's female community to Toledo, 15 December 1500, Granada, Simancas. Archivo General de Simancas (henceforth as: AGS), CCA, CED, 4, 242, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Queen Isabel I lets her confessor know about her decision of lodging the nuns coming from Santa Eufemia in the convent of Santa Fe in Toledo, which should previously be adapted to their needs, 25 December 1500, AGS, CCA, CED, 4, 242, 2.

unexpected, sometime in the year 1502, and in this way the monastic life in Cozuelos ended permanently.

## 2. NOBILITY PATRONAGE IN SANTA EUFEMIA

When contemplating the foundational panorama of female monasteries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Castile and León, it is well known that the nobility had vested interest in sponsoring many of them. They established themselves as founders of the new establishments to which they endowed economically and in which relatives of the founders used to profess on a regular basis. This situation occurred frequently among members of the same family over several generations.<sup>43</sup> Generally, the founders and their relatives chose to be buried in these monasteries, which they also endowed appropriately to guarantee permanent prayers for the salvation of their souls after their passing.<sup>44</sup> With regard to the Hispanic Military Order of Calatrava and according to Carlos de Ayala and María Raquel Torres, the foundations of its two female houses were promoted by wealthy families, belonging to the local nobility. These monasteries appeared, therefore, as areas of family solidarity and as a way of connection and projection of the Order with the upper social strata. This was accomplished through the patronage and burial of noblewomen willing to be buried within their walls.<sup>45</sup>

Male convents of the Military Order of Santiago always owned the prestige coming out from the victories against Muslims, and were also frequently chosen

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<sup>43</sup> An example: in the case of the Haros, within the family lineage there are the female Cistercian foundations of Cañas, Arroyo, Vileña, Otero de las Dueñas, Perales and Herce between 1160 and 1246. A good number of abbesses and nuns of these monasteries belong to the same family. Raquel Alonso Álvarez, *El monasterio cisterciense de Santa María de Cañas (La Rioja). Arquitectura gótica, patrocinio aristocrático y protección real* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2004), 28. Simón Ruiz de Haro, lord of the Cameros and husband of Sancha Alfonso, belonged to this family group.

<sup>44</sup> On monasteries as spaces for noble burial, see: Marta Serrano Coll, “Espacios monásticos como locus sepulturae: enterramientos nobiliarios en el románico hispánico,” in *Monasterios y nobles en la España del románico: entre la devoción y la estrategia*, ed. José Ángel García de Cortázar and Ramón Teja Casuso (Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico de la Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2014), 139–175.

<sup>45</sup> Ayala, *Las Ordenes*, 180. María Raquel Torres Jiménez, “Mujeres de Órdenes Militares, siglos XII–XVI. La realidad cotidiana en el Monasterio Calatravo de la Asunción de Almagro según la visita de 1546,” *Revista de las Ordenes Militares* 11 (2020): 80.

as burial sites by masters and knights of the Order.<sup>46</sup> The very essence of the religious militia, primarily dedicated to the expansion of Christianity in the battle field provided its lay members with the dignity of an ecclesiastical knight,<sup>47</sup> while clerical members, who provided spiritual assistance to their brethren in combat, participated to some extent in it.

Obviously, nothing of the above could be applied to the conventual *freilas* of the Military Order of Santiago, and this is particularly evident in the absence of noble references in its female monasteries until the second half of the thirteenth century in Castile-León. The Santiago monasteries of San Vicente de Junqueras and San Pedro de la Piedra were promoted and founded in Catalonian lands by two noble women: María de Terrasa and Constanza de Anglesola. On the contrary, the initial male monastery of Santos, later occupied by women in Portugal, seems to have directly been founded by the master of the Order of Santiago, Sancho Fernández, by 1194.<sup>48</sup> Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos, the first female foundation of the Santiago Order, was promoted by this same master and it seems evident in this case that the women of its initial community did not belong to the noble estate. The other two female convents of the Order which existed until 1268, namely those of the Destriana commandery and the female community of the Hospital de San Mateo in Ávila, which only appear as such between 1256 and 1286, present the same problem. We hardly have names of *freilas* who inhabited them, and the few that have reached us are completely devoid of noble references. The subsequent connections of the monastery of Santa Eufemia with members of the Castilian-Leonese high nobility, together with the noble foundation of the last female Jaco-

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<sup>46</sup> On burial practices of brethren and masters, see: Carlos de Ayala Martínez and Philippe Josserand, "Vida y eternidad. La actitud de los freiles de las órdenes militares ante el problema de la muerte en Castilla (ss. XII–XIV)," *Deus vult. Miscellanea di studi sugli ordini militari*, 1 (2011): 53–67. On burial places of Jacobean masters, see: Manuel López Fernández, "La iglesia de Santa María de Tudía y los enterramientos de tres maestros santiaguistas." *Revista Ordenes Militares*, 9 (2017): 35–76 and Manuel López Fernández, "Sobre la muerte y enterramientos de un maestre santiaguista." *Revista de Estudios Extremeños*, 59, 2 (2003): 757–775.

<sup>47</sup> Sam Zeno Conedera, *Ecclesiastical Knights. The military orders in Castile (1150–1330)* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 41–44.

<sup>48</sup> Ferrer-Vidal, "Los monasterios," 44; Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 58. Many of the *freilas* in Santos came from the wealthy urban families in Lisbon, not always connected with the high nobility lineages: Luis Filipe Oliveira, "Uma barrega régia, um mercador de Lisboa e as freiras de Santos." in *Lisboa Medieval. Os rostos da cidade*, coords. Luis Krus, Luís Filipe Oliveira and Joao Luís Fontes (Lisboa: Horizonte, 2007), 182–196. The same occurred with the ones in Sancti Spiritus, in Salamanca: Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres*, 203–207.

bean convent in medieval times, Sancti Spiritus de Salamanca, were promoted, as we will see below, by another master of the Military Order of Santiago.

### 2.1. *The Alfonso Gil lineage*

The maximum expansion of the monastic domain of the convent of Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos matches chronologically with two important facts. The first is the long tenure of Pelay Pérez Correa as the Master of the Order of Santiago (1242–1275), and the second concerns the close bond between the Order and the offspring of the concubinary union of Alfonso IX, king of León and the Portuguese lady Teresa Gil de Soverosa, the last of his mistresses.<sup>49</sup> In addition, of the four siblings resulting from this extramarital relationship, two linked themselves to female monasteries of the Order of Santiago. Martín Alfonso founded, together with his wife, María Méndez de Sousa, the convent of Sancti Spiritus in the city of Salamanca in 1268, while his sister Sancha, still married to Simón Ruiz de los Cameros, professed as a secular *freila* in Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos in 1270, a convent that was also favoured by some of her relatives and acquaintances. It is our opinion that this was not at all accidental, and could reflect a strategy designed ultimately to provide the Military Order with the prestige that noble patronage would bring to its female foundations in Castile and León. This association also would further strengthen the position of the Alfonso siblings and their Portuguese mother within the Castilian court, once Castile and León were united in the person of Fernando III, their father's brother, and in that of Alfonso X, their nephew.

The Soverosa were a relevant family group present in the Portuguese court during, above all, the reigns of Alfonso II and Sancho II, until the latter's death in 1248.<sup>50</sup> Their important properties extended around the border areas between the kingdoms of Portugal, Galicia, and León, just at the time when all those border lines were being defined. The name Soverosa, identifying the entire family, is documented for the first time associated with Gil Vázquez in the early years of the thir-

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<sup>49</sup> On the concubinary relations of Alfonso IX of León, see: Inés Calderón Medina, "Las otras mujeres del rey. El concubinatio regio en el reino de León (1157–1230)", in *Seminario Medieval Universidade do Porto*, ed. María do Rosário Ferreira, Ana Sofia Laranjinha and José Carlo Ribeiro Miranda (Oporto: Instituto de Filosofia da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2009–2011), 255–289.

<sup>50</sup> Inés Calderón Medina, *Los Soverosa: una parentela nobiliaria entre tres reinos. Poder y parentesco en la Edad Media hispana (ss. XI–XIII)* (Valladolid: Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid, 2018), 17.



teenth century. The civil war that broke out in Portugal in 1211 caused the exile to León of part of the Portuguese nobility facing Alfonso II, since Alfonso IX, the Leonese king, had taken the side of his sister and opponent, Teresa of Portugal, who had been his first wife. Entire families with this origin generated a Portuguese party in the Leonese court. Gil Vázquez de Soverosa then designed a matrimonial strategy for himself and his descendants, so that they could be well positioned in the environment of the Castilian court during the reign of Fernando III and his successors.<sup>51</sup>

Teresa Gil de Soverosa, daughter of Gil Vázquez de Soverosa and María Aires de Fornelos, was born in Portugal. She would arrive in León during the second decade of the thirteenth century. In the Leonese court she received the attentions of the king, much older than her, and both were united in a concubinary relationship which lasted from 1218 until the death of the monarch in 1230. They had four children, Martín, Sancha, Urraca and María, whose marriages created kinship ties with the main families of the Castilian kingdom (Fig. 2).<sup>52</sup>

The problem of the succession of the Leonese king Alfonso IX arisen after the death in full youth of the only male child of his first marriage to Teresa of Portugal affected the Alfonso Gil siblings. Supporters and opponents of the Leonese crown joining the Castilian one in the person of Fernando, son of Alfonso IX and Berenguela, queen of Castile, his second wife, generated a high level of tension in both kingdoms. This situation induced the official silencing of the existence of this other concubinary lineage which could represent the alternative union of Leon and Portugal.

May we recall at this point that in the case of illegitimate son or daughter of a king, the lack of a canonical link between the parents weighed much less than the fact that royal blood ran through their veins. In general, therefore, we are faced with family groups linked to the high nobility and sometimes holding notable power quotas, without their illegitimacy representing a social loss. Furthermore, this situation would change radically, and concubinage would be considered morally reprehensible. This affected, for example, and very directly, the memory of Sancha Alfonso already in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as we will see further below.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>52</sup> Inés Calderón Medina, *Cum magnatibus regni mei. La nobleza y la monarquía leonesas durante los reinados de Fernando II y Alfonso IX (1157–1230)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2011), 120–122.

<sup>53</sup> Calderón, *Los Soverosa*, 155, and 207.

According to Inés Calderón, master Pérez Correa, a Lusitanian by birth, was related to the Soverosas, who directly witnessed the Portuguese king's support to the Order of Santiago since 1235. Later on, don Pelay attracted a good number of Portuguese nobles during his mastership of the Order of Santiago.<sup>54</sup> The descendants of Teresa Gil and Alfonso IX were among them.

It is also interesting to draw attention to the lack of offspring or the premature death of the few descendants' fruit of the intra or extramarital unions of Alfonso Gil de Soverosa's siblings. Any action aimed at maintaining the memory and prestige of its members should therefore be carried out on their own initiative. Evidently, any hypothetical risk that this family could suppose for the Castilian-Leonese crowns, recently joined, was absolutely avoided by the absence of a second generation.

Master Pelay Pérez Correa could see in these circumstances a double opportunity for the Military Order of Santiago. On the one hand, the connection of some members of the Alfonso Gil lineage – their Portuguese relatives – with the main female convents of the Order in Castile and León would provide them with the noble prestige they lacked until then, coming in addition from a family of royal blood. The Order of Santiago needed to be at the same level as the rest of the female monastic establishments sponsored by members of the nobility and in this way it would be possible.

On the other hand, he had to cherish the possibility of increasing the territorial domain of the Military Order with the extensive properties inherited by the four siblings Alfonso Gil from their mother in Galicia and Portugal, and from their father in Leonese lands, which the master knew well. The way to reach this final aim would be to promote the necessary agreements with each of them, with the certainty that at the end of their days the entire territory incorporated into the domain of the Order would revert to it in a definitive way, since they lacked direct descendants.

A strong connection between the illegitimate offspring of the last king of León and Teresa Gil with the Military Order of Santiago would undoubtedly strengthen their own position within the Castilian nobility, considering their maternal Portuguese origin. In addition, they could choose to be buried in one of the convents of the Order, perpetuating thus their memory in the best possible environment and guaranteeing perpetually the necessary prayers for the salvation of their souls.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 119, 147.

We cannot ignore the evidence suggesting the attempt to legitimate this concubinary lineage by the Military Order in the visit records of Santa Eufemia and Sancti Spiritus by the end of fifteenth century. In them, both Sancha and Martín Alfonso are referred to as *infantes*,<sup>55</sup> a title reserved to the rightful descendants of the monarchs and never used by themselves in life, as they had no right to it due to their bastard origin.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, the Order was extremely interested in promoting the prestige coming from this altered memory, which reached its maximum level, as we shall see, when promoting the initiation of the beatification process of Sancha Alfonso.

As said above, in parallel to the transfer to the Military Order of their inheritances after their deaths, Martín and Sancha Alfonso linked themselves to two female monasteries of the Order of Santiago. One of them, that of Sancti Spiritus, was founded in the city of Salamanca. Its founders and main promoters, Martín Alfonso and his wife, María Méndez de Sousa, decided to be buried there. Each of their tombs were housed in an arcosolium located on each side of the presbytery inside the convent church, which was also the parish of the neighbourhood. Both endowed chaplaincies to perpetually pray for their souls. Sancha Alfonso decided to profess as a secular Jacobean *freila* in the first female house of the Order, Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos. Likewise, her patronage had the counterpart of her tomb being located according to her will. Dona Sancha's donations to her convent also imply the endowment of two chaplains to celebrate daily masses for her soul in perpetuity. The sepulchres of these three nobles are currently preserved within the convent churches in which they were buried in the second half of the thirteenth century.

## 2.2. Doña Sancha Alfonso

This Leonese lady and her relationship with the convent of Santa Eufemia deserves a bit deeper analysis, not really due to her life trajectory, about which we know quite little, but rather because of the legend created around her when her body was exhumed in Santa Eufemia's church, found uncorrupted and transferred to Toledo in 1608.

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<sup>55</sup> We shall henceforth use the expressions *infante* (masculine) and *infanta* (feminine) when referring to Martín and Sancha Alfonso, as they are entitled in the visit records of Santa Eufemia and Sancti Spiritus in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

<sup>56</sup> Calderón, *Los Soverosa*, 199.

There are many monasteries that draw on fantastic and miraculous founding legends. These were much more attractive than the historical reality of their birth, whose details may sometimes have been forgotten over the years, in addition to providing them with an important dose of prestige.<sup>57</sup> Constructed memory is also used as a mechanism to further strengthen the identity of these monastic establishments, as well as their own legitimacy. This is especially true in times when such legitimacy could be questioned. We are thus facing a tool used by all institutions, from the regular and secular religious to the Crown, the nobility and the urban powers.<sup>58</sup>

The creation of a memory of the past triggered by a later event is precisely what happens in the case at hand. In it, both the Military Order of Santiago and its monastery of Santa Fe in Toledo seek to increase and reaffirm their institutional prestige through the construction of a memory around the figure of doña Sancha Alfonso and her life, linked to the Military Order and to the monastery of Santa Eufemia. We should bear in mind that this community was transferred and formed the first one of the new foundation of the Order of Santiago in Toledo in 1502. In this way, the memory of the figure of doña Sancha, who had remained hidden in the private sphere of the monastery where she decided to be buried in 1270, gained renewed relevance in the early years of seventeenth century as a result of the transfer of her mortal remains from Palencia to Toledo in 1608.

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<sup>57</sup> Javier García Turza, “Los monjes y la escritura de la memoria: identidad y poder en Castilla (siglos XI–XIII),” in *La memoria del poder, el poder de la memoria: XXVII Semana de Estudios Medievales*, ed. Esther López Ojeda (Nájera: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2017), 123–162; José Ángel García de Cortázar and Ramón Teja Casuso (ed.), *Los monasterios medievales en sus emplazamientos: lugares de memoria de lo sagrado* (Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico de la Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2015). In the case of the Cistercian foundations of Veruela and Tulebras, the fantastic story that incorporates two divine apparitions that inspire their founder, Pedro de Atares, in the twelfth century, is not written for the first time until the last years of sixteenth century. García M. Colombas, *Monasterio de Tulebras* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1987), 29–31.

<sup>58</sup> Ester Penas González, “La memoria del pasado como mecanismo de afirmación en el Císter femenino castellano durante la Baja Edad Media y la Edad Moderna: materialidad y discurso escrito,” *Estudios Medievales Hispánicos*, no. 6 (2018): 141–142; José Antonio Jara Fuente, Georges Martin and Isabel Alfonso Antón, *Construir la identidad en la Edad Media* (Cuenca: Universidad Castilla la Mancha, 2010); Esther López Ojeda, *La memoria del poder, el poder de la memoria* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2017); José Ángel García de Cortázar, *Monasterios y monarcas: fundación, presencia y memoria regia en los monasterios hispanos medievales* (Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico de la Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2012).

Let us start with a short review of the little biographic information of this woman which has been passed down in the sources. We know that she was one of the daughters of the king of León, Alfonso IX and Teresa Gil. Her birth probably took place, along with that of her siblings, between the second and third decades of the thirteenth century. Sancha spent her childhood in the Galician lands of her maternal family. The first direct news that we keep from Sancha Alfonso in the archive of Santa Eufemia, later transferred to the one of Santa Fe, is a document issued by king Alfonso X in 1256. In it he gives to Simón Ruiz de los Cameros and his wife, Sancha Alfonso, the town of Tormantos with its castle and all the properties owned by the Crown in Belorado, including the town's cellar.<sup>59</sup> Doña Sancha bought some estates in Tardajos from the archdeacon of Aza in 1268,<sup>60</sup> properties which would end up being added to the domain of Santa Eufemia some years later. She also bought from her husband in 1269 his half of the goods that the king had donated to them in Tormantos and Belorado 13 years before.<sup>61</sup> The price for the transaction was agreed at 5,000 maravedís, which the lord of los Cameros deducted from the previous debt of 13,000 he had with whom appears to have continued being his legitimate wife. A few months earlier, Sancha Alfonso, by herself, had already become affiliated to the Military Order of Santiago, whom she had made the beneficiary, after her passing, of all the territories inherited from her parents in exchange for an important cash amount that the master agreed to yearly grant to her while alive from other properties of the Order, mainly based in Castile.<sup>62</sup> In 1270 doña Sancha decided to profess a secular *freila* given her mari-

<sup>59</sup> King Alfonso X gives the town of Tormantos and all the royal properties in the one of Belorado, including its cellar, to Simón Ruiz de los Cameros and his wife, Sancha Alfonso, 3 August 1256, AHN, OM, c. 94, 26.

<sup>60</sup> Diego Alfonso, archdeacon of Aza, sells to Sancha Alfonso his houses and land in Tardajos, 2 February 1267, BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 76r. –79r. and BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 58r. –60v.

<sup>61</sup> Simon Ruiz de los Cameros sells to his wife, Sancha Alfonso, his half of the properties that both received from king Alfonso X in Tormantos and Belorado, 23 October 1269, AHN, OM, c. 94, 39. Copied in doc. 40 of the same file and in BN, Ms. 13064, fol. 74r. –76v.

<sup>62</sup> Doña Sancha Alfonso donates to the Military Order of Santiago, after her death and in the person of its master, Pelay Pérez Correa, all inheritance received from her parents in León, Galicia and Portugal, 15 June 1269, AHN, OM, c. 94, 37. The fact that Doña Sancha excluded from the donation to the Military Order all the goods shared with her husband is significant. It seems to indicate that the marriage bond remained intact in that moment, at least in theory. It is also clear that the sale of the part of Tormantos and Belorado made by don Simón to his wife is integrated into a larger negotiation between both spouses, which had previously generated an important debt of don Simon with his wife, and that probably, given her near death and the lack of offspring of the marriage, it would ultimately go unpaid. As soon as she closed the purchase to her husband, doña Sancha could already freely dispose of all this patrimony, and it seems

tal status. She did this in Santa Eufemia for life, when she was about 50 years old, and probably already suffering leprosy.<sup>63</sup> The master received her as such into the Order under the condition of celebrating perpetually two daily sung masses in the monastic church from the first day after her death onwards for the salvation of her soul.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the lands he gave to doña Sancha when she initially joined the Order were to be transferred to her convent upon her passing. That same year of 1270, after endowing the monastery with the income of several of her properties and assigning herself its specific destinations,<sup>65</sup> as well as donating her houses and estates in Tardajos and Las Quintanillas to her maid Teresa Roiz and her son on 22 May,<sup>66</sup> doña Sancha Alfonso died. This is indicated in the inscription engraved on the head of her tomb which is preserved in very good condition inside the church of Santa Eufemia (Fig. 3).

The fact of donating herself to the convent “in body and soul” implies that she wished to be buried within it. Undoubtedly, doña Sancha, coming from the highest aristocracy, decided that her sepulcher should be positioned in the middle of the *freilas*’ choir, just under the dome and in front of the high altar. This was

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that she did so, donating it to Santa Eufemia, which did not prevent the king from giving it to doña Berenguela López de Haro after the execution for traitor of Simon Roiz, lord of Cameros in 1277. Doña Berenguela, recognizing the inadmissibility of this last donation to her person, agreed with the Military Order the definitive transfer of Tormantos and the cellar of Belorado to Santa Eufemia in exchange for 17 000 maravedís, 12 April 1288, Tormantos, AHN, OM, c. 94, 52. Copied in BN, Mss. 13064, fol. 134r. –136r.

<sup>63</sup> Inés Calderón, *Los Soverosa*, 193.

<sup>64</sup> Manuel López Fernández, *La Orden de Santiago y el maestro Pelay Pérez Correa* (Ciudad Real: Instituto de Estudios Manchegos, 2001), 625–628 (Source edition no. 37, doña Sancha Alfonso toma los hábitos de la Orden de Santiago e ingresa como freira en Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos. A tenor de lo anterior se establece un nuevo acuerdo entre doña Sancha y la Orden por el cual las heredades que reciba la señora, del intercambio con los santiaguistas, pasarán concretamente a engrosar las propiedades del convento de Santa Eufemia, Tolmantos, (La Rioja), 21 febrero 1270).

<sup>65</sup> López, *La Orden*, 629 (Source edition no. 38, doña Sancha Alfonso asigna ciertas rentas a distintas dependencias del convento de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos. Intuyendo que el maestro de la Orden puede no estar de acuerdo con tal donación, toma medidas al respecto, 1270). Although this document has traditionally been known as the will of doña Sancha, perhaps because of the proximity to the date of her death, the truth is that its content is far from that of the Castilian wills in these years. On female wills in medieval Castile, see: Leonor Gómez Nieto, “Actitudes femeninas ante la muerte en la Edad Media castellana,” in *Religiosidad femenina: expectativas y realidades* (ss. VIII–XVIII, ed. María del Mar Graña Cid and Ángela Muñoz Fernández (Madrid: Asociación Cultural Al-Mudayna, 1991).

<sup>66</sup> Doña Sancha Alfonso gives to her maid Teresa Roiz some of her properties in life usufruct, 21 May 1270, BN, Mss. 13064, fol. 110r. and 124r.; AHN, OM, Códices, l. 228, documental appendix, fol. 12r. –13r.

the most relevant space in the monastic church. Most probably, the donation to the convent of doña Sancha's properties in Tormatos and Belorado would be the counterpart of her election.<sup>67</sup>

We know that Sancha Alfonso was married when she decided to retire to Santa Eufemia as a Jacobean freila in 1270.<sup>68</sup> Taking the habit of the Order of Santiago was a perfectly viable option for a married woman since the regulations of the Order allowed it. In fact, a Jacobean woman could change her marital status keeping her *freila* condition within the Military Order, without the need to change her votes or making new ones. Direct sources show us several cases of married *freilas* who entered convents of the Order once they were widowed, convents they could leave to remarry with the authorization of the master and maintaining their status as freilas throughout the entire process.<sup>69</sup>

Secular *freilas* of the Order of Santiago could be incorporated as such to the monastic life of the female convents of the Order. Among the buildings of Santa Eufemia there was a palace, integrated within the monastic precinct, but outside the cloistered area. This would have been the place of residence of these *freilas*, who would share with the conventual ones the prayers of the Divine Office and the religious ceremonies celebrated in the monastic church. The temporary stays of secular *freilas* in the convents of the Order were concentrated in the periods during which the rule forced married couples to live separately – Advent, Lent, festivities of the Virgin, saint John Baptist and All Saints. – However, there was no regulation preventing these periods from being lengthened.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> On the choice of burial by the knights of Santiago, see: Miguel Cortés Arrese, *El espacio de la muerte y el arte de las órdenes militares* (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla la Mancha, 1999), 159–180.

<sup>68</sup> Simón Ruiz de los Cameros, married to Sancha Alfonso at least since 1256, survived her. Already a widower, he remarried to Beatriz Fadrique de Castilla, daughter of the infante Fadrique and niece of Alfonso X. The infante and his son-in-law, the lord of Cameros, promoted a noble rebellion against the Crown, which they both paid for with their lives in 1277. The king had his brother Fadrique drowned and ordered don Simón to be burned alive. (Antonio Ballesteros Beretta, *Alfonso X el Sabio* (Barcelona: Salvat, 1963), 818–826).

<sup>69</sup> María Soledad Ferrer-Vidal Díaz del Riguero, “Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos: el primer monasterio femenino de la Orden Militar de Santiago” (Phd Diss., Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2020), 448–458. Of all the commanders documented in Santa Eufemia, no less than six are explicitly cited as widows in the convent's sources.

<sup>70</sup> Lomax, *La Orden*, 224 (Source edition no. 1, traducción castellana de la Regla de la Orden de Santiago, mediados del siglo XIII). The Rule of the mid-thirteenth century states that “En las dos quaresmas los freyres que ouieren mujeres conuiento tengan e las mujeres con aquellas que no an marido. Mas sy los freyres fueren sobre moros o en otros negocios de la casa e sus mujeres quisieren seer en la claustra con las freyras, sean recibidas e ténganlas ondrada mientras tro a que

Furthermore, during her stay in Santa Eufemia, doña Sancha maintained the services of at least one maid of her own, Teresa Roiz, who professed as a conventual *freila* in the monastery after the death of her lady. In 1315 she donated all of her properties in Tardajos and Las Quintanillas to the convent, represented by its commander, Teresa González.<sup>71</sup> We consider, for these reasons, that doña Sancha Alfonso received and kept the Santiago habit as a secular *freila* during the short period of time elapsed between the date of her entry into the monastery of Santa Eufemia and that of her death, which, as we have seen, took place in the same year, 1270.<sup>72</sup>

There are hardly any documents in which doña Sancha Alfonso is cited between the date of her death and the last years of fifteenth century, when the preserved series of visit records to Santa Eufemia begin. In 1270, while doña Sancha was still alive and in Santa Eufemia, the commander of the convent quotes her on the occasion of one of the leases of the Tudes house as *doña Sancha Alfonso, nuestra señora*,<sup>73</sup> in what seems to be a show of respect for the lineage of the noblewoman who had just given herself to the monastery after donating a good number

sos maridos uengan e aquesto sea en providentia del maestro. Aquelas mugeres aqui transieran sos maridos esten en los monesterios”. Translation: “Along the two Lents, friars who have women should have convent, and their women with those who do have no husband. But if the friars go against the moors, or in other House affairs and their women would like to be in the cloister with the freilas, they should be welcome and taken care of until their husbands come, and all expenses covered by the master. Those women whose husbands die, do stay in monasteries.”

<sup>71</sup> Teresa Roiz, conventual freila in Santa Eufemia, previously Sancha Alfonso’s maid, gives to Santa Eufemia convent in the person of its commander, Teresa Gonzalez, her properties in Tardajos and Las Quintanillas, 6 April 1315, BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 122r. –123v.

<sup>72</sup> Doña Sancha took the Santiago habit on 21 February 1270, see above (note 61). The date of her death is carved in her preserved sepulchre, which states the Hispanic era of 1308, corresponding to the year of 1270, which should also be taken as certain. With regard to the precise date of her death, 25 July (feast of St. James the Apostle) is handled as true in the documents associated with the process of her beatification from seventeenth century, despite the judgment of the Royal Academy of History stating that it is not even possible to conjecture an approximate date, once the available documentation has been reviewed in 28 December 1753, AHN, Códices, l. 228, fol. CVr. –CVIIIr. In our opinion, it is unlikely that the death of this lady occurred precisely on the feast of Santiago, when there are books of calendas and martyrologies in Santa Fe and Uclés prior to the discovery of the incorrupt body of doña Sancha in which other dates are attributed to her passing, and none of them correspond to 25 July. In a Santa Fe’s martyrology, it is assigned to doña Sancha’s death the date of 22 May, which would match with that of the donation made to her maid Teresa, 1536, BN, Mss. 13064, fol. 149v. In any case, the truth is that doña Sancha would remain alive in Santa Eufemia for no more than ten months.

<sup>73</sup> Teresa García, commander of Santa Eufemia, leases the house, church and incomes of San Pedro de Tudes to don Pedro and his sons, 2 May 1270, BN, Mss. 13064, fol. 130r. –130v. Translation: *Doña Sancha, our lady*.



of properties to it. Some years later, in 1327, we find doña Sancha again, this time on the occasion of the lease of the dehesa de San Martín *que doña Sancha nuestra freila nos dio*.<sup>74</sup>

The memory of doña Sancha Alfonso is present in the three preserved records of the visitations issued to the inhabited monastery between 1494 and 1501, where she is entitled, like her brother Martín in those of Sancti Spiritus, as an *infanta*. This was a title that, as we have seen above, she never attributed herself while alive. In these visitation records, doña Sancha is identified as an *infanta* daughter of the king of León, as a benefactress of the monastery through the important donations she gave to it and as the person buried in the tomb located in the centre of the *freilas*' choir. The fulfilment of chaplaincies which she endowed is also verified in these records, where no reference is made to the mother of the alleged *infanta*, nor to any extraordinary virtue or quality that could have characterized her life.<sup>75</sup> According to Inés Calderón, the figures of the two siblings were conveniently manipulated in the fifteenth century, "hiding their illegitimate ancestry to present them as infantes," which would undoubtedly give prestige to the two monasteries of the Order of Santiago to which they were linked.<sup>76</sup> Certainly, the visitation records of Santa Eufemia confirm this manipulation.

With the monastery already abandoned, 13 years and two visitations passed until in 1515 the visitors state that *en medio del dicho coro está un enterramiento bien obrado el qual dizen que es de la infanta doña Sancha*,<sup>77</sup> information which is reiterated in the visits issued in 1529 and 1538, with an exception that is not trivial. The text, identical in both of them, reads as follows: *en medio del dicho coro está un enterramiento de piedra bien labrado en el qual diz que está una infanta que se lla-*

<sup>74</sup> Don Vasco Rodriguez, master of the Order of Santiago, gives to Santa Eufemia, in the person of its commander, doña María Gutierrez, the commandery of Villamartín, together with the properties of the Order in Legones and San Millán de la Vega, 5 June 1327, BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 72r. –74r. Translation: *that doña Sancha, our freila, gave us*.

<sup>75</sup> Report of the visit issued by Alonso Pérez de Esquivel and Francisco Martínez de Almagro to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 6–22 November 1494, AHN, OM, l. 1090, 217. Report of the visit issued by García Henríquez and Fortuño García, priest of Alange to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 27 February to 14 March 1499, AHN, OM, l. 1091, 145. Report of the visit issued by Rodrigo de Céspedes and Gómez de Tovar to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 6–27 January 1501, AHN, OM, l. 1092, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Calderón, *Los Soverosa*, 184.

<sup>77</sup> Report of the visit issued by Francisco Patiño and Francisco Martínez de Almagro to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 25 April 1515, AHN, OM, l. 1097, 538. Translation: *In the middle of the said choir there is a well-done burial which they say belongs to the infanta doña Sancha*.

*maba doña Sancha*.<sup>78</sup> Thus, it is clear how, in fact, the memory of the noblewoman gradually faded over time so that 40 years after the monastery was abandoned, neither the visitors nor the butler who received them there remember clearly who is the person occupying such an important sepulchre, and in memory of whom from Santa Fe the weekly masses that are still being celebrated in Santa Eufemia are paid. There is something that remains, however, in all the visitation records, and it is the title of *infanta* in the memory of a person about whom almost everything else has already been forgotten. It is improbable that this forgetfulness would have been possible if the extraordinary virtues and death in the odour of sanctity that were later attributed to her were true to some extent.

Precisely if doña Sancha had lived and/or died in an exceptionally exemplary way and that memory lasted, perhaps the *freilas* of the Order of Santiago would have been able to transfer, as if it were a relic, the body of the *infanta* to their new house in Toledo. But it does not seem like they even tried to do it. In the visitation to the monastery in 1503, the visitors indicate that *en el dicho monesterio no hay religiosas porque sus Altezas las mandaron pasar a Toledo e llevaron la plata e ornamentos e libros*.<sup>79</sup> So, they transferred to Toledo the most valuable assets they had in Santa Eufemia, including their archive, and the body of doña Sancha was not among them.

From 1538 and until 1606, it seems that there is an absolute documentary silence about doña Sancha Alfonso, whose corpse laid unnoticed in the abandoned church of Santa Eufemia. That year, the commander of Santa Fe, doña Ana de Guzmán, begged the king for permission to move the body of doña Sancha from Santa Eufemia to their convent in Toledo,<sup>80</sup> which king Felipe III authorized in 1608.

We do not know the reasons that led doña Ana de Guzmán, commander of the Santiago convent in Toledo between 1558 and 1608, to claim the memory of the supposed – for her, she certainly would be – *infanta* buried in their mother house

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<sup>78</sup> Report of the visit issued by Diego de Ribera and Pedro Gil to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 12–13 February 1529, Santa Eufemia, AHN, OM, l. 1098, 682. Translation: *In the middle of the said choir there is a well-carved stone burial in which it is said that there is an infanta named Doña Sancha*.

<sup>79</sup> Report of the visit issued by García de Alvarado, Francisco Puyol, cleric, and Gonzalo de Ribera to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 27 October 1503, Santa Eufemia, AHN, OM, l. 1093, 295. Translation: *In the said monastery there are no nuns because their Highnesses sent them to Toledo and took with them the silver, ornaments and books*.

<sup>80</sup> Jesús Ángel Sánchez Rivera, *Imagen y devoción barroca. Doña Sancha Alfonso, comendadora de Santiago* (Saarbrücken: Editorial Académica Española, 2012), 17–18.

in Palencia and to request the transfer of her remains to the monastery she ran in the city.<sup>81</sup> Probably it would be an intent of giving some more prestige to the new convent of Santa Fe, which had a short history in Toledo, enabling it to transmit to the people there the tradition of a long, virtuous and noble conventual life that the transfer from Palencia had broken in 1502. Nothing better than lodging in Santa Fe the tomb of a Leonese *infanta*, a secular *freila* of the Order of Santiago who died and was buried in their primitive convent, to achieve this aim. Doña Sancha would be, for these purposes, the link that would connect the long monastic tradition of Santa Eufemia with the new of Santa Fe convent in Toledo.

For sure, what doña Ana, who died in 1608 before receiving doña Sancha's remains, would have never imagined was that the body of their *infanta* would have remained uncorrupted in her sepulchre for more than 300 years.

What began with the intention of a discreet transfer, “sin publicidad y con moderada pompa,”<sup>82</sup> ended with the unexpected exhumation in Santa Eufemia of a body in excellent condition, a finding that marked the beginning of the creation of a legend around this lady in a historical moment – the counter reformation – especially favourable for the dissemination of the news of a possible new saint, the first Jacobean saint in history. Until then, not even the founder of the Order of Santiago, Pedro Fernandez, had been canonized. For sure, the Order of Santiago would see with very good eyes the possibility that this could happen with one of its *freilas*, specially being one of royal blood, and going back in time that possible holiness no less than 300 years. Therefore, a beatification process was started before the Holy See in 1615, promoted by the Order itself and mainly sustained on the incorruption of doña Sancha's remains.<sup>83</sup>

Before the transfer of the body of doña Sancha Alfonso to Toledo, the chroniclers of the military orders collected the filiation of this noblewoman as she identified herself as the daughter of king Alfonso IX of León and doña Teresa Gil.<sup>84</sup> Francisco de Pisa was the first who, in 1611, even before the beatification cause started, and presumably in an attempt to ensure the good end of it, confused the

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 20. Translation: “without publicity and with moderate pomp.”

<sup>83</sup> Many of the documents related to this beatification process are preserved in the diocesan archive of Toledo (Miguel Ángel Dionisio Vivas, “El archivo diocesano de Toledo: hacia una descripción de sus fondos,” *Toletana*, no. 24 (2011): 183).

<sup>84</sup> Francisco de Rades y Andrada, *Chronica de las tres Ordenes y cavallerias de Sanctiago, Calatrava y Alcántara en la qual se tracta de su origen y successo y notables hechos en armas de los maestros y cavalleros de ellas y de muchos señores de titulo y otros nobles que descenden de los Maestres y de muchos otros Linages de España* (Toledo: Juan de Ayala, 1572), fol. 19v.

identity of doña Sancha, illegitimate and incorrupt, with that of another daughter of her father with the same name. This was a legitimate daughter who died some 30 years before the younger one. Let us clarify here that both were daughters of two homonymous mothers named Teresa, one of them, Teresa Sánchez, daughter of king Sancho I of Portugal and first wife of Alfonso IX of León, and the other, Teresa Gil de Soverosa, also Portuguese, who was his last lover. Only one of the two Sanchas, the illegitimate one, professed in Santa Eufemia. However, Francisco de Pisa states that doña Sancha Alfonso *según la común voz y fama i tradición antigua en la tierra de Burgos i las montañas, fue monja y comendadora y nunca casada i era legítima heredera de aquellos reinos*, referring to those of León and Portugal, which she supposedly renounced in favor of her half-brother, Fernando III, who brought together the kingdoms of Castile and León.<sup>85</sup> From this moment onwards, the supposed legitimacy of the candidate for sainthood was the subject of all kinds of controversies, falsehoods and manipulations. Most probably, these together with the lack of funds to go on with the process, resulted in her canonization never coming to fruition.

The most important consequence of the transfer of the incorrupt body of doña Sancha to the monastery of Santa Fe in Toledo was the explosion of popular devotion as a result of her perceived holiness. This was spread and encouraged among others by the convent itself, not only through the city, but also throughout the region. The body of the so-called venerable woman, whose natural conservation was truly exceptional, was moved to the chapel of Bethlehem of the Santiago convent in 1615, the same year of the beginning of her beatification process. It had already been venerated and visited by devotees for almost eight years in the Hospital de Afuera, where it arrived on 19 May 1608.

In this moment, the venerable *infanta* is no longer just an incorrupt body by the action of divine grace, but this quality extends to all her garments and to the objects with which it is in contact. In 1752, Antonio de Quintanadueñas already wrote about something more than a very serene *infanta*. According to him, she was a great servant of the Lord, from whom one could also obtain relics that worked miracles. The legend, the memory built of a miraculous past around this lady which occurred in a distant monastery, returned full of power to the Santiago con-

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<sup>85</sup> Francisco de Pisa, *Información del hecho y derecho de la comendadora y convento del Real Monasterio de Santa Fe de Toledo por el doctor Francisco de Pisa* (Toledo, 1611); BN, Mss. 13063, fol. 205r.–221r. Translation: “according to the common voice and fame and ancient tradition in the land of Burgos and the mountains, was a nun and commander and never married and was legitimate heir of those kingdoms.”

vent of Santa Fe. It was fed by the popular devotion that filled the chapel of Bethlehem in Toledo with votive offerings and referred to constant miracles propitiated by devotion to doña Sancha. These were carefully collected to contribute to the cause of her beatification. The diffusion of the thaumaturgical power of the relics of doña Sancha, transmitted by word of mouth and attracting to Santa Fe people in need of the miracles that are operated through her relics was very good for the monastery.<sup>86</sup> Devotees grateful for the healings that, through the intercession of doña Sancha and these relics, had occurred in themselves, their relatives or acquaintances, only strengthened this prestige.<sup>87</sup>

The gratitude was manifested in the form of donations that were made to the convent where the presumed saint was venerated, which obviously make Santa Fe prosper in a way unthinkable 50 years before. In fact, the final result of the situation was equivalent to the translation of a relic – a body in our case – from a sacred and abandoned place to another equally consecrated. However, the new place was

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<sup>86</sup> Gregorio de Tapia y Salcedo, *Epítome de la vida y milagros de la Serenísima doña Sancha Alfonso, hija del señor rey don Alonso el Nono de León i Galicia, hermana del señor don Fernando de Castilla el Santo, esposa de Gesu Cristo en el convento de Santa Eufemia de Coçollos de la Orden de Santiago, trasladado al de Santa fe de la Real Imperial ciudad de Toledo. Dedicado a la Reina Nuestra señora doña Mariana de Austria, tutora y cuidadora del rei nuestro señor Carlos Segundoy de su augustísima monarquía. Por don Gregorio de Tapia y Salcedo, antes fiscal y ahora procurador general de la Orden de Santiago en el Real Consejo de las Militares de Castilla* (Madrid: Josef Fernández de Buendía, 1668), 13–23. It is interesting to analyze the typology of the relics of the venerable Sancha Alfonso that circulate working miracles in Toledo and its region, as recorded in this work of Gregorio de Tapia of 1668, who refers to 66 miracles, 40 performed on women and 26 on men, of all ages and conditions: from the attempt – miraculously prevented – of the bishop of Palencia, that he intended to take a finger from the supposed infanta, up to the healing effects of the application of the oil of the lamp that illuminated her chapel, of taking – with or without dissolving in water or wine – earth or dust from the tomb of the infanta or water that had touched any of her relics; the application of the relics themselves – fragments of her clothes or splinters from her coffin – on the sick persons or under their pillow. Miraculous healing effects obtained through prayers of entrustment and even apparitions of doña Sancha to the sick, in wakefulness and also during sleep are also referred to. An inexhaustible and varied assortment of materials with healing capacity that do not affect the integrity of the venerated body and, in addition, a lucrative activity, fed directly by the Santiago monastery of Santa Fe, which notifies miraculous cures in a commander, a prioress, a subcommander and two freilas, as well as in a nun of Santo Domingo el Real.

<sup>87</sup> Antonio de Quintanadueñas, *Serenísima infanta, gloriosa virgen, Doña Sancha Alfonso, hija del rey de Leon Don Alonso el nono y de la infanta de Portugal Doña Teresa Gil de Soberosa; hermana del santo rey D. Fernando, Tercero de este nombre; su vida, sus virtudes, sus milagros* (Madrid: Imp. De Mercurio, por Joseph de Orga, 1752), 112. In this book, Antonio de Quintanadueñas makes a full relationship of the different illnesses and pains supposedly cured by doña Sancha's relics.

in the middle of a populous city, where the place of origin of the main relic – the so-called holy body – lost relevance, gaining absolute prominence the new space in which it was housed.<sup>88</sup>

We are facing a phenomenon in which time also plays a leading role, since the miraculous capacity of the body of doña Sancha Alfonso and her relics is activated only from the popular recognition of the miracle of the incorruption of her mortal remains. In our case, a spatial transfer immediately generates the activation and updating of a memory of past and latent holiness until that moment. Only a single caveat should be noted: the memory of the past in this occasion does not return, but is created from the present.

The Order of Santiago itself contributed to the dissemination of the funerary portrait that collected, in different versions, the one recognized as the true image of the *freila* candidate for saint among its female monasteries. Jesús Ángel Sánchez Rivera has documented the portraits of doña Sancha, in addition to those existing in Santa Fe in Toledo, some of them preserved in the current one of Santiago Apóstol of the same city, in the convents of Comendadoras de Santiago el Mayor in Madrid and of the Mother of God in Granada. Surely there would also be at least one of them in each of the other female Santiago convents, now disappeared, in Valladolid, Salamanca, Badajoz, Barcelona and Lisbon.<sup>89</sup> It is significant, however, the absence of any portrait or references to doña Sancha Alfonso in the main convent of Uclés.

Nowadays, the body of doña Sancha Alfonso is kept inside a wooden coffin lined with velvet in the choir of the church of the monastery of the Comendadoras de Santiago el Mayor in Toledo. It was opened with episcopal authorization in 1975 and 2008, confirming the good state of conservation of a mummy that is already more than 700 years old.

### 2.3. *Doña Berenguela López de Haro*

Not belonging to the family group of the Soverosas, but related to the Alfonso Gil siblings, Berenguela López de Haro, daughter of Urraca Alfonso and Lope Díaz

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<sup>88</sup> Francisco de Asís García García, “Mover al santo: traslado de reliquias y renovación de escenarios de culto en monasterios hispanos (siglos XI y XII),” in *Los monasterios medievales en sus emplazamientos: lugares de memoria de lo sagrado*, ed. José Ángel García de Cortázar and Ramón Teja Casuso (Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico de la Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico, 2016), 146.

<sup>89</sup> Jesús Ángel Sánchez Rivera, “Configuración de una iconografía singular: la Venerable Doña Sancha Alfonso, comendadora de Santiago,” *Anales de Historia del Arte*, no. 18 (2008): 207.

II de Haro, was also the niece of Sancha Alfonso, being a maternal granddaughter of Alfonso IX and another of his concubines, Inés Íñiguez de Mendoza.<sup>90</sup> Doña Berenguela married Rodrigo González Girón, Fernando III's principal butler, of whom she was his third wife and with whom she had no descendants. Although the direct relationship of this noblewoman with the monastery of Santa Eufemia does not begin until after the death of her aunt Sancha Alfonso, we must go back in time to the moment of the death of her husband, shortly before 1258, in order to reconstruct the sequence of events. In fact, these first documents relating to Doña Berenguela were kept in the archive of Santa Fe as part of that of Santa Eufemia. This was transferred to Toledo with the move of the community in 1502. Don Gonzalo had two sons from his first marriage to María Froilaz. Both, Pedro and Gómez González, who are listed as his heirs, along with their father will executors, Gonzalo García de Estrada and Diego Ordoñez, were sued by Doña Berenguela, widow, who claimed 20 000 maravedís for debt of dowry with her late husband in February 1258. The litigation should have come from before, since the first document preserved on this matter includes the widow's request to king Alfonso X to order making effective the payment of the debt, which is finally established in two parts.

The widow would collect 10 000 maravedís in cash and the rest should come from the income of the deceased in the places of Derruñada and San Román. Of this last amount, the widow should give 2 500 maravedís to the will executors of don Rodrigo and to apply them for the salvation of his soul, as had been his will.<sup>91</sup> In April 1258, the executors of don Rodrigo, fulfilling the will of the king, sold to the widow the full domain of the assets of the deceased in the two places mentioned above, in exchange for the payment of 7 500 maravedís.<sup>92</sup> Manuel López understands this payment as corresponding to the pawn lifting of the houses of the deceased in Derruñada and San Román.<sup>93</sup> The matter is definitively settled when the king confirmed doña Berenguela as the owner of the houses

<sup>90</sup> Calderón, *Cum magnatibus*, 116. Berenguela López de Haro was also related to her aunt doña Sancha Alfonso through the latter's husband. Simón Ruiz de los Cameros and Berenguela López de Haro share a grandfather, maternal in the case of the lord of the Cameros and paternal in the one of doña Berenguela: it is Diego López de Haro II, named the Good (Alonso, *El monasterio*, 28).

<sup>91</sup> King Alfonso X, as requested by doña Berenguela López de Haro, orders to the sons of her last husband the payment of the dowry debt they owed her, 22 February 1258, AHN, OM, c. 94, 29 and BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 154r. –155r.

<sup>92</sup> Gonzalo García de Estrada and Diego Ordoñez, will executors of Rodrigo González Girón, sell to her widow, doña Berenguela Lopez de Haro the places of Derruñada and San Román de la Cuba, 12 April 1258, AHN, OM, c. 94, 30 and BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 152r. –153r.

<sup>93</sup> López, *La Orden*, 434.

of Derruñada, in Villanueva del Río, and San Román.<sup>94</sup> At this moment, doña Berenguela decided to donate her properties of Derruñada and San Román to the Military Order of Santiago after her death. In return, she would give the Military Order 3 000 maravedís to invest in land for the hospitals of Las Tiendas and Villamartín, and another 4 500 to be spent there on chaplains to pray in them for her soul and her husband's.<sup>95</sup>

We must now return to the documented actions of doña Sancha Alfonso, Berenguela's aunt, in 1270. We have already seen that in February of this year, the Leonese noblewoman, professing as a secular *freila* in the monastery of Santa Eufemia, reaffirms herself in the donation to the Military Order, in the person of its master, of all her properties in León, Galicia, and Portugal, inherited or to be inherited from her parents. The counterpart of the agreement changes with respect to the pact made between the two a year before. Now, the beneficiary was the monastery of Santa Eufemia which – in theory – would receive, when the moment would arrive and in full domain, everything that had been of don Ferrán García and his wife, doña Milia, which had previously been valued at 900 maravedís per year of income. In addition, and in this same document, the master of the Order gave, with capitular grant, the commandery of Tubilla to the monastery of Santa Eufemia “in the person of doña Sancha”. The convent also received the extensive pastures of San Martín in Badajoz. It is indicated that this last donation was made to compensate Santa Eufemia for what was taken from the convent by the king in Aguilar de Campoo.<sup>96</sup> Doña Sancha clearly established her interests, namely that her soul be prayed for permanently in the convent of Santa Eufemia, singing there two daily masses from the day after her death. If the community did not do so, she demanded that all donations made by her should be withdrawn and transferred to another convent which would comply with her will.<sup>97</sup> It is clear that the monastery would only receive all these goods once Doña Sancha died, since there is another document signed by her somewhat later, probably on a date close to her death, in 1270. In this document, the noble *freila* specifies the destination and

<sup>94</sup> King Alfonso X confirms doña Berenguela Lopez de Haro as owner of the places of Derruñada and San Román de la Cuba, 10 October 1258, AHN, Sellos, arm. 1, c. 12, 4. Before in OM, c. 94, 34.

<sup>95</sup> López, *La Orden*, 435.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 432. In his opinion, they were probably Callosa and Catral, although we have not found any evidence that Santa Eufemia had properties in these two places, neither before nor after 1270.

<sup>97</sup> Pelay Pérez Correa, master of the Order of Santiago receives doña Sancha Alfonso into the Order, 21 February 1270, Tormantos, see above (note 61).



the amount of what she decided to donate to the monastery in which she lived. Specifically, she allocated 500 maravedís to wardrobe expenses and 200 more for the convent infirmary. The total amount, 700 maravedís, should come from the income of all the goods from don Ferrán and doña Milia. We know that these had previously been valued at 900 maravedís per year, so it is evident that doña Sancha reserved for herself part of the income of these places while she lived. She also endowed the choir of the monastery with 250 maravedís per year and the refectory with 150, although these 400 maravedís had to come from the income of the commandery of Tubilla and of the pastures of San Martín in Badajoz, which would also total a yearly income greater than this figure. To ensure the fulfilment of her will, Doña Sancha warned the master that, in case of not abiding by the agreed terms, she would recover for herself the assets of don Ferrán and doña Milia while the monastery would receive its stipulated amounts from the properties that doña Sancha owned in Galicia,<sup>98</sup> which should pass to the monastery after her death. According to Manuel López, this is precisely what ended up happening. Doña Sancha only had to die for the master to put the interests of the Military Order before those of its female convent, which was clearly harmed. Santa Eufemia received the goods in Galicia, which would soon be taken again by the master without any compensation, while the Order itself appropriated the properties previously given to doña Sancha.<sup>99</sup>

In 1274, already four years after the death of doña Sancha Alfonso in the monastery of Santa Eufemia, the Military Order decided to deliver during her life the already well-known assets coming from don Ferrán and doña Milia to doña Berenguela López de Haro, so that at the end of her days they would revert to Santa Eufemia convent, in exchange for the goods received by her from her husband in Derruñada and San Román.<sup>100</sup> Although we are again faced with a unilateral action of the master and the chapter that put the benefit of doña Berenguela ahead of the legitimate interests of the monastery of Santa Eufemia, the truth is that the volatility of their decisions is evident, since within only a few days, through a donation later on granted by the General Chapter held in Mérida in 1277, and

<sup>98</sup> Doña Sancha Alfonso gives to Santa Eufemia the incomes of several properties, to cover yearly specific needs of the convent, 1270, see above (note 62).

<sup>99</sup> López, *La Orden*, 434.

<sup>100</sup> López, *La Orden*, 632–33 (Source edition no. 41, don Pelay Pérez Correa, con otorgamiento del Cabildo General de la Orden, efectúa un intercambio de propiedades con doña Berenguela López. Las que reciba esta señora, pasarán a formar parte del patrimonio del convento de Santa Eufemia cuando muera doña Berenguela, Mérida, 12 Marzo 1274).

completely ignoring the donation previously made to doña Berenguela, Santa Eufemia received from the Order, at last and after a four years delay, the properties of Don Ferrán García and Doña Milia. These were the commandery of Tubilla and the house and pastures of San Martín in Badajoz, which are also delimited in the document.<sup>101</sup>

In June 1274, doña Berenguela López de Haro donated to Santa Eufemia her properties in Derruñada and San Román, so that with their annual income they would feed and dress three chaplains in the monastery to sing for her soul and that of her husband in perpetuity. The surplus would be divided into three parts, with two-thirds set aside for the expenses of the convent's wardrobe and one for its infirmary. The affected, on this occasion, would be the hospitals of Las Tiendas and Villamartín, where Berenguela had initially endowed these chaplaincies.<sup>102</sup>

We have documentary evidence that doña Berenguela López de Haro maintained an active relationship with Santa Eufemia for some time, even participating in its administration. In 1275 and with the consent of the commander of Santa Eufemia, she proceeded to lease for 10 years the house of Los Hoyos in Valderredible. This belonged to the commandery of Tubilla, headed by the abbot of San Martín in Elines. Santa Eufemia, in addition to being able to take its pigs there to graze freely, would be the only beneficiary of the collection of the income generated by the operation.<sup>103</sup> As can be seen in this document it seems that, despite the fact that officially all the goods donated by Sancha Alfonso had finally passed into the hands of the monastery instead of those of Berenguela López de Haro, this lady was recognized in the monastery certain capacity for action on these properties, as long as she had the approval of its commander. Once doña Berenguela died, we see

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<sup>101</sup> López, *La Orden*, 643–45 (Source edition no. 46, traslado de una carta de 1274 en la que el maestre Pelay Pérez y el Cabildo General, reunido en Mérida, concedieron ciertas propiedades al monasterio de Santa Eufemia. La donación es confirmada en León, en 1277, por el maestre dpn Gonzalo Ruiz, y el Capítulo General, León, Dominica de Laetare [7 marzo] 1277).

<sup>102</sup> López, *La Orden*, 642–43 (Source edition no. 45, don pelay Pérez recibe, en nombre de la Orden de Santiago, la donación que doña Berenguela López hace al monasterio de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos -Derruñada y San Román de la Cuba-, a cambio de que en el monasterio se pongan tres capellanes que recen por su alma y la de su marido, Rodrigo González, Zamora, 5 junio 1274).

<sup>103</sup> Doña Berenguela López de Haro, with the consent of Santa Eufemia's commander, leases the house of Hoyos in Valderredible to the abbot of San Martín de Elines, 3 July 1275, BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 156r. –157r. and BN, Mss. 13064, fol. 98r. –98v.

in 1317 that the female commander of Santa Eufemia together with the *commander of the freilas*<sup>104</sup> – the male one – proceed to the lease of this same commandery.

Doña Berenguela Lopez de Haro – whose husband was buried in the Cistercian monastery of Santa María de Benavides in Boadilla de Rioseco (Palencia)<sup>105</sup> – finally decided to be buried alone in the main chapel of the church of the convent of San Francisco in Vitoria-Gasteiz, financing its building by means of a large testamentary order.<sup>106</sup>

#### 2.4. *The Estrada and the Sarmiento lineages*

Although he is not related to any of the illegitimate descendants of Alfonso IX above indicated, the first documented contact between Gonzalo García de Estrada<sup>107</sup> with our monastery is the moment of his performance as executor of the will of the husband of doña Berenguela López de Haro in 1258. This knight, when marrying Mayor García, was linked to the Sarmiento lineage, which already had extensive properties in the Cerrato area, and which, over time, would build the castle in Fuentes de Valdepero that bears its name (Fig. 4).<sup>108</sup> Maria García, Mayor's sister, is documented first as a conventual *freila* and later on as the commander of Santa

<sup>104</sup> Doña Teresa González, commander of Santa Eufemia, together with the male commander of the convent, lease the commandery of Tubilla to Juan Martínez de Medinilla, 3 June 117, BN, Mss. 13065, fol. 132r. –134r.

<sup>105</sup> Luis Fernández, “Colección Diplomática del Real Monasterio de Santa María de Benavides,” *Publicaciones de la Institución Tello Téllez de Meneses* 20 (1959): 148–154. Don Rodrigo González Girón became a great benefactor of this male Cistercian monastery since 1254, date already close to his death, when he had already decided to receive Christian burial there, ordering his grandiose sepulchre – unfortunately disappeared – to be positioned in a preeminent place of the conventual church, a building that he himself contributed to improve.

<sup>106</sup> Gorka López de Munain Iturrospe, Isabel Mellén, Ander Gondra Aguirre and Iñigo Ezquerria Ibarrañan, *La Ciudad Perdida. Historia Cultural del Convento de San Francisco de Vitoria-Gasteiz*, (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Sans Soleil Ediciones, 2018), 41–48.

<sup>107</sup> Carlos López Fanjul de Argüelles, “Los comienzos de la heráldica en Asturias,” *Hidalguía*, (2012): 162. Francisco de Borja Rivero Sierra, “El águila a contracolores,” *Revista de la Asociación Cántabra de Genealogía*, 8 (2012): 104, 108 and 116. Members of the Estrada lineage, one of the derivatives of the house of Aguilar, are recorded as holders of the territory of this name at the end of the thirteenth century, showing the sign of the eagle on their seal. It seems that the lordship of Estrada would be located in the surroundings of the valley of Peñamellera, border area between the kingdoms of Castilla y León, also shared with the lords of Aguilar and Castañeda.

<sup>108</sup> Francisco de Paula Cañas Gálvez, “La casa de Juan I de Castilla: aspectos domésticos y ámbitos privados de la realeza castellana a finales del siglo XIV (ca. 1370–1390),” *En la España medieval*, 34 (2011): 170–179. The Sarmiento lineage was very close to the Castilian court in the second half of the fourteenth century. Several members of this family held quite relevant positions

Eufemia by the end of the twelfth century. Both Gonzalo García de Estrada, his wife and several of their close relatives are documented in the archive of Santa Eufemia and linked to it not only during their lives, but also after their death. This is because the Estrada family, as we will see, was due the building, attached to the north wall of the conventual church, of the funerary chapel of San Bartolomé. There, three knights of this lineage were buried, and the family endowed it with a perpetual chaplaincy to daily pray for their souls.<sup>109</sup> Several women of this lineage also professed as conventual *freilas* in the monastery with some continuity. They appear documented even after their transfer to Toledo in sixteenth century.<sup>110</sup> All the Díaz Sarmiento sisters, Mayor, María, Toda and Marina, favoured the Order of Santiago and the monastery of Santa Eufemia at the end of the thirteenth century. María García, from her position of conventual *freila* and commander of Santa Eufemia, acts as a catalyst for many of these purchases and donations, which in general materially benefit the monastery and her own relatives, through the endowment of chaplaincies to pray for the souls of the members of her family and for her own one.<sup>111</sup>

Gonzalo García de Estrada had already been deceased for some time when, in 1316, the commander of Santa Eufemia, Teresa González, returned to his will executor a deposit composed of some silver liturgical elements and a cash amount. This was previously given by this executor to ensure that the masses ordered by the deceased in the monastery were said.<sup>112</sup> This document opens the door for us to raise an interesting hypothesis. It has to do with the commander of Santa Eufemia at this time, Teresa González, who we believe was, in all likelihood, married

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in the house of Juan I, such as those of guardian and senior justice of the king, as well as adelantados mayores of the kingdom of Galicia.

<sup>109</sup> Report of the visit issued by Alonso Pérez de Esquivel and Francisco Martínez de Almagro to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 6–22 November 1494, AHN, OM, l. 1090, 213.

<sup>110</sup> Calendas book of Santa Fe convent, 1536, BN, Mss. 13064, fol. 150v. and 151v. Beatriz de Estrada is documented as a conventual *freila* in the visit records of Santa Eufemia in 1494, 1499 and 1500: Report of the visit issued by Alonso Pérez de Esquivel and Francisco Martínez de Almagro to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 6–22 November 1494, AHN, OM, l. 1090, 209. Report of the visit issued by García Henríquez and Fortuño García, priest of Alange to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 27 February to 14 March 1499, AHN, OM, l. 1091, 139. Report of the visit issued by Rodrigo de Céspedes and Gómez de Tovar to the convent of Santa Eufemia, 6–27 January 1501, AHN, OM, l. 1092, 16. It is also recorded in the Calendas book above indicated that she died in Santa Fe, where she was moved in 1502. There is news of another *freila*, called María de Estrada, in this same book.

<sup>111</sup> González, *El monasterio*, 417.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

to Pedro González de Estrada,<sup>113</sup> of whom she was widowed before professing as a conventual *freila* in Santa Eufemia. We would be facing the continuity of the Sarmiento-Estrada family at the head of the Santiago convent of Santa Eufemia, being doña Teresa González widow of the nephew of doña María García, both commanders and documented in their positions, between 1292 and 1299 doña María, and between 1311 and 1320 doña Teresa.

As indicated above, the visit records of Santa Eufemia clearly indicate that some knights *Destrada* ordered to build at their expense a funerary chapel attached to the north wall of the conventual church under the invocation of St. Bartholomew. We have not been able to verify the names of the knights of Estrada buried in this conventual chapel, although two of them could well be Gonzalo García de Estrada and his son, Pedro González de Estrada, both related to commanders of the monastery, as we have seen. Today, in an arcossolium carved on the outer face of the north wall of the church, overlooking the chapel, there is an unworked monolithic tomb embedded in it. Outside, in the church, there is a stone sepulchre placed over lions (Fig. 5). On the lid and the front face of its box are carved eagles with unfolded wings, a heraldic figure that identified the Estrada lineage.<sup>114</sup> Several tombstones with this same figure have also been preserved, being now part of the pavement of the church in the surroundings of the meeting of the nave with the southern branch of the transept.

### 2.5. *Other patrons*

The visitation records of Santa Eufemia by the end of fifteenth century allow us to identify two more patrons of our monastery who wanted to be recalled through the liturgical ornaments they donated to it. We can identify these persons based on the decorations of the ornaments, which portrayed their coats of arms.<sup>115</sup> One of them was Pedro de Portocarrero, son of master Juan Pacheco and María de Portocarrero, who was lord of Moguer and La Puebla de Montalbán, as well as commander of Segura de la Sierra since 1494. He married a daughter of the last

<sup>113</sup> Teresa González, already being a widow and commander of the monastery of Santa Eufemia, sells to her son-in-law some properties of her own, 6 June 1317, BN, Mss. 13063, fol. 165r. –166r. Pedro González de Estrada would be the son of Gonzalo García de Estrada and Mayor García Sarmiento.

<sup>114</sup> Rivero, “El águila,” 116.

<sup>115</sup> Inventory of liturgical ornaments in the visit record of Santa Eufemia, 1502, AHN, OM, l. 1092, 25.

master of the Order, Alonso de Cárdenas,<sup>116</sup> and by 1501 Santa Eufemia had a white brocade cape and chasuble with his coat of arms. There was also a complete set of liturgical ornaments in white damask with the coat of arms of a don Alvaro, but the surname of this noble was never written in the visitation record. It might be possible that this don Alvaro could be Alvaro de Luna, also Jacobean master by mid-fifteenth century.

### 3. SANTA EUFEMIA'S TERRITORIAL EXPANSION DUE TO ITS PATRONS

Sancha Alfonso, Berenguela López de Haro, the Estradas, the Sarmientos and other minor donors effected important territorial donations to Santa Eufemia convent along the second half of the thirteenth century. All of them respond to both strategic and economic interests shared in some ways by the donors and the Military Order, always at the sidelines of Santa Eufemia women, who were almost never listened to as far as we know.

Many of these donations are characterized by the existing complexity between the initial moment of the donor decision and the reception by the convent of the donated properties. The responsible element of this complexity is the Order of Santiago itself, which acted directly over the properties given to the convent changing its destiny, temporarily in most cases, being consistent with interests outside the beneficiary house.

In any case, these were the years of Santa Eufemia's maximum territorial expansion (Fig. 6). Most of these new properties were not too far away from the convent placement, mainly to the southeast within the provinces of Palencia, Burgos and La Rioja. Santa Eufemia also received the house and extensive winter pastures of San Martín, in Badajoz, 600 km south from our convent and only connected to it through cattle paths. The Order acted in a very similar way with its also female house of Santi Spiritus in Salamanca, which also owned important winter pastures in this same area.

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<sup>116</sup> Pedro Andrés Porras Arboledas, *La Orden de Santiago en el siglo XV* (Madrid: Dykinson, 1997), 26 and 339.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the second half of the thirteenth century the two main female monasteries of the Order of Santiago in Castile and León, without an initial link with the high noble estate, managed to attract a family group of royal blood and Portuguese roots that provided them with the plus of prestige they needed to match other female monastic foundations of the time in the Castilian-Leonese environment.

On the other hand, the Alfonso Gil siblings, with royal blood running through their veins though coming from a concubinary union of Portuguese origin through their mother, used the support provided by the Order of Santiago to reinforce and consolidate their own position within the Castilian Leonese court under the reigns of Fernando III and Alfonso X.

The influence of master Pelay Pérez Correa, Portuguese himself, is decisive for the descendants of the concubinary union of Alfonso IX of León with Teresa Gil de Soverosa to benefit the Order of Santiago with important donations in border territories between the Castilian-Leonese and Portuguese kingdoms, and to the linking of two of them – Sancha and Martín – with the two most relevant female convents of the Order in the lands of Castile and León. These were Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos and Sancti Spiritus de Salamanca, in whose conventual churches they decided to receive burial and where today the tombs of both are preserved. The two siblings endowed their convents with properties enough to maintain chaplaincies to perpetually pray for their souls.

The Order of Santiago had no qualms about instrumentalizing in its favour the memories of Martín and Sancha Alfonso, whom are referred to as *infantes* at least since the preserved visit records of Santa Eufemia and Sancti Spiritus in the fifteenth century, in an attempt to hide the bastard origin of both siblings. In the case of Sancha, this altered memory was used by the Order to promote the initiation of the beatification process carried out after the exhumation of her naturally incorrupt body in Santa Eufemia in 1608 and its subsequent transfer to Toledo, which never came to fruition.

Berenguela López de Haro, niece of Martín and Sancha Alfonso, seems to have considered the possibility of being buried in Santa Eufemia after becoming a widow by mid-thirteenth century. Perhaps the fact that her aunt, Sancha, had already chosen for her burial the most relevant space of the conventual church made doña Berenguela change her mind. However, she endowed the monastery of Santa Eufemia with three chaplaincies to pray for her soul and that of her husband, don Rodrigo González Girón, butler of Fernando III.

Along these years, the members of two other family groups belonging to the nobility are linked, through relations of kinship with their commanders, with Santa Eufemia convent. These are the Sarmientos and the Estradas. The latter lineage chose the conventual church of Santa Eufemia to build a funerary chapel attached to it in the early years of the fourteenth century, where several members of this family were buried, endowing the convent to pray for the souls of all of them there in perpetuity.

The benefits of this monastic and noble association are reciprocal, since the benefactor lineages colonized conventual spaces that, in turn, provided them with prestige in life and memory after their death. The visitation records of Santa Eufemia and Sancti Spiritus convents prove this.

For the monastery of Santa Eufemia, the patronage of Sancha Alfonso, her niece Berenguela López de Haro, in addition to the Estrada and Sarmiento lineages also meant a spectacular growth of its territorial domain, which reached its maximum expansion precisely at this time, at the end of the thirteenth century.

#### FIGURES:

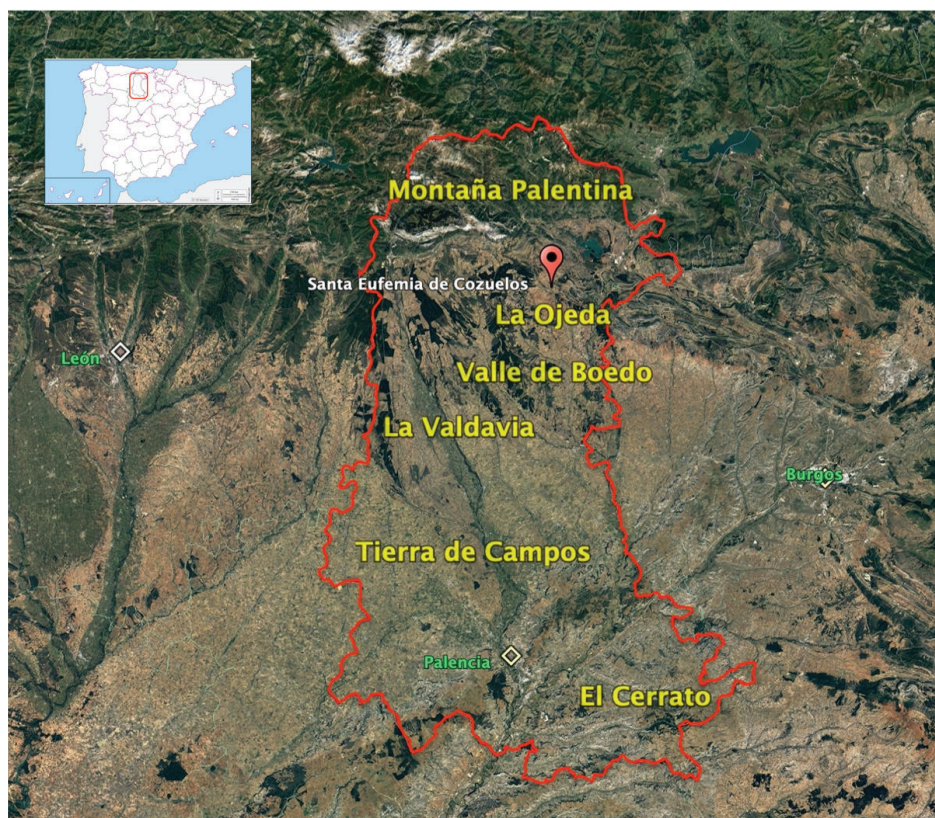


Fig. 1: Santa Eufemia's location (Author's elaboration on Google Earth).



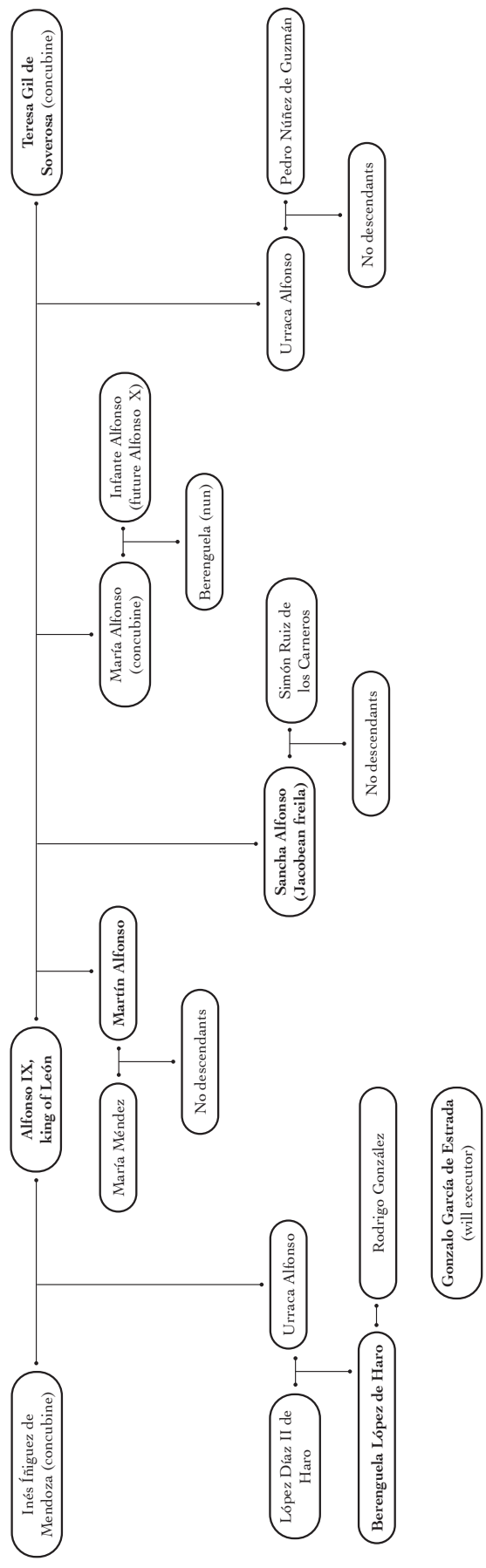


Fig. 2: Some of Alfonso IX's descendants.



Fig. 3: Doña Sancha Alfonso's sepulcher in Santa Eufemia's church (© Fundación Santa María la Real/J. Nuño).

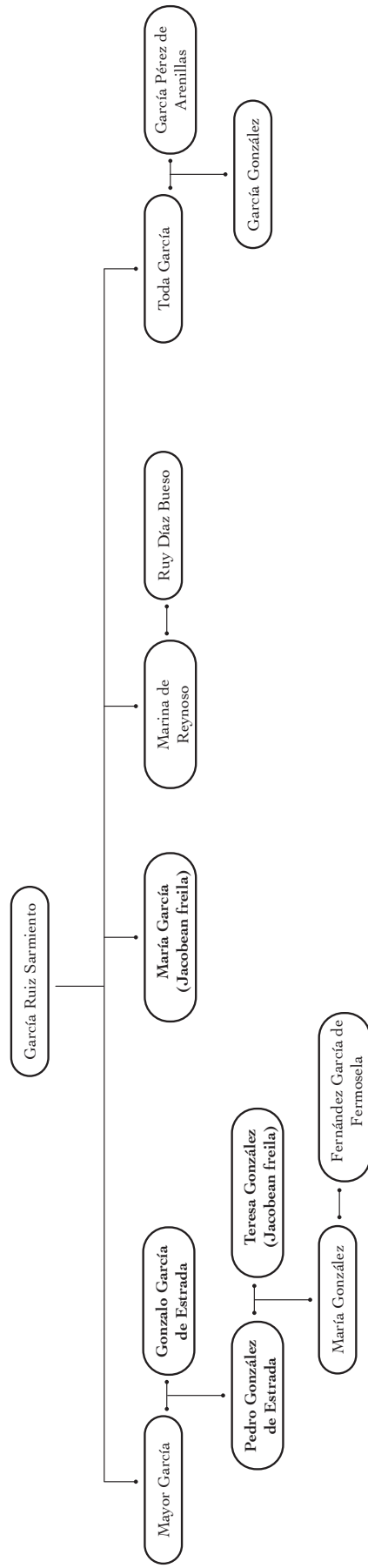


Fig. 4: The Estradas and the Sermientos.



Fig. 5: A knight of the Estrada lineage sepulcher in Santa Eufemia's church (© Fundación Santa María la Real/J. Nuño).



Fig. 6: Santa Eufemia's territorial domain by the early fourteenth century (author's elaboration on Google Earth).

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