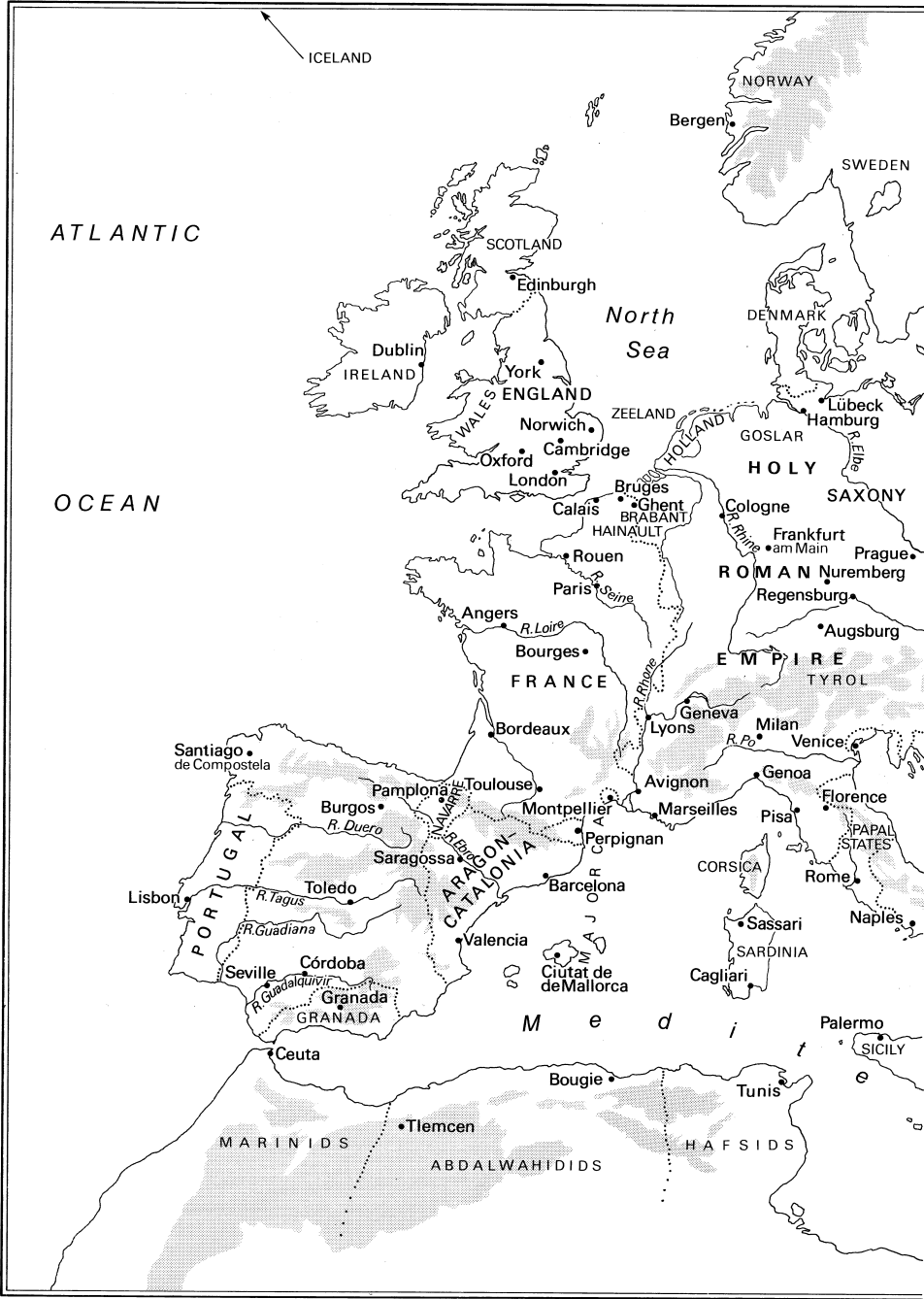# INTRODUCTION

David Abulafia

THE dominant theme in the history of thirteenth-century Europe is arguably that of expansion: the expansion of Latin Christendom, to encompass Orthodox, Muslim and pagan lands previously on its outer fringes; the expansion of the economy, as western merchants (Italian, German, Catalan) penetrated deeper into the Mediterranean, the Baltic and the European land mass; the expansion too of population, to which a halt was called only around 1300; the expansion also of government, as rulers in western Europe consolidated their hold over their territories, and as the papacy made consistent claims to its own authority even over secular rulers. By the end of the thirteenth century the political and demographic expansion of powerful European kingdoms could be felt, too, on the edges of the British Isles, as the English king posed an ever sharper threat to the autonomy of the Welsh princes and the Scottish kings. To see the thirteenth century in this light is not simply to see it from a western, Latin, perspective. It will be obvious already that a major feature of the period is the encroachment of the Latin west upon the Greek and Slavonic east, as upon the Muslim world: this was the era of major crusades, under royal and princely direction, against Egypt, Tunis, Muslim Spain and indeed pagan Prussia and Livonia, but it was also the period in which a diverted crusade, aiming originally at the mouth of the Nile, found itself able to overwhelm Constantinople, fragmenting the already fragile Byzantine empire and imposing (not very successfully) the authority of the bishop of Rome over the Orthodox Church in Greece. Nowhere in Europe, nor indeed in the Mediterranean, were the Latins totally invisible. Even if it were not the case that the history of medieval Europe can only be written after paying attention to the east of Europe (including Byzantium), and the Islamic lands bordering on Europe, it is hard to see how a volume on the thirteenth century could lack detailed attention to areas far from the Ile-de-France, and issues remote from the conflict of popes and emperors, the theme that has dominated many surveys of this period.[1]

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[1] See the old *Cambridge medieval history*, VI: *The victory of the papacy* (Cambridge, 1929).

Map 1   Europe in the thirteenth century

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0

50 miles
50   100 km

All political boundaries are approximate
Land over 1000 metres is shaded

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Borga
(Porvoo)
Reval
Dorpat
Novgorod
LIVONIA
ORDER
Riga
R.W.Dvina
Baltic Sea
LITHUANIA
TEUTONIC
Danzig
R.Vistula
POLAND
Wrocław
(Breslau)
SILESIA
Lwow
R.Dnieper
R.Dniester
Vienna
Buda
HUNGARY–
CROATIA
R.Danube
CRIMEA
Caffa
Black Sea
SERBIA
BULGARIA
Dubrovnik
(Ragusa)
Trebizond
TREBIZOND
Durazzo
Bari
EPIRUS
Thessalonika
Constantinople
LATIN
EMPIRE
NICAEA
ICONIUM
Chocaea
ARMENIA
ANTIOCH
Antioch
FRANKISH
Messina
GREECE
Famagusta
CYPRUS
Beirut
Acre
CRETE
LATIN KINGDOM
OF JERUSALEM
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Damietta
Alexandria

The successes, military and commercial, of Latin Christendom engendered new types of relationships, between the westerners and those now subject to their authority. There were now large areas of Spain under Latin rule but possessing a Muslim majority; and a similar situation prevailed in Greece, where Franks exercised dominion over resentful Orthodox, who showed little appreciation of unsubtle attempts by the Franks to force the union of the Churches (indeed, such efforts only increased the gap between the communities). Greater awareness of the existence of barely suspected peoples in the Asian steppes also led the western Church to cast its eyes eastwards, hoping for an alliance with the Mongols against Islam, hoping too that rumours of Christian kings far to the east had substance; yet at the same time it was difficult to equate the terrifying Mongol hordes that swept into eastern Europe in 1243 with the Christian armies of Prester John so long and eagerly awaited. Among the kingdoms that found themselves in the Mongol path, Hungary was a borderland between not two but many worlds, with its mixed population of Catholic Christians, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims and also pagans. Western rulers can be seen taking a greater interest in missionary activities, strongly encouraged by the Franciscans and Dominicans; but this involvement with missions was not simply directed outwards to Asia, and those who have treated the missionary activities of the friars only in relation to the Mongol threat (thinking of Giovanni di Pian Carpini, the Polos and others) have seriously underestimated the range and purpose of their activities. Indeed, evangelisation was needed within western Europe as well, not merely against heretics and infidels, but also as a necessary and urgent way to strengthen the religious awareness of Catholics tending all too easily towards sin. As the career of Ramon Llull, at the end of the century, would show, the act of evangelisation was itself a way of bringing a deeper Christian awareness to those, within the Church or at princely courts, or indeed in city streets, who gave their assent and support to such efforts.

The existence of non-Christian groups elicited a variety of responses. In some regions, notably Sicily, Muslims were cleared off the land altogether. Within western Europe, the one significant non-Christian group to persist outside Spain, the Jews, were under increasingly ruthless pressure to convert, as the traditional 'Augustinian' guarantee of the right to live in a subordinate condition within Christian society gave way to denunciations of contemporary Jewish beliefs and practices, and as fantastic accusations against the Jews began to gain a following; the blood libel and accusations of child murder, which had begun to spread in the mid-twelfth century, were unsuccessfully challenged by rulers such as Frederick II and Pope Innocent IV, who were aware of their lack of foundation. On the other hand, the Talmud was increasingly targeted as proof of the contempt Jews felt for Christianity. Jews could also be seen as

lacking in reason, by virtue of their failure to accept the 'reasonable truth' that Christianity professed itself to be. Lacking in reason, they might even appear to be lacking in humanity, if reason were the outstanding characteristic of humanity. Jews, Muslims, Greeks, pagans under Latin rule were not simply a marginalised 'other', and the Jews in particular had been granted a place, though a difficult one, in Christian eschatology; but by defining these groups as outsiders western rulers and churchmen sought to define as well their expectations of their Latin Christian subjects and followers. Indeed, it was in the thirteenth century that vigorous attempts were first made to combat the spread of heresy, not just the blatantly anti-Catholic beliefs of the Cathars, but the misdirected (as it seemed) evangelism of Waldensians and of wayward Humiliati or beguines: by fire and the sword during the Albigensian Crusade; by the relentlessly thorough investigations of inquisitors in southern France, Germany and Italy. The thirteenth century is the period in which Catharism was virtually driven off the map, persisting into the next century only in remote villages, of which the best recorded was Montaillou in the Pyrenees; but new challenges emerged, some of them from the heart of the Church itself, as the Spiritual wing of the Franciscans became more insistent upon the need for absolute poverty. The worries of the Spirituals were themselves a loud echo of the many voices that were questioning the commercialisation of society, from the late twelfth century onwards. Indeed, such worries had themselves been a major element in Francis of Assisi's career. The dilemma about the treatment of usurers, and indeed the definition of usury, was addressed by such influential figures as Ramon de Penyafort, for a time the Dominican general, and by Thomas Aquinas. In sum, the Church needed to find ways to satisfy the spiritual yearnings of Christians, and to ensure that these yearnings did not turn into challenges against the teaching of the Church. Already at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 the text of the creed was laid out, in the first canon of the Council, not merely in Latin but also in Greek, to meet the needs of the Uniate Church which had been so greatly and reluctantly expanded after the fall of Constantinople.

The Church insisted upon the duty of secular rulers such as the counts of Toulouse or Frederick II to join in the active suppression of heresy; usury too often came within the purview of enthusiastic princes such as Louis IX of France. The problem of heresy itself opened up once again the difficult issue of the right of the Church, and in particular the papacy, to command secular rulers. The tension between increasingly powerful secular authorities and the Church was not a novelty in the thirteenth century, but the bitterness with which both Frederick II in the 1230s and 1240s and Philip the Fair of France around 1300 attacked papal pretensions surpassed anything visible in the so-called Investiture Dispute of the late eleventh century. Propaganda machines

came into existence which made full use of the skills of rhetoricians trained in the emergent universities. The harnessing of arguments based on Roman law gave the councils a much sharper edge, as the secular rulers found themselves increasingly able to argue a case which appeared to have its own set of consistent principles, upon which the safety of the entire social structure appeared to rest. The conflicts between Frederick II and the papacy were accentuated by Frederick's role as king of Sicily as well as German emperor; the engagement between the leading secular power and assertive popes revealed that the papacy was not prepared to allow itself to be scared away from the most severe challenge: war with a ruler who might prove able to dominate all of Italy, including the Papal State, who, moreover, had the will and the means to persuade other Christian monarchs not to offer more support to the papacy against the empire. Apocalyptic images of Frederick as Antichrist had their propaganda value, as well as reflecting deeply held beliefs in some factions close to the pope; it was in the thirteenth century that secular rulers too began to harness propaganda campaigns, culminating in Philip IV's defamation of Boniface VIII and the Order of the Temple. Probably Frederick had no serious intention of reducing the papacy to an imperial chaplaincy. What matters, none the less, is how the papacy reacted to a supposed threat. The struggle between the universal powers of papacy and empire was, in another sense, anachronistic. Frederick's own conception of his imperial authority was concerned more with the trappings of Romanism, with pomp and display, than with any serious claim to or exercise of universal power; it was far from clear whether even his Sicilian kingdom formed part of the Roman empire. The collapse of Byzantium had effectively solved the *Zweikaiserproblem*, the problem of the existence of two claimants to the title of Roman emperor, which had so exercised Frederick's namesake and grandfather. But, as has been seen, the appeal to Roman law (with the help of legal professors in Bologna and, rather less successfully, of Frederick's own university in Naples) justified the claims to authority of the *princeps*, but they could be used by other princes than the emperor, as the career of Edward I of England, Alfonso X of Castile or Philip IV of France would in different ways reveal, and as is also amply revealed by the development of canon law. Rulers were increasingly seen as kings of territories: *rex Francie* rather than *rex Francorum, rex Anglie* rather than *rex Anglorum*; in some kingdoms, the increasing use of the vernacular in public documents such as law codes helped further to define a growing sense of nationhood, even if it was not yet by any means coterminous with political boundaries. In this world, the German kingdom, ruled by a *rex Romanorum*, king of the Romans, eligible for papal coronation as Roman emperor, was increasingly obviously the oddity, a kingdom whose method of succession to the throne (by ever more bitterly contested elections), whose royal power base, whose bureaucracy – or lack of

one – placed it apart from centralising monarchies with capital cities at Paris, Westminster, Naples, centres in which they were able to glorify the dynasty by erecting monuments on the scale of the Sainte-Chapelle, Westminster Abbey or Santa Chiara in Naples. Art glorified dynasties but also, by the end of the century, individual rulers, whose images became diffused and, at the top end of the scale of piety, acquired reputations for sanctity which could help overcome political crises not merely in their own lifetime but in that of their heirs. 'Saint Louis a-t-il existé?' Jacques Le Goff has pertinently asked. What mattered was the way a royal saint gave sanction to his successors' ambitions, not merely in France but in any kingdom whose ruler could claim Capetian blood.

Yet royal authority was easier to declare than to enforce. The search for funds to achieve royal objectives (ranging from crusades to wedding bills) forced rulers into the arms of their more influential subjects, by way of assemblies with which different rulers experienced very different relationships. The estates in France were quite different in character to what emerged elsewhere, and they never achieved the degree of leverage exercised by the Lords and (in due time) by the Commons in England. In Aragon-Catalonia the existence of different *corts* or *cortes* for the ruler's different realms did not, as might be expected, permit a policy of divide-and-rule by which the king could make himself master of his subjects; contrasting political aims, the crushing cost of the ambitious Aragonese-Catalan wars, and a distinctive theory of state origins, enabled these parliaments to exercise an unusual degree of influence over royal policy. Often an issue was the king's advisers: there were campaigns to exclude Jews from office in Aragon, and 'foreigners' from office in England (led by one who was himself a foreigner, Simon de Montfort). The appeal to the authority of a Roman *princeps* was thus not always pressed successfully. In some cases, too, the authority of one king over another became a crucial issue: in Scotland the issue that had to be confronted was whether the king of Scots paid homage to the king of England for his English lands or for his entire kingdom; the relationship between the king of Aragon and the king of Majorca was no less fraught with complication.

Nor were these exclusively phenomena of the Christian world: in the Muslim lands on and beyond the edges of Europe, old universalisms were challenged, and local kingdoms, ruled by Nasrids in Granada, Marinids in Morocco, Hafsid Almohads in Tunis, replaced the unitary, theologically unitarian, Almohad empire that had conquered much of the Maghrib and southern Spain in the mid to late twelfth century. There, as in Egypt, caliphs were at best a cipher, and local bureaucracies, anxious to exploit to the full local economic resources, helped build states of remarkable longevity. The Mongol invasions rocked but did not destroy the Mamluk state in Egypt and Syria, whose military strength would remain surprisingly sound until the Turkish irruptions around

1500, thanks in part to the willingness with which the Genoese and others provided Circassian slaves for the military elite.

Turning back to western Europe, there were also the areas that escaped royal supervision: imperial cities in Germany, in theory accountable directly to the emperor; cities in northern and central Italy, mostly under the nominal authority of emperor, pope or some other ruler of stature, but in the case of Venice quite clearly independent of any higher authority. By the end of the thirteenth century, the Swiss rural communes, later joined by several major towns, insisted on rejecting local lords, forming a union that was to acquire formidable physical strength. In the thirteenth century appeals to Hohenstaufen emperors, Angevin kings of Naples and popes by the citizens of the Italian towns formed part of a wider network of alliances among the faction-ridden urban elites. One solution seemed to lie in the submission of the commune to the authority of a local lord, such as the Este in Ferrara, the della Torre in Milan, the della Scala in Verona, who would often leave existing communal institutions in place, but would offer an end to internal strife. The coming of the *signori* was not universally welcomed; Florence and Genoa generally managed to keep the traditional commune alive, along with its vendettas and turbulence. In these cities, as elsewhere, the claims of the wealthier artisans to a political voice, often expressed through the mechanism of the *popolo*, contributed further to tensions. What is thoroughly remarkable is that Florence and Genoa remained important centres of industry and of trade in the face of such profound political fragmentation. Yet royal involvement in city life was not necessarily a threat to economic success. Barcelona flourished precisely because king and citizens possessed a community of interests. Marseilles, on the other hand, suffered at the hands of its Angevin rulers, by being transformed from a role as a trading entrepot into one where its naval arsenal became the prime source of profit. Moreover, it was Barcelona (like Venice and Genoa) that exercised influence far afield through a network of consulates, warehouses and diplomatic leverage that Marseilles had no ability to match. Overseas possessions, whether the Genoese and Pisan lands in Sardinia and Corsica, Venetian ownership of Crete or Catalan penetration under the Aragonese flag into Majorca and Valencia, and ultimately Palermo too, brought access to foodstuffs, raw materials and captive markets. Western producers bought eastern cotton through Venice, Ancona and elsewhere, processing it, dyeing it with eastern dyes such as indigo and reselling it in eastern markets; this way the industrial ascendancy of the west was gradually being expressed, though there were endless dogfights as (for instance) Venice tried to limit the access of Ancona to eastern markets. By contrast, the German merchants of the incipient Hansa adopted a less overtly competitive framework for their trade, though there were tensions between German towns such as Cologne and Lübeck, and there were lengthy periods of

peace between supposedly inveterate Mediterranean rivals such as Genoa and Venice. As in the classic Mediterranean, trade within the 'Mediterranean of the North' constituted by the Baltic and the North Sea was characterised by exchanges of luxury goods for basic raw materials and for grain; crusaders pressed ahead (in this arena, the Teutonic Knights most notably), and cleared spaces for the traders. Trade and crusade together conquered the Baltic.

The Mediterranean itself became the battle ground of emergent empires: Aragonese-Catalan expansion in the west was challenged by the aspirations of the French house of Anjou (and France itself celebrated its arrival on the shores of the Mediterranean with the building of the port of Aigues-Mortes). Further east, the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem became embroiled in the conflict of two new forces, the Mongols, of limitless ambitions, and the Mamluks, clear in their desire to sweep the Franks into the sea. The fall of Acre to the Mamluks in 1291 did not undermine fervour for a crusade; but without a firm bridgehead beyond Cyprus a crusade for the recovery of Jerusalem became increasingly difficult to set in motion. It does mark a major moment in the history of the crusades, the point at which (except for the allied state of Cilician Armenia) the Latin presence on the shores of Syria and the Holy Land came to a decisive end. A great variety of objectives had, in any case, come to compete for crusading manpower since Innocent III launched the Albigensian Crusade: crusades against Christian lay powers ('political crusades'), notably those against the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Germany and Italy; crusades in the Baltic and in Spain, the former of which contained an unusually strong conversionist element. Even if the crusade to Jerusalem retained a special reputation and glory, the possibility of redeeming crusade vows in other theatres of war could be, for the more cynical, practically very opportune. On the outermost edges of Europe crusading and political conquest became easily intertwined, and elaborate theories were easily transmuted into broad, gross justifications, whether of Swedish wars against Orthodox Russians (led by the nearly legendary Alexander Nevskii), or Norwegian wars against pagan Lapps. Naked ambition, too, propelled Norway's rulers to acquire their claim to Iceland and even Greenland, though in Man and the Hebrides it was the Scottish rather than the Norwegian king who won the day. And, as has been seen, trade and crusade became closely intermingled in attempts to gain authority in Finland, Estonia and along the fur trappers' routes into Russia.

These areas seem remote from the Latin Christian heartlands that are the focus of so much that has been written on the thirteenth century. It is hard to remember that France and England were the only significant kingdoms without non-Christian inhabitants (their Jews apart) or without neighbours who were non-Latin; however, there was an occasional wicked temptation to compensate by classifying the Irish as to all intents pagan. In Spain, southern

Italy, eastern Germany awareness of the Muslim, Orthodox or pagan neighbour was a fact of life. This is not to say that such awareness translated easily into toleration, which, when practised at all (as in Valencia or Sicily), was highly pragmatic, conditional and based on the firm assumption that Latin Christians took precedence. It was this sense of the integrity of Latin society, professing one faith or 'law', that remained from the aggressive universalism of the late eleventh- and twelfth-century Church, and that still formed a significant core of the teaching of such lawyer popes as Innocent III and IV and Boniface VIII. But by the end of the century, in Boniface's years as pope, it was western kings – in France, England, Castile, Naples and so on – who emphatically utilised this awareness of Christian identity in order to enhance their own, and not the pope's, authority. In extreme cases, such as the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, or the sale as slaves of the inhabitants of Muslim Lucera by King Charles II of Naples in 1300, the insistence on the Christian identity of the kingdom could lead to terrible hardship for outsiders.

The papacy began and ended the century with clarion calls for the submission of the Christian flock to its one shepherd, Peter. In his bull *Unam sanctam*, Pope Boniface insisted that such submission was entirely necessary for salvation. But it was secular rulers who most successfully took up the message of submission to higher authority to serve their own ends, and to bring their own subjects more securely under their own authority: not Peter's deputy, but anointed kings, found themselves in the best position to achieve moral reform, on their own terms, in a society which they brought increasingly tightly under their own control.