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## *The Cistercian Customaries*

Emilia Jamroziak, Leeds

### *The Rule of Benedict*

The centrality of the Rule of St Benedict for the Cistercian communities overshadowed, at least historiographically, the customaries that governed the lives of Cistercian monks, nuns and the lay brothers. The Rule of St Benedict being upheld strictly and literally was genuinely important for the Cistercian. What this strictness implied in practice has been much debated by scholars and formed parts of the “ideal-reality” paradigm. It was also an element of the narrative that reformed groups used to position themselves towards contemporary “mainstream” Benedictine practice. Historiographically, the emergence of the concept of the Cistercian spirit - especially in the works of Jean Leclercq rather than literal adherence to the rules set in the normative texts, shifted the perspective on the relationships of the Cistercian communities to the Rule of St Benedict.<sup>1</sup> The engagement with the Rule occurred textually in various forms, including the key Cistercian narrative texts that made the Rule central to the whole project. The adherence to it was also a building block of the reform rhetoric. Most famously, it was employed in Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Apologia ad Guillelmum*, in which he condemned Cluniac practices as being contrary to the Rule.<sup>2</sup> In the narrative of the establishment of new life in Cîteaux by the monks who departed from Molesme in the *Exordium Parvum*, the Rule was made very prominent in the context of their new life:

Thereupon that abbot and his brethren, not unmindful of their engagement, unanimously enacted a statute to establish and keep the Rule of the blessed Benedict in that place, rejecting whatever offended against that Rule: namely, coats, fur garments, linen shirts, hoods, too, and drawers, combs and coverlets, mattresses, and a variety of dishes in the refectory, as well as lard and all else that was contrary to the Rule in all its purity. So that, directing the whole course of their life by the Rule over the entire tenor of their life, in ecclesiastical as we as in the rest of the observances, they matched or conformed their steps to the footprints traced by the Rule.<sup>3</sup>

The Rule was a text that monks heard every day, its sections were read and explained by the abbot or his appointee during the daily chapter, it was a subject of sermons and commentaries. Nevertheless, it was not a text that could govern, in practice, all the aspects of life of the

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<sup>1</sup> W.E. Goodrich, “The Cistercian Founders and the Rule: Some Reconsiderations,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984): 358-360.

<sup>2</sup> *Cistercians and Clunics: St Bernard’s ‘Apologia’ to Abbot William*, trans. Michael Casey (Kalamazoo: 1987).

<sup>3</sup> *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell, Cîteaux: Studia et documenta 9 (Cîteaux: 1999), 434. See also: Jean Leclercq, “Intentions of the Cistercian Founders”, in *The Cistercian Spirit: A Symposium in Memory of Thomas Merton*, ed. M. Basil Pennington, Cistercian Studies Series 3 (Spencer: 1970), 88-133 (93).

monastic communities. Whilst the Rule of St Benedict was central to their construction of the monastic life, their self-image and a vital connection to the monastic tradition, it was simply not detailed enough to be use in maintaining observance.<sup>4</sup> The connection between the foundational phases of the Cistercian movement has been emphasized by the scholars historically and again more recently. Lars-Arne Dannenberg asserts that “the Cistercians surrounding Bernard called upon the unquestionable authority of Benedict of Nursia and his Rule. In this, their second generation, subsequently proclaimed the “generation of Bernard,” a deepened understanding of the Rule in light of the Gospel began to assert itself.”<sup>5</sup> The role of the Rule as ultimate sources of authority for the monastic practice is referred to in the *Ecclesiastica Officia* through the evocations of the name of St Benedict.<sup>6</sup>

It was just as important in the later middle ages not only as a central element of the observance but a link to the sources of monastic tradition. Cistercian visual culture in the post-1300 period exemplifies the role of tradition as a central element of monastic identity. The Rule of St Benedict played a major role in it. Among the standard attributes of St Bernard of Clairvaux was a book symbolising the Rule which he held in one hand – such images came from both Cistercian and non-Cistercian milieu since the twelfth century. This means that Bernard of Clairvaux was himself an embodiment of tradition who linked white monks to the origins of monasticism. It is not possible to give here a comprehensive list of such depictions, but a selected examples highlight the most important characteristics. A MSS of Conrad of Eberbach’s *Exordium Magnum Ordinis Cisterciensis*, dated 1457, in vernacular translation, from Mechelen nunnery contains depiction on f. 28 r an image of a nun kneeling in front of St Bernard of Clairvaux who depicted as an abbot holding in his arm and open book.<sup>7</sup> In the *Graduale cisterciense* from Fürstenfeld (c. 1340), on the margin of the *introitus* for the feast of St Bernard, there is a depiction of Bernard as a saint and a abbot who holds a abbatial staff and very reverently, through a fold of his cowl, a book, that is very likely to represent the Rule.<sup>8</sup> The growth of depictions of St Bernard of Clairvaux together with St Benedict of Nursia, that were frequent in the Cistercian manuscripts as well in the context of altarpieces, stalls and other devotional images, made a visually powerful statement about the role of the Rule within the Cistercian tradition. Both saints – as pillars of monastic tradition – were also depicted with the Rule in which the authority was vested.<sup>9</sup> Writing commentaries on the Rule were also among intellectual pursuits connected to the role of the abbots as

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<sup>4</sup> Janet Burton, “Past Models and Contemporary Concerns: The Foundation and Growth of the Cistercian Order,” in *Revival and Resurgence in Christian History*, ed. Kate Cooper & Jeremy Gregory, Studies in Church History 44 (Woodbridge: 2008), 27-45 (42).

<sup>5</sup> Lars-Arne Dannenberg, “Charity and Law: The Juristic Implementation of a Core Monastic Principle,” in *Aspects of Charity: Concerns for One’s Neighbour in Medieval vita religiosa*, ed. Gert Melville, Vita regularis 45 (Münster: 2011), 11-28 (13). See also Francis Kline, “Saint Bernard and the Rule of Saint Benedict: An Introduction,” in *Bernard Magister: Papers Presented at the Noncentenary Celebrations of the Birth of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Spencer: 1992), 169-183.

<sup>6</sup> Bede K. Lackner, “Early Cistercian Life is Described in the ‘Ecclesiastica Officia’,” in *Cistercian Ideals and Reality*, ed. John R Sommerfeldt, Cistercian Studies Series 60 (Kalamazoo: 1978), 62-79 (65).

<sup>7</sup> *Buchmalerei der Zisterzienser. Kulturelle Schätze aus sechs Jahrhunderten. Katalog zur Ausstellung*, ed. Hiltrud Reinecke et al. (Stuttgart: 1998), 188-189.

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Hammer, *Bernhard von Clairvaux in der Buchmalerei. Darstellungen des Zisterzienserabtes in Handschriften von 1135-1630* (Regensburg: 2009), 76-77.

<sup>9</sup> James France, *Medieval Images of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Kalamazoo: 2007), 325-330; Hammer, *Bernhard von Clairvaux*, 255-275.

spiritual leaders. It was even consciously employed by some abbots in the early sixteenth century as a means of fulfilling abbatial obligation, not just to defend but also continue to engage with the tradition. It is not an accident, that Abbot Wolfgang Marius (Mayr) of Aldersbach (dioc. Passau) produce such commentaries. He was the 33<sup>rd</sup> abbot of that house and held the office between 1514 and 1544. Abbot Wolfgang was renowned for his humanistic learning, wrote Latin poetry and monastic chronicle and also produced commentary on the Rule of St Benedict in 1534 with the German translation of the text. He was a very active defender of monasticism as valid religious vocation against the criticism of the Lutheran reformers. The defence was not only in the texts itself but in the act of living monastic tradition and writing commentary on the Rule, which was a part of that tradition.<sup>10</sup> Referring to the situation at the beginning of development of the Cistercian project, W.E. Goodrich described the relationship of the white monks to the Rule in the following way:

The 'precious treasure', which the Cistercians wished to share with the rest of the monastic world, was the message that the fulfilment of the precepts of the Rule is possible and indeed demanded of those who have vowed obedience to it.<sup>11</sup>

### *Customaries*

Even if scholars debate what the truthfulness to the Rule actually meant, there is no disagreement that it was the fundament of Cistercian observance as a link to the "most powerful written monument in the monastic tradition."<sup>12</sup> The focus of the scholarship related to the Rule of St Benedict and the white monks is firmly on the foundation stage, part of the discussion of the origins of the movement. In this context, Cistercian customaries received far less scholarly attention and there is a total absence of any systematic investigation into customaries that Cistercian nuns used. *Ecclesiastica Officia* and the *Usus Conversorum* are primarily discussed in relation to the lived experience of the monks and lay brothers, their normative prescriptions are examined to understand how daily life, rituals and practices were conducted rather than examining foundational character of these texts, as it is the case with the Rule of St Benedict.

As it is discussed in other chapters of this volume, the monastic communities following the Rule of St Benedict, required additional customaries. Therefore, what the Cistercians did, in supplementing the Rule with the *Ecclesiastica Officia*, was to follow an already well-established practice that all monastic communities – male and female followed. "Bernard himself acknowledged that there were different observances of the Rule, in different monasteries, which were permitted since they all served God."<sup>13</sup> Fundamentally,

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<sup>10</sup> M. Katherina Hauschild, *Abt Wolfgang Marius von Aldersbach (1514-44). Ein Niederbayerischer Klosterhumanist und Monastischer Apologet*, Diplomarbeit, Theologischen Fakultät der LMU (München: 2001), 26.

<sup>11</sup> Goodrich, "The Cistercian Founders", 375.

<sup>12</sup> Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: 2011), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Alice Chapman, *Sacred Authority and Temporal Power in the Writings of Bernard of Clairvaux* (Turnhout: 2013), 97.

what customaries did was to describe customs that dictated practice in a given place, but for Cistercians this description applied across their network of monasteries. Whilst Isabelle Cochelin has argued against a rigid juxtaposition of the “inspirational” customaries (up to 11<sup>th</sup> century) and later “normative” customaries, this is definitely true for the *Ecclesiastica Officia*, which contains characteristics of both.<sup>14</sup> As it will be explained in more details later, the Cistercian customaries were not static, but existed in a relationship to other texts, especially the statutes of the General Chapter. Manuscripts of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* were also part of the core collections in every monastery. Whilst the present chapter examines different customary text separately, the Cistercian culture and practice did not consider them as stand-alone, but part of the set, together with narrative and historical text. Typically, *Consuetudines cisterciensium* compilations in the twelfth century contained historical texts - either the *Exordium Cistercii* or the *Exordium Parvum* - one of the version of the *Carta Caritatis*, the *Capitula* of the General Chapter, the *Ecclesiastica Officia* and the *Usus Conversorum* later substituted by the *Definitiones*.<sup>15</sup> Usually they were also accompanied by the copy of the Rule of St Benedict and frequently also by papal bulls of Cistercian reform, especially *Parvus fons* (1265) and *Fulgens sicut sella matutina* (1335). Whilst the customaries for the lay brothers had a rather checkered history – a matter to be discussed later – the same customary, *Ecclesiastica Officia*, for the monks remained in use throughout the medieval history of the order. They all informed and validated each other. In the process of reforms and renewals not just the normative texts, but also historical narratives were used as a source of endorsement for changes, alternations, adaptation, and reinventions that were always understood as the authority that was not just beyond questioning but a tradition that was lived.

### *The Ecclesiastica Officia*

There are several editions and translations of the *Ecclesiastica Officia*. 1892 Latin edition by Hugo Séjalon have been superseded by the bilingual Latin-French edition by Danièle Choisselet and Placide Vernet. The latter is the base for a more recent German edition and translation by Hermann Herzog and also English translation prepared by Martin Cawley, OCSO, from Trappist-Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Oregon.<sup>16</sup>

The *Ecclesiastica Officia* contains set of liturgical instructions that go back to the issue of commonality of liturgical texts that was central to the Cistercian identity and practice. In lived reality, the uniformity was never fully achieved and the liturgical books had always

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<sup>14</sup> Isabelle Cochelin, “Customaries as Inspirational Sources,” in *Consuetudines et Regulae: Sources for Monastic Life in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*, ed. Carolyn M. Malone & Clark Maines, *Disciplina Monastica* 10 (Turnhout: 2014), 27-72 (29).

<sup>15</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia cisterciens du XII<sup>ème</sup> siècle: texte Latin selon les manuscrits édités de Trente 1711, Ljubljana 31 et Dijon 114, version française, annexe liturgique, notes, index et table*, ed. Danièle Choisselet & Placide Vernet, *Documentation Cistercienne* 22 (Reiningue: 1989), 48.

<sup>16</sup> *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, ed. Hugo Séjalon (Solesmes: 1892); *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet; *Ecclesiastica officia: Gebräuchebuch der Zisterzienser aus dem 12. Jahrhundert. Lateinischer Text nach den Handschriften Dijon 114, Trient 1711, Ljubljana 31, Paris 4346 und Wolfenbüttel Codex Guelferbytanus 1068*, ed. Hermann Herzog, *Quellen und Studien zur Zisterzienserliteratur* 7 (Langwaden: 2003); *The Ancient Usages of the Cistercian Order* (Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey: 1998).

features specific to the region in which a given Cistercian house was located, but the desire for consistency of liturgical manuscripts and reflection over uniformity of observance was a very important theme of the records of the General Chapter.<sup>17</sup> Whilst relatively extensive, the *Ecclesiastica Officia* is not a fully comprehensive customary and it covered different aspects of monastic practice with varying depth. Its central element, is without a doubt, liturgy. The translator of the English edition of the *Ecclesiastica* goes as far as to say that the main addressee of this customary is the cantor.<sup>18</sup> The structure of the text is very much driven by the liturgical calendar.<sup>19</sup> The first thirty chapters or so are concerned with liturgy for various high feasts and parts of the liturgical year including Advent, Christmas, Lent, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Good Friday, Rogation, Ascension, and Pentecost. It provides instructions on the liturgical actions and gestures such as bowing, kneeling or genuflecting, of the abbot, cantor and the monks, readings, recitations and chanting, responsories, handling of Eucharist, ringing of the bell, use of candles, as well as possible variants that may occur for various reasons. It specifies observance on the feasts days, which are free from work and on workdays.<sup>20</sup> Further prescriptions regulate number of collects at masses, variation of the mass text on feast and weekdays and Sundays that are not feasts.<sup>21</sup> Chapter 41 describes the circle readings in the refectory from the Old Testament, in order from Pentecost to Advent, which is followed by a chapter that deals with magnificent antiphons for Saturday.<sup>22</sup> A further group of chapters outlines liturgy associated with feasts falling on Saturdays, saints day occurring on Saturdays, eves of feasts days and octaves of saints days.<sup>23</sup> Chapter 46 provides liturgical prescriptions for how the feast of the Purification should be observed – involving abbot, monks and lay brothers, procession with candles, gestures, readings, and antiphones. The next chapter is devoted to canticles’ distribution on different feasts and finally a schedule of feasts with twelfth readings that are working day.<sup>24</sup> Chapters 50 to 52 deals with the commemoration of the dead, structure of the offices of the dead in daily circle as well as yearly, categories of people to be commemorated, liturgical elements and variants of the office, and its relationship to other aspects of liturgy.<sup>25</sup> The next grouping of the chapters deals with the liturgy of the mass and these sections are very details in the instruction of actions and gestures, celebrants, content, organization, and participation in the liturgy. Different variants related to the circumstances of the liturgical year are also included. Chapter 55 is devoted to the procedure of the blessing of water and salt, and then the process of sprinkling various rooms and spaces within the claustral range as well as different individuals and groups within the monastic community from the abbot down to the laybrothers, guest and *familia* (various craftsmen, workers and servants). This is followed by a detailed description of how the pax board should be handled during the mass as a form of communion, the gestures and action that should be performed as well as order in which it is

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<sup>17</sup> For the discussion of uniformity liturgy and its limits in English Cistercian houses, see: Richard W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: 2009), 248-264.

<sup>18</sup> *The Ancient Usages*, x.

<sup>19</sup> *Ecclesiastica officia: Gebräuchebuch*, ed. Herzog, 27-29.

<sup>20</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 66- 123.

<sup>21</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 123-134.

<sup>22</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 131-135.

<sup>23</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 137-143.

<sup>24</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 142-149.

<sup>25</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 148-157.

passed between the members of the community and between the choirs. Whilst the next chapter described how the communion in two forms is administered at the high altar, the next section is a sign of recognition that growing number of monks were ordained as priests. Therefore a detailed prescription specifies how, according to the level of ordination, and when a private mass can be held, and the relationship between private masses and masses for the dead is clarified. Further chapters provide detailed instructions concerning days when there are two masses, regulate the signing of *Kyrieleyson*, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* and saying of the *Ite Missa Est* and of *Creed* during the mass, obligatory communion days, use of three lamps in the mass during particularly important feasts and sermons.<sup>26</sup> After this, comes yet another grouping of liturgy-related prescriptions, namely organisation of vigils, and laudes.<sup>27</sup> Chapter 70 deals with the organisation of the chapter – what the abbots and the brethren should do in terms of postures, gestures, readings and liturgical elements as well as the ritual of confession that takes place during the chapter. The issue of private confession is discussed in the next chapter and then the instruction moves to the *lectio* after the chapter (for these members of the community that are not busy with other assigned tasks). It is very detailed in prescribing expected behavior during the time allocated to private reading.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Non-Liturgical Aspects*

It is only at this point that the *Ecclesiastica Officia* moves to the non-liturgical aspects of monastic observance. From chapter 72 there is a series of sections that deal with behavior, actions permitted, and access to various spaces with the monastic precinct: the kitchen, refectory, warming room, the parlor, and the dormitory. Finally, chapter 73 describes the permitted form of taking of *mixto*, a morning meal consisting of some bread and wine either before or after sext (depending if the previous day was a fasting one or not).<sup>29</sup> The next grouping of chapters focuses on daily schedule and work of the monks, their behavior during various tasks and times permitted for rest.<sup>30</sup> Organisation of meals, eating, and ritual that need to be observed are described in chapters 76 and 77.<sup>31</sup> Following the chronology of the day, the next section deals with the organisation of the vespers, behavior during the vespers, and drinking afterwards.<sup>32</sup> The next chapter (84) introduces a sessional variation, namely a schedule for the monastic community during the harvest time. It allows for a reduction of liturgical duties, difference in meals arrangement, and additional bread to facilitate work in the field and even travel to the granges.<sup>33</sup> Consideration for practicalities combined with concerns about conduct that preserve observance are also expressed in the next chapter, that deals with communal shaving and hair cutting seven times a year.<sup>34</sup> The remaining chapters

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<sup>26</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 156-193.

<sup>27</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 193-203.

<sup>28</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 203-213.

<sup>29</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 213-217.

<sup>30</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 216-225.

<sup>31</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 225-231.

<sup>32</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 230-241.

<sup>33</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 242-244.

<sup>34</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 244-245.

are concerned with various aspects of contact and obligations between the monastic community and the outside world as well as detailed prescriptions for different roles within the monastic community.

Sections from 86 to 88 specify how a bishop visiting a Cistercian monastery should be received – a process shaped by the exempted nature of white monks' houses – followed by a chapter that describes how all other guests should be received. The custom is designed to show respect and *caritas* to the guests but at the same time to keep visitors away from the community. Finally, the last section in this sequence provides detailed stipulations of the conduct of the monks whilst travelling outside the monastery. Any journey was potentially a point of great vulnerability for an individual monk, because of all manners of dangers and temptations that the outside world posed as well as possibility of causing harm to the reputation of the monastery by the transgressive behavior.<sup>35</sup> After that a sequence of chapters from 89 to 93 is devoted to the care of monk's bodies and the time of illness. It begins with section dedicated to handling instances when a monk vomits or has nosebleeds – how he should be helped out and how to handle any disruption to the liturgy or other communal activities. This is followed by prescription how the blood-letting sessions, four times a year, should be organised – a practice that was believed to have preventative and beneficial impact on health. Then, chapters 92 and 93 describe the dispensation of the ill from the liturgical duties in the choir as well as specify care of the body and soul of the monks in the infirmary and the conduct of monks there. It is very clear that these two aspects of care – physical and spiritual – should not be separated.<sup>36</sup> It is only logical that this is followed by chapters that deal with death and liturgy surrounding death-bed, preparation of the body, and funerary rites and burial.<sup>37</sup> The posthumous care of the soul extended beyond the commemoration of departed brethren as was described in the earlier section of the *Ecclesiastica Officia*, but included also relatives of the monks: mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and all blood relatives. Chapter 99 also stipulated collective commemorations of the benefactors of the order.<sup>38</sup> Because it was not unusual that the guests may become ill and even die in the monastery, the care of their soul and funerary rites are specified in chapters 100 and 101.<sup>39</sup>

At the other end of the monastic life-journey, at its beginning, was the noviciate and the detailed arrangements for the admission of laymen into the first stage of the monastic life, the process of training as well as profession to become a monk are described in chapter 102.<sup>40</sup>

The remaining chapters of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* are concerned with different offices as well as temporary role taken up by the members of the community. First of all the duties of the rotating position – on the weekly basis - of the hebdomadary priest who was responsible for the running of the liturgical offices are specified. This was the person who performed various blessings and to whom the officiating duties were delegated by the subprior. Similarly weekly role was given to the invitator, who was responsible for chanting

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<sup>35</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 246-253.

<sup>36</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 252-269.

<sup>37</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 268-291.

<sup>38</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 290-291.

<sup>39</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 292.

<sup>40</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 294-298.



and intoning key sequences in the mass. The sacristan was also supported by assistants who were rotating on the weekly basis. They looked after the lamps in the church and the monks delegated to read at mealtimes were also changing each week. Further rotational roles were associated with the ritual washing of the feet of guests, helping in the kitchen and serving food to the community, and assisting in the abbot's kitchen. While the Rule of St Benedict describes what the ideal abbot should be like, chapter 110 of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* provides a fairly detailed schedule of abbot's liturgical duties, outlines the scope of his authorities and the role in the interaction with the guests. In the next chapter, devoted to the office of the prior, his role as the deputy of the abbot, is made clear as well as the scope of his authority. Further to that, the subprior had both function of assisting the prior and acting as his deputy. The next section describes the role of novice master, which was central to the successful acculturation of the new recruits. While the role of the cantor was mentioned in the sections devoted to the liturgy, chapter 115 discussed the specific duties, action and the scope of authority that the cantor and his assistant were entrusted with. Infirmarian's role was crucial for the successful running of the monastic hospital and both the spiritual and medical care of the members of the community who were ill and infirm and resided there. As much as he is solely responsible for the wellbeing of these in the infirmary, the cellarer (and his assistant) were making sure that the material framework of the monastic organisation was functioning. Chapter 117 described the duties of the office – especially food supply, overseeing smooth running of the kitchen and its workforce, and certain aspects of the authority of the lay brothers. Because his duties were very practical, he had more freedom of movement within the cloistral range. The office that directly dealt with the communal meals, was that of the refectorian and the details for his duties were primarily concerned with the preparing of the refectory's tables and clearing after, as well as control of the distribution of drinks for monks and novices. The role of the monk of the guesthouse was to be a barrier between the guests and the community and to ensure that the visitors were both cared for and controlled, so they did not endanger observance. The overall control of access was entrusted to the gatekeeper to provide "screening" of all who approach the monastery and decided who can be admitted and who cannot. In this, he was to follow a strict set of actions and gestures. The whole of *Ecclesiastica Officia* closes with chapter 121, that stipulates when and how and which prayers and blessings are said before and after meals.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Usus Conversorum*

The customary for the Cistercian monks remained in use throughout the middle ages and beyond and its relationship to other normative texts with the *consuetudines* will be discussed later on, but it is important first to turn to the customaries that governed the lives of lay brothers and nuns. A more radical departure from the older monastic tradition was the creation of the separate customary for the lay brothers. Whilst *conversi* were already present in Cluny, their role in the Cistercian communities was far greater and required systematized

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<sup>41</sup> *Les Ecclesiastica Officia*, ed. Choisselet & Vernet, 298-338.

normative organisation.<sup>42</sup> This came at first in the shape of the *Usus Conversorum*. The reasons for composing both customaries for monks and for lay brothers were explained in the prologue to the *Usus Conversorum*:

Just as we necessarily indeed had to draw up *Usages* for monks so that unity may everywhere be preserved in our manners, so also we have decided that provision should be made in the following brief document for the lay brothers, in things both temporal and spiritual, so that diversity may not be found in their way of life, either.<sup>43</sup>

According to Chrysogonus Waddell, because of the centrality of the observance, especially the uniformity of observance, he dates the oldest version of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* (no longer in existence) to soon after, or perhaps even just before, the first confirmation of the *Carta Caritatis* (23 December 1119). He dates the earliest version of the *Usus Conversorum*, which is no longer extant either, to the early 1120s and asserts whilst the exact date cannot be established for the *Usus Conversorum*, it was created after the *Ecclesiastica Officia* had appeared.<sup>44</sup> The editor of the German edition of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* gives speculative production date of the D 114 Dijon manuscript the youngest of known manuscripts to between 1184 and 1186.<sup>45</sup> Waddell also put forward the hypothesis that both customaries were written by the same author, namely Stephen Harding.<sup>46</sup> His hypothesis, which assigns the authorship to Abbot Stephen of Cîteaux, is based on a strong textual argument: It is also a way of emphasizing the centrality of these normative texts to the origins of the Cistercian movement – rather than any actual order at that stage – and thus the importance of the uniformity of observance to the Cistercian identity.

*Usus Conversorum* had a much shorter history than the *Ecclesiastica Officia* and was superseded by later compilations. The text itself continued to evolve until 1183, but already by the beginning of the thirteenth century, it was defunct as a rulebook for the lay brothers. The oldest surviving manuscript of the *Usus*, identified by Waddell, was created c. 1138/1140 in a daughter house of Morimond, Villers-Betnach (dioc. Metz). It contained fifteen chapters. It survived in only one manuscript witness. The edition that Waddell produced is based on this oldest version together with groups of manuscripts labelled by him as Recession II (consisting of twelfth manuscripts and text of twenty chapters dated to c. 1147) and Recession III (consisting of seven manuscripts with twenty-three chapters and dated to the last quarter of the twelfth century) as the basis of his edition.<sup>47</sup> All of these versions have also a prologue that states the reason for the creation of the *Usages*.<sup>48</sup> As explained before, the reason given for the creation of the text in the prologue centred on the uniformity. The text notes with horror a great diversity of these practices among the Cistercian abbots in their

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<sup>42</sup> For the types of lay brothers in the Cluniac communities, see: Giles Constable, *The Abbey of Cluny: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Eleven-Hundredth Anniversary of its Foundation*, (Vita regularis) 43 (Berlin: 2010), 381-404.

<sup>43</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-Century Usages with Related Texts*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell, Cîteaux: Studia et documenta 10 (Cîteaux: 2000), 20 (translation), 56 (Latin).

<sup>44</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Ecclesiastica officia: Gebräuchebuch*, ed. Herzog, 32-33.

<sup>46</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 21.

<sup>47</sup> MS 1711, Trento, Biblioteca comunale; *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 29-50.

<sup>48</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 56-57 (Latin), 164-166 (translation and commentary).

treatment of the *conversi*. This variety of treatment is equated with endangering of souls of lay brothers who are the “weakest,” spiritually, members of the monastic community and need to be provided with proper pastoral care. That care can only be delivered through uniformity.

In its fullest form, the *Usus* text was arranged in 23 chapters and the significant variants and additions between different recessions are captured by Waddell’s edition. Even in its relatively short life span, the text evolved through “erasures, overwriting, interlinear and marginal additions and corrections.”<sup>49</sup> It reflected lived experience and management of the lay brotherhood in the twelfth century, the growth of the communities, and the expansion of the Cistercian network geographically and numerically. The chapters 1 to 14 deal with the issue of observance, participation in the liturgy, access to communion, the role of silence within the context of work and rest, prayers at mealtime, maintenance of discipline, limited participation in the chapter on Sunday to hear abbot’s sermon as well as admission, noviciate, and profession. These sections contain some very well-known pronouncements on lay brothers, including their illiterate status and the necessity to learn by heart only a very limited number of prayers: *pater noster*, *credo in deum*, and *miserere mei deus*.<sup>50</sup> The remaining chapters are devoted to what might be described as material ramifications of the lay brothers’ lives. They describe arrangements during journeys that lay brothers took far more frequently than the monks but the *Usus* specifies that they should behave just like the monks did – the concerns for potential scandals that transgressions could bring were ever present. The lay brothers’ food is decreed to be the same in terms of quality as that given to monks, but their fasting practices and quantities were different. The description of the clothing of the lay brother emphasizes simplicity and cheapness of material above all. For example, animal skins and cloths used for protective cloaks worn outdoors should be cheap and old. The nature of the manual labor also meant that lay monks performing particularly demanding outdoor jobs were permitted to use additional layers for protection. Boots, if given to the lay brothers, should be likewise old. Prescriptions concerning communal washing, hair cutting, and beard trimming, should not involve physical contact between lay brothers. It should result in a distinctive style that visually differentiated between monks and lay brothers. The regulations for beds and bedding of the *conversi* again reiterate that they should be the same as these used by the monks, except that they can use animal skins instead of blankets. In terms of discipline and control, chapter 18 stipulated that they were under the authority of the grange master. Punishments in case of disobedience included humiliation and exclusion from the communal meals. The *Usus* closes with a prohibition on taking oaths on the gospel.<sup>51</sup>

The relationship of status between monks and lay brothers as being equal but leading very different lives is reflected in the *Usus*, and, according to James France, is imbedded in various prescriptions. In particular, he stresses the similarities in certain parts of liturgical observance. At Vigils and *ad horas diei* the *conversi* should say their prayers in the same way as monks and observe the same feasts as monks (with some difference to fasting practices on granges), and also keep silence as the monks (with some adjustments for the necessity to cooperate in various tasks of manual labor). Very importantly, the entry into both the

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<sup>49</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 57.

<sup>50</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 57-71 (Latin), 164-187 (translation and commentary).

<sup>51</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 72-78 (Latin), 187-194 (translation and commentary).

monastic status and into the lay brotherhood began with a year-long noviciate, and some elements of the entry formulas were the same. At the other end of the monastic journey – in death – the same prayers were said over the lay brothers and over the monks.<sup>52</sup>

### *Related Texts*

As already mentioned, *Usus* was in use for a relatively short time. A major codification of the Cistercian legislation occurred in 1202, which reorganised a significant part of the existing Cistercian legislation as thematically arranged *Distinctiones*. Within it, section 14 or *Distinctio XIV*, entitled *De conversis*, re-used almost entirely the *Usus Conversorum* with cross-references to the statutes of the General Chapter.<sup>53</sup> This new text was subjected to further changes in the codifications in 1237 and 1257.<sup>54</sup> This process of codification and reorganisation is important for the understanding of the role and character of customaries in the Cistercian order and as well as dynamics of their use in relation to other centrally-produced texts.

Whilst *Distinctiones* and their codification were intrinsically connected to the centralized nature of the order, another text of customary for the lay brothers, *Breve et Memoriale Scriptum de Consuersione Laicorum Fratrum Secundum Instituta Beati Bernardi*, demonstrates other important features of Cistercian practice and culture in relation to such normative text. Because there are no surviving medieval manuscripts attesting it, the oldest printed edition is by Chrysostomus Henriquez from 1630. Henriquez, a major early historian of the order, used “an edition manuscript from the library of the Abbey of Aulne” that no longer exists and thus the date of the *Breve* can be only given as post-1153 without any *terminus ante quem*. The most recent edition of this text by Waddell provides full apparatus to this short text.<sup>55</sup> It is clear from the wording that the *Breve* was designed for the use of the community of Clairvaux. The anonymous author refers to both the tradition and the authority of Bernard of Clairvaux – saying that the *Breve* is a record of his words and intentions that were written first in the hearts of his community.<sup>56</sup> This is not only a straightforward way to establish an unquestionably authoritative voice, but is also an important manifestation of how Bernard was embedded into the tradition of Clairvaux. He was used as a direct source of normative regulations, and thus sanctifying *Breve* and giving it incontestable status for the monks of Clairvaux.

It provides further details and elaborations of rules in the *Usus*. These elaborations are clearly a result of practical experience with the application of rules that were not very precise, lacking in detail to cover all variants and necessities of complexities of the daily life

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<sup>52</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 57-59, 64-66, 70-73; James France, *Separate but Equal: Cistercian Lay Brothers, 1120-1350*, (Cistercian Studies Series) 246 (Collegeville: 2012), 153-154.

<sup>53</sup> *Le codification cistercienne de 1202 et son évolution ultérieure*, ed. Bernard Lucet (Rome: 1964), 157-169 (dist. XIV).

<sup>54</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 21-22; *Les codifications cisterciennes de 1237 et de 1257*, ed. Bernard Lucet (Paris: 1977), 336-347 (dist. XIV).

<sup>55</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 145-159.

<sup>56</sup> [...] *quam suorum cordibus filiorum lingua eius tamquam calamus sapientiae caelestis scripsit* (*Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 153 (commentary) and 155 (discussion)).

of the lay brothers. *Breve* regulated further behavior of the *conversi* in the choir, during the chapter, and in the refectory. It gives far more precise instructions in what situations and with whom lay brothers were allowed to speak and this is related to different agricultural professions that *conversi* had performed. There is clearly a lot of care taken to prevent subversion of rule of silence, under the threat of punishment and especially within the granges and with the guests. Verbal communication is restricted to only such that is necessary. or example, one should provide information about direction somewhere, but not engage in a conversation with the guests. “But if somebody asks them further, they should say it is not allowed to confer with a guest.”<sup>57</sup> This level of detail is clearly a result of lived experience and situations that have arisen and for which *Usus* was too vague. This is also directly referred to in the prologue to the *Breve*: that it had a supplementary role to the “*communis consuetudinis Libri*” (that it *Usus Conversorum*) and that it should be used when there was doubt over specific aspects of observance. This because many aspects of practice are not addressed in the *Usus*.<sup>58</sup>

The history of lay brotherhood as a distinct group within Cistercian communities was complex and very much subject to regional variations. Whilst they mostly disappeared from the western European context after the Black Death, they continued to be important in the Central and East-Central European context in the later middle ages.<sup>59</sup>

### *Cistercian Nuns*

In the relatively sparse secondary literature on Cistercian customaries for male communities, there is an almost total absence of any discussion over customaries of female communities. The different ways in which Cistercian nuns could be become affiliated to the order through incorporation or foundation as well as simply following the Cistercian *ordo* without formally belonging to the order, caused significant variation to how a community of nuns could live and experience their “Cistercianness.”<sup>60</sup> In the historiographical discussions about the status of the female communities vis-à-vis the order, it is often stressed how difficult it is to establish from which point a female community becomes Cistercian. Franz Felten established that in the cases of transition from Benedictine to Cistercian, both following the Rule of St Benedict, the point of change from one to the other is the hardest to detect: “If, in documents, it is only mentioned that the women followed this rule, they could already be Cistercian women, even if there is no explicit reference to the Cistercian customs or the *ordo*.”<sup>61</sup> The references to the *ordo* – the custom of Cistercians – are in the primary sources, especially charters, but when historians discuss these cases, they usually do not probe further to

<sup>57</sup> *Si quis amplius eos interrogauerit, decant, non licere sibi colloqui cum hospite* (*Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 157).

<sup>58</sup> *Cistercian Lay Brothers*, ed. Waddell, 155.

<sup>59</sup> Emilia Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe 1090-1500* (London: 2013), 63-65.

<sup>60</sup> Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 124-155. On incorporation mechanism, see Franz J. Felten, *Vita Religiosa Sanctimonialium. Norm und Praxis des weiblichen religiösen Lebens vom 6. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte des Mittelalters) 4 (Korb 2011), 224-232, 235-244.

<sup>61</sup> “Wenn also in Urkunden nur erwähnt wird, daß die Frauen diese Regel folgten, können sie durchaus schon ‚Zisterzienserinnen‘ sein, auch wenn der explizite Hinweis auf die zisterziensischen Gewohnheiten oder den *ordo* fehlt.” (Felten, *Vita Religiosa*, 209).

establish its constituent elements. Adopting Cistercian customary must have played a major role in the process of becoming a regularized community. In the discussion of various northern Italian nunneries into the Cistercian order, Guido Cariboni points to one form of incorporation, namely the process of absorbing Cistercian observance “by cohabitation and imitation.” It involved a founding member of the community going temporarily to an established house of white nuns to learn the details of the observance that would then be transmitted upon her return to the recently established monastery.<sup>62</sup>

It is not only the diversity of female Cistercian communities that is an issue here, but the necessity of adopting regulations designed for male communities to the practices of nuns. In the manuscript Dijon 352, edited by Guignard, there is a copy of vernacular French thirteenth century version of the *Statuta* within the set of Cistercian historical and normative texts as well as the Rule of St Benedict. The indication of the process of adopting the regulations to the context of translation of the regulations for the use of nuns, is manifested by the change in the pronouns.<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps the best-known case of an “exceptional” Cistercian nunnery, Las Huelgas in Castile, also produced its own customary between 1390 and 1406. Whilst Las Huelgas cannot be representative of an “average” Cistercian nunnery, if such things ever existed, the character of its customary shows certain features that might have been typical for many Cistercian female communities. First of all, the customary of Las Huelgas is based on the *Ecclesiastica Officia* but the Latin text is extensively adopted through omissions, additions, interpolations. It is also rendered into Castilian.<sup>64</sup> The vernacular translation or more broadly the presence of vernacular texts in the Cistercian nunneries is a phenomenon observed in various communities of the Cistercians - male and female – in the later middle ages. David Catalunya stressed that whilst the entire customary of Las Huelgas was created from the female perspective – by nuns and for nuns – not all variants differing from the *Ecclesiastica Officia* were necessarily gender-driven, but they were all linked to the locally specific considerations. The issue of vernacular translation of the normative text will be discussed further below.

The importance of the nunnery as a site of commemorations and the intercessory role of the nuns is also a prominent feature in the Las Huelgas customary, detailing liturgical obligation towards the deceased buried in their monastery and major benefactors. In addition, the Las Huelgas customary provide the list of anniversaries that were celebrated annually, with the indication how many psalms should be recited for each. The highest number – full psalter – was accorded to the kings and queens, and more limited selection to lower-status benefactors.<sup>65</sup> Whilst Las Huelgas was a very prominent royal foundation and burial place of

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<sup>62</sup> Guido Cariboni, “Cistercian Nuns in Northern Italy: Variety of Foundations and Construction of an Identity”, in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, ed. Janet Burton & Karen Stöber, Medieval Monastic Studies 1 (Turnhout: 2015), 53-74 (66).

<sup>63</sup> *Les monuments primitifs de la Règle cistercienne*, ed. Philippe Guignard (Dijon: 1878), 407-642; Anne E. Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns: The Women’s Religious Movement and its Reforms in Thirteenth-Century Champagne* (Ithaca: 2011), 84.

<sup>64</sup> David Catalunya, “The Customary of the Royal Convent of La Huelgas in Burgos: Female Liturgy, Female Scribes,” *Medievalia* 20 (2017): 91-160 (97). This article contains an inventory (identifying elements listed directly from the *Ecclesiastica Officia*) and a partial edition of the manuscript. A full edition is in preparation by the same author.

<sup>65</sup> Catalunya, “The Customary”, 105-108.

members of the Castilian royal family, the role of Cistercian nuns in the commemoration of the dead is well attested for many nunneries across medieval Europe. So-called “dynastic” Cistercian foundations tended to be particularly entrusted with commemorative practices. Trzebnica Abbey (Trebnitz) in Silesia a ducal foundation of Henry the Bearded and his wife Hedwig (1202), which became a major necropolis as well as the site of the cult of Hedwig with the community that was highly vested in both.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the strong presence of stipulations related to the commemorative practices in the Las Huelgas customary can be taken as indicative for much greater number of female houses.

In the *Libellus definitionum* of 1237, which has been already mentioned in relation to the customary for the lay brothers, a *Distinctio* for nuns was also included, which systematized changes occurring in the previous decades. According to Franz Felten, these codifications were related to the recent process of incorporation of female houses into the order and the corresponding duty of the abbots for nuns’ communities.<sup>67</sup> This is yet another example of the process of change within the normative texts and their form as a result of changing realities of monastic structures.

### *Translations*

The presence of the vernacular translations of the Rule of St Benedict and other normative texts in the Cistercian houses is not just the issue of female communities, even if the oldest translation of the Rule into French, in the thirteenth century is connected with female use. The only systematic survey of vernacular monastic rules for Cistercians exists for high-middle German manuscripts and shows the greatest number of surviving copies to be from the fifteenth century.<sup>68</sup> A manuscript from either Kaisheim (male house) or Kirchheim (female house) dated to after 1493 contains vernacular translation of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* as well as of the *Usus Conversorum*.<sup>69</sup> A late fifteenth or early sixteenth century manuscript from Lichtenthal nunnery holds vernacular translations of the *Libellus antiquarum definitionum* of 1289 (with the incipit: “(d)as büchly der gesatzet Citelser ordens, deren die zugehören der regulierte observanz”) as well as the *Libellus novellus definitionum* von 1350.<sup>70</sup> Another manuscript dated to the same period, from Cistercian nunnery St Martin in Erfurt, contains a translation of the Rule of St Benedict.<sup>71</sup> A slightly earlier (third quarter of the fifteenth century) manuscript from Aldersbach Abbey also contains translation of the Rule (with the incipit: “Ausculda o fili precept. Hör kint die gepot deines maisters”).<sup>72</sup> The significance of this evidence is not in the assumption that these translations were related to lower levels of Latinity in the late-medieval Cistercian communities, in the sense of being “remedial tools.”

<sup>66</sup> Przemysław Wiszewski, “Zwischen Chor und Krypta. Die schlesischen Herzöge, Zistercienser und Zistercienserinnen im 12.-14. Jahrhundert,” in *Adlige-Stifter-Mönche. Zum Verhältnis zwischen Klöstern und mittelalterlichem Adel*, ed. Nathalie Kruppa (Göttingen: 2007), 242-260.

<sup>67</sup> Felten, *Vita Religiosa*, 233.

<sup>68</sup> Tobias Tanneberger, „...usz latin in tutsch gebracht...“. *Normative Basistexte religiöser Gemeinschaften in volkssprachlichen Übertragungen. Katalog - Untersuchung – Fallstudie*, (Vita regularis) 59 (Berlin: 2014), 131.

<sup>69</sup> Tanneberger, „...usz latin in tutsch gebracht...“, 132-133 (Augsburg, UB, Cod. III.1.4<sup>0</sup>43).

<sup>70</sup> Tanneberger, „...usz latin in tutsch gebracht...“, 134 (Karlsruhe, BLB, Cod. Kl. L. 46).

<sup>71</sup> Tanneberger, „...usz latin in tutsch gebracht...“, 134-135 (Karlsruhe, BLB, Cod. St Peter perg. 50b).

<sup>72</sup> Tanneberger, „...usz latin in tutsch gebracht...“, 136 (München, BSB, cgm 805).

Whilst the role of the vernacular in the monastic culture – including Cistercians - is now seen as being significant even before 1300, it was also highly regionalised phenomenon.<sup>73</sup> What is particularly significant in the context of the discussion here is that the key texts of normative tradition became incorporated into the vernacularization within the monastic culture.

### *Conclusion*

The relationship of the Cistercian communities to the customaries is a manifestation of several processes occurring within the monastic world, both across temporal changes and regional differences. First of all, not only the Rule of St Benedict but also many of the prescriptions of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* is fundamentally a result of monastic tradition – both in terms of the content, but also structurally in terms of the creating chains of authority between monastic roots, the deep past and the present. Customaries are practical texts that enable observance to be enacted from generation to generation. They allow tradition to live and the change to be managed within that framework. Whilst customaries were established and necessary part within the Benedictine tradition, Cistercians were the first to use them within the network of the order. The *Ecclesiastica Officia* as well as *Usus Conversorum* and its later incarnations were not a repository of just the local custom of a specific Cistercian community, but a source of shared practice and tradition across the order. This interpretation is further strengthened by the linkages to the historical texts (*Exordium*) and the *Carta Caritatis* that the copies usually had.

There is also an important historiographical concern that this chapter reveals. The fact that the history of Cistercian nuns is neglected in comparison to the study of male communities is well known. However, what the extremely limited scholarship on the customaries of the Cistercian nuns exposes is how the approach that treats male houses and male monastic experience as the norm overshadows very fundamental questions in relation to the structures and norms of monastic culture and practice. Moreover, a systematic study of the late medieval manuscript copies of the customaries from different parts of Cistercian world would reveal new aspects of the process of regionalization of the order intersecting with trans-European structures of the , transmission of information, as well as reform processes. If we really want to understand long-term process of tradition production and consumption, the Cistercian customaries are an excellent case to explore the structural mechanism of a large network within different layers of local, regional, and shared monastic tradition coexisting in dialogue with each other.

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<sup>73</sup> Julie Barrau, “Did Medieval Monks Actually Speak Latin?,” in *Understanding Monastic Practices of Oral Communication*, ed. Steven Vanderputten, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 21 (Turnhout: 2011), 293-317; David N. Bell, “The Libraries of Religious Houses in the Late Middle Ages,” in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* 1, ed. Elisabeth Leedham-Green & Teresa Webber (Cambridge: 2006), 126-151; *Nuns’ Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton et al. (Turnhout: 2013); *Nuns’ Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton et al. (Turnhout: 2015); *Nuns’ Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Antwerp Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton et al. (Turnhout: 2017).



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