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# The Transition of Papal Politicization as Demonstrated through Pope Gregory IX and His Adversaries in the Thirteenth Century

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**THE TRANSITION OF PAPAL POLITICIZATION  
AS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH POPE GREGORY IX AND  
HIS ADVERSARIES IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY**

by

**EMILY NORTHCUTT**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS, HISTORY**

THESIS

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**B.A., History, University of Oklahoma, 2016  
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**ABSTRACT**

Gregory IX (pope 1227-41) asserted his papal authority over secular and religious leaders in an attempt to showcase the strength of the church. His pontificate took place between those of the famous Innocent III (1198-1216) and the powerful Innocent IV (1243-54), meaning that Gregory's accomplishments are often overshadowed. This thesis aims to prove that Gregory is a worthy protagonist and a worthy subject of study in his own right. Comparing Gregory's pontificate to those of his immediate predecessor and successor highlights the shifting nature of Gregory's priorities. This work examines Gregory's relationship with Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II regarding crusades and the emperor's controversial relationship with Muslims. Gregory's unique method of addressing Islam as a propagandistic tactic implies that he was more concerned with a group's actions rather than its religious affiliation. The pope also had disagreements with St. Clare of Assisi regarding the privilege of poverty, and he tried to limit her monastery's rights in an effort to secure his authority over female monastic orders. Pope Gregory IX knew how to play the political game, and he marks a transitional period in the papacy as a pope who strove to maintain his position of power.

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## Chapter 1

### *Introduction*

The thirteenth-century church saw a wave of political popes who altered the overall function and motivation behind the upper administration of the Roman church. One of these popes in particular does not receive the credit that he deserves despite filling his pontificate with significant disagreements, actions, and changes. Pope Gregory IX served as pope from 1227-1241. His pontificate is most notably marked by his tumultuous relationship with Frederick II Hohenstaufen, who was cumulatively Holy Roman Emperor (from 1215), King of Sicily (from 1198), King of Germany (from 1212) and King of Jerusalem (from 1225). Yet this relationship is only one indicator of a larger shift in a political papacy. Gregory's predecessor Innocent III often attracts the most scholarly attention as representing the peak of a political medieval papacy, but the purpose of this work is to demonstrate that Gregory deserves his own time in the spotlight as a politically and authoritatively motivated church leader.

Pope Gregory IX struggled to assert his papal authority. During his pontificate, he disagreed with secular rulers and monastic leaders. He developed his own personal way of addressing matters regarding Muslims, women, and secular authority. Throughout this thesis, I will examine specific instances of these disagreements and issues to determine Gregory's motivations as pope. Much of this work revolves around Gregory's well-documented interactions with Frederick II, which allows for an intensive study of how Gregory used law and politics to his advantage. A central, focused theme connecting



Gregory to Frederick II also allows for further extrapolation of the larger themes at play in Gregory's other disagreements.

### *Sources and Methods*

Papal letters and official religious documents provide the main sources of information for this work. Throughout the thesis I draw upon four letters from Gregory's papal registry that exemplify his reactions towards Frederick's various escapades. These letters address Frederick's excommunication, his relations with Muslims—in both Jerusalem and Lucera—and crimes he supposedly committed against the church. Some of these letters were written directly to Frederick, while others were written to Italian bishops and lords to update them on Frederick's status within the church. It is my hope that these letters will shed light on Gregory's professional opinions towards Frederick and Islam as a religion. In the chapter about St. Clare of Assisi, letters from both Clare and Gregory shed light on the relevant religious policies' personal effects. These primary sources combined with strong secondary scholarship provide a well-rounded look into Gregory's function as a political pope.

In order to contextualize the rising tensions between Gregory and Frederick, I surveyed letters from the papal registries of Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV.<sup>1</sup> A brief numerical survey of papal mentions of Frederick, Islam, and excommunication demonstrates that Gregory's pontificate saw a rising wave of tense papal-imperial relations. This survey used the following categories for each pope: Frederick II,

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Rodenberg, ed., *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae*, 3 vols., Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae 3 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883-94).

excommunication, Frederick II and excommunication, Muslims, Frederick II and Muslims, Holy Land/crusade, Frederick II and Holy Land/crusade. While I did not translate each and every letter from these registries, I used Carl Rodenberg's editorial summaries of the letters to count the number of times each of these categories was mentioned. Some of these letters overlap in categories, so I placed the numerical significance in the double category instead of the singular category. For instance, in letters in which both Frederick and excommunication are mentioned, I only counted the Frederick and Excommunication category instead of both the Frederick category and the Excommunication category. Furthermore, some of the letters in the registry were not written by the popes but are still included in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. The editor includes a brief synopsis of these letters as he does with the included letters. I therefore counted these synopses in my survey.

The conclusions regarding this numerical survey are as follows. Honorius mentions Frederick 88 times, Gregory mentions him 96 times, and Innocent mentions him 182 times. These numbers refer to mentions of Frederick independently from any other categories within this survey. Tensions seemed to rise with each pope, culminating with almost double the mentions of Frederick in Innocent's registry than in Gregory's. Honorius and Innocent rarely mention Muslims in their letters, three times each to be exact. Gregory, on the other hand, mentions Muslims once and Frederick and Muslims seven times. This suggests that Gregory was more concerned with Frederick's interactions with Muslims, and that Frederick was more active in Jerusalem and with his colony at Lucera during Gregory's pontificate. Honorius and Gregory frequently mention Frederick's crusades as well as other crusading efforts (70 and 60 times, respectively),

whereas Innocent rarely mentions crusades at all in comparison (26 times). Crusading efforts were seemingly not as much of a priority to Innocent. Innocent's mentions of excommunication, both with or without Frederick, more than double those of Honorius or Gregory, which suggests that he was quicker to resort to the most serious ecclesiastical punishment for transgressors. Gregory's numbers for most of these categories place him right in the middle, which suggests that he marked a transitional period in interactions with nobility and opposing religions.

### *Organization*

A thematic rather than chronological organization provides the framework for a deeper examination of Gregory as a political pope. His feuds with religious and secular leaders intermittently occurred in between his bouts with Frederick II. Thematically addressing his interactions with Islam, monasticism, secular authority, and women helps identify the patterns in his courses of action.

Chapter One provides a historiographical examination of Pope Honorius III, Pope Gregory IX, and Pope Innocent IV in an attempt to contextualize Gregory's decisions during his pontificate. This subject merits its own chapter due to the broad scope and significance of historiography in placing Gregory in his proper historical context. In order to best explain why Gregory deserves the spotlight, this work must first compare him to his immediate predecessor and successor in each pope's relationship with Frederick II and Islam. Due to Frederick's various interactions with Muslims, and the fact that he reigned during all three pontificates, he served as an outlet for papal frustrations and changing attitudes.

Chapter Two examines Gregory's relationship with Frederick II with particular emphasis on Frederick's crusade to Jerusalem as an excommunicate, which I argue provides the foundation for most of their future disagreements. Frederick's issues with the papacy began during Honorius III's pontificate, as it was Honorius who first attempted to persuade the emperor to lead a crusade. This crusade spilled over into Gregory's pontificate, and its aftermath lasted through Innocent IV's.

Chapter Three addresses Gregory's reaction to Frederick's relationship with Islam. Islam was a touchy subject in this crusading period, and popes did not shy away from using references to it as a scare tactic. Gregory was no different. He used Frederick's behavior in Jerusalem as proof of the emperor's obstinacy. In this chapter, I examine Gregory's propagandistic use of Islam, specifically through Frederick's Muslim colony in Lucera, Italy and its surprisingly minimized role in Gregory's propaganda campaign against the emperor.

Chapter Four examines female monasticism under papal control through Gregory's interactions with Clare of Assisi regarding the privilege of poverty and enclosure. At first glance this chapter may appear as an outlier when compared to the rest of the thesis's emphasis on Frederick and Islam. While in a sense this is true, I aim to place Clare in the same plane as Frederick. Gregory fought with both characters in an attempt to assert his papal authority. He employed political measures against both Frederick and Clare in order to get his way. Thus, the chapter on Clare of Assisi highlights other ways in which Gregory demonstrated his political motivations outside of his dealings with Frederick.

The epilogue uses one final example of papal interference in secular affairs through Gregory's involvement in Frederick's marriage to Isabella of England. This example highlights Gregory's political motivations and his desire to elevate his position of authority as pope. It is my hope that the thematic organization of this work allows the reader to follow Gregory's disagreements with Frederick in order to understand the larger context of his shift towards political motivations.

### *Implications*

The historiographical trend tends to focus on Innocent III as the powerful political pope worthy of study. Throughout this thesis, I argue that Innocent III's successors contributed just as much as he did to the political development of the church. Each pope built on the success of his predecessor. Gregory IX is arguably the most obvious example of this transition in progress. Unfortunately, only a few historians have fully explored Gregory's contribution to Christian-Muslim relations. Studies of Gregory and Frederick's relationship circle the issue of Islam in the Latin West, but research is lacking to combine Gregory's politicization with his canonistic view of Islam. Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV mark a transitional period in the thirteenth-century papacy. Each pope progressively relied on politics to further his agenda, and further research is needed to implicate Gregory's pontificate in particular as the watershed moment in papal relations with the rest of Christendom.

## Chapter 2

### *Frederick II Hohenstaufen versus Three Popes: Power Dynamics in the Use of Islam as a Political Tool*

Gregory IX served as pope during a time when the church held immense power. The thirteenth century saw crusades, ever-changing interfaith relations, and developing canon law. Gregory's interpersonal relationships suggest that he was often motivated by potential political gains of power and authority. He knew when to attack and when to hold back from his opposition. Gregory knew how to play his role as defender of the church and as a powerful leader. He wanted to continue the powerful rise of the church, and in doing so he shifted how the church would come to interact with Islam. His interactions with Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II most clearly demonstrate this shift. Frederick threatened the political power of the church through his kingdom's expansion in Italy and through his interactions with Muslims, both on crusade and in his Christian kingdom.

In order to fully understand the transformative relationship between Gregory and Frederick, this historiographical chapter analyzes Frederick's relationship with Gregory's immediate predecessor Honorius III and successor Innocent IV. Frederick is the perfect choice for this comparative study in that he fought with three popes during his reign as Holy Roman Emperor. Exploring the power dynamics in each relationship highlights the significance of Gregory's pontificate as a moment of shifting priorities. The lord-vassal relationship of pope to emperor brings into question the primary function of these leaders' diplomatic relations, both in the religious and in the secular realm. Frederick

struggled to accept his position as loyal vassal to the popes, and the popes asserted their authority time and again over Frederick as their rebellious vassal. Islam often came under fire as the popes looked for transgressions to hurl against the emperor, which meant that the church gradually adjusted its propagandistic use of the opposing religion to suit its political needs.

### *Frederick II Hohenstaufen*

Pope Honorius III, Pope Gregory IX, and Pope Innocent IV have all recently become popular subjects of historical study, often tangentially due to their relationships with Frederick II Hohenstaufen, but some scholars have attempted to highlight the individuality of these men. Frederick, on the other hand, has long been a cause of historical fascination.

Hiroshi Takayama addresses the rise of the Hohenstaufen family to power over the kingdom of Sicily, specifically focusing on Sicily and Frederick's reign as king. The Norman conquest unified Sicily, but Muslims and Greeks made up the majority of the population. Takayama suggests that these cultures maintained their identities regardless of who ruled them.<sup>2</sup> The transition from Norman to Hohenstaufen rule took place shortly before Frederick's birth. The abundance of Islamic influence in Sicily lends to Frederick's reputation as generally affable towards other religions, both within and outside of his court. Sources from Frederick's crusade to Jerusalem further support this

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<sup>2</sup> Hiroshi Takayama, "Law and Monarchy in the South," in *Italy in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1300*, ed. David Abulafia, The Short Oxford History of Italy, ed. John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 61.

affable reputation, but most scholars agree that the extent of Frederick's favor towards Islam has been exaggerated.

A brief history of Frederick's family and his rise to power is necessary in order to contextualize Frederick's later interactions with the papacy. Henry VI, a German king, married Constance, a Sicilian queen. Henry thus became ruler of both Germany and Sicily in 1194, uniting the area under Hohenstaufen rule instead of Norman. Constance soon gave birth to her son Frederick II, the future Holy Roman Emperor and papal adversary.<sup>3</sup> Both Henry and Constance died early, leaving Frederick as a ward of Pope Innocent III. Takayama, along with other scholars, suggests that Sicily under Frederick's rule was not as culturally diverse as some have thought. On the contrary, multicultural interactions decreased during Hohenstaufen rule. Granted, this shift was largely due to Frederick's mass expulsion of the Muslim population to Lucera in the 1220s, which will be discussed at length in a subsequent chapter. Even his court was lacking in Arabic officials when compared with previous Norman rulers.<sup>4</sup>

Upon reaching adulthood, Frederick quickly became an adversary of the papacy. Many of Frederick's disagreements with the papacy emerged when he failed to fulfill his crusader vow to Honorius III. This delay in fulfillment continued after Honorius's death. Pope Gregory IX finally excommunicated the emperor in 1227 after hearing too many excuses for his delay. Frederick then decided to lead a crusade anyways, which further infuriated the pope. This disagreement was one of many between Frederick and the papacy. Tensions continued to build throughout the emperor's life, with a demonstrable shift in antagonism during Gregory IX's pontificate. Tensions peaked during Innocent

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<sup>3</sup> Takayama, "Law and Monarchy in the South," 70.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 74.



IV's pontificate, and Frederick's heirs continued to fight the papacy after the emperor's death.

### *Pope Honorius III*

Honorius III's pontificate was sandwiched between the great Innocent III and the fiery Gregory IX. As a result, historians tend to overlook Honorius as he seemingly contributed little to the grand scheme of Christianity. Honorius attempted to follow in Innocent's footsteps and failed, granting him the reputation of being a rather passive pope. Yet some historians, such as James Powell and Rebecca Rist, have attempted to revitalize Honorius's name and legacy. After all, the tense relations between Frederick and the church began during Honorius's pontificate, and this neglected pope also made important decisions regarding the crusades.

Rebecca Rist argues that Honorius marked a change in papal governance in his own right and broke away from the tradition of his predecessors. She uses his involvement in the Albigensian Crusade and the Fifth Crusade to explore the significance of his pontificate. Honorius was concerned with the rise of heresy in the south of France. As Rist's main focus is to grant Honorius III agency as a pope worthy of historical study apart from Innocent III, she argues that Honorius proclaimed crusading to the east as his main priority, but in reality he focused his attentions on the Albigensian Crusade as part of what he believed to be the more pertinent fight against heresy.<sup>5</sup> Understanding that Honorius highly prioritized crusades, both in the East and the West, explains why he was so eager for Frederick to go to Jerusalem.

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<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Rist, "Papal Policy and the Albigensian Crusades: Continuity or Change?" *Crusades* 2 (2003): 107.

Honorius pressured Frederick to lead a crusade to Jerusalem, which Frederick enthusiastically vowed to undertake. Yet Frederick never actually went. He kept finding reasons to remain in Europe. Honorius grew increasingly frustrated with Frederick, as he felt the emperor was shirking his duties to fight for Christendom against heresy. Honorius reluctantly threatened excommunication if Frederick continued to avoid going on crusade, but Frederick apparently called his bluff, as he incurred no punishment.<sup>6</sup>

Thirteenth-century Europe viewed religious-secular relationships as lord-vassal relationships, meaning that the king or emperor was subservient to the pope. The pope bestowed legitimacy and land upon the secular ruler, and in return the ruler paid homage to and obeyed the pope. Honorius often used this relationship to his advantage, especially with Frederick. Throughout Honorius's pontificate, the region of Bosnia had become a heretical area, and even though it was under Latin-Christian rule, the church could do little to stop the spread of heresy.<sup>7</sup> In an attempt to combat infidelity, Honorius wrote letters over the course of several years to different rulers imploring them to defend against these heretics. In these letters, the pope often referred to the established lord-vassal relationship to remind the "vassal" of his duty and how he was obligated to perform a certain act on behalf of the church because of the gifts bestowed upon him as vassal.<sup>8</sup>

Heresy extended by definition to Muslims, as their beliefs deviated from orthodoxy. Some scholars assert that it was actually Honorius's pontificate that changed

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<sup>6</sup> David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 151.

<sup>7</sup> Francesco Dall'Aglio, "Crusading in a Nearer East: The Balkan Politics of Honorius III and Gregory IX (1221-1241)," in *The Papacy and the Crusades: Proceedings of the VIIth Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, ed. Michael Balard (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 175.

<sup>8</sup> Dall'Aglio, "Crusading in a Nearer East," 176.

how the church interacted with non-Christians, or at least, he marked a change in the level of papal involvement in how the church addressed heresy.<sup>9</sup> While this concept applies more closely to heretics than to Muslims, it supports the shifting use of religion in the later pontificates of Gregory IX and Innocent IV. Honorius tried to organize a missionary crusade, but his efforts never came to fruition. Even so, his direct concern with the matter implies a stronger interference on behalf of the church.

As for Honorius's relationship with Frederick II, historian James Powell's work has granted much-needed agency to the pope. His research brought Honorius into focus as a legitimate figure of study. He claims that his work has reinterpreted Honorius as a more influential figure than historians credit him with being, and he has applied this reinterpretation to the pope's relations with Frederick II and their lasting implications.<sup>10</sup> Honorius acted intentionally towards Frederick, as he understood the emperor's political power and wanted to secure a steady relationship between the laity and the church.<sup>11</sup> Honorius was concerned with heresy and non-Christians under church dominion, and he naively believed that Frederick would be the conduit through which he could eliminate these religious threats. The pope was willing to use political means to obtain his religious goals, which set the stage for Gregory IX.

### *Pope Gregory IX*

Scholars know little of Gregory's early life. He was born under the name of

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<sup>9</sup> Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt, "Pope Honorius III and Mission and Crusades in the Baltic Region," in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 103-5.

<sup>10</sup> James M. Powell, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 524.

<sup>11</sup> Powell, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean*, 531.

Hugolino in 1170 and died Aug 22, 1241. As Innocent III's "nephew" (exact relation unknown), Hugolino appeared to be destined for greatness. He became Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti di Segni of Ostia in 1206 and Pope Gregory IX at Easter of 1227.<sup>12</sup> While Gregory is popularly known for writing the *Decretals* and initiating the Inquisition, he is also known for his bouts of hostility with Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II.<sup>13</sup> Gregory IX marks a transitional phase in the papacy, and his relationship with Frederick is a clear indicator of this shift towards political motivators. David Abulafia's acclaimed biography of Frederick II details the relationship between pope and emperor. In fact, his narrative is largely responsible for promulgating the negative view of this papal-imperial relationship.

Gregory excommunicated Frederick numerous times, the first of which took place in 1227 when Frederick failed to honor his vow to go on crusade, and the second in 1239 when Frederick failed to honor his vow to protect his subjects against heresy.<sup>14</sup> Failure to honor a vow, regardless of the reasons, meant that the promise was broken. Oath breaking was a major crime and sin in the Middle Ages and ties back to the lord-vassal relationship between pope and emperor. In 1239, Gregory's charges against Frederick extended beyond oath breaking and included the horrific charge of heresy. Historian John Phillip Lomax particularly examines Gregory's political use of canon law against Frederick to prove his case. With this use of canon law, Gregory brought into question the issue of authority between pope and emperor.

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<sup>12</sup> Anne Vizzier, "Gregory IX," in *Great Lives from History: The Middle Ages, 477-1453*, vol. 1, ed. Shelley Wolbrink (Pasadena, CA; Hackensack, NJ: Salem Press, 2005), 436.

<sup>13</sup> Vizzier, "Gregory IX," 437-8.

<sup>14</sup> John Phillip Lomax, "Hints and Allegations: The Charge of Infidelity in Papal and Imperial Propaganda, 1239-1245," in *Religion, Power, and Resistance from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries: Playing the Heresy Card*, ed. Karen Bollermann, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Cary J. Nederman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 171.

This chapter has already explored the lord-vassal relationship between Frederick and Honorius III, but these power dynamics continued to evolve throughout Gregory's pontificate. Gregory relied on the Donation of Constantine, still considered to be a legitimate document at this time, to justify his claims to papal authority.<sup>15</sup> Lomax explains that as the disputes grew heated, the popes asserted their authority over Frederick as the granters of his legitimacy: "The popes did not invite Frederick to negotiate a settlement as an equal partner. Rather, they insisted that the emperor submit unconditionally to nonnegotiable terms."<sup>16</sup> They had no interest in equalizing the relationship. Frederick was too dangerous to allow any more authority than he already had. Lord Pope Gregory nullified vassal Frederick's imperial lands, as the emperor's allegedly heretical actions had damaged his kingdom and made him an unfit ruler.<sup>17</sup>

All of the charges against Frederick had no supporting evidence, but this fact did not stop Gregory from using every accusation and justification possible to condemn his adversary. In response, Frederick returned the allegations and accused Gregory of heresy.<sup>18</sup> Again, this accusation had no merit, but at this point the two were mostly concerned with undermining each other's authority. Heresy was a serious enough accusation to require canon law for justification. The use of canon law in this dispute implies that the pope was willing to use religion as a means to a political end.

### *Pope Innocent IV*

Born as Sinibaldo Fieschi in 1180 and becoming Pope Innocent IV on June 25,

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<sup>15</sup> Brenda Bolton, "Papal Italy," in Abulafia, *Italy in the Central Middle Ages*, 88.

<sup>16</sup> Lomax, "Hints and Allegations," 172.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

1243, Innocent finished what Honorius III and Gregory IX had started.<sup>19</sup> Innocent marks the completion of the papal transition to the position of political figurehead of the church. He built on Gregory's foundation for pursuing political goals over religious goals, especially in regards to papal interactions with Frederick. Thus, Innocent has a long established reputation as a very political pope. He took advantage of his papal authority to remove imperial legitimacy when he excommunicated and deposed Frederick at the First Council of Lyon in 1245.<sup>20</sup>

Frederick's deposition meant that the emperor lost not only imperial titles, but also his vassals, which threatened his support system.<sup>21</sup> To deepen the cut, Innocent then launched a papal crusade against the deposed emperor, which forced even the laity to take sides in the papal-imperial dispute.<sup>22</sup> Innocent IV finally defeated Frederick II. The church rejoiced because the main threat of Frederick was gone. Frederick's illegitimate son Manfred took his father's place as Holy Roman Emperor and also rebelled against the church. In the aftermath of his triumph, the pope was confident in his abilities to put down Manfred's rebellion, although Innocent did not succeed before his own death. Innocent's victory over the emperor was so lauded that his tomb states, "he destroyed the serpent Frederick, Christ's enemy."<sup>23</sup>

Whether Innocent's victory over Frederick was due to the pope's diplomacy and political skills or whether it was circumstantial is debatable. Innocent IV had to repair the damage that Frederick had done to both the church and the papacy. Abulafia explains that

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Witkoski, "Innocent IV," in Wolbrink, *Great Lives from History*, 545.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 372-3.

<sup>22</sup> Graham A. Loud, "The Case of the Missing Martyrs: Frederick II's War with the Church 1239-1250," in *Montecassino and Benevento in the Middle Ages: Essays in South Italian Church History*, ed. Graham A. Loud (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 144.

<sup>23</sup> Witkoski, "Innocent IV," 547.

Innocent's goal was to rid Europe of the fear of Frederick as an unjust emperor and to once again put the church in the spotlight as the keeper of justice and upholder of Christianity.<sup>24</sup> Innocent took his cue from Gregory's campaign against Frederick and merely expanded the crusading aspect of it. He characterized the crusade against Frederick as a holy war against every sinful thing for which the emperor stood, especially his support of Islam.<sup>25</sup> Frederick's dealings with the Muslim colony at Lucera as well as his peaceful negotiations with al-Kamil of Egypt were proof of Frederick's tendencies towards association with heretics. The dispute quickly moved from petty to dangerous. Each ruler, religious and secular, took special care to undermine his opponent's authority whenever possible.

Graham Loud examines the precise measures Innocent and Frederick took to ruin each other's reputation. The emperor's immediate response to papal allegations of heresy and oath breaking was to severely persecute papal supporters. His persecution escalated to the point of executing papal couriers.<sup>26</sup> Drawing largely on contemporary chronicles, Loud notes the public reaction to this papal-imperial feud. Famous English chronicler Matthew Paris, whose thirteenth-century work *Chronica Majora* tends to criticize Frederick's actions, comments on one particularly nasty event. Frederick executed a beloved local bishop who supported the papacy over him. The public was outraged, and

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<sup>24</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 387. While Abulafia asserts that Lucera was a source of contention between Innocent and Frederick, other scholars such as Julie Ann Taylor (*Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* [Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003]) and Christoph Maier ("Crusade and Rhetoric against the Muslim Colony of Lucera: Eudes of Châteauroux's *Sermones de Rebellionem Sarracenorum Lucherie in Apulia*," *Journal of Medieval History* 21 [1995]: 343-85) argue that Lucera did not cause problems for the papacy until after Frederick's death in 1250. My argument aligns with Taylor and Maier in Chapter Four of this work.

<sup>26</sup> Loud, "The Case of the Missing Martyrs," 145.

considered the man to be a martyr, as he died fighting against the church's enemy.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly enough, Innocent IV did not recognize this death as worthy of martyr status, even though supporting such would have probably aroused popular sympathy for the church's cause.<sup>28</sup> The Italian region did not subscribe to the cult of martyrs as much as the rest of Europe, which helps to explain Innocent's silence on the matter.<sup>29</sup> Loud references Matthew Paris's account: "the Bishop's death, at the hands of this 'impious leader, having like his father the devil great anger against the Church of God', was expressly portrayed as martyrdom, and his journey to the scaffold, exposed to the mockery and ill-treatment of the Saracen executioners, compared with that of Christ to the Cross."<sup>30</sup> The poignant mention of "Saracen executioners" furthers the common contemporary perception of Frederick as partial towards Muslims. He employed Muslims to carry out his executions across Italy, which probably did not improve Christian reactions to the Islamic tradition. The same passage from *Chronica Majora* later compares Frederick to Saladin, the Muslim leader of the Third Crusade, implying that Frederick's leadership was so poor that even a Muslim could outdo him. This comparison suggests that public opinion of the emperor had reached an all-time low. Innocent IV used this negative public reaction to his advantage through the employment of papal propaganda against Frederick.<sup>31</sup>

While the eventual triumph over Frederick remains a major focal point of Innocent's reputation, he was also a serious canonist. In particular, he explored the question of legitimacy in secular and religious rulers. His conclusions differed from the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 149.



norm, and were not widely accepted by theologians. This thesis argues that his conclusions were probably inspired by his dealings with Frederick, as many of his questions revolved around excommunicated or non-Christian rulers. Frederick's excommunications put him in a different position than other secular rulers, and Innocent IV teased out in his writings whether or not the church had the authority to revoke the emperor's legitimacy as ruler. Once again, the pope had to employ his power in the lord-vassal relationship of pope to emperor.

The Latin term *extra ecclesiam non est imperium* refers to the ecclesiastical opinion that the church holds and decides all legitimate authority.<sup>32</sup> The church issued secular authority, and it also issued excommunication. The right to issue excommunication meant that the church also had the right to remove excommunicates from positions of authority.<sup>33</sup> These two powers worked in conjunction. In exploring Innocent IV's position on legitimacy, James Muldoon looks at canonists who preceded the pope. Pope Innocent III, himself a canonist, believed that the pope should elect the emperor, but he did not care about lesser secular rulers.<sup>34</sup> Twelfth-century canonist Huguccio of Pisa asserted that excommunication does not de-legitimize an emperor but serves as a disciplinary measure.<sup>35</sup> Yet Innocent IV believed that the church should not recognize the legitimacy of an excommunicated ruler, and more importantly, that it had the authority to do so.<sup>36</sup> In sum, power is power, but the church is above all secular things and can choose not to recognize a power that it deems illegitimate.

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<sup>32</sup> James Muldoon, *Canon Law, the Expansion of Europe, and World Order* (Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 556.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 557.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 566.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 569-70.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 577.

Taking his cue from Gregory IX, Innocent used the Donation of Constantine to his advantage. Historian Brenda Bolton explores Innocent's employment of this document as follows: "Following the claims of Innocent III and Gregory IX, that Constantine had endowed the papacy with royal as well as papal authority, Innocent announced that, before his conversion, Constantine had ruled illegally. Hence, in issuing the Donation, he was only returning to the pope what had rightfully belonged to the papacy all along."<sup>37</sup> Innocent asserted that the land belonged to the church, first and foremost, and that the church then decided to bestow this land upon a worthy emperor as a gift. If the emperor betrayed the church or misused his gift, then the church had every right to take the land back.

Later canonists strongly disagreed with Innocent's view, but his ideas were a product of his time. James Muldoon argues that Innocent's outlier viewpoint had political motivations associated with his interactions with the Mongols, and so he altered his view to suit his political needs.<sup>38</sup> This argument, combined with evidence of the pope's interactions with excommunicated Emperor Frederick II, provides a foundation for why Innocent IV approached legitimacy differently than other canonists. If the church bestows legitimacy on a secular ruler, then the church ranks above said ruler. This hierarchy is similar to the lord-vassal relationship in that the ruler is subservient to the pope. Thus the pope should assume authority in the case of imperial failings.<sup>39</sup> When the "vassal" Frederick rebelled against the church, the "lord" Pope Innocent had no choice but to remove his legitimacy as emperor. Innocent IV justifies papal authority over secular

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<sup>37</sup> Bolton, "Papal Italy," 88-9.

<sup>38</sup> Muldoon, *Canon Law*, 580.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Martin, "Biblical Authority in the Writing of Pope Innocent IV (1243-54)," *Studies in Church History* 38 (2004): 99.

authority through scripture.<sup>40</sup> Innocent clearly believed that he had scriptural authority on his side when exerting his papal judicial power over the emperor.

Innocent's canonistic writings, especially before becoming pope, highlight the evolving relationship between the church and Islam. An older but influential work by James Muldoon explores Innocent IV's canonistic writings as they relate to his opinion of Christianity's affiliation with Muslims. As previously mentioned, Innocent IV took papal authority to a new level, and he did so through his use of the Donation of Constantine. His writings on Islam opened up a new form of papal discussion about the Other.<sup>41</sup> Innocent questions if the church should be allowed to take Muslim-occupied lands, and he looks at the origins of private property and government to justify the conclusion that the church cannot take away these lands.<sup>42</sup>

As for conversion efforts, Innocent IV and his predecessor Gregory IX seemingly agreed that certain measures must be taken to preserve the righteousness of their people, but the church could not force Jews and infidels into baptism.<sup>43</sup> Despite this moderated stance, the church extensively used Islam as a tool to expand papal authority. According to James Muldoon, Innocent masked his seemingly benevolent interest in Muslim spiritual well-being: "When Innocent IV described infidels as belonging to Christ's flock, though not to the Church, he was continuing the practice of extending papal jurisdiction."<sup>44</sup> Muldoon explains that this expansion of power was a major movement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which culminated with Innocent IV's death. As such,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 100-1.

<sup>41</sup> James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 15.

this time frame conveniently places Gregory in the middle of this papal rise to power and political use of Islam as a means to an end. Muldoon states, “[Innocent] seems to have seen the Moslems living in Europe as a greater threat to Christians than the Jews, so that his strongest strictures were against the toleration of Moslems in Spain.”<sup>45</sup> The pope was more religiously motivated in his theoretical writings than in his practice as a pope. He wanted to protect his Christian subjects from heretical teachings, but he understood that he did not have the authority to tell non-Christian rulers how to do their jobs.<sup>46</sup> His time and place put him in a unique position that seemingly offered him the power to make drastic changes in Muslim-Christian relations, but he was helpless to enact change on a permanent level.<sup>47</sup>

### *Power Dynamics in Papal-Imperial Diplomacy*

Frederick II is a prime subject of study for thirteenth-century power dynamics in religion and politics. His turbulent relationship with not one, but three popes during his reign displays an ascending slope of political driving forces within the church. Honorius III lived under the shadow of the great Pope Innocent III, and historiography has only recently corrected the perception of him as a weak pope. His immediate predecessor and successor experienced great excitement during their pontificates, and Honorius would have been hard-pressed to compete with their accomplishments. Even so, his concern over heresy in southern France resulted in shifting religious priorities of the crusades.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 48.

This new religious prerogative carried over into Gregory IX's pontificate. Gregory's relationship with Frederick II generally serves as the highlight of his historical reputation, although he accomplished a great deal in other matters. His employment of the lord-vassal relationship moved the papacy closer to a political entity that preferred authority and control to religious morality. Gregory thus laid the foundation for Innocent's shift toward political motivations.

Innocent IV demonstrates the final product of this political transition. He took Gregory's glory for defeating Frederick, and his pontificate marks him as a full-blown political pope who represented the secular power of the Christian Church. His success can only be recognized through the gradual evolution of the papacy that came before him.

The lord-vassal relationship appears in all three popes' association with Frederick II. The hovering question of authority determined how each pope reacted to signs of rebellion on Frederick's part. By asserting their papal right to grant secular legitimacy to Frederick, they justified their outbursts at Frederick's pathological oath breaking. The emperor had failed to fulfill his vow to go on crusade, which began during Honorius's pontificate and spilled over into Gregory's. Failing to honor a crusading vow suggested to the church that Frederick did not care about the spiritual well-being of his Christian subjects. To further damage his case, he had failed to uphold the church's standards of fighting heresy in his own lands. Gregory claimed that by ignoring heresy, Frederick had embraced it and was thus unfit to rule his kingdom.<sup>48</sup> Innocent had long battled with the canonistic perception of religious and secular authority. He questioned the church's right to denounce an unfit ruler's claim to the imperial throne. This theological questioning did not inhibit him from denouncing the excommunicated Frederick, however.

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<sup>48</sup> Lomax, "Hints and Allegations," 177.

Excommunicated and non-Christian rulers posed a problem for Innocent, and he struggled with how best to deal with supporters of Islam in his lands.

### *Power Dynamics in Relation to Islam*

Frederick serves as a vessel through which to examine the church's shifting viewpoint of Islam. The popes hurled numerous accusations against Frederick, from heresy to oath breaking. He violated the conditions of the lord-vassal relationship between pope and emperor. Oftentimes, the emperor's all too friendly association with Islam fueled these accusations. David Abulafia has already suggested that Frederick was not as tolerant towards Muslims as his modern reputation holds, but multiple medieval sources intentionally mention his interactions with and employment of Muslims in his court. These sources generally favored the church, and thus negatively portrayed Frederick as preferring Muslims to Christians. Such preferential treatment would not have improved the emperor's already shaky relationship with the church. The church was aware of Frederick's reputation through these sources, and the popes were willing to use it against the emperor as a means of furthering their case against him. In exerting papal authority to undermine Frederick's legitimacy as a secular ruler, they hurled every accusation possible against him. In the wake of the crusades, the fight against Islam had receded from a religious opposition to a political manipulation. While Frederick is the physical marker for this changing papacy, his relationship with the church inadvertently affected Islam. Thus, further discussion of Frederick's relationship with the church and with Islam takes place in the next chapter.

The historiographical trend tends to focus on Innocent III as the powerful political pope worthy of study. This thesis suggests that Innocent III's successors contributed just as much to the political development of the church. Each pope built on the success of his predecessor. Gregory IX is arguably the most obvious example of this transition in progress. Unfortunately, only a few historians have taken it upon themselves to fully explore Gregory's contribution to Christian-Muslim relations. Studies of Gregory and Frederick's relationship circle the issue of Islam in the Latin West, but research is lacking to combine Gregory's politicization with his canonistic view of Islam. Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV mark a transitional period in the thirteenth-century papacy. Each pope progressively relied on politics to further his agenda, and further research is needed to implicate Gregory's pontificate in particular as the watershed moment for Christian-Muslim relations.

## Chapter 3

### *Frederick II's Crusade: A Peaceful Journey with Violent Consequences*

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Emperor Frederick II's conflicts with the church, and especially with Pope Gregory IX, are no secret. This bellicose relationship largely developed as a result of Frederick's crusade in 1228. The emperor had first vowed to go on crusade at the behest of Pope Honorius III, but he did not depart for Jerusalem until over a decade later.<sup>49</sup> When Frederick finally arrived in Jerusalem, he managed to obtain the Holy Land from Muslims without any fighting, and he became King of Jerusalem in the process. In theory, this victory should have won him favor and support from the Latin West, but in reality, Frederick's methods for achieving this victory only further damaged his reputation among Latin Christians. This crusade spurred a lifetime of fighting between emperor and pope, with the implications stretching beyond mere disobedience.

Frederick II, King of Sicily and later crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Honorius III, was the perfect political choice to lead a crusade to Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup> Not only was he a powerful secular ruler, but he was also known in the Latin West for his unusual lifestyle. With his kingdom based in Sicily, he had access to multiple cultures and religions. In modern scholarship, his court is often viewed as a space of progressive tolerance, as he welcomed Muslims and Jews into his court and valued the arts and

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<sup>49</sup> James Powell, *The Papacy, Frederick II and Communal Devotion in Medieval Italy*, ed. Edward Peters (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 252.

<sup>50</sup> John G. Gallaher, "Frederick II," in Wolbrink, *Great Lives from History*, 389.



sciences.<sup>51</sup> His crusade to Jerusalem further supports his affinity for learning and affable relations with “the Other.” This multicultural acceptance caused trouble for the emperor, as his friendly interactions with Muslims in Jerusalem suggested a preference for infidels over his own Christian people.

A basic overview of Frederick’s crusade reads as a spiteful exchange between two rulers: Frederick vowed and failed to lead a crusade, and when Pope Gregory IX ascended the papal throne in 1227, he almost immediately ordered Frederick to go on crusade with a final warning. Frederick continued to delay his departure until Gregory excommunicated the emperor. Frederick ignored this excommunication and still went to Jerusalem on crusade to negotiate for the Christian takeover of Jerusalem, which was a direct violation of papal authority that further angered Gregory. Yet the situation was far more complex than mere disobedience.

### *Leading up to the Crusade*

Pope Honorius III encouraged Frederick to go on crusade, as the Fifth Crusade desperately needed his assistance. James Powell suggests that this push to depart for Jerusalem was an attempt to achieve stronger ties between the papacy and the monarchy.<sup>52</sup> Frederick had promised the pope that he would lead a crusade, but he delayed his departure for so long that he actually missed the conclusion of the Fifth Crusade. Due to his inexplicable absence from the Holy Land, contemporaries often used

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<sup>51</sup> David Abulafia has argued against this conception of a tolerant Frederick in *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). His argument is explored further in a subsequent section of this essay.

<sup>52</sup> Powell, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean*, 531.

the emperor as a scapegoat for the failure of the Fifth Crusade.<sup>53</sup> Many of the narratives detailing Frederick's absence from crusades depict him as an unwilling participant looking for ways out of his obligation. Linda Ross, on the other hand, explains that even in his absence he was still involved in providing military aid and support to the Fifth Crusade, and that crusaders saw and appreciated this effort.<sup>54</sup> Unsurprisingly, this support was often omitted in propagandistic narratives of Frederick's absence.

### *Yolanda of Jerusalem*

After the failed Fifth Crusade, more incentive seemed necessary to push Frederick to go to Jerusalem. Eastern Christians proposed the idea of a marriage between Frederick and Yolanda—the Christian heiress of Jerusalem—and the Western Christians wholeheartedly supported it because of its potential political and military advantages.<sup>55</sup> This arrangement would make Frederick, a Western Christian, king of Jerusalem until he produced a legitimate heir. The marriage also prompted Frederick, as a powerful political figure who now had a personal investment in the future of Jerusalem, to finally lead a crusade to the Holy Land.<sup>56</sup>

Yolanda of Jerusalem—often referred to as Isabella of Jerusalem or Isabella of Brienne, but for simplicity's sake referred to in this chapter as Yolanda of Jerusalem—seemed an excellent match for Frederick II. Yolanda's father John of Brienne was King

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<sup>53</sup> Richard F Cassady, *The Emperor and the Saint: Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, Francis of Assisi, and Journeys to Medieval Places* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 180.

<sup>54</sup> Linda Ross, "Frederick II: Tyrant or Benefactor of the Latin East?" *Al-Masāq* 15, no. 2 (2003): 150.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

of Jerusalem, but only through marriage to Yolanda's mother who had passed away years earlier. Thus, Yolanda's husband would become the new king until they produced an heir to the throne of Jerusalem. Pope Honorius III wanted to ensure that a Latin Christian ruler would take the crown. He also needed Frederick to lead a crusade to Jerusalem. Frederick II just happened to be in need of a new bride after the death of his first wife Constance. The pope seized this opportune timing to meet each of these needs. He called together a council in Ferentino, Italy in 1223, during which both Western and Eastern Christians proposed a political marriage between Frederick and Yolanda.<sup>57</sup> Linda Ross explains that western nobility often married the heiresses of Jerusalem as a means of solidifying Christian power.<sup>58</sup> She spreads the credit for the marital arrangement evenly across those present at the council, including Honorius, Frederick, and John of Brienne.

When Pope Honorius III tried to convince Frederick to go on crusade to Jerusalem, he hoped that arranging a marriage alliance would further entice the emperor to fulfill his vow. A marital arrangement between Frederick and Yolanda seemed beneficial to all parties involved, especially for Frederick. David Abulafia explains Frederick's motivation to go to Jerusalem and marry Yolanda: "As emperor, Frederick exercised no authority [in Jerusalem]; as head of a crusade, he would command considerable influence, but not explicit power; but as king in right of his wife he would possess the capacity to organize, defend and save the beleaguered kingdom."<sup>59</sup> This marriage was thus favorable towards Frederick's imperial status. Through Yolanda, he gained the crown of Jerusalem as well as the public respect that accompanied it. Her royal status symbolized Frederick's expansion of power.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 150-1.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>59</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 150.

Furthermore, the eastern and western political leaders would reap the benefits of a powerful marital alliance. The church would finally witness the emperor's fulfillment of his vow to go on crusade and have a western heir to the Crown of Jerusalem. Frederick would become heir to Jerusalem, a coveted title for Holy Roman Emperors.<sup>60</sup> This widely beneficial arrangement demonstrates the multi-layered involvement of religious and secular rulers in diplomatic relations. Honorius relates his excitement over the arrangement in a letter to Henry III of England:

Finally, so that he might manifest his sincerity for it [the expedition] more fully, and that more faith may be placed in his undertaking, and [also] that scruples and suspicions to the contrary will be entirely removed, at the request of the aforesaid patriarch and the others of the East, [Frederick II] asserted with a religious vow that he would take the daughter of the same king [John of Brienne] in lawful marriage, in the presence of us and our brothers and a multitude of men who had come to the conference.<sup>61</sup>

Honorius claimed that this arrangement would erase any doubts about Frederick's devotion to protecting the interests of the church. His optimistic tone suggests that he believed that this resolution would prevent future conflicts between pope and emperor.

Unfortunately for Honorius, this seemingly foolproof plan quickly fell apart. Frederick and Yolanda married in 1225, but the emperor did not leave for Jerusalem until three years later due to an illness.<sup>62</sup> Frederick's hesitation to depart for Jerusalem did not stop him from assuming the title of King of Jerusalem as soon as possible. Frederick's rapid assumption of his title upset John of Brienne. As a result, John stirred up trouble for his new replacement back in Europe. Honorius's optimism for this marital arrangement and crusade did not have the desired outcome. Instead of bringing peace through marriage and recovery of the Holy Land, the emperor made Christian enemies and

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<sup>60</sup> Ross, "Frederick II: Tyrant or Benefactor," 149-50.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 153.

managed to get himself excommunicated. Honorius may have interfered in arranging political marriages with good intentions, but he was helpless to control the actions of those around him.

### *An Excommunicated Emperor*

Frederick's illness and delay was not well received. The decade's worth of excuses infuriated the new Pope Gregory IX, who excommunicated Frederick for delaying fulfillment of his vow. He refused to accept Frederick's sickness as an excuse to not go on crusade. David Abulafia, authoritative biographer of Frederick II, believes that Gregory simply used the crusade as an excuse to finally excommunicate Frederick. Tensions had been building between the two for a while, and Frederick's delay of crusade was merely the breaking point.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, in a letter to religious leaders in Frederick's territory of Apulia, Gregory explains the necessity of excommunicating the emperor:

Truly because a covered wound, if it is left untouched, is accustomed to spread more widely to the detriment of the body, we having once seen that Frederick, Emperor of the Romans, was neglecting his own salvation while he was hesitating to perform the healthy vow that he had vowed to God with added oaths not without detriment to the faith and to the grave detriment of the whole Christian people because according to the saying of the wise one, "while you are healing wounds, pain is the medicine of pain," have stretched forth the medicinal sword of Peter against him in the spirit of gentleness, by publishing the sentence of excommunication, which he himself had caused to be promulgated against himself voluntarily, unless he voyaged in assistance of the Holy Land within a certain amount of time and faithfully fulfilled other promises; hoping that having been struck, grieving, he might return to the one striking him in humility by seeking the Lord of hosts.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, 166.

<sup>64</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:288-9 (no. 371): "Verum quia tectum vulnus, si dimittatur intactum, solet in scandalum corporis latius evagari, nos olim viso, quod Fridericus Romanorum imperator salutem propriam negligebat, dum salubre votum, quod Deo voverat additis iuramentis, detrectabat

Gregory did not hold back his criticism against Frederick. He compared Frederick's oath-breaking to a festering wound, and the only cure was to cut it out completely. The emperor had committed such a grave fault that the pope had no choice but to excommunicate him. This excommunication was not meant to be a permanent fix, however, as Gregory stated that his goal was to punish Frederick in the hope that he would realize the error of his ways and seek forgiveness. As Frederick's response demonstrates, such was not the case.

Abulafia's biography of Frederick is completely sympathetic to Frederick and unsympathetic to Gregory. He states, "with [Gregory's] election, cooperation between pope and emperor gave way to the idea of the subordination of emperor to pope."<sup>65</sup> The constant power struggle between the two appears to confirm Abulafia's assertion. This statement suggests a stark transition in how the papacy handled relations with imperial powers. Thus, the crusade marked a perfect opportunity for Gregory to assert his authority over this obstinate ruler. In the previous chapter, we discussed how the lord-vassal relationship between pope and emperor was important in establishing relationships of power. This relationship was threatened when Frederick went on crusade despite Gregory's sentence of excommunication.

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exolvere non sine detrimento fidei et gravi scandalo totius populi Christiani, quia iuxta sapientis edictum: 'Vulnera dum sanas, dolor est medicina doloris', medicinalem Petri gladium in eum exseruimus in spiritu lenitatis, excommunicationis sententiam publicando, quam ipse in se voluntarius fecerat promulgari, nisi statuto termino transfretaret in Terre Sancte subsidium et alia promissa fideliter adimpleret; sperantes ut percussus dolens, ad percutientem se in humilitate redirect dominum exercituum requirendo."

<sup>65</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, 164.

## *Frederick's Crusade*

Frederick's decision to lead a crusade as an excommunicate was a major dismissal of papal authority, as an excommunicated ruler did not have legitimate power to lead a religious military effort. Abulafia hints at a sense of panic on Gregory's part upon hearing of Frederick's plan. Frederick's success would bring embarrassment to the church.<sup>66</sup> An imperial crusade—as opposed to the typical and accepted religious crusade—directly threatened the pope's political standing. If crusaders no longer needed his approval to fight on God's behalf, then his power was diminished. Gregory needed to assert his position as lord over his vassal Frederick in order to maintain the status quo. In the same letter to Apulia, Gregory promises to take away Frederick's fief if he does not comply:

And if he should not desist from oppressions of churches and ecclesiastical persons, or if he should not cease from trampling on ecclesiastical freedom, or, scorning excommunication, if he should not care to return to ecclesiastical obedience, we will absolve all who are tied to him by the oath of fealty and specifically the men of his kingdom and pronounce them to be absolved from the oath by which they are bound to him, because according to the decree of Pope Urban II, our predecessor of blessed memory, they are obliged by no authority to pay the fealty which men have sworn to a Christian ruler to one opposing God and his saints and trampling upon their precepts.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>67</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1: 288-9 (no. 371): “Et si ab ecclesiarum et ecclesiasticarum personarum oppressionibus non destiterit, aut non cessaverit a conculcatione ecclesiastice libertatis, vel excommunicatione contempta redire non curaverit ad mandatum ecclesie, omnes qui sunt ei fidelitatis iuramento astricti, et specialiter homines regni, a iuramento, quo sibi tenentur, absolvemus et denunciabimus absolutos, quia iuxta decretum felicitis recordationis Urbani pape secundi, predecessoris nostri, fidelitatem, quam homines Christiano principi iuraverint, Deo eiusque sanctis adversanti et eorum precepta calcanti, nulla auctoritate persolvere cohibentur.”

The lord-vassal relationship was a hierarchy, and Gregory was supposed to be at the top. If his own vassal Frederick would not respect his authority, then Gregory had no choice but to cut the emperor off from his vassals. Fealty required obedience, and Frederick had failed to obey his lord. The purpose of this action was twofold. Gregory demonstrated his power and authority by absolving Frederick's vassals and removing his fiefdom. He also would be able to cut off some of Frederick's power. Thus, the pope became the rescuer of those who were trapped in an oath to an excommunicated ruler.

Yolanda of Jerusalem was a strong symbol of Frederick's relationship with the church. The emperor's marriage to her calls attention to both the conflict and the remedy of his ongoing dispute with the papacy. Yolanda and Frederick's union had obvious political advantages for both the emperor and the young wife's family. The church's involvement merely adds another layer to the drama of the relationship.

Yolanda's union with Frederick in 1225 had far-reaching consequences. Initially, John of Brienne had fully supported his daughter's marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor. Gregory Federenko provides two potential reasons as to why John of Brienne was so eager for his daughter to marry Frederick: either to bring in personal wealth from such a strong match, or to gain prestige from the match but maintain control.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately for John, who had expected to rule until Frederick departed for the Holy Land, Frederick took immediate actions to take control of Jerusalem, leaving John without any legitimate authority over the Holy Land.<sup>69</sup> As John of Brienne did not anticipate losing his crown so quickly, he began spreading rumors about Frederick to the church. One of these rumors details Frederick's alleged mistreatment of Yolanda, claiming that he beat her and overtly

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<sup>68</sup> Gregory Federenko, "The Crusading Career of John of Brienne, c.1210-1237," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 52 (2008): 68.

<sup>69</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 152.



committed adultery.<sup>70</sup> John felt responsible for defending her honor, while simultaneously discrediting Frederick's authority. These rumors of domestic abuse reached Honorius as well as the rumor that Frederick was a negligent husband, especially as far as bedroom duties were concerned. If these rumors were true, then Frederick's lackluster affection for his new wife was cause for concern on Honorius's part, as his whole reason for arranging the marriage was so that Frederick and Yolanda could provide a male heir to Jerusalem.<sup>71</sup> It is unclear whether or not these rumors were unfounded and were merely an attempt to dampen Frederick's reputation, but the emperor did not help his case. Rather than meeting Yolanda in Jerusalem for their wedding, Frederick stayed in Europe to recruit crusaders, so he married Yolanda by proxy and had her sent to him.<sup>72</sup> His lackluster attitude towards the marriage did not bode well for securing peaceful relations amongst participants in the betrothal arrangement.

Frederick's negotiations with Sultan al-Kamil and assumption of the crown of Jerusalem, as well as the Latin West's perception of these events, have been widely interpreted by modern scholars. Linda Ross wants to subvert what modern historians interpret as negative Western impressions of Frederick after his negotiations in Jerusalem.<sup>73</sup> For the most part, the negative reaction towards Frederick's actions was based on Frederick's undesirable status as an excommunicate leading a crusade. Ross suggests that even though John of Brienne was upset with Frederick's immediate assumption of authority over Jerusalem, everyone else supported the new king's

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<sup>70</sup> Fedorenko, "The Crusading Career of John of Brienne," 70.

<sup>71</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 153.

<sup>72</sup> Fedorenko, "The Crusading Career of John of Brienne," 70.

<sup>73</sup> Ross, "Frederick II: Tyrant or Benefactor," 149.

actions.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the negative reaction to Frederick was in reality only due to a few loud voices in an otherwise approving group of Western Christians.

Frederick's crusade was indeed unusual in its execution, which explains why it requires special interpretation on the modern historian's part. Hiroshi Takayama, for instance, examines the success of this crusade with particular emphasis on the diplomacy between Frederick and Sultan al-Kamil. The lack of fighting during a crusade was unusual, but Frederick's long-term relations with Muslims worked in his favor.<sup>75</sup> While Takayama's argument for the most part is sound, his evidence for Frederick's diplomatic relations extending back to 1217 is scant and somewhat unreliable. It is based on a lost mosaic that is mentioned in one seventeenth-century source. One sentence in particular strikes as problematic and draining of the argument's strength: "It is most probable that Frederick II and al-Kamil exchanged envoys in this period, given the fact that Frederick II had Muslim officials and soldiers as well as scholars at his court, and lived a life surrounded by Muslims, like the previous Norman Kings of Sicily."<sup>76</sup> Hiroshi packs a lot of conjecture into one sentence. Furthermore, many scholars have suggested that Frederick's court was not as full of Muslims as was once thought. Even so, the emperor was probably more exposed to Islamic culture than most of his contemporaries.

In looking at these earlier diplomatic interactions, Takayama mentions Fakhr al-Dīn as the main envoy to Frederick's court, as he is the best documented and arguably the most important figure to have served as a catalyst to Frederick's crusade. Following al-Kamil's request for military aid, Frederick sent an envoy in return to Egypt, bringing

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>75</sup> Hiroshi Takayama, "Frederick II's Crusade: An Example of Christian-Muslim Diplomacy," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 25, no. 2 (2010): 169.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 171.

gifts.<sup>77</sup> The emphasis on diplomacy through the use of envoys rather than fighting and bloodshed demonstrates a forgotten reality to interfaith relations during the crusades. These exchanges contained discussion of the Holy Land and military aid, both of which were potentially controversial topics. Yet political gain and diplomacy override the seemingly bloodthirsty nature of crusaders at this time. A lot of travel via envoys was conducted before Frederick ever left the comfort of his court.

Takayama's research reveals much about Frederick's involvement in thirteenth-century interfaith relations. Not every exchange between the emperor and sultan of Egypt consisted solely of negotiations. Frederick apparently liked to test the intellect of his ally's court, so he sent mathematical problems to be solved.<sup>78</sup> The agreeable nature of these exchanges suggests an intellectual curiosity on behalf of the two rulers. Arabic sources are favorable towards Frederick, and comment on his love for science and kindness towards Muslims.<sup>79</sup> Frederick seemed to have more support from Muslims in Jerusalem than from Christians. Frederick's peaceful interactions with the enemy did not sit well with Pope Gregory IX, who later used Frederick's relationship with Islam as a means of turning his Christian subjects against the emperor.<sup>80</sup>

### *Frederick in Jerusalem*

Ibn Wasil's thirteenth-century chronicle suggests that Sultan al-Kamil had ulterior motives for giving Jerusalem to Christian control. He states, "he believed that he should

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Four below, "Excommunications with Many Explanations: Pope Gregory IX and Frederick II's Crusade," for a more detailed analysis of Gregory's propaganda campaign against Frederick.

satisfy the Franks with the city of Jerusalem in ruins, and make peace with them for a time, and then he would be able to seize it from them whenever he wished.”<sup>81</sup> This narrative suggests that al-Kamil wanted immediate peace with the Franks, and so he was willing to make this sacrifice as long as it was temporary. He assumed that he would be able to retake the city at a later date. Neither party was particularly happy with the agreement, but they both agreed that immediate peace was most important.<sup>82</sup> Despite an ambivalent interpretation of Frederick and al-Kamil’s treaty, Ibn Wasil seemed supportive of Frederick as an individual. He accompanied Frederick on a tour of Jerusalem and carefully documented their interactions. Frederick was respectful of Muslim customs and looked forward to experiencing them, which was surprising for a Christian ruler in such turbulent times as the crusading period.<sup>83</sup>

In agreement with Ibn Wasil’s account, contemporary Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī provides an amiable narrative of Frederick acting respectful while touring Jerusalem. The end of his account would later bring trouble for Frederick’s reputation, however. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī states, “what was apparent from his words was that he was a materialist, and that he was only play-acting at being a Christian.”<sup>84</sup> This assertion compounded with his excommunication did not bode well for the emperor’s already tense relationship with the church. Indeed Gregory pounced upon rumors of this behavior and accused Frederick of preferring Muslims over his own Christian subjects.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Niall Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders: Christianity’s Wars in the Middle East, 1095-1382, from the Islamic Sources* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 155.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>85</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:293-4 (no. 376).

David Abulafia tries to correct some misconceptions about Frederick's attitude towards religion in Jerusalem. He argues that the accounts of the emperor's ambivalence towards Christianity were exaggerated, and while he valued Muslim learning, he still preferred Christianity as evidenced by his pursuit of heretics in his kingdom.<sup>86</sup> Abulafia's interpretation of Ibn Wasil's account suggests that respect did not necessarily mean tolerance.<sup>87</sup> As a subsequent chapter of this thesis points out, the idea of action versus identity became an unusual way of viewing Muslims. Frederick appeared to have experimented with this idea in Jerusalem. He embraced the culture while he was there, but he still held onto his Christian identity at home in the safety net of Christian territory.

### *Political and Religious Aftermath*

Frederick viewed his crusade as a terrific success. In a letter to Henry III of England, the emperor detailed his own success in the Holy Land.<sup>88</sup> Frederick spoke highly of the Sultan al-Kamil, and his general tone was excitement for his new victory. Seeing that Frederick could not have become king of Jerusalem without his marriage to Yolanda of Jerusalem, it is interesting to note that he did not even acknowledge Yolanda's contribution to his crusading victory in Jerusalem. Frederick, the church, and even Yolanda's own father used her as a political pawn. Frederick wanted to expand his imperial power, Honorius wanted a Christian heir to Jerusalem, and John wanted to reap the monetary benefits of marrying his daughter off to the successful Holy Roman

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<sup>86</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 186.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>88</sup> "Frederick II to Henry III of England. 1229," in Dana Carleton Munro, ed., *Letters of the Crusaders*, rev. edn., Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History (Philadelphia, PA: The Department of History of the University of Pennsylvania, 1902), 24-27.

Emperor. The young empress held no agency. Granted, Yolanda had died in childbirth shortly before Frederick's departure, providing him with a son named Conrad.

Nevertheless, the young empress was a major motivation for Frederick's leaving on crusade. In a letter to Henry III of England detailing his triumphant crusade, Frederick fails to mention his wife's ties to Jerusalem. He brags about his diplomacy skills and title as king in the now Christian-controlled Holy Land, but he expresses no gratitude to those who made the arrangement, Yolanda, or her family. He does, however, give glory to God:

We, in company with all the pilgrims who had with us faithfully followed Christ, the Son of God, entered the holy city of Jerusalem, and after worshipping at the holy sepulchre, we, as being a Catholic emperor, on the following day, wore the crown, which Almighty God provided for us from the throne of His majesty, when of His especial grace, He exalted us on high amongst the princes of the world; so that whilst we have supported the honor of this high dignity, which belongs to us by right of sovereignty, it is more and more evident to all that the hand of the Lord has done all this.<sup>89</sup>

Frederick's words suggest that he felt entitled to the position of king of Jerusalem, and as Holy Roman Emperor, he was certainly more qualified than most. Even so, his self-praise comes across as arrogant, especially since he had gone on this expedition as an excommunicate. Throughout the letter, he makes no mention of his excommunication or of his wife who gave him his legal right to the crown, choosing instead to highlight his victory through Christ in the hopes of convincing readers that he was still worthy to rule in God's eyes. In emphasizing his own success, Frederick takes away any credit for success on Yolanda's part.

He seemed pleased that everything played out to his advantage. This excitement is understandable, given that he was also crowned King of Jerusalem during this trip, a

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 26.

detail he “humbly” included in his letter. Frederick also mentioned God’s glory and mercy for giving the Christians this victory: “And whilst the treaty was in progress between the parties on either side of the restoration of the Holy Land, at length Jesus Christ, the Son of God, beholding from on high our devoted endurance and patient devotion to His cause, in His merciful compassion of us, at length brought it about that the sultan of Babylon restored to us the holy city, the place where the feet of Christ trod.”<sup>90</sup> The emperor’s phrasing suggests that Frederick did not take his excommunication too seriously and still considered himself a Christian on God’s crusade. Publicly announcing his victory on God’s behalf even though he technically was not supposed to have left Italy in this way demonstrates that he felt justified in his cause. Gregory’s excommunication was unlawful and thus the emperor felt no shame in bragging about his accomplishments.

Gregory, on the other hand, felt that Frederick’s attitude towards his excommunication was indicative of him turning his back against the faith. He states,

But that which is grievous to relate, with a hardened heart abhorring the medicine and deprecating the rebuke of discipline, or rather reckoning the hammer as a blade of grass, not only has he corrected himself with no remorse, but also he brazenly incites the Lord against himself, adding sins to sins.<sup>91</sup>

Frederick demonstrated no fear of rebuke from the church. Gregory implies in his letter that the emperor did not respect the church’s authority or God’s wrath. Frederick had no

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>91</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:288-9 (no. 371): “Sed quod dolentes referimus, inclinato corde medicinam exhorrens et increpationem abominans discipline, immo malleum velut stipulam reputans, non solum nulla penitudine se correxit, verum etiam adiciens peccata peccatis contra se Dominum audaciter irritat.”

interest in reconciliation, and so Gregory had to ensure that all knew of his disapproval of this crusade. The fact that Frederick succeeded could only have further angered him.

Whereas Frederick's letter gushed of his success and attitude on crusade, Patriarch Gerold of Jerusalem wrote about Frederick's victory in a far less favorable light. He called the emperor "deplorable" and believed that "from the sole of his foot to the top of his head no common sense would be found in him."<sup>92</sup> Gerold's frustrations with the emperor were rooted in Frederick's decision to go on crusade as an excommunicate, and he was further exasperated by the secretive nature of Frederick's diplomatic efforts with al-Kamil. Frederick's ambiguous relations with Muslims confused both parties into accepting his actions, which Gerold found detestable and manipulative.

Christian refusal to help the excommunicated Frederick prompted him to position guards against pilgrims. This action appalled Gerold, who claimed, "and you may be sure he never showed as much animosity and hatred against Saracens."<sup>93</sup> This accusation further tarnished Frederick's reputation as a supporter of Muslims over Christians. Gerold was deeply disturbed by Frederick's friendly relations with Muslims, as he believed Frederick treated them more fairly than his own people. He snidely remarked that Frederick sent gifts to al-Kamil, "his dear friend," while simultaneously blocking Christian pilgrimage into Jerusalem.<sup>94</sup>

Gregory's frustrations with Frederick's crusade probably had little to do with the results of the crusade, as he was instead threatened by the thought that a secular ruler could achieve such results without the assistance of the church.<sup>95</sup> Frederick had gone on

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<sup>92</sup> "Gerold to all the Faithful. 1229," in Munro, *Letters of the Crusaders*, 27.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Powell, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean*, 257.



this crusade without the blessing of the church, he had obtained Jerusalem without any bloodshed, and he had successfully become King of Jerusalem and gained the respect of the Muslim sultan of Egypt. Gregory contributed nothing to this victory other than his attempts to impede Frederick's progress. If the crusades no longer required the approval of the church, then Gregory's power as a pope was significantly diminished. The pope therefore had to throw everything he could at the emperor in order to regain his own political authority. At every turn on this journey, Frederick upset the Latin West. Not only did he go on crusade as an excommunicate, he also won back Jerusalem through peaceful negotiations with an infidel and seemingly supported Muslim customs over his own. The combination of these actions prompted further disagreement between Frederick and the church, which resulted in a long-lasting propaganda campaign against the emperor.

## Chapter 4

### *Excommunications with Many Explanations: Pope Gregory IX and Frederick II's Crusade*

Frederick II made a holy vow at the beginning of his reign to lead a crusade to Jerusalem at the behest of Pope Honorius III. Frederick delayed his fulfillment of this vow until after Honorius's death. Gregory IX struggled to persuade Frederick to uphold his promise, but it was not until after Gregory excommunicated Frederick in 1227 for his seemingly intentional delay in departure that the emperor finally embarked on a crusade for the Holy Land. While abroad, Frederick further angered Gregory through his supposed preferential treatment of Muslims over Christians. This chapter argues that Frederick's crusade set the tone for Pope Gregory's future interactions with the rebellious emperor, in that Gregory used Frederick's relationship with Muslims to support his many allegations against Frederick over the course of his pontificate. However, Gregory did not use Frederick's Muslim settlement in Lucera against him. Despite the physical closeness of this colony to Christian territories, the colony never posed a direct threat to Gregory's Christian subjects. The pope therefore focused on other more pressing points of contention with the emperor and largely left the colony alone.

In order to support these claims, I will closely examine several of Gregory's papal letters that directly address Frederick's crusade to Jerusalem in 1227 and his relationship with the Lucerne Muslims. Not only do these letters demonstrate the tense papal-imperial relations that mark the beginning of Gregory's pontificate, but they also hold implications for medieval Muslim-Christian relations in demonstrating a transitional

period in papal use of Islam as imperial propaganda. At this point, the crusades had been going on for over a century, so Christian sensitivity to Islam as “the Other” was heightened. Popes had long targeted this fear of Islam in their calls to crusade, and Gregory used the foreign religion’s reputation as a scare tactic in order to fuel his arguments against his enemy Frederick on the home front. Gregory’s reaction to Frederick and Islam serves as an indicator of the complex political and religious motivators behind the entirety of Gregory’s pontificate.

In addition to modern scholarship on the topic, this chapter examines four letters from Gregory’s papal registry.<sup>96</sup> For the sake of simplicity, this chapter will refer to them by their chronological number within Rodenberg’s edition. Letter 368 is Gregory’s excommunication encyclical against Frederick II on October 10, 1227. In this encyclical, Gregory addresses Frederick’s delay in his departure for Jerusalem and his many reasons for excommunicating the emperor. Letter 376, written on November 30, 1228 while Frederick was still in Jerusalem, laments that Frederick was too supportive of Muslims in Jerusalem at the expense of his fellow Christians and also details how Frederick and his representative Raynald of Spoleto had completely defiled Christianity through despoilment of Christian lands. Letters 494 and 553, written in 1232 and 1233 respectively, address the Muslim colony at Lucera, which suggests that Gregory was aware of and concerned with the colony but did not necessarily use it against Frederick. Examination of these letters and their context implies that Gregory used Frederick’s treatment of Muslims as general ammunition to build up harsh sentiment against the emperor, but that Lucera was not necessarily a specific source of contention. Gregory

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<sup>96</sup> In particular, this chapter looks at letters from Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* (nos. 368, 376, 494, and 553). Each passage is my own English translation from the original Latin.

was often annoyed by Frederick's actions regarding the Muslim colony and was quick to mention the colony's faults. Even so, Lucera was not a primary target of his propaganda campaign against the emperor, as it did not reflect Frederick's capabilities as a Christian ruler. Gregory's decision to avoid Lucera—a Muslim colony in the heart of Christian territory during the crusading period—suggests that his preoccupation was with action rather than religious affiliation. As long as these Muslims were not physically or spiritually harming his Christian subjects, Gregory did not mind their existence in Lucera. This is not to say that Gregory was tolerant by any means, at least according to the modern understanding of the term, but rather that he had shifted his focus to only address direct threats to Christianity.

### *Background and Historiography*

Frederick II Hohenstaufen held many titles: King of Germany, King of Sicily, Holy Roman Emperor, and King of Jerusalem following his crusade to the Holy Land. He was a successful military leader and a prominent noble.<sup>97</sup> One of the reasons that Frederick has long held the interest of historians is his reputation as a modern king in medieval times. He is often touted as a tolerant king who valued the input of Muslim scholars in his court. Muslim accounts describe his actions in Jerusalem as favorable towards Islam and only superficially supportive of Christianity. Such a king was rare in the thirteenth century, making Frederick a unique source of study. Yet scholars have recently begun to push back against this tradition. David Abulafia in particular argues that Frederick II was not as benevolent as his reputation suggests and that he acted on his

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<sup>97</sup> Julie Anne Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 9.

own economic interests towards Muslims under his rule. The notion of Christians and Muslims behaving tolerantly towards one another only applied to Frederick's court, as exemplified in Frederick's patronage of the arts and sciences, and does not account for the rest of the kingdom of Sicily.<sup>98</sup> Even so, the emperor's court, while well versed in Arabic works of intellect, was bare of Muslim employees.<sup>99</sup>

The political and religious struggles between Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX are nothing new to medieval historians. For years, historians depicted Frederick as completely antagonistic towards the papacy and the church. In the 1960s, James Powell was the first historian to give credit to Frederick as a ruler with complex motivations.<sup>100</sup> Powell's work was fundamental to the historiography of Frederick and the papacy in that he prompted a reinterpretation of the various interactions between Frederick and the papacy, with new focuses on how the lord-vassal relationship, Muslim-Christian interactions, and propagandistic rhetoric all fit into the complex nature of Frederick II's rule.

Since James Powell's influential work, Frederick has become a popular topic of study largely due to his controversial run-ins with the papacy. Abulafia wrote a groundbreaking biography of Frederick II's life,<sup>101</sup> and John Phillip Lomax has explored

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<sup>98</sup> David Abulafia, "The End of Muslim Sicily," in *Latin Expansion in the Medieval Western Mediterranean*, ed. Eleanor A. Congdon, The Expansion of Latin Europe, 1000-1500, 7 (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2013), 111.

<sup>99</sup> Abulafia, "The End of Muslim Sicily," 133.

<sup>100</sup> James M. Powell, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007); James M. Powell, *The Papacy, Frederick II and Communal Devotion in Medieval Italy*, ed. Edward Peters (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>101</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*.

the legal side of Frederick and Gregory's conflicts. Lomax and Abulafia agree on Gregory's motivations against Frederick.<sup>102</sup>

For the sake of clarity, a brief timeline of the events discussed in this chapter is in order. Frederick deported Muslims to Lucera from 1223-5, was excommunicated in October 1227, departed on crusade shortly after his excommunication in the same year, and reconciled with Gregory in 1230. Throughout the 1230s, Gregory and Frederick continued in conflict, and it is at this point that Gregory finally mentions the Muslim colony at Lucera in 1232-4.

### *Islam as a Rhetorical Device*

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), often lauded as the most powerful medieval pope, began the process of using propaganda to fuel crusades for his own cause, and his successors followed his example. Christoph Maier explains that Innocent completely restructured the purpose of the crusade by expanding its function to encompass fighting against his own political enemies.<sup>103</sup> Innocent managed to garner new interest in the crusades through liturgy.<sup>104</sup> Innocent set a precedent for holding a procession in preparation for a crusade, a model that Gregory would later follow.<sup>105</sup> This procession was meant to gather support from those who did not physically go on crusade.<sup>106</sup> Innocent believed that all of Christendom should be involved in some way or another. As

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<sup>102</sup> John Phillip Lomax, "A Canonistic Reconsideration of the Crusade of Frederick II," *Monumenta Iuris Canonici*, Series C, Subsidia 9 (1992): 207.

<sup>103</sup> Christoph T. Maier, "Mass, the Eucharist and the Cross: Innocent III and the Relocation of the Crusade," in *Pope Innocent III and His World*, ed. John C. Moore (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999), 351.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

Innocent greatly influenced Gregory's crusading methods, it is pertinent to examine the earlier pope's involvement with the Hohenstaufen family. In 1199, Innocent III launched a crusade against Markward of Anweiler, a former Hohenstaufen agent who rebelled against the crown and befriended the Muslims of Sicily in an attempt to take over the kingdom.<sup>107</sup> This crusade and Innocent's justifications behind it carry similar language as Gregory's reaction to Frederick's crusade. Innocent referred to Markward "as another Saladin and as a friend of infidels."<sup>108</sup> Calling out Markward's actions and labeling him as opposed to Christians seemed to set the tone for Gregory's language in his letters about Frederick's actions. In linking papal enemies with foreign enemies, Innocent and Gregory expanded the conception of what a crusade could be.

Innocent III used Sicilian Muslims as propaganda against Markward, even though in reality they did not pose a threat to Christianity, but again served as a sort of "buzzword."<sup>109</sup> He employed propagandistic language against Islam to his advantage, as did Gregory IX and his successor Innocent IV. Yet this technique did not extend to the Muslims at Lucera. Outside of initial conversion attempts, Gregory IX and Innocent IV did not care about the Lucerine Muslims and did not use them as a threat against Frederick.<sup>110</sup> Gregory only cared about the Muslims if they directly interfered with Christian practice, and even then he toned down his language against their actions, as evidenced through close analysis of Gregory's letters.

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<sup>107</sup> Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 4-5.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> Christoph T. Maier, "Crusade and Rhetoric against the Muslim Colony of Lucera: Eudes of Châteauroux's *Sermones de Rebellionem Sarracenorum Lucherie in Apulia*," *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995): 347.

<sup>110</sup> Maier, "Crusade and Rhetoric," 348.

## *Excommunication and a Rebellious Crusade*

From the beginning of his reign, Frederick had promised Pope Honorius III that he would lead a crusade to Jerusalem. However, he kept delaying and kept finding excuses not to go. Honorius died in 1227, and a few months into Gregory IX's pontificate the new pope still saw no sign of the emperor fulfilling his vow. Scholars often portray Frederick's delay as intentional or indicative of unreliable behavior, but his excuses were indeed valid. Muslims had been rebelling in Sicily for years, and Frederick did not feel comfortable leaving his kingdom during such turmoil. He wanted to stay in Italy and hopefully oversee the surrender of this Muslim rebellion, which at that point was a real and violent threat to his kingdom.<sup>111</sup> He donated funding for the crusade to literally buy him some time with the papacy. In fact, the violence of this rebellion prompted him to deport Sicilian Muslims to a newly re-established colony at Lucera in Apulia.<sup>112</sup> A major focus of this chapter, the foundation of Muslim Lucera potentially solved Frederick's immediate problems, but would later cause difficulties for his successors.

This rebellion and a serious illness caused Frederick further delay, which was the final straw for the newly elected Pope Gregory IX. The pope chose to excommunicate the emperor for failure to fulfill his vows. In his excommunication encyclical, Gregory charges Frederick with failure to depart for the Holy Land on time and for not sending

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<sup>111</sup> Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 12.

<sup>112</sup> Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 11; Graham A. Loud explores Frederick's deportation of Sicilian Muslims and suggests that this mass expulsion did not necessarily mean an end to Muslims living in Sicily in his article "Communities, Cultures and Conflict in Southern Italy, from the Byzantines to the Angevins," *Al-Masāq* 28, no. 2 (2016): 132-52.



crusading funds (even though he actually did), both of which culminated in failure to uphold his vows.<sup>113</sup>

John Phillip Lomax explores Frederick's first excommunication from a legal standpoint. He looks at the justifications within Gregory's legal arguments against Frederick during his crusade to Jerusalem in order to argue that Gregory wanted to depose Frederick from the outset of his pontificate.<sup>114</sup> Frederick's illness legally should have exempted him from fulfilling his part of the crusading agreement by the given date; therefore Gregory had to deny that Frederick was truly ill in order to justify his excommunication.<sup>115</sup> Gregory's frustrations are understandable. Frederick had two years to prepare for a crusade, yet he conveniently happened to fall ill right before the deadline. Once he denied that the emperor was sick, Gregory managed to brush past the illness and pile on the accusations in order to strengthen his case against Frederick, in the hope that others would be appalled by Frederick's other faults and would forget about his illness.<sup>116</sup>

Frederick seemingly knew that the pope was grasping at straws and prepared for his crusade as if nothing had happened in order to convey his good intentions to the whole of Latin Christendom. Lomax states, "To prove that the papal judgment of 1227 was false, Frederick had to depart on crusade, as promised, in 1228. He clearly understood that his credibility rested on fulfillment of his vows."<sup>117</sup> In December 1227, Frederick wrote an encyclical letter, *In Admirationem vertitur*, to justify himself against

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<sup>113</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:281-5 (no. 368).

<sup>114</sup> Lomax, "A Canonistic Reconsideration," 207.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

the pope. Frederick believed his actions to be just and claimed that he had no reason to fear Gregory's unjust wrath.<sup>118</sup>

Politically and militarily speaking, Frederick II's crusade was a success. He won back Jerusalem for the Christians without bloodshed, and he managed to become King of Jerusalem through his marriage to Yolanda of Jerusalem. Even so, Gregory was not pleased with Frederick's behavior. Not only was he an excommunicate claiming victory for Christians, but he and his men also behaved deplorably while in Jerusalem. Gregory does not hold back his anger towards Frederick and his men in the following letter to the Genoese:

For Raynald, son of the late Conrad duke of Spoleto, [Frederick's] vicar and minister, having gathered a band of warriors, violently attacking the patrimony of blessed Peter, which the same Frederick is held to defend by many oaths, had priests and clerics mutilated at the hand of Saracens in a sacrilegious undertaking, as has been certainly related to us, with some suspended on a cross and others tortured by different torments. And because we did not restrain the first efforts of his forces when we were easily able, he, assuming more insolent audacity because of our patience, attempted to attack the March of Ancona and the duchy of Spoleto.<sup>119</sup>

Frederick made Raynald of Spoleto the imperial legate of Italian territories that Frederick had previously granted to the church.<sup>120</sup> As Frederick's representative, Raynald's actions reflect directly upon Frederick's ideals. Thus, by "violently attacking the patrimony of blessed Peter," Gregory suggests that Frederick had completely forgone all prior

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<sup>118</sup> Lomax, "A Canonistic Reconsideration," 212.

<sup>119</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:293-4 (no. 376): "Raynaldus enim natus quondam Conradi ducis Spoleti, eius vicarius et minister, exfortio congregato patrimonium beati Petri, quod idem Fridericus multiplici iuramento tenetur defendere, violenter invadens, presbyteros et alios clericos, sicut nobis est pro certo relatatum, per manus Sarracenorum fecit ausu sacrilego mutilari, quibusdam in cruce suspensis, aliis diversis suppliciis cruciatis. Et quia primos virium suarum conatus a primordio non repressimus, cum facile potuerimus, ille de patientia nostra insolentiozem assumens audaciam, marchiam Anconitanam et ducatum Spoleti aggredi attemptavit..."

<sup>120</sup> Lomax, "A Canonistic Reconsideration," 216.

agreements with the church to allow such to happen. Geographically speaking, these lands were in close proximity to Rome, which made these violent attacks all the more threatening to Gregory. It is interesting that this letter mentions Raynald despoiling church lands in Frederick's name, but Frederick had supposedly revoked those lands from the church because of all of the accusations of ingratitude floating around prior to his crusade. This point in particular sparked contention between pope and emperor, as Gregory claimed that Frederick's revocation was impossible since those lands belonged to the church now. Land meant power at this point in time, and disrespect towards papal lands meant disrespect against the Church. Gregory probably felt the need to solidify his power and control over his lands in an attempt to assert his supremacy over Frederick.

Gregory addresses Frederick's crusade in a detailed letter to the Genoese. He used damning language against Raynald and Frederick in order to make Christians realize the threat that Frederick posed to Christianity. He did not hold back in expressing his anger.

In one passage, he states:

Indeed, Emperor Frederick, lifting his heart against God, with his spirit determined upon pride, not to mention the almost innumerable other things by which he has rashly provoked God, not content that he has as it were confounded the business of the Holy Land irreparably by his deceitful waywardness, to the most atrocious abuse of Jesus Christ and the inextricable disgrace of the Christian peoples, and counting as nothing that he is violently despoiling churches and ecclesiastical persons, has subverted ecclesiastical liberty.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:293-4 (no. 376): "Fridericus siquidem imperator cor suum elevans contra Deum, spiritu ad superbiam obfirmato, ut taceamus alia fere innumera quibus Deum provocavit audacter, non contentus quod negotium Terre Sancte dolosa perversitate irreparabiliter quasi confudit, in atrocissimam contumeliam Iesu Christi et inextricabile opprobrium populi Christiani, et pro nichilo reputans quod ecclesias et personas ecclesiasticas spolians violenter, subvertit ecclesiasticam libertatem"

The language in this passage is harsh. Gregory wrote as though Frederick deliberately turned his back on God and his fellow Christians. Phrases such as “atrocious abuse of Jesus Christ” and “violently despoiling churches” suggest that Frederick held no regard for Christianity. Frederick’s actions against the church were intentional, and Gregory wanted the world to know. Gregory employed propagandistic language in an attempt to rally support for his cause against the emperor who had “subverted ecclesiastical liberty” at every turn. Ecclesiastical liberty was of the utmost importance to Gregory, at least according to these letters. In a later passage of Letter 376, Gregory explained that Frederick consistently abused the Church and her people, referring to “the oppression of ecclesiastical liberty which that same Frederick always threatens and carries out incessantly, since even before this, wheresoever he had the power he determinedly trod down churches and ecclesiastical persons, as well as widows, orphans, and wards.”<sup>122</sup> Gregory wanted to emphasize that Frederick’s actions were nothing new, and that all should beware his malevolent intentions.

Furthermore, Gregory used Islam as an additional means of tearing down Frederick’s credibility. Muslims were not his main focus in this letter, but he used their association with Frederick as an insult added to injury of sorts. In the Genoese letter, Gregory described Frederick as “now falsely putting on the appearance of one going to Jerusalem, where he may take care to hinder the Christians more than the Saracens.”<sup>123</sup>

This language suggests that Frederick cared more about Muslims in Jerusalem than

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 1:293-4 (no. 376): “... Quam idem Fridericus semper minatur et indesinenter exequitur, depressionem ecclesiastice libertatis, cum antea etiam, ubicunque habuit potestatem, ecclesias et ecclesiasticas personas nec non viduas, orphanos et pupillos ex industria conculcarit.”

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 1:293-4 (no. 376): “Nunc faciem euntis in Ierusalem inique pretendens, ubi Christianis potius quam Sarracenis studeat officere.”

helping his fellow Christians with their cause. While the exact meaning is unclear, it probably has to do with Frederick's diplomatic approach to his crusade rather than the typical reliance on fighting and bloodshed. Nor did Gregory expand on this statement, which suggests that mention of Muslims was more of a propagandistic "buzzword" in order to fuel his argument. He also mentioned that Muslims aided Raynald in his torture of priests and clerics, as the passage above states. Again, we do not hear more about Muslim involvement other than Raynald's employment of their assistance.

Even with all of the hateful language that Frederick and Gregory threw at one another, neither of them used the Muslim settlement at Lucera as a justification for or against any charges. If Islam was not the central issue in a debate that was supposedly about a crusade to free Christian lands from Muslims, then why did Gregory and Frederick argue? John Phillip Lomax suggests that the crusade was a façade for underlying issues regarding papal and imperial lands in Italy. He explains, "Gregory was much more concerned with the threat that Frederick posed to the papacy in Italy than the loss of papal control over the crusade."<sup>124</sup> Gregory's attentions were elsewhere, so he did not care about Frederick's colony of Muslims. He had other concerns against the emperor. Unfortunately for Frederick, Gregory did not cease conflict after the crusade. Rather, he launched a full-scale attack on Frederick and his Sicilian kingdom. This thesis chapter does not focus on this dispute, but it is important to note that Gregory's campaign against Frederick from 1227-30 had to do with Frederick's treatment of his kingdom and papal lands, rather than the crusade in Jerusalem or with Muslims.<sup>125</sup> The main sources of

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<sup>124</sup> Lomax, "A Canonistic Reconsideration," 218.

<sup>125</sup> Graham A. Loud, "The Papal 'Crusade' against Frederick II in 1228-1230," in *The Papacy and the Crusades: Proceedings of the VIIIth Conference of the Society for the*

contention between the two were loyalty and land, not religion.<sup>126</sup> If the crux of the disagreement was no longer religion, then Gregory's lack of direct worry over Lucera is understandable.

### *The Foundation of Lucera*

Lucera, having been founded in 1222, was still a new colony during Frederick's crusade. It is understandable that the colony would have taken several years to fully establish itself and garner any attention. Following Gregory and Frederick's reconciliation in 1230, the pope occasionally mentioned the colony in his exchanges with the emperor. He wanted to convert Frederick's non-Christian subjects, as he was concerned for the well-being of Lucera's Christian neighbors. These Muslims had only recently been deported from their homeland of Sicily, which was a known hotspot for multicultural interactions.

Sarah Davis-Secord, a specialist in Sicilian history, explores Sicily's role in early medieval Mediterranean Greek, Latin, and Muslim interactions. After the Norman Conquest, Latin Christianity slowly started seeping into the island, which left Christians with "a level of ambivalence about how to confront the problem of a newly drawn boundary between Islam and Christianity and the predicament of Muslims living on the 'wrong' side of this line."<sup>127</sup> Nobody fully knew how to address these new living conditions. The growing Christian population slowly took over the waning Muslim

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*Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, ed. Michel Balard, Subsidia 4 (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 98.

<sup>126</sup> See James M. Powell, "Frederick and the Church: A Revisionist View," in Peters, *The Papacy, Frederick II and Communal Devotion in Medieval Italy*.

<sup>127</sup> Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2017), 223.

population. The Sicilian Muslims at Lucera had grown up with their traditions having been taken from them over the course of a century. It seems as though while the scholarship and religion of the Muslims was supported and appreciated, the slow takeover of Christian culture meant that all of these traditions were pushed out. Muslim forces began rebelling against their new ruler Frederick II, which resulted in the foundation of the colony in the mainland. Frederick granted these Muslims relative autonomy within the colony, but Gregory's insistence on conversion seemed to be a direct attempt to take away their religious traditions once again.

If Frederick initially did not care whether or not the Lucerine Muslims remained Muslims, then what was his end goal with this colony? Understanding the general treatment of this colony and the social status of the Muslims within Lucera illuminates their overall contribution to Frederick's relationship with Islam. Muslims at Lucera were property of the crown, known as *servi camerae*, but they were protected under imperial rule.<sup>128</sup> As *servi camerae*, the Lucerine Muslims could be called upon for military service, construction labor, or agricultural labor.<sup>129</sup> Even though Frederick relied on the Muslims for labor and military services, they were not technically slaves. The difference is distinct, albeit subtle. While Muslims at Lucera were physically bound to the area, they were generally free to practice religion and culture as they pleased.<sup>130</sup> These Muslims were situated in the midst of Christian territory, but they were largely isolated within their colony. Even so, they could still potentially pose a threat to Christianity.

Julie Ann Taylor wrote a foundational survey of the Muslim colony at Lucera.

Although scholars often refer to Lucera or speculate on its relevance to medieval

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<sup>128</sup> Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 67.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Muslim-Christian relations, Taylor's book was the first in a century to focus exclusively on the foundation and history of this Muslim settlement. In tracing the colony's history under Hohenstaufen and ultimately Angevin rule, Taylor is able to shed light on religious and secular perception of Muslims in this region. Her research suggests that under Frederick, this colony was well protected and for the most part stayed out of the papal spotlight. As far as Gregory and Frederick go, Gregory only cared about converting the colony in order to protect its Christian neighbors. Previous scholarship suggested that the location of Lucera for a new Muslim settlement was a direct provocation against the papacy. James Powell, however, asserts that Frederick had no ill intentions against the church with this decision.<sup>131</sup> Rather, the Muslim rebellion forced a relocation of Sicilian Muslims, and the new location on the mainland allowed for economic benefits to the emperor. Powell supports the notion that Gregory was not directly opposed to Lucera.<sup>132</sup> It seems as though Gregory did not care about Lucera as long as Frederick kept it under control. Thus, Islam was a threat, but Lucera was surprisingly not, at least not during Gregory's pontificate. Two of Gregory's letters specifically mention Muslim Lucera, and these letters imply that Lucera held a unique position in thirteenth-century Muslim-Christian relations.

### *Lucera's Role in Propaganda*

In 1232, Gregory wrote to Frederick asking him to restore a church in Bangio Foietano that the Lucerine Muslims had destroyed. Muslims could not leave the colony

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<sup>131</sup> Powell, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean*, 194.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.



except on official business, which made resources competitive.<sup>133</sup> The land was abundant, but not enough to support the large influx of Muslims alongside the Christians already living there. The colonists therefore had to look elsewhere for building supplies. Gregory states, “They destroyed the same [church] entirely, carrying off its stones and wood to Lucera for constructing their own buildings.”<sup>134</sup> He then asks Frederick to remedy the situation. This letter shows that the pope was aware of the colony, but did not appear troubled by it unless its inhabitants directly interfered with Christian property or practice. His main concern is restoring the church, not condemning the Muslims living in the nearby colony.

Gregory placed heavy emphasis on ensuring ecclesiastical liberty for his people in his letters regarding Frederick’s crusade. He continues this emphasis in his letter to Frederick about restoring the church in Bangio Foietano. Gregory ends this letter by referring to the surrounding Christians who might have witnessed the actions of the Lucerine Muslims. He is concerned that the destruction by the “sons of Belial” (*Belial filii*) might threaten the liberty of the “children of light” (*filios lucis*).<sup>135</sup> Such terminology throughout this letter could suggest negative feelings towards the Lucerine Muslims.<sup>136</sup> Yet it appears that in this particular passage, Gregory intentionally sets up this rhetorical device in order to contrast the destructive Muslims with the superior “children of light.” The difference in religion makes these Muslims more suspect and liable to harm Christianity in Gregory’s eyes, and so he used this rhetorical device to clearly separate

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<sup>133</sup> Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy*, 45.

<sup>134</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:398-9 (no. 494): “ipsam funditus diruerunt, lapides et lignamina eius deportando Nuceriam pro suis edificiis construendis.” Note that in Medieval Latin, Lucera could either be spelled as *Luceria* or *Nuceria*.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:398-9 (no. 494).

<sup>136</sup> Maier, “Crusade and Rhetoric,” 353.

the two religions. Such terminology is harsh and offensive, but compared to his fiery language against the actions of Frederick and Raynald in his letter to the Genoese, this letter seems quite mild regarding Gregory's reaction to the destruction of the church itself.

Gregory was concerned with actions rather than religious affiliation. He asserts that the Lucerne Muslims had “turn[ed] into a place of degradation what was once the dwelling-place of angels.”<sup>137</sup> He wants to remind Frederick that his duty as a Christian ruler is to watch over his Christian subjects. If Frederick's Muslims destroyed a church, then Frederick needed to rebuild it. Gregory is upset that the “dwelling-place of angels” has been destroyed, but rather than demanding expulsion or conversion of the Muslims who destroyed it, he merely pressures Frederick to restore it to its previous condition. Conversion does become an eventual goal during Gregory's pontificate, but this letter indicates that the Lucerne Muslims did not threaten Christianity because of their religious identity, only because of their actions that directly affected Gregory's Christian subjects. Overall, this letter suggests that Gregory's primary focus was restoring the church to its former nature in order to preserve ecclesiastical liberty rather than verbally attacking Muslims in Christian territory.

Gregory insisted in 1233 that Frederick allow Dominican preachers into the colony. Gregory makes a comparison to Jonah and the whale, suggesting to Frederick that if God means for these preachers to evangelize then nothing can stop them.<sup>138</sup> He also mentions the colonists' understanding of Italian, which several scholars have taken

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<sup>137</sup> Rodenberg, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae* 1:398-9 (no. 494): “vertentes in locum subigalium que prius fuerat habitaculum angelorum.”

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:447-8 (no. 553): “qui Ionam indicti casus oneris fugientem per elementum, quo se putabat evadere, terruit, ac velut ergastulo carceris ita piscis ventre conclusit, et innumeram multitudinem Nineven exterminii denuntiatione convertit.”

to mean that the pope was worried about the Muslims influencing nearby Christians with heretical beliefs. Gregory states,

We have decided that your imperial kindness should be requested and urged to firmly command through your letters the Saracens who dwell in Lucera in the province of Capitanata, and who understand the Italian language to no mean degree, as it is reported, that they are to receive in peace the brothers of the Order of Preachers, messengers of peace, whom we are sending to them with words of exhortation, and they are to listen to them patiently and prudently direct their attention to the things proposed to them for their salvation.<sup>139</sup>

We see in this passage that Gregory only briefly mentioned the Muslims' ability to speak Italian, and he did so in order to emphasize that the colonists would be able to understand the Dominican preachers. His main concern is getting the preachers to the colony in order that they may evangelize. The general tone of this letter is gentler than the other letters to Frederick addressed in this chapter. Gregory was not angry with Frederick at this point in time, and the two had taken a break from their many feuds. The pope just wanted to make sure that the emperor was looking out for the salvation and well-being of his subjects, both Christian and non-Christian. As the ruler of this colony, Frederick had the power to influence his subjects: "You are to draw through admonition and compel through terror."<sup>140</sup> This mention of Frederick's position was an intentional reminder of his Christian duty. Gregory's concern towards the Muslims of Lucera was aimed towards keeping Frederick in line, but the pope did not seem to use the colony's non-Christian status as a negative indicator of Frederick's capabilities as a Christian ruler.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 1:447-8 (no. 553): "Imperialem mansuetudinem rogandam duximus et hortandam, quatinus Sarracenis, qui Capitinate Luceriam incolunt et Italicum ydioma non mediocriter ut fertur intelligunt, per tuas litteras firmiter dare debeas in mandatis, ut fratres ordinis Predicatorum, pacis angelos, quod ad eos cum exhortationis verbo dirigimus, in pace suscipiant, patienter audiant et prudenter hiis, que pro sua salute proponuntur, intendant."

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 1:447-8 (no. 553): "exhortationibus attrahas et terrore compellas."

John Phillip Lomax studies this letter in detail in an attempt to gauge Gregory's opinion on Lucera. Lomax explains that the mention of the Muslims' ability to speak Italian probably did not make them more threatening, but rather Gregory mentioned it to justify sending Italian Dominicans to preach in a language that the colonists knew.<sup>141</sup> He also notes that letter 553 does not mention anything other than conversion, which suggests that this was his only concern and not the dangers of the colony to other Christians. The crusades were still in high gear during the thirteenth century, and Islam was still an unfamiliar religion to most Christians. Unfamiliarity with a religion whose members have been at war with members of one's own religion can be worrisome or even threatening to Christians. Even so, Gregory does not appear threatened by the existence of these Muslims so close to Christian communities. Lomax explains that Gregory does not specifically admonish the Muslim colony at Lucera but instead focuses the letter on Frederick's failure to uphold ecclesiastical liberty.<sup>142</sup> These letters imply that upholding ecclesiastical liberty was one of Gregory's primary functions as pope. Gregory was concerned with the idea of Muslims living so close in proximity to Christians and wanted to isolate and convert them, but he did not use them as a way to undermine Frederick's authority as a Christian ruler. Minority populations were common under Christian rulers, and this colony appeared no worse than others.

Lomax takes letter 553 to mean that Gregory was legitimately worried about the colony at Lucera in that the rhetoric of this letter was far too detailed and involved to mean otherwise. He states, "the Saracens of Lucera vividly reminded Gregory of what a

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<sup>141</sup> John Phillip Lomax, "Frederick II, His Saracens, and the Papacy," in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*, ed. John V. Tolan (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 194.

<sup>142</sup> Lomax, "Frederick II, His Saracens, and the Papacy," 176.

menace Frederick himself could be, to papal independence every bit as much as to the souls and churches of Christendom.”<sup>143</sup> Since Frederick was already a potential threat to the church, Lomax is correct in assuming that Gregory had to act preemptively and check in with the emperor to make sure he was doing his job. Yet this letter does not indicate an especially worried attitude towards the colony. Gregory encourages conversion, but he is doing so for the well-being of his Christian flock rather than because he is worried about what the colony might do. Throughout his essay, Lomax asserts that upholding ecclesiastical liberty is Gregory’s primary concern. This mindset transfers to both letters regarding the colony at Lucera. The pope only seemed upset with the Muslims at Lucera when their actions (not religious identity!) threatened the ecclesiastical liberty of his people.

Gregory appears to be unique in his preoccupation with action over identity. Such a transition is difficult to explain. In the midst of the crusades—when fear of Islam and confusion over what the religion actually entails was at its height—Gregory chose to avoid conflict with a Muslim settlement in his own territory. Sending crusaders to fight abroad and bringing crusaders to fight at home in Italy are two different actions. Gregory may have wanted to avoid violence on the home front unless it became crucial to his subjects’ safety. He reached out to Frederick at the first signs of threat from the colonists, which suggests that he was astutely observing the movements of Lucera. As long as Frederick kept his colony under control, Gregory saw no reason to lash out against the colonists. After all, Lucerine Muslims minding their own business in the confines of a colony were far less threatening than unfamiliar Muslims holding the Holy Land hostage.

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<sup>143</sup> Lomax, “Frederick II, His Saracens, and the Papacy,” 184.

## *Aftermath and Conclusions*

A mere fifty years after Frederick's death in 1250, the Muslim colony at Lucera was dismantled. Although Gregory largely left Lucera alone, his successors often brought up the colony during propaganda battles with the emperor. In fact, Pope Alexander IV (1254-61) was the first to use Lucera in a propagandistic sense in 1255 against Manfred, Frederick's illegitimate son.<sup>144</sup> It would appear as though Pope Innocent III and Pope Alexander IV used the Muslims at Lucera as a propagandistic tool, but the two popes in between, Gregory IX and Innocent IV, did not even though they both had open conflicts with Frederick. As for Gregory IX's pontificate, the pope generally used Frederick's treatment of Muslims as ammunition against him, but Lucera was not a point of conflict. After Pope Alexander IV's death, Urban IV (1261-4) also frequently engaged in the use of Islam as propaganda against Manfred. Lucera evolved into a target for papal fury against rebellious emperors. The escalation of this colony's status makes Gregory's laxity about it all the more curious.

Gregory IX appeared to have known when to pick his battles and how to effectively use propaganda against Frederick. The Lucerine Muslims never caused a direct threat to Christianity, so he never felt a need to use them as an example of Frederick's incompetence as a ruler. He did use the Muslims in Jerusalem against Frederick, however. He did so because at that point the emperor was an excommunicate who, in Gregory's opinion, threatened Christianity at every turn and used the Muslims to do so. As Frederick and Raynald used Muslim assistance for their destruction of Christian lands and liberties, Gregory felt it necessary to mention them in his accusations. The

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<sup>144</sup> Maier, "Crusade and Rhetoric," 348.

language employed in these letters suggests that Gregory used fiery language to describe horrific actions rather than religious preference. Gregory's interests in Islam, and in Lucera in particular, seemed to be both politically and religiously motivated. He used Islam as a scare tactic in his political bouts with Frederick, especially when the emperor was on his rebellious crusade to Jerusalem. The trope of the frightening, unknown Muslim was a common form of propaganda among medieval popes. Gregory abstained from using Lucera against Frederick unless the colony directly threatened ecclesiastical liberty, which suggests that he was indeed motivated to protect his Christian subjects. Ecclesiastical liberty was a recurrent theme in his letters to and about Frederick. Gregory took corrective measures against Lucera when the colony posed a threat to his subjects' ecclesiastical liberty, but he otherwise demonstrated a lack of concern towards the colonists. He understood when to and when not to use opposing religions to his political advantage. This unique approach separates Pope Gregory IX from his predecessors and successors as a pope focused on action rather than identity.

## Chapter 5

### *The Battle for Poverty: Pope Gregory IX against Saint Clare of Assisi*

Saint Clare of Assisi is a prominent historical figure because of her extreme piety as a follower of Saint Francis, but she has recently garnered the attention of medieval historians as a worthy adversary of the papacy in the thirteenth century. The beloved nun spent much of her adult life standing up to Pope Gregory IX to protect her religious order and its right to practice absolute poverty. The personal history between Gregory and Clare began with the founding of her order back when Gregory was still Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti di Segni of Ostia. Clare was a feisty character and did not want to bend to anyone's will, even that of the church, because of her sex. This chapter uses the disagreement between Gregory and Clare about religion and poverty as a contrast to the disagreements between Gregory and Frederick about religion and power. Gregory's pontificate serves as a turning point in the papacy's approach to religious and political issues in nearly every way, from religious orders to imperial power to opposing religions. Scholars of Clare's life have often mentioned the significance of the pope's role in the church's relationship with female monastic orders, and I hope to expand that idea by inserting Clare of Assisi into the larger sphere of Pope Gregory's interpersonal diplomacy to highlight his political nature. Frederick occupied much of Gregory's time as an adversary. The emperor was also a secular ruler over a vast array of territory. A close look at how Gregory interacted with someone in a completely different social setting provides further evidence of his political transition. As far as papal adversaries go, Clare



held the unusual status of woman and enclosed nun, which meant that Gregory's approach to handling conflict with her differed from his approach with Frederick.

Clare's noble birth and position as abbess of San Damiano meant that she was probably well educated and able to voice her opinion clearly. The extent of her ability to read and write is up for debate among modern historians.<sup>145</sup> Regardless, she was involved in the letter writing process to defend her beliefs, which gave her an authoritative power. According to her letters and her Rule, she wielded this power effectively. Furthermore, Clare's conflict with Gregory IX represents a shift in papal use of canon law to assert authority. Clare wanted to live a life of extreme poverty, whereas Gregory wanted her order to be cloistered with a stable source of income. The reasons for this assertion of power are unclear, but lean towards financial and security purposes. Gregory used her as a tool, manipulating canonistic rules and tradition in order to achieve his political goals.

Only in the last few decades has Clare surfaced as a subject of historical study. Scholars have only recently moved past the basic biography stage and into more specific details of her life. For the most part, she receives a passing nod in studies of the better-known Saint Francis of Assisi. Few of her own writings exist, but what we do have illuminates not only her piety but also her zeal for living a Christ-like life. Any modern research specifically dedicated to Clare tends to focus on her dispute with Gregory about poverty. Scholarly opinions of Clare and Gregory vary from source to source as to who was in the right or wrong, but most are sympathetic towards Clare. For instance, Maria Pia Alberzoni provides a detailed account of Clare's life and her lifelong work to ensure the longevity of her order. Her introduction makes Clare out to be a passive character and

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<sup>145</sup> Catherine M. Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules, and Resistance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 90-3.

a pawn in papal policy, Francis of Assisi to be a misogynist, and Gregory to be a manipulative force to be dealt with.<sup>146</sup> Jacques Dalarun, on the other hand, greatly romanticizes Clare's fight against the papacy.<sup>147</sup> He strives to make a simplistic battle of good and evil out of a significantly nuanced relationship. This example in particular supports the well-established argument that Clare was a feisty character willing to butt heads with the bishop of Rome for her beliefs. Catherine Mooney's recent book about Clare's life attempts to contextualize the lively abbess and in turn removes some of the "great woman" status from Clare's legacy.<sup>148</sup>

This chapter closely examines Clare's relationship with the church through the battle for poverty. A close examination of excerpts from Clare's own letters and official religious documents related to this conflict showcases Clare's place in Gregory's repertoire of political disagreements. In particular, I look at the shifting nature of Gregory's relationship with Clare as he transitioned from cardinal to pope. Economic change ruptured the social understanding of monetary value, and this change affected the entirety of the Franciscan order. Pope Gregory rose as a primary figure in promulgating the developing relationship between Franciscans and money. As such, he and Clare clashed in order to preserve their own ideals.

### *The Life of Clare of Assisi*

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<sup>146</sup> Maria Pia Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), 16-17.

<sup>147</sup> Jacques Dalarun, "In the Eyes of Each Other: Clare and Francis of Assisi," in *Interpreting Francis and Clare of Assisi: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Constant J. Mews and Claire Renkin (Melbourne: Broughton Publishing, 2010), 8.

<sup>148</sup> Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 14.

Clare (born Chiara) came from a noble family in Assisi, Italy.<sup>149</sup> She forfeited this wealth and status at a young age to join Francis of Assisi as a sister in poverty for Christ.<sup>150</sup> Her parents were displeased, to put it mildly. Francis took Clare and the other girls who had joined him to the church of San Damiano located just outside of Assisi, where he established a permanent residence for the young women in which to serve the Lord. Clare and Francis became close, and he served as a mentor to her. Having established San Damiano as the home of a new female Franciscan Order, he named her abbess, and she was so beloved that she became the namesake of the new female monastic group.<sup>151</sup> This order has several common names, such as The Order of Saint Clare, The Poor Clares, and the Poor Sisters. For the sake of continuity, I will refer to the female Franciscan order as the Poor Sisters.

Clare's canonization hearing abounds with stories of miracles and the sincere piety of the late abbess of San Damiano. Some members of the Poor Sisters recounted Clare's vivid dreams of a seemingly sexual nature regarding her and Francis, but they quickly assert that the relationship between the two was purely spiritual: "They were, Francis and Clare, in every sense spiritual lovers, though Francis abhorred the thought of bodily contact between the sexes and even turned his eyes away when addressing a woman."<sup>152</sup> This close relationship transcended physical attraction because of its holy purity. It seems as though Clare cared far more deeply about Francis than he did about her. She adored and admired him, and while he respected her, he did not mention her in

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<sup>149</sup> Joan Mueller, *A Companion to Clare of Assisi: Life, Writings, and Spirituality* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 11.

<sup>150</sup> Cassady, *The Emperor and the Saint*, 101.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

his own writings.<sup>153</sup>

### *Cardinal Hugolino of Ostia*

Cardinal Hugolino of Ostia, who would later become Pope Gregory IX, worked with Clare of Assisi and her order from its foundation. At the behest of Honorius III, he worked closely with Francis of Assisi during his lifetime, which in turn resulted in close contact with Clare. Francis took his own Rule to Pope Honorius III.<sup>154</sup> Hugolino edited the Rule, to Francis's dissatisfaction, in order to get it to pass with the pope's permission.<sup>155</sup> Hugolino strategically omitted the section about absolute poverty, a trait he would carry on in his dealings with Clare.

Despite these adjustments, Hugolino and Francis remained on good terms. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 had declared that no new religious orders would be founded, forcing Clare's new group to fall under the Franciscan brotherhood, the Order of Friars Minor. The Franciscan Order now had male and female monastic branches, with the actions of one affecting the other. Because of Hugolino's relationship with Francis, Pope Honorius III appointed the cardinal as the church official in charge of supervising and protecting these new female monastic groups. Clare and Francis did not always approve of Hugolino's legislation over the Poor Sisters.<sup>156</sup> It seems that Francis approved of Honorius's choice of Hugolino as protector of the Poor Sisters, but he wanted to have his own hand in the matter to ensure any policies did not interfere with his own ideals.

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<sup>153</sup> Dalarun, "In the Eyes of Each Other," 3.

<sup>154</sup> Cassady, *The Emperor and the Saint*, 196.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>156</sup> Joan Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations in the Early Franciscan Movement," *Collectanea Franciscana; Bibliographia Franciscana* 71.3-4 (2001): 393.

The Constitutions of Hugolino reevaluated and regulated female monastic orders.<sup>157</sup> The political factors at play in his regulation are crucial to understanding the tensions regarding San Damiano's joining of a papal order. Catherine Mooney explains that after establishing his *forma vitae* regarding monasticism, "Hugo became 'Father and Lord' of these women's monasteries, a role later more familiarly identified as 'cardinal protector.' Hugo's Order of Enclosed Ladies and Francis of Assisi's Order of Lesser Brothers were, in fact, the first religious orders to be linked to the papacy via cardinals. The prelates' mediating and authoritative role attested to the papacy's new ascendancy over increasingly centralized religious orders."<sup>158</sup> Hugolino's attitude in forming this order hints at his later desire as pope to bring these groups directly under his control while giving the impression that these women were freer than if they were on their own. Despite these later controversies, however, Hugolino supported Clare's mission for her order.<sup>159</sup> He offered support and protection, but embracing papal protection meant that San Damiano would become cloistered.

Tensions between Hugolino and Clare initially arose due to their varying opinions in regard to enclosing the nunnery. Hugolino felt that cloisters were necessary for "religious renewal."<sup>160</sup> The church approved of the order's mission and purpose, but Hugolino wanted them to be cloistered for safety and social reasons.<sup>161</sup> Initially, enforcement of enclosure for these nuns was lax. Yet Hugolino demanded full enclosure.

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<sup>157</sup> Clara Gennaro, "Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers: From the Poor Ladies of San Damiano to the Poor Clares," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>158</sup> Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 63-4.

<sup>159</sup> Gennaro, "Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers," 44.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

In “The Form and Manner of Life of Cardinal Hugolino,” sent to a new monastery in 1228, Pope Gregory IX detailed the importance of cloistering monasteries and provided instructions on how enclosed nuns should behave. Gregory probably wrote this rule when he was still Cardinal Hugolino, but he sent out copies to new monasteries once he was pope.<sup>162</sup> The date of this particular letter coincides with when he granted Clare poverty, and thus relates to the existing tensions between Gregory and Clare. He pushed for enclosure and possessions, and he provided instructions for abiding by each rule. He states, “After they have entered the enclosure of this religion and have assumed the religious habit, they should never be granted any permission or faculty to leave, unless perhaps some are transferred to another place to plant or build up this same religion.”<sup>163</sup> Being closed off from the community meant safety for these women and kept them from begging on the streets. Yet as absolute poverty actually required begging on the streets for food and donations, a fully enclosed nunnery would hence struggle to follow Franciscan ideals. While this arrangement was not ideal, Clare understood that certain concessions must be made in order to preserve the more fundamental ideals of the order. Patricia Ranft explains that imitation of Christ through poverty was what Clare desired above all things, which was why she chose her battles with the papacy carefully, such as accepting the cloistering of San Damiano.<sup>164</sup> She was willing to cloister her nunnery in exchange for preserving the Poor Sisters’ right to practice poverty.

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<sup>162</sup> Regis J. Armstrong, ed. and trans., *The Lady: Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York, London, Manila: New City Press, 2006), 73-4.

<sup>163</sup> Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 61; Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 76-7.

<sup>164</sup> Patricia Ranft, “An Overturned Victory: Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth Century Church,” *Journal of Medieval History* 17.2 (1991): 131.

Poverty entered the disagreement between Clare and Gregory with more aggression upon Pope Honorius III's death. Upon ascending the papal throne, Hugolino, now Pope Gregory IX, openly disapproved of complete poverty, as he felt that too much poverty was dangerous to the physical health of a group and would have the opposite of its intended effect.<sup>165</sup> Gregory felt that when a group had no other means of sustenance than begging, then they could no longer focus on spiritual improvement. This lay at the nexus of the disagreement between Clare and Gregory.

### *Pope Gregory IX*

Hugolino's ascension to the papal throne in 1227 was a watershed moment for monasticism. Once he officially became Gregory IX, his relationship with religious orders shifted. He began to look at his interpersonal affairs through a pragmatic and juridical lens rather than a theological one. Gregory wanted to exert more authority over these religious orders, and his policies regarding the Order of Friars Minor also affected the Poor Sisters.

Gregory appealed to Clare in person at San Damiano that she might solidify the Poor Sisters' deference to the church. This deference meant direct papal protection for her order, but it also threatened the order's vow of poverty. Papal protection for a monastic group went further than mere physical protection. It meant canonical and administrative protection, which moved the Poor Sisters up a rung on the hierarchical ladder of the church, granting them more autonomy. They no longer had to answer to

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<sup>165</sup> Gennaro, "Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers," 47.

local clergy but to the pope himself.<sup>166</sup> Despite the benefits of Gregory's proposition, Clare hesitated. She understood that by strengthening ties with the papacy, she would weaken her order's ties with the Franciscan brothers whose ideals were most closely associated with what she hoped to emulate.<sup>167</sup> Thus Clare faced an internal conflict in questioning with whom to place her loyalty.<sup>168</sup>

Gregory was deeply invested in persuading Clare to embrace his protection. He even offered to absolve her vows in order to ease her mind about abandoning poverty.<sup>169</sup> He understood that income of some sort was necessary for the monastery to function, but Clare understood that accepting his terms meant giving up her Franciscan ideals.<sup>170</sup> Gregory's visit to Clare's convent was a popular example in her canonization hearing to argue for her extreme piety. Clare stood fast in her love of poverty, even when approached by the pope himself. According to Joan Mueller, a leading scholar on Clare's life, "'possessions' were definitely the core of the issue for Clare, while Gregory's primary agenda seems to have been the security, legalization, and reputation of the sisters."<sup>171</sup> If Gregory could successfully bend the rules to support his methodology, then that would be his course of action. In contrast, Clare resolved to stick to her principles and not abandon them at any cost. *Privilegium paupertatis*, or the privilege of poverty, was the one monastic vow she could not do without, much to Gregory's chagrin. Clare

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<sup>166</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 71.

<sup>167</sup> Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters*, 46-8.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>169</sup> Peta Hills, "Poverty and Franciscan Identity in the *Form of Life* of Clare of Assisi," in *The Writings of Clare of Assisi: Letters, Form of Life, Testament and Blessing*, ed. Michael W. Blastic, Jay M. Hammond, and J.A. Wayne Hellmann, *Studies in Early Franciscan Sources* 3 (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2011), 117.

<sup>170</sup> Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 74.

<sup>171</sup> Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations," 396.



was in a tough situation. She needed Gregory's protection, but his *juridical* priorities conflicted with her *spiritual* priorities.<sup>172</sup> As Clare repeatedly fought Gregory on this issue, he became more aggressive in bending her to his will. The next section further explores the privilege of poverty and its significance to Clare and Gregory.

### *The Privilege of Poverty*

Clare's fight with Gregory marks her as a unique woman, and she was neither disrespectful nor passive. She admirably fought for her beliefs, but she never crossed the line into obstinacy or disobedience. Gregory IX had given Clare's order at San Damiano the privilege of poverty in 1228. In his short letter, he mentions the remarkable faith of these women to trust that God will provide for them despite not owning any material possessions. He concludes, "Therefore, we confirm with our apostolic authority, as you requested, your proposal of most high poverty, granting you by the authority of [those] present that no one can compel you to receive possessions."<sup>173</sup> Thus, Clare had this privilege of poverty that she so adored, but the pope kept trying to persuade her to give it up. Why was poverty in particular so important to the Poor Sisters? Simply put, poverty was a way to imitate Christ. Clare's idea of poverty and charity meant that the cloister would accept no monetary donations, but begging was acceptable. The nuns would still interact with the outside community through service and prayer, and thus the two communities could openly benefit from each other.<sup>174</sup>

Poverty was the main focal point for Gregory and Clare's conflict, but the issue of

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>173</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 87.

<sup>174</sup> Hills, "Poverty and Franciscan Identity," 112.

enclosure emerged as an outlet for these tensions. Peta Hills explains the conflict regarding land ownership: “There had been considerable pressure exerted by the papacy, concerned for the security of the community, to accept property which would provide a source of income for the community.”<sup>175</sup> The church’s line of reason seems to hold benevolent intentions, as Gregory was concerned for the women’s safety. Clare did not see Gregory’s ideas as altruistic. Accepting property and income meant accepting money, which again went against the ideals of poverty. Nonetheless, Gregory would not back down in enforcing these measures.

As previously mentioned, Pope Gregory IX personally visited San Damiano to push his agenda, and even then Clare refused to abandon poverty. Several witnesses confirm the details of this visit in Clare’s canonization hearings. A witness account states, “she particularly loved poverty, but she could never be persuaded to desire anything for herself, or to receive any possession for herself or the monastery. Asked how [the witness] knew this, she replied she saw and heard the Lord Pope Gregory of happy memory wanted to give her many things and buy possessions for the monastery. But she would never consent.”<sup>176</sup> Another witness confirms the circumstances of this event.<sup>177</sup> Not only did Clare refuse personal possessions, she fully adhered to an ascetic lifestyle. Multiple witnesses attest to her uncomfortable clothing and bedding as examples of her devotion to Christ. Poverty encompassed all of the trappings of her daily life, and she could not bear to eradicate such a crucial display of her piety.

Clare seemed to make no distinction between male and female when imitating the life of Christ and striving literally to be one with him; the Church, on the other hand, did

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<sup>175</sup> Hills, “Poverty and Franciscan Identity,” 115.

<sup>176</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 147.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

not know how to address women acting like Christ in such a literal sense.<sup>178</sup> The church acknowledged the nuns as the brides of Christ, as evidenced in Gregory's letter to Clare in 1228: "Through the operation of the grace of the Holy Spirit, He has espoused you, who are to be crowned in the kingdom of heaven with your heavenly Spouse."<sup>179</sup> Yet these brides of Christ still fell under papal rule during their time on earth. Gregory's struggle with Clare suggests that he did not know how much distinction male and female religious orders needed on behalf of the papacy. Authority, hierarchy, and ascension to power within the church were religious benefits only available to men. Yet Clare pursued the same rights of poverty as her brothers, and the church simply did not know what to do.

As for the Friars Minor of the Franciscan Order's view of poverty, Michael F. Cusato examines how the brotherhood came to appreciate and even require money for the continuation of their order.<sup>180</sup> During his lifetime, Francis had built a strong foundation of monastic poverty. Begging for donations of food and necessary items was admirable, but accepting money for food or items was a major line that Francis refused to cross.<sup>181</sup> After Francis's death, however, the brotherhood slowly began accepting monetary donations to further its cloisters, which became problematic for Clare.<sup>182</sup> The brothers had strayed from the tradition that Clare had fought so hard to preserve.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ranft, "An Overturned Victory," 130.

<sup>179</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 131.

<sup>180</sup> Michael F. Cusato, "*Turpe lucrum, stercus, capitale*: The Evolving Relationship of the Friars Minor to Money in the Thirteenth Century," in Mews and Renkin, *Interpreting Francis and Clare of Assisi*, 18.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>182</sup> Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations," 407.

<sup>183</sup> Joan Mueller further explores the shifting fiscal relationship between Gregory, the Poor Sisters, and the Friars Minor as well as the political nuances behind these changes in chapter 3 of *A Companion to Clare of Assisi*, titled "The Politics of 'Infants' Milk:' Clare

Gregory's bull *Quo elongati* addresses the brothers' concerns about poverty. The pope issued this document on September 28, 1230, four years after Francis's death, meaning that the brothers were on their own in figuring out how to handle monetary donations.<sup>184</sup> Cusato skillfully rewords Gregory's role in answering the brothers' questions to make him sound as benevolent as possible, when in reality he was searching for any loophole in the Franciscan Rule to allow the brothers to accept money.<sup>185</sup> Gregory eventually assigned a *nuntius*, a papal representative, to each cloister to handle any monetary donations. This appointment allowed the brothers to reap the benefits of donations while avoiding the technicalities of accepting money themselves. The Friars Minor and Gregory were in agreement that the times had changed and that the order needed to adjust their means of survival accordingly.<sup>186</sup> During Francis's life, money held a negative connotation as a means of power that manipulative patrons exerted over their benefactors. During Gregory's pontificate, money had since lost that negative connotation through its ubiquity in business transactions.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, Gregory and the Franciscan brothers justified their new changes as methods of adapting to their current times without forfeiting the order's spiritual roots. Cusato's work heavily relies on the pragmatic nature of Gregory, further emphasizing his pontificate as a transitional phase into a political era of the church.

The Friars Minor was not the only group to witness Gregory's change of heart regarding money. Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II accuses Gregory of loving wealth more than poverty and of subsequently abandoning his role within the church as a

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of Assisi and the Privilege of Poverty.”

<sup>184</sup> Cusato, “*Turpe lucrum, stercus, capitale*,” 26.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

supporter of the poor Franciscans.<sup>188</sup> Granted, this accusation was in direct retaliation against the emperor's own excommunication, but David Abulafia's biography of the fiery emperor implies that Gregory was indeed tied to the physical world. This new love of wealth may have encouraged the pope's push for Clare to abandon poverty. The monetary connection between Gregory and the Friars Minor supports the idea of Gregory as a political pope. He understood that money was necessary to achieve his political goals, and recruiting the popular Franciscan Order to do his bidding only fueled his ambition. The Franciscans had adopted the role of maintaining peace during strained papal-imperial relations.

While the Franciscans had become more political and separated from their order's origins, the Poor Sisters were still very invested in remaining true to their roots.<sup>189</sup> The Franciscans questioned whether a life of poverty was in their best interest and took action to remedy the situation. Gregory had given the Franciscan brothers the responsibility of caring for nuns at enclosed monasteries, meaning they would beg on behalf of San Damiano.<sup>190</sup> Therefore any action they took to undermine the Franciscan Rule would also affect the lower order of the Poor Sisters.<sup>191</sup>

### *The Battle Begins*

Clare of Assisi and her order at San Damiano did not care about adapting to the changing times as her brothers had. She wanted to live like Francis, regardless of the

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<sup>188</sup> Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 169.

<sup>189</sup> Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations," 405-6.

<sup>190</sup> Mueller, *A Companion to Clare of Assisi*, 52; Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 75.

<sup>191</sup> Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations," 407.

impracticality of such a way of life. While poverty was an admirable trait in religious groups, Pope Gregory IX did not find it to be a practical way of life. Historian Luigi Pellegrini asserts that Cardinal Hugolino granted the privilege of poverty freely to women's religious groups, but upon becoming pope, he tried to protect these ever-growing monastic orders by exerting more juridical power over them, which is when problems emerged.<sup>192</sup> Gregory pressured other religious orders, both male and female, to modify their definitions of poverty and enclosure. Not only were the Friars Minor confused about how to properly utilize money, they were also concerned about what their precise responsibilities were regarding nuns after Francis's death.<sup>193</sup> Gregory attempted to clarify both issues in his *Quo elongati*, where he explained that friars were forbidden from entering enclosed female monasteries without papal permission.<sup>194</sup> Clare was horrified at this change, as it was an explicit power move on Gregory's part to express papal authority over all matters regarding his monastic orders.<sup>195</sup>

Gregory used obedience as a tool against Clare when she asked for freedom from the Benedictine Rule in order to follow the Franciscan ideal of poverty.<sup>196</sup> Tensions rose as Clare struggled to determine to whom exactly the Poor Sisters were to show obedience: the papacy or God. As a religious order, they had vowed to obey the pope, but they felt that God called them to a life of poverty. Francis believed that no contradiction should exist between papal and heavenly authority, but the church gradually began to

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<sup>192</sup> Luigi Pellegrini, "Female Religious Experience and Society in Thirteenth-century Italy," in *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society: Essays in Honor of Lester K. Little*, ed. Sharon Farmer and Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 107.

<sup>193</sup> Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 82.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>196</sup> Julie Ann Smith, "Observing the Gospel: Obedience in the Clarissan *formae vitae* (1212-53)," in Mews and Renkin, *Interpreting Francis and Clare of Assisi*, 125.

push for obedience in ways that the Poor Sisters could not abide.<sup>197</sup>

The enclosure of monastic orders changed the landscape of how these brothers and sisters functioned. As previously mentioned, cloistering a monastery or convent made practicing absolute poverty difficult, as it cut off contact with the outside world. Donations were still possible, but monetary donations had become more common and convenient. Money was practical. Its use could extend across the cloister in a number of ways, from sustenance to repairs to means of study. Other monastic orders had fully embraced the potential for wealth in their cloisters, which positively affected the church. Gregory had been close with the Franciscans since their foundation, and he may have seen the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship.

A more sinister reading of Gregory's detachment from poverty looks at the power dynamics of his relationship with the Friars Minor and the Poor Sisters. Part of the reason Francis opposed money was because of the negative relationship that ensued between the benefactor and the recipient. A benefactor could exert a certain amount of control over a recipient, and the recipient would be helpless to resist because of his debt to his patron. Francis wanted to avoid such a relationship, as it corrupted the altruistic motivations for donating to a religious order. Yet Gregory had gradually broken down the system, especially in the case of the Poor Sisters. By enclosing nunneries, he placed them under his own protection and control. By taking away their poverty, he would make the nuns dependent upon his support.<sup>198</sup> Papal protection theoretically suggests autonomy on the nuns' part, but in actuality it places the nuns under the direct supervision of the papacy. The authority resulting from this protection increased Gregory's papal and political

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>198</sup> Mueller, *A Companion to Clare of Assisi*, 75.

power, and Clare's resistance to Gregory's actions impeded his process of obtaining absolute control over the cloister.

### *Agnes of Prague*

Agnes of Prague became a political pawn of sorts in this disagreement, as both Gregory and Clare influenced her to do as they wished. Agnes was a Bohemian princess, the daughter of King Přemysl Otakar I of Bohemia and Queen Constance of Hungary, who gave up her political wealth and social status to establish her own convent of the Poor Sisters in Prague.<sup>199</sup> She and Clare exchanged letters of support, although only four of Clare's letters to Agnes survive today. In her second letter in 1235, Clare commends Agnes for choosing Christ over royalty: "This is that perfection with which that King will join you to himself in the heavenly bridal chamber where He is seated in glory on a starry throne, because you have despised the splendor of an earthly kingdom and considered of little value the offers of an imperial marriage."<sup>200</sup> This camaraderie led Clare and Agnes to unite against Gregory and plead for absolute poverty for their respective cloisters. Clare wrote to Agnes and encouraged her not to let anyone (not even the pope himself!) take away her right to poverty for Christ.<sup>201</sup> She states, "If anyone has said anything else to you or suggested any other thing to you that might hinder your perfection or that would seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel."<sup>202</sup> This statement overtly refers to Pope Gregory IX. As a monastic order, the Poor Sisters had vowed to obey the pope, which was why Clare cautioned Agnes to

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 77; Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 94.

<sup>200</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 47.

<sup>201</sup> Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations," 413.

<sup>202</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 48-9.



be respectful. Yet she understood that a vow to Christ overruled a vow to the papacy, and so encouraged the former princess to remain true to poverty.

Agnes took Clare's words to heart and convinced her brother King Wenceslaus of Bohemia to work with the church in exchange for the order's freedom to practice poverty. Agnes had previously been betrothed to Emperor Frederick II, which would have united the two families and created an alliance that was unfavorable to Gregory.<sup>203</sup> This new arrangement would form an alliance between Bohemia and the papacy against Frederick, which gave Gregory the advantage. Gregory agreed to Wenceslaus's arrangement in order to strengthen his forces against the Holy Roman Emperor. In his letter to Agnes in 1235, he states, "and since you desire to be joined with the Lord in the highest poverty, choosing to follow the poor Christ as poor women, We extol your pious and holy way of life in praises worthy of the Godhead."<sup>204</sup> He granted Agnes and the Poor Sisters in Prague the same privilege of poverty that he granted the Poor Sisters at San Damiano. Agnes understood the political ramifications behind uniting Gregory and her brother and figured out a way to use it to her benefit.<sup>205</sup>

Even though Agnes had abandoned her royal life for a life of piety and poverty, she was willing to use her heritage and political connections to her advantage when needed. Agnes outmaneuvered Gregory using a *quid pro quo* method and strong-armed him to grant the order in Prague absolute poverty, which the pope did not appreciate.<sup>206</sup> Nonetheless, in order to stand against Frederick II, a more threatening adversary than Clare, he needed the alliance with the Crown of Bohemia more than he needed Agnes to

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<sup>203</sup> Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church*, 94.

<sup>204</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 353.

<sup>205</sup> Ingrid Peterson, "Clare of Assisi's Letters to Agnes of Prague: Testaments of Fidelity," in Blastic, Hammond, and Hellmann, *The Writings of Clare of Assisi*, 25.

<sup>206</sup> Mueller, "Poverty Legislation and Mutual Relations," 416.

absolve her vow of poverty. He was thus willing to accept a loss on the religious front in exchange for a victory on the political front.

### *Conclusions*

Clare's Order at San Damiano's security of poverty appears to be the exception to the rule, perhaps because she offered so much resistance. Gregory IX imposed his lax ideas of poverty on other cloisters. Agnes's group was another exception, as she forced Gregory into granting her the privilege of poverty through a political alliance. Thus, the battle for poverty was more of an issue of preservation for San Damiano and an issue of acquisition elsewhere. Clare wanted to ensure that this privilege would not be snatched away once she died.

Clare of Assisi was a strong-willed woman who used her intelligence and connections to ensure the desired outcome for her religious order. Although she put up resistance against Gregory IX, she understood her boundaries as an obedient servant to the church. Her effective method of preserving poverty for the Order at San Damiano kept her reputation safe within the church. Gregory fought against her, but he never seemed to lose respect for her as he did with other adversaries such as Frederick II. Gregory's admiration for the Poor Sisters shines through in his letter to the cloister at San Damiano in 1228 in the words "so that abounding more and more in virtue you may cause God to be glorified in you and fill up our joy, as we embrace you in intimate love as our special daughters."<sup>207</sup> These words of affirmation suggest that even though

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<sup>207</sup> Armstrong, *The Lady: Clare of Assisi*, 132.

Gregory wanted to exert control over this monastic order, he nonetheless respected their mission and devotion to God.

Agnes's contribution to Clare's cause shows the widespread political connections and consequences for the church. Agnes's use of her political position was successful in part because of the existing tensions between Gregory and Frederick, which was why the church needed an alliance with her royal family.<sup>208</sup> This enlightening fact further contributes to Gregory's desperation to have his way. He was already struggling on the imperial front with Frederick, and so he needed a success on the religious front with Clare and Agnes. When the two worlds began interweaving, he had to resort to the unusual measures—for a pope at least—of manipulating the rules of poverty in order to accomplish his political and juridical goals.

Clare's remarkable steadfastness on the issue of poverty interfered with Gregory's plans for monastic groups. In the end, he could not beat her. His manipulation of the rules for the Friars Minor suggests that he was more focused on how best to benefit the brotherhood and himself than on preserving Francis's traditions. His willingness to accept the Bohemian alliance over Agnes's sisterhood points to his political nature. Political motivations trumped religious motivations, and both Clare and Agnes had the misfortune of fighting back against a political pope. Gregory's struggle against Clare of Assisi encompasses numerous aspects of the labyrinth of his priorities regarding power, law, and politics.

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<sup>208</sup> Lezlie Knox, "The *Form of Life* of the Poor Ladies," in Blastic, Hammond, and Hellmann, *The Writings of Clare of Assisi*, 91.

## Chapter 6

### *Epilogue*

As this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen infamously clashed with popes in the thirteenth century, and yet these same popes played an integral role in arranging each of his marriages. Frederick had three wives during his lifetime. Frederick married Constance of Aragon (1179-1222), Yolanda of Jerusalem (1212-28), and Isabella of England (1214-41), in that order. The legacies of these women as political pawns indicate that papal interference in noble marriages had shifted towards protection of the secular affairs of these popes. Pope Innocent III arranged Frederick's marriage to Constance of Aragon, Honorius III arranged the emperor's marriage to Yolanda of Jerusalem, and Gregory IX arranged his marriage to Isabella of England. Unfortunately, these women had little opportunity to express their own influence in court or in Frederick's personal affairs outside of providing him with children. Frederick seemingly had little use for his wives within his imperial court and frequently used them as political tools to further his own agenda. Although their agency was limited in life, each woman's legacy serves as a symbol of papal-imperial disputes on issues of authority. In taking on such an active role in arranging Frederick's political marriages, the popes demonstrated their desire to assert their own legitimacy and authority over the emperor. The timing of these marriages also played to papal advantages.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Frederick's marriage to Yolanda helped the emperor conquer Jerusalem and helped Pope Honorius III strengthen ties between Western and Eastern Christendom. After Yolanda of Jerusalem's untimely death,

Frederick married one last time. Pope Gregory IX followed in his predecessors' footsteps in arranging the profitable marriage between Frederick and Isabella of England. King Henry III of England—Isabella's brother—and Frederick II Hohenstaufen both benefited from the political ramifications of this marital arrangement.

Gregory's participation in this political marriage was perhaps more direct than that of Innocent's and Honorius's involvement in Frederick's marriages to Constance of Aragon and Yolanda of Jerusalem, respectively. Frederick and Gregory seemingly conspired amongst themselves in deciding on Isabella as the right choice, whereas Innocent III and Honorius III both relied on outside assistance to find a suitable bride for Frederick. Honorius even relied on an entire council to arrange Frederick and Yolanda's marriage. As for a betrothal to Isabella, both pope and emperor saw the potential for widespread benefits in this arrangement. Louise Wilkinson examines the religious and political context surrounding the marriage. Frederick's marriage to Isabella served as a peacemaking vessel of sorts. His pre-existing alliance with France would provide a three-way link of peaceful relations between Sicily, France, and England, with Frederick and his new bride as the "middleman" of sorts to solidify the union.<sup>209</sup> England was in good favor with the church, and association with the country through marriage would mean stronger imperial ties to the papacy.<sup>210</sup> The possibility of soothing papal-imperial tensions and strengthening political ties prompted Gregory to wholeheartedly support this match. Wilkinson asserts that one of Gregory's main papal duties was to maintain peace between

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<sup>209</sup> Louise J. Wilkinson, "The Imperial Marriage of Isabella of England, Henry III's Sister," in *The Rituals and Rhetoric of Queenship: Medieval to Early Modern*, ed. Elizabeth Oakley-Brown and Louise J. Wilkinson (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 23.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

secular rulers of Christendom.<sup>211</sup> He and Frederick had already gone through a series of disagreements, mostly surrounding Frederick's scandalous crusade. Thus, the fact that both pope and emperor agreed on a marriage for Frederick promised potential avoidance of future conflicts. Gregory's role in arranging this profitable marriage made him look good in the eyes of the public. He benevolently encouraged peace between kingdoms and strategically restored good relations between himself and Frederick.

Despite the obvious benefits of Frederick and Isabella's marriage, Frederick was not Isabella's first intended husband. Henry III had tried several times to arrange a suitable marriage for his sister and failed.<sup>212</sup> At one point she was even betrothed to Henry (VII), Frederick's own son, which is interesting considering that Frederick later used her to help quell Henry's rebellion. Frederick and Pope Gregory IX decided on the final arrangement. For once, the two rulers agreed on something.<sup>213</sup> Pope and emperor saw the potential benefits of tying the two kingdoms together. Louise Wilkinson explains the pros and cons of Frederick's marriage to Isabella. Ideally, this marriage was to be a great diplomatic feat in securing German-English-Sicilian imperial relations. Alternatively, the thought of Isabella producing an heir to the Sicilian throne was unlikely considering how many children (both legitimate and illegitimate) Frederick already had.<sup>214</sup>

Isabella's appearance, upbringing, and character made her a suitable bride, and Frederick's imperial prestige and power made him a suitable groom. Isabella played a significant role in her brother Henry III's court in England, but that experience was all for

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 24-5.

naught once she moved to Sicily with Frederick.<sup>215</sup> She appears to have served her purpose well as the symbolic glue of a political alliance, as she was the one who soothed tensions between Henry and Frederick.<sup>216</sup> Wilkinson states, “Isabella’s formal role within the government of her husband’s empire was limited, but both the emperor and her brother, the English king, acknowledged Isabella’s central role in facilitating Anglo-imperial relations.”<sup>217</sup> Other than providing the occasional voice of reason to her husband, Isabella was largely kept in isolation. Frederick paraded her through his kingdom as a symbol of his power and status, and then immediately locked her away in his imperial court in Sicily. Their wedding was a clear example of the new empress’s use as a political tool, as it accomplished two objectives at once: It solidified Frederick’s relationship with England and showcased his authority in Germany. Frederick’s marriage to Isabella of England provided him with a political alliance that he desperately needed at this time.<sup>218</sup>

Isabella’s marriage to Frederick II not only strengthened political and religious ties between the two kingdoms of Sicily and England, it also simultaneously functioned as a weapon in the emperor’s fight with his rebellious son in 1235. Frederick had named his first son Henry (VII)—noted as such to avoid confusion with a later well-known Henry VII—king of Germany to rule in his stead. Geographical and political limitations prevented Frederick from directly ruling all of his kingdoms at once. The emperor expected his son to rule in name alone and would not give him any autonomy as king of

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>218</sup> Björn Weiler, “Reasserting Power: Frederick II in Germany (1235-1236),” in *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500*, eds. Björn Weiler and Simon MacLean (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 239.

Germany.<sup>219</sup> Thus, Henry (VII)'s revolt should not have come as a surprise. He had grown increasingly frustrated with his minimal authority as king of Germany and decided to seize power for himself.

Frederick went to Germany in 1235 to put down this rebellion and to marry Isabella of England.<sup>220</sup> Frederick strategically planned hosting his wedding festivities in Worms, Germany as a method of simultaneously quelling the rebellion. Most of Germany's population already supported Frederick, and the emperor wanted to use this support to his advantage.<sup>221</sup> Henry had to apologize in Worms, where many people had already gathered for the wedding, marking both events as public spectacles.<sup>222</sup> Isabella's journey through Germany in order to meet her betrothed was filled with pomp and elegance. The people received her well and seemingly respected her as a symbol of imperial authority.<sup>223</sup> Frederick wanted to flaunt her beauty and status to his people as reassurance that he was their rightful ruler. Similar to his approach with Sultan al-Kamil in Jerusalem, the emperor preferred diplomacy to violence.<sup>224</sup> Frederick used his victory over his son's rebellion to his advantage by proclaiming the extent of his power. Frederick and Isabella's wedding in Worms, Germany became a political tool to gain favor with his subjects.<sup>225</sup> The emperor manipulated every aspect of the situation to demonstrate his imperial power.<sup>226</sup> Every action was a symbol of this power and authority: his wife, his wealth, and his victory over his son. He went to Germany under

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>224</sup> Takayama, "Frederick II's Crusade."

<sup>225</sup> Weiler, "Reasserting Power," 253.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 254.



the guise of promoting, but promoting the crusades was definitely not on his agenda.<sup>227</sup> Henry's rebellion instead served as an opportunity for Frederick to assert his imperial power.<sup>228</sup>

By the time of his visit to Germany, Frederick and Gregory IX had resolved many of their tensions regarding Frederick's crusade to Jerusalem.<sup>229</sup> Frederick further soothed the situation with a promise to devote this trip to spreading the Gospel to his people.<sup>230</sup> The emperor had a poor record of maintaining his vows, so Gregory perhaps should have been wary of Frederick's true intentions. The future of their resolution of peace seemed to depend on this trip. Even so, Frederick failed to uphold any of these vows to preach in Germany, as his main focus was enhancing his imperial power.<sup>231</sup>

Gregory's attention to Frederick's marriage produced interesting results. On the one hand, he succeeded in strengthening political ties. On the other hand, Frederick duped him into thinking he was going to promote the crusades throughout Germany. Lending Frederick his own papal support only helped the emperor secure his power. Gregory's intentions for Frederick and Isabella's wedding seemed unaffected by Frederick's trip to Germany, whereas Isabella was used as a pawn in settling royal disputes.

The church heavily participated in arranging all three of Frederick's marriages. Medieval nobility commonly used marriage to further political interests, so the lack of affection between Frederick and his wives is understandable. Each of the emperor's marriages had a distinct agenda, with most of them benefitting numerous parties. The

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 267.

participants understood the necessity of their arrangements to secure diplomatic relations between the Holy Roman Empire and other European kingdoms. The popes' active roles in these nuptial agreements imply the evolving political nature of the papacy. They took extra measures to secure the church's assets in these marriages.

Aside from secular justifications for Frederick's betrothals, each pope had his own political agenda in arranging these marriages. Innocent III wanted a strong political alliance for his ward, Honorius wanted a Latin-Christian heir to Jerusalem, and Gregory wanted to soothe any tensions between the church, the emperor, and other Christian kingdoms. As Frederick gradually granted himself more autonomy in his reign, the popes had to try harder and harder to maintain peaceful relations with the Holy Roman Emperor and the rest of Christendom. The best way to guarantee peace and alliance during the thirteenth century was through noble marriage, and the papacy had become expert in maneuvering these marriages to the popes' liking.

This instance of Gregory interfering with Frederick's marriage is yet another example of his political mindset. He wanted to ensure that his enemy married into a family that would be most advantageous to him and his papal position. Just as Gregory supported an alliance with Bohemia as we saw in Chapter Five, he acted similarly with Frederick's union with Isabella of England. Gregory knew how to play the political game well. He knew when to use Islam as a scare tactic and when to ignore it. He knew when to let Clare have her way. He knew how to interfere in ways that always made him look good. This is not to say that Gregory did not care about religion or his position as father of the church. He always acted to protect his Christian subjects, whether it was demanding that a church be rebuilt after Muslims destroyed it or demanding that a female

monastery be enclosed for safety reasons. Gregory cared about his subjects. He just did not shy away from using political measures in order to achieve his goals. It is for this reason that he merits study as a political pope among great medieval popes.

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