



**REVISITING D. GOMES EANES EPISTOLOGRAPHY:  
HESITATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES  
ON A PROJECT OF RELIGIOUS REFORM**

REVISITANDO LA EPISTOLOGRAFÍA DE D. GOMES EANES:  
VACILACIONES Y DIFICULTADES  
EN UN PROYECTO DE REFORMA RELIGIOSA

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**Abstract**

The recent edition of the *Carteggio* (epistolary) of Abbot Gomes Eanes, from the Monastery of Saint Mary of Florence, serves as a pretext to revisit the unsuccessful reform project of the Benedictine Order in Portugal, along with the abbot's participation in the attempts, supported by kings João I (r. 1385 – 1433) and Duarte (r. 1433 – 1439), to foster ecclesiastical reform in the Portuguese realm. A project in which the Portuguese kings, the Abbot of Florence, and the Abbot of Alcobaça take important roles, along with the Archbishop of Braga, showing different perspectives on religious reform, the resources used to the attempt to

introduce Benedictine observance and the obstacles due to a tense relation between the Portuguese monarchs and the Church. In the end, it aims to contribute to the discussion on the historical dynamics linked to the search for religious renewal in the late Middle Ages, its connection to broader networks of personal relations and the circulation of people and texts, as well as the various forms of resistance to such movements.

### **Keywords**

Gomes Eanes, *Carteggio*/Epistolography, Late Medieval Portugal, Ecclesiastical Reform, Benedictine Observance, Relation Between the Portuguese Crown and the Church.

### **Resumen**

La reciente edición del *Carteggio* (epistolario) del abad Gomes Eanes, del Monasterio de Santa María de Florencia, sirve como pretexto para visitar el fallido proyecto de reforma de la Orden Benedictina en Portugal. Además, se analiza la participación del abad en los intentos, respaldados por los reyes João I (r. 1385 – 1433) y Duarte (r. 1433 – 1439), de promover la reforma eclesiástica en el reino portugués. En este proyecto, los reyes portugueses, el abad de Florencia y el abad de Alcobaça desempeñaron papeles fundamentales, junto con el arzobispo de Braga. La investigación aborda las distintas perspectivas sobre la reforma religiosa, los recursos empleados para intentar introducir la observancia benedictina y los obstáculos derivados de la tensa relación entre los monarcas portugueses y la Iglesia. En última instancia, el estudio busca contribuir al debate sobre las dinámicas históricas relacionadas con la búsqueda de renovación religiosa en la Baja Edad Media, su conexión con redes más amplias de relaciones personales y de circulación de personas y textos, así como las diversas formas de resistencia frente a estos movimientos.

### **Palabras clave**

Gomes Eanes, *Carteggio*/Epistolografía, Portugal bajomedieval, Reforma eclesiástica, Observancia benedictina, Relación entre la Corona portuguesa y la Iglesia

Religious reform, driven by both the Church and the Crown, was an important topic in fifteenth-century Portugal. One remarkable individual stands out in linking these two dimensions of power: Gomes Eanes (c. 1383-1459), the famous

Benedictine reformer traditionally known as the *Abbot of Florence*.<sup>1</sup> His presence is highlighted in an extraordinarily large number of records, which clearly express Portugal's openness to the predominant currents of religious renewal in the contemporary Christian world.<sup>2</sup>

Gomes Eanes was active in the political, diplomatic, religious, and cultural spheres. Particularly noteworthy was his role in the reform movement of the Benedictine monastic order, especially between 1419 and 1439, when he served as abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria in Florence, traditionally known as the *Badia* (abbey).

This paper aims to reflect on Gomes Eanes's participation in the failed project to introduce the Benedictine observance in Portugal, along with his involvement in attempts, supported by Kings João I (r. 1385 – 1433) and Duarte (r. 1433 – 1438), to develop ecclesiastical reform in the Portuguese realm and, consequently, to implement new religious proposals.

We will subsequently examine the reformative efforts championed by Gomes Eanes during his two decades leading the *Badia*, as well as the networks he established to pursue his objectives. We will also examine his contribution to fostering an intense dialogue between Portugal and Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century, driven by his zealous intent to bring the reform to his homeland as well.

The primary basis for our study is the *carteggio*, or correspondence, of Gomes Eanes – a vast and rich collection of letters that spans two substantial codices: *Badia 4* (*Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Conventi Soppressi da ordinare*) and *Ashburnham 1792* (*Biblioteca Laurenziana*), the latter being the better known.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his own time, Gomes Eanes was also frequently known just as the “abbot of Florence”, which seemed to be enough to identify him. On the other hand, this fact speaks volumes of his importance at that time. Extensive studies on this character have been carried out by António Domingues de Sousa Costa and Eduardo Borges Nunes, who have provided the most exhaustive biographical approaches to Gomes Eanes, to this date (Costa, 1963, p. 59-73; Costa, 1986; Nunes, 1963). Also important were the studies on Gomes Eanes by Guido Batteli in the 1930s and 1940s, and more recently two important articles by Martin Elbl (Batteli, 1938, pp. 218-227; Batteli, 1940, pp. 149-163; Elbl, Elbl, 2013a, pp. 19-151; Elbl, Elbl, 2013b, pp. 137-202).

<sup>2</sup> See José Adriano de Freitas Carvalho's summary which traces a general framework of the religious reforms in Portugal in the fifteenth century and shows the impact and extent of the action of Gomes Eanes in that field (Carvalho, 2016, *passim*; Dias, 1960, *passim*).

<sup>3</sup> In terms of the publication of his *carteggio*, Gomes Eanes' private and official epistolary archives have been considerably transcribed by António Domingues de Sousa Costa and Eduardo Borges Nunes, and adding to that came the transcriptions made by the editors of *Monumenta Henricina* (15 vols., Coimbra 1960-1974). To this older work, we need to add the recent and very

The extraordinarily numerous and rich collection of letters that has come down to us is an incomparable source of information on his reformist activities. These letters allow us to understand his movements, methods, influence, and agency among the most powerful figures of his time. We will also take into account other historical records issued by the Portuguese kings, the Holy See, and other ecclesiastical institutions connected to Gomes Eanes's activities.

## I. PERSONAL JOURNEY

Gomes Eanes was born in Lisbon, in the parish of S. Mamede, in the last quarter of the 14th century. The first information about his life is connected to his departure for Padua to study law, following in the footsteps of his father, João Martins, who was also legally trained and had an important career serving both the Portuguese king, João I, and the oligarchy governing the city of Lisbon. This connection to the Court was further strengthened by João Martins's early ties with the Charneca family, from whom he was brought up, including Martim Afonso Pires da Charneca, whom the king appointed in 1398 to succeed D. Lourenço Vicente as Archbishop of Braga.<sup>4</sup>

This background may explain not only the decision to invest in Gomes Eanes's education in Italy, likely with the aim of a promising career in royal service<sup>5</sup>, but also his early and significant connections to the Portuguese kings and their entourage. However, although Gomes Eanes enrolled in the Faculty of Law at the University of Padua in 1409, he left academic life in 1413 to join the Benedictine community of Santa Justina of Padua, already under the guidance of the reforming abbot Ludovico Barbo (1381-1443).<sup>6</sup>

He professed in January 1414, joining the small, select group of Ludovico Barbo's favoured disciples. This group's spiritual direction was grounded in

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relevant publication of Gomes Eanes' correspondence by Rita Costa-Gomes (Costa-Gomes, 2017). This latter and complete edition increased substantially our knowledge of the extant epistolography of this prolific author and consequently what we know of the man and his times.

<sup>4</sup> About João Martins, the father of Gomes Eanes (Farelo, 2008, pp. 504-509). About Gomes Eanes (Costa, 1963, pp. 59-73; Nunes, 1963; Costa-Gomes, 2017, pp. XI-XXI).

<sup>5</sup> As many others, by the same time (Farelo, 2019, pp. 275-276).

<sup>6</sup> For more on Ludovico Barbo and his reforming work, see (Calati, 1984, pp. 46-58; Fois, 1984, pp. 225-262; Fonseca, 1984, pp. 293-308; Ildefonso, 1952, *passim*; Lunardi, 1984, pp. 59-71; Penco, 1984, pp. 3-44; Pesce, 1984, pp. 135-160; Pesce, 1969, *passim*; Tramontin, 1984, pp. 91-108; Trolese, 1984, pp. 109-134; Witters, 1984, pp. 207-224).

six fundamental principles: healthy community life, continuous spiritual guidance, gentleness and moderation in governance, reform of monastic organization, cultural and literary growth, and ongoing improvement in both temporal and spiritual administration (Nunes, 1963, pp. 24-30). As a result, four years later, in 1418, he led a group of 16 monks whose primary mission was to reform the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria in Florence, the aforementioned *Badia*.

Gomes Eanes's official title was that of cloistered prior, but in reality, his authority and scope of action extended far beyond what the canonical office implied. As Eduardo Borges Nunes states, it was he who "directed the monastery not only in the care of souls and observance, but also in the administration of goods, income, and expenses" (Nunes, 1963, p. 42). Gomes established observance in all areas of life at the abbey in Florence, beginning with the *oficio*, the primary obligation.

The following year, in 1419, he was elected abbot of that institution, a position he would hold until his election as General of the Camaldulense Order in 1439. In the meantime, the *Badia* became the second most important monastery of the Congregation, after Santa Justina. In 1441, two years into his leadership of the Camaldulense Order, Gomes Eanes applied for the priory of the Portuguese Regular Canons' Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, petitioning Pope Eugenius IV (r. 1431 – 1447). His request was granted, and the pope entrusted him with the governance of that monastery, a position he would hold for the next eighteen years, until his death in 1459.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. PROFILE

Gomes Eanes, a monk with a legal background, was a coherent and conservative figure. He envisioned reform within a well-defined context, seeing it as a groundbreaking act rooted in profound and unconditional respect for the Rule, always adhering to the purest Benedictine tradition. (Orsino and Salvestrini, 2021, pp. 241-298).

For him, canon law and the established hierarchy were irrefutable; the entire behavioral structure of a monk rested on the priority and indisputable require-

<sup>7</sup> Special attention should be given to Saul António Gomes work in what concerns Gomes Eanes' activity as head of the Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra (Gomes, 2002, pp. 439-540).

ments of discipline, precision, and, especially, perfect obedience.<sup>8</sup> All of this was combined with a pragmatic spirit, which continuously linked contemplation with proactivity. In other words, for Gomes, spirituality had to be accompanied by the power of initiative and zeal – essential conditions for any proposal of re-organization and improvement.

Gomes Eanes desired reform, observance, good administration, and, above all, spiritual ascension – the latter being possible only when based on the previous attributes. This is why almost all of his reformist activity is guided by a movement of reciprocal causalities. Since the good spiritual direction of the monastery should be the first obligation of an abbot, Gomes knew – consistent with the purest tradition of St. Benedict and his long-time mentor Ludovico Barbo – that he had to find the right balance between initiative and judicious action in his work. Indeed, it is this constant pursuit of balance that can be seen in his management (both temporal and spiritual), whether as abbot at the *Badia* or as prior of Santa Cruz in Coimbra.

His activity as a reformer was realistic because it was operationalized in a very concrete way, monastery by monastery. Always following the path of Eugenius IV,<sup>9</sup> the great promoter of this method, he proceeded to reform the monasteries house by house, city by city, using the appropriate occasions and suitable men for the task. His actions were always well situated in space and time, focusing on the specific rather than on the general principles.<sup>10</sup> Usefulness, sustainability, culture, art, and above all, faith, were the principles he applied in the reform of the *Badia* and the extensive work he initiated there, and later, in the governance of the canons of Santa Cruz in Coimbra (Gomes, 2002, pp. 439-540).

In the specific context of his concerns regarding art, Gomes Eanes actively promoted patronage, hiring artists specialized in mural and other forms of painting, such as the Portuguese painter João Gonçalves, who lived at the Florence Monastery for several years (Nunes, 1963, pp. 269-280). Indeed, regardless of medium, the Abbot of Florence demonstrated from early on an openness to the artistic element, which he considered essential both for enhancing the appearance

<sup>8</sup> Hence, later, as we will see, Gomes Eanes reacted violently to the “insubordination” of one of his favourite disciples, Friar Estêvão de Aguiar, in the context of the foundation of St. Benedict of Xabregas, in Lisbon. To the extent that it required the intervention of members of the royal family, namely Isabel (1397-1471, future Duchess of Burgundy) and Duarte (r. 1433 – 1438).

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of his pontificate (Uginet, 1994, pp. 642-645).

<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, both projects that extended Gomes’ reformist action to wide-ranging frameworks resulted in failure.

and magnificence of worship within the temple and as an indispensable element in the monks' daily life, particularly in their human and spiritual formation.<sup>11</sup>

These guiding principles were equally important in both attempts to merge the Badia with the Monastery of Santa Maria del Sepolcro, known as *Delle Campora* and belonging to the Order of St. Jerome, in 1421 and 1434, respectively (Nunes, 1963, pp. 197-212, 235-240, 255-257). The same can be said about the attempt to reform the small Monastery of St. Donino on the outskirts of Pisa in 1426 (Nunes, 1963, pp. 213-233).

### 3. THE CORRESPONDENCE: A WIDE NETWORK OF INFLUENCE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS REFORMATION

By observing the synergy derived from the interplay across his various spheres of activity – clearly visible in Gomes Eanes' *carteggio* – we can understand how his actions made certain events possible, such as the infiltration of Italian agents in Portugal in the first half of the fifteenth century, or conversely, the involvement of Portuguese nationals in key areas of Italian life, including academic and humanist circles, the acquisition and circulation of cultural and artistic items, religious pilgrimages, and, of course, diplomacy and trade (Costa-Gomes, 2017, pp. XI-XXI; Lopes, 2022, pp. 217-243). Above all, we see his association with the religious renewal projects led by the Avis dynasty to reform the Portuguese clergy.

Epistolary writing was a widespread form of communication in the late Middle Ages and served as a primary textual means of creating and strengthening relationships of trust and friendship (Costa-Gomes, 2004, pp. XI-XXI, II-37; Costa-Gomes, 2017, pp. XXXIV-XLIII). This was particularly true for Gomes Eanes, whose correspondence often bordered on intimacy.<sup>12</sup> His relationship with the royal family, in this context, stands out as a major example.

<sup>11</sup> An example is the cycle of 12 frescoes of the upper cloister of the *Badia* by a Portuguese author, with scenes from the life of St. Benedict. These are two periods of pictorial activity to which two painters correspond, one for each: the first is the aforementioned João Gonçalves (10 frescoes), the other is anonymous, probably Portuguese (Eloi de Tera, 2015, pp. 14, 19, 23, 33, 41, 58, 77, 82-85, 139, 157, 167-184, 187-210, 251, 284-286; Nunes, 1963, pp. 129 and 243-278).

<sup>12</sup> Close observation of these letters reveals personal emotions and perceptions, as well as intrinsic intentions and ideologies. As such, they are rare and invaluable historical sources. Some particularly revealing examples can be found in the following missives: Document n° 30, 1425. From Estevão de Aguiar to Fernando Falcão (Estevão de Aguiar urges his companion Fernando Falcão, who is

Endowed with this specific function, the letters in Gomes Eanes' *carteggio* allow for the reconstruction of the abbot's transnational web of social and political relations – especially during the 1430s, which coincided with the reign of King Duarte. Above all, they clearly reveal his reformist intentions and the importance of his personal connections to that project.

In fact, Gomes Eanes' *carteggio* reveals him as the epicenter of a network of Portuguese travellers – including noblemen, students, and clerics – who were active in Italy at the time. For the clerics, there was particular emphasis on matters related to the Curia. This network was made possible by Gomes Eanes' extensive influence and his involvement in various spheres of activity, most of which were linked to projects of religious reform

As shown in Fig. 1, which pertains to the *carteggio* and chronology under study, the geographic breadth and the number of places from which the abbot of Florence received correspondence are remarkable, especially concerning his work in Italy.

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in Portugal with Abbot Gomes Eanes, to reconcile himself with the abbot and submit to Gomes's authority in order not to damage the reforming initiatives already undertaken there); Document nº 37, 1426. From Estevão de Aguiar to Gomes Eanes (Estevão de Aguiar protests to Abbot Gomes about a letter sent to Portugal by the latter showing animosity towards him); Document nº 262, 1428. From Princess Isabel of Portugal to Gomes Eanes (Princess Isabel of Portugal writes in favour of Estevão de Aguiar and Fernando Falcão, monks now residing in Portugal, against whom the abbot Gomes Eanes was proceeding with excommunication because of borrowed books they had kept and because of their insubordination. She argues that she is protecting Estevão de Aguiar's initiative of founding a new monastery in Portugal and would be much displeased by further development of this conflict); Document nº 263, 1428, From Prince Duarte of Portugal to Gomes Eanes (Prince-heir Duarte of Portugal intercedes for the monks Estevão de Aguiar and Fernando Falcão against whom abbot Gomes Eanes was proceeding with excommunication, asking the abbot to reconsider his actions); Document nº 271, 1429. From Estevão de Aguiar to Gomes Eanes (Estevão de Aguiar claims to have received news in Portugal of the excommunication decided against him by abbot Gomes Eanes, and he begs the abbot to reconsider the reasons for such condemnation); Document nº 400, 1437. From Vasco Rodrigues 1480 to Gomes Eanes (Vasco Rodrigues, Cantor of the Cathedral of Braga, waiting in Venice to embark on a pilgrimage sends his will and testament to Abbot Gomes Eanes). At this point, we would emphasize that, due to its predominantly intimate nature and its association with the personal and private sphere, epistolary documentation can make a significant contribution to the study of medieval emotions and sensitivities – a field still developing and refining its own definitions. For further information on the scientific debate surrounding the History of Emotions, see (Almeida, 2017, pp. 253-288; Athanasiou, Hantzaroula, Yannakopoulos, 2008, pp. 5-16; Costa, Mallorquí-Ruscalleda, 2012, pp. 1-4; Garrison, 2001, pp. 243-250; Kleinginna, Kleinginna, 1981, pp. 345-379; Larrington, 2001, pp. 251-256; Lewis, Haviland-Jones, Barrett, 2016, *passim*; Nagy, Bouquet, 2008, *passim*; Rosenwein, 1998, *passim*; Rosenwein, 2001, pp. 229-234; Rosenwein, 2002, pp. 821-845; Stearns, Stearns, 1985, pp. 813-836).



Nº	Letters send to Gomes Eanes (Places of origin)	Occurrences
<b>ITALY</b>		
1	Florence	17
2	Genoa	2
3	Rome	78
4	Padua	17
5	Cesena	1
6	Venice	28
7	Assisi	2
8	San Benedetto di Polirone (Mantua)	2
9	Pisa	113
10	Subiaco (Rome)	2
11	San Martino a Mensola (Florence)	7
12	Livorno	1
13	Santa Maria a Querceto (Florence)	1
14	San Michele di Agnano (Pisa)	1
15	Bologna	34
16	Badia ad Isola (Siena)	2
17	Mercatello	3
18	Vicenza	2
19	Santa Maria de Praglia (Padua)	1
20	Siena	4
21	S. Giacomo da Grigliano (Lavagno)	1
22	Perugia	1
23	Cervara	1
24	Arezzo	2
25	Tortona	1
26	San Quirico d'Orcia	1
27	Tivoli	3
28	San Casciano (Florence)	2
29	San Leonardo (Verona)	1
30	Ferrara	8
31	San Gaudenzio (San Godenzo)	1
32	Bibbiena	1
33	San Salvi (Florence)	1
34	Montepulciano	1
35	Fiumesino	2
36	Prato	1
37	Parma	1

38	Monte Senario (Vaglia)	1
	<i>Italy (location unknown)</i>	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>
<b>PORTUGAL</b>		
39	Lisbon (Portugal)	51
40	Abrantes (Portugal)	1
41	Fronteira (Portugal)	2
42	Punhete (Constância, Portugal)	5
43	Torrão (Portugal)	2
44	Tentúgal (Portugal)	1
45	Alcácer do Sal (Portugal)	2
46	Porto (Portugal)	10
47	Coimbra (Portugal)	2
48	Estremoz (Portugal)	1
49	Aveiro (Portugal)	1
50	Braga (Portugal)	4
51	Santarém (Portugal)	9
52	Quintá da Barra (Portugal)	1
53	Salvaterra (Portugal)	1
54	Benavente (Portugal)	1
	<i>Portugal (location unknown)</i>	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>FLANDERS</b>		
55	L'Écluse (Flanders)	1
56	Bruges (Flanders)	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SPAIN</b>		
57	Salamanca (Spain)	1
58	Burgo de Osma (Spain)	1
59	Barcelona (Spain)	1
60	Valencia (Spain)	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>OTHERS</b>		
61	Buda (Hungary)	1
62	Tangier (Morocco)	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>TOTAL (Global)</b>	<b>474</b>

Figure 1

Equally remarkable are the occurrences from cities such as Rome, Pisa, Venice, Padua, Bologna, and even Florence. In the case of Rome, the numbers indicate Gomes Eanes' direct and indirect activity within the Curia. Notably, over his career between Portugal and Italy, he served six popes, each of whom was, to varying degrees, a reformer: Gregory XII, Martin V, Eugenius IV, Nicholas V, Calixtus III, and Pius II.

Cities like Pisa, with 113 occurrences, Venice, and Florence had a strong Portuguese presence at the time, mainly for commercial reasons. A good example of this is merchant Afonso Eanes, an agent of the Portuguese king in Italy. In total, he sent twenty-five letters from Pisa to Gomes Eanes. The same can be said for Bologna, due to the intense *peregrinatio academica* from Portugal.

Gomes Eanes appears as an abbot of a famous monastery, noteworthy for his observance and integrity, in-depth knowledge of the canons and legal procedure, and extensive connections with ecclesiastical and lay authorities, mainly with the Roman curia and some of the most significant reformers of his time.

Good examples are the letters exchanged with the monk Marino de Maffeo between 1421 and 1422, who at the time was representing the cause of the annexation of Santa Maria del Santo Sepolcro (le Campora) to the Badia Fiorentina, a papal decision opposed by the Prior of that monastery (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 9, pp. 12-14).

Another can be found in the epistle sent to Gomes Eanes by the director of the Congregation of Santa Justina, Teofilo Michiel, dated June 16, 1424, informing him of the annual chapter's decision to entrust him with the project of reforming the monasteries of Rimini and Cesena by sending some of his monks there (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 23, p. 26).

The correspondence with the monk Iacopo Niccolini is equally revealing. On January 16, 1426, he complained to the abbot of Florence about a monk who had stolen food, and at the same time asked him for help in mentoring the studies of a young and promising novice. Two years later, Iacopo again begged abbot Gomes Eanes to reconsider his decision of sending harmful and incorrigible monks to his community, whose behavior and vices would contaminate the others and cause scandal (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 219, p. 208).

There are various other examples that show Gomes Eanes as the axis of circumstances somehow related to religious reform in Italy and Portugal, such as the letters by Biagio Onofri (monastery of Santo Donnino in Pisa on May 13, 1429), by his disciple Estêvão de Aguiar (on September 5, 1429), and by the monk Bartolo in 1430. In the first case, "the monks are disappointed that they will not have the visit of Abbot Gomes, as they rejoice on the growing numbers in the

community. (...) Biagio also refers to the acquisition of clothes for the winter.” (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 280, pp. 269-270). In the second epistle, Estevão de Aguiar “asks for Abbot Gomes Eanes’ assistance in the reform of the monasteries of Portugal, and requests that some brothers be sent from Italy for that purpose.” (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 290, pp. 278-279). Finally, the monk Bartolo reported to the abbot on the state of disrepair and popular agitation at the church of San Bartolo a Grieve, urging Gomes Eanes to visit soon (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 306, p. 290).

A phenomenon that illustrates Gomes Eanes’ rare ability to build a solid network of solidarity – and, at the same time, his contribution to Church reform in the 15th century – was the ties of mutual friendship he established in Italy over the years with some founders of the new movements of observance. Ludovico Barbo, Juan de Mella (1397-1467), the *cubicularius* Arsénio, Fr. Beltramo de Correnti, abbot of the Congregation of Cervara, and Giovanni di Sicilia (the second leader of the Congregation of Santa Justina and abbot of St. Paul) are just a few examples. With them, he exchanged advice and services, sought their help, and rewarded them generously. These friendships were cemented through personal and epistolary contacts, as evidenced by their letters.

Another example is Gomes Eanes’ friendship with Fr. Lope de Olmedo (1370-1433), leader of the Order of the Hermit Monks of St. Jerome. Their relationship was characterized by regular contact, mutual help, consultations, and exchanges of ideological and practical influence.

Also noteworthy is his friendship with the three founders of the Portuguese Congregation of Secular Canons of Vilar de Frades – later known as St. John Evangelist, or more commonly, the *Lóios*: Preceptor João Vicente (1380-1463), Bishop of Lamego and future superior of this congregation; the preacher Martim Lourenço; and the nobleman Afonso Nogueira (1399-1464).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Gomes Eanes’ role in founding the *Lóios* was crucial, as demonstrated by the correspondence he exchanged with João Vicente in 1426-1427. Particularly noteworthy are his efforts to secure the statutes of the Canons of St. George of Alga to aid in establishing the *Lóios*. In this context – as revealed by letters from August 9, 20, and 23, 1426, sent by the merchant Afonso Eanes to Gomes Eanes – Afonso Nogueira, one of the founders of the *Lóios*, was in Florence to obtain the statutes with the assistance of the abbot of Florence. Gomes Eanes took on the task of requesting the manuscripts from Giovanni Michiel (d. 1430), abbot of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 69, pp. 71-72; doc. 72, pp. 74-75; doc. 73, p. 75). Both the missive sent by the latter on September 23 of that year to Gomes Eanes, and the letter from Afonso Nogueira (of January 2, 1428, also addressed to the abbot of Florence) showed the positive outcome of this process (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 82, pp. 81-82; doc. 221, p. 113). See (Costa, 1986, pp. 202-220). On the origins of the Congregation (Pina, 2011; Falcão, 2018).

However, the strongest friendship Gomes Eanes cultivated in Italy was with the General of the Camaldulense, the humanist monk Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439). This friendship was born out of a shared set of ideas and mutual admiration, nurtured in a circle of common friends – most notably Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) – and through the exchange of books, collaboration in the visitation of the Vallombrosa Abbey, joint assignments, loans, and various other circumstances (Lopes, 2018, p. 31-57; Orsino, 2021, pp. 1-27).

Another exemplary instance of Gomes Eanes as the center of a wide network dedicated to religious reform – particularly in Italy – was his role in founding a new convent for nuns in Florence, which rapidly grew and became famous as *Le Murate* ('Walled Women'). He worked to secure living quarters for them and to obtain the approval of Pope Eugenius IV. He personally copied the Rule and attached the Constitutions, which he also drafted for this purpose. Additionally, he assisted the nuns by securing papal commissions on their behalf and did everything in his power to ensure their requests were met (Nunes, 1963, pp. 304-314; Sousa, 1987, pp. 119-133; Sousa, 2002, pp. 683-699).

Finally, in considering the importance of personal relationships established by the Abbot of Florence for the development and application of his reformist program, we must highlight his role as an educator of reformers. His disciples, dispersed across various monasteries and orders, carried with them the practices of observance and the seeds of reform. The results would become apparent years later, evident in the improvement of several Camaldulense monasteries, the dynamic renewal within the Congregation of St. Salvi of the Order of Vallombrosa, and the flourishing Cistercian community at Settimo (Nunes, 1963, pp. 294-338). In the case of the latter, a letter sent by Domenico Capranica to Gomes Eanes on August 22, 1437, makes this particularly clear (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 445, pp. 432-433).

#### 4. THE CONNECTION WITH THE CROWN ON DEVELOPING AN ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM TO THE PORTUGUESE REALM

This would soon make Gomes Eanes a key figure in the strategy of the Portuguese monarchy, which was committed to consolidating its power over the realm and eager to reinforce its international prestige. For the new dynasty, this included the reform of religious life, positioning the monarchy as a protagonist alongside ecclesiastical authorities, whose liberties and privileges remained a subject

of debate, as clearly reflected in the Jacobine laws of 1419 issued by King João I.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the fifteenth century, the Portuguese monarchy engaged in heated confrontations with the clergy due to the Crown's determination to reform the problematic state of religious life that prevailed in Portugal at the time.<sup>15</sup>

His son, King Duarte, in his book *Leal Conselheiro* (*Loyal Counselor*), advocates reforming action from an essentially spiritual perspective – namely, the interior renewal of the Christian faithful, both laity and clergy.<sup>16</sup> The Crown's strategy seeks, in fact, to gain the support of other religious movements, many of them influenced by ideals of solitude and voluntary poverty, with strong lay participation, to promote such religious reform. In this light, we should view the royal support – and that of the royal family and many members of the court's nobility – for the Franciscan and Dominican observances and for new religious orders such as the Hieronymites, the Secular Canons of Saint John the Evan-

<sup>14</sup> See the proclamation of the “Jacobine laws” of December 1419 (that is, forty ordinances concerning jurisdictional – and not theological or disciplinary – issues between the church and temporal power) which so displeased the Portuguese clergy. It was a significant moment in the relations between the Portuguese Crown and Church, which after that became tense (Costa, 1977, pp. 509-591; Ventura, 2012, *passim*).

<sup>15</sup> Relations between the king and the clergy in medieval Portugal were, in fact, far from smooth. Rather than stemming from theological or disciplinary conflicts, these tensions were jurisdictional, arising from the evolving definition of the king's authority. As in other Christian kingdoms – for example, in Castile (see Nieto Soria, 1993, *passim*) – the Portuguese king also regarded it as his right and duty to exercise jurisdiction over many matters that the clergy considered exclusively theirs, based on both theological principles and Roman law. This is, therefore, a stance taken by the kingdom's government, grounded in a conception of kingship that firmly holds that royal power should extend over all subjects, across the entire territory, and on all matters – particularly over laypeople and issues related to property and economic affairs. This conception of power draws on both Roman law and a claim to royal sacredness, which, in the Portuguese case, was solidified by the conquest of Ceuta in 1415. The Jacobin laws should, therefore, be seen in this broader context – that is, as part of a concerted strategy to define effective royal power. In this sense, they represent one of several episodes of tension and adjustment between spiritual authority and temporal power, a process from which the characteristic distinction between these two dimensions in modern Western states would eventually emerge. Another aspect of the conflict, exacerbated in Portugal by the Jacobin laws and its resonance in the Roman Curia, must be understood considering the serious crisis facing the Church at the time – particularly the conflicts between supporters of papal authority and conciliarists, who advocated for the Council's authority over the Pope. Regarding the nature and scope of this conflict between royal power and the Church, see (Marques, 1994, pp. 137-172; Ventura, 1997, 32-38; Ventura, 2009, 441-449; Ventura, 2010a, 491-538; Ventura, 2010b: 125-141; Rosa, 2012 [in particular the Introduction and the 3rd part, dedicated to the reform in fifteen century Portugal]).

<sup>16</sup> For insights on King Duarte's support for reforming the Church from a spiritual perspective, as evident in his book *Leal Conselheiro*, see (Carvalho, 2016, pp. 27-37; Dias, 1960, pp. 67-73; Duarte, 2007, pp. 252-256, 260-265, 270-272 and 280-282).

gelist, and the Hermits of Serra de Ossa (Rosa, 2000, pp. 492-505). Many of their members would be employed by the Portuguese kings as preachers and confessors, and as agents in diplomatic missions or in the service of internal policies, particularly on ecclesiastical issues (Costa-Gomes, 1995, pp. 110-129; Coelho, 2015, pp. 83-105; Rodrigues, 2020).

Throughout this entire process, the royal family's affection and preference for Gomes Eanes were evident, as he was seen as a reforming and zealous figure who advocated for an observant spirituality. A good example of this is found in the epistles dispatched by the following individuals and institutions: the papal prot-honorary Alvaro Ferreira (Rome, March 15, 1427; and Buda, between August and October 1426),<sup>17</sup> the acting proctor of the king of Portugal in the papal curia, João Rodrigues (Rome, February 2, 1429),<sup>18</sup> Afonso Eanes (Pisa, August 16, 1426),<sup>19</sup> the Council of the city of Lisbon (May 16, 1437),<sup>20</sup> Marco Contarini (Venice, April 22, 1437), and especially, King John I (Lisbon, July 28, 1429)<sup>21</sup> and King Duarte (Santarém, January 29 and March 23, 1437;<sup>22</sup> Lisbon, May 16, June 25, July 21, August 27 and September 9, 1437).<sup>23</sup> Also significant are the letters sent by Queen Leonor (q. 1433 – 1438, regent 1438-1439) to her brother, King John of Navarre (r. 1425 – 1479) from Santarém on January 31, 1437,<sup>24</sup> and to Gomes Eanes, from Abrantes on February 20, 1438.<sup>25</sup>

Two factors determined the Crown's choice of Gomes Eanes to carry out the reform in Portugal: first, his reforming spirit, demonstrated by his work in reforming the monastery of Santa Maria of Florence and other Italian monastic communities; and second, his alignment with the Crown's interests and his role as an advocate for Portuguese interests in Italy, especially near the Papal Curia – it is no coincidence that he served as ambassador both in Portugal and at the Curia.

In fact, Gomes Eanes moved with ease among the papal curia and the courts of cardinals, abbots, kings, and princes. He was even part of Pope Eugenius IV's inner circle at the time of the latter's flight to Florence.

<sup>17</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 158, p. 152; doc. 65, pp. 66-68.

<sup>18</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 272, pp. 257-258.

<sup>19</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 70, pp. 72-73.

<sup>20</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 408, pp. 398-399.

<sup>21</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 395, p. 381; doc. 301, pp. 285-286.

<sup>22</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 377, pp. 358-361; doc. 388, pp. 370-372.

<sup>23</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 406, pp. 392-395; doc. 424, pp. 412-413; doc. 436, pp. 425-426; doc. 447, pp. 434-436; doc. 456, pp. 447-449.

<sup>24</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 379, pp. 362-363.

<sup>25</sup> Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 492, pp. 487-488.

In Portugal, both Prince Duarte and his sister Isabel (1397–1471), the future Duchess of Burgundy, who supported the movements and proposals associated with the renewal of religious life from early on,<sup>26</sup> exemplify the alliance of powerful lay figures with Gomes Eanes in his reformist efforts.

Gomes Eanes served as a member of the royal councils of King Duarte and King Afonso V (r. 1438 – 1481). He also acted as papal legate for Portugal between 1435 and 1437, participating actively in significant Church events, including sessions of the Council of Basel/Ferrara/Florence (1431-1445), where he supported Pope Eugenius IV.

As Figs. 1, 2, and 3 illustrate, there is evidence of a dialogue between Portugal and Italy established and continually sustained by the Benedictine abbot, largely through epistolography – a dialogue that revealed the profound connection between religious and royal authorities, which helped to advance Church reform in fifteenth-century Portugal. The most productive period of this process was during the twenty years that Gomes Eanes spent in Italy: he travelled twice to Portugal during that time to promote reform, first of the Benedictine Order, from 1424 to 1426, and later, from 1435 to 1436, with the aim of ensuring a general visitation and reformation of the entire clergy in Portugal. In both cases, he had the support of the Crown.

In 1424, he adopted a strategy similar to the one used in the reform of his own abbey, selecting a group of 17 monks who, under his leadership, could be placed in an existing monastery to implement a stricter observance of the Benedictine rule. The chosen monastery was Pendorada<sup>27</sup> – one of the oldest, with sufficient assets

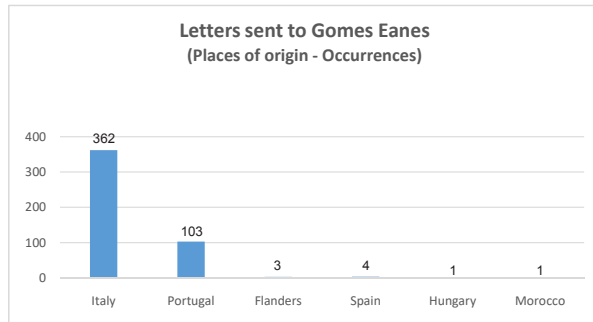
<sup>26</sup> Indeed, even before marrying Philippe III of Burgundy, known as Philippe the Good (1396-1467), the Infanta undertook significant reform efforts. Once in Burgundy, she actively promoted the proposals of reformist movements from Northern Europe (closely linked to *Devotio Moderna*), which advocated for new currents of spirituality guided by observance. Her religiosity was clearly influenced by these movements, which targeted both clerical and lay dimensions of spiritual life. Culturally, the new Duchess stood out for her support of the translation of classical religious texts, as well as for fostering exchanges between the courts of Portugal and Burgundy. This included introducing works from the Portuguese court into Burgundy (for example, *Leal Conselheiro* – *Loyal Counselor*) and, conversely, disseminating works by authors from beyond the Pyrenees in Portugal. An example of this is the *Book of the Three Virtues* by the Italian poet and philosopher Christine de Pizan (1363 – c. 1430), who lived in France during the first half of the fourteenth century (Sommé, 1998, pp. 451-478). The sixteenth chapter of this work, entitled “Faith and Works,” is fundamental to understanding Isabel’s support for the reform of religious orders.

<sup>27</sup> The Monastery of São João Baptista da Pendorada was likely founded in 1059 by the monk Velino as part of the renewal of ecclesiastical and monastic life following the Council of Coyanza (1055). It was built following a model inspired by the rules of Fructuosus of Braga (c. 595 – 665) and Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636). Around 1080, the cenobium adopted Cluniac customs and the



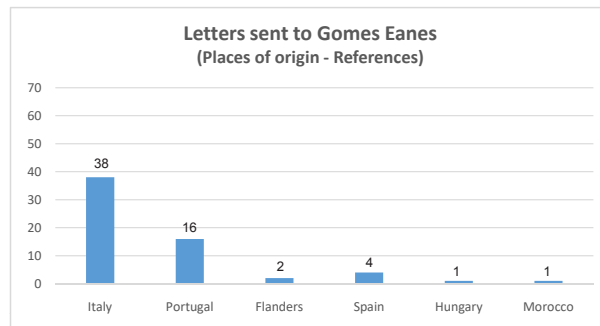
to support a community – in the diocese of Oporto, a region where the Order had its largest number of monasteries.<sup>28</sup> The project to reform the Portuguese Benedictine monasteries was ratified by the Pope on May 30, 1425 (Costa, 1963, p. 123), and on the same day, the king was authorized to use the monastery of Pendorada for that purpose (Costa, 1963, pp. 123, 128). It seems clear that the abbot intended to stay in Portugal, as Prior Álvaro of Portugal, who had been left in Florence to oversee the Badia, felt compelled to come to Portugal to persuade him to return to his community when signs of the project's failure became more evident.<sup>29</sup>

Italy	<b>362</b>
Portugal	<b>103</b>
Flanders	<b>3</b>
Spain	<b>4</b>
Hungary	<b>1</b>
Morocco	<b>1</b>



**Figure 2**

Italy	<b>38</b>
Portugal	<b>16</b>
Flanders	<b>2</b>
Spain	<b>4</b>
Hungary	<b>1</b>
Morocco	<b>1</b>



**Figure 3**

Rule of St. Benedict. It was governed by perpetual abbots until the early 15th century, after which it was led by commendatory abbots until 1569, when it was integrated into the Congregation of St. Benedict (see Mattoso, 2002a, pp. 9-49; Mattoso, 2002b, *passim*; Sousa, 2005, pp. 61-62).

<sup>28</sup> About the geography of the Order in Portugal, see (Sousa, 2016, pp. 43-91).

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Álvaro Dias (January 21, 1426), yet in Portugal, to the monks of the Badia Fiorentina (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 39, pp. 42-44).

On his second journey, Gomes Eanes was accompanied by the Bishop of Lamego, João Vicente (1380-1463), one of the founders of the Congregation of the Secular Canons of Saint John the Evangelist, who was also committed to clergy reform. This new Congregation had the abbot of Florence's support from its inception, not only in its contact with the Venetian monastery of Saint George in Alga – whose constitutions they adopted – but throughout the entire process of recognition by the Holy See.

However, João Vicente was also a risky choice, as the Congregation was in open conflict with the powerful Archbishop of Braga, D. Fernando da Guerra, due to the privilege of exemption from episcopal jurisdiction granted by Eugenius IV to the community of Vilar de Frades. This community, located in an ancient Benedictine monastery given to them by the Archbishop himself, was established as the Congregation's headquarters. Furthermore, since his appointment as Bishop of Lamego, João Vicente had, on several occasions, been chosen by the pope to judge significant disputes involving the Archbishop (Pina, 2011, pp. 119-124).

Both projects were broad in scope and highly ambitious in their objectives, but they ultimately ended in failure. Only in the following century, as was the case with the rest of Christendom, would Portugal be prepared for a comprehensive reform initiative.

The specific reasons for this failure lie primarily in three main factors: first, the internal disagreements and opposition within the Benedictine Order itself, to which Gomes Eanes belonged; second, the resistance from other elements of the clergy who felt affected by the reform – those who perceived their rights and privileges as being diminished or threatened, in a context of tense relations or even open conflict between the clergy and the Portuguese monarchy; and finally, the papacy's deep concerns about the increasingly intense interference of royal power in ecclesiastical affairs.

The first factor becomes especially evident in the initial mission, notably due to resistance from other reformers, such as the influential Archbishop of Braga, Fernando da Guerra (1390-1467), and Friar André Dias (1348 – c. 1451), a renowned Dominican who later became a Benedictine abbot, bishop, theologian, canonist, and university professor in Rome. Friar André also participated in the Councils of Constance (1414-1418) and Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431-1445) (Costa, 1963, pp. 59-164; Costa, 1967, *passim*; Costa, 1977, pp. 509-591; Marques, 1989, *passim*).

From the outset, Friar André Dias expressed clear reservations about the project. In 1426, he wrote to Gomes Eanes, suggesting a more suitable mon-

astery for the reform, specifically S. Miguel de Refoios de Basto, likely aware of the challenges surrounding the bull related to Pendorada (Costa, 1967, doc. 60, p. 292; Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 67, pp. 69-70).<sup>30</sup> Having obtained Pendorada for himself, Friar André Dias clearly opposed Gomes Eanes's intention to use that monastery as the starting point for the Benedictine reform in Portugal. In a letter dated January 28, 1436,<sup>31</sup> Friar André protested against the Abbot of Florence, claiming that in his attempts to introduce reform in Portuguese Benedictine monasteries, Gomes Eanes intended to deprive him of his rights. In this correspondence, Friar André Dias pleaded with Gomes Eanes to spare him from difficulties at this stage of his life, suggesting instead that he focus on reforming other monasteries, such as Pedroso, Santo Tirso, and Pombeiro, whose abbots – besides having more children and women in their monasteries than he did – were far more ignorant, foolish, reckless, and irresponsible. He even threatened to resort to the council.

In fact, such a project threatened the entire beneficial system that particularly affected the wealthiest monasteries and churches in the realm, which were utilized by both the Portuguese monarchs and the Holy See, often involving powerful and influential individuals. The obstacles stemming from this situation made it impossible for Gomes Eanes to carry out the reform of the Benedictines in Portugal and ultimately led to his return to Italy.

It is also possible to identify this first point in the dissensions that arose between Gomes Eanes and his disciples, as seen in the case of Friar Estêvão de Aguiar (?-1446) and Friar Fernando Falcão. Both were Portuguese noblemen and professed Benedictine monks from the Abbey of Florence. They received from Pope Martin V, on May 30, 1425, the authority to establish a Benedictine observant monastery in Portugal, to be built in the place of Xabregas, Lisbon, with the support of relatives and the faithful (Costa, 1963, p. 127).<sup>32</sup> In this process, Gomes Eanes, their mentor, felt unauthorized, as he preferred reforming existing monasteries rather than founding new ones. In this case, Gomes Eanes raised

<sup>30</sup> The issue seems to have been considered by Gomes Eanes and the Portuguese king, who tried to get this monastery for the abbot's project (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 70, pp. 72-73; doc. 72, pp. 74-75). Letters of Afonso Eanes, both from August 1426.

<sup>31</sup> We follow the date established by António Domingues de Sousa Costa (Costa, 1967, doc. 145, pp. 353-354). Rita Costa Gomes dates the same letter from January 18, 1435, without explaining the criteria for such an option (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 359, pp. 339-340).

<sup>32</sup> The initiative of Estêvão de Aguiar to get permission to found a new monastery was already confirmed in a letter addressed by him to Gomes Eanes dated from March 1425 (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 27, pp. 29-31).

personal objections that hindered the progress of the reform: his authority was at stake – since he disagreed with the presence of Friar Estêvão and Friar Fernando in Portugal – and, moreover, he disapproved of Friar Estêvão’s independent initiative.

In essence, these were two reforming intentions, albeit divergent in their methods of implementation. The conflict reached a point where D. Gomes called for the excommunication of Estêvão de Aguiar and Fernando Falcão. The letters of the *Carteggio* reveal the conciliatory interventions of Prince Duarte and his sister, Princess Isabel, who worked toward reconciling the parties involved (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 262, pp. 249-250 [letter from Princess Isabel, December 30, 1428] and doc. 263, p. 251 [letter from Prince Duarte, December 30, 1428]). Friar Estêvão de Aguiar himself wrote to the Abbot, asking him to reconsider the reasons for the condemnation (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 271, p. 257 [January 1429]).

In other words, the reformist intentions and programs lacked consistency and uniformity, preventing the realization of Benedictine observance in Portugal.

The monastery of Saint Benedict of Xabregas was founded on properties granted to Friar Estêvão de Aguiar by Prince Henry, as the administrator of the Order of Christ, on May 21, 1426.<sup>33</sup> Besides, it had the support of King João I and his daughter, Princess Isabel,<sup>34</sup> who also granted significant assets to the newly founded monastery.<sup>35</sup> A small community of five monks had already set-

<sup>33</sup> The original donation chart dates from May 21, 1426 (Costa, 1963, p. 135, n. 155). It is mentioned in the letters addressed to D. Gomes by Martim Lourenço (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 36, pp. 39-40) and Estêvão de Aguiar (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 37, p. 41). Friar Fernando Falcão had already abandoned the project, moving to the Franciscans.

<sup>34</sup> According to Pero Lopes do Quintal, the king himself provided all the stone and stonework from the royal residence of Xabregas, while the costs for other materials (wood, lime, and additional stones) were covered by Princess Isabel. This first statement is confirmed by a royal letter dated August 26, 1426, in which King João I grants Friar Estêvão de Aguiar “all the stone and mortar of the walls, arches, and portals of our palace of Enxobregas, which is near the city of Lisbon,” instructing him to “dismantle the walls of the said palace and take the stone and mortar from them to construct the oratory in which they are prepared to serve God within the jurisdiction of that city.” (National Archives – Torre do Tombo, *Colecção Especial*, box 32, n° 47). The construction works were already on the move in December 1426 (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 123, pp. 115-116).

<sup>35</sup> In October 25, 1426, the princess Isabel donates to Friar Estêvão de Aguiar and to his monastery (as said in the back of the document) two mills located in Alenquer, in her own lands (National Archives – Torre do Tombo, *Colecção Especial*, box 72, bundle 26, n° 1). On September 13, 1429, she adds to these assets a significant amount of lands (grain fields, vineyards, olive groves, vegetable gardens), houses and water-wells located near the monastery, in the place called “do Madeireiro” and along the valley of Xabregas, that she had gathered by donation or purchase (*ibid.*, n° 2).

tled in Xabregas by December 1428 (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 262, pp. 249-250 [letter of Princess Isabel – December 30, 1428] and doc. 264, pp. 251-253 [letter of João Rodrigues, proctor of the King of Portugal at the papal curia – January 1429]). The reasons for the failure of this new foundation are unclear. It is certain, however, that D. Gomes continued to advocate for establishing the reform in an already existing Benedictine monastery. In 1429, he obtained the monastery of Pedroso, for which Friar Estêvão de Aguiar was appointed abbot (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 272, pp. 257-258 [letter of João Rodrigues, proctor of King João I at the papal curia, February 2, 1429]).<sup>36</sup>

Correspondence with Gomes Eanes appears to confirm Estêvão de Aguiar's efforts to promote the Benedictine reform, as, in September of that year, he wrote to his former abbot requesting monks to assist him in this task (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 307, pp. 290-291).<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, a donation made to the monastery of Xabregas by Princess Isabel around the same time suggests that Friar Estêvão continued to use it as a starting point for his reform project. Two years later, on October 29, 1431, he was appointed by the Portuguese King and Prince Duarte, with the approval of Eugene IV, to assume leadership of the Cistercian monastery of Alcobaça (Gomes, 2012, p. 145).<sup>38</sup> Through this process, the place of Saint Benedict of Xabregas became integrated into the assets of the monastery, used by Estêvão de Aguiar during his stays in Lisbon as a royal counsellor.<sup>39</sup>

The second factor – the obstacles posed by other members of the clergy who felt impacted by the process – affects both missions, as they both occur in a context of conflict or tension between the clergy and the Portuguese monarchy, with strong clerical opposition to any reform initiatives from the king. In 1425-1427, this opposition was a reaction to the royal legislation of 1419, with complaints presented to the pope by the Portuguese clergy against the king's violations of Church liberties and immunities. The Archbishop of Braga was appointed by the

<sup>36</sup> The confirmation of his choice as abbot of Pedroso was issued on March 13, 1429 (Costa, 1963, p. 143).

<sup>37</sup> However, Estêvão de Aguiar never mentions the monastery of Pedroso, leaving unclear how he intended to pursue the reform of the Portuguese Benedictines. This issue is addressed in another letter, dated December 16, 1429 (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 325, pp. 304-305).

<sup>38</sup> The former abbot, D. Fernando do Quental, still tried to reverse the royal and papal decision, as certified in a letter from João Rodrigues to Gomes Eanes (Costa-Gomes, 2017, doc. 33, pp. 37-38).

<sup>39</sup> We are grateful for this information provided by Prof. Iria Gonçalves. The monastery of Saint Benedict of Xabregas was granted to the Congregation of the Secular Canons of Saint John Evangelist (Lóios) on January 11, 1456, by the successor of Friar Estêvão do Aguiar, under pressure from King Afonso V, to establish a new house for the Congregation in Lisbon (Pina, 2011, pp. 137-140).

Holy See to lead this process, which, following a general meeting of the clergy in his diocese (December 15-22, 1426), culminated in the signing of a concordat on August 30, 1427, in Santarém (Costa, 1977; Ventura, 1997, pp. 36-38, 96-99; Marques, 1989, pp. 78-81; Rosa, 2012, pp. 179-183; Coelho, 2005, pp. 212-214).

The same opposition is vividly revealed in the context of Gomes Eanes's second reforming mission to Portugal in 1435-1436, when a plea was submitted by the proxies of the Portuguese prelates and clergy, then at the Curia, outlining objections to the appointment of João Vicente (1380-1463), Bishop of Lamego and founder of the Congregation of Lóios, and Gomes Eanes, Abbot of Florence, to lead such a mission. The purpose of the supplication was to prevent the visit and to refocus the pope's attention on the need to protect ecclesiastical freedoms through the appointment of impartial visitors who could withstand pressure from powerful lay figures. This concern stemmed from the fact that the initiative for the general visitation came from King Duarte himself. The plea even contained a veiled threat of appeal to the Council, which may have caused Pope Eugenius IV some apprehension (Costa, 1963, pp. 145-151; Ventura, 1997, pp. 100-103; Marques, 1989, pp. 81-88; Rosa, 2012, pp. 192-195; Duarte, 2005, pp. 189-192).<sup>40</sup>

The third factor, in turn, is fully evident in Gomes Eanes's second reform mission to Portugal. When King Duarte requested that Pope Eugenius IV appoint the Florentine abbot as the general reformer of Portuguese monastic congregations, the pope, concerned about the reaction of the Abbot of Cîteaux – who was his supporter at the Council of Basel – delayed the appointment as much as possible. After all, it is important to remember that this project aimed at a general visitation and reform of all clergy in Portugal.<sup>41</sup>

As can be concluded, all these mechanisms of obstruction and resistance, particularly those arising from within the very heart of Christendom, made it impossible for greater attempts at *reformatio* to succeed. Consequently, on both occasions, Gomes Eanes had to return to Italy without seeing the wishes of King Duarte – or his own – fulfilled.

Finally, we may also point to more abstract but equally significant causes for this failure: the powerful inertia created by established behaviours, as well as the inherent ambition and idealism of the projects themselves. These initia-

<sup>40</sup> We can probably relate this context to the quarrel between D. Gomes and the Archbishop of Braga, D. Fernando da Guerra, which led to several letters sent to the Abbot in an attempt to clarify the situation (Costa-Gomes, 2017, docs. 478-481, pp. 473-477; December 20-22, 1437 and [1438]).

<sup>41</sup> See note 40.

tives sought to reform an entire nation and, indeed, the whole Church at once, without the practical conditions, a unified and consensual reform plan, or a sufficiently powerful authority to enforce it.

#### 5. GOMES EANES AND PORTUGAL IN THE REFORMIST CURRENTS THAT CHARACTERIZE CHRISTENDOM OF THE TIME

Seen from a different angle, Gomes Eanes's trajectory serves as an example of how, throughout the 15th century, Portugal was not disconnected from the broader Christian world's search for the reform of religious life. On the contrary, to varying degrees, Portugal was part of contemporary international movements for Church reform and did not simply passively observe developments beyond its borders.

In many ways, these reformist currents were heirs to earlier sects and heresies (ranging from the 12th to the early 14th century) (Vauchez, 2014, *passim*), particularly in their spirit of contestation and desire for change. They shared several doctrinal and, consequently, ideological traits, which help explain the disorders and reactions they provoked within the Church. We refer here to the clear tendency toward establishing an interior, conscience-driven, evangelical, and de-clericalized form of Christianity. Ultimately, these currents culminated in the authentic desire for a *renovatio ecclesiae* – a deeply spiritual process aimed at deepening pastoral zeal and reducing the relaxed lifestyle of much of the clergy, returning to the perfection and rigor of early Christianity, closer to its source: Jesus Christ.

The *forma vitae* of the ecclesiastical world, rife with weaknesses and deviations, was a reality that needed to be addressed. It was essential, with varying degrees of radicalism, to combat and change this state of affairs: simony, clerical corruption, clientelism, the relaxation of the lesser friars – many of whom were steeped in ignorance and illiteracy – episcopal absenteeism, the temporal nature of the Papal Curia, and so on. In pursuit of authentic religious zeal, the renewal project for religious life had to be as comprehensive as possible, addressing not only the administrative and normative aspects but also the cultural and spiritual dimensions.

It is not surprising, then, that the 15th century was marked by several movements advocating for the reform of ecclesiastical institutions, aiming to align them more closely with the Gospel in both public and private Christian life, particularly among clerics and religious figures (Costa, 1963, pp. 59-164).

In the northern and central regions of Catholic Christendom, since the end of the 13th century, notable figures have emerged, including Master Eckhart (c. 1260 – c. 1328) and his mystical school, William of Ockham (c. 1287 – 1347), Marsilius of Padua (c. 1275 – c. 1342), John Duns Scotus (c. 1266 – 1308), and John of Jandun (c. 1285 – 1328). Entering the 14th century and gaining full affirmation by the 15th century, other key figures and movements stand out: John Wycliffe (c. 1328 – 1384) and the Lollards, John Huss (1369-1415) and the Hussites, Jerome of Prague (1379-1416), the movement led by Conrad of Prussia in the latter half of the 14th century, Dionysius the Carthusian (c. 1402 – 1471), the Dutch Dominicans, and, above all, the *devotio moderna*<sup>42</sup> movement and its followers, including the Carthusians of Cologne.

In the Latin countries, to the south, the influence of the observant mendicants – namely, the Franciscans and Dominicans – along with movements focused on eremitism and monastic reform, is especially prominent. Within this context, we can place the active contributions of Gomes Eanes. Furthermore, key figures such as Saint Francesca Romana (1384-1440) and Saint Lorenzo Giustini-ani (1381-1456) made notable efforts in promoting reform.

Meanwhile, other significant voices like Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Saint Brigid of Sweden (c. 1303 – 1373), and Saint Vicente Ferrer (1350-1419) of Iberia were deeply engaged in debates on ecclesiastical reform. In Spain, the efforts of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436-1517) were particularly influential, alongside those of the Franciscan and Dominican reformers, with Pedro de Villacreces (c. 1350 – 1422) standing out as a pivotal figure in the Franciscan reform movement whose impact extended into Portugal.

In Italy, the pre-Reformation period saw the influence of the Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) as well as the observant branches of the Dominicans, Augustinian hermits, and the Franciscan Capuchins.

On the other hand, the councils themselves – particularly those of Constance and Basel-Ferrara-Florence – addressed these issues and underscored the urgent need for reform. However, the political conflicts that marked these assemblies, involving both the papacy and secular rulers, ultimately undermined the effectiveness of these calls for change. Despite this, the cause of reform remained closely linked with the councils' efforts for over a century. Rome viewed this

<sup>42</sup> One of those most impressive identity models related to religious reformism, which undoubtedly reached the Portuguese space.



movement as a threat aligned with the episcopal and parliamentary ambitions of the clergy at Constance and Basel, and it reacted strongly against it, as it did against conciliarism (Dias, 1960, pp. 5-31).

All reform movements and their leaders based their arguments on the evident failures and needs within Christian society, particularly in the ecclesiastical sphere. They denounced, with particular vigour, issues such as the luxury and moral laxity within the Church, the clergy's neglect of the Bible, the dominance of popular rites and devotions, the weakening of apostolic functions, and the exclusion of the laity from pastoral activities and spiritual life.

Gomes Eanes' reforms did not strictly align with all the prevailing trends, which at times advocated theses incompatible with Catholic doctrine and were, as such, condemned by various councils. However, like these movements, his reforms called for changes in many aspects of the Catholic Church, particularly advocating for a spirituality more aligned with the origins of Christianity – here, the connection with the *devotio moderna* is particularly relevant. This return to early Christian ideals emphasized the correct formation of the clergy and the purity of their actions.

Gomes Eanes' reforms are thus part of a broader process extending across Western Europe, with significant connections to Italian developments of the 1400s. The contacts he established, especially during his time in Italy, integrated his efforts into platforms of solidarity and supranational influence, ultimately reflecting the openness to mobility and exchange in secular and clerical reform proposals across 15th-century Christianity.

## 6. FINAL NOTES

To speak of Gomes Eanes is to speak of someone deeply integrated into – and, consequently, highly knowledgeable about – the reformist religious currents spreading through Christianity in his time. His reform program should not be viewed in isolation or as something stagnant but rather as part of a larger movement that extended far beyond Portugal's borders, reaching across Western Europe in the 1400s. He should be understood as having strong connections to both the Portuguese Crown and Italy.

Although his reformist efforts found success in Italy, especially through concrete cases of reform, they did not succeed as a comprehensive program covering an entire kingdom, as was attempted twice in Portugal. Supported by Kings João I and Duarte, Gomes Eanes participated in efforts to establish ecclesiastical

reform in Portugal, particularly by introducing Benedictine observance. However, these attempts ultimately failed.

Despite this, his influence on religious reform was still significant, both as head of the Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra and as a mentor to other reformers who left a lasting mark on Portuguese religious life. Notably, his disciple Estêvão de Aguiar led the important Cistercian Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobça as abbot for 15 years (1431-1446), where he successfully advanced reforms. However, these achievements were specific and limited to particular contexts.

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