
QUEENSHIP, MATERIALITY AND MEMORY. THE OBJECTS OF BLANCA OF SICILY IN THE CONVENT OF SANT ANTONI I SANTA CLARA OF BARCELONA**Blanca Garí Aguilera**

Universitat de Barcelona

e-mail: gari@ub.edu

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Resum

En este artículo, me propongo seguir el hilo trazado en el tiempo por los objetos de la infanta Blanca de Sicilia en el monasterio de Sant Antoni y Santa Clara de Barcelona. Un hilo que nos lleva hacia el pasado: de los objetos a la tumba, al féretro, a la procesión, a la figura en vida de Blanca, y de ella a la red familiar y dinástica catalano-aragonesa y siciliana. Pero un hilo que también, a través de la lectura atenta de los inventarios, teje hacia el futuro la memoria de Blanca en el convento y nos permite interrogarnos por la vida y la función de los objetos que le pertenecieron. El estudio se aborda metodológicamente desde tres líneas de análisis interrelacionadas: “reginalidad”, “materialidad” y “memoria”, es decir, en primer lugar, plantea el problema de las redes reginales y dinásticas y de sus estrategias promocionales, en segundo lugar, la materialidad de los objetos y su devenir en el tiempo, y finalmente la cuestión de la performatividad de la memoria a ellos asociada.

Paraules clau: reginalidad, materialidad, objetos, memoria, Blanca de Sicilia, Leonor de Sicilia, Sant Antoni y Santa Clara de Barcelona

Abstract

In this article, I intend to follow the traces left by the objects that belonged to the *infanta* Blanca of Sicily in the monastery of Sant Antoni and Santa Clara of Barcelona. These traces will take us back in time, first to her tomb, her coffin and funerary procession, and later to the figure of Blanca herself and the Catalan-Aragonese and Sicilian family and dynastic network. However, at the same time, through an attentive reading of the extant conventual inventories, these traces will project Blanca's memory within the convent walls into the future, allowing us to explore the life and function of the objects that belonged to her. Methodologically, the study is based on three interrelated lines of analysis: 'queenship,' 'materiality,' and 'memory.' First, it raises the issue of the personal connections of queens and dynastic networks and their promotional strategies; secondly, it discusses the materiality of objects and their evolution over time; and finally, it deals with the question of the performativity of the memory associated with them.

Key Words: Queenship, Materiality, Objects, Memory, Blanca of Sicily, Leonor of Sicily, Sant Antoni and Santa Clara of Barcelona

In February 1374, two funeral processions made their way through the streets of Barcelona from Santa Eulàlia del Camp to two of the city's mendicant convents. The first cortège, which took place on Thursday, 9 February, carried the coffin of María Álvarez de Xèrica, Dowager Countess of Empúries and widow of the late Count Ramon Berenguer I —son of King Jaume II of Aragon and Blanca of Anjou— to the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina, where she was to be buried next to her first-born son Jaume, who had died an infant before 1343. The following day, on Friday, 10 February, the second cortège proceeded to the convent of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara carrying the coffin of her daughter-in-law, the *infanta* Blanca of Sicily, sister of Queen Elionor of Aragon and first wife of Joan I of Empúries, son of Ramon Berenguer I and Maria Álvarez de Xèrica herself. Blanca of Sicily had died in 1369 and her widower had remarried in 1372 to the *infanta* Joana of Aragon, daughter of King Pere IV of Aragon —known as the Ceremonious— and his first wife, Maria of Navarre.²

In September 1374, Blanca's remains were transferred to the church of the Poor Clares of Barcelona and buried there. A sort of posthumous dowry, consisting of a series of objects donated by the *infanta* Blanca, accompanied her into the convent. These objects can be identified fairly accurately thanks to the extant receipt that records their reception by the abbess, and because they were repeatedly mentioned from then until the end of the sixteenth century in the sacristy and convent inventories of the community archives,³ which also mention the tomb of their owner.⁴ On the one hand, the aforementioned receipt reveals that Blanca had left instructions in her will to endow a benefice in the convent's church. On the other, the existence of a certain sepulchre that was apparently located in the presbytery, in the chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene, is documented

¹ The research on which this paper is based was conducted within the framework of the project Monastic Landscapes (PGC2018-095350-B-I00) and benefited from a grant from the Salvador de Madariaga Senior Researcher and Faculty Mobility Programme (PRX19/00046) at the University of Colorado Boulder. I would like to thank Brian Catlos and Núria Silleras for their warm welcome and the excellent conditions in which I was able to work there.

² Arxiu Municipal de Castelló d'Empúries (AMCE), Fons Archivo Ducal Medinaceli (ADM), comtat Empúries, 412. I have consulted the documentation of the county of Empúries at the Ducal Medinaceli Archive in the Arxiu Municipal de Castelló d'Empúries, which holds digitised copies of its fonds. I would like to thank the archivists, Marisa Roig and Meritxell Fernández, for their generous collaboration and assistance.

³ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 6428.

⁴ Arxiu del Monestir de Sant Benet de Montserrat/Monestir de Santa Clara de Barcelona (AMSBM/MSCB), Inventaris. I would like to thank the SAF (Catalan Federation of Benedictine Nuns), and the archivists Sister Coloma Boada and Irene Brugués, for their continued willingness to help me consult and use the documentation in the Santa Clara fonds. There are six extant convent inventories and twenty sacristy inventories dating from the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. They are particularly valuable in terms of devotional and liturgical objects. These were seemingly scattered throughout the convent, which in turn provides information about the places where they were kept and used, and often also about their performative function. These inventories have been studied as a source in themselves by Núria Jornet (JORNET BENITO, Núria, 2014), and also in relation to their function by Núria Jornet and myself (GARÍ, Blanca, JORNET I BENITO, Núria, 2017). The projects *Spiritual Landscapes* <http://www.ub.edu/proyectopaisajes/index.php/es/ejes/monasterio-interior> [2020/11/21] and *Monastic Landscapes* include infographics and a database connected with these objects

in that same church between the sixteenth and the late seventeenth century.⁵ This tomb, which could have been Blanca's, was identified, perhaps erroneously, as that of her sister Elionor of Sicily, Queen of Aragon, from at least 1527 onwards.

In this article, I intend to follow the traces left by the objects that belonged to the *infanta*. These traces will take us back in time, first to her tomb, her coffin and funerary procession, and later to the life of Blanca of Sicily itself and to the Catalan-Aragonese and Sicilian family and dynastic network. However, at the same time, through an attentive reading of the extant conventual inventories, these traces will project Blanca's memory within the convent walls into the future, allowing us to explore the life and function of the objects that belonged to her. What were these objects like? Where were they kept? Who used them? For what purpose? And, above all, what did the women of the community know about them? What did they remember and what did they forget about them from the time of their arrival in the fourteenth century until well into the sixteenth century? Undertaking this task brings up three major issues that combine to pose many questions and maybe provide some answers. First, it raises the issue of the personal connections of queens and dynastic networks and their promotional strategies; secondly, it discusses the materiality of objects and their evolution over time; and finally, it deals with the question of the performativity of the memory associated with them.

Some prior methodological and historiographical considerations are necessary in order to adequately address these three issues in relation to the *infanta* Blanca, her objects, and her tomb, starting with the question of queenship. Recent decades have witnessed the consolidation of a solid research line based on the study of the power exercised by queens and its multiple facets. Within this framework, monarchy itself has been reconceptualised as something that no longer exclusively concerns the king, but rather the nucleus formed by at least the king, the queen, and the heir to the crown. Special emphasis has been placed on the queens' capacity for political action, frequently extending the impact of this 'agency' to include their parental and family networks, revaluing the role of the *infantas* within them (EARENIGHT 2007; SILLERAS 2008; PELÁEZ 2013; ROEBERT 2020:9-29). Some studies have also highlighted the importance and uniqueness of Mediterranean queenship networks and the possibilities that a comparative analysis of their shared strategies might offer (WOODACRE, 2013; ECHEVARRÍA, JASPERT, 2016: 3-33). Finally, the most recent research on medieval monastic landscapes has emphasised the profound significance of the promotion of conventual and monastic communities by reigning dynasties. Many facets of a queen's power were involved in this promotion, such as those linked to devotional practices, spirituality, and the construction of memory (GARÍ 2013; GARCÍA HERRERO, MUÑOZ FERNÁNDEZ 2017), as well as

⁵ Arxiu de l'Abadia de Montserrat (AAM), *Llibres*, 13, fol. 72r-78v. Record of the triennial visitation of the Benedictine Claustral Congregation of Tarragona and Saragossa to the convent of Santa Clara in Barcelona, Saturday 16 March 1527. I thank Irene Brugués for informing me of the presence of this record in the Archives of the Abbey of Montserrat.

the creation of synchronic and diachronic communication networks (JASPERS 2015; ECHEVARRIA, JASPERS 2016: 10). Current research, both on the power of queens and on medieval monasticism, invites us to delve deeper into some of these networks, seeking to offer new interpretive keys. It is in this context that the spiritual promotion of Blanca, *infanta* of Sicily and Countess of Empúries, as an active member of Aragonese and Mediterranean queenship networks can provide a telling case in point.

But this article also deals with objects. One of the common threads of recent research on the cultural background of medieval communities of women religious is precisely the discovery of an interior topography of convents, in which objects and practices were embedded in ritual gestures, acquiring a hitherto unexplored corporeality (GARÍ 2014). This article aims to examine the possibilities of interpretation offered by new approaches to the study of the materiality of objects. These take into account not only the objects in themselves but also their narrative and textual constructions, which, through a dialogue between words and things, make it possible to shift the focus of analysis from the object to its context (DIXON 1993; GARÍ, JORNET-BENITO 2017; DOWNES 2018), and to understand devotional objects as the materialised expectations of certain events (VARNAM 2015: 213). Although neither Blanca's tomb nor any of her objects have made it to the present day, at least as far as we know, their presence is strongly felt in the extant inventories. The relatively detailed description of some of them, and the references to their place of custody, function and place of use, allow us not only to evoke other similar objects but, above all, to rethink each of these objects on the basis of their living materiality (KEAN 2016), that is, in terms of the out-of-the ordinary gesture that ritualised them (GARÍ 2014: 73-74; KORSMEYER 2019). This means reading them as devotional objects narrated at the moment of their materialisation in the hands and minds of their owner, the *infanta* Blanca, the nun sacristans who recorded their presence, and the rest of the community of Poor Clares of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara in Barcelona, who celebrated the cyclical but ever-changing resurgence of the memory of their promoter through these objects.

It is precisely this approach that leads to the third central theme of this paper, the performativity of memory. Nowadays, no one doubts that building family memory was one of the main functions of the actions of spiritual promotion carried out by queens and their family and parental networks. The objects donated to a community, the altars endowed, the masses, the perpetual liturgical foundations, and other devotional practices linked to the constant revival of memory, constituted the fundamental architecture of a factory of dynastic and family memory empowered by women (GRAÑA 2014: 193-199). But if anything sealed the deep bond between a patroness and a female community, if any element was the true foundation of the construction of identity and memory, it was her burial, that is, the presence of her remains and her tomb in the conventual church and the liturgical repetition of the rituals associated with her memory and that of her relatives. This 'memory', however, was by no means individual or static. On the contrary, beyond the intention

of the patroness, the memory lived in time, was renewed over the years, and sometimes became blurred, redefining the relationship between remembrance and oblivion in a rather vague manner. Memory thus depended on a performance that could bring back to life the links with the past through objects and renewed gestures. This was the case of the community of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara and the *infanta* of Sicily. Over time, the links forged through a tomb, an altar, and a series of objects that had arrived at the convent one day in 1374 were transformed in an evocative and significant way, gradually shifting the focus from Blanca to another figure, that of her sister, Queen Elionor.

Thus, if we wish to understand and properly interpret the presence of Blanca's objects and burial in the convent of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara in Barcelona and delve into their underlying end goals, our analysis needs to tackle a variety of circumstances. It is necessary to frame the strategies of their presence within the broader spectrum of fourteenth-century foundational and promotional initiatives of the women of the Sicilian dynasty in the Mediterranean, in the peninsular territories of the Crown of Aragon, and, especially, in Catalonia. It is therefore important to consider their function and to place this spiritual promotion against the backdrop of a wider network of influences and political agency. To this end, it is useful to look into these networks first from a Mediterranean perspective and then within the more specific context of the Crown of Aragon. The aim is to analyse the role of the women of the House of Sicily and their openly pro-mendicant stance both in Aragon and in Catalonia, especially in relation to the second Franciscan order, the Poor Clares. Thus, without losing sight of this vast arena, we will be able to use new tools to venture inside the walls of the convent of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara in Barcelona, to closely follow the traces of Blanca and the vicissitudes of the objects that were guarded, used, and remembered or forgotten there, together with the body of the *infanta* that was buried in the convent's church. The function and living presence of these objects between the fourteenth century and the late sixteenth century, which can be traced thanks to the extant inventories, will make it possible to establish both the gradual evolution of their performative context and their impact on the community as memory-building elements, and just as importantly, it will reveal the also gradual 'dismantlement' of such memory and the disappearance of the link between the objects and their patroness, which would in turn create new forms of identity, memory, and patronage.

1. The Sicilian Branch of the House of Barcelona

The role of the court of Anjou as a model of Franciscanism in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon has been emphasised by art historians and historians alike (BESERAN 2009; ESPAÑOL 2014). Although this influence is abundantly clear, it could perhaps be argued that this model, sometimes called 'Angevin', was part of a more complex network formed by various hubs of dynastic promotion that fed off each other. In addition to the court of Anjou, this network had as its main focal points at least the court of Mallorca, the Sicilian court, and the Aragonese

court, which sometimes transcended the Mediterranean area itself. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, and especially in the fourteenth century, a solid pro-mendicant Mediterranean and European network took form in these courts, which mainly, but not only, favoured Franciscans and Poor Clares (JASPERT, JUST 2019: 1-12). To varying degrees and depending on the moment, queens and *infantas* were frequently the main protagonists of the promotional and devotional strategies forged at the centres of political action within this network (JASPERT 2019). This is clearly illustrated by the case of the Mallorcan dynasty and the extraordinary role played in this arena by Sança of Mallorca, who, as Queen of Naples, reinforced a model that was already set in motion at the Neapolitan Angevin court (JORNET-BENITO 2014; ANDENNA 2019). But this was also the case of the women of the Sicilian branch of the House of Barcelona in the kingdoms and territories of the western Mediterranean, connected at the same time with the courts of Anjou, Portugal, and Aragon.

Specifically, from the late thirteenth century onwards, the queens and *infantas* of Sicily were foundresses, abbesses, nuns, promoters, and builders of memory in the Clarissan and Franciscan convents on the island of Sicily, as well as in other Mediterranean territories. This preferential treatment is evident in the close and active relationships that several of these queens and *infantas* maintained with the island's female monasteries.⁶ Thus, between the late thirteenth and the early fourteenth century, two important convents of Poor Clares were founded in Messina on the initiative of different queens: Santa Chiara in Messina, circa 1294, and Santa Maria in Basicó in 1318 (SANTORO 2017). The latter was founded by Eleanor of Anjou and Frederick II of Sicily—who called himself Frederick III—and was a royal chapel during the reign of Elisabeth of Carinthia and Peter II of Sicily. In contrast, the former, Santa Chiara in Messina, possibly located next to the Royal Palace, was founded by Queen Costanza, daughter of King Manfred, heiress to the throne of Sicily and wife of Pere III of Aragon, known as the Great. In 1294, Costanza, already a widow, founded Santa Chiara with the aim of retiring to it as a nun, although in the end political circumstances prevented her from doing so (SANTORO 2017: 150; DEIBEL 1928). Her daughter Violant did live there until she became the wife of Robert of Anjou—the future Robert I of Naples—in 1297. As for Costanza herself, she returned to Barcelona and, upon her death in 1302, she was buried in the Franciscan convent of the city wearing the habit of the Poor Clares. In 1306, her daughter-in-law—the aforementioned Eleanor of Anjou, wife of Frederick II (or III) of Sicily—was authorised by Pope Clement V to visit the convent of Santa Chiara in Messina, which her two daughters Margherita and Caterina had joined as nuns, the latter being appointed as abbess. Years later, however, Eleanor would choose the Franciscan convent of Messina instead of Santa Chiara as her burial place (SANTORO 2017: 153). In fact, Costanza's

⁶ See the outstanding work conducted by the Italian team of the project *Claustra* <http://www.ub.edu/claustra/eng> [2020/11/21] on the monastic communities of the island, which has resulted in several publications: COLESANTI, GARÍ, JORNET-BENITO, 2017. *Clarisas y dominicas. Modelos de implantación, filiación, promoción y devoción en la Península Ibérica, Cerdeña, Nápoles y Sicilia*, COLESANTI et al., 2018. *Il monachesimo femminile nel mezzogiorno peninsulare e insulare*.

great-granddaughters, Elionor, Eufemia, Blanca, and Costanza, daughters of King Peter II of Sicily and Elisabet of Carinthia, were the ones who maintained strong and close ties with the community of Santa Chiara of Messina. It seems that all of them, including Elionor, the future queen of Aragon, were raised and educated within the walls of the convent. Costanza, Eufemia, and maybe even Blanca were nuns of the community, with Costanza assuming the abbacy at some point. In the case of Blanca, apparently mentioned as a Poor Clare together with Costanza in a document dated 5 March 1342 (SANTORO 2017: 156), the vicissitudes of the conflict with the House of Anjou led her to spend a few years in captivity in Naples (DEIBEL 1928), after which she married Joan I of Empúries in Catalonia in 1364, whereas her sister Elionor had already married the King of Aragon, Peter IV, the Ceremonious, in 1349.

2. The House of Sicily and the Poor Clares in the Crown of Aragon

Thus, two of the *infantas* of Sicily married into the House of Aragon, respectively to King Pere the Ceremonious and to Count Joan I of Empúries, grandson of King Jaume II and first cousin of King Pere himself. These two marriages furthered a policy of family networks that intertwined the crowns of Naples, Sicily, and Aragon, and these, in turn, with the county of Empúries. It seems that their new status enabled both women to remain close to the spirituality of the mendicant orders and to promote the Franciscan houses and, especially, the convents of Poor Clares in the peninsular territories of the Crown of Aragon.

Available evidence suggests that the establishment of a benefice, and the presence of Blanca's objects and tomb in the convent of the Poor Clares of Barcelona should not be dissociated from the broader framework of queenly strategies carried out by her sister Elionor. Therefore, it is necessary to begin by examining what is known of this relationship between the Queen and the Poor Clares. Thanks to the recent studies by Sebastian Roebert, we know quite well the promotional policy pursued by Queen Elionor, who founded the Clarissan convent of Santa Clara of Teruel in Aragon in 1367, bringing along two Sicilian Poor Clares, and re-founded the Poor Clares of Santa Clara of Calatayud in 1366 (ROEBERT 2014; ROEBERT 2017). In general, as Roebert's works amply show, the queen implemented a thoughtful religious policy during her reign, favouring multiple monasteries and convents, but most especially supporting and promoting the presence of Poor Clares in the peninsular territories of the Crown. In fact, in addition to the two aforementioned communities in the kingdom of Aragon, Elionor established a particular and intense relationship with the Poor Clares of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara of Barcelona, a community which, together with her foundation in Teruel, she endowed above all others (ROEBERT 2017: 67; JORNET-BENITO 2007: 139-140). She commissioned the construction of a chapel dedicated to the archangel Saint Michael in the conventual church and set up a prebend there in 1363 (JORNET-BENITO 2007: 133; ROEBERT 2017:61), and in 1366 she endowed the community with lands next to the gate of Sant Daniel. The obligations attached to the prebend are unknown, but the donation

of the lands entailed prayers in memory of the royal family and the queen's Sicilian relatives, all of which were stipulated in the document of the donation (ROEBERT 2017: 61).

Other sources also attest to the special relationship between Elionor of Sicily and this community. On the one hand, according to an undated letter preserved in the community's archives, probably dictated personally by the queen and addressed to the abbess of the convent, it seems that she assiduously frequented Sant Antoni. In this letter, the queen apologised for not being able to pay a previously promised visit to the community, insisted on the great devotion she had always had for the order, and offered to obtain the king's support for the convent (ROEBERT 2020: 167-168; JORNET-BENITO et al. in press). Furthermore, on 2 May 1371, a papal bull issued by Pope Gregory XI in Avignon at the queen's request granted Abbess Clemencia Ermengol and her successors the right to carry an abbatial crozier (ROEBERT 2020: 169).

The provisions of Elionor's testament are even more telling of the bond that existed between her and the community. On 12 June 1374, a few months after the transfer of Blanca's remains and her burial in the conventual church of Sant Antoni, the queen dictated a testament in which, among other things, she carefully arranged the celebration of her post-mortem memorial services. On the one hand, she provided for the celebration of a perpetual anniversary mass in Poblet, where she wished to be buried and where she also established the daily recitation of prayers *super tumulum domini Regis et nostrum*, and, on the other hand, she stipulated the celebration of four annual anniversary masses in the Cathedral of Barcelona and in the convent of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara *cum representacione tumbe*.⁷

Later evidence confirms and nourishes the memory of a privileged relationship between the queen and the nuns of Barcelona. On the one hand, around 1515, in the context of the Observant Reformation, after the community switched rules and joined the Benedictine order, there were at least of two pastoral visitations, the second of which, dated 1527, left an extant record. In it, the visitators toured the conventual church and made a fairly detailed record of the chapels, benefices, ornaments, and tombs. On arriving at the chapel of Sant Miquel, they recorded the existence of the royal benefice and the presence among the objects of the sacristy of a miraculous image of Saint Michael whose devotion they associated with the queen, who would have donated it to the convent. However, the most remarkable detail in this visitation is the mention of the sepulchre of Queen Elionor herself in the chapel dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene, next to the presbytery: "en dita capella a dos sepultures la una de la abadessa i laltre de nobles. Emes y ha una sepultura de la serenissima reyna dona Leonor molt bella tot de marbre lo personatge de bulto molt ben

⁷ ROEBERT 2020: 595-597 ACA Cancilleria Reg 1582 fol.65r. I would like to explicitly thank Sebastian Roebert for his remarks and for the discussion on the importance of the testamentary dispositions of the queen, on whose funeral he is currently working. As Olga Pérez Monzón points out in the case of San Juan de los Reyes, I think that the expression *cum representacione tumbe* likely refers to a celebration that was held before an ephemeral monument (PÉREZ MONZÓN 2011:241).

labrat e obrat” [in the said chapel there are two sepulchres, one belongs to the abbess, the other to a noble. The sepulchre of the most serene Queen Elionor, very beautiful, made of marble, with her effigy beautifully carved and crafted, stands in the middle].⁸ This is the first mention of the presence of Elionor’s tomb in the church of Santa Clara. Towards the end of the century, in 1599, Sebastià Roger, archivist of the community, again recalled in the *Llibre de coses dignes de memòria del monestir* that the queen had been buried in the church of this convent (JORNET-BENITO 2007: 139). At the end of the seventeenth century, in 1697, a letter addressed to the Queen of Spain, Maria Anna von Pfalz-Neuburg, by the abbess of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara and the nuns of the community asking her for funds to repair the conventual precinct, stated the same thing. The nuns argued for their request by referring to the past and reminding the queen that because of their special devotion to the saintly Agnès and Clara, foundresses of the convent—which the letter calls “the royal convent”—her predecessor Queen Elionor had donned the habit of the Poor Clares and arranged to be buried there (ROEBERT 2020: 615-616). Today we know that this was not the case and that Elionor’s coffin was never in the convent, not even temporarily. The queen, who died in Lleida on 20 April 1375, was buried provisionally in the city’s cathedral, pending her permanent transfer to the royal pantheon in the Cistercian monastery of Poblet. As Stefano Cingolani has shown, on 15 November 1377, King Pere the Ceremonious sent a monk from Poblet, Guillem Deudé, to the cathedral to ascertain the condition of the queen’s remains in order to proceed with their transfer. Shortly afterwards, the coffin arrived at Poblet to be buried in the royal pantheon (CINGOLANI 2013: 83). Thus, the tomb that, according to both the pastoral visitation of 1527 and the archivist Roger was in the chapel of Mary Magdalene in the presbytery of the church of the Clarissan convent of Barcelona, could hardly have held the body of Elionor of Sicily in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It could conceivably be argued that some of Elionor’s body parts might have been buried there, or even that the alleged tomb was in fact a cenotaph, but, as far as we know, nothing other than what has already been mentioned attests to the existence of such monument, nor is there any reference to this royal tomb before 1527, that is, a century and a half after the queen’s actual death. A more reasonable explanation would be that the identification was erroneous and that, in the first decades of the sixteenth century, which coincided with the beginning of the new Benedictine phase, a legend was built around this error, along with a whole exercise of remembrance and oblivion.

3. Remembrance and Oblivion: Blanca of Sicily and the Community of Sant Antoni in Barcelona

Let us now turn to the procession of 10 February 1374, and consider what we know about Blanca of Sicily, about her relationship with the Poor Clares, and her last wishes, about her death in 1369 and the transfer of her body five years later to be buried in Sant Antoni i Santa Clara. Let us now follow the traces of the tomb, the altar, and the objects associated with it, which were

⁸ AAM. *Llibre*, 13, fols. 72r-78v. Congregació Claustral Tarraconense i Cesaraugustana.

kept, remembered and forgotten by the community between 1389—the date of the first surviving inventory recorded after Blanca’s arrival at the convent—and 1585, the date of the last of the sixteenth-century inventories.

Blanca only lived in Catalonia for a short time, as she died barely five years after her marriage to the Count of Empúries in 1364. We do not know much about her life during this five-year period, but there are various extant documents concerning the celebration of her marriage to the count and her solemn entry into the town of Castelló d’Empúries.⁹ Her presence alongside her husband attending some acts of the comital government is also documented,¹⁰ and we know that during these years she bore him a daughter, called Elionor.¹¹ Yet much more is known about the impact of her death in 1369, as the echoes of her will have reached us through a codicil and several other documents. It is precisely these sources that allow us to glimpse the importance of her figure as Countess of Empúries, but also, and above all, as an *infanta* of Sicily and sister of the Queen of Aragon, as well as her resulting importance in the family’s networks and in queenly strategies of spiritual promotion and memory construction.

On 8 November 1369, Blanca, surrounded by Franciscan friars who acted as witnesses, signed a codicil that was to complete her will, and by 24 November she was already dead. Three letters were sent from Saragossa by the *infant* Joan, son of Pere the Ceremonious and Elionor of Sicily, dated 24 and 28 November and 9 December respectively.¹² In the first letter, the heir to the crown informed his mother that he had received a letter from the Count of Empúries notifying him of the death of the *infanta* Blanca.¹³ In the second letter, four days later, he wrote to his father, the king, confirming that he had received his letter informing him of the *infanta*’s death.¹⁴ Finally, the third epistle was also meant for Queen Elionor, who apparently had also written to inform Joan of Blanca’s death. In this third letter, the *infant* Joan addresses his mother in a very affectionate and comforting tone, telling her that he had already heard of the death of his aunt Blanca and that two weeks earlier he himself had written to the queen about it via Father Ramon Peguera, who had instructions not to give it to her until she had heard of the death of her sister. Joan implores Elionor not to give in to anger, which would only turn against her, and asks her for wisdom and patience, for, as he says, neither her, nor himself nor others stand to gain anything if she lets herself be carried away by wrath. He concludes, “E axí, senyora, amats a vós et amarets mi e

⁹ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 388 (4 September 1364), 384 and 385 (24 October 1364), 4265 (28 October 1364), 7898 (21 January 1375).

¹⁰ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 6757 (14 July 1368).

¹¹ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 394 and 420. The testament and codicil of Countess María Álvarez de Xèrica, both dated 28 November 1372, inform us of the existence of a daughter of the late *infanta* Blanca and Joan of Empúries, called Elionor, for whom her grandmother established several bequests.

¹² I am grateful to Stefano Cingolani for making available these three letters and other documents related to the death of the *infanta*, which will be included in CINGOLANI et al, in press. “Més enllà de la mort”, *Diplomatario*.

¹³ Archivo Corona de Aragón (ACA), Cancelleria, reg. 1753, fol. 111v (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 666 prov.584).

¹⁴ ACA, Cancelleria, reg. 1753, fol. 107r. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 667 prov 585)

los altres fills vostres qui desigam vostra vida et salut” [And thus, my lady, love thyself, me and thy other children who wish you life and health].¹⁵ These three letters, which seem to go beyond mere protocol, subtly touch on the feelings and emotions between son and mother, revealing how the news of Blanca’s death circulated among the members of the royal family and conveying the queen’s grief with a rare degree of intimacy. Where was she? Elionor had been in Valencia since August 1369 and, in fact, between December of that year and January 1370, a series of payment receipts from the king and queen’s household record the celebration there of a momentous anniversary mass for the soul and in memory of the *infanta* Blanca, Countess of Empúries.¹⁶

As for Blanca herself, the aforementioned codicil dated 8 November 1369, when she was very ill and awaiting death, allows us to surmise fairly confidently where her remains were deposited immediately after her death —where they would remain until 1374. She stipulated that she wanted to be temporarily put to rest in the convent of the Poor Clares of Castelló d’Empúries and, once her bones had been separated from the flesh, to be transferred definitively to the convent of the Poor Clares of Barcelona, where she had chosen to be buried.¹⁷ This is what happened in 1374. Various documents describe the transfer ceremony and inform us of the final destination of her remains, allowing us to imagine the solemnity with which the funeral was carried out. The *Crónica del Racional de Barcelona* (CRÓNICA 1921: 148) and the *Rúbricas de Bruniquer*, based on the *Crónica*, (RÚBRICAS 1912: 326) describe in detail the two processions that accompanied the bodies of María Álvarez de Xèrica and Blanca of Sicily across the city on 9 and 10 February 1374 to their final place of burial in the convents of Santa Caterina and Santa Clara, respectively. Both processions were attended by King Pere the Ceremonious, the archbishop of Tarragona, the bishops of Barcelona, Girona, and Elna, the bishop of Suelli, in Sardinia, the abbesses of Sant Pere de les Puelles and Valldonzella and the prioress of Jonqueres, as well as a large crowd of nobles, clerics, and members of the city’s male and female religious communities.¹⁸ A number

¹⁵ ACA, Cancelleria, *reg. 1753*, fol. 119v. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 669 prov 587)

¹⁶ ACA, Reial Patrimoni, MR, *reg. 358*, fol. 132r. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 668 prov 586), *reg. 358*, fol. 135r. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 670 prov 588), *reg. 494*, fol. 97v. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 670), *reg. 494*, fol. 104r-v. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 671bis), *reg. 495*, fol. 53r. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 672bis).

¹⁷ “Preterea, scientes nos elegisse sepulturam corpori nostro in monasterio sororum sancte Clare Sancti Danielis Barchinone ubi tamen nos mori contigeret extra comitatum Impuriarum [et] diocesis Gerundendis, alias ubi mortale debitum exolveremus intra dictum comitatum et diocesis prectam, in monasterio Sancte Clare ville Castilionis Impuriarum, ut in dicto testamento clariter enarratur, tunc autem elegimus et ordinamus sepulturam nostram in prefato monasterio Sancti Danielis Barchinone, videlicet infra clausuram eiusdem monasterii, in loco concedenti, iuxta convenienciam, status [...] ubicumque contigat nos ab hoc seculo expirare, provi[...]tes, volentes et ordinantes quod statim morte nostra corporali secuta, corpus nostrum sepeliatur ac ecclesiastice sepulture tradatur in monasterio predicto Sancte Clare ville Castilionis, ubi permaneat ipsum corpus nostrum donec ossa sint carnibus destituta vel existat prefato inclito domino Comiti opportunum et eo tunc predictum corpus nostrum sive ossa eiusdem traslatentur et sepeliantur ac ecclesiastice sepulture tradantur in dicto monasterio Sancti Danielis Barchinne, ubi nostram ut pretangitur eligimus sepulturam.” AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 9165, (8 November 1369).

¹⁸ Likewise, the *Chronicle* of Pere the Ceremonious, when referring to the marriage of the Count of Empúries to the *infanta* Joana of Aragon, deems worthy of mention the death of Joan’s first wife, Blanca, and her burial in Santa Clara “com li fos morta la muller infanta de Sicilia, apellada Blanca, qui jau a les menorettes de Barcelona” [when his wife, an *infanta* of Sicily named Blanca, who rests at the Poor Clares’ of Barcelona], *Crónica de Pere el Cerimonios* ed. Soldevila Àpendix, 1, 2014: 400).

of payment receipts dated in the months following the ceremony also provide us with precious additional information about the performative details of the funeral. Thus, for example, they show that in January 1374 Queen Elionor ordered the purchase of two cloth-of-gold palls to cover the coffins, as well as large candles for the transfer of the remains and the burial.¹⁹ Several other receipts addressed to Joan I of Empúries as executor of the will of his wife Blanca record, among other things, the payment due to Pere d'Abella, canon and sacristan of Santa Eulàlia del Camp, for preparing the body of the *infanta* in the church of this monastery the day before the transfer,²⁰ the payment to the Carmelites for the thirty-four friars who attended the celebration, and the payment to Sant Pere de les Puelles for the presence of twenty presbyters and forty-four nuns.²¹ A receipt dated 24 October 1374 is particularly revealing of the importance that was given to the ceremony of the transfer of the *infanta*. In this document, the Count of Empúries, as executor of Blanca's will, commits to pay for the following items: fifteen large candles taken on 8 February to Sant Andreu de Palomar to accompany the coffin from there to the church of Santa Eulàlia del Camp, whence the solemn procession would depart on 10 February; eighty large candles painted black and decorated with the arms of Empúries and Sicily, which were delivered on 10 February "in ecclesia Sancte Clare Barchinone"; fifteen pounds of wax for the candles given to each of the attendants at the mass for the transfer of the remains of the *infanta*; four white wax candles and a black one offered to the king and the *infanta* Joana, by then the new wife of the Count of Empúries, during the offertory; sixty smaller candles for the sixty poor people dressed in pale cloth who had carried the large candles during the procession; and the salary of Jaume Canals, the craftsman who had painted the eighty large candles in black and decorated each one of them with three emblems of Empúries and Sicily.²² Finally, on 26 October of the same year, in a document signed in the convent of Santa Clara, the abbess, Subirana Sarovira, acknowledged payment for the services of six of her nuns who had watched over the body of the *infanta* in the church of Santa Eulàlia del Camp on the night before the procession.²³

However, the key pieces of evidence related to the memory of the *infanta*, her tomb in Santa Clara, the altar set up in the church, and the presence in the convent of a certain number of objects connected either with the tomb or with the service of the altar, are provided by another receipt, signed by the abbess on 11 August 1374.²⁴ In it, Subirana Sarovira acknowledges before Count Joan of Empúries, Berenguer de Relato, advisor and treasurer to the queen, and Pere de Sant Climent —executors of the will of the *infanta* Blanca— the payment by Joan de Verges, chaplain to the count, of 500 *sous* of Barcelona that remained from the bequest that the *infanta*

¹⁹ ACA, Reial Patrimoni, MR, *reg.* 503, f. 57v. (CINGOLANI et al, in press. 705bis).

²⁰ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 7491, (10 February 1374).

²¹ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 417 y 418, (5 October 1374).

²² AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 419, (24 October 1374).

²³ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 7125 (26 October 1374). The nuns who kept vigil over the body were Maria de Prats, Constança Bages, Sibil·la Ferrer, Clara de Costabella, Francesca de Sant Feliu, and Antonia de Cases.

²⁴ AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 6428, (11 August 1374).

had left for the convent in her last will, as well as the donation of a series of liturgical objects, “res sequentes quas dicta inclita infantissa legavit nobis seu dicto monasterio in dicto suo ultimo testamento ad opus cuiusdam altaris quod dicta inclita infantissa iussit et ordinavit fieri in ecclesia dicti monasterii”.²⁵ From this point onwards, the document lists and describes the objects, which would later reappear in sacristy inventories.

Following the evidence presented to far, that is, a benefice, a burial, and a legacy of liturgical objects, we can now accompany the *infanta* to her tomb and finally discover the traces of her objects inside the walls of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara. First of all, we should start with the cloth-of-gold pall purchased by the queen to cover the coffin of her sister Blanca, which, after the arrival of the body at Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, was kept in the sacristy of the convent and used to cover Blanca’s tomb on the celebration of her anniversary masses. This detail appears repeatedly in the sacristy and convent inventories that record the objects belonging to “domna Blanca” [lady Blanca], the first of which —preceding all others, as it had covered her coffin in the funerary procession— is always this precious pall used during the transfer of her remains. Despite not being listed in the document of August 1374, the *infanta*’s missal, which does appear in the inventories, probably arrived at this time too. Finally, in addition to the funeral pall and the missal, the inventories repeatedly mention other objects as belonging to the *infanta*, all of them listed in the 1374 receipt. These objects belonged to a liturgical ensemble, probably from the *infanta*’s private chapel, and their intended function was to serve the benefice established by Blanca at the altar of Santa Maria in the convent’s church. The ensemble included at least one chasuble, one (or two) stoles, a manipule, a jasper portable altar, a liturgical corporal case with a corporal inside, a chalice (or two), a paten, and a silver cross. These were by no means extraordinary objects in themselves, but they were made extraordinary by their link to the construction of Blanca’s memory.²⁶ The twenty-six sacristy and convent inventories of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara in Barcelona sometimes mention the links between an object in the custody of the convent and a specific person. For instance, they specify who donated a cushion, who gave a chasuble or a chest to the convent, or even who made a book or embroidered a cloth, but in the vast majority of cases, the persons mentioned are members of the community, either abbesses or other nuns (GARÍ, JORNET-BENITO 2017). With few exceptions, only Blanca of Sicily, “domna Blanca”, appears time and again as the owner of a series of objects kept in the convent. This was not by chance, just as it is not by chance that the analysis of this information on the one hand

²⁵ The document thus confirms the endowment of a benefice, which, according to later sources, was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. See, on the one hand, the endowment of the benefice “institutum in ecclesia monasterii sancti Danielis Barchinone, sub invocatione beate Marie, per inclitam infantissa Blancham” dated 15 September 1375 due to the death of the former holder of the benefice, Archivo Diocesano de Barcelona (ADB), *Registro Communium (1375-1378)*, fols. 57r-v; on the other, see a monitory issued to order the holder of the benefice to reside in the benefice, dated 17 November 1399. ADB, *Registro. Communium (1399-1401)* fol. 12. Both documents are quoted in JORNET-BENITO, 2007: 256.

²⁶ We should also add an alb, an amice, two candelabra, and an altar frontal listed in the 1374 document, which could be identified in the inventories but did not mention any connection with the *infanta*.

allows us to learn about the materiality of these objects, their function, and place of custody and use, and, on the other, reveals how the thread of memory was woven and unwoven around them and how they were eventually obscured by the shadow of oblivion. Let us follow the traces of each of Blanca's objects through the convent:

The cloth-of-gold pall. This precious cloth is the only one of Blanca's objects that can also be found in other sources. As noted above, in February 1374, Queen Elionor's treasurer, Berenguer de Relato, returned Arrigo de Gusmer, a chamberlain, the money he had paid to buy two gold cloths: "I a ops de la sepultura de la senyora dona Maria Álvarez, et l'altre a ops de la translació de la senyora infant dona Blanca, germana de la dita senyora reyna et comtessas d'Empúries" [One for the burial of lady *dona* Maria Álvarez, and the other for the transfer of the remains of the lady *infanta* Blanca, sister of the said lady queen, and countess of Empúries]. The queen herself had commissioned them, one on a blue field and the other on a red field. Seven *canas* of black taffeta were also purchased to decorate them, as well as six *canas* and two spans of black, red, yellow, and white sendal for the ten emblems that were to be attached to each of the cloths, and seventeen *canas* of blue cloth to line them. Both cloths cost a total of 1,277 *sous* and 3 *diners*.²⁷

The cloth-of-gold pall was a key feature in funeral processions (PÉREZ MONZÓN 2011: 236; SEERING 2014: 81-82). Trimmed in black and decorated with coats of arms it was one of the main elements of funeral rituals and was present both at the funerals and on the anniversary masses of members of the royal family from the late thirteenth century onwards—a custom that was later adopted by other members of the nobility (CINGOLANI 2013: 77). This was undoubtedly the case of the pall of lady Blanca, sister of the queen, which, trimmed in black and bearing the emblems of Empúries and Sicily, covered her coffin during the procession that transferred her remains to the convent of Santa Clara. Its continued presence in the convent is first recorded in the 1389 sacristy inventory.²⁸ Between 1389 and 1421, the inventories mention the cloth-of-gold pall indicating repeatedly that it was kept in a drawer in a sacristy cabinet and that it was used to cover the tomb of *domna* Blanca, that is, that it was used during her anniversary masses.²⁹ The pall continues to appear between 1433 and 1461, but it is no longer described as a cloth-of gold and is instead referred to as a canopy that had belonged to *domna* Blanca.³⁰ It stands to reason that this was the

²⁷ ACA, Reial Patrimoni, MR, *reg.* 503, fol. 57v. (CINGOLANI et al, in press, 705bis)

²⁸ AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1389), vol. 31, no. 2. There is only one earliest inventory composed after Blanca's death, namely the convent inventory of 1376, which only had three extant folios, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1376), 813, no. 19.

²⁹ See, for instance, "I drap d'or qui çervex a le tomba da donna Blanca", AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1389), vol. 31, no. 2, fol. 2r; "I drap d'or per la roba (sic) de donna Blanca", AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1399), bundle 813, no. 18, fol.10; "I drap d'aur per cobri la tomba de done Blanca", AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1406), vol. 31, no. 3, fol.4; "un drap de donna Blanca qui servex sobre la tomba", AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1419), vol. 31, no. 5, fol. 2v.

³⁰ See, for instance, "Item un doçer de donna Blanca", AMSBM/MSCB *Inventari de sagristia* (1433), vol. 31 no.7, fol.3r; "Item mes un dossier lo qual es de donna Blanca", AMSBM/MSCB *Inventari de sagristia* (1437), vol. 31, no. 8, fol. 2v.

same object, although it is worth noting that the inventory did not mention its purpose any more, but rather to whom it had belonged. It is possible that it was no longer in use. At any rate, the gold pall, or canopy, eventually disappeared from the inventories—or was misidentified—in the Benedictine phase of the convent, documented after 1534.

The missal. Alongside the cloth-of-gold pall, we also find in the convent a missal that was repeatedly described as the missal of *domna* Blanca.³¹ As noted above, this missal was not listed in the document of August 1374. Therefore, it is possible that it arrived earlier accompanying the coffin and the funerary procession that reached the convent on 10 February of the same year. It appears in the inventories from 1389 to 1433 (with the only exception of the 1410 inventory), and according to the earliest records, it was kept in a cabinet in the cloister along with other objects that had belonged to Blanca. After that, it was listed by itself, until it ended up vanishing altogether from 1437 onwards, probably buried among the many missals inventoried in the convent.

One chasuble, two stoles, and a maniple. The rest of Blanca's objects were clearly the basic furnishings of an altar. In particular, the chasuble, stoles and maniple remained naturally associated and were kept together. The document of 1374 mentions them, but only lists one stole.³² The chasuble is described in detail in some of the inventories as made of red silk cloth with images embroidered in gold and lined with yellow sendal, and complemented by two stoles and a maniple, all of them made of the same cloth.³³ Between 1389 and 1410, this set was mentioned in greater or lesser detail in every inventory but for the one dated 1399. In all cases we are told that these objects belonged to *domna* Blanca. However, from 1419 onwards, all references to the *infanta* disappear and, in the absence of a detailed description of the chasuble that would allow its identification in subsequent inventories, it ended up buried among the many other chasubles kept in the convent, just as the missal.

Other objects of Blanca listed in the receipt of 1374 that also appear in the inventories included a portable altar, a liturgical corporal case, two chalices, and a cross. Their traces can be followed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, as all of them were significantly stored together and, at least from 1406 onwards, kept in a cabinet identified as “l'armari de la volta”, that is, the vault cabinet.

³¹ See, for instance, “Item I ara da yaspi e I miçal e I corporal ab l'estog da drap d'aur ab un corporal de dintre”, AMSBM/MSCB *Inventari de sagristia* (1389), vol. 31, no. 2, fol. 5r; “i un misal de dona Blanqua”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1399), bundle 813, no. 18, fol.12.

³² “(...) et una casulata rubeam panni scirici panpolat forratam cum stindone croteo fresada cum imaginibus. Item, unam astolam et unum / manipulum similis panni forrats de stindone”, AMCE. Fons ADM, comtat Empúries, 6428.

³³ “Item una casula da drap da çeda vermeya ab ymages ab II estola e ab I manible es da dona Blanqua /I un altre casula de drap de ceda vermel ab imayas d'or folrade da cendat grogh ab stola i manipla del drap metex”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1389), vol. 31, no. 2, fol. 3r, kept in the vestment cabinet, or simply, in “the first cabinet”.

A jasper altar. The first of this objects is a portable altar that, between 1389 and 1422, was listed in the inventories as having belonged to *domna* Blanca.³⁴ The next four inventories, dated between 1433 and 1461, mentioned it without referring to Blanca. In the Benedictine period, this altar is simply described in all the inventories as a “jasper altar”, and from 1561 to 1581 it would be inventoried together with two more marble altars. The 1585 inventory only listed one altar made of marble.

A liturgical corporal case and a corporal. The corporal case, which was sometimes said to contain a corporal, appeared from 1389 to 1406 as having belonged to Blanca and was described as a case of red gold cloth.³⁵ Between 1410 and 1422, the case was simply listed as a red, gold cloth corporal case. In 1433, two cases were inventoried together, one blue and gold—attributed to a donation from Queen Violant³⁶—and the other of gold cloth with a corporal inside. Between 1437 and 1461, both cases were listed with no mention whatsoever to their respective donors. Likewise, in the ten inventories of the Benedictine period, these two objects were repeatedly described as a blue case and another case made of crimson brocade, but Blanca’s name was no longer mentioned in connection with them.

Two chalices. The inventories of 1406 and 1410 mention three chalices that were kept together, two of which were said to have belonged to *domna* Blanca. Although the reference to *domna* Blanca was omitted from the convent inventory of 1422, this manuscript did include the presence of the same three chalices in the same cabinet and provided a more detailed description: the three chalices and their paten were made of gilded silver and two of them were enamelled.³⁷ They were also listed, without reference to Blanca, in the inventories of 1433, 1437, 1454, and 1461. In the Benedictine phase, these three chalices were no longer mentioned separately, but we find an interesting reference in the inventory of 1534 indicating that one of the ten chalices kept in a cabinet in the sacristy was called “the queen’s chalice”.³⁸ Did one of Blanca of Sicily’s chalices contribute to reinforcing the legend of the presence of her sister Queen Elionor in the convent? It is hard to say.

³⁴ See, for instance, “Item I ara da yaspi e I miçal e I corporal ab l’estog da drap d’aur ab un corporal de dintre”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1389), vol. 31, no. 2, fol. 5r; “Item una ara de jaspi de dona Blanqua», AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1422), bundle 813, no. 20, fol. 6r.

³⁵ “Item I ara da yaspi e I miçal e I corporal ab l’estog da drap d’aur ab un corporal de dintre”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1389), vol. 31, no. 2, fol. 5r.

³⁶ “Item una ara de jaspi e un stoig de corporals blau e d’or quens donà la Senyor(a) Reyna dona Yolant, e un altra astoig de corporals de drap daur ab un corporal de dintre”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1433) vol. 31 no.7, fol. 8r. This is one of the very few references to another promoter from outside the community that can be found in the inventories.

³⁷ “Item hun calzer ab patena d’argent daurat e esmaltat. Item hun altre calzer d’argent daurat ab patena en forma de scudella. Item hun altre calzer d’argent daurat ab patena e esmaltat”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1422), bundle 813, no. 20, fol. 6v.

³⁸ “la un se anomena de la reyna”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1422), bundle 813, no. 20, fol. 6v.

A silver cross. This cross, described as early as 1374 as bearing two images of Mary and John, enamels of the four evangelists and Sicilian emblems, was first listed in an inventory in 1406, where, together with the aforementioned chalices, the liturgical corporal case, and the jasper altar, it was described as having belonged to *domna* Blanca.³⁹ In turn, the 1421 inventory mentioned that it was made of gilded silver and bore the royal emblem.⁴⁰ The 1422 inventory provided a more detailed description that matched the one included in the 1374 receipt, that is, it was portrayed as a gilded silver cross with a base and two embedded images of the Virgin Mary and Saint John with enamels and the crest of *domna* Blanca.⁴¹ Both the fact that it belonged to a liturgical ensemble and the mention of a “base” in the 1422 inventory, suggests that it was an altar cross. The inventories of 1437 and 1454 omitted to mention Blanca and merely stated that the cross bore the emblem of the king of Sicily.⁴² The cross also appears in the inventory of 1461, although in a rather odd manner, as it is simply described as a cross used during the Gospel acclamation, and is mentioned together with a gilded silver monstrance bearing the coat of arms of the King of Sicily. In any case, this is the last reference to this cross, which from this point onwards vanishes from the liturgical ensemble that had belonged to *domna* Blanca.⁴³

These were the objects and this was their journey through the inventories. Let us now place them in context by analysing the timeline. Situating Blanca’s objects within the convent over time provides us with a key to trace not only her presence, but also the ability—or lack thereof—she had to develop and document her family history. It is evident that, for the first few decades after her burial, the *infanta*’s memory was nurtured by the objects that evoked her presence inside the convent, many of which were kept together. Moreover, it seems clear that between 1433 and 1461—when she was last mentioned—such memory, at first linked personally and specifically to the *infanta* Blanca, gradually faded away into an all-encompassing remembrance of the House of Sicily as a whole. This idea is supported, for example, by the fact that the inventories explicitly recorded the presence of the royal emblem of Sicily featured on some objects that we know had belonged to Blanca without mentioning the emblem of Empúries. Moreover, some of them, such as the cross, were first described as bearing “the crest of Blanca” and later “the arms of Sicily”, thus becoming effectively dissociated from her figure. The ambiguity of the queenly

³⁹ “e I Creu d’argent de dona Blanca”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1406), vol. 31, no. 3, fol. 11.

⁴⁰ “Item una creu d’argent sobra deurade ab senyal reyal. ...”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1421) volum 31 n. 6, fol. 5v.

⁴¹ “Item huna Creu d’argent daurada ab peu ab II ymatges enbotides de Santa Maria, e de Sent Johan ab esmalts e senyals de dona Blanqua. Item II palles obrades, e hun stocg de corporals de drap daur vermell. Item una ara de jaspi de dona Blanqua”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de convent* (1422), bundle 813, no. 20, fol. 6r.

⁴² “Item mes hi a una Creu d’argent deurada ab senyals del Rey de Cicilia”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1437), vol. 31, no. 8, fol. 10r; “Item mes una Custodia d’argent daurada ab senyal del Rey de Cicilia.”, fol. 8r “E una Creu d’argent daurada, qui servex a l’Avengeli. Item mes una Custodia d’argent daurada ab senyal del Rey de Cicilia ab una Creu petita ab perles”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1454), vol. 31, no. 9, fols. 7v and 8r.

⁴³ “E una Creu d’argent daurada qui servex a la avengeli. Item una Custodia d’argent daurada ab seyall del Rey de Cicilia ab una Creu petita ab perles”, AMSBM/MSCB, *Inventari de sagristia* (1461), no. 11, fol. 7r. As it is not possible to ascertain whether the monstrance was in any way related to Blanca of Sicily, it has not been included in our list of objects.

or royal origins of other objects, such as the chalice or the monstrance, would also buttress this idea. Finally, the break marked by the lack of inventories between 1461 and 1534, which also coincides with the change from the Clarissan to the Benedictine rule, evinces that, in the sixteenth century—at least from 1534 onwards—all direct or indirect recollections of Blanca related to the liturgical objects she had donated had permanently disappeared.

Blanca's decision to be buried in the church of the Poor Clares of Barcelona had multiple connotations. Having grown up within the walls of the Clarissan community of Messina, she, like her sisters, showed a clear predilection for the female branch of the Franciscan order. Blanca, together with her sister Elionor—and in the shadow of her queenly agency—translated this inclination into a religious policy that helped to reinforce the presence and legitimacy of the cadet branch of Sicily within the Crown of Aragon, and to build up the family memory. Although in addition to being the queen's sister, the *infanta* Blanca was also the Countess consort of Empúries, the family memory that pervaded the objects mentioned in the inventories was mainly related to Blanca as an *infanta* of Sicily, and, as of the second half of the fifteenth century, only to the House Sicily itself. By the sixteenth century, such memory was almost completely detached from the objects, but in all likelihood, they had already given rise to a legend. According to the visitors of the Benedictine community of Santa Clara in 1527, to the archivist Sebastià Roger in 1599, and to the tradition that would later endure through time within the walls of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, the tomb or sepulchre that could still be seen in the convent's church was, undoubtedly, that of the Queen of Aragon, Elionor of Sicily.

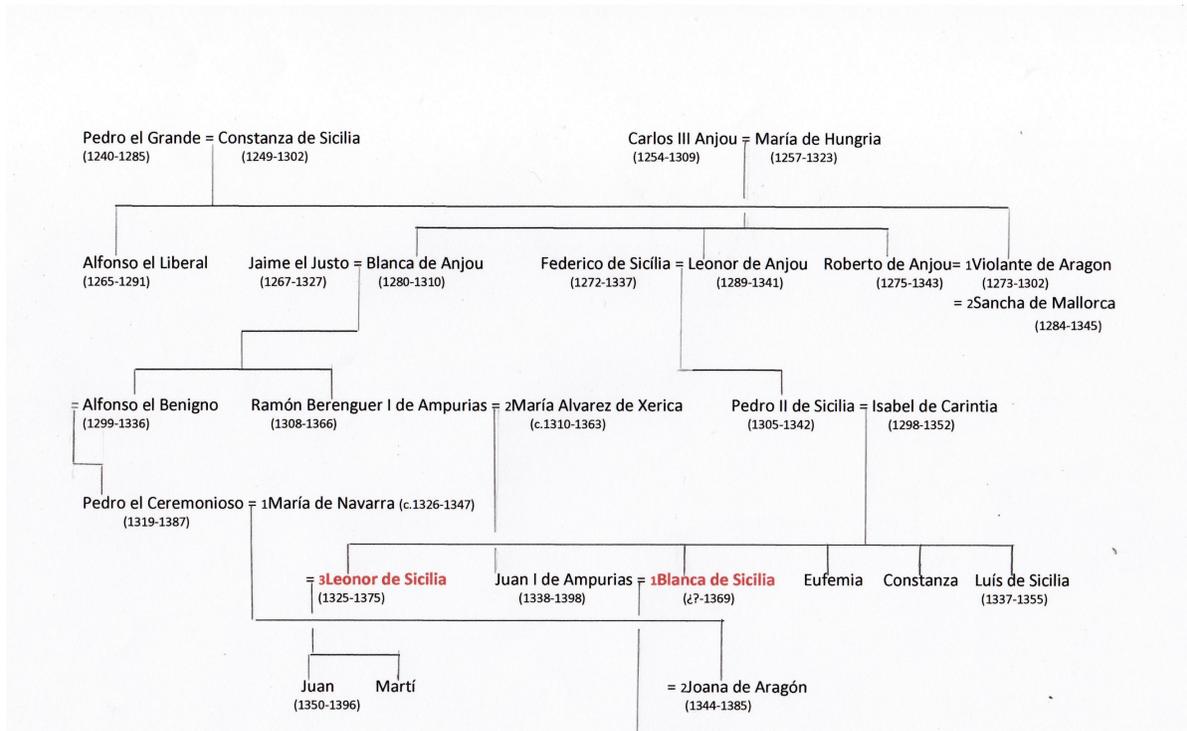


Fig. 1 Simplified image of the family networks of Eleanor and Blanca of Sicily. For the sake of clarity, although their network was undoubtedly much more complex, this image only includes the figures mentioned in the present article.

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