Inna Savynska
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3929-6801

ORIGINS OF THE BEGUINAL URBAN CULTURE IN THE 13TH-CENTURY LOW COUNTRIES: THE PHENOMENON OF THE BEGUINAGE AS A HORTUS CONCLUSUS

The article is devoted to the Beguinal urban culture in the 13th-century Low Countries. It points out that the phenomenon of the Begijnhof is an implementation of the biblical idea of the hortus conclusus. Architecture and safe localization of the beguinages inside the city walls created the unique cultural and economic space for the development of the Beguinal movement. Beguinages organized the space for the common being of women and gave them an opportunity for safe intellectual and manual work that brought them popularity outside the city walls. It also initiated the development of brilliant religious art inside the beguinages which was mainly devoted to the topic of the Holy Family and the Virgin Mary.

This investigation presents a look at the beguinages as the small female towns in the cities of the Low Countries that took an important part in the urban economy and culture.

Keywords: beguinage, hortus conclusus, *Beguinal movement in the Low Countries, the Beguinal urban culture.*

Preface

This research focuses on the specificity of the social and spiritual life of beguines in the 13th-century Low Countries. It presents beguinage as the centre of the Beguinal coexisting and a realisation of a *hortus conclusus* or enclosed garden, popular among the female religious groups in the Medieval Low Countries.

The article consists of three parts. The first chapter is a brief introduction to the history of the Beguinal movement. It emphasises that the distribution of an idea of a *vita apostolica* among the laity and the prohibition to organise new orders plays a key role in the origin of the phenomenon of beguines (by Herbert Grudmann, Ernest Willam McDonnell, Giles Constable).

The second chapter systematizes all known hypotheses about the origin of the notion "beguine" and points out that representation of beguines as pious women has been made thanks to the cycle of hagiographies which devoted their lives to poverty (by Joanna Ziegler and Walter Simons).

The third chapter is devoted to considering the manual and intellectual types of works by beguines. It also emphasizes the educational and medical role of the beguinages in city life (by Laura Swan, Jennifer C. Ward). Based on the investigations by Philip Sheldrake, Helen Rolfson, Mark DelCogliano, Bie Plevoets and Shailja Patel, I suggest that the idea of a *hortus conclusus* was spread among beguines through works of theologists in the 12th-century and was embodied in the complex of beguinages in the 13th-century Low Countries. I also highlight the link between the Beguinal religious practices and religious art of the Holy family that have been realized in such sculptures as *Pieta* and *Christuskindje*

or *Beguinalia* – cradle with Christ Child in beguinages (by Joanna Ziengler, Harrison Klingman). Moreover, the article touches upon the influence of religious art on the appearance of the Beguinal vernacular texts in the beguinages (by Herbert Grudmann, Laura Swan).

1. Cultural and historical context of the emergence of the Beguinal movement in the 13th-century Low Countries

Women's religious movements (*mulieres religiosae*) owed their appearance to several transformation processes that started with the popularization of the ideal of apostolic life in the 11th-century Medieval Church.

The new impetus to the development of the idea of a *vita apostolica* was given by Pope Gregory VII in the second half of the 11th century. The Pope implemented Church-hierarchical and monastic reforms, which strengthened the Church's authority and awakened the religious consciousness of the laity. Numerous religious groups, especially females in cities of the Low Countries perceived literally the Christian apostolic ideal and wanted to bring it to their lives. The Christian poverty, sermon, and labour were the core of the apostolic ideal for them. Without fleeing from the world, as was typical for monastic life, they practised religious life within the safety of the city walls. They were represented by the wise Mothers, urban anchorites and beguines.

But not only the laity but also priests under the influence of the apostolic ideal, became beggar Catholic preachers. Some of them got recognition from the Church for their preaching and founded new monasteries (e.g., Robert d'Abrissel – the Fontevraud Abbey) or incorporated women's urban religious movements into the Church's orders (e.g., the Cistercians and Premonstratensians), others became leaders of heretic groups (e.g., Pierre Valdo — Waldenses). Such diversity of religious practices was until 1215th when the Fourth Lateran Council, was convened by Pope Innocent III, defined clear heretical features and named the main heretical groups. There were Cathars, Albigensians, Waldenses, Humiliates, Amalricians. Moreover, a Council's decree prohibited the creation of new orders or the opening of new urban religious houses. However, there was the only exception for new monastic mendicant orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans. One of the functions of which was struggling against heiresses.

Prohibition of creating new forms of a *vita religiosa* transformed the situation in the religious spirit of the Church and the laity. In particular, Cistercians and Premonstratensians refused to incorporate the women's religious communities into their orders, which led to the overpopulation of already existing urban communities in the Low Countries. Since that time, all women who lived outside the orders in the religious houses were named "beguines".

But the situation changed in the next decade, mainly due to the French cardinal Jacques de Vitry. He received permission from a newly elected Pope Honorius III to create women's religious communities outside the orders on the territories of the middle-kingdom part Lotharingia, for example in Liege, which is

contemporary Belgium. Later movements extended to the Rhineland, the present-day northern France, Holland and Germany.

Jacques de Vitry was personally acquainted with the beguine Marie D'Oignies. Her mystical visionary experience fascinated him so much that after her death, cardinal de Vitry portrayed the Life of Marie D'Oignies. His work initiated the appearance of the other hagiographies of the Beguinal life, such as *Vitam Christinae*, *Vitam Margaritao*, *Vitam Piae Lutgardie* by Thomas of Cantimpré. These hagiographies became "a didactic narrative" for beguines of the next centuries, they gave the model of sanctity for their daily life in the urban culture. As pointed out by Joanna Ziegler: «The model of female sanctity as narrated in the *vitae* of individual holy women manifested certain clear contours, and the rules of the beguinages shaped those contours in such a way that *all* women, whether they were of humble or noble birth, could adapt themselves to them. At the heart of the riles was imitation: one must appear "saintly" in dress, walk, and action. The sanctity of the few took on the appearance of saintliness in the many» [Ziegler 1993: 119]. Consequently, the intention of the laity to follow the ideas of a *vita apostolica* and support of the Church allowed the development of the Beguinal movement at the beginning of its emergence in the cities of the 13th-century Low Countries.

2. Genesis of the notion "beguine"

The notion of "beguine" has many hypotheses surrounding its origin. Thus, according to folk etymology notion "beguine" is:

- related to the Latin *Albigensis* (from the southern French town of Albi – the centre of the Cathar heresy) and has the meaning of heretic. But contemporary philologists have doubts, that *beguina*, with an occlusive -g-, could derive from Albigensis [Simons 2001: 122];
- connected with the French word *beges* from the Latin *badius* – usually applied to wool and meaning "undyed", or a greyish-brown colour [Simons 2001: 122], that was a colour of beguine's dress;
- appeared in the conversational French language (*béguin)* to denote a woman who is wearing a coif – a typical black hood from the beguine's headdress of the early 13th century;
- originated from: «the Indo-European root *begg-* and means someone who speaks indistinctly, mumbles, as when reciting prayers. The word is related to the old-French *béguer*, to stammer (modern French: *bé-gayer*), which was, as we will recall, the nickname given in the thirteenth century to Lambert[2], the Liégeois priest who died in 1177. The term is also closely related, both in meaning and construction, to the French *papelard* (another term of derision used for beguines in France, as mentioned by James of Vitry), which in turn is derived from the Middle Dutch *popelen*, or to mumble, especially to mumble prayers. It is akin to the English *lollard*, derived from the Middle Dutch *lollaert* or *beghard* (the Dutch *lollen* means to mumble prayers or to sing quietly)» [Simons: 122];

- derived from the old Germany *beggen* or *beggan* - to pray or from the French "*bègue-béguelle*"– bigot, pushover;
- taken «from the Latin term *benignus*, meaning kind and beneficent» [Constable 2014: 2].

Herbert Grundmann stressed that such controversial meanings appeared because there were two groups of beguines in the mid-13th century: «While one part, doubtless by far the greater part, led a regulated life in beguinages, often with ties to mendicant houses, caring their way with handcraft, the other part stimulated complaints against women who kept no enclosure and wandered about without restraint, preferring alms, to work» [Grundmann 1995: 147]. Also, in the 1240s the shadow of suspicion of heresy, which was forgotten for several years due to Cardinal de Vitry, was returned to the Beguinal movement by the theologian William of Saint-Amour. He started attacking beguines and step by step became the forerunner of changes in attitudes towards beguines [Grundmann 1995: 164]. It was because William of Saint-Amour sought to preserve the old Church order and didn't recognize new forms of religiosity that brought novel mendicant orders and the Beguinal movement.

The male lay communities, associated with the Beguinal movement, are called beghards – «good children» or «apostolic men» (from English *beggar*, from the Middle Dutch – *beggaer* – poor men, from Old French *begart* – to pour out prayers). They had common interests and aims with the beguines [McDonnell 1969: 246–247]. But their brotherhood vanished in the 17th century. Many beghards became Tertiaries*,* unlike beguines, which preserved their local functioning on the territories of the Low Countries (contemporary Belgium) down through the 21st century. But the situation was completely different with the beguines in southern France and Germany. During the 13th–14th centuries, some of them suffered repression by the Inquisition and their texts of a vernacular theology have been classified as heretical (e.g., works of Marguerite Porete in Paris).

Thus, based on the etymology review, it can be suggested that the name "beguine" keeps a diversity of meanings, which denotes beguines, on the one hand, as pious women, but on the other hand – women who time to time arouse suspicion from Church and laity because their spirituality has been developed outside the church orders and was incorporated into the urban lay culture.

3. Phenomenon of the *hortus conclusus:* a new form of urban spirituality in the beguinages

The first beguines were from the knights or merchant rank, later beguines from the artisan families joined them. They left their wealthy families and led the lives of poor people, sometimes begging. The aim was to avoid pleasures and wealth which has not been obtained honestly. According to Walter Simons, the success of the Beguinal movement occurred due to a combination of a *vita activa* and a *vita speculativa*: «I suggest that a more fundamental reason for the movement's wide appeal lies in the dual nature of the beguine life and, more particularly, in their unique and flexible combination of an active life among urban

citizens and a contemplative life within a secure setting. Although their vocation was a religious one, it did not burden them with the lasting obligations that nuns or monks assumed. In order to realize this goal, beguines adopted – by necessity rather than by design, perhaps – two innovative strategies that proved to be highly effective: first, they accepted the principle of personal property, usually shunned by traditional monastic orders; second, a large number of beguines joined beguine courts, which offered just enough of a quasi-monastic enclosure to protect them from scandalum, yet allowed them access to the urban labor market and ultimately served as a powerful magnet for new recruits» [Simons 2001: 112].

Hortus conclusus

The places of beguines' gathering were hospices and hermitages, but in about 1230th they began to live within the cities or on the city's outskirts in their own houses or small groups in the Beguinal communities – convents or beguinages (*curtes, begijnhoven*). Some beguines «chose an extreme form of retreat from the world as recuses or anchoresses» [Simons 2001: 74]. They were the urban anchoresses and lived in cells near the city's church or chapel.

Convents were characterised by the common life and headed by the mistress or prioress, meanwhile, beguinages combined coexisting and separate life, headed by the single superior and grand mistress [Simons 2001: 50–51]. The beguinage or Begijnhof is larger than the convent. It was the formation of the common and private buildings which organised female towns, where the women lived alongside or with servants or female companions.

Territory of Begijnhof, predominantly in the Low Countries, was «domestic and urban rather than classically monastic» [Sheldrake 2014: 76]. It had a hospital, church and even a little farm, brewery and bakery. It was like a small town with its economy. However, as Helen Rolfson stresses, beguines «built a courtyard on the mystical model of the "enclosed garden" (or *hortus conclusus)* of the *Canticle of Canticles* 4:12[3], implementing this Marian symbolism in the Middle Ages» [Rolfson 2012: 331]. Expanding on this idea, it can be assumed that the metaphor of an enclosed garden had been spread within the Beguinal communities thanks to the texts of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, who were, in their turn, familiar with the series of Commentaries on the *Canticle of Canticles* by Fathers of the Church. Thus, William of St. Thierry was acquainted with the works of St. Ambrose of Milan, for example, as visible in William's work *Excerpts from the Books of Blessed Ambrose on the Song of Songs* (*Excerpta de libris beati Ambrosii super Cantica canticorum*)[4]. In his turn, St. Ambrose interpreted the metaphor of *hortus conclusus* as a place closed from the external world that reflects «the features of the image of God»: «But what is meant by the gardens He Himself points out, saying: "A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed;" because in gardens of this kind the water of the pure fountain shines, reflecting the features of the image of God, lest its streams mingled with mud from the wallowing places of spiritual wild beasts should be polluted» [Ambrose 1886: 811]. The important point is that the idea of beguinage as a

spiritual and material city also refers to Augustine's concept about the earthly city as the image of the heavenly city. It also influenced the idea of the paradise in the city's walls. For example, English visioners of the 12th century – Gunthelm described such a city as: "a walled city which, within its walls, turns out to be a garden with plants, trees, birds, and fragrant flowers" [Sheldrake 2014: 64].

Beguinage is one of *the* implementations of the idea of a *hortus conclusus,* which was the «archetypical figure of the garden, it symbolises man's cultivation of nature in contrast with the inhospitable world outside» [Plevoets *&* Patel 2021: 85]. Beguinage enclosed women «by a fence, wall, building or dense vegetation (e.g., hedges)» [Plevoets *&* Patel 2021: 85]. Hence, the high walls of the beguinage protected women from the outside world and organized the sacred space of the court. According to Bie Plevoets and Shailja Patel: «Phenomenon of *hortus conclusus* served as a model for monastic architecture, with a series of buildings organised around a central cloister garden, often with a fountain in the centre. Isolated from the outside world but open to the above, the garden invites for contemplation and prayer» [Plevoets *&* Patel 2021: 85].

Beguinages were a new form of a social institution and a safe area of women's common life. They were designed with only one entrance to the territory because it «served for physical security as well as for assurance of space and quiet enough for the objectives of a life of work and contemplation» [Rolfson 2012: 331]. They were also a new type of urban cultural life. According to Philip Sheldrake, the beguines were an urban phenomenon [Sheldrake 2014: 76]. «They played the role of religious education centres, like canonesses' houses in the X–XI centuries. Created by and for women not only in Ghent but also in many other cities and towns of the southern Low Countries from the thirteenth century on, they offered single women of all ages an opportunity to lead a religious life of contemplation and prayer while earning a living as laborers or teachers» [Simons 2001: 9].

As pointed out by Laura Swan, «scholars have identified 111 medieval beguinages in Belgium […]» [Swan 2014: 3]. The main Belgium's beguinages are located in Gent, Bruges, Leuven, Diest, Kortrijk, Lille and Mechelen. In each of these cities lived more the 1,500 beguines. The most of them were the court beguinages – established and supported by countesses of the Low Countries [Swan 2014: 29–30]. Often, they were built outside the cities in the fields and included beautiful gardens.

Manual and intellectual work

Most of the beguines were highly educated, therefore they worked as teachers for young girls and very often for orphans to whom they gave religious and music knowledge. Thus, for example in Gent, «some of the beguines at St Elizabeth's were responsible for the upbringing of girls, sent to the house by their wealthy parents […]» [Ward 2016: 204]. Beguines organised schools, mainly for girls, on the territory of beguinages, where taught to write, to read and to understand some religious texts in Latin. Their students also studied etiquette,

Christian morality and even vernacular languages. According to Laura Swan, «many women became beguines as a result of their newfound literacy. Searching for biblical and other spiritual texts in the vernacular, beguines met to study and debate the meaning of these texts» [Swan 2014: 21]. At the same time, beguines very often invited university scholars for sermons or religious studies. In this way, Beguinal education increased the general level of literacy among the common people in the Low Countries.

Except in the educational sphere, beguines also worked as nurses in hospitals and leprosy centres and prayed by the bedside of dying. Thus, they also established some hospitals (leprosaria) as did Juetta of Huy. The hospital was an integral part of beguinages.

Therefore, they played the public role of pious women without taking the vows as nuns did. Meanwhile, beguines worked with their own hands with wool and linen in the textile industry, they also could make candles. That is why beguines founded a lot of groups in Bruges – a centre of the textile industry in the 13th century. Beguines earned by trading their products on the local markets which increased cities' economies. Some beguinages used the systems of river channels for the sale and delivery of their products. They also paid taxes, unlike nuns in the monasteries, which is why they enjoyed protection from the church but had more degrees of freedom unlike monasteries [Swan 2014: 14]. Their manual work was incorporated into the urban economy with a developing merchant segment of society. Beguines felt comfortable in the new market economy [Swan 2014: 18]. Some of them, that had private or common property, also received rental income and could lend money: «Beguines were wise and prudent businesswomen. Not only did they own property and collect rents, they also possessed farms and received rent-in-kind in the form of grain or meat. […] Beguines made loans and bought annuities, with the yearly payments serving as income. Some of them made their living in the world of finance: changing money, extending letters of credit, and granting loans» [Swan 2014: 65].

In addition, beguines also worked as illustrators of books. They made and collected books: copied manuscripts and painted miniatures.

Consequently, beguines' economic activity united low-income and poor segments of society with the noble and wealthy in a common goal – to help the poor, needy and sick people; and at the same time to keep the simplicity being. As pointed out by Philip Sheldrake: «Beguines expressed two particular religious motivations – a cult of chastity and a desire for voluntary poverty» [Sheldrake 2014: 76].

They also took an active part in the social life of cities. Beguines gave a helping hand to escaped slaves, young girls, that have been sold into sexual slavery and tramps that wanted to change their lives. Beguinages gave them roofs over their heads, which was one of the reasons for gossip about their reputations. As Ernest Williams McDonalds notes: «the dual purpose of the beguinage – to provide a spiritual retreat for the economically independent and a refuge for the dispossessed» [McDonnell 1969: 148].

Pietà and Christuskindje

The Beguinal movement also developed the space of religious artworks: «Large, stable communities of Beguines were able to commission and house numerous, often valuable, works of religious art. It was during the middle decades of the thirteenth century in the southern Low Countries that these communities and their large precincts, called *beguinages*, were first founded and endowed» [Ziegler 1993: 115].

The beguines' spiritual preferences also set the tone for 13th-century religious sculpture. For example, they ordered sculptures that presented *Pietà*, or «Virgin Mary, grieving the crucified Christ; and the *Christuskindje*, or Christ-child, Jesus portrayed as an infant» [Swan 2014: 6]. Moreover, during the prayer beguines practiced the swing of a small, decorated cradle with Christ Child that was named *Beguinalia* [Simons 2001: ix] Praying to sculptures was a part of the Medieval Christian tradition of the Low Countries.

Beguines also portrayed the Holy Family and their saint patronesses in chapels: Catherine of Alexandria, Elizabeth of Hungary, Mary Magdalene and, especially, the Virgin Mary. According to Joann Ziegler, the Virgin Mary was a spiritual Mother for beguines, because: «Mary herself was a holy laywoman; […]. Her chastity and goodness, like those of the good Beguines themselves, were rewarded by the presence of God in the form of Christ. The meanings of the image were, therefore, personalized, for they resonated specifically with the character of the particular viewers' lives as Beguines» [Ziegler 1993: 123].

Thus, a statue of the Virgin Mary with a Child or suffering Christ at her hands was an example of an idea of holy women [Ziegler 1993: 125] and the spirit of motherhood. It also refers to the image of the Holy Family, which represented the ideal of family type and became the main model of family relationships for beguines [Klingman: 2024]. It also influenced their spiritual ideology, where a duty to the husband was relevant to service to God [Klingman: 2024]. At the same time, *Pietà, Christuskindje* or cradle with Christ Child were visual objects for beguines' spiritual practices which initiated mystical experiences during prayers. Very often beguines, who had mystical visions wrote brilliant didactic texts which became a part of women's vernacular literature and theology[5].

Vernacular theology

Beguines' vernacular theology found its expression in a variety of literary forms: poetry, visions, letters, sermons, and diaries. Notably women's vernacular theology was distinguished by its unique style, which became a consequence of the enriching spiritual friendship with the fathers Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans: «[…] wherever men with theological training participated in the women's religious movement, the ground was readied for a vernacular religious literature» [Grundmann 1995: 195]. However, spiritual fathers translated their sermons for beguines into vernacular languages.

Among other things, vernacular theology presents its special type – woman's vernacular *Unio mystica* within the beguine movement. The particular character of

women's vernacular mysticism is using local languages to describe Love mysticism. For mystics of that time, it was very important to choose literary forms to describe their unique visions. Beguines had spiritual power because of their visions. Most of them created impressive mystical texts: using a literary background of previous centuries, they formed new linguistic images. «Most beguines did not "write books" as we understand it today. A beguine's friends and followers might record some of her teaching and public preaching or preserve her letters. Some books were compiled after a beguine's death. And a number of the sacred texts we have from the beguines were carefully crafted as a partnership between the beguine and her spiritual director or confessor» [Swan 2014: 139]. The first female vernacular writers in the Low Countries were: Cistercian nuns Beatrice of Nazareth and Ida of Nivelles, and beguine Hadewijch of Brabant, the 13th-century early Dutch speakers. Their didactic texts preached about the way how to know God as a perfect Love through the mystical union and made a huge impact on the mystical theology of the future centuries.

Consequently, beguinages were the spiritual, educational and economic centre of women's common life outside the religious orders. Their architectural planning and location inside the city walls implemented the mystical metaphor of a *hortus conclusus* and contributed to the development of religious art. Beguinages were also a space of spiritual and visionary practices which formed the ground for a female vernacular theology in the 13th-century Low Countries.

Conclusion

Beguinal urban culture flourished in the context of the popularisation of the idea of a *vita apostolica* among the laity in the 13th-century Low Countries. It was fixed in the cycle of hagiographies or *Vita religiosa* that were written to present beguines as pious women. But the meaning of the notion "beguine" preserved all the variety of attitudes to the beguines in the Medieval culture.

Beguines' urban culture embodied in the phenomenon of a beguinage. This research underlines that the phenomenon of the beguinage could be considered as the spiritual and architectural implementation of the metaphor of the *hortus conclusus* from the *Canticle of Canticles*. The idea of an enclosed garden was commented on by the Fathers of the Church, particularly by St. Ambrose and echoed in Augustine's conception of two cities. Probably, it became known among the beguines' communities through the texts of William of St. Thierry and St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

Beguinages were also the urban complex of the education, health care and manual work that made beguines financially independent which in its turn, stimulated the popularity of this movement in the cities of the Low Countries. A characteristic feature of beguinages was religious art that reflected the peculiarities of the Beguinal spiritual practices. Thus, *Piete*, *Christuskindje* or cradle with holy Child were part of biblical narratives about the Virgin Mary and the Holy Family which played a leading role in the organisation of the Beguinal coexistence and became central topics for their vernacular theology.

Notes

[1] For further information about Jacques of Vitry see more [McDonnell 1969].

[2] Simons pointed out it is just a legend that Lambert was the founder of Beguinal movement. For further discussion of this topic see [Simons 2001: 24].

[3] «A garden locked is my sister, bride, A pool locked, a fountain sealed» [Pope 1977: 6].

[4] About the comparative analysis of William's of St.Thierry and St. Amrbose's texts see [DelColgiano 2015: 37–59].

[5] During the 12th and 13th centuries beside a monastic theology *(credo ut experiar)* and a scholastic theology *(credo ut intelligam)* a vernacular theology *(intellectus et amor)* became popular, that included achievements of two previous forms. On one hand, vernacular religious texts were addressed to the larger audience that didn't understand Gospels in Latin. Thus, in the mid XII century popular spiritual leaders Waldenses in Lyon and Lambert in Liege, independently of each other, translated some Gospels into vernacular languages for their own flocks. On the other hand, vernacular theology *(intelligentia amoris)* replaced secular literature about love that was popular at the beginning of 1200th year on the territory of Flanders and Italy.

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Інна Савинська

ВИНИКНЕННЯ МІСЬКОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ БЕГІНОК В НИЖНІХ КРАЇНАХ ХІІІ-ГО СТОЛІТТЯ: ФЕНОМЕН БЕГІНАЖУ ЯК *HORTUS CONCLUSUS*

Дана стаття присвячена міській культурі бегінок у Нижніх країнах ХІІІ-го століття. Головна увага дослідження сфокусована на феномені бегейнгофа, що є втіленням біблійної ідеї hortus conclusus. Архітектура та безпечне розташування бегейнгофів за міцними стінами міст сформували унікальну культуру та економічний простір для розвитку інтелектуальної роботи та ручної праці бегінок, результати яких надали їм популярності за межами міських стін. Феномен бегінажів, як місць релігійного співбуття жінок, також ініціював розвиток неповторного релігійного мистецтва, яке здебільшого було присвячено темам Святого Сімейства та праведності Діви Марії й вплинуло на появу текстів з вернакулярної теології.

Це дослідження презентує погляд на бегінажі як на невеликі жіночі міста в містах Нижніх країн, що відігравали важливу роль у міській економіці та культурі.

Ключові слова: *бегінки, міська культура бегінок, hortus conclusus, бегінаж, бегейнгоф у Нижніх країнах 13-го століття.*