

# RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN ANDALUSIA AT THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES: ECONOMIC FOUNDATION AND FAMILY TIES

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to study the collectives of religious women who lived at the end of the Middle Ages in Andalusia. Researches about this item multiplied in the last years, but the analysis has been made from an institutional perspective. The novelty of my investigation is based on the analysis of their economic basis and their religious vocation, as on their family ties that their lifestyle allowed them to keep unlike religious women living in enclosed environments. Even they didn't renounce to maternity. Enter into the privacy of religious women's lives has been possible thanks to the information contained in the compilation of Public Notaries' official records preserved at the Municipal Archive of Jerez de la Frontera.<sup>1</sup>

## KEYWORDS

Religious Women, Walled-up women, Devoted Women, Tertiaries, Economic Activities.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Mulieres Religiosae, Mulieres Inclusae, Mulieres Devotae, Tertiariae, Activitates Oeconomicae.

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1. Used Abbreviation: AMJF, Archivo Municipal de Jerez de la Frontera.

The study of women during the Middle Ages is not as easy an area of study as one would wish due to a number of reasons; one of these being, and undoubtedly the most important, the lack of documental proof. Consequently, a global and theoretical view was built and accepted, according to which women stood behind men and were suppressed by them within the late medieval society and only carried out specific tasks of domestic and reproductive nature in accordance with their social group, age and state.<sup>2</sup> However, this is only a general consideration and does not apply to many women in particular who took crucial decisions for their life direction.

In this paper I study a specific group of women that break with this theoretical impression, the *mulieres religiosas*,<sup>3</sup> who carried out unregulated types of religious lives. During the last decade of the past century, research regarding this group has greatly increased and been gathered in excellent publications which have enlightened us about the life of these women. My contribution aims to provide deeper knowledge regarding two essential aspects of their lives: their economic activities,<sup>4</sup> which allowed them to keep their independence from any kind of men tutelage, and the family ties that their lifestyle allowed them to keep unlike religious women living in enclosed environments. This study was developed through the analysis of the information contained in the compilation of Public Notaries' official records<sup>5</sup> preserved at the Municipal Archive of Jerez de la Frontera.<sup>6</sup>

## 1. Religious-laywomen

This topic is immensely interesting as it appears to be very widespread, yet also conflicting. It is widespread because this kind of group of women was found in

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2. Del Val Valdivieso, María Isabel. "Las mujeres en el contexto de la familia bajomedieval. La Corona de Castilla", *Mujeres, familia y linaje en la Edad Media*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2004: 105.

3. "Generic name that groups many different realities of women who, without being nuns, had the priority of focusing on the love of God and the desire to live in the first person the evangelical ideals" in García Herrero, María del Carmen. "Mulieres religiosas en Zaragoza (siglos XIII-XVI)", *Artisanas de vida. Mujeres de la Edad Media*. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2009: 314.

4. Erikson, Amy Louise. *Women and property in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1993.

5. Studies based on Public Notaries' official records are: Bono y Huerta, José. "Conceptos fundamentales de la diplomática notarial". *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 19 (1992): 73-88; Colombo, Octavio. "Los dueños del dinero. Prestamistas abulenses a mediados del siglo XV". *Espacio, tiempo y Forma. Historia Medieval*, 29 (2016): 249-277; De Vijlder, Nicolas; Limberger, Mic. "Public or private interests? The investment behaviour of public officials in Antwerp during the early modern period". *Financial History Review*, 21 (2014): 301-326; García Garcimartín, Hugo. *Articulación jurisdiccional y dinámica socioeconómica de un espacio natural*. Madrid: Complutense, 2005; Pardo, Marisa; Ostos, Pilar. *El notariado andaluz en el tránsito de la Edad Media a la Edad Moderna*. Seville: Colegio Notarial, 1995; Rodríguez Mateos, Joaquín. "Escribanos públicos en Huelva: los protocolos notariales y el Archivo Histórico Provincial". *Huelva en su historia*, 8 (2001): 131-150; Rojas Vaca, María Dolores. "Los inicios del notariado público en el reino de Castilla". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 31/1 (2001): 329-400.

6. City located within the province of Cadiz, Andalusia, in the South-West of Spain.



every territory where Christianity was established and, among those, in the Iberian Peninsula. On the other hand, I consider this topic to be especially conflicting as it addresses the expression of very specific religious practices carried out by women who live in communities similar to religious orders but do not belong to any religious order in particular; hence we can find many terms which refer to them, but none of them turns out to give an accurate description. Nevertheless, this confusion does not apply only to the communities located in the Iberian Peninsula, but also to the whole European territory: “Who were the beguines? This question is not easy to answer, for the juridical and canonical status of the beguines has never been very clear”.<sup>7</sup>

Another point that contributes to this initial confusion is the fact that most traditional explanations of this phenomenon correspond to views with a strong focus on unilateral aspects of the problem; not being studied as a whole but merely as a parallel dimension of other events of economic, social and religious nature.<sup>8</sup>

As I mentioned before, the existence of women who spontaneously decide to live according to religious rules constitutes a frequent and widely spread phenomenon. These groups of women adopt different external forms of expression and belong to different communities such as the ‘beguines’, ‘enclosed women’, *deodatas*, ‘hermits’ and ‘hospitalers’. However, I will focus on describing three groups which are characteristic of the Andalusian area: *emparedadas* or ‘walled-in women’, *terceras* or ‘tertiaries’ and *beatas* or ‘devout women’. They set examples of this particular religious and yet lay lifestyle during the late medieval period, in which religious rules and practices were performed outside enclosed placements, worship increasingly turned to Mary and thus the female figure was promoted, and religious practices focused on mental prayer and inner life instead of worship such as rites, ceremonies, verbal prayers, etc.<sup>9</sup>

In Andalusia, these communities could be found from early stages as they were established as soon as the Christians reconquered the Peninsula from the hands of the Arabs, or at least as soon as the new population took roots there. This lifestyle was soon widespread, since traces of its existence have been found not only in big cities, but also in smaller population centres and even traditional rural areas.

The women studied in this paper have very few common features, we could even say none, with their traditional image we have received from authors of the Church. According to Church sources, these women were old and helpless widows, unable to find their own sources of income and no longer eligible to join a convent, therefore they had to settle for this type of religious lifestyle.<sup>10</sup> We must bear in

7. Olyslager, W. A. *The Groot Begijnhof of Leuven*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999: 11.

8. Mac Donell, Ernest W. *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, with special emphasis on the Belgian scene*. New Brunswick-New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969.

9. This definition was found in Andrés, Melquiades. *Historia de la Iglesia en España*. Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1980: 325-345.

10. Santonja, Pedro. “Mujeres religiosas: beatas y beguinas en la Edad Media. Textos satíricos y misóginos”. *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 14 (2003-2006): 209-228.



mind that this kind of spontaneous religious communities escaped the strict Church categorization, namely the negative image conveyed by the Church hierarchy.

However, even though this stereotype was certainly the case of many particular women at that time, the cases of women I have analyzed for this study break with that convention. Firstly, these walled-in women, tertiaries and devout women enjoyed a decent standard of living allowing them to have enough resources to pay for the services of a notary public, own properties and carry out lucrative businesses. That said, it is true that the Notary Public Archive only gathers documents coming from the middle to high sectors of society and excludes the poor and lower classes; therefore, we can only assume that there exists a wider socio-economic spectrum within the religious-lay women segment, which is not exclusive of Jerez de la Frontera but also found in other Hispanic areas.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, regarding the marital status of the women in the present study, I found the majority of them were unmarried, followed by a few widows and the absence of any married woman.

Thirdly, the documents analyzed do not show any relevant proof of lack of abilities and requirements which would have prevented these women joining a convent —mainly because it was not of interest to the notary public. This could certainly be the case for many other women, but I would rather think that these particular women, who had the means to be independent from male figures and religious institutions, personally chose this specific religious-lay lifestyle in order to own their destiny and businesses while living their lives according to the religious standards.

These three types of religious-lay women share the same spirituality, common to both religious and lay people, even if there are differences among their practices and material aspects. They also established links with members of the regular and secular clergy, who in certain occasions served as their protectors in material and spiritual matters.

All the features described above are shared by other groups of women located in different areas of Western Europe and in Flanders in particular, where they were named 'beguines' —a term used with a negative tone in Castille— and described as follows:

[...] We can say that the beguines were religious women who were halfway between nuns and laywomen. They lived in community but not in a true convent, and did not make the solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; they maintained control over their own property and earned their living by manual labour [...]<sup>12</sup>

11. Muñoz Fernández, Ángela. *Beatas y santas neocastellanas: ambivalencias de la religión y políticas correctoras del poder (SS. XIV-XVI)*. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 1994: 27-50.

12. Olyslager, W.A. *The Groot...*: 11.



In this paper, I study the three major groups that I have been able to distinguish in accordance with the information contained in the official documents: walled-in women, tertiaries and devout women. Before moving on to the presentation of the separate groups, I offer a common description that applies to all three:

*Se trata de tipos de expresiones religiosas de mujeres enraizadas en un movimiento espiritual más amplio, no son prácticas y reglas religiosas femeninas, sino expresiones religiosas de las mujeres. Dicho esto, tales expresiones religiosas están motivadas por su propio movimiento espiritual, que se centra en la vida interior, el misticismo e incluso el feminismo, y en consecuencia, promueve el poder de las mujeres. Deberíamos llamarlos prácticas religiosas, no prácticas religiosas o espirituales femeninas distinguidas de las masculinas.<sup>13</sup>*

## 2. Walled-in women

The walled-in women were generally those who:

*Por el amor de Dios, para tener una vida contemplativa o por motivos relacionados con la penitencia, deciden confinarse en celdas, cerrar la puerta y dejar solo una pequeña ventana para que les proporcionen comida y agua, su único medio de contacto con el mundo externo.<sup>14</sup>*

Normally, these cells were found attached to either parish or convent churches so that the women could follow the services through a little hole in their cell wall. The walled-in women became a popular example of monastic life.<sup>15</sup>

However, this definition<sup>16</sup> requires a few clarifications within the Andalusian area as the religious practices consisting in voluntary confinement were declining and being replaced by new practices in the Western Christian territory during the

13. "These are types of religious expressions of women rooted in a wider spiritual movement, it is not female religious practices and rules but religious expressions of women. That said, such religious expressions are motivated by their own spiritual movement, which focuses on the inner life, mysticism and even feminism – consequently, promoting women power. We should call them religious practices, not female religious or spiritual practices distinguished to male ones." Translation from fragment contained in Miura Andrades, José María. "Algunas notas sobre las beatas andaluzas", *Las mujeres en el Cristianismo medieval. Imágenes teóricas y cauces de actuación religiosa*. Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1989: 302.

14. "For the love of God, in order to have a contemplative life or due to penance-related reasons, decide to confine themselves in cells, wall up the door and leave only a little window to be provided with food and water, their only means of contact with the external world". Translation from fragment contained in Sánchez Herrero, José. *Las diócesis del Reino de León*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1978: 332; Sánchez Herrero, José. "La Iglesia andaluza en la Baja Edad Media, siglos XIII-XV", *I Coloquio de Historia Medieval de Andalucía*. Seville: Diputación Provincial, 1982: 321.

15. Miura Andrades, José María. *Frtales, monjas y conventos. Las Órdenes Mendicantes y la sociedad sevillana bajomedieval*. Seville: Diputación Provincial, 1998: 232.

16. Cavero Domínguez, Gregoria. *Inclusa intraparietes: la reclusión voluntaria en la España medieval*. Toulouse: Université Toulouse II-Le Mirail, 2010; Montero Curiel, Pilar. "Los espacios en el poema de Santa Oria de Gonzalo de Berceo". *Anuario de Estudios Filológicos*, 19 (1996): 359-379.



13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> In Jerez de la Frontera, the walled-in cells were indeed attached to parishes,<sup>18</sup> but the women who lived in them were not confined nor isolated from the external world. The archbishop Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1485-1502) condemned the new walled-in confinement procedure in Seville during the bishops' synod that took place in 1490, c. XXV:

*Sabemos que hay muchos emparedamientos conectados a las iglesias de esta ciudad e incluso de esta diócesis en las que las mujeres no han seguido un estilo de vida confinado adecuado hasta el momento, y esta situación es un mal ejemplo, [...] como solución, les ordenamos que vivan en aislamiento total, no deben abandonar la celda y ninguna otra persona, hombre o mujer de ningún estado, debe ingresar a la celda sin nuestro permiso. Si una persona ingresa en la celda o la mujer la abandona, se le otorgará un juicio de excomunión y se la obligará a abandonar definitivamente su celda.*<sup>19</sup>

In any case, this regulation did not come into effect until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the walled-in women I studied certainly did not live according to the archbishop's Hurtado contemplative monastic lifestyle: they did not live in total isolation and were not dependent on charity; on the contrary, they had an active life integrated in society and lived within communities. They enjoyed enough freedom to leave their cells and participate in economic and trade activities, which allowed them to keep in touch with society.

Documentary references to walled-in women are rather scarce during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. I hold a few testaments<sup>20</sup> in which the testator leaves inheritance to non-specified walled-in communities in Jerez;<sup>21</sup> I have others in which the testators mention specific churches with walled-in communities attached, such as

17. King, Margot. *The Desert Mothers: a survey of the feminine anchoritic tradition in Western Europe*. Saskatoon: Peregrina Publishing, 1989. L'Hermite-Lequercq, Paulette. "La Réclusion volontaire au Moyen Age: une institution religieuse spécialement féminine", *Actas del Coloquio Hispano-Francés. La condición de la mujer en la Edad Media*, Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1986: 139.

18. Mesa Jinete, Francisco. *Historia sagrada y política de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Tarteso, Turdeto, Asta Regia, Asido Cesariana, Asidonia, Gera, Jerez Sidonia, hoy Jerez de la Frontera*. Jerez de la Frontera: Melchor Ga. Ruíz, 1888: 114.

19. "We know there are many walled-in cells attached to the churches of this city and even of this diocese in which women have not followed a proper confined lifestyle so far, and this situation sets a bad example, [...] as a solution, we command them to live in total isolation, they must not leave the cell and no other person, male or female of any status, must enter the cell without our permission. If any person enters the cell or the woman leaves it, an excommunication judgment will be given to her and she will be forced to permanently leave her cell." Sanchez Herrero, José; Pérez González, Silvia María. "El sínodo de Sevilla de 1490". *Archivo Hispalense*, 79/241 (1996): 69-96. Other articles: Cavero Domínguez, Gregoria. "Obispos y sínodos hispanos ante el emparedamiento medieval". *Medievalismo*, 22 (2012): 57-74; Lehfeldt, Elizabeth. *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister*. Aldersho-Burlington: Ashgate, 2005; Suárez Beltrán, Soledad. "Las emparedadas de Oviedo: Una aportación al estudio de la religiosidad popular en la Baja Edad Media". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 15 (1985): 467-474.

20. Guillot Aliaga, María Dolores. "La mujer a través de los testamentos valencianos", *Las mujeres en la Edad Media*, Murcia: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2013: 153-170.

21. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Juan Ortega Gaitán. 18<sup>th</sup> November 1490, f. 177v.



the churches of San Miguel,<sup>22</sup> San Marcos<sup>23</sup> and El Salvador.<sup>24</sup> It was actually a usual habit to give alms to all these parishes so that the walled-in women would pray for the soul of the benefactor or perform the Penitential Psalms for them.<sup>25</sup> In these documents I have also registered a special case of donation in which Alfonso de Vanades,<sup>26</sup> chaplain of the church of San Miguel, gives a book named *Flos Sanctorum* to the walled-in community attached to this temple. The fact that both the chaplain and the walled-in women lived together in the same chapel and may have developed friendly relationships would explain a gift with such a special value during that time, a book.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, I find numerous references from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century which describe the freedom of walled-in women living in communities. A good example was María de la Cruz, who lived in the community of walled-in women of El Salvador. She left her cell and visited Alonso de Cuenca, notary public, in order to rent out a few store premises located in Corredera street for the price of eight golden ducats to be paid three times a year (at the end of June, beginning of November and before Lent).<sup>28</sup> This short renting period would allow her to rent out her properties again the following year with the possibility of increasing the rent.

However, the fact of being fully integrated in society also brought them disadvantages as they were subject to lawsuits. The case of Juana Cordero Menor, a walled-in woman who lived in an unspecified community, was heard at the Chancery of Granada<sup>29</sup> and she was assisted throughout the process by Antón Pérez, solicitor at that same court.<sup>30</sup> This woman had also hired an accountant, namely, a person enabled by law to clear accounts. The estate of Juana remains unknown, but it must have been big enough for her to need the services of two experts to help her out. I have analyzed other documents according to which she let the mayor of Jerez know about some private agreements she had reached with people she “had been negotiating with through an iron window grill”.<sup>31</sup> This is certainly an interesting detail as it shows how this walled-in woman dealt with civil matters

22. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Bartolomé de Maya. 13<sup>th</sup> July 1489, f. 147r.

23. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Juan Ortega Gaitán. 30<sup>th</sup> March 1491, f. 44v.

24. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Bartolomé de Maya. 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1489, f. 196v.

25. Fernández Vallina, Emiliano. “Plegarias e invocaciones en la Edad Media Latina”, *Las donaciones piadosas en el mundo medieval*, Alfonso García, ed. Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 2012, 483-506. Reeves, Andrew. “The Cure of Souls is the Art of Arts: Preaching, Confession, and Catechesis in the Middle Ages”. *Religion Compass*, 7 (2013): 372-384.

26. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Bartolomé de Maya. 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1489, f. 196v.

27. Vives, Juan Luis. *The Education of a Christian Woman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

28. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales, Escribano Alonso de Cuenca. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1536, f. 427r.

29. Ruiz Rodríguez, Antonio María. *La Real Chancillería de Granada en el siglo XVI*. Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1987.

30. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso de Cuenca. 5<sup>th</sup> April 1537, f. 144v.

31. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso de Cuenca. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1537, f. 195r.



from her religious confinement and how her isolation is purely symbolic since she takes part in the social sphere of the city with all the consequences.

Other walled-in women, due to trust reasons or merely to avoid the service charge, decided to hand over their estate management to a close family member. As was the case of Isabel García, a walled-in woman located within the community of El Salvador, who entrusted her brother with the sale of some properties she had inherited upon her father's death.<sup>32</sup>

The social life of these walled-in women did not prevent them from strictly performing their religious practices,<sup>33</sup> as it was known by the rest of the society in Jerez. Their social and religious prestige is evident as shown by the agreements held by Francisca Sánchez, also a walled-in woman in El Salvador, who used to pray Penitential Psalms every day for a whole year in exchange for two golden ducats.<sup>34</sup> Besides, other documents prove how these communities served as shelter for women in need. This was the case of Alejo de Fuentes, a surgeon born in Oviedo (a city in the North of Spain), who had to go to war and decided to leave his youngest daughter in the care of the walled-in community of the church of El Salvador. According to their agreement, the "walled-in Mothers" would take care of the child, feed her, bring her up and teach her good manners in exchange for one *cahíz*<sup>35</sup> of wheat and grain and 48 Spanish *reales*<sup>36</sup> a year. Since he was not sure about how long he would be serving as a surgeon for the troops, he left Sebastián García, a scabbard maker, and his wife money and provision enough to pay the walled-in women for a period of two years.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Tertiaries

The tertiaries were women who, in keeping in touch with the world, chose a life of religious perfection inside their homes following the rules of some religious order. In the documents I analyzed I found tertiaries who belonged to the Franciscans.<sup>38</sup>

32. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso de Cuenca. 8<sup>th</sup> August 1537, f. 385r.

33. Aldrin, Viktor. "The Prayer Life of Peasant Communities in Late Medieval Sweden. A Contrast of Ideals and Practices". *Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift*, 87 (2011): 96-106.

34. Shea, Mary Lou. *Medieval Women on Sin and Salvation*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010: 40-58.

35. *Cahíz*, plural *cahíces*, historical Spanish weight measure with its value depending on the region and the product measured.

36. *Real*, plural *reales*, unit of currency in Spain for several centuries after the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century.

37. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 22<sup>th</sup> August 1535, f. 721v.

38. Further reading: Moliner, José María. *Espiritualidad medieval: Los mendicantes*. Madrid: Monte Carmelo, 1974. Álvarez Gómez, Jesús. "Los laicos en la Iglesia: las Terceras Órdenes". *Verdad y Vida*, 46 (1974): 7-29; Riquelme Oliva, Pedro. "La Tercera Orden de san Francisco". *XX Siglos*, 25 (1992): 17-29. Graña Cid, María del Mar. "Una tentativa frustrada de autonomía religiosa femenina: las Terceras Franciscanas en Andalucía (Siglos XV-XVI)", *Las mujeres en Andalucía. Actas del 2º encuentro interdisciplinar de estudios de la mujer en Andalucía*. Málaga: Centro de Ediciones de la Diputación Provincial de Málaga, 2003: 163-188.





The Secular Third Order of St. Francis was born in 1221 and was open for men and women, married or unmarried. This lay Franciscan movement was mentioned for the first time in 1238 by Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), who sets out in a papal bull the three orders established by St. Francis: the Order of Friars Minor, the Order of Poor Ladies and the Third Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance. The Third Order was founded under the influence of St. Francis by members of fraternities who desired to pursue the ideal of Franciscan life without leaving their homes.<sup>39</sup>

St. Francis had hugely promoted this kind of secular associations and had crucially participated in its direction by establishing their code of conduct: wearing simple and austere clothes, never attending feasts, shows or balls, reducing the meat consumption to three times a week, performing the Liturgy of the Hours by praying the *Pater Noster*, paying the tithe, taking care of the family, etc.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding this group, from the documents studied a first conclusion can be reached: the society in Jerez at the end of the Middle Ages, or at least any group of qualified professionals like the public notaries, did not have a definite idea about what a tertiary was. Moreover, they never use this term to name them—I use it according to the consecration they receive—and they are generally called ‘lay sisters’. This fact proves the lack of clarity in relation to this type of religious practices performed by women. The public notaries, and presumably the rest of the society in Jerez, were aware of the decision of these women to choose this peculiar religious lifestyle and they knew exactly to which Order they belonged helped by the type of habit they wore, however, they failed to attach to them an accurate term which described their situation.

These documents have allowed us to know in detail the ordination ritual performed for a Franciscan tertiary, Constanza de la Cruz, a Roman devout woman resident of Jerez.<sup>41</sup> The ceremony took place by Vespers at the main chapel of the convent church of San Francisco and was officiated by ‘Father Guardian’ Jorge in the presence of the rest of the friars. After being interrogated by the Guardian, Constanza declared that she wanted to become a ‘devout sister’ of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, which testifies again to the lack of a specific name for this group of women. She was then informed about her obligations and her duty to obey; she knelt down before the Guardian, who took her hands in his, and she professed out loud her vows to the Virgin, St. Francis and other saints to live according to God’s commandments and to the rules of the Third Order and never leave the Order.

As can be observed, the resemblance between the forms used to join the Third Order and the features of the commendation ceremony between a feudal lord and

39. Roest, Bert. *Religious Orders and Religious Identity Formation, ca. 1420-1620*. Leiden: Brill, 2016: 69-82.

40. Zaremba, Theodore Anthony. *Franciscan Social Reform: A Study of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis as an Agency of Social Reforms According to Certain Papal Documents*. Washington: Catholic University of America, 1947: 175-181.

41. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 7<sup>th</sup> October 1537, f. 995v.



a vassal is uncanny:<sup>42</sup> they both contain the *volo* or announcement of submission, the *immixtio manuum* or clasp of hands and the oath of fealty. I do not know if they removed the osculation tradition in the case of tertiaries. Neither can I confirm if all or only some of the tertiaries wore a distinctive habit from the Order they had joined as the information regarding this issue is very limited.

The tertiaries, like the walled-in women, were fully integrated within society.<sup>43</sup> Even though they were closely linked to the convent or monastery of the Order they belonged to, these women lived alone in their homes as any other neighbour of the district. On the other hand, their religious lifestyle, filled with good values, conferred them a special social recognition —what we call the social-religious prestige of the tertiaries— that led them to perform civil roles as legal executors of testaments and donations *pro remedio animae*.<sup>44</sup>

However, most of the activities registered in these documents are of economic nature, like the sale of a portion of an olive grove<sup>45</sup> in exchange for 4,500 Spanish *maravedís* carried out by Isabel de Sierra;<sup>46</sup> the rental agreement of a land donation signed by Ms. Brianda de Villavicencio<sup>47</sup> in exchange for an annual rent of nine *cahíces* of wheat to be paid every 25<sup>th</sup> July<sup>48</sup> for nine years; or even the practice of credit systems like the purchase of rent.<sup>49</sup>

In the late Middle Ages, Jerez de la Frontera was a large trading centre with noted special developments in monetary economics; however, during the specific period I studied the society was undergoing financial difficulties and suffering a lack of liquidity.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, this development of monetary economics did not benefit everyone in an equal way, since some residents experienced a dramatic reduction in their purchasing power as prices were rising. The need for money was alleviated by multiple means; one of them was the credit systems.<sup>51</sup>

At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there were two basic factors which introduced and developed credit systems: a person needing money and the well-off capitalist

42. Bagge, Sverre; Gelting, Michael H.; Lindkvist, Thomas, eds. *Feudalism: new landscapes of debate*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.

43. Cohn-Sherbok, Lavinia. *Who's Who in Christianity*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

44. Pérez González, Silvia María. *La mujer en la Sevilla de finales de la Edad Media: solteras, casadas y vírgenes consagradas*. Seville: Servicio Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2005: 113-114.

45. Martín Gutiérrez, Emilio. *La organización del paisaje rural en la Baja Edad media: el ejemplo de Jerez de la Frontera*. Seville: Servicio Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2004.

46. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 30<sup>th</sup> June 1535, f. 453v.

47. Ruiz Pílares, Enrique. “El mayorazgo del veinticuatro Pedro Camacho de Villavicencio ‘el rico’ (1507). El patrimonio del caballero jerezano más acaudalado de su tiempo”. *En la España Medieval*, 35 (2012): 317-347.

48. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1536, f. 370r.

49. Bourin, Monique. “Peasant Elites and Village Communities in the South of France, 1200-1350”. *Past And Present*, 2 (2007): 101-114.

50. Borrero Fernández, Mercedes. “Efectos del cambio económico en el ámbito rural. Los sistemas de crédito en el campo sevillano (fines del siglo XV y principios del XVI)”. *En la España medieval*, 5 (1986): 33.

51. Tittler, Robert. “Money-Lending in the West Midlands”. *Historical Research*, 164 (1994): 249-263.



who wanted to increase his monetary savings. At the time, the Church regulation regarding excessive profits from economic activities had widely exceeded the limits imposed by Canon law, and even though there were attempts to rectify this situation, we can observe the development of financial formulas in order to provide loans by indirect means and receive that same amount plus interest at a deferred date.<sup>52</sup> One of these methods was the purchase of rent. According to this contract, a property owner, the loaner, gives away an amount of money on his property, which is only part of the benefits that the borrower would obtain through the exploitation of the property, in exchange for a specific rate that the borrower must pay back annually for the rest of his life i.e. a perpetual annuity. This formula itself cannot be considered a conventional capital loan as it involves the exploitation of benefits and the payment of capital for life instead of the full refund of the initial loaned amount within an established period of time.<sup>53</sup>

There were many tertiaries who were aware of these activities and practiced this type of loan system, the purchase of rent, on their properties. This was the case of María de la Cruz, who loaned 5,000 *maravedís* located in a few properties within the Parochial District of San Miguel in exchange for 500 *maravedís* to be paid back annually for life, the properties being the guarantee of repayment.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, the tertiaries kept a close relationship with their families,<sup>55</sup> which would have been impossible if they lived in enclosed environments like the nuns from the same Orders. These family connections had many forms of expressions and good examples of them were the cases I mentioned before, Isabel de Sierra, who sold her olive grove<sup>56</sup> to her brother, and Ms. Brianda de Villavicencio,<sup>57</sup> who rented her land donation to her relative, the city councilor Bartolomé Núñez de Villavicencio.<sup>58</sup> Another good example was María Rodríguez, who sent a dowry of 5,000 *maravedís* to her nephew's daughter for her being "an honest maid with little goods" that she would obtain from the profits given by the tertiary's estate upon her death.<sup>59</sup> This is a particularly interesting example since the tertiary, who chose a lifestyle that differed

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52. Clavero Salvador, Bartolomé. "Prohibición de la usura y Renovo: notas y documentos sobre los préstamos usurarios en el reino astur-leonés (siglos X-XI)". *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 57-58 (1973), 408-448; Nelson, Benjamin. "The Idea of Usury. From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood". *Social Research*, 61/4, (1994): 955-965. Clavero Salvador, Bartolomé. "Prohibición de la usura y constitución de rentas". *Moneda y crédito*, 143 (1977): 107-131; Clavero Salvador, Bartolomé. "Interesse: traducción e incidencia de un concepto en la Castilla del siglo XVI". *Anuario de historia del derecho español*, 49 (1979): 39-98.

53. De Almeida Costa, Mario Julio. *Raizes do censo consignativo. Para la historia do crédito medieval português*, Coimbra: Atlântida, 1961: 78.

54. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 4<sup>th</sup> January 1537, f. 38r.

55. Loring García, María Isabel. "Sistemas de parentesco y estructuras familiares en la Edad Media", *La familia en la Edad Media*, Logroño: Instituto de Estudios riojanos, 2001: 13-38.

56. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 30<sup>th</sup> June 1535. f. 453v.

57. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 1536. 2nd May 1536, f. 370r.

58. Trillo San José, María del Carmen. *Mujeres, familia y linaje en la Edad Media*, Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2004.

59. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 14<sup>th</sup> May 1536, f. 421r.



from what society expected of her (a husband, children, a home), contributes to her nephew's daughter fulfilling the traditional role conferred to women.

#### 4. Devout women

The devout women were those who, in keeping in touch with the world, carried out a life of religious perfection within their homes without attachment to any religious institution.<sup>60</sup> They highlighted the relevance of having an active life within society while following mendicant principles.<sup>61</sup> This strong connection with daily life led them to perform work and assistance activities compatible with their religious life, clearly influenced by the ideal of austerity present at the beginning of the foundation of the institutions.<sup>62</sup>

The fact that they lived in their houses and not in institutional buildings, unlike the walled-in women, and that they did not belong to any Order, unlike the tertiaries, confused people of late medieval Jerez, who failed to classify these women from the linguistic point of view. The most common term was *beata* or 'devout woman', but in the official documents I have also observed the use of *doncella* or 'maid',<sup>63</sup> *doncella beata* or "devout maid",<sup>64</sup> *doncella honesta* or 'decent maid',<sup>65</sup> *beata honesta* or "decent devout woman"<sup>66</sup> and *religiosa* or 'religious woman'.<sup>67</sup> I know they refer to the same type of religious woman, because all those terms were applied to the same women, who were not sure themselves how to be called as they did not object to the use of such variety of names when the notary public read to them the documents he was

60. Graña Cid, María del Mar. "Beatas y comunidad cívica. Algunas claves interpretativas de la espiritualidad femenina urbana bajomedieval. (Córdoba, Siglos XIV-XV)". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 42/2 (2012): 698; Miura Andrades, José María. "Beatas y beaterios andaluces en la Baja Edad Media. Su vinculación con la Orden de Predicadores", *Andalucía entre Oriente y Occidente (1236-1492)*. Córdoba: Diputación Provincial de Córdoba, 1988: 527-535.

61. Makowski, Elizabeth. *A pernicious sort of woman: quasi-religious women and canon lawyers in the later Middle Ages*. Washington: Catholic University Press, 2005: 23-43; Miura Andrades, José María. "Formas de vida religiosa femenina en la Andalucía medieval. Emparedadas y beatas", *Religiosidad femenina: expectativas y realidades (SS.VIII-XVIII)*, Madrid: Al-Mudiyana, 1991: 141. Simons, Walter. *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. Walters, Barbara. "Women Religious Virtuosae from the Middle Ages: A Case Pattern and Analytic Model of Types". *Sociology of Religion*, 63 (2002): 69-89; Weber, Alison. "Recent studies on women and early modern religion in Spanish". *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52 (1999): 197.

62. Miura Andrades, José María. "Formas de vida religiosa...": 157.

63. Francisca Sánchez de la palomina (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 28<sup>th</sup> January 1538, f. 81r.).

64. Beatriz López de Lobatón (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo Rus. 8<sup>th</sup> October de 1533, f.837r.); Francisca Medina (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 7<sup>th</sup> January 1537, f.94r.).

65. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 8<sup>th</sup> December 1538, unnumbered.

66. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1533, f. 301r.

67. Catalina de Fuentes (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 1<sup>st</sup> October 1538, f. 875v).



ratifying. One example was Inés de Orvaneja, who was given the names ‘devout woman’,<sup>68</sup> ‘maid’<sup>69</sup> and ‘honest maid’.<sup>70</sup> Maybe they did not have the need to be classified as some particular type, but required only their particular religious lives to be acknowledged.

A devout women community was established in Jerez de la Frontera, next to the church of San Marcos, which later would become the Convent of Conception,<sup>71</sup> very similar to Flemish beguines communities.<sup>72</sup> Although the devout women I have studied did not live in these communities but in their own houses, they created some sense of group unity based on their peculiar religious lifestyle within society. Proof of this is one last will and testament by which three ducats were sent to Catalina de Morla so that she and ‘her companions’ would pray the Penitential Psalms for the testator’s soul for the time they considered necessary.<sup>73</sup> I am led to think that some devout women met up to pray and perform other kinds of religious activities in groups in public spaces, which may be another reason why they were recognized as a community.<sup>74</sup> These types of practices have lived on throughout history and, for instance, it was frequent to find female members of the same family or neighborhood reciting the rosary together. In the Convent of St. Francis a devout women grave was found whose origin remains unknown,<sup>75</sup> although it has been known that not all devout women in the city were buried there.<sup>76</sup>

## 4.1 Economic foundation of devout women

### 4.1.1 Housing market

These devout women, as permanent residents of Jerez, actively participated in its housing market.<sup>77</sup> The fact that they preferred owning real estate located within the

68. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 28<sup>th</sup> July 1533, unnumbered.

69. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 18<sup>th</sup> November 1537, f. 845v.

70. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 8<sup>th</sup> December 1538, unnumbered.

71. Mesa Jinete, Francisco. *Historia sagrada y política de la muy noble y muy leal de Tarteso, Turdeto, Asta Regia, Asido Cesariana, Asidonia Gera, Jerez Sidonia, hoy Jerez de la Frontera*. Jerez de la Frontera: Melchor García Ruiz, 1888: 154.

72. Bennet, Judith M. *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1989: 240-260; Simons, Walter. *Cities of Ladies. Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries 1200-1565*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

73. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Juan Rodríguez. 30<sup>th</sup> October 1527, f. 837r.

74. Muessig, Carolyn; Putter, Ad, eds. *Envisaging Heaven in the Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006: 103-110.

75. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 28<sup>th</sup> October 1539, f. 1168v.

76. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 17<sup>th</sup> September 1539, f. 1194v; 28<sup>th</sup> September 1539, f. 1223r.

77. Collantes de Terán Sánchez, Antonio. “El modelo meridional, Sevilla”, *Mercado inmobiliario y paisajes urbanos en el Occidente europeo (siglos XI-XV)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2007: 591-630.



city they lived in allowed them to exercise efficient control over their properties as they did not have to travel elsewhere to supervise the contracts compliance and the maintenance of their properties. They would take care of these tasks once they had finished with their duties or even during their duties if it was possible.

The study of the housing operations and its multiple factors, especially the economic dimension, has not been easy for many reasons.<sup>78</sup> One of them is the lack of sources of information during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century and the fact that these sources belonged to the Church. Besides, the process behind the economic operations seems to be always incomplete as only the price or rent paid for the house can be known, but not determining factors like the home size.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, the official documents do not explain the usual characteristics of the houses either.<sup>80</sup> I find the term *casas* or “houses”, in plural, with which they refer to a group of spaces including an entrance hall,<sup>81</sup> the main room,<sup>82</sup> an attic,<sup>83</sup> a farmyard and an inner yard behind,<sup>84</sup> which can be all present or just some of them. Other houses also included a kitchen,<sup>85</sup> a well and a sink.<sup>86</sup>

For this study, I chose 19 documents in which properties located in different Parochial Districts of the city are mentioned: I found four houses in El Salvador,<sup>87</sup> one in San Lucas,<sup>88</sup> four in San Marcos,<sup>89</sup> seven in San Miguel<sup>90</sup> and one in Santiago.<sup>91</sup>

These details show the location of the devout women’s real estate, scattered throughout the city, not only in the Parochial Districts within the walls (El Salvador, San Lucas and San Marcos), but also in the suburbs (San Miguel and Santiago). The

78. Álvarez Fernández, María; Beltrán Suárez, Soledad. *Vivienda, gestión y mercado inmobiliario en Oviedo en el tránsito de la Edad Media a la Modernidad*. Vitoria: Universidad del País Vasco, 2015.

79. Collantes de Terán Sánchez, Antonio. “Propiedad y mercado inmobiliario en la Edad Media: Sevilla, siglos XIII-XVI”. *Hispania*, 169 (1988): 77-78.

80. Carlé, María del Carmen. “La casa en la Edad media castellana”. *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 67-68 (1982): 165-229.

81. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1539, unnumbered.

82. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> September 1537, unnumbered.

83. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 20<sup>th</sup> June 1536, unnumbered.

84. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 1<sup>st</sup> January 1537, unnumbered.

85. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1539, unnumbered.

86. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 20<sup>th</sup> June 1536, unnumbered.

87. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 26<sup>th</sup> February 1537; 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1537, f. 456v; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Luis de Llanos, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1537, f. 169r; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 13<sup>th</sup> August 1538, f. 682v.

88. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Juan Rodríguez. 5<sup>th</sup> July 1527, f. 449r.

89. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso de Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> September 1537; 20<sup>th</sup> June 1536, unnumbered; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 13<sup>th</sup> December 1537, f. 1027v; 27<sup>th</sup> December 1537, unnumbered.

90. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> June 1535, f. 440v; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 1<sup>st</sup> January 1537, f. 20v; 15<sup>th</sup> April 1537, f. 309r; 28<sup>th</sup> January 1538, f. 81r; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 7<sup>th</sup> January 1537, f. 94r; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco Román Trujillo. 11<sup>th</sup> March 1535, f. 619v; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1539, unnumbered.

91. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 10<sup>th</sup> July 1537, unnumbered.



cause of this distribution is unknown as the documents do not reveal information regarding this issue. Perhaps there are no specific reasons, maybe the devout women bought their properties wherever the purchasing conditions looked favorable; or there is the possibility they simply inherited them. Finally, I registered one example of a property owned by a devout woman located 30 km outside of Jerez in the town of Medina Sidonia.<sup>92</sup>

In the majority of cases I could not find out about the prior and necessary processes according to which the devout women became the owners of the properties, since there are no documents registering the purchase of the properties or the transfer of ownership to the devout women after their purchase.

Regarding the businesses in which the houses were involved, I have observed a high number of rentals.<sup>93</sup> 16 out of these 19 documents are rent agreements, whereas two are property sales and one is a termination of a rent agreement. Those 16 documents allowed the analysis of aspects such as the rental period, the rent paid and the type of rental.

In relation to the rental period, this is the first conclusion: there is a difference between the contracts signed by institutions and the ones signed by individuals. In my doctoral thesis I prove how the institutions tended to rent their properties for a period of three lives, that is, a long-term contract that did not require an annual revision and renewal. On the contrary, individuals like the devout women preferred the annual contract: 68.75% of the documented cases (11 out of 16) are annual contracts, two of them are valid for fixed periods of two and three years, and the one remaining was signed for nine months.<sup>94</sup> The majority of short-term rental agreements prove the strict control of the devout women over their finances and a mentality motivated by profit, since the annual renewal of contracts would allow them to raise the rent price if the economic conditions were favorable and to adjust to the increase in the cost of living. Besides, their religious occupation left them time enough to personally take care of their businesses and keep detailed accounts.

On the other hand, the majority of short-term rental agreements have an immediate effect that also differentiates the devout women from the institutions and their long-term contracts: the time limit meant no breach of contract. I have registered only one case in which the tenant terminates the agreement he signed.<sup>95</sup>

The high number of rentals and the intense activity of the housing market show how Jerez was experiencing a period of economic prosperity at the end of the Middle Ages. The property owners, institutions and individuals had a wide variety of potential tenants to offer their properties to depending on the most favorable conditions for the owners and how they conducted their business.

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92. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 6<sup>th</sup> April 1532, unnumbered.

93. Iradiel, Paulino. "Mercado inmobiliario, crédito y crecimiento urbano medieval en Valencia", *Mercado inmobiliario y paisajes urbanos en el Occidente europeo (siglos XI-XVI)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2007: 377-416.

94. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso de Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> September 1537, unnumbered.

95. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 15<sup>th</sup> April 1537, f. 309r.



However, the devout women did sometimes not give away the whole house to rent but only part of it, which may have arisen at times of need. I have registered the renting of a main room;<sup>96</sup> a main room and an entrance hall with the right to use the washing sink,<sup>97</sup> the kitchen, the well and the farmyard; an attic with the right to use the well, the sink and the entrance of the house;<sup>98</sup> or the ground floor of the property.<sup>99</sup> The rental of separate parts of the house could have generated a feeling of suspicion from the neighbours since the women sometimes had to coexist with a man; however, the religiosity that their lifestyle inspired in others left this issue out of the question.

The devout women set up the rent in the following currencies: *maravedís* (1,166,<sup>100</sup> 1,755,<sup>101</sup> 2,298,<sup>102</sup> 3,000<sup>103</sup>), silver *reales*<sup>104</sup> (20<sup>105</sup> and 42<sup>106</sup>) and golden ducats<sup>107</sup> (two,<sup>108</sup> three,<sup>109</sup> seven,<sup>110</sup> eight<sup>111</sup> and 12<sup>112</sup>). I have not observed cases of payment in kind. I do not consider appropriate to establish an average rent as they are set according to a number of factors inherent to the properties, about which there is no information available. The rent was due mostly every three months; there was only one case in which it was due only twice a year, one half at the beginning of Lent and the other on the 24<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>113</sup> The devout women must have exercised strict control over the rent payments as I have not observed any document referring to rent debts.

Besides the rental agreements, I have registered two cases of property sales carried out by devout women. Ana García sold her properties in Medina Sidonia

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96. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> September 1537, unnumbered.

97. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1539, unnumbered.

98. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 20<sup>th</sup> June 1536, unnumbered.

99. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1537, unnumbered.

100. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Juan Rodríguez. 5<sup>th</sup> July 1527, f. 449r.

101. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 26<sup>th</sup> February 1537, unnumbered.

102. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Luis de Llanos. 13<sup>th</sup> January 1537, unnumbered.

103. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 15<sup>th</sup> April 1537, f. 309r; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 13<sup>th</sup> December 1537, unnumbered; 27<sup>th</sup> December 1537. f. 25v; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 7<sup>th</sup> January 1537, f. 94r.

104. A silver *real* is worth 34 *maravedís*.

105. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> June 1535, f. 440v.

106. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1539, unnumbered.

107. A golden ducat is worth 375 *maravedís*.

108. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 20<sup>th</sup> June 1536, unnumbered.

109. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 29<sup>th</sup> September 1537, unnumbered.

110. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1537, f. 456v; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Baltasar de Lueña. 28<sup>th</sup> January 1538, f. 81r.

111. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 1<sup>st</sup> January 1537, f. 20v.

112. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco Román Trujillo. 11<sup>th</sup> March 1535, f. 619v.

113. 24<sup>th</sup> June is the day when some of these rents start (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 7<sup>th</sup> January 1537, f. 94r; 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1539, unnumbered; 26<sup>th</sup> February 1537, unnumbered; 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1537, f. 456v; AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco Román Trujillo. 11<sup>th</sup> March 1535, f. 619v.).





in exchange for 30 golden ducats,<sup>114</sup> while Catalina Pérez sold a property that she shared with her daughter in the district of El Salvador in exchange for 19,250 *maravedís*.<sup>115</sup> Both amounts were paid cash.

#### 4.1.2 Credit systems

The devout women decided to invest their capital by means of the purchase of rents not only in the city but also in the rural areas. Given that they were owners of properties, their real estate was mainly the object of these credit operations and also the guarantee in case of non-payment.

I have registered a total amount of 13 documents regarding perpetual annuity contracts linked to the economic activities of the devout women, in which their motive was purely capitalist, simply to obtain benefits and increase the capital they had been accumulating by means of these type of operations. The documented amounts are as follows, from lower to higher quantities: Constanza Guillén signed a perpetual annuity contract and lent 20,000 *maravedís* in exchange for 2,000 *maravedís* on an annual basis;<sup>116</sup> Isabel Riquet lent 30,000 on her properties located next to the butcher's in San Miguel in exchange for 3,000 *maravedís*,<sup>117</sup> and Luisa de Santana lent six golden ducats in exchange for 375 *maravedís* annual rate.<sup>118</sup>

Other documents do not show credit operations but the recognition of the obligation to pay back the loan to the devout woman. Ms. Inés de Hinojosa signed an agreement according to which someone acknowledged his obligations and committed to pay her 1,500 *maravedís* annually in exchange for her properties in the Francos street,<sup>119</sup> 1,500 *maravedís* in exchange for her properties in San Miguel<sup>120</sup> and 500 *maravedís* for other properties in the same district.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, it was acknowledged the payment to Francisca Bernal of a perpetual annuity regarding her properties in Cruz Vieja, which she had inherited upon her uncle's death.<sup>122</sup>

The dates of payment of the perpetual annuity vary:<sup>123</sup> on Christmas Day,<sup>124</sup> half on Christmas Day and half on St. John's Eve,<sup>125</sup> on All Saint's Day,<sup>126</sup> three equal

114. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 6<sup>th</sup> April 1532, f. 179r.

115. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 13<sup>th</sup> August 1538, f. 682v.

116. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 28<sup>th</sup> September 1537, f. 811v.

117. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 15<sup>th</sup> May 1537, f. 370r.

118. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1536, unnumbered.

119. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 13<sup>th</sup> April 1532, f. 123r.

120. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 5<sup>th</sup> May 1532, f. 161r.

121. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1532, f. 344r.

122. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 24<sup>th</sup> August 1535, f. 735v.

123. Fontcuberta Díaz, Ángel. "El año litúrgico y los tiempos sagrados". *Toletana: cuestiones de teología e historia*, 29 (2013): 27-60.

124. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1532, f. 344r.

125. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco de Sanabria. 28<sup>th</sup> September 1537, f. 811v.

126. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 24<sup>th</sup> August 1535, f. 735v.



parts on St. John's Eve, All Saint's Day and Carnival,<sup>127</sup> half on Michaelmas Day and half on Easter.<sup>128</sup>

The annuity contract becomes a property which is subject to any kind of operation, like any other economic goods.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, I have frequently found the sale of the annuity amount that the borrower must pay to a third party, thus an exchange for the property ownership takes place. There were devout women who also sold their perpetual annuity contracts in exchange for full amounts in cash which led me to think that they were experiencing a period of need. For instance, Ms. Inés de Hinojosa sold her 500 *maravedís* of perpetual annuity on some properties located in San Miguel in exchange for 4,500 *maravedís*.<sup>130</sup> In a similar manner, Francisca Íñiguez la Naranja entitled her nephew to sell her 500 *maravedís* of perpetual annuity on her properties for the amount he considered appropriate to either the *Hospital y Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación* (Hospital and Brotherhood of Our Lady of Incarnation) or the *Cofradía de la Cera del Santísimo Sacramento* ("Brotherhood of the Blessed Sacrament").<sup>131</sup> This same devout woman sold her 1,000 *maravedís* of perpetual annuity on her properties located in San Miguel in exchange for 11,000 *maravedís* to the operating fund of the church of El Salvador.<sup>132</sup> Finally, Catalina de Fuentes was paid 6,000 *maravedís* for her 600 *maravedís* perpetual annuity on her real estate in San Mateos.<sup>133</sup>

When they needed money at a specific time, the devout women also became involved in credit systems and thus they became borrowers of a loan that they had to pay for life and their properties —a payment guarantee.<sup>134</sup>

Even though the devout women preferred living within urban areas, some owners from the rural areas turned to them to obtain money in exchange for perpetual annuity. I have also observed documents regarding the acknowledgement of obligation to pay the perpetual annuity to the devout woman. That was the case with Marina Trujillo de Vargas, who asked her perpetual annuity of 1,200 *maravedís* on five *aranzadas* of vineyards located in the land district of Arinala Vieja to be acknowledged.<sup>135</sup> Sisters Inés de Orvaneja and Catalina de Olando also set an example as they received the acknowledgement regarding an annual payment of 500 *maravedís* on two *aranzadas* of vineyards located in the district of Anorias,<sup>136</sup> as well as the payment of 780 *maravedís* on three *aranzadas* of vineyards and 60

127. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 5<sup>th</sup> May 1532, f.161r.

128. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1536, unnumbered.

129. Ballester Martínez, Adolfo. "Los censos: concepto y naturaleza". *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie IV, Historia Moderna*, 18-19 (2005-2006): 35-50.

130. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco del Mercado. 7<sup>th</sup> May 1533, f. 342v.

131. She inherited 500 *maravedís* from her sister as part of a count of 3,000 *maravedís* (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 13<sup>th</sup> February 1535, f. 129v.).

132. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 10<sup>th</sup> May 1538, f. 566r.

133. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 1<sup>st</sup> October 1538, f. 875v.

134. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 10<sup>th</sup> July 1537, unnumbered.

135. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Francisco del Mercado. 30<sup>th</sup> January 1532, f. 87v.

136. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 18<sup>th</sup> November 1537, f. 845v.



*estadales*<sup>137</sup> located in the district of Cuatro Amorenas.<sup>138</sup> Inés also obtained the acknowledgement of another perpetual annuity of one golden ducat on two *aranzadas* of vineyards in the district of (by coincidence) Orvaneja.<sup>139</sup> On other occasions, it is the devout woman who acknowledges the payment; however, I cannot discern if it is a case of credit operation or property purchase with this burden. For instance, Isabel Sánchez committed to pay 750 *maravedís* at an annual rate on a span of fallow land that she owned in the district of Añina.<sup>140</sup>

### 4.1.3 Commercial agent

Besides the exercise of their religious obligations, there were devout women who were also involved in commercial activities.<sup>141</sup> They acted as intermediaries in businesses in which some level of expertise was required and was normally taken care of by men, like the cattle market,<sup>142</sup> the trade of boots<sup>143</sup> or the sale of grape harvest.<sup>144</sup> These activities reveal how, while carrying out a religious lifestyle, these women came to know the local market and did not consider the level of specialization an obstacle. Instead, they became intermediaries to sell the most popular—and most lucrative—local products within trading situations in which the intervention of women used to be minimal.<sup>145</sup> They obtained the specialized knowledge they needed, contacted potential clients and negotiated the sale terms to receive as much profit as possible. For instance, Francisca Sánchez del Clavo participated in several

137. *Estadal*, plural *estadales*, measure of land, 1 *estadal* is equal to 3.334 m.

138. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 25<sup>th</sup> March 1538, f. 210v.

139. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Baltasar de Lueña. 8<sup>th</sup> December 1538, unnumbered.

140. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1538, f. 42r.

141. Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. "El universo mercantil bajomedieval: Una propuesta metodológica a través de la documentación notarial", *Aragón en la Edad Media: sociedades, culturas e ideologías en la España bajomedieval*, Saragossa: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2000: 33-44. Navarro Espinach, Germán. "Los protagonistas del comercio: oficios e identidades sociales en la España bajomedieval", *El comercio en la Edad Media*, Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2006: 147-188.

142. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 25<sup>th</sup> June 1538, f. 521r.

143. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 14<sup>th</sup> July 1536, f. 446v.

144. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1532, f. 376v.

145. Researches about feeding in the Middle Ages: Azcona Domínguez, Margarita. "Fuentes documentales para la historia del vino de Jerez", *El vino de Jerez y otras bebidas espirituosas en la Historia de España y América*. Jerez de la Frontera: Ayuntamiento, 2004: 43-60; Block, John; Mossler, Kristen, eds. *Trade, Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge, 2000; Goicolea, Julián; Francisco Javier. "El vino en el mundo urbano riojano a finales de la Edad Media". *En la España Medieval*, 30 (2007): 217-244; Rodrigo Esteva, María Luz. "Beber vino en la Edad Media. Modos, significados y sociabilidades en el Reino de Aragón". *Patrimonio cultural de la vid y el vino*. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma Madrid, 2013: 141-159; Sánchez Martínez, Manuel. "Vino y fiscalidad en la Edad Media", *Actas del I Simposio de la Asociación Internacional de Historia y Civilización de la Vid y el Vino*. El Puerto de Santa María: Ayuntamiento del Puerto de Santa María, 2001: 403-420.



fields and knew about types, quality and prices of traded products, thus she became a commercial agent in the sale of a mule, wheat and oil.<sup>146</sup>

#### 4.1.4 Interest loan

Even though the interest loan was condemned by the Church,<sup>147</sup> I have found cases of devout women who carried out this practice. This fact turns out to be surprising and interesting as their choice of lifestyle would suggest strict following of Church rules.<sup>148</sup> I cannot establish the interest rate<sup>149</sup> as the documents only state, intentionally, the total of debit (10 golden ducats in one document<sup>150</sup> and 60 golden ducats in another<sup>151</sup>). I cannot confirm either if the powers that some of these women conferred to different solicitors to take care of the collection of that money was motivated by interest loans not cashed yet or by other matters,<sup>152</sup> as the documents dealing with condemned practices are rather cryptic.

I also observed that sometimes they do not lend an amount in money but in kind. Even though the documents reveal absolutely nothing in this respect, we could expect this type of loan to have some benefit to the devout women, paid with the same product that was lent and including the interest rate in the total amount of debt. For instance, Ms. Inés de Villavicencio was owed two<sup>153</sup> and ten *cahíces* of wheat<sup>154</sup> by two different debtors and I assume that those amounts include the interest rate.

#### 4.2 Family and social ties

The devout women, like any other members of society, kept solid relationships with their family members and other close associates, and these were ties they would have had to give up if they had chosen to join an Order and an enclosed

146. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1538, f. 1016.

147. Rabinowitz, Jacob J. "Some Remarks on the Evasion of the Usury Laws in the Middle Ages". *The Harvard Theological Review*, 37 (1944): 49-59.

148. Hernando i Delgado, Josep. "De la usura al interés, crédito y ética en la Baja Edad Media". *Aragón en la Edad Media: sociedades, culturas e ideologías en la España Bajomedieval*. Saragossa: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2000: 55-74.

149. Uruburu Colsa, Juan Manuel. "El contrato de préstamo en Madrid a fines de la Edad Media". *Revista jurídica de la comunidad de Madrid*, 18 (2004): 302.

150. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 6<sup>th</sup> March 1536, unnumbered.

151. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 5<sup>th</sup> August 1538, f. 643v.

152. Francisca Ferrández empowers Andrés García to collect any outstanding amount of money (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso de Cuenca. 25<sup>th</sup> June 1536, f. 218v.).

153. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 26<sup>th</sup> March 1538, f. 378r.

154. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 26<sup>th</sup> March 1538, f. 391v.



residence to live in.<sup>155</sup> These relationships were established in the same terms as in any other family in the Middle Ages or the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the same affection and everyday clashes.

The last will and testaments<sup>156</sup> reveal the warm feelings of the deceased and some living members of the family would request services *pro remedio animae*<sup>157</sup> to help them reach glory and peace. These documents also present one special vocation the devout women could satisfy thanks to their choice of their particular religious lifestyle: motherhood.<sup>158</sup> The fact that they refused to live under male authority did not prevent them from mothering children.<sup>159</sup> Francisca Sánchez del Clavo set a perfect example as she adopted a one year-old child from the orphanage Hospital de la Sangre and raised him as his guardian. Since she became ill when the child was only eight years old, she wrote her last will and testament to guarantee a comfortable future for him. She left him eight golden ducats, two for each year of four of service she had provided, that someone she trusted would multiply until the child reached his marrying age. Besides, she was in charge of raising a girl to whom she left 11,000 *maravedís*, from which the above mentioned person would multiply 6,000. In her last will, she asked her nephews to take care of these children, who she loved as her own, and to teach them the Catholic faith upon her death. She also requested her children be dressed with black clothes, which only highlights the close relationship and affection among the devout woman and these children as this was a tradition that only close family members were supposed to keep upon someone's death.<sup>160</sup>

This example contributed to the thesis which is underway in the new perception of medieval childhood based on the recent critical interest in the history of emotions. Against the idea claimed by Philippe Ariès "the idea of childhood didn't exist" during the Middle Ages,<sup>161</sup> new studies are demonstrating that children were felt to be valuable and worthy of protection.<sup>162</sup> His idea that childhood was discovered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that medieval children weren't important for

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155. However, this was not always followed. Pérez González, Silvia María. *La mujer en la Sevilla de finales de la Edad Media: solteras, casadas y vírgenes consagradas*. Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2005: 190-191.

156. García Herrero, María del Carmen. "En torno a la muerte a finales de la Edad Media aragonesa". *En la España Medieval*, 29 (2006): 159-164.

157. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1538, f. 1016r.

158. Cid López, Rosa María. *Maternidades: Representaciones y realidad social. Edades Antigua y Media*, Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 2010.

159. Wilkinson, Louise J., ed. *A cultural history of childhood and family in the middle ages*. Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.

160. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1538, f. 1016r.

161. Ariès, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Vintage Books, 1962: 128.

162. Atkinson, Clarisa W. *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 144-193; Classen, Albrecht, eds. *Childhood in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*. Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005: 10-33; Parsons, John; Wheeler, Bonnie. *Medieval Mothering*. New York: Garland, 1999: 313-333.



their parents has been strongly criticized by medieval historians.<sup>163</sup> Francisca Sánchez del Clavo did it in this way.

Inspired and reassured by the devout women's lifestyle, some parents trusted them with the upbringing of their children when they did not have the means to achieve it. This was the case of Isabel de Cuenca, who raised a four-year old girl called Juana who served as her maid for 20 years. In exchange, Isabel taught her good manners and knowledge about religious matters and covered all her living expenses. Moreover, in return for her services, the devout woman would pay 7,000 *maravedís* to the girl as a dowry upon her marriage.<sup>164</sup> I do not know what happened 20 years after this agreement was written and signed, but either because of the devout woman's life style, the close relationship between them or a personal choice, Juana decided to carry out a life very similar to Isabel's.

However, the devout women's family relationships did not develop exclusively in their own homes but they expanded to other members. I would like to highlight their relationships with their nephews to whom they rewarded with gifts—like two *aranzadas* of vineyards in the district of Solete<sup>165</sup> or 2,500 *maravedís* of perpetual annuity to join the monastery of Santa María de Gracia<sup>166</sup>—or with whom they kept long and tough disputes over inheritances.<sup>167</sup> They also filed lawsuits against their parents about legitimacy matters that even reached the Chancellery of Granada.<sup>168</sup>

Finally, I would like to point out the close relationship that some devout women kept with different religious institutions in the city. A good example is set by the bond between Francisca Sánchez del Clavo and the monastery of Nuestra Señora de la Merced. She donated 300 *maravedís* from a perpetual annuity contract on some properties she owned;<sup>169</sup> the monastery lent her 60 golden ducats when she was in need, and her spiritual guide was Brother Francisco de Mendoza to whom she donated a canvas altarpiece from her house. Also, on her last will she requested the brothers of the monastery to be present in her funeral cortege, to be buried wearing their typical habit in the monastery, where would also take place the funeral service and the service *pro remedio animae*.<sup>170</sup> Given this close relationship between the devout woman and the monastery, I cannot help but wonder: why

163. Ward, Jennifer. *Women in medieval Europe 1200-1550*. New York: Routledge Publishing, 2016: 33-44.

164. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Antonio Juan Rodríguez. 19<sup>th</sup> August 1528, f. 639v.

165. Francisca Sánchez del Clavo to her nephew Juan Fernández (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 9<sup>th</sup> October 1538, f. 929v.).

166. Inés de Orvaneja to her Grand nephews María Márquez y Catalina Riquel (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Cuenca. 28<sup>th</sup> July 1533, unnumbered).

167. Juana Martínez empowered to collect the inheritance of 12,000 *maravedís* left by her uncle (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 29<sup>th</sup> April 1529, f. 575r.). Also, the dispute between Francisca Íñiguez "la naranja" with her two nephews over the inheritance of her sister Leonor García "la naranja" was long and arduous, and created several notarial deeds (AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. illegible date, f. 653v; 4<sup>th</sup> June 1538, f. 706v; 18<sup>th</sup> June 1538, unnumbered; 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1538, f. 901v; 27<sup>th</sup> October 1538, f. 1350r).

168. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1538, f. 1016r.

169. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Rodrigo de Rus. 27<sup>th</sup> April 1538, f. 523v.

170. AMJF. Protocolos Notariales. Escribano Alonso Sarmiento. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1538, f. 1016r.



did she not join the Third Order of *Merced*? The answer, according to the facts registered in the documents, seems clear: their relationship was established in terms of equality, whereas if she had joined the Order, she would have had to live under the total authority of the institution.

## 5. Conclusions

The religious-lay lifestyle was certainly the best option for those women who decided to carry out their lives free from male interference and criticism and suspicion from the late medieval society, which believed an independent woman to be dangerous and an endless source of the worst sins.

The official documents I have studied break with some of the stereotypes traditionally associated with these women. At least the ones who broke their anonymity and established contractual relationships within public notaries' offices were not old, were not in desperate need and certainly did not live in poverty. Therefore, these women were not forced to have this religious lifestyle as their only choice for their 'sad existence'. On the contrary, they preferred to live freely outside of enclosed institutions and not relinquish their properties to join an Order. We should see them as an expression of lay spirituality that was intensively active during the late Middle Ages, driven by the new Christian religiosity and definitely not by socio-economic marginalization.

Furthermore, they adopted an integrated role within the late medieval society in which they searched for obtaining economic profits through several practices. Regarding the housing market, they were able to activate the means to be visible while they managed to negotiate rates and prices, looked for the best tenants, developed accountancy skills and supervised their properties within the city to guarantee they obtained wide profits. Such lucrative intentions led these women to choose short-term contracts in order to adjust the rent income to any potential increase of prices. This task required a big effort to exert control over their properties, the renewal of contracts or the termination of contracts, which required searching for new tenants and writing new contracts at the same time. All of the subjects of study showed skills and abilities developed enough to become active and visible agents in the housing market at the late Middle Ages in Jerez.

Their performance within the rural real estate market was similarly impressive. However, their activity in this field is far more limited in comparison with their activity in the urban area, perhaps due to the distance from their residence and the level of specialized knowledge that the countryside area requires.

Regarding the credit and loan field, they revealed an excellent management of the specific mechanisms of finance. These religious women constitute a great example of the new Andalusian society: prosperous and profit-driven. Owning capital significant enough to invest in credit systems, these women became



creditors who made sure they obtained a periodic amount in exchange for the borrowed capital. Since interest loans were condemned by Church, they disguised them as annual rent of properties and this turned out to be a very favorable means, and the one most exploited, to multiply their savings. The risk they took was low, since along with the automatic generation of interests, they counted on the mortgage on their properties, which acted as guarantee of payment and as compensation in case of non-payment. Therefore, we find a group of women whose mentality is clearly market-oriented as they invested their capital in financial mechanisms which allowed them to increase them while enduring low risks. Finally, I would like to emphasize the economic power these women enjoyed with the help of these types of practices.

In relation to their commercial activities, I must highlight again the ability of this group to join the most lucrative sectors of the trading life of the city they lived in. They acquired the specialized knowledge required and worked as commercial agents in the cattle business, which demanded high agility to negotiate the prices and obtain the highest benefits, and whose clients were mainly men. On the other hand, within the food industry they also took part in another emerging sector in Jerez, the wineries. They traded with the raw material as well as with the logistics needed to produce and transport it. Besides, they also focused on the trade of two basic foods, wheat and oil, which were two of the main products of the thriving economy of the Andalusian aristocracy. The religious women became visible as active commercial agents for these two products, they negotiated in enormous quantities and showed accurate knowledge of the sector while attracting the most sought clients.

Lastly, I have also aimed this paper to the study of the family ties of this group of women, which they could keep and care for thanks to their religious and yet lay lifestyle. The walled-in women, tertiaries and devout women forged bonds of affection but also confrontation that in some cases even reached the courts with their next of kin. Furthermore, their web of ties kept on widening with the inclusion of other members of society who joined their close sphere, such as the girls who joined the walled-in communities or, especially significant, the children they adopted from orphanages and raised as their own. These religious women gave up on conception, but not maternity, as I gathered from their loving intentions in their last wishes of their testaments.

We can also say these women turned their main opponent to their lifestyle, religion, into their best ally in the development of their options and individual freedom. They proposed alternative structures to the dominant hierarchies and established a new independent lifestyle from male sovereignty and church institutions. They organized themselves as a social group and reached economic, work and living autonomy.

However, from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the life conditions drastically changed for the *mulieres religiosae*. The Council of Trent did not establish any specific rules over them, but gave the church hierarchies the power to define their authority over them and, thus, to control them. Through this, they restricted





all religious practices to take place only within convents or monasteries, which led to the almost total dissolution of the communities of women who practiced unregulated types of religious lives and put an end to the means for many women to function as a de facto independent group within society, included within the labor and economic spheres of life.

