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Author(s): Michael Lower

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The Papacy and Christian Mercenaries of Thirteenth-Century North Africa

By Michael Lower

In the medieval period, Muslim rulers frequently hired Christian mercenary soldiers to defend their persons and bolster their armies. Nowhere was this practice more common than in North Africa, a region, then as now, linked to Europe through migration, diplomacy, and trade. From the twelfth century to the sixteenth, North African regimes of all types found it useful to recruit European fighters to their sides. Some of these mercenaries were former prisoners of war, while others were prominent political exiles. Most, though, were of humbler origin, fighting men who found a lively market for their services in the decentralized, fiercely competitive political environment of the late medieval Maghrib.[1]

Though their terms of service were informal at first, by the thirteenth century Christian mercenaries were a well-defined presence in North Africa. Treaties negotiated between their homelands and the governments that hired them specified their wages, weapons, and supplies in minute detail.[2] Despite the increasingly contractual nature of their employment in the Maghrib, there was nonetheless much that remained uncertain about the status of these Christian mercenaries serving in Islamic lands. The treaties might detail how much barley a mercenary's horse could eat while on campaign, but they had nothing to say about the larger questions of propriety, belonging, and allegiance that loomed over the mercenary

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[1] On the Christian mercenaries of medieval North Africa, see Simon Barton, "Traitors to the Faith? Christian Mercenaries in al-Andalus and the Maghreb, c. 1100–1300," in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence. Studies in Honour of Angus MacKay*, ed. Roger Collins (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 23–45; Robert I. Burns, "Renegades, Adventurers, and Sharp Businessmen: The Thirteenth-Century Spaniard in the Cause of Islam," *Catholic Historical Review* 58 (1972): 341–66, at 350–58; Andrés Giménez Soler, "Caballeros españoles en África y africanos en España," *Revue Hispanique* 12 (1905): 299–372, and 16 (1907): 56–69; J. Alemany, "Milicias cristianas al servicio de los sultanes musulmanes del Almagreb," in *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera en su jubilación del profesorado: Estudios de erudición oriental con una introducción de D. Eduardo Saavedra* (Zaragoza: M. Escar, tipógrafo, 1904), 133–69. For Frankish mercenaries in the Muslim Near East around the same time, see Jean Richard, "An Account of the Battle of Hattin Referring to the Frankish Mercenaries in Oriental Moslem States," *Speculum* 27 (1952): 168–77, at 171–75.

[2] See, for example, the treaty agreed between the Marinid emir Abu Yusuf and King Jaime I of Aragon on 18 November 1274: Louis de Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix et de commerce et documents divers concernant les relations des chrétiens avec les Arabes de l'Afrique septentrionale au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1866), 285–86.

enterprise.[3] In an era of crusade and jihad, when acting against one's faith was sometimes defined as a crime akin to treason, could fighting for a Muslim ruler ever be licit for a Christian?[4] Could one remain a member of the community of the faithful while serving an avowed enemy of the faith in arms? Could one be a good mercenary and a good Christian at the same time?

These were questions for churchmen, not diplomats, and especially for the papacy, which saw itself as the arbiter of Christian relations with the wider world. Even for the lawyer-popes of the thirteenth century, the Christian mercenary in North Africa proved a puzzle. There was no fixed body of legal or scholastic thought on this category of Christian. Canonists and pastoral theologians had touched upon some of the issues surrounding their work, but had not tackled them directly. Yet the stakes were high, for the mercenary and the papacy alike. The mercenary needed to know how seriously he was compromising his prospects in the next life when he joined the retinue of a North African prince. The papacy needed to decide whether the mercenary excluded himself from a properly ordered Christian society by making that choice. Was his exile only physical, or was it spiritual as well? Beyond that pastoral judgment lay considerations of policy. What impact would the decision to condemn or support him have on the papal approach toward the re-Christianization of Africa, the land of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine?

Popes, canonists, and theologians would eventually work through the legal and pastoral dimensions of interfaith mercenary warfare in the early decades of the thirteenth century. During this time, church teaching on mercenaries and military aid to Muslims evolved significantly, gaining flexibility and refinement in the process. By the mid-1230s, Latin Christian religious authorities had devised criteria that legitimated some forms of Christian military service to Muslim rulers. Their work laid the legal foundation for an improbable partnership in the western Maghrib. Rather than casting the mercenaries out of the community of the faithful, the papacy came to tolerate and at times actively encourage their work. Over the course of the thirteenth century, popes who reigned at the height of papal monarchy—Gregory IX, Innocent IV, Nicholas IV—developed a remarkably sympathetic relationship with soldiers who carried out their duties beyond the bounds of Christendom, in the service of a rival faith.

[3] Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles: De la bataille de Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) à l'avènement du sultan mérinide Abou-l-Hasan (1331)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966), 514.

[4] In the *Siete partidas*, the mid-thirteenth-century Castilian law code promulgated under King Alfonso X, those who leave the realm to take up arms with the Muslims are declared traitors to God and country alike: "When a nobleman leaves his country of his own accord, and the king does not banish him, and he goes to the land of the Moors, his vassals should not follow him. This is the rule because he commits treason in two ways: first, he commits it against God, because he goes to the assistance of the enemies of the faith; second, he commits it against his natural lord, by making war against him and ravaging his country, and his vassals are guilty of the same treason if they accompany him in order to assist him." See *Las siete partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio*, ed. Real Academia de la Historia, 3 vols. (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1801; repr. Madrid, 1972), 3:139 (4.25.13); trans. S. Parsons Scott, *Las Siete Partidas*, ed. Robert I. Burns, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 4:997.

The papacy's support for the mercenaries was tied in to its larger aim for North Africa: to re-Christianize what had been a heartland of the late antique church. Because the mercenaries comprised a significant portion of the North African Christian population, the popes saw them as crucial to the realization of this goal. At first, papal aspirations coalesced around a specific diplomatic strategy in which the mercenaries featured prominently. As a weakened Almohad empire grew more dependent on Christian mercenaries for military support, the popes were able to link their continued presence in Almohad armies to the creation of a Latin Christian church in Morocco. When negotiations with the Almohads over the future direction of the church and the security of the mercenaries reached an impasse in the early 1250s, the papacy endorsed Castilian plans for an "African Crusade." Given the issues that precipitated the breakdown in relations—Christianization and mercenary safety—the turn to crusade does not seem to have represented a fundamental shift in the papacy's larger regional aspirations or a repudiation of the mercenaries. Indeed, by the end of the century the popes were praising the mercenaries as an exemplary Christian presence in the Maghrib.

In working with the mercenaries to revive Latin Christianity in North Africa, the papacy showed flexibility in a realm of activity—interreligious relations—where it is often thought to have stressed separation, division, and difference. This flexibility manifested itself both in papal teaching on the mercenaries and in the actual policies that the popes adopted toward them. The relationship between ideology and practice is an important issue in modern scholarship on the medieval Mediterranean. Since David Nirenberg's influential study of intercommunal relations in the medieval Crown of Aragon appeared in 1996, scholars have been exploring how local actors engaged with prevailing discourses of religious difference.[5] A host of studies has highlighted the power of local communities to employ, undermine, or transform Latin Christian norms governing interfaith relations to suit what were often intensely local purposes.[6] But what about the norms themselves—could these also have been more pliable than we might imagine? The papal relationship with the Christian mercenaries of North Africa allows us to address this question with precision, because the papacy not only tried to develop a coherent set of teachings on supplying military aid to the Muslim rulers of the region but also worked actively to shape the destiny of the Christian mercenaries who lived there. The result of these efforts was not a disjuncture between ideology and practice, but rather a surprising degree of harmony. Papal teachings were adaptable enough to promote adventurous diplomacy. It was, in fact, the very practicality of their doctrine and policy that allowed the thirteenth-century popes to pursue a patently idealistic goal, which Father Burns called the "dream

[5] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 6.

[6] For example, Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and "Pagans" in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser., 50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Brian A. Catlos, *The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims in Catalonia and Aragon, 1050–1300*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser., 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Michael Lower, *The Barons' Crusade: A Call to Arms and Its Consequences* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

of conversion": the re-Christianization of the most thoroughly Islamized region in the Mediterranean basin.[7]

Christian Mercenaries in Europe

Fighting for the infidel for pay: it does not sound like the kind of activity that a medieval pope would endorse for his flock. Thirteenth-century popes, in fact, could look back on a firm tradition of papal condemnation of mercenaries who fought for Christian princes, never mind Muslim ones. This tradition had its roots in ecclesiastical efforts to curb the violence of the mercenary companies that plagued southern France in the mid-twelfth century.[8] Pope Alexander III took action against these companies at the Third Lateran Council in 1179. In Canon 27, the pope condemned the "Brabanters, Aragonese, Navarrese, Basques, Coterelli, and Triaverdini, who practice such cruelty upon Christians that they respect neither churches nor monasteries, and spare neither widows, orphans, old nor young nor any age or sex, but like pagans destroy and lay everything waste."[9] The canon condemned specific groups engaged in particular kinds of bad behavior. It did not outlaw the practice of fighting for pay in general, which was widespread by the late twelfth century. It thus implicitly acknowledged the legitimacy of a fighter who could licitly pursue his violent occupation. The problem for later commentators was how to distinguish this legitimate soldier from the mercenary.

Taking up the challenge in the early thirteenth century were three prominent pastoral theologians: Peter the Chanter, Robert of Courson, and Thomas of Chobham.[10] They began by making explicit the distinction implied in Canon 27 between licit and illicit fighting for pay. Robert of Courson identified two kinds of fighting men: the *coterelli*, his favored term for the mercenaries, on the one hand, and the *milites stipendarii*, or "salaried knights," on the other.[11] To distinguish the one

[7] Robert I. Burns, "Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion," *American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 1386–1434.

[8] On these mercenaries, who were often called *routiers*, see H. Géraud, "Les routiers du douzième siècle," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 4 (1841–42): 125–47; Herbert Grundmann, "Rotten und Brabanzonen: Söldner-Heere im 12. Jahrhundert," *Deutsches Archiv* 5 (1942): 419–92; and J. Boussard, "Les mercenaires au 12e siècle: Henri II Plantagenet et les origines de l'armée de métier," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 106 (1945–46): 189–224. In 1139, Archbishop Guillaume of Auch called on secular authorities to suppress these "pestilential people" by force in his province: *Gallia Christiana*, ed. Denis de Sainte-Marthe, Barthélemy Hauréau, et al., 14 vols. (Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1715–1865), vol. 1, *Instrumenta*, 162. For discussion and partial translation of the decree, see Norman Housley, "Crusades against Christians: Their Origins and Early Development, c. 1000–1216," in *The Crusades: Essential Readings*, ed. Thomas F. Madden (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 71–97, at 86.

[9] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:224–25.

[10] The views of the pastoral theologians on mercenary violence have received detailed treatment in John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 1:220–24, and Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3rd ser., 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 161, 241–42.

[11] Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 1:221.

from the other, he turned to theories of the just war and the just price, stating that those who "fought in a just war" may receive "their due wages."[12]

Once distinguished from the knight who could licitly earn his pay, the mercenary came in for harsh criticism. Peter the Chanter listed the mercenary among the sinful professions and urged those who pursued it to be denied the Eucharist.[13] Robert of Courson called them evil men infected with sacrilege, and Thomas of Chobham agreed that the office of mercenary was dangerous to the soul.[14] By the early thirteenth century, therefore, a legal and theological tradition was in place that condemned the Christian mercenary fighting in Europe for his unlawful violence and love of plunder. At the same time, this tradition legitimized the knight who served in a just conflict for appropriate wages. Because this tradition did not forbid fighting for pay as such, the Christian mercenary in North Africa could not be condemned on those grounds alone. But could that person draw pay from a Muslim ruler? That was another question altogether.

Christian Military Support for Muslims

The papacy had sought to prohibit Christian military assistance to Muslims since the late twelfth century.[15] This was in keeping with contemporary legal thought. According to the canonist Huguccio, a Christian who voluntarily performed military service for a Muslim was guilty of sin.[16] Papal prohibitions targeted not only Christian military aid and advice to Muslims, but Christian commerce in military supplies as well.

In the decretal *Ita quorundam*, Pope Alexander III prohibited the supply of military materials and naval expertise to Muslims on pain of excommunication, loss of property, and potential enslavement if the supplier were captured in war.[17] Pope Clement III (1187–91) increased the scope of the papal ban on Christian support for Muslim warmaking. In a series of decretals, he expanded the list of prohibited trade items, called for a total wartime trade embargo with the Islamic world, and forbade not only service on Muslim warships but "any kind of aid or advice to them, while war was underway between us and them."[18]

At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Pope Innocent III built on Clement's expanded conception and gave the papal embargo its classic expression. He added still more items to the list of prohibited trade goods (iron, galleys, and ships were now included alongside arms and timber) and barred Christians from providing military support to Muslims at all times. Most importantly, he provided an explicit

[12] Ibid., 2:158 n. 109.

[13] Russell, *Just War*, 241.

[14] Ibid., 241–42.

[15] In 1196, for example, Pope Celestine III excommunicated King Alfonso IX of León for allying with the Almohads: Fidel Fita Colomé, "Bulas históricas del reino de Navarra en los postreros años del siglo XII," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 26 (1895): 423–24, no. 3.

[16] Huguccio, *Summa decretorum*, to C. II q. 3 c. 94; quoted in Russell, *Just War*, 121 n. 123.

[17] *Ita quorundam* (X 5.6.6): *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Emil Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1879–81; repr. Union: Lawbook Exchange, 2000) 2:773; *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:223.

[18] *Significavit* (X 5.6.11); *Quod olim* (X 5.6.12): *Corpus iuris canonici*, 2:775.

rationale for these prohibitions. Innocent argued that they prevented harm being done to Christians and the Christian settlements in the Holy Land.[19]

There was a tension latent in Innocent's presentation of the embargo. By outlawing Christian military aid and trade to Muslims at all times, he offered legal grounds for a total ban on these practices. By justifying that prohibition in terms of avoiding injury to Christian people and the Holy Land, however, he opened the door to an intriguing possibility: could there be military trade and aid to Muslims that did not damage Christendom and its crusading projects?

Canonistic commentary on Innocent's version of the embargo did nothing to close off that possibility. In general, it affirmed harm to Christians or the Holy Land as the key reasons for imposing the ban. According to Pope Innocent IV, Christian piracy on behalf of Muslims was unacceptable "because of the following words, in aid of the Holy Land."[20] Ramón of Peñafort's view was that "we may not send arms to Saracens, with which they could fight us."[21]

This was not Ramón's only statement on the matter. In 1234, mendicant friars working in Tunis sent him a long list of questions about how to minister to the merchants, captives, and mercenaries who made up their flock. He was the right person to ask about these matters. Besides being a leading canonist and a proponent of the mendicant mission in North Africa, he was currently serving as a penitentiary for Pope Gregory IX, which meant that he dealt with matters relating to the forum of conscience that came to him from all corners of Christendom and beyond. One of the questions the friars posed had to do with the mercenaries who worked for the local emir. Should these Christians, who fought for an Islamic regime, be excommunicated? Ramón found his answer in *Ad liberandam* and decretalist commentary on it. He replied that those who provided support to Muslims by their arms should not be excommunicated unless the fighting was "done to the detriment of the Holy Land or other Christians."[22]

Ramón's distinction between harmful and harmless military assistance to Muslims opened a path to papal acceptance for the Christian soldiers of the Maghrib. If the papacy judged these fighting men to pose no threat to their coreligionists and the Holy Land, then they could remain Christians in good standing. This is precisely the determination that the papacy made. By legitimating their violent occupation, the popes were able to build a supportive relationship with these mercenaries, a relationship that they hoped would promote Latin Christianity in North Africa in the mid-thirteenth century.

[19] *Ad liberandam* (X 5.6.17): *Corpus iuris canonici*, 2:777–78; *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:270.

[20] Innocent IV, *Commentaria super libros quinque decretalium* (Frankfurt, 1570), fol. 507.

[21] Ramón of Peñafort, *Summa* (Verona: Ex Typographia Seminarii, Apud Augustinum Carattonium, 1744), fol. 26.

[22] Franciscus Balme and Ceslaus Paban, eds., *Raymundiana: Seu documenta quae pertinent S. Raymundi de Pennaforti vitam et scripta*. Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum historica 6 (Rome: In domo Generalitia and Stuttgart: Apud Jos. Roth, bibliopolam, 1898), no. 18 (Canonical responses given in the name of Gregory IX by Brother Ramón of Peñafort to the prior of the Dominicans and the minister of the Franciscans in the kingdom of Tunis), at 34.

Christian Mercenaries in North Africa

Christian mercenaries had first come to the Maghrib a hundred years before. Many of them were prisoners of war captured by the Almoravids during their Iberian campaigns.[23] These conscripts were soon joined by genuine volunteers, the most famous of whom was Reverter, viscount of Barcelona and lord of La Guardia de Montserrat, who rose to a leadership position in the Almoravid army before dying in the Maghrib in 1144.[24] By that time, the Almoravids were facing challenges to their rule from dissident Andalusian groups in Spain and from the Almohads in Morocco. The Almohad caliph ʿAbd al-Muʾmin captured the Almoravid capital, Marrakesh, in March 1147.[25] His troops massacred many of the city's residents, but he gave the Christian soldiers the choice of converting to Islam or returning to Iberia. A large-scale exodus of Christian mercenaries to Toledo shortly followed.[26]

As ʿAbd al-Muʾmin's successors struggled with the demands of ruling a trans-Mediterranean and multiethnic empire, Christian mercenaries soon found themselves welcomed back into Almohad service. Fernando Rodríguez de Castro joined the forces of the Almohad caliph Abu Yaʿqub Yusuf in 1174 and helped them attack the holdings of his former lord, the king of León. Geraldo Sempavor, a Portuguese warlord, fought for Abu Yaʿqub Yusuf in the Maghrib and was rewarded with an estate in the western Atlas.[27]

The flow of European mercenaries to North Africa increased after a grand alliance of Iberian monarchies defeated the Almohads at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in July 1212. Though touted at the time as a triumph of Christian unity in the face of a religious rival, the battle actually enhanced the market for Iberian Christian mercenaries willing to cross the religious divide. 1213 brought drought and famine to the Iberian Peninsula, which discouraged the Christian powers from pursuing the reconquest deeper into al-Andalus. Pope Innocent III withdrew indulgences from Iberian crusading, seeking to redirect the military energies of Christendom toward the Holy Land. Key leaders on both sides passed away, including King Pedro II of Aragon, King Alfonso VIII of Castile, and the Almohad caliph Muhammad al-Nasir. As these states reorganized internally, interreligious conflict halted, at least for the time being. Castile and the Almohad empire agreed

[23] *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, ed. Antonio Maya Sánchez, in *Chronica Hispana saeculi XII, Pars I*, ed. Emma Falque, Juan Gil, and Antonio Maya Sánchez, CCCM 71 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 200.

[24] *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, 200–201. For Reverter's career, see István Frank, "Reverter, vicomte de Barcelone (vers 1130–1145)," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona* 26 (1954–56): 195–204; Barton, "Traitors to the Faith?," 40 n. 28; and François Clément, "Reverter et son fils, deux officiers catalans au service des sultans de Marrakech," *Medieval Encounters* 9 (2003): 79–106.

[25] ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar wa-diwan al-mubtadaʾ wa-l-khabar fi ayyam al-ʿarab wa-l-ʿajam wa-l-barbar wa-man ʿasarahum min dhawi al-sultan al-akbar*, 7 vols. (Beruit: Dar al-kitab al-Lubnani, 1956–61), 6:479; translated as *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, ed. and trans. William MacGuckin de Slane, 4 vols. (Algiers: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1852–56), 2:181.

[26] *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, 248.

[27] Barton, "Traitors to the Faith?," 28.

to a truce at Salé in 1215, which was renewed again in 1221. With opportunities for combat along the Iberian frontier restricted, many Castilian warriors began to ponder their options. Dissatisfaction with the new royal government and conflicts within the nobility encouraged increasing numbers of these fighting men to seek their fortunes across the Straits.[28]

They found a warm welcome there, because the Almohad defeat at Las Navas created the kind of chaotic, decentralized political environment in which mercenaries often thrive. Rival groups emerged to exploit the growing weakness of the Almohad regime. In the eastern Maghrib, the Hafsids established an autonomous emirate around Tunis in the early 1230s; in the central Maghrib, the Zayyanids drove the Almohads from power in Tlemcen soon after; and in the western Maghrib, the last Almohad dynasts battled the Marinids while fighting a civil war among themselves. The Marinids would eventually prevail in Morocco, but not until 1269. The slow collapse of Almohad power ushered in the heyday of the Christian mercenary in North Africa.[29]

The Hafsid, Zayyanid, and Marinid dynasties all established Christian mercenary guards over the course of the thirteenth century. But no North African power depended more on Christian soldiers than the Almohads themselves. The caliph Yusuf al-Mustansir (1213–24) employed two Christian military units. One was based in Meknes and commanded by the renegade Abu Zakariya Yahya, whose father was a Castilian *caid* (mercenary commander) named Gonzalo and whose mother (so it is reported) was the sister of the king of Castile.[30] The other troop had its headquarters in Marrakesh and was led by an aristocrat of the highest rank: the infante Pedro Fernandes, the brother of King Alfonso II of Portugal. Joining these highborn recruits in al-Mustansir's Christian mercenary guards was the Castilian magnate Count Fernando Núñez de Lara.[31]

These soldiers helped al-Mustansir hold back the Marinids, who had launched a rebellion in the region around Fez.[32] The mercenaries were powerless, however, to prevent the Almohads from descending into a dynastic crisis upon al-Mustansir's death in 1224. In Morocco and western al-Andalus, a member of the ruling Mu'minid family named Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid won the approval of

[28] For the situation in the Iberian Peninsula after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, see Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castille pendant la première moitié du XIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire et de civilization du Maghreb* 5 (1968): 37–62, at 37–40; and Barton, "Traitors to the Faith?," 24.

[29] For North African political history in this period, see Ramzi Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate: Ifriqiya and Its Andalusis, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 103–43; Atallah Dhina, *Les états de l'Occident musulman aux XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles: Institutions gouvernementales et administratives* (Algiers: Office des publications universitaires, 1984); Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 201–42; Charles-André Julien, *History of North Africa: From the Arab Conquest to 1830*, ed. and rev. Roger Le Tourneau, English trans. John Petrie, ed. C. C. Stewart (New York: Praeger, 1970), 138–219.

[30] Alemany, "Milicias cristianas," 137.

[31] Dufourcq, "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castille," 41; Barton, "Traitors to the Faith?," 29.

[32] Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:524 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:228).

the most powerful Almohad families.[33] In eastern al-Andalus, however, an uncle of al-Mustansir, Abu Muhammad ʿAbd-Allah al-ʿAdil, had himself proclaimed caliph at Murcia. He gained enough support in Muslim Spain to convince the Moroccans to cast off ʿAbd al-Wahid. They deposed and assassinated him in September 1224.[34] In the midst of this civil strife, Almohad al-Andalus began to break apart. Independent emirates emerged at Valencia in 1224 and Baeza in 1225.[35] Once in power, al-ʿAdil hardly had a chance to reconstitute his shattered domains. Having watched his former rival be driven from power and assassinated in 1224, he suffered the same fate just three years later.[36]

Upon al-ʿAdil's death, two would-be successors announced themselves. One was al-ʿAdil's brother, Abu al-ʿUla al-Maʾmun, who was proclaimed caliph at Seville on 15 September 1227. The other was al-ʿAdil's nephew, Yahya b. al-Nasir, who won the allegiance of the Almohad shaykhs and gained control of Marrakesh, Sijilmassa, and southern Morocco.[37] This rapid consolidation of power in Morocco gave Yahya an initial advantage. Worse still for al-Maʾmun, he faced opposition in al-Andalus from the emir of Baeza, al-Bayasi, and from Muhammad b. Yusuf of the Banu Hud, who claimed the caliphate for himself at Murcia in 1227–28.[38] As the candidates to succeed al-ʿAdil multiplied, al-Maʾmun decided on a desperate gamble. Rather than trying to unify al-Andalus behind his candidacy, he would strike at the Almohad heartland and attempt to win the caliphate by driving Yahya out of Marrakesh.

There was only one problem with the plan: with Morocco and most of al-Andalus having declared against him, al-Maʾmun had few soldiers at his disposal. He therefore asked King Fernando III of Castile for troops to take to Morocco. According to Ibn Abi Zarʿ, the king agreed to give him twelve thousand men, but demanded several concessions from al-Maʾmun in return:

> I will not give you the army, except on the condition that you give me ten fortresses, which I myself will choose, on the frontier of my land; if God's favor is upon you and you enter Marrakesh, build a church in the middle of the city for the Christians that

[33] Ibn ʿIdhari al-Marrakushi, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib fi akhbar al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib: Qism al-Muwahhidin*, ed. Muhammad Ibrahim al-Katani et al. (Beruit: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami; Dar al-Thaqafa, 1985), 269–70; translated as *Al-Bayan al-mughrib fi ijtisar ajbar muluk al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib: Los Almohades*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda, 2 vols. (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1953–54), 1:287.

[34] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 270 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:288); ʿAli b. ʿAbd-Allah b. Abi Zarʿ, *Al-Anis al-mutrib bi-rawd al-qirtas fi akhbar muluk al-maghrib wa-tarikh madinat Fas*, ed. ʿAbd al-Wahad b. Mansur (Rabat: Al-Matbaʿa al-Malakiyya, 1999), 322; French translation: *Roudh el-Kartas: Histoire des souverains du Maghreb et annals de la ville de Fès*, trans. Auguste Beaumier (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1860), 349. Spanish translation: *Rawd al-Qirtas*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda, 2 vols. (Valencia: J. Nácher, 1964), 2:476.

[35] Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 323–24 (trans. Beaumier, 350; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:477).

[36] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 273 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:297); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:528 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:233).

[37] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 274 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:299–300); Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 325–27 (trans. Beaumier, 352–55; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:480–83); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:529 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:234).

[38] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 275–78 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:303–7); Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 329 (trans. Beaumier, 358; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:486–87); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:529–30 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:234–35).

> come with you, where they can expound their religion and ring their bells at the times of their prayers. If a Christian attempts to convert to Islam, he shall not be received as a Muslim and will be returned to his brothers so that they can judge him according to their laws; and if a Muslim converts to Christianity, none shall do a thing to him.[39]

Scholars have questioned some aspects of Ibn Abi Zarʿ's account of this agreement.[40] The figure of twelve thousand soldiers is almost certainly far too high. Ibn ʿIdhari's estimate of five hundred accords better with what we know about the size of medieval Mediterranean armies.[41] Then there are the provisions governing conversion between Islam and Christianity. Would even the most desperate of Almohad pretenders have agreed to the one-way traffic in converts that Ibn Abi Zarʿ describes? If these details remain open to question, other sources confirm critical elements of the agreement: that al-Maʾmun recruited Castilian mercenaries for his invasion of Morocco, allowed them to build a church in Marrakesh, and permitted the sounding of bells.[42] In this way, the treaty between Fernando III and al-Maʾmun linked Christian military aid to the Almohads with the advancement of Latin Christianity in Morocco.

Al-Maʾmun received his troops in the summer of 1229 and in late September sailed from Algeciras to Ceuta on the Moroccan coast. After a slow advance toward Marrakesh, his forces encountered those of Yahya b. al-Nasr just outside the city on 11 February 1230.[43] Al-Maʾmun won a clear victory, with his Christian mercenaries dealing the crucial blow. They attacked Yahya's red tent and destroyed it, creating panic as his soldiers feared that he was dead.[44] Yahya, in fact, survived the defeat and retreated into the mountain strongholds of his allies among the Hintata tribe.[45]

Once in control of Marrakesh, al-Maʾmun broke radically with Almohad political and religious traditions.[46] The Almohads had once banned nonbelievers from settling permanently in the city. They could enter within its walls during the day but had to be out again by nightfall.[47] Now al-Maʾmun kept his promise to King

[39] Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 329 (trans. Beaumier, 357–58; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:486).

[40] Ambrosio Huici Miranda rejects Ibn Abi Zarʿ's version of the treaty between al-Maʾmun and Fernando III. Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq accepts the terms that Ibn Abi Zarʿ sets forth, but rejects the figure of twelve thousand troops. Allen J. Fromherz accepts Ibn Abi Zarʿ's account in its entirety, as does Mercedes García-Arenal. See Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 2 vols. (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1956–57), 2:471–72; Dufourcq, "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castille," 43 n. 26; Fromherz, "North Africa and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Christian Europe and the Almohad Islamic Empire," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20 (2009): 50–51; García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdis of the Muslim West*, trans. Martin Beagles (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 198.

[41] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 284 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:313).

[42] Ibid., 284 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:313); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:530–31 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:235–36).

[43] Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 330 (trans. Beaumier, 358–59; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:487).

[44] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 284 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:314).

[45] Ibid., 284 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:315); Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 330 (trans. Beaumier, 359; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:487); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:530 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:235).

[46] Roger Le Tourneau, "Sur la disparition de la doctrine almohade," *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970): 193–201, at 194–97.

[47] Fromherz, "North Africa and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," 50.

Fernando and allowed a Christian church to be built in Marrakesh. It was dedicated to Mary, and, if sixteenth-century reports are accurate, it was located close to the headquarters of the Christian mercenaries to the west of the mosque of al-Mansur.[48] According to Ibn Khaldun, the new caliph also permitted Christian worshippers to ring bells in their church.[49]

While rewarding his Christian followers, al-Ma'mun turned with ferocious rage upon the Almohad tribal leaders who had backed Yahya b. al-Nasr for the caliphate. Declaring them traitors, he had them executed and ordered their heads to be hung from the walls of Marrakesh.[50] At the same time, he renounced the ideology of the Almohad movement. He dispatched an edict throughout the empire denying that Ibn Tumart, the Almohad founder, was the Mahdi—the divinely inspired redeemer of Islamic theology who would restore justice to the world: "Know that we have rejected falsity and have published the truth and that there is no other Mahdi than Jesus, son of Mary."[51] He denied that Ibn Tumart possessed "infallibility" (*'isma*) and ordered his name removed from the Friday prayers and the currency.[52]

Al-Ma'mun's declaration that Jesus was the true Mahdi may have impressed some of the Christian fighters who had helped him to conquer Marrakesh.[53] Even so, his renunciation of Ibn Tumart probably aimed at more than retaining the loyalty of the mercenaries. His teachings on the Mahdi fell within the boundaries of Sunni orthodoxy as defined by the Maliki school of jurisprudence, which was growing increasingly influential in North Africa at that time.[54] Al-Ma'mun's abandonment of Almohadism brought the religious ideas that animated his regime into line with Maliki doctrine. For that reason it could have represented a way of reaching out both to Muslim constituencies in his domains and to his Christian

[48] Luis del Mármol Carvajal, *Primera parte de la descripcion general de Affrica, con todos los successos de guerras que a auido entre los infieles, y el pueblo Christiano, y entre ellos mesmos desde que Mahoma inue[n]to su secta, hasta el año del señor mil y quinientos y setenta y uno*, 3 vols. in 1 (Granada: En casa de Rene Rabut, 1573), vol. 2, fol. 29r; Pierre de Cenival, "L'église chrétienne de Marrakech au XIIIe siècle," *Hespéris* 7 (1927): 69–83, at 83.

[49] Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:531 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:236).

[50] When the heads eventually began to rot, city residents complained about the smell. Al-Ma'mun is supposed to have responded, "What fools! Those heads are a protection for them . . . they are a sweet smell for friends and a stench for enemies." See Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 331 (trans. Beaumier, 361–62; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:490). For the executions, see also Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 285 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:315–16); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:530 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:235); *Kitab al-hulal al-mawshiyya fi dhikr al-akhbar al-Marakushiyya: Li-mu'alif Andalus min ahl al-qarn al-thamin al-Hijri*, ed. Suhayl Zakar and 'Abd al-Qadir Zamama (Casablanca: Dar al-Rashad al-Haditha, 1979), 165; translated as *Al-Hulal al-mawsiyya: Crónica arabe de las dinastías almorávide, almohade y benimerín*, ed. and trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1952), 193.

[51] *Kitab al-hulal al-mawshiyya*, 164 (trans. Huici Miranda, 192).

[52] Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 330 (trans. Beaumier, 359–60; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:487–88); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:530 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:235); *Kitab al-hulal al-mawshiyya*, 165 (trans. Huici Miranda, 193).

[53] Fromherz, "North Africa and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," 50.

[54] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, 133–34. For the rise of Maliki jurisprudence in the Maghrib, see Mansour H. Mansour, *The Maliki School of Law: Spread and Domination in North and West Africa, 8th to 14th Centuries C.E.* (London: Austin and Winfield, 1995).

guard. In the long run, this strategy might have proved successful. In the short term, it left al-Ma'mun more dependent than ever on his Christian soldiers.

Despite the purge, Almohad opposition to the caliph's rule remained strong in Morocco. Al-Ma'mun was forced to take the field for a second time against Yahya b. al-Nasr in the summer of 1230. Yahya suffered another defeat but escaped into the mountains once again. In 1232, al-Ma'mun's brother rebelled against him in Ceuta. Al-Ma'mun invested the city but was unable to breech the walls. As the siege dragged on, Yahya took advantage of his absence to launch a raid on Marrakesh. Al-Ma'mun tried to return to his capital but died before he could reach it. Yahya put the city to the sack.[55]

Amid the general destruction, Yahya's soldiers made sure to tear down the Christian church.[56] According to Ibn Abi Zar', they also killed "many Jews and Banu Farkhan and seized their goods."[57] The original meaning of the Arabic word *farkh* is "little bird."[58] In a pejorative register, it could have the sense of "young man" or even "bastard." North African and Andalusi Muslims used the term to refer to Christian mercenary soldiers.[59] The word later entered Spanish as *farfan* (plural *farfanes*). A small group of descendants of the Christian mercenaries of Marrakesh who returned to the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fourteenth century appear in the sources as *farfanes*.[60] What Ibn Abi Zar' seems to be describing, then, is the killing of some members of al-Ma'mun's Christian mercenary guard during Yahya b. al-Nasr's 1232 raid on Marrakesh.[61] A fourteenth-century Franciscan chronicle provides an important complement to this report. It describes the martyrdom of five Franciscan friars in the Church of the Blessed Mary of Marrakesh at this time, along with the massacre of "a very great crowd of Christians of both sexes."[62]

These accounts of the Marrakesh raid show how closely al-Ma'mun's enemies had come to associate the cause of Christianity with his rule. The reports also raise broader questions about the Christian community of medieval North Africa and

[55] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 289, 294, 297–98 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:322, 331, 337–39); Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 332–33 (trans. Beaumier, 363; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:490–91); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:532 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:236–37).

[56] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 298 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:338); Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 333 (trans. Beaumier, 363; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:491).

[57] Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 333 (trans. Beaumier, 363; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:491).

[58] Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1881; repr. Beruit: Librairie du Liban, 1981), 2:249.

[59] Alemany, "Milicias cristianas," 138; Cenival, "L'église chrétienne de Marrakech," 75–76; Jean-Pierre Molénat, "L'organisation militaire des Almohades," in *Los Almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro, and Luis Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 2:554.

[60] Mármol, *Descripcion de Affrica*, vol. 2, fol. 29v.

[61] According to Ibn 'Idhari, many members of the guard survived the attack because they were with al-Ma'mun at the siege of Ceuta: Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 298 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:338).

[62] *Chronica XXIV generalium Ordinis Minorum*, ed. Bernard Bessa, in *Analecta Franciscana ad historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, 17 vols. (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1895–2010), 3:33; English translation: Arnald of Sarrant, *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals of the Order of Friars Minor [1369–1374]*, trans. Noel Muscat (Malta: Tau Franciscan Communications, 2010), 44.

the place of Christian mercenaries within it. Who were these Christians "of both sexes" who were targeted for death in the raid of 1232? How had Franciscans made their way to the Almohad capital? Why had they returned to a city where several of their brothers had suffered a famous public martyrdom twelve years before?

The Christian Communities of North Africa

The fate of the indigenous Christian communities of North Africa is a historical puzzle with many missing pieces. Evidence from chronicles, geographies, and histories is sparse; so too are epigraphical and archaeological remains. There is much work still to be done to fill in the considerable gaps left by the state of the surviving evidence. Recently, though, scholars have begun to develop better models for understanding when and how local North African Christianity dwindled and disappeared over the late antique and medieval periods. The general trend in the scholarship has been away from interpretations that stress the "rapid demise" of indigenous Christian communities in the wake of the Arab conquest of the Maghrib in the seventh century. Dominique Valérian, Mohamed Talbi, and Mark Handley have argued instead for a longer process of decline stretching out to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Talbi describes a "slow asphyxiation" of pre-Islamic North African Christianity, marked by three major exoduses of Christian populations: the first during the initial Arab invasion; the second during the mid-eleventh-century incursions of the Banu Hilal; and the third during the Norman retreat from North Africa in the 1160s in the face of Almohad pressure. Some Christian communities would survive longer still, "reduced, isolated, and scattered" throughout the region. At the end of the twelfth century, an indigenous Christian community may have lived on in Qal'a, in central Algeria. Al-Idrisi refers to Berbers in Gafsa speaking a localized Latin dialect in the twelfth century, implying their allegiance to Christianity. Ibn Khaldun describes villagers in Nafzawa, to the south of Byzacena, speaking the same dialect two hundred years later.[63]

One measure of the North African Church's growing weakness in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was its greater need to look to Rome for help in regulating its internal affairs.[64] As the African ecclesiastical hierarchy shrank, there were

[63] Dominique Valérian, "La permanence du christianisme au Maghreb: L'apport problématique des sources latines," in *Islamisation et arabisation de l'Occident musulman médiéval (VIIe–XIIe siècle)*, ed. Dominique Valérian (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2011), 139, 149; Mark A. Handley, "Disputing the End of African Christianity," in *Vandals, Romans, and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, ed. A. H. Merrills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 304, 309–10; Mohamed Talbi, "Le christianisme maghrébin de la conquête musulmane à sa disparition: Une tentative d'explication," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, Papers in Mediaeval Studies, 9 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 329–30, 338–39.

[64] Valérian, "La permanence du christianisme," 140; for this period of papal-North African relations in general, see Anette Hettinger, *Die Beziehungen des Papsttums zu Afrika von der Mitte des 11. bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 36 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993).

fewer bishops available to settle disputes between dioceses and to consecrate new clergy. In 1053, Pope Leo IX intervened in a struggle for precedence between the archbishop of Carthage, the traditional head of the African Church, and the bishop of Gummi-Mahdia, whose claims were favored by the Zirids. As he did so, Leo regretted that only five bishops remained in "all Africa," which had once boasted an episcopate over two hundred strong.[65] By Pope Gregory VII's day, there were only two African bishops, fewer than the three needed to consecrate a new member of the hierarchy. In 1076, Gregory was compelled to ask Archbishop Cyriac to send a qualified candidate to Rome for consecration.[66] In the same year, the pope responded positively to an extraordinary request from the Hammadid emir of Bejaya, al-Nasir, to appoint a bishop to lead the city's Christian community.[67] Gregory hoped to oversee a revival of African Christianity, but his new appointments failed to halt the general decline of Latin ecclesiastical structures there.

The thirteenth century is often thought to have marked a new beginning for Christianity in North Africa, as newcomers from Europe took up residence in the larger coastal cities. In fact, though, there was considerable chronological overlap between the arrival of these European Christians and the gradual disappearance of the indigenous communities. The Almoravids sometimes sent back to Morocco Christian prisoners they had captured during their Iberian campaigns. Mass deportations of captives took place in 1109, 1126, 1130, and 1138.[68] According to a twelfth-century fatwa from the collection of al-Wansharisi, the Christian deportees were permitted to construct churches where they settled.[69] Some of these prisoners were subjects of the Christian kingdoms of northern Iberia. Others were Mozarabs from al-Andalus. A Mozarab bishop named Miguel b. ʿAbd al-Aziz lived in Fez between 1126 and 1137. During that time he made a copy of the Gospels in Arabic.[70] The Almoravids conscripted soldiers from both Iberian Christian communities into their first Christian guards, which, as we have seen, soon began to attract freely recruited Castilians as well. Joining the captives and the mercenaries among the new Christian arrivals in the western Maghrib were merchants from Catalonia, Provence, and the Italian maritime republics. Pisa seems to have established commercial relations with the Almoravids in the 1130s, while Genoa agreed to a trade pact with the Almohads in the 1150s.[71] There

[65] Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 1–3.

[66] Ibid., 6.

[67] Ibid., 7–8; see also *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: Selected Letters from the "Registrum,"* trans. Ephraim Emerton, Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies, 14 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 94–95.

[68] Vincent Lagardère, "Communautés mozarabes et pouvoir almoravide en 519H/1125 en Andalus," *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988): 99–119, at 99.

[69] Ahmad b. Yahya al-Wansharisi, *Histoire et société en Occident musulman au Moyen Âge: Analyse du Miʿyar d'al-Wansarisi*, ed. and trans. Vincent Lagardère (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1995), 66.

[70] Francisco Simonet, *Historia de los Mozarabes de España*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Tipografía de la Viuda é Hijos de M. Tello, 1897–1903; repr. Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1983), 4:751–53; Cenival, "L'église chrétienne de Marrakech," 72–73; Lagardère, "Communautés mozarabes," 114.

[71] Mas Latrie, "Introduction historique," in *Traités de paix*, 36–37, 47.

is no firm information on the size of these new Christian communities, but the anecdotal evidence we have suggests that they were modest.[72]

Even the smallest of Latin Christian communities required clergy to administer the rites. By the twelfth century, as we have seen, no effective Latin ecclesiastical hierarchy remained in North Africa. The earliest efforts to minister to the new Christian groups were ad hoc. It is likely that when Bishop Miguel b. ʿAbd al-Aziz reached Fez as a captive in 1126 he continued to serve in a pastoral role; but he had no formal standing as a North African bishop. Other clergy may also have been active among the captives and mercenaries of Almoravid Morocco. The *Chronicle of the Emperor Alfonso VIII* reports that the Christian mercenaries who fled Marrakesh in 1147 after the Almohad conquest returned to Toledo "with their bishop and the greater part of their clergy."[73] (This may have been Bishop Miguel, but there is no positive proof of the identification.)

These informal arrangements continued into the early thirteenth century. The Portuguese infante Pedro brought a personal chaplain with him to Marrakesh when he took command of the Christian troops there: Joan Robert, canon of the Church of the Holy Cross of Coïmbre.[74] The merchants also used their own clergy from home. Each European merchant community of the medieval Maghrib lived and worked in its own merchant factory, or *funduk*. Each *funduk* usually housed a small chapel staffed by a fellow countryman.[75] In Ceuta in the late 1220s, for example, a priest named Hugo served as the "vicar of the Genoese."[76] The third major Christian population of North Africa—the captives—might find a priest among their number by chance, but they could not hire any clergy. Toward the end of the twelfth century, two religious orders were founded to minister to their spiritual needs and, if possible, purchase their freedom. The Trinitarians and Mercedarians quickly established themselves in the western Maghrib.[77]

The arrival of the redemptive orders continued the trend toward highly atomized ecclesiastical structures in the North African Church, with each Christian community— mercenary, merchant, and captive—having its own clergy or religious. In another sense, though, the implantation of the Trinitarians and the Mercedarians in the Maghrib represented a new departure. Their efforts revived papal interest in the Christians of the region. On 8 March 1199, Pope Innocent III wrote to "Miramolin, the illustrious king of Morocco" to recommend the

[72] Talbi, "Le christianisme maghrébin," 340–44.

[73] *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, 248.

[74] *Chronica XXIV generalium*, 3:20 (Arnald of Sarrant, *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals*, 30).

[75] Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100, 119–20.

[76] Dufourcq, "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castille," 47.

[77] For the Trinitarians, see Giulio Cipollone, *Trinità e liberazione tra Cristianità e Islam* (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 2000); for the Order of Merced, see James William Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

Trinitarians.[78] Later popes, especially Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV, concerned themselves with the entire Latin Christian community of North Africa and, spurred by the mendicant orders, tried to expand it through a program of evangelization. The peculiar historical development of this community placed the papacy in a curious position. The indigenous Christians had almost disappeared, the new Christian population was small, and one major component of it was unfree while another was transient, coming and going with the demands of commerce. The remaining group represented a relatively permanent, voluntary Latin Christian presence in North Africa. The pastoral care they received was informal and undeveloped. Their work was valued by a weakened but still formidable North African regime. Mercenaries who served the Almohads—these would have to be a foundation stone for a new Latin Christian church in the land of Augustine.

The Popes and the Mercenaries

Honorius III played a crucial role in the development of papal policy in North Africa during the thirteenth century. While a firm proponent of crusading in other venues, in North Africa he focused on protecting the existing Christian communities of the region and winning converts among the Muslim majority. This approach remained influential at the papal curia through the 1250s.

The small Christian populations of thirteenth-century North Africa seem to have inspired hope and fear in Honorius: hope that they would grow and spur the re-Christianization of Africa; fear that they would be absorbed into the surrounding Muslim population. Honorius's first efforts in the region concentrated on defending a community he saw as vulnerable. In 1219, he wrote to the Almohad caliph al-Mustansir, who employed two Christian mercenary guards in his struggles against the Marinid insurgency. The pope expressed alarm that the caliph might be listening to those who were urging him to forbid the Christians of his land from practicing their religion freely. In Honorius's opinion, this was not only bad advice—he cited a host of biblical warnings about the fate of rulers who thwarted God's will in this fashion—but it was also unfair, for as pope he allowed an "innumerable multitude" of Muslims to exercise their religious rights among Christians. Honorius beseeched the caliph to allow "the men of our [Christian] people to use their law freely."[79]

If these Christians could not practice their natal faith, they might feel pressure to abandon it. Captives were seen as especially sensitive to such compulsion, for obvious reasons, but mercenaries raised concerns on this front as well. The son of the famous Almoravid mercenary captain Reverter had converted to Islam.[80]

[78] Karl-Ernst Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern im 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels*, Studi e testi, 291 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1981), no. 1; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 8–9.

[79] Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 5; Demetrio Mansilla, ed., *La documentación pontificia de Honorio III (1216–1227)*, Monumenta Hispaniae Vaticana: Sección Registros, 2 (Rome: Instituto Español de Historia Eclesiastica, 1965), no. 243.

[80] Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 321–22, 327–30; Barton, "Traitors to the Faith?," 41 n. 30.

So too had the commander of al-Mustansir's Christian troop at Meknes, Abu Zakariya Yahya—his case could have been on Honorius's mind as he appealed for Christian religious liberty in Morocco.[81]

Honorius's fear of apostasy also encouraged him to be flexible about the way Christianity was practiced in North Africa. In early 1223 he received more information about al-Mustansir's relations with the Christians of his realm. The caliph celebrated military victories by inviting "five Christians of greater piety and reputation living under his power" to feasts at which they were obliged to eat meat even on Fridays or during Lent. When the pope learned of this, he wrote to his "dear Christian sons dispersed throughout Morocco." He absolved those who had been forced to act against their faith in this fashion, offered his condolences for their misfortune, and exhorted them to remain firm in their faith.[82] This letter raises puzzling questions: to what Christian community did the feast attendees belong? Were they the noble mercenaries who worked for al-Mustansir at the time, such as the infante Pedro Fernandes or Count Fernando Núñez de Lara? Were they consuls in charge of the merchant *funduks*? Were they distinguished captives who happened to have fallen into al-Mustansir's possession? Were they merchant or mercenary chaplains, or Trinitarian/Mercedarian brothers? And why were five of them invited to the feasts, not more, not less? If the text leaves these matters in doubt, it does make clear that Honorius was eager to support the Christians of Morocco, even when that entailed adapting Christian practice to the unexpected demands of minority life.

Honorius's ambitions for the Maghrib extended beyond defending its modest Christian communities. Over 1225 and 1226, he launched a full-blown missionary program in the region. His plans took shape in the aftermath of one of the most famous episodes in the history of the early mendicant missions to the Islamic world: the death of five Franciscan friars in Marrakesh, traditionally dated to 16 January 1220.[83] Father Burns coined the phrase "fanatic confrontation" to describe the early Franciscan technique of seeking to convert by example, inspiring individuals to receive the faith by suffering to the point of martyrdom for it.[84] Five years later, Honorius would promote a more staid approach, which certainly sought to win converts, but not at the expense of the missionary's life, nor at a risk to the existing Christian populations. He laid out his vision in a letter of June 1225 to the Dominican friars Domingo and Martín, who were about to embark on their order's first mission to Morocco. Drawing inspiration from the Gospels, he told them that their goal should be to "convert the infidel, build up the fallen, strengthen the weak, comfort the doubters, and confirm the strong." They were to combine, in other words, their missionary aim with work among the local

[81] Alemany, "Milicias cristianas," 137.

[82] *Documentación pontificia de Honorio III*, no. 439.

[83] For the martyrs of Marrakesh, see *Chronica XXIV generalium*, 3:15–22 (Arnald of Sarrant, *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals*, 25–33). See also E. Randolph Daniel, *The Franciscan Concept of Mission in the High Middle Ages* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975), 44–45; and James D. Ryan, "Missionary Saints of the High Middle Ages: Martyrdom, Popular Veneration, and Canonization," *Catholic Historical Review* 90 (2004): 8–15.

[84] Burns, "Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West," 1395.

Christians. With this balanced agenda in mind, the pope granted them authority not only to baptize converts but also to impose penance on local Christians, absolve them from sentences of excommunication, and reconcile to the church those who had apostatized.[85]

In October 1225, Honorius called for Franciscan and Dominican reinforcements to join Domingo and Martín in the western Maghrib.[86] It is likely that around this time he also sought out a secular partner for his North African venture. This was the kingdom of Castile, which had entered into a period of peaceful interaction with the Almohads, marked by the truces of 1215 and 1221.[87] To take advantage of the good relations between the two powers, it made sense to seek out the new missionary recruits in Castile and to do so in concert with the kingdom's chief prelate, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, archbishop of Toledo. Honorius therefore invited Rodrigo to assign mendicants to the Moroccan mission. To provide a more permanent ecclesiastical foundation for the venture, Honorius took a crucial further step. He asked the archbishop to appoint one of the mendicant missionaries as a new bishop of Morocco.[88] Rodrigo chose Brother Domingo. It is not clear whether Domingo exercised his episcopal office in any meaningful way.[89] By February 1226, Honorius was writing again to Rodrigo about the Moroccan mission. This time he asked the archbishop to dispatch still more mendicants to North Africa and to appoint one or two more bishops for the region if it seemed prudent.[90] After centuries of decline, a fledging Christian church in North Africa was taking shape once again.

Honorius had no illusions about the challenge of building up that church. Never mind gaining converts, the mendicants sent to Morocco struggled to minister to the resident Christians. The pope was soon granting the friars various dispensations from the rules of their order to allow them to carry out their mission more easily, permitting them to wear beards, to dress in the local fashion, and to receive alms in cash.[91] And despite the boldness of his missionary program, Honorius remained convinced that the local Christians were vulnerable to apostasy. In his letter of 1226 to Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo, he described how the Christians of Morocco, scattered across the "vast amplitude" of the kingdom, lived in the midst of a ferocious people "who persecute the professors of the Christian name with excessive cruelty." As a result, the pope observed with regret, "in Miramolin's kingdom there are many Christian captives who are said to have apostatized out

[85] *Documentación pontificia de Honorio III*, no. 562.

[86] Ibid., no. 579.

[87] Dufourcq, "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castille," 39–40.

[88] This letter does not survive. It is summarized in Honorius's letter of February 1226 to Archbishop Rodrigo: *Documentación pontificia de Honorio III*, no. 595.

[89] In 1228, Domingo became the bishop of Baeza, which the Castilians were then in the process of conquering. See Atanasio López, *Obispos en al Africa septentrional desde el siglo XIII* (Tangier: Tipografía Hispano Arábiga, 1941), 7–13.

[90] *Documentación pontificia de Honorio III*, no. 595. See also Williel R. Thomson, *Friars in the Cathedral: The First Franciscan Bishops 1226–1261*, Studies and Texts, 33 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), 25–26.

[91] *Documentación pontificia de Honorio III*, no. 596.

of fear of torture and death and others weak in faith who are tottering toward the edge of an abyss."[92]

Honorius's talk of an abyss was not far off the mark. Almohad dynastic strife in the wake of al-Mustansir's death in 1224 threw the pope's careful plans for the development of the Latin Church in Morocco into doubt. The struggle between al-ʿAdil and ʿAbd al-Wahid suggested an uncertain future for Christians in the region. But al-Maʾmun's rise to power transformed the situation. By casting off the traditional sources of Almohad legitimacy and trusting instead in his Christian mercenaries, al-Maʾmun created a dynamic that would remain in place for decades. At its heart was an exchange—mercenaries for Christianization—that bound together the papacy, the Almohads, and Castile into a politico-religious constellation in the western Mediterranean.

Abu Muhammad ʿAbd al-Wahid al-Rashid was fourteen years old when his father al-Maʾmun died at Wad al-ʿAbid in October 1232.[93] His succession to the caliphate owed a great deal to his mother Habab, a Christian and former captive, and to the mercenary known as Far Qasil, the *caid* of his father's Christian guard.[94] The mercenary captain, who in his former life had been a Castilian soldier named Sancho, soon proved himself indispensible to the young caliph.[95] In November 1232, he helped defeat al-Maʾmun's old nemesis, Yahya b. al-Nasr, before the walls of Marrakesh, which allowed al-Rashid to take possession of the Almohad capital.[96] A year later Far Qasil's brother, Gonzalo, arrived with more soldiers from Castile.[97] Despite the reinforcements, a rebellion drove al-Rashid from Marrakesh in 1235.[98] Making the best of his expulsion, the caliph and his Christian mercenaries drove south to Sijilmassa and recaptured the former Almohad stronghold. They gained not only the city but also the defeated emir's Christian mercenaries, who joined the army that had just defeated them on the march toward its next target: Fez.[99] Here too al-Rashid was able to win recognition of his authority, and by 1236 he was the master of Marrakesh once again.[100]

The Almohad dynasty's growing reliance on the military support of Christian mercenaries did not escape the attention of the papal curia. In May 1233, Pope

[92] Ibid., no. 595.

[93] Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 333 (trans. Beaumier, 364; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:492–93). For al-Rashid's reign, see Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 2:481–521.

[94] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 298 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:338); Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 334 (trans. Beaumier, 364–65; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:493).

[95] For this enigmatic figure, see Dufourcq, "Les relations du Maroc et de la Castille," 54; Barton, "Traitors to the Faith?," 30; Alemany, "Milicias cristianas," 138–39.

[96] Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 335 (trans. Beaumier, 365–66; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:494); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:532 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:237–38).

[97] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 307 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:29).

[98] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 318–19 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:55–56); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:534 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:240).

[99] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 324–25 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:67–69); Roger Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 98.

[100] Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 6:535 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:240).

Gregory IX addressed a bold letter "to the noble man Miramolin."[101] The pope's message to the caliph contained an offer, a request, and a threat. The offer was to embrace Christianity: "We desire and ardently demand that to you who walk in the shadows he reveal his only son, the true light, and call you mercifully to the faith of Christian truth in acknowledgment of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ." The request was to treat the Christians of his realm well, especially the Franciscan, Brother Agnello, described here as the "bishop of Fez," and the other mendicants working with him.[102] Otherwise (and this was the threat), "if you choose to be an enemy of Christ rather than a friend, we will in no way permit, as we ought not to permit, what is done for you by his faithful." What Christians had done for al-Ma'mun and al-Rashid was fight for them as mercenaries. By claiming control over such Christian military support, Gregory could link his tolerance of it to the caliph's tolerance of the mendicant mission in Morocco. The mercenaries had become a source of leverage in papal efforts to promote Christianity in North Africa.

The frank appeal to the caliph to convert to Christianity marks a new confidence in papal dealings with the Almohads. Gregory dispatched more mendicants to the western Maghrib in 1233 and in 1237 he announced the appointment of a new bishop of Morocco.[103] The tone of the announcement letter, addressed to "all Christ's faithful residing in the kingdom of Morocco," is celebratory, even triumphant. "We rejoice," Gregory proclaimed, "that the church of Morocco, formerly sterile, has returned to fecundity and that the synagogue of sinners, which used to have many sons, has been weakened."[104]

For all Gregory's optimism, there were risks inherent in tying Christian military support for the Almohads to Christianization in Morocco. One was that it was a bargain born of Almohad desperation. The weaker the dynasty grew, the more concessions the papacy might win. But if the dynasty weakened to the point of collapse, the nascent Latin Church of Morocco might come crashing down along with it. Alternately, a weakened Almohad claimant might decide that papal support was no longer worth the cost of antagonizing other interest groups. He might repudiate the strategy and revert to a greater reliance on more traditional allies. Worse still, from the curia's point of view, a caliph could call its bluff: could a pope actually halt the flow of mercenaries to North Africa? As Gregory's successor Innocent IV weighed the risks and rewards of papal diplomacy with the

[101] Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 13; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 10. The beginning of the text makes clear that Gregory believed he was addressing someone to whom he had written before. This suggests that Gregory may not have been aware of the transfer of power from al-Ma'mun to al-Rashid, which had taken place the previous October. Since al-Rashid had adopted many of his father's policies, the pope's message fitted the new caliph's circumstances well in any event.

[102] On Bishop Agnello of Fez, see López, *Obispos en al Africa*, 13–18; Thomson, *Friars in the Cathedral*, 27.

[103] The identity of this new bishop of Morocco is unknown. For Gregory IX's recommendation letter of 26 May 1233 on behalf of the mendicants travelling to Morocco, see *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. Johannes H. Sbaralea, 4 vols. (Rome: Typis sacrae congregationis de propaganda fide, 1759–68), 1:105–6.

[104] Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 11–12.

Almohads, the Christian mercenaries of Morocco emerged as a central focus of papal interest in North Africa.

In October 1246, Innocent IV wrote to the Almohad caliph Abu al-Hasan al-Sa'id, thanking him for the support he had shown to the Christian church in his realms and congratulating him for the victories he had won over his enemies.[105] Al-Sa'id had come to power in 1242 following the death of his half brother al-Rashid in a boating accident.[106] The new caliph, who was the son of al-Ma'mun and a Nubian slave, continued the family tradition of relying on Christian mercenaries.[107] In a crucial battle against the Marinid emir Abu Mu'arif Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Haq, fought on 12 November 1244, the commander of the Christian guard, known in the sources only as "the son of the count" (*ibn al-qamt*), led the charge that gave the victory to al-Sa'id.[108] During the battle, the mercenary captain Juan Gaïtan killed 'Abd al-Haq, eliminating the caliph's greatest Marinid rival.[109]

In his letter, Innocent noted that al-Sa'id had gained this victory with the help of Christian fighters. Although winning battles for the forces of Islam might not seem the best way of earning praise from a medieval pope, Innocent paid these mercenaries a compliment. He declared that they were doing God's work in Morocco, for, when they fought in defense of the caliph's realm, they were also defending "the Catholic faith and the church."[110] However improbable it might seem at first blush, this was not a fanciful notion. The Latin Church of Morocco had indeed become so associated with the rule of al-Ma'mun and his sons that it had become a target of their enemies, as in the Marrakesh attacks of 1232 by Yahya b. al-Nasr and his followers.[111] Innocent played up this tradition of caliphal support for the church in the opening clauses of the letter, exhorting al-Sa'id to follow in the footsteps of "Catholic princes and your predecessors, who bestowed the privileges of many liberties upon the Moroccan church, and endowed her with many benefits, and who have defended her up to the present time from the efforts and incursions of . . . enemies of the Christian faith."[112] So far, al-Sa'id had lived up to his family's reputation for protecting the Christian communities of the Almohad realm. He too had granted the church liberties, privileges, and

[105] Augusto Quintana Prieto, ed., *La documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV (1243–1254)*, Monumenta Hispaniae Vaticana: Sección Registros, 7 (Rome: Instituto Español de Historia Eclesiastica, 1987), no. 332; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 31; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 14–15.

[106] Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 335 (trans. Beaumier, 366; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:495); Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 2:518.

[107] Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 336 (trans. Beaumier, 367; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:496).

[108] Ibn Abi Zar', *Al-Dhakhira al-saniyya fi tarikh al-dawla al-mariniyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahab b. Mansur (Rabat: Dar al-Mansur, 1972), 62.

[109] Ibid., 63.

[110] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 332; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 31; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 14–15.

[111] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 289, 294, 297–98 (trans. Huici Miranda, 1:322, 331, 337–39); Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 333 (trans. Beaumier, 363; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:490–91); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:532 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:236–37).

[112] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 332; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 31; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 14–15.

immunities, and he had defended and supported "with opportune benefits" the Christians introduced into his lands by his predecessors.

These Christians—the reference is clearly to the Christian mercenary guard founded by al-Ma'mun[113]—had helped al-Sa'id repulse "the insults and violent attacks" of his enemies. They had also allowed the caliph to accumulate a great deal of plunder. If Christian mercenaries brought such rewards to him, what benefits would then accrue if he were to accept the faith of Christ? "If only you could ascend to the height of contemplation and taste a little of the sweetness of divine wisdom!" Beyond that ineffable benefit, conversion would also bring al-Sa'id the special protection of the Apostolic See. It would surely also result in "an innumerable multitude of people" following him to the faith.[114]

After conjuring up this vision of mass conversions in the western Maghrib, Innocent turned to the grittier realities of Christian life in the region. Al-Sa'id's Christian troops had won a stunning victory in 1244, but since then the external threats to his regime had grown more severe. By 1246, he was under pressure not just from the Marinids but also from the Zayyanids to the east.[115] Christian mercenaries had been on the losing end of confrontations with these Almohad rivals.[116] So as Innocent looked into the future, he did not like what he saw. Despite the caliph's past military success, won with Christian help, his enemies were gaining on him. With strong hands and great cunning, they were striving to infest his lands. The Christian mercenaries were thus more important to the security of the realm than ever. But what if the enemy launched an unexpected attack? The mercenaries could be wiped out, leaving the kingdom defenseless and the caliph in danger. To prevent this catastrophe, al-Sa'id should provide the mercenaries with strongholds in which they could seek shelter in times of crisis, together with coastal ports from which they could withdraw and to which they could later return with reinforcements. Although the mercenaries would possess the strongholds and ports, the caliph would retain suzerainty over them.[117]

To deliver his appeal on behalf of the mercenaries, Innocent called on a new bishop of Morocco, Lope Fernández de Aín. Lope brought long diplomatic experience to this assignment. Born near Zaragoza, in the Crown of Aragon, he had become a Franciscan friar in 1221. In the late 1230s he represented the

[113] Eugène Tisserant and Gaston Wiet, "Une lettre de l'almohade Murtada au pape Innocent IV," *Hespéris* 6 (1926): 27–53, at 48.

[114] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 332; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 31; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 14–15.

[115] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 384–87 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:191–95); Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 337 (trans. Beaumier, 368; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:497); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:541 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:246).

[116] Ibn Abi Zar' reports that al-Sa'id sent various armies against the Marinids, made up of "Almohads, Arabs, and Christians," but they were all defeated: Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 337 (trans. Beaumier, 368; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:497–98).

[117] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 332; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 31; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 14–15. For analysis of this proposal, see Tisserant and Wiet, "Lettre de l'almohade Murtada," 48–50; James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels: The Church and the Non-Christian World 1250–1550* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979), 41; Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 119–20.

Franciscan province of Aragon in negotiations at the papal curia, which brought him to the attention of Gregory IX. By the mid-1240s he was serving as a counselor to Innocent IV in Lyon. He was also well known at the Castilian royal court. He would remain at the forefront of papal and Castilian initiatives in North Africa until his death in the early 1260s.[118]

Lope's mission was not limited to discussing the welfare of the Christian mercenary guard with al-Sa'id. Once again, as in the days of Honorius, optimism and pessimism combined in papal plans. On the one hand, Innocent seems to have believed that a major segment of the North African Christian population was so embattled that it required fortresses to protect it. This would not seem to bode well for its future. On the other hand, the pope's negotiations with the caliph over the security of the mercenaries formed part of a larger effort to revitalize North African Christianity. Strengthening the Latin Church of Morocco remained a central component of this effort. Innocent called the Moroccan church a "special daughter of the Roman church" and argued that it was entitled to particular consideration because it was "established at the ends of the earth" and was "alone and unique" in that part of the world.[119] For all the importance Innocent attached to the western Maghrib, his ambitions for Bishop Lope's mission extended beyond that region. He wanted the new bishop to revive Christianity not just in Morocco, but throughout North Africa. Innocent expanded the scope of Lope's pastoral responsibilities to incorporate parts of the eastern and central Maghrib. He recommended the bishop to the emirs of Tunis, Bejaya, and Ceuta, while noting that "many Christians" were living in their domains and that "several also come there to sell their merchandise."[120] Finally, in addition to serving these established communities, Lope's venture would have the traditional missionary goal. Innocent proclaimed that the bishop's work could lead to a "new planting" of Christianity throughout Africa.[121]

Innocent launched a promotional campaign for Lope's mission that was as ambitious as the goals he had set for it. The expedition was not a crusade—one of Lope's tasks, after all, was to deliver a letter to al-Sa'id—but the pope's efforts to build support for it bore all the hallmarks of crusade promotion. He appealed for assistance to all the traditional recipients of crusade propaganda: monarchs with a stake in the outcome (in this case the kings of Castile, Aragon, Navarre, and Portugal);[122] prelates who could promote the venture (the archbishops of Genoa and Tarragona, and the bishops of Valencia, Majorca, Porto, Burgos, Pamplona,

[118] For Lope's career prior to his appointment as bishop of Morocco, see Tisserant and Wiet, "Lettre de l'almohade Murtada," 41–43; López, *Obispos en al Africa*, 18–20; Thomson, *Friars in the Cathedral*, 28–29; Henry Koehler, *L'église chrétienne du Maroc et la mission franciscaine 1221–1790* (Vanves: Imprimerie franciscaine missionaire, 1934), 35.

[119] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 333 (31 October 1246).

[120] Ibid., no. 325; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, nos. 28–30; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 13.

[121] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 333.

[122] For the king of Aragon, see ibid., no. 322 (23 October 1246); *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1:434. For the kings of Navarre, Castile, and Portugal, see *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1:435; and Tisserant and Wiet, "Lettre de l'almohade Murtada," 47 n. 1.

Barcelona, Marseille, and Narbonne);[123] the mendicants and the military orders (in this instance the Iberian order of Santiago);[124] and finally the lay people (especially those who lived "on the coast of Spain") who seemed likely to respond positively to the appeal.[125] Innocent also dispensed privileges to induce participation. In an attempt to attract lay people to Lope's travelling party, the pope granted permission for Christians in Africa to marry within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity.[126] This measure may have been intended to allay concerns about finding a mate in such a small community. He also offered the full Holy Land crusade indulgence to those who joined Lope's permanent retinue.[127] Innocent did not explain his reasoning for granting the indulgence, but it does suggest his eagerness to attract recruits and perhaps also his sense that their work might involve danger and the use of force in defense of the faith.

Lope's expedition combined disparate motives and methods. It was half missionary venture and half diplomatic mission. It was promoted like a crusade, but its aims were to protect and expand North African Christianity peacefully, while defending the interests of mercenaries who fought for a Muslim prince. Fittingly enough, it went neither as well, nor as badly, as Innocent expected. The bishop and his retinue were well treated during their stay at the caliph's court and were never in physical danger.[128] In other respects, though, the venture was not a success. Because of the wide-ranging nature of his preparations, it took Bishop Lope many months to ready himself for departure. As of February 1247, some four months after his appointment as bishop of Morocco, he was still at the curia in Lyon, engrossed in the details of planning. On 28 February he received a dispensation from the pope to continue in his episcopal office despite worries about his illegitimate birth: his parents had apparently failed to marry in sight of a church, as canon law suggested.[129] About two weeks later, Lope secured a similar dispensation for the priest Bernardo, who was to accompany him to Morocco.[130] After that, the bishop of Morocco disappears from the historical record until June 1250.

In the interval, Almohad domestic politics were transformed yet again. The Almohad caliph al-Sa'id was killed while campaigning against the Zayyanids in June 1248. His young son lost his life at the same time.[131] In the absence of a direct heir, the Almohad shaykhs convened in Marrakesh to choose a new caliph. After a contentious debate, they settled on a member of a cadet branch of the

[123] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 318 (18 October 1246); *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1:431. Spanish translation in López, *Obispos en al Africa*, 20.

[124] For the Franciscans, see *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, nos. 323, 326; *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1:433. For the Knights of Santiago, see *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 328; *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1:436.

[125] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 318; *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1:431.

[126] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 340.

[127] Ibid., no. 372.

[128] In a letter to Pope Innocent IV reporting on his meeting with Bishop Lope, the Almohad caliph al-Murtada laid great stress on this point: Tisserant and Wiet, "Lettre de l'almohade Murtada," 32, 36.

[129] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 357.

[130] Ibid., no. 360.

[131] Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 338 (trans. Beaumier, 370; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:499–500); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:541 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:246–47).

Mu'minid line, Abu Hafs 'Umar, who took the caliphal title al-Murtada.[132] His rise to power did not bode well for Bishop Lope's embassy. The new caliph owed his position more to the Almohad shaykhs who had selected him and less to the Christian troops who had supported al-Ma'mun, al-Rashid, and al-Sa'id. Before his election, moreover, he had served as governor of Salé, a strategically significant port city much coveted by European powers.[133] Al-Sa'id had appointed him to that office after executing the previous ruler of the city for trying to convert to Christianity and grant his "kingdom" to the Knights of Santiago.[134] Al-Murtada would now have to respond to a request from the bishop of Morocco to surrender coastal strongholds (perhaps even Salé itself) to the Christian mercenaries of his deceased predecessor.

We are fortunate to have al-Murtada's reply to Pope Innocent's letter to al-Sa'id, which is dated 10 June 1250. The caliph began with an invocation of Almohad unitarian doctrine that stressed its contrasts with Christian belief: "We praise God—there is no God but he—in the manner of he who knows that he is the only Lord, whose unity is established by the most decisive arguments and testimonies. We know that superior intellects are loathe to admit that he had a son or that he should be called father; moreover the merciful Sovereign is beyond the opinions expressed by the trinitarians, the idolaters, and the unbelievers."[135] So much, then, for converting to Christianity, as Innocent had desired. Correct belief lay instead in the teachings of Ibn Tumart. Al-Murtada praised him as the acknowledged Mahdi and restored to him the infallibility (*'isma*) that al-Ma'mun had denied him some twenty years before.[136] Indeed, by reasserting the traditional doctrinal basis of Almohad caliphal authority, al-Murtada signaled a break with the policy of al-Ma'mun and his sons. Those caliphs had never totally rejected the tribal foundations of Almohad power—that would have been impossible. But they had placed a greater emphasis on attracting outside support for their rule—from the Christian mercenaries, the Castilians, and the papacy. This in turn had encouraged them to tolerate diplomatic overtures aimed at fortifying the Christian presence in their realms. Al-Murtada's declaration of Almohad orthodoxy announced the end of that tolerance and of the special relationship that the papal curia believed it had developed with the Almohad caliphate since the days of Honorius III. Al-Murtada set down the new terms of papal-Almohad

[132] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 388–89 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:199–200); Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 339–40 (trans. Beaumier, 371; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:500–501); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:542 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:247); Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 2:541–42.

[133] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 388 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:199).

[134] On 24 September 1245, Pope Innocent IV authorized the Knights of Santiago to accept a proposal from al-Hasan of Salé to convert and grant the city to the order. Al-Hasan was the son of Abu Zayd, the last Muslim ruler of Valencia and himself a convert to Christianity. For Innocent's letter, see *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 216; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 12. See also Burns, "Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion," 1393; Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*, 40; and O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 119.

[135] Tisserant and Wiet, "Lettre de l'almohade Murtada," 30, 34.

[136] Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 330 (trans. Beaumier, 359–60; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:487); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:530 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:235); *Kitab al-hulal al-mawshiyya*, 165 (trans. Huici Miranda, 193).

relations in an exquisitely noncommittal diplomatic formulation: "We confirm, to the extent that it is legitimate, [our] reasons for connection with you, and we renew, as much as we can, the assurance of our consideration."[137]

What did this statement mean in policy terms for al-Murtada? It certainly meant that the Almohad Christian guard would not be receiving coastal strongholds any time soon. The caliph does not even mention the issue in his letter. But he evidently intended to keep Christian soldiers in his service, because he remained open to Christian clergy ministering to their spiritual needs. In the final part of the letter, he suggested that Innocent "send to those Christians in service in the lands of the Almohads . . . a man who would concern himself with what was sound in their religion and would encourage them to observe their habitual laws."[138] Given that Innocent had dispatched Bishop Lope to do exactly that, the caliph's request appears puzzling at first glance. But, al-Murtada went on, the appropriate candidate for the position would be a man "of superior intelligence and good conduct: such that he could be one of those who, in a clear fashion, were eager to avoid evil, and who, in their service, distinguished themselves by excellent doctrine and praiseworthy intentions."[139] Bishop Lope, it seems, did not fit the bill. That, in a sense, was the larger message that al-Murtada's letter delivered. The caliph was happy to employ Christian mercenaries, but he wanted them with no strings attached. They could have a pious cleric for a pastor, but there would be no Bishop Lope and his team of mendicants, eager to evangelize and develop the Moroccan church.

In early June 1250, Lope left the caliph's court to deliver the bad news in person to the pope.[140] After listening to the bishop's report, Innocent wrote to al-Murtada in March 1251. The difference in tone and content from the pope's letter of 1246 is stark. There was no rejoicing in the state of the Moroccan church, no appeal for conversion. Instead, there was a stern reiteration of the demand that al-Murtada provide fortified places in which the mercenaries could "live securely and defend themselves against their enemies in a time of necessity." Because of the caliph's refusal to grant his original request, Innocent claimed that "the aforesaid Christians are known to sustain grave injuries against their persons and their property, for it happens that since many of them go frequently [on campaign] with your army, or work for you in other ways, they do not have a safe place where they can leave behind their wives, children, or other relatives, so the Saracens, seizing the opportunity, have killed many of them and compelled some to deny the Catholic faith."[141] If the caliph failed yet again to hand over the strongholds, Innocent would have no choice but to command Bishop Lope to send all the Christians serving him home and to forbid any other Christians from travelling there. We do not know whether Innocent carried out this threat. He certainly did not give al-Murtada very long to comply with his demand, because

[137] Tisserant and Wiet, "Lettre de l'almohade Murtada," 32, 36.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid, 32–33, 36.
[140] Ibid., 51.
[141] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 712; Lupprian, *Beziehungen der Päpste*, no. 37; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 16–17.

by October 1252 the pope was contemplating a more aggressive approach to Christianizing the Maghrib and protecting the mercenaries.

The Turn to Crusade

After papal-Almohad negotiations over the mercenaries broke down, relations between the two sides took a more hostile turn. The third party in this western Mediterranean nexus—the Castilians—exacerbated the split by adopting a more hostile posture toward the western Maghrib around the same time. The conquest of Seville in 1248 forced a number of previously hostile Andalusian rulers to seek out accommodations with Castile, which freed up resources and fired imaginations for a campaign across the Straits.[142] While King Fernando III remained cautious to the end, his heir Alfonso X declared that he would lead an "African Crusade" shortly after his accession in 1252.[143] Innocent endorsed the king's plans, authorizing indulgences and other crusading privileges and launching a propaganda campaign in Castile, León, and Navarre in early 1253.[144]

King Alfonso's African expedition took a very long time to prepare. His attempt to become Holy Roman emperor proved a distraction.[145] The papacy remained involved, with Pope Alexander IV picking up where Innocent IV had left off and calling upon a familiar figure, Bishop Lope of Morocco, to lead a new recruitment campaign in 1255.[146] Lope had settled in Toledo after reporting to Innocent on his failed Moroccan mission in 1251.[147] In addition to preaching the crusade, Lope was also to serve as papal legate in Africa. In this role, his duties would include delimiting dioceses in the lands "recovered" there by King Alfonso X "from Saracen hands."[148]

As Lope's new assignment in Africa suggests, the papal turn to crusade in the 1250s did not entail a complete break with previous policy.[149] Just as the earlier approach of missionizing and promoting ecclesiastical development incorporated crusading elements, the African Crusade had a missionary component. In September 1258, Alfonso X asked permission from Alexander IV to build a church in what the pope called the *regnum Tenetu*, whose ruler had submitted to Alfonso and who seemed, in Alfonso's estimation, sympathetic to Christianity. Joseph F. O'Callaghan has identified this "kingdom" with the Algerian port of Ténès. In a similar vein, King Henry III of England congratulated Alfonso for attempting "not

[142] Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 11–13.

[143] For Alfonso's "African Crusade," see Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, "Un projet castillian du XIIIe siècle: La croisade d'Afrique," *Revue d'histoire et de civilization du Maghreb* 1 (1966): 26–51; O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 11–33.

[144] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, nos. 833, 839.

[145] O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 16–17.

[146] *Les registres d'Alexandre IV: Recueil des bulles de ce pape publiées ou analysées d'après les manuscrits originaux des archives du Vatican*, ed. Charles Bourel de la Roncière et al., 3 vols. (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1895–1959), no. 483.

[147] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, nos. 710, 714.

[148] *Registres d'Alexandre IV*, nos. 274, 275, 873.

[149] Cf. Dufourcq, "La croisade d'Afrique," 30.

only to subjugate the barbarous natives to the Cross, but also to bring them . . . to the light of truth and knowledge of God's name."[150] Christianization remained the larger ambition, with crusade the new vehicle for achieving it.

On the face of it, the new approach might have seemed to pose a danger to the Christian mercenaries of North Africa. Crusade plans could have made them the target of reprisals. It is not at all clear, though, that Innocent IV and Alexander IV saw the shift to crusade as further endangering the mercenaries and their families. Their employer, al-Murtada, was never made an explicit target of the crusade.[151] In their correspondence, the two popes referred only to crusading against the "Saracens of Africa"—possibly in an attempt to keep King Alfonso's options open.[152] A campaign against Almohad enemies, such as the Marinids, could actually have helped the mercenaries, who, as Innocent had noted, had been on the losing end of several battles with this rising power.[153] It is also crucial to bear in mind that Innocent's assessment of the security situation in Morocco for the mercenaries was extremely gloomy. He described them as living amid "barbarous peoples"; as being subjected to attacks from Almohad rivals, who were on the verge of eliminating the dynasty altogether (Innocent was right about that, of course); and as requiring nothing less than inland fortresses and coastal strongholds to keep them safe.[154] After al-Murtada twice rejected pleas for such protection and dismissed Bishop Lope, Innocent and Alexander may have been ready to try a new way of defending the mercenaries and the other Christian groups of Morocco.

It must be said, though, that defending Christians seems to have been far from the minds of the Castilian crusaders who sacked Salé, a Moroccan port on the Atlantic coast, and killed or imprisoned many of its Muslim residents in September 1260. The city, which had been under the nominal control of a dissident Marinid warlord, endured two weeks of looting and pillaging. The crusaders then withdrew under pressure from the Marinid emir Abu al-Haq. That brought to an end the only armed confrontation to result from King Alfonso's African Crusade.[155]

[150] O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 19.

[151] The specific aims of the African Crusade have occasioned much speculation. Manuel González Jiménez identified Ceuta as a probable target. See his *Alfonso X el Sabio* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2004), 138–39. Dufourcq argued that Morocco, not Tunis, was the main focus of Alfonso's planning and speculated that the Almohad caliph al-Murtada may even have been on the receiving end of Castilian diplomatic overtures in the late 1250s: Dufourcq, "La croisade d'Afrique," 35–36.

[152] For example, *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 833; *Registres d'Alexandre* IV, no. 483.

[153] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 332; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 14–15.

[154] *Documentación pontificia de Inocencio IV*, no. 712; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 16–17.

[155] Ibn ʿIdhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 420–25 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:267–73); Ibn Abi Zarʿ, *Rawd al-qirtas*, 393 (trans. Beaumier, 429–30; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:571–72); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ʿibar*, 7:361–62 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 4:46–47); Antonio Ballesteros Beretta, "La toma de Salé en tiempos de Alfonso X el Sabio," *Al-Andalus* 8 (1943): 89–128; Ambrosio Huici Miranda, "La toma de Salé por la esquadra de Alfonso X: Nuevos datos," *Hespéris* 39 (1952): 41–74; Concepción Cereijo Martínez, "La política marítima de Alfonso X: La toma de Salé en la crónica de Alfonso X y en las fuentes musulmanas," *Revista de historia naval* 25 (2007): 37–56; O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 25–28.

Conclusion

After the Salé expedition, the Castilians, the Almohads, and the papacy found fewer reasons to engage with one another, whether diplomatically or on the battlefield. Each party was too distracted by troubles closer to home. The papacy was consumed with the Sicilian question, King Alfonso faced a Mudéjar insurrection, and al-Murtada struggled against the Zayyanids and the Marinids.[156] In 1266, al-Murtada lost Marrakesh and his life in an uprising led by a rival Almohad claimant to the caliphate.[157] Three years later, the Almohad empire itself was gone, swept away with the Marinid conquest of Marrakesh.

Taking advantage of this political realignment, Christian mercenaries flowed into North Africa in ever-increasing numbers. Al-Murtada continued to employ Christian soldiers in the 1260s.[158] By the 1270s, the mercenary guards of Hafsid Tunis and Marinid Fez were the popular choices. The Hafsids recruited among the fighting men of Aragon and Catalonia, while the Marinids looked to the Castilian mercenary market that the Almohads had long dominated.[159] The Zayyanids developed a substantial Christian guard as well.[160]

In the late thirteenth century, the papacy reengaged with the Christian communities of North Africa. Taking the lead was Pope Nicholas IV (1288–92), a Franciscan and former minister-general of the order who was a committed proponent of missionizing. In December 1289, he appointed a new bishop of Morocco, the Franciscan friar Rodrigo.[161] The new bishop received jurisdiction over the entire Christian community of Africa, including permanent residents and visitors (presumably merchants who came and went on business).[162] He also obtained the right to grant indulgences of one hundred days to those who attended his preaching in Morocco, to those who remained there in the service of their fellow Christians, and to those who provided monetary aid for the redemption of captives, the construction or decoration of churches, or the sustenance of converts new to the faith.[163]

With his double focus on fostering the existing community (redeeming captives, building churches, encouraging sermon attendance) and expanding it through

[156] Norman Housley, *The Italian Crusades: The Papal-Angevin Alliance and the Crusades against Christian Lay Powers 1254–1343* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 14–24, 47–50; O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade*, 34–59; Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade*, 2:560–65.

[157] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 444 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:309); Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd al-qirtas*, 340 (trans. Beaumier, 429–30; trans. Huici Miranda, 2:502–3); Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-'ibar*, 6:547–49 (*Histoire des Berbères*, 2:252–55).

[158] Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-mughrib*, 429 (trans. Huici Miranda, 2:283).

[159] For the Hafsid mercenary guard at this time, see J. F. P. Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government in Barbary until the Sixth Century of the Hijra* (London: Luzac, 1958), 75–77; Michael Lower, "Ibn al-Lihyani: Sultan of Tunis and Would-Be Christian Convert," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24 (2009): 17–27.

[160] Dufourcq, *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib*, 150–55.

[161] *Les registres de Nicholas IV (1288–1292): Recueil des bulles de ce pape d'après les manuscrits originaux des archives du Vatican*, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Thorin, 1886–93), nos. 2005–7.

[162] Ibid., nos. 2118, 2120.

[163] Ibid., no. 2117.

evangelization (supporting recent converts), Pope Nicholas drew inspiration from the papal approach to Christianizing North Africa pioneered by Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV. He also included the Christian mercenaries in his plans. In February 1290, he wrote to them directly, addressing a letter to "the noble men, barons, captains, knights, and other Christian mercenaries established in the service of the kingdoms of Morocco, Tunis, and Tlemcen."[164] Putting aside the security issues that had preoccupied Innocent IV, Nicholas focused on encouraging the mercenaries to live a Christian life. Although he was eager for Christians everywhere to live righteously, he especially wanted those who resided in infidel lands to be pure in faith, works, and virtue. The mercenaries, therefore, should be just, righteous, and honest, and they should not do anything that might cause the Christian faith to be blasphemed. By living an exemplary Christian life, they could serve as role models to Christians and Muslims alike. Nicholas urged them to be "zealous to demonstrate an upright way of life and conversation among the unbelievers, so that by offering guidance with the aid of charity and piety, by constantly exerting yourself in divine mercies, and by refraining from anything that could detract from the Christian name, the faithful residing in those parts as much as the infidels might be informed by your example and win the fruits of a better life."[165] Here, then, was a legitimate role for the mercenary to play in a Christian moral universe. In the pope's idealized vision, he could help draw nonbelievers to the faith by living a blameless life in their presence. Nicholas IV wanted the Christian mercenaries of North Africa to be missionaries.

Behind that approving characterization stood a legal doctrine and a policy choice. Over the course of a long development in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the canon law on Christian military aid to Muslims gained refinement and subtlety. Successive popes and canonists moved away from a blanket condemnation of the practice and developed criteria for establishing when it could be legitimate. The formulation that eventually prevailed—Christian military aid for Muslim regimes was blameless if it did not harm the Holy Land or fellow Christians—afforded the papacy flexibility in its dealings with the Islamic world and the Latin Christians who lived within its borders. In North Africa, popes made use of this flexibility to further specific policy goals. Ramón of Peñafort's application of the canon law on military aid to Muslims to the Christian mercenaries of the region allowed the papacy to develop a supportive relationship with these fighting men and their families. Because they represented a large and strategically significant segment of the Christian population of the Maghrib, this relationship helped the curia to pursue its larger aim of protecting and expanding the Christian presence there. In the case of Christian mercenaries who fought for Muslims, papal law and papal policy were mutually reinforcing.

It is worth underlining the flexibility of both papal doctrine and practice in thirteenth-century North Africa. Recent scholarship on the medieval Mediterranean has done much to dislodge older notions of a region divided along confessional lines, with strictly enforced religious identities the order of the day for

[164] Ibid., no. 2121; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 17–18.
[165] *Les registres de Nicholas IV*, no. 2121; Mas Latrie, *Traités de paix*, 17–18.

Muslims and Christians alike. The emphasis in Mediterranean Studies now is on fluid personal identities and multinodal networks of interaction.[166] Even so, some elements of the older view remain in place. Among these is the idea that, while individual actors may have been flexible and pragmatic, the prevailing norms and discourses of medieval Islam and Christianity remained fixed around ideologies of religious difference. Religious and legal elites erected sealed boundaries between the two faiths and endorsed conflict, in the form of jihad and crusade, as the normative stance of each religion toward the other. While individuals may have transgressed, the norms remained in place.[167] Thirteenth-century popes certainly embraced the concept of a Christian republic, or Christendom, that defined political order in religious terms. They also endorsed the crusade as a vehicle for defending and maintaining that order.[168] Within that thought-world of conflict and division, there would seem to be little space for tolerating Christians who served in the armed forces of Muslim rulers. Nevertheless, the popes proved less rigid in this matter than modern scholarship has allowed. The result was that when they tried to revive the Latin Church in the southern Mediterranean, they were able to turn to an unlikely ally for support: Christian mercenaries who fought for the Islamic regimes of the medieval Maghrib.

[166] Examples include Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Sciences, 124th ser., 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

[167] Important recent studies that stress the strength and coherence of these norms include John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000–1150)*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[168] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1992), 8–13.

Michael Lower is Associate Professor of History at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 (e-mail: mlower@umn.edu).