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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### [Translated article] On Hildegard of Bingen



#### Sobre Hildegarda de Bingen

To the Editor,

We carefully read the interesting article titled “Causes and cures of dermatoses in the works of Hildegard von Bingen.”<sup>1</sup> This excellent article presents the fascinating life and works of the medieval abbess and mystic Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179),<sup>2,3</sup> while delving into the dermatological diseases described by the also known as the “Sibyl of the Rhine.”<sup>2</sup> The article discusses Hildegard’s view of some dermatological diseases and recounts the therapeutic methods she proposed to treat dermatoses. The paper begins with a biographical description of Hildegard, introducing to us the fascinating life of one of the most influential women of the Middle Ages. In consideration of the above, our interest and purpose in this letter are to provide a historical clarification on the biography of Hildegard von Bingen as presented in the mentioned article.

The article states that Hildegard von Bingen had “visions” from an early age,<sup>3</sup> and around 1141, she started to relate these visions to Judith von Sponheim (some sources refer to her as Judith von Spanheim, also known as Jutta), and a monk named Volmar.<sup>1</sup> These visions were also described by other sources<sup>2,4,5</sup> and by Hildegard herself in Scivias, her most important piece of work,<sup>6</sup> which was written between 1141 and 1151.<sup>7</sup> However, the historical precision we intend to formulate is that sources place Jutta’s death around the year 113<sup>3,4,6,7</sup> which means that these visions could have never been recounted to Jutta around 1141.

Judith von Sponheim is said to have been born around December 22, 1091. She was the daughter of Stephen von Sponheim and entered into the Disibodenberg convent at an early age,<sup>2</sup> around 1112. Meanwhile, Hildegard von Bingen—who was born around 1098<sup>1-3</sup>—was entrusted to Jutta for her education and monastic life<sup>1,3,4,7</sup> when Hildegard was between 7 and 8 years old.<sup>2,4,7</sup> A few years later (1112), Jutta and Hildegard entered and

lived in the Disibodenberg monastery until Jutta’s death, which—as mentioned earlier—is said to have occurred around 1136.<sup>3,4,7</sup> After this, Hildegard took over the convent becoming the abbess that same year at the age of 38,<sup>2</sup> which is consistent with Hildegard’s age in 1136.

Finally, we should mention the valuable work of J. Romani and M. Romani,<sup>1</sup> both on the life and works of Hildegard, and specifically on her vision of dermatoses. Despite the passage of time, her work is beginning to gain significant value in various areas such as theology, or medicine.<sup>2</sup> The figure of Hildegard von Bingen is fascinating, and her work should be considered in the education of specialists in history and medical humanities, such as those who intend to dedicate their lives to the dermatology.

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