# WOMEN'S MONASTICISM IN LATE MEDIEVAL BOLOGNA, 1200-1500

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2004

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SIGNED:

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate the training and support I have received from the professors who have guided me through my coursework and the dissertation process. Alan Bernstein is a wonderful mentor. I admire his enthusiasm for learning and for teaching, and the breadth of his knowledge and interests. Alison Futrell is a dynamic teacher and scholar, as well as a friend and advocate of graduate students. I also am grateful for the direction I have gotten from Helen Nader, who has a knack for asking the right questions to get students to focus on what is important about their work, and from whom I have learned a great deal. I thank all three of my committee members for their generosity with their time and their expertise. Though he was not on my committee, Piotr Górecki read and commented on chapters and was a source of encouragement as I wrote my dissertation in Riverside, California. Gabriella Zarri set me on the right path as I began my archival research in Bologna.

I have also benefited from the community of graduate students at the University of Arizona. Conversations with Laura Shelton, Catherine Pomerleau, Jerry Pierce, and Jeanine Bruening have helped me to develop my ideas, and I have enjoyed learning about their work as well. I also appreciate the friendship and hospitality of Jodie Kreider and Paula Smith-Hawkins.

My husband, Martin Johnson, makes me want to do my best work because of his confidence in me. He was the nuns' greatest advocate during the inevitable days of doubt during the course of writing a dissertation. He is my partner and best friend. My parents, Al and Barbara Franks, instilled in me a love of learning and a sense of adventure. They taught me to set high goals and to persevere in achieving them, which has been made easier by the knowledge that I have their love and their support. My in-laws, Guy and Vivian Johnson, also deserve thanks. I consider Vivian my fourth committee member because of her interest and encouragement. Finally, I want to remember and thank my grandfather, Nelson Dozier, who passed away just as I finished my archival research. He spent his life as a teacher, and set an example of lifelong learning for all who knew him.

# DEDICATION

For my husband, Martin Johnson,

in honor of Barbara and Al Franks,

and in memory of Nelson Dozier.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES....9

ABSTRACT....10

INTRODUCTION....11

CHAPTER 1: BOLOGNA'S CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY....21

Bologna between Papacy and Empire....22

The consulate and the communal government....24

The city, the bishops, and the university in the 13th century....28

Frederick II and the Second Lombard League....30

The communal government and expansion of the monastic community....31

Factional struggle between the Geremei and Lambertazzi....38

Civic religion and lay piety in Bologna: San Petronio and the Madonna di San Luca....42

Religious movements as responses to factionalism and war....44

The rise of the Bentivoglio....49

The Bentivoglio and religious patronage....50

Conclusions....52

CHAPTER 2: RULES, CONSTITUTIONS AND ORDERS....54

Benedict and Augustine....60

Benedict's Rule and Carolingian reform....60

Cluny and Citeaux....63

Women in the Cluniac and Cistercian movements....68

TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued*

The discovery of Augustine's "Rule" and rise of Canons Regular .....70

The Fourth Lateran Council and the emergence of the mendicants.....72

The Franciscans.....74

Clare of Assisi and her Order.....78

The Dominicans.....84

The "Second Order" of Dominicans.....88

Augustinians.....89

Conclusions.....91

CHAPTER 3: EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURY FOUNDATIONS IN BOLOGNA.....94

Religious movements in Europe.....97

Hermitesses in Bologna.....103

S. Caterina and its congregation.....112

Conclusions.....118

CHAPTER 4: NUNNERIES AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN BOLOGNA.....120

Dominican houses in Bologna.....124

Other Orders.....144

Conclusions.....154

CHAPTER 5: MOVEMENT INTO THE CITY.....156

Physical layout of Bologna.....162

TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued*

The thirteenth century and *inurbimento*.....164

The relationship between old property and new nunneries.....176

Fleeing wars in the *contado*.....180

Conclusions.....186

CHAPTER 6: UNIONS AND SUPPRESSIONS.....189

S. Guglielmo.....192

Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget's suppressions of nunneries.....193

S. Maria di Pontemaggiore.....200

Late fifteenth-century unions.....203

Conclusions.....212

CONCLUSION.....214

WORKS CITED.....218

# LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1, Communal donations to religious organizations.....34
Table 1.2, Property value of religious houses in Florence.....36
Table 5.1, Total number of nunneries in Bologna by location.....161
Table 5.2, Change in number of nunneries by location..... 161

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the fluid relationship between monastic women and religious orders. I examine the roles of popes and their representatives, governing bodies of religious orders, and the nunneries themselves in outlining the contours of those relationships. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, many emerging religious communities belonged to small, local groups with loose ties to other nearby houses. While independent houses or regional congregations were acceptable at the time of the formation of these convents, after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, monastic houses were required to follow one of three monastic rules and to belong to a recognized order with a well-defined administrative structure and mechanisms for enforcing uniformity of practice. This program of monastic reform had mixed success. Though some nunneries attained official incorporation into monastic or mendicant orders due to papal intervention, the governing bodies of these orders were reluctant to take on the responsibility of providing temporal and spiritual guidance to nuns, and for most nunneries the relationship to an order remained unofficial and loosely defined. The continuing instability of order affiliation and identity becomes especially clear in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when war-related destruction forced many nunneries to move into the walled area of the city, often resulting in unions of houses that did not share a rule and order affiliation. Moreover, some individual houses changed rules and orders several times. Though a few local houses of religious women had a strong and durable identification with their order, for many nunneries, the boundaries between orders remained porous and their organizational affiliations were pragmatic and mutable.

# INTRODUCTION

With the exception of the work of prominent religious women who gained fame due to their writings or to their mystical experiences, most documentary evidence that historians use to investigate women's monastic life is written by men and reflects their concerns. Frequently it is only possible to see what happens *to* religious women in documents in which male clerics decide the fates of nuns and their communities, but on rare occasions, a historian can see evidence of an active female role in events. A nunnery's petition to an ecclesiastical official is the most precious of discoveries. A more likely find in the archives, though still uncommon, is correspondence from popes, bishops, and their representatives in which these men summarize or reflect a petition from a nunnery in the course of relaying a decision on the matter at hand. These direct or reflected requests or documents referring to them deal with practical issues. Who will perform the office of visitation by which monastic houses are regulated and corrected? Will the current pope confirm a privilege granted by his predecessors? Will a community whose buildings have been ruined through war, natural disaster or decay be allowed to move to another nunnery and unite with the community there? In the documents that treat these questions, a historian can catch a glimpse of the practical needs of religious women, and can investigate how these issues impinged on the daily lives and religious identity of these women. Sometimes nuns guarded privileges that provided autonomy from episcopal oversight or encroachment by monastic orders, sometimes they sought official recognition of inclusion in a monastic order. Other times they maneuvered to gain a better living situation for themselves, at times even at the expense of male

religious, their families, and of other nuns.

Girls and women faced significant constraints on their choices. Because of the young age at which most families in medieval Italy determined which daughters would marry and which would enter a nunnery, most girls had little to say about the path their lives would take. According to a study by Richard Trexler using data from the Florentine *Monte delle doti* records of 1471, on average, fathers made investments in the fund when their daughters were six years of age, meaning that families wealthy enough to provide dowries for their daughter had decided by then which girls would marry and which would become nuns at a very early age.[1] Some young women such as Clare of Assisi and Diana d'Andolò chose the monastic life over marriage, famously defying their parents' wishes, as did other less well-known women who had once been destined for marriage; this number was probably small.[2]

In many cases, a family had ties to a particular nunnery; thus, the young woman's choice of which rule to profess and which convent to enter was often limited, though as with the decision to become a nun, some women with strong dedication to a particular nunnery or order could assert her preferences over her family's plans. Once a family established one of their daughters in a nunnery, others may have chosen to enter that house in order to be with relatives. But many families focused their financial support on one or two nunneries, and sometimes donated land or other sources of income that could

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[1] Richard Trexler, *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Studies Texts, 1994), 361.

[2] Trexler notes that the ledgers of the *Monte* include a line on which to note how the dowry was used. Trexler concludes that "an insignificant number of girls whose dowries had been deposited in such accounts later entered convents." *Dependence in Context*, 361.

provide a place for a member of that family from one generation to the next.[3] In rare cases, a nun who was dissatisfied with the practices of her house could transfer to another nunnery, and could even decide to enter a house of a different order.

To a great extent, the constraint of choices of individual nuns is repeated at the collective level of the nunnery. Sometimes there were exceptional circumstances in which women could determine the character of their institution. This flexibility was perhaps the case with women who entered new nunneries, whether taking the veil for the first time or breaking off from an established nunnery. This was especially true in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In Bologna, this period saw the establishment of religious foundations organized in a great variety of forms, from an oratory for a hermitess with an attending group of priests in a nearby church (S. Maria del Monte della Guardia), to a community of religious men and women living an extremely ascetic life (S. Caterina di Quarto), to traditional nunneries that were part of reformed Benedictine orders such as the Camaldolese and Cistercians or the mendicant orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans.

Under Pope Innocent III, the Fourth Lateran Council mandated that all monastic houses should follow one of a few approved rules and that they should belong to a recognized monastic order. The council also decreed that all orders should hold regular meetings, at least at the regional level, to set a uniform policy for all the houses of their order. Pope Innocent held up the Cistercian General Chapter as a model for this kind of organization, though some other orders such as the Cluniacs and Premonstratensians had

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[3] Trexler, Dependence in Context, 359.

developed similar institutions. At these meetings, or general chapters, the leaders of an order could determine which houses did or did not belong to their order, and made provisions for enforcing uniformity of practice. This hierarchical structure and regulatory ability would become the hallmarks of a monastic order, though they dated back only to the twelfth century. The new mendicant orders of the thirteenth century, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, developed such administrative structures from their inception.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, monastic orders strongly opposed to accepting nunneries within their ranks. There were two main reasons that male monastics gave for their objection to undertaking the care of nuns. The first was that nunneries were a financial and administrative burden. Convents tended to be poorer than their male counterparts, and male religious claimed they were a financial drain on the orders and on the local monasteries to whose care they were entrusted, and that furthermore the administrative duties involved in the *cura monialium* (care of nuns) distracted them from their primary missions of prayer or preaching. The second was the fear on the part of many monks that the women in their care would be sources of temptation, and that proximity between men and women religious could lead to sin. Though some thirteenth-century popes such as Gregory IX (1227-1241) and Innocent IV (1243-1254) endeavored to mediate between the nunneries and the monastic orders with which they identified, the relationship between most nunneries and their orders was tenuous. A few women's houses were able to gain incorporation into the monastic orders, usually because of papal intervention on their behalf. The majority of nunneries, however, remained under the

jurisdiction of the bishop.

Recent scholars of female monasticism have tended to avoid dealing solely with one order or another, acknowledging that is it often difficult to pin down the order and rule of many nunneries. For example, in her study of women's monasteries in northern France and their place in the secular and ecclesiastical communities around them, Penelope Johnson argues that "[u]sing a group of orders instead of limiting the investigation to just one order takes account of the enormous fluidity in medieval monasteries; tight definitions run the risk of forcing messy realities into tidy categories."[4] While Janet Burton on the whole organizes her history of monasticism in medieval England by order, she chooses to treat women in a separate chapter instead of integrating them into her chapters about individual orders, stating that "[t]o do this would be to squeeze women into categories which may better describe male rather than female congregations."[5]

Though these scholars recognize the problem of assuming static affiliation between nunneries and orders, there has been no study concentrating on the changes in rule and order affiliation of female houses. Perhaps one reason for this is that many studies of women's monasticism focus on France and England in the twelfth century, before the papal drive to consolidate nunneries into monastic orders in the thirteenth.

Other students of women's monasticism have focused their attention on a single order, or have dealt with many orders but have done so by devoting separate chapters to

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[4] Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 5-6.

[5] Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 86.

each. Regarding women's monasticism in the thirteenth century, a substantial amount of recent work concentrates on Clare and the Franciscan order, especially among those scholars who study medieval Italy.[6] Similarly, the problem of the relationship between Cistercian nuns and the hierarchy of the Cistercian order has received considerable attention.[7] Micheline de Fontette's seminal study on women's monasticism details the histories of the Premonstratensians, the Cistercians, the Dominicans and the Poor Clares, in each case discussing the growth of these orders and the eventual battles opposing the monks and friars who eschewed responsibility for the *cura monialium* to the nuns who sought recognition and inclusion in these orders.[8]

Scholarship on the relation between nuns and monastic orders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has focused on controversies between nunneries that identify with a

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[6] See Lezlie Knox, "Audacious Nuns: Institutionalizing the Franciscan Order of Saint Clare" *Church History* 69:1 (March 2000), 41-62; Luigi Pellegrini, "Female Religious Experience and Society in Thirteenth Century Italy," in *Monks & Nuns, Saints & Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society*, ed. Sharon Farmer and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 97-122; Clara Gennaro, "Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers: From the Poor Ladies of San Damiano to the Poor Clares," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 39-55. See also *Movimento religioso femminile e francescanesimo nel secolo XIII,* Proceedings of the Seventh Conference of the International Society for Franciscan Studies, Assisi, 11-13 October 1979 (Assisi, 1980), 169-91.

[7] Sally Thompson, "The Problem of Cistercian Nuns in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries," in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 227-252; Brigitte Degler-Spengler, "The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns Into the Order in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," in *Hidden Springs: Cistercian Monastic Women. Medieval Religious Women, Volume Three*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 85-134; Constance Berman, "Were there twelfth-century Cistercian nuns?" *Church History*, 68:4 (1999), 824-864.

[8] Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses a l'age classique de droit canon: recherches sur les structures juridiques des branches féminines des orders* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967).

particular order and are attempting to gain official recognition on the one hand, and on the other, the monastic orders reluctant to commit to these ties. The effect is to portray a situation in which it is assumed that nuns desired acceptance into monastic orders and would have expected to belong to an order. This picture understates the diversity of religious life in the thirteenth century. Though the model of a monastic order represented by the Cistercians and later the Dominicans, in which houses could be recognized by a general chapter as being incorporated into the order, was gaining currency, indeed was mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council, not all monastic houses were part of such an order. Houses that followed the Benedictine or Augustinian rules but that were not part of any other group were referred to as being part of the Order of St. Benedict or the Order of St. Augustine, but they remained under the jurisdiction of the local bishop. They may have been part of small local networks or congregations, but most of these houses were autonomous.

It was not unusual for nunneries to change their rule and order; some communities did so more than once in the period under investigation, 1200-1500. This is especially the case during times of difficulty in the city. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many northern Italian cities remained in a constant state of war. These wars occurred between city-states, but factional strife within the cities themselves also led to instability. After 1300, the number of nunneries in Bologna began to decline from its peak of thirty-five houses, evenly distributed between the city and the suburbs; by 1500, only twenty-two remained, with only six of those outside the city walls.

This study details the changes in communities of women religious in late medieval Bologna and the religious and civic situation in which these changes occurred. Chapters One and Two provide information about the context in which the nunneries in Bologna developed. Chapter One examines the civic and religious institutions of Bologna. Along with lay confraternities and saints' cults, specifically the cult of Bologna's patron saint, San Petronio, monastic houses were an important focus of civic identity, drawing support from the city rulers as the government changed from consular government to commune to seigniorial rule, and giving governing parties a means of bolstering their legitimacy.

Chapter Two traces the development of different forms of monastic life from the era of the Church Fathers, including Benedict and Augustine, through the thirteenth century. Until the twelfth century, monastic houses were autonomous units or part of small, local group of houses, or congregation. During the twelfth century, some of these congregations grew large enough that they developed governing institutions that could set policy for the entire order, could maintain discipline, and could decide which houses would receive official recognition as members of the order. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 held up this model of monasticism as the ideal. These well-organized, international monastic orders resisted accepting women's houses and providing for their care. Thus, though some nunneries were accepted as members of religious orders, most nunneries were not, and for them, the older form of monasticism, in which houses functioned as autonomous establishments, persisted.

Chapters Three through Six concentrate on nunneries in Bologna. Chapter Three describes the diverse forms of religious life for women in Bologna in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, focusing especially on a hermitess attended by a group of canons and on two double houses and the colonies and daughter houses that spring from them. These communities differed from traditional monastic houses in that they in many cases followed rules other than the Augustinian or Benedictine rule, and in their inclusion of men and women in a single community. In some cases, they bore resemblances to lay movements such as the Humiliati. Along with comparable groups in other parts of Europe such as the Fontevrists and the Premonstratensians, they are examples of the diversity of religious groups in this period that led to the Fourth Lateran Council reforms and their attempt to impose order on religious life.

Chapter Four traces the fate of women's houses after the Fourth Lateran Council, with its shift in the expectations for the organization of monastic life. Unlike the houses discussed in Chapter Three, new nunneries founded after 1215 tended to see themselves as part of one of the international religious orders. Reforming popes such as Gregory IX and Innocent IV wanted to make the governing bodies of religious orders responsible for nuns following the rules of that order, and some nunneries strongly desired recognition of their membership in a religious order, despite the resistance of monks and friars to assuming responsibility for the care of nuns. Some convents were able to secure recognition of their status as members of a monastic order, but most were not. Many of these houses remained difficult to categorize, and could change from one observance to another in response to practical needs. Nunneries founded in the period before the Fourth

Lateran endeavored to retain some of their unique characteristics and practices, but over time came to resemble other monastic groups.

Chapters Five and Six examine how nunneries responded to the economic, administrative and physical exigencies of maintaining their communities. Chapter Five shows the gradual concentration of nunneries inside the city walls due to the attractions of the city in the thirteenth century and to dangers brought on by constant warfare in the countryside in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The change in location could also be accompanied by a change in the community, as greater emphasis on enclosure accompanied moves into the city and increased episcopal scrutiny. Chapter Six examines the suppressions of nunneries in the fourteenth century and unions of nunneries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and explores the implications of these events for nunneries' identity as part of a religious order and as an individual community.

Some nunneries whose houses were destroyed by war or who feared they were in danger from soldiers managed to relocate to safer quarters. Many communities, with their homes ravaged by war, age, or other disasters had to unite with other houses. In these situations, sharing a common rule and order seems to have done little to ease the difficulty of combining two communities, each with their own leaders and dynamics. The main factor determining the success of these unions was the willingness of both parties, whether they originally followed the same rule or not. Thus, despite the increased emphasis on monastic orders and uniformity of practice in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council, for many nunneries, affiliation with monastic orders remained fluid, and could change when practical concerns required it.

# CHAPTER 1

## BOLOGNA'S CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY

During the central Middle Ages, Bologna emerged as a center of legal studies and as the primary seat of power in the Romagna. Along with their counterparts in other Italian city-states, the local Bolognese nobility took advantage of conflict between emperors and popes to establish a communal government, gaining the right to do so from a distracted emperor. In league with other cities and towns, the Bolognese successfully fought off the attempts of later emperors to reassert their authority over Northern Italy. Wealthy guild members such as bankers and merchants gained access to government office, then formed an alliance with the petty nobles and members of the artisan guilds to wrest power from the landed aristocracy and to establish a government of the *Popolo*.

The period of the *Popolo* government overlaps with emergence of the mendicant orders of the Dominicans and Franciscans and corresponds to a growth in the university and in civic and religious institutions such as confraternities. Though tensions simmered between the displaced nobles and the guild-based government, and though Bologna continued to fight with nearby cities for control of the Romagna, the period from 1228 to 1274 proved sufficiently stable to allow for the foundation and growth of new friaries and nunneries. The communal government supported these monastic foundations with money and with other forms of aid, privileging recently established organizations over those that were built during the period of noble dominance. This tendency reflected their desire to promote religious institutions that advanced the religious and familial concerns of the ruling party. Confraternities allowed the laity to participate in the spiritual benefits

of the monastic orders, and became the spiritual counterpart to *Popolo* societies such as guilds and militias.

In the late thirteenth century, strategic maneuvering between the guild-based communal government and the aristocracy devolved into civil war. The ruling coalition succeeded in expelling the opposing noble faction, but the victory proved Pyrrhic as the Bolognese submitted to the authority of governing papal legates, alternating with periods of local seigniorial rule. A brief revival of *Popolo* government in the last quarter of the fourteenth century was marked by a renaissance of civic pride, especially evident in the choice of a local bishop and saint, Petronius, as the city's new patron, and in the construction of a basilica in his honor. Nevertheless, an ever-smaller group of families controlled the city government, until the Bentivoglio family consolidated power in their own hands, bolstering their claims to authority by highlighting their connections to monastic and pious lay organizations.

**Bologna between Papacy and Empire**

Bologna's proximity to Milan, Tuscany, Rome and Ravenna allowed it to interact with all four of these stronger neighbors and in turn to exercise its own influence on the region as it became the primary center for the study of civil and canon law in Europe. R. W. Southern notes that Bologna was the last stop before the arduous journey over the Apennines for pilgrims and litigants traveling from northern Italy and the rest of the

continent to Rome.[1] In its early years, it was part of Milan's territory, and one of its main churches was dedicated to Milan's patron saint, Ambrose.[2] After Justinian's conquest of Italy in the sixth century, Bologna was mainly in Ravenna's sphere of influence, and was part of its archdiocese. It passed to the temporal control of the papacy under Charlemagne in the late eighth century, but remained in the archdiocese of Ravenna until it became the seat of its own archdiocese in the sixteenth century.[3]

By the tenth and eleventh centuries, the papacy, the archbishop of Ravenna, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the counts of Tuscany, whose territory extended almost to Bologna, all exercised some degree of influence over the city, largely depending on the relative strength of each of these parties at any given moment. The competing influences and divided loyalties of the city are particularly evident during the Investiture Contest of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. One historian of Bologna notes that during this time, Bologna was governed by a count, who drew his authority from the Emperor; the city was also in the territory of the old Exarchate of Ravenna, itself under papal jurisdiction, over which the papacy had jurisdiction; and finally, the Tuscan countess Mathilda of Canossa exercised effective power in the city, though she did not have direct dominion. Thus, in this period, Bologna could be seen as either an imperial city, a papal

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[1] R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, vol. 1: Foundations* ( Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), xx.

[2] Amadeo Benati, "Bologna dalla caduta dell'Imperio Romano d'Occidente alla lotta per le investiture (secoli V-XI), in *Storia di Bologna*, ed. Antonio Ferri and Giancarlo Roversi (Bologna: Edizioni ALFA, 1978), 101. This church was leveled in the 1380's to allow for the construction of the basilica of San Petronio.

[3] Benati, 106.

city, or as part of Mathilda's territory.[4] This confusion gave the city the chance to begin asserting some degree of independence. After the death of Mathilda, an important ally of the pope, the controversy between the papacy and empire nevertheless continued, and under its cover, Bologna founded a communal government in 1115.[5] To demonstrate their growing independence from outside powers, a party of Bolognese citizens destroyed the *rocca imperiale*, the fortress on the outskirts of the city that had been the headquarters of the emperor's functionaries. The emperor, Henry V, was not able to reassert control over Bologna, and in 1116 he issued a charter pardoning them for destroying the fortress and recognizing the communal government of the city, though later emperors would intervene in Bologna's governing institutions.[6]

**The consulate and the communal government**

In the early years of Bologna's commune, the landed aristocracy, or magnates, dominated the city's government. A small body of consuls made up of men from these noble families carried on the city government, serving two-year terms.[7] Beginning in the 1150's, the consular government was occasionally supplemented by a *podestà*, who was a magistrate from another city appointed to a fixed term, usually only a year or two.[8]

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[4] Benati, 121-122.

[5] Gina Fasoli, "Bologna nell'età medievale (1115-1506), in *Storia di Bologna*, ed. Antonio Ferri and Giancarlo Roversi (Bologna: Edizioni ALFA, 1978), 134. Benati, 123-124.

[6] Rolando Dondarini, *Bologna nella storia della città,* (Bologna, Patron Editore, 2000), 106.

[7] Augusto Gaudenzi, ed., *Statuti delle Società del Popolo di Bologna: Volume II, Società delle Arti.* Fonti per la storia d'Italia, vol. 4 (Rome: Forzani e C. Tipografi del Senato, 1896), ix.

[8] Dondarini, 216.

The *podestà* served as a police captain and a judge, thought to be more impartial than local judges, who with their ties to local clans and factions may have had a greater stake in the outcomes of cases.[9] Under Frederick I Barbarossa (1152-1190), the emperor and the consuls competed in choosing the *podestà,* demonstrating that Bologna was not entirely free of imperial influence.[10] Having grown accustomed to independence from imperial oversight, Bologna and other cities bristled at what they perceived to be Frederick's encroachment on their liberty. After Bologna joined the Lombard League, which successfully defended allied northern Italian city-states against Frederick Barbarossa's attempt to strengthen imperial power in that region, the consuls were able to choose the *podestà*, and the office became a permanent fixture in the city government.

By the end of the twelfth century, members of the upper guilds such as the merchants and bankers had managed to enter the ranks of the consuls. As in many Italian cities, the members of the upper guilds, also sometimes known as the *popolani grassi*, allied with the magnates instead of with the artisan guilds.[11] The members of the lower guilds could participate in the *Consiglio degli Anziani*, a counterpart to the *Consiglio dei Consuli*. The nobles made attempts to check the power of the guilds, banning them in 1219. By 1228, the combined *Popolo,* the upper and lower guilds along with their allies

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[9] Denys Hay and John Law, *Italy in the Age of Renaissance, 1380-1530* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 19.

[10] Dondarini, 216.

[11] For an account of relations among the magnates, the *popolo grasso*, and the *popolo minuto* and their role in government and in factional violence in Florence, see John Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch 1216-1380* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), 113-125; for a description of the more peaceful rapport between these factions in Venice, see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 38-44.

in the petty nobility, saw their chance to strike in the wake of the nobles' defeat in a war against Modena. A merchant named Giuseppe Toschi led an attack on the *palazzo comunale*, destroying the judicial and financial records of the magnate government and setting up a council of the upper guilds along with a few noble families who placed their loyalty with the *popolani*.[12] This combined group of guildsmen and nobles formed the Geremei faction. The Lambertazzi formed a rival party uniting a group of magnates, who viewed the guildsmen as upstarts, to reassert noble control of the city government.[13]

The Geremei and the Lambertazzi came to be identified, respectively, with larger Italian parties called the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. These factions emerged during the battle between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and the northern Italian city-states in the mid-thirteenth century. The Ghibelline party remained loosely pro-imperial, and the Guelfs could be seen as either anti-imperial or pro-papal, especially after the defeat in the 1260's of Frederick's sons and the Hohenstaufen dynasty.[14] Though the names given to these factions were a product of conflict with Frederick II, they corresponded to parties that existed in each city before Frederick II's attempt to consolidate control over Italy, and tended to be based more on local politics than on geo-political ideology. Guelfs of one town could ally with Ghibellines of another city to pursue a common agenda. As we

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[12] Albano Sorbelli, *I Bentivoglio: Signori di Bologna* (Bologna: Capelli Editrice, 1969), 8; Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics*, 3rd edition (London and New York: Longman, 1988), 44.; Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 56-57.

[13] Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

[14] Waley, 146-147. "Guelfs" were originally those factions that took the side of Frederick's main German opponent, Otto IV, who was a member of the Welf family. The word "Ghibelline" is derived from the name of one of Frederick's castles, Waiblingen, which served as a battle cry for Frederick's partisans.

will see, in the late thirteenth century, Pope Nicholas III intervened to help the Ghibelline Lambertazzi faction, demonstrating the shifting nature of these allegiances.

After the 1228 revolt, the *Popolo* government encouraged the development of armed societies to defend the city against outside invaders and also against the nobility. In addition to the militias in each quarter of the city, there were at least twenty *Compagnie delle Armi* that, along with the *Compagnie delle Arti*, made up the *Società del Popolo*.[15] These *compagnie* were voluntary associations organized around a variety of different groups. For instance, two of them were comprised of people who were originally from Tuscany or Lombardy, while some were associated with specific trade guilds. Some were based in a single quarter, while others had members from throughout the city. They drew from a wide swath of society, including some nobles, presumably those who were friendly to the current government.[16] While most of the societies were intended to aid in the physical defense of their members and of the city as a whole, there was also a *Compagnia Spirituale* whose duties included praying for the city during wartime.[17] By the 1250's, the *Anziani* and Consuls created the office of the *Capitano del Popolo*, who served as the director of the *compagnie*.[18]

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[15] The statutes of these *compagnie* are contained in Augusto Gaudenzi, ed., *Statuti delle Società del Popolo di Bologna: vol. I, Società delle Armi*. Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, vol. 3 (Rome: Forzani e C. Tipografi del Senato, 1889).

[16] Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics*, 3rd edition (London & New York: Longman House, 1988), 143-144.

[17] Terpstra, 4-5.

[18] Dondarini, 219.

**The city, the bishop, and the university in the 13th century**

The university helped make Bologna one of the principal cities in Europe. Bologna became the center for both civil and canon law. In the last years of the eleventh century, the manuscripts of Justinian's *Digest* were found in Ravenna, former center of Byzantine power, and transferred to the now more dynamic Bologna. There the jurist Irnerius became the first great teacher of Roman law in the Middle Ages. For canon law, the Camaldolese monk Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum*, also known as the *Decretum*, became the primary text.[19] With approximately two thousand students, the university was an economic boon to merchants, artisans and shopkeepers from whom the students purchased the necessities of life. Thus, the university was vital to the development of the city, but its presence there also gave popes and the emperors some leverage over Bologna in the early years. Pope Innocent III and Emperor Frederick II both attempted to punish Bologna when the city did not do as they wished, either by trying to close the university or by attempting to move it to another, more favorable city.[20] At the beginning, the *Studium* was private and autonomous, with privileges from the emperor and the papacy. By the late thirteenth century, the Bolognese government had captured some control by paying part of the faculty's salaries, particularly for its greatest luminaries.[21]

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[19] Stephan Kuttner, "The Revival of Jurisprudence, " in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lantham. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, vol. 26 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 300-305.

[20] Fasoli, 142. For more on this, see below.

[21] Philip Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 450.

In addition to Bologna's wealth and its desirable location between Florence and Venice, the presence of the university provided a reason for continuing papal interest in the city. One manifestation of this interest was papal appointment of diocesan officials, including the bishop. From the around the 1240's, the popes appointed the archdeacon of the cathedral, who served as the chancellor of the university. Beginning in 1244, the cathedral chapter no longer elected the bishop, who instead took his office by papal appointment, a situation that would endure until the election of the first bishop after the restoration of the communal government in the 1380's.[22] The Ubaldini family dominated the office of bishop in the last half of the thirteenth century. A noble family that belonged to the Lambertazzi faction, the Ubaldini were at once papal allies and Ghibellines, though less on ideological grounds than for the purpose of internal Bolognese politics. The Ubaldini's Lambertazzi ties sometimes put them at odds with the Geremei-dominated *popolo*. Many of the Ubaldini bishops and their successors also served as cardinals, and were therefore away from their home diocese for lengthy periods. These factors contributed to an estrangement between the Bolognese and their bishops.[23] Nevertheless, ties to the university could be politically useful for citizens. As we will see, the seigniorial families of the Pepoli and Bentivoglio sent their sons to study law, thereby helping them to bolster their skills and their prestige. The leader of the

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[22] Augusto Vasina, "Chiesa e Communità Dei Fedeli Nella Diocesi Di Bologna Dal XII Al XV Secolo," in Storia Della Chiesa Di Bologna, eds. Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (Bergamo: Bolis, 1997), 130; 166-7. Ottaviano I Ubaldini was bishop from 1240-1244, then became a cardinal and served as papal legate to Bologna during the episcopate of Giacomo Boncambi. Giacomo was succeeded by Ottaviano II Ubaldini, his namesake's nephew, who held the office from 1261-1295. Schiatte Ubaldini then served as bishop from 1295-1298.

[23] Vasina, 129-140.

revolt that established the second communal period, Rolandino Passaggeri, also emerged from the ranks of the *dottori*.

**Frederick II and the Second Lombard League**

While Bologna had participated in the First Lombard League of the 1160's, it did not play a pivotal role. By contrast, the Bolognese, along with the Milanese, were central to the Second Lombard League and the eventual destruction of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. During the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216), when the pope was on good terms with the young Emperor Frederick II, Bologna supported his rival, Otto IV, whom the pope had excommunicated. To retaliate for this allegiance, Innocent attempted unsuccessfully to transfer the university out of Bologna.[24] In 1226, Frederick II , by now himself an enemy of Innocent's successor Honorius III, used a similar tactic with limited success, founding a university at Naples and forbidding the masters and scholars of the *Studium* from carrying on instruction in Bologna.[25] That same year, Bologna and its allies reformed the Lombard League to fight off imperial encroachment. The League and the emperor continued an uneasy standoff for ten years, engaging in open warfare beginning in 1239.[26] The event that symbolized Bologna's defeat of Frederick was the capture in May of 1249 of his son, Enzo, the king of Sardinia. The Bolognese built a

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[24] Antonio Ivan Pini, "Guelfes et Ghibelins à Bologne au XIIIe s.: L''autodestruction' d'une classe dirigeante", in *Les elites urbaines au Moyen Age*: XXIVe Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S (Rome, mai 1996). Collection de l'Ecole Français de Rome, vol. 238 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), 161.

[25] Antonio Ivan Pini, "Federico II, lo Studio di Bologna, e il 'Falso Teodosiano'" in *Federico II e Bologna*, Deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna: Documenti e Studi, vol. 27 (Bologna: Presso la deputazione di storia patria, 1996), 36-37.

[26] Fasoli, 156.

palace for their hostage in the Piazza Maggiore, where he remained as a living reminder of the victory until his death twenty-three years later. Taking advantage of its dominance over other Romagnol cities in the Lombard League, the Bolognese were able to expand and consolidate their control over the region.[27]

**The communal government and expansion of the monastic community**

The conditions that elicited communal government also fostered rapid growth in the number of Bologna's religious houses. The presence in Bologna of Francis, Dominic, and their followers in the first half of the thirteenth century played a large role in inspiring the foundation of new religious communities aligned with the mendicant orders.[28] The Bolognese statutes from the years between 1255 and 1267 demonstrate that the *Anziani* took an interest in providing aid and sustenance for religious communities.

The commune gave money to forty-seven religious groups. Of the groups for which the statutes indicate the sex of the inhabitants, thirty-one were women's houses, while nine were communities of religious men. Three included both men and women, probably living in separate residences under the authority of a single prior, while two groups, S. Agostino and the community at Albicedo, were made up of males in the 1255 statutes but were female houses by 1259. In addition, the statutes list three hospitals, which do not mention the sex of either the caretakers or inmates. Beyond the hospitals, the list also includes three groups that fall outside of the bounds of traditional monasticism – the Humiliati of S. Lucia, the Convertite convent of Maria Maddalena, and

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[27] Dondarini, 162.

[28] On the growth of the mendicant orders, see Chapter 2.

a community of women living at a private house owned by a certain Dom. Accursio, which may have been a community of beguines, called *pinzochere* in Italy.[29] The perils of endemic war had driven four groups (three female and one male) to take temporary refuge in Bologna.

Primarily, the commune donated grain, though in many cases the gift would also include monetary aid. Though the largest gifts were given to male houses, these tended to occur in unusual circumstances. For instance, two of the nine male groups received donations designated specifically for help in building their churches, and two obtained help in cases of extreme need, such as one group of friars who took refuge in Bologna after fleeing their hometown. Though the statutes do not mention building construction for S. Giacomo, this community of Augustinian Hermits had recently moved into the city and must have been raising money for its church, on which they began construction in 1267.[30] This activity fits in with the picture of the women's communities that received monetary gifts. Of the twenty entries for which this is the case, eight specifically mention that the donation is to help with building, two are to help purchase garments, and

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[29] The Humiliati had been considered a heretical group in the twelfth century, but under Innocent III they were reconciled with the church and were divided into three groups: groups of male clerics (First order), male and female lay people living in a community (Second Order), and men and women who met regularly but lived separately in their own homes (Third Order). The Humiliati of S. Lucia would have been part of the Second Order. See Frances Andrews, *The Early Humiliati* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2. Convertite nunneries were for "fallen women." See Zarri, "I monasteri femminili di Bologna tra il XIII e il XVII secolo," *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per la province di Romagna: nuova serie*, vol. 24 (1973), 204 n. 201.

[30] Paola Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi medievali a Bologna e nel suo territorio", in *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, vol. II, ed. Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), 483-484.

one given to a group that had fled to Bologna from its nunnery elsewhere. Even many nunneries whose monetary gifts were not specifically dedicated to a building project were of recent foundation, and therefore could have used the money for ongoing construction or to offset debt from a completed dormitory or church.[31] The vast majority of male religious groups in Bologna did not receive financial help from the communal government.

By contrast, almost every female religious house received some form of aid from the commune. Moreover, in the cases where a group had male inhabitants in 1255 but female inhabitants in the years afterward, the donation rose from 25 baskets to 40 in one case and from 10 baskets to 30 in the second. Probably the men who governed the city did not perceive that monks and friars had the same financial needs as their religious sisters. Communities of religious men tended to be wealthier than their female counterparts and could supplement their endowment by a greater variety of types of work and by begging, while the townspeople did not deem it appropriate for women religious to circulate through the city begging. Though the information that would allow for a comparison of monastic endowments is not available for Bologna, an assessment of Florentine houses demonstrates the economic disparity between monks and

[31] Five nunneries that received money but for whom there is no mention of building project were of recent foundation. The nunneries with their approximate foundation dates are as follows: S. Giovanni Battista (1239); S. Maria Nova (1250), S. Mattia (1254), S. Eusebio (1259) S. Guglielmo (1260).

**Table 1.1**[32]
**Communal donations to religious organizations**

| Religious Group | Disbursement from Communal Government | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1255 | | 1259-1264 | | 1267 | |
| | Baskets of grain | Lire | Baskets of grain | Lire | Baskets of grain | Lire |
| Santa Caterina di Quarto (f & m) | 100 | | 100 | | 50 | |
| SS. Trinita di Ronzano (f) | 50 | | 100 | | | |
| S. Maria Maddelena di Valdipietra (f) | | | | | 100 | |
| S. Cristina (f) | 25 | | 50 | 60† | 50 | |
| S. Nicolo (f) | 50 | | 50 | | 50 | |
| Hospitale Misellorum | 25 | | 25 | | 25 | |
| S. Maria Maddalena (m) | 25 | | | | | |
| Friars "of the Sack" (m) | | | 50 | 100 | 50 | 60 |
| S. Giacomo di Laureto (f) | | | 10 | 10 | | |
| S. Lorenzo (f & m) | | | 30 | 25 | 100 (annual) | |
| S. Andrea (f) | | | 50 | 25 | 50 | |
| S. Maria di Rocanovella (f) | | | 50 | | | |
| S. Eusebio (f) | | | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| S. Gregorio (m) | | | 25 | | 50* | |
| S. Maria "de finibus terre" | | | 10 | 10 | | |
| S. Maria Billiemme (f) | 50 | | 60 | 35^ | 25 | |
| S. Francesco (f) | 50 | | 100 | 200† | 100 | 50† |
| Friars Minor (m) | | 25‡ | | 25‡; 1000† | | 25‡ |
| S. Maria de Pugliole (f) | 50 | | 100 | 100† | 100 | 100† |
| S. Giacomo di Savena (m) | 25 | | 50 | 300† | 50 | 100† |
| S. Giacomo Maggiore (m) | | | | 300 | | |
| S. Michele in Bosco (m) | 25 | | 25 | | | |
| S. Maria della Misericordia (f) | 60 | | 60 | | 50 | |
| S. Maria Nova (f) | 40 | | 100 | 50 | 50 | |
| S. Giovanni Battista (f) | 60 | | 100 | 50 | 100 | |
| S. Agostino (becomes S. Maria delle Vergine) | 25 (m) (annual) | | 40 (f) (annual) | | 50 (f) (annual) | |

[32] The information for this table is drawn from *Statuti di Bologna dall'anno 1245 all'anno 1267, tom. I*, ed. Luigi Frati (Bologna: Regia Tipografia, 1869), 41-52.

| Religious Group | Disbursement from the Communal Government | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1255 | | 1257-1264 | | 1267 | |
| | Baskets of grain | Lire | Baskets of grain | Lire | Baskets of grain | lire |
| S. Maria del Monte della Guardia (f) | 25 (annual) | | 50 (annual) | | | |
| S. Cristina di Treviso > (f) | 15 | | 15 | 15 | | |
| S. Margarita di Barbiano (m) | | | 40 | 60 | 40 | |
| Hospitale Caritatis | | | 50 (annual) | | 25 (annual) | |
| Cistercian nuns of Reggio Emilia > (f) | 10 (annual) | | 20 | | | |
| Dominican nuns of Parma > (f) | 20 (annual) | | | | | |
| Friars of Martorano > (m) | 20 | | 20 | 25 | | |
| Albicedo | 10 (m) | | 30 (f) | | | |
| S.Maria di Valverde (f) | | 20 | 10 | | | |
| Humiliati of S. Lucia (f & m) | 20* (annual) | | 20* (annual) | | | |
| Hospitale Sancti Marie de Castro Franco | | | 25 | 15 | 10 | |
| "Ladies who remain at S. Paulo di Ravone, and who live in Burgo S. Isaia in the house of Dom. Accursio" (f) | | | 20 | | | |
| S. Mattia (f) | | | 50 | 60 | 50 | |
| S. Maria della Volta (f) | | | 60 | 50† | 50 | |
| S. Maria "nuper edificata" (f) | | | 40 (2 years) | | | |
| S. Maria di Fontana (f) | | | 15 | 25 (three years) † | 30 (annual) | |
| S. Guglielmo (f) | | | 150 | 100 | 100 | |
| S. Maria del Cestello (f) | 25 | | | 100† | 60 | 20† |
| S. Agnese (f) | | | | 100† | | 50† |
| S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite (f) | 100 | | 200 | 100^ | | |
| S. Pietro Martire (f) | 25 | | 45 | 100† | 45 | 25† |

*- mentions dire need

† - donation to help with building

^ - for garments

‡ - for sustenance, in consideration of their piety (*intuiti pietatis*)

> - in Bologna temporarily after expulsion from own territory, donation only applies while the group is in Bolognese territory

nuns. Using the Catasto for the period of 1427-1438, Gene Brucker lists the property of thirty communities of men and fifty-four nunneries in Florence and within a five-mile radius of the city center (see Table 2.2 below). The smallest endowment – 286 florins – belonged to a nunnery, while the wealthiest nunnery owned 9,800 worth of property. The poorest house of monks had land worth 515 florins, and some were valued at well over 10,000 florins; the Cistercians of S. Lorenzo di Certosa had assets valued at 20,670 florins to support a community of twenty monks.[33] If the disparity in wealth between Bolognese monasteries and nunneries was comparable to those of its Florentine counterparts, female monastics had considerably fewer resources to draw on than did their brethren.

**Table 1.2**
**Property value of religious houses in Florence[34]**

| | < 2,500 florins | 2,501-5,000 florins | 5,001-7,500 florins | 7,501-10000 florins | >10,001 florins | Unknown | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male Houses | 5<br>17% | 7<br>23% | 6<br>20% | 1<br>3% | 4<br>13% | 7<br>23% | 5883 florins |
| Female Houses | 21<br>38% | 14<br>26% | 3<br>6% | 4<br>7% | | 12<br>22% | 3054 florins |

The nunneries to which the commune did not give alms share two characteristics: they were well established, and they were Benedictine houses that were not part of one of the reformed orders such as the Cistercians or the Camaldolese. Just as the venerable

[33] Brucker, 44-49.

[34] The information for this table is drawn from Gene Adam Brucker, "Monasteries, Friaries, and Nunneries in Quattrocento Florence" in *Christianity in the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 45-49.

Benedictine monasteries of S. Stefano and S. Procolo received no grain or money from the commune, their female counterparts in S. Colombano, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, S. Margherita, and SS. Vitale e Agricola, all twelfth-century foundations, did not benefit from the communal government's largesse. This similarity would support the argument that the commune gave money to newer monastic houses whose futures were still precarious and who were still in need, either because of building programs or because of their generally poorer financial condition.

Another possible explanation is that in this period of struggles between the urban elites and nobility, the *Anziani* did not feel the need to aid the convents that had been founded before the communal era, which may still have had noble patrons. Convent records rarely contain last names of nuns, and therefore it is difficult to link nunneries to specific families and factions. Nevertheless, it is likely that new foundations that were affiliated with Benedictine reform orders such as the Cistercians or Camaldolese, or with the mendicants and Augustinians, were founded for the daughters of the new urban elites. These donations occurred during a period of significant expansion in the monastic community, especially for nuns. From the beginning of this boom (1223) to the year of the last available communal statutes (1267), twenty-three new nunneries were built in Bologna and its environs, and sixteen of these houses were founded between 1250 and 1260. A combination of religious, familial and civic factors contributed to this growth. Whether out of piety or because of economic considerations that prevented them from marrying, the daughters of the rising elite of the *popolo* joined these new religious

groups, and their families supported these foundations with their own money as well as with the treasure of the communal government.

The period between the defeat of Frederick II and his sons and the escalation in internal conflict in the 1270's was a time of relative peace in Bologna, allowing most newly established monastic communities to survive their precarious early years. After 1260, the Bolognese began to devote their wealth and energy to other things. For one, lay piety movements gained prominence, and some Bolognese citizens used their means to establish confraternities that allowed lay men and women to participate in some of the devotional activities that had previously been the monopoly of monks and nuns. Beyond this development, relations between the main factions in Bologna deteriorated, leading to civil war.

**Factional struggle between the Geremei and Lambertazzi**

After the danger from outside the city passed, the conflict between internal factions resumed. The Lambertazzi attempted to bolster their cause by capitalizing on the resentment of the majority of citizens, who were not allowed to join the guilds, harbored towards the urban elite who made up the *Popolo* government, leading to an alliance between the Lambertazzi nobility and the wage laborers and agricultural workers who were excluded from the guilds, also called the *sottoposti*. The communal government responded in 1257 by decreeing an end to serfdom in Bolognese territory, though they compensated the serf's masters by paying them the manumission fees for the freed serfs in the amount of eight lire for children and ten lire for adults. In all, 5855 serfs were emancipated from 379 owners. This action served to undermine the financial base of the

magnates, who now had to hire sharecroppers or other agricultural laborers, and added new citizens to the city's tax rolls.[35]

Despite this new infusion into its citizenry, Bologna would not enjoy its independence and regional dominance for long. An outbreak of internal factional struggle in the 1270's and extending into the fourteenth century would weaken the city, giving the papacy the opportunity to assert its control. These fatal developments resulted from a war between Venice and Bologna. The repeated expulsion and readmission of a party comprised of as many as 12,000 people meant regular battles in the countryside and the confiscation and destruction of large amounts of property.

In the early 1270s, Venice blocked the Po River, causing famine and unrest in the cities that relied on that waterway to obtain shipments of salt and grain from the Adriatic. Bologna waged war on Venice in an unsuccessful attempt to remove the blockade.[36] During this time, the cities under Bolognese hegemony in the Romagna began to revolt. Finally, in 1274, civil war broke out in the city itself. A doctor of the notarial arts named Rolandino Passaggeri led the Guelf faction, which expelled the Lambertazzi Ghibellines. Though the aristocratic families that led the Geremei and Lambertazzi factions numbered only seventy-three and eighty-three families, respectively, the victorious Guelfs expelled all those who were loyal to the defeated party, numbering between 10,000 and 12,000 people out of a population of approximately 50,000. The newly empowered populace confiscated the property of the expelled citizens and destroyed their homes.[37] The

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[35] Dondarini, 221.
[36] Fasoli, 161.; Dondarini, 223.
[37] Pini, "Guelfs et Ghibelins," 155; Fasoli, 161.

Lambertazzi traveled to Modena to provide military aid their fellow Ghibellines, who had also been expelled from that town.[38]

In 1278, the recently elected Pope Nicholas III convinced the Guelf-dominated government of Bologna, as well as those of other Romagnol cities, to swear allegiance to the Holy See. Part of Nicholas's program was to try to reconcile the warring factions. He convinced the Geremei faction to allow the readmission of the expelled Lambertazzi. Yet this attempt at reconciliation lasted for only a few weeks, after which the Ghibellines were once again expelled.

In the wake of the second expulsion, Rolandino Passaggeri convinced the *Anziani* to pass anti-magnate legislation aimed at Lambertazzi and Geremei nobles alike. The Bolognese Geremei faction split into moderate and "intransigent" camps. Calling the aristocrats "ravenous wolves" (*lupi rapaces*), the communal government under Passageri enjoined magnates from holding office and forced them to pay a deposit of 1000 lire to the city government to ensure their good behavior.[39] They also forbade *popolani* to seek counsel or patronage from magnates, prohibited the exercise of seigniorial justice or the imposition of fines by rural lords, and mandated that the aristocrats give up their use of private prisons.[40] In 1299, the Lambertazzi were again readmitted to the city, and this time they were allowed to regain their previous holdings. The year 1306 saw their definitive expulsion.[41]

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[38] Dondarini, 223.
[39] Pini "Guelfs et Ghibelins," 155.
[40] Waley, 139.
[41] Fasoli, 131.

The successful expulsion of the city's most aristocratic faction did not bring peace to the city. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the government of the city alternated between native seigniorial control and the rule of papal legates, many of whom were not benign rulers. The rise in 1315 of the Bolognese banker Romeo Pepoli as the first individual to seize control of the communal government divided the city into two new factions. Pepoli loyalists were known as the Scacchesi for the resemblance of their black-and-white crest to a chessboard (*scacco*); those opposed to the Pepoli were called Maltraversi. Romeo Pepoli sought to legitimate his influence by tying himself and his family to the university – his son Taddeo became a doctor of law – and by becoming a patron of monastic institutions in the city, particularly of the mendicant orders. Nevertheless, the Maltraversi succeeded in overthrowing Romeo in 1321.

After Romeo Pepoli's fall, Bologna came under direct rule of the popes, ruling at that time from Avignon. In 1327, Pope John XXII appointed his nephew, Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget, to be his legate in Bologna and to act as the city's governor. Bertrand suppressed the governing bodies of the communal government and imposed heavy taxes in order to finance campaigns to create the Papal States.[42] After the Bolognese overthrew Bertrand in 1334, they revived their deliberative bodies, but soon afterward appointed Romeo Pepoli's son, Taddeo, as *conservatore della pace e della giustizia*, giving him seigniorial power, which he maintained until his death in 1347. His two sons assumed his role after his death, but they were not as capable rulers as their father had been, and they decided in 1350 to sell control of the city and its territory to the

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[42] For more on Bertrand, see Lisetta Ciacco, *Il Cardinal Legato Bertrando del Poggetto in Bologna (1327-1334)* (Bologna: Ditta Nicola Zanichelli, 1905).

Archbishop Giovanni Visconti of Milan's ruling family. Visconti's vicar, Giovanni da Oleggio, returned the city to papal control, and was followed by a series of papal legates.[43]

The communal government had a resurgence in the last quarter of the century after a revolt against papal rule in 1376. An increase in civic pride marked this period, a sentiment symbolized by the substitution of a fifth-century bishop, Petronius, as Bologna's patron saint in lieu of its former patron saint, the apostle Peter, who was too closely tied to the papacy. To appreciate the significance of this conscious manipulation of religious symbols by the renascent commune, it is necessary to shift focus and consider some centuries' old elements in the evolution of civic religion in Bologna.

**Civic religion and lay piety in Bologna: San Petronio and the Madonna di San Luca**

In 1141, Bishop Enrico "discovered" the relics of a fifth-century bishop, Petronius, in the Benedictine abbey of S. Stefano. According to the legends that developed around that time, Petronius had been sent by the Emperor Theodosius II to rebuild the city after its destruction at the hands of his predecessor, Theodosius I. The development of the cult of S. Petronio was in clear response to the enthusiasms and crises of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One such influence was Bologna's fervent support for the crusades, as his *vita* claims that part of his duty was to fight a growing heresy propounded by "Macometto," though in fact Mohammed would not be born for more than a century afterward.[44] His relics were buried in one of the seven churches in the

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[43] Dondarini, 257.
[44] Dondarini, 134

complex of S. Stefano. The repository for his relics was a replica of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

S. Petronio was also tied to the *Studium*. According to legend, he gained a charter from Theodosius II designating Bologna an "imperial city," giving it the right to establish a school.[45] During Bologna's struggle with Frederick II in 1226 and the emperor's foundation of a rival university in Naples, a copy of the document designating these rights surfaced, now called the "Theodosian forgery." The charter was probably the work of some of the university masters, though many among both the students and masters regarded it with suspicion.[46]

During the late-fourteenth-century resurrection of the communal government, S. Petronio served as the symbol of the city's freedom from a long line of papal governors. The Bolognese adopted S. Petronio as their patron, cleared several buildings around the Piazza Maggiore, and started construction on a basilica dedicated to the saint that would serve as the center of the civic cult, surpassing the cathedral church, S. Pietro, in size and in importance.[47] In S. Petronio, the Bolognese had found a patron saint who was credited with rebuilding the city and so functioned as a second founder – depictions of the saint often show him holding the city in his hand. The Bolognese interpreted the miraculous discovery of his relics in the first communal period as a sign of divine favor on their endeavors, and the leaders of the second commune hoped to evoke that memory as a symbol of their renewal of communal government.

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[45] Dondarini, 134.

[46] Antonio Ivan Pini, "Federico II, lo Studio di Bologna, e il "falso Teodosiano,"" 48-60.

[47] Terpstra, 11.

Another focus of the city's civic religion, second only to the cult of the patron saint was the Madonna di San Luca, an image of the Virgin and Child supposedly painted by the Apostle Luke. By legend, a holy virgin named Thecla brought this image from Constantinople in the mid-twelfth century and entrusted it to a group of hermitesses on the Monte della Guardia.[48] Whatever the date of its origins, the icon did not become an important part of the civic cult until 1433, when the *Anziani* decided to carry it in a procession from S. Maria del Monte della Guardia into the city after an earthquake, and during a period of incessant flooding that further threatened to damage the city.[49] The Bolognese credited the icon with the cessation of the flooding, and afterwards they held an annual procession, the leadership of which was rotated among the city's four quarters. Outside of these annual events, the icon was sometimes used in a procession in case of impending war or during natural disasters.

**Religious movements as responses to factionalism and war**

A combination of the religious climate that formed the context for the growth of the mendicant orders and the factional violence within and among central and northern Italian cities led to the periodic emergence of penitential processions. These movements were usually initiated by religious figures who believed that strife in Italy was a form of

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[48] It is difficult to establish the existence of this community. They may have been older relatives of Angelica, who founded the church and oratory of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia in the 1190's. See Giovanni Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano e memorie di Loderingo d'Andolò, Frate Gaudente* (Bologna: Società Tipografica Bolognese, 1851), 77-80.

[49] Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginasio, fondo Gozzadini, n. 12, f. 1v (henceforth, BCA Gozz.); Dondarini, 321.

divine punishment, which might be averted by the prayers of the faithful, wide-scale expiation of sins, or both. These processions moved from city to city. The reception these pilgrims received varied; some towns shut their gates, while others welcomed the movements. Bologna was consistently among the latter. The event could dominate the life of the town for a week or more.

A series of processions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provided at least temporary respite from factional strife inside and between cities, and sometimes had more long-lasting influence, such as governmental reform or the establishment of lay confraternities intended to perpetuate the spiritual benefits of these penitential movements. One of the first of these was the *Alleluia* procession of 1233, led by both Franciscan and Dominican friars, which "reconciled enemies, made peace between warring cities, and called for the release of prisoners, the restitution of usurious profits, and the moral reform of society." These processions led to the reform of statutes in Bologna, Parma and Vercelli.[50] In 1260, a Perugian hermit named Raniero Fasani led processions of *Disciplinati* flagellants in Perugia over several months. The event caused the town's factions to call a truce.[51] Other towns began to imitate the movement. One of the first was Imola, whose citizens processed into the countryside and to other towns in the area, including Bologna. As the group moved from town to town, its members would call for "peace and mercy" generally, and would more specifically pursue objectives similar to those of the Alleluia nearly thirty years earlier – repentance of sins, settling of

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[50] Daniel Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 48.

[51] Bornstein, *The Bianchi,* 36

feuds, and restitution of usurious gains. The *Disciplinati* remained in Bologna for eight days, moving from parish to parish and stopping to whip themselves in front of altars, during which time normal city life came nearly to a halt.[52]

The period following the *Disciplinati* march through Bologna saw the growth of lay piety organizations, or confraternities, that sought to capture the penitential spirit of the processions. These groups fell into two main categories, corresponding to different purposes of the processions – *laudesi*, whose main activity was public and private prayer in an attempt to invoke God's mercy; and *battuti*, whose members mostly met in private to mortify their flesh through self-flagellation in expiation for their sins and those of their fellow citizens. Some *laudesi* confraternities had already existed before Raniero's movement, meeting for prayers in the churches of S. Domenico and S. Francesco; in addition to these confraternities that were associated with the mendicant orders, there were also at least two confraternities meeting in parish churches.[53]

Civic and religious purposes were integrated in these confraternities. In the twelfth century, they were aligned with the *popolo* faction of Bologna – those members who supported the magnates risked permanent expulsion from their confraternity. By the early fourteenth century, each quarter had one prominent *laudesi* confraternity (with the exception of the Porta Procola quarter, which held the main Dominican church where most confraternities were groups of *battuti*). In the Porta Stiera quarter, the group met in the church of S. Francesco; Porta Piera's confraternity was housed in the Augustinian church of S. Giacomo Maggiore; Porta Ravennate's group met at the Servite church, S.

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[52] Terpstra, 1
[53] Terpstra, 4.

Maria dei Servi.[54] Confraternity members gave their organizations names such as the Compagnia di S. Maria della Vita and the Compagnia della S. Croce, reflecting the names of the *compagnie* associated with the guilds and the militias.

These penitential movements, involving both clergy and laity, were in part responses to the frequent warfare within and among cities. Following the same impulses, a group of nobles led by Loderingo D'Andolò and Catalano Malatesti founded a military order called the Milizia della Vergine Gloriosa dei Frati Gaudenti, which used Augustine's rule as the basis for its statutes.[55] Unlike the military orders that began in response to the Crusades, whose members engaged in warfare, the mission of the Frati Gaudenti was a peace-keeping operation in Bologna and other cities such as Florence. Their purpose was to pacify factional fighting and to protect the weak. One sign of the accord they hoped to promote was the collaboration of Loderingo, who was from a Ghibelline family, and Catalano, a Guelf.[56] But this partnership was not always successful in its goals. The two were invited to share the office of *podestà* of Florence in 1266, and their term of office was marked by violence in the city, leading Dante to place them among the hypocrites in the eighth circle of Hell.[57]

The turbulence of the fourteenth century gave rise to other penitential movements, always seeking to bring peace to the strife-torn towns of Italy and to encourage repentance of sins. One of these originated with a Dominican named Venturino da

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[54] Terpstra, 6-7.

[55] Loderingo was the younger brother of Diana d'Andolò, who founded the first Dominican nunnery in Bologna, S. Agnese. Dondarini, 222; see also Gozzadini, 19, 29ff.

[56] Gozzadini, 33.

[57] Gozzadini, 40-43. Dante's encounter with Loderingo and Catalano can be found in Canto XXII: 82-146.

Bergamo, who had lived in Bologna in the years before returning to his home city to begin preaching a peace movement in 1335. He developed a vestment for his followers based on the Dominican habit, consisting of a white tunic with deep purple or black mantles, a tau cross on their hoods, and a dove and olive branch on the left breast and a red and white cross on the right breast. As many as 3,000 people followed him as he left Bergamo, and his movement may have reached as many as 10,000 "pilgrims".[58]

As they marched, they cried out for "peace and mercy". The pilgrims flagellated themselves at Dominican altars, but not in public. Though Venturino at first gained the support of the Dominicans, the order eventually condemned his movement, especially after he lead some of his followers to Rome and to Avignon and began to criticize the pope for his residence in Avignon instead of at St. Peter's see in Rome. In 1399, another penitential movement similar to Venturino's arose. During the Great Schism and the Milanese Visconti family's attempts to conquer much of northern and central Italy, the Bianchi, so called for their white robes, spread from Genoa and proceeded southeast to Tuscany and Rome and also northeast to Piacenza and then turned east to the Romagna and toward the Veneto. In Bologna, the Bianchi who had come from Modena stayed for a day, but the Bolognese themselves took up the processions from parish to parish, in an observance that lasted for nine days. The Bolognese Bianchi then traveled down the Via Emilia to Imola.[59] In the wake of the Bianchi processions, the members of the confraternity of S. Maria della Laudi converted from a confraternity of *laudesi* to one of *battuti*, adopted white robes as their devotional garments, and changed the name to S.

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[58] Bornstein, *The Bianchi*, 37-38.
[59] Bornstein, *The Bianchi*, 77.

Maria della Misericordia. Citizens of several small towns in the Bolognese countryside also founded groups of *battuti* carrying the same name.[60]

**The rise of the Bentivoglio**

The second communal government of Bologna began to disintegrate in the last years of the fourteenth century. In 1393, the *Anziani* established the *Sedici Riformatori dello stato di libertà*. The sixteen members of this council were at first elected to one-year terms. But as time passed, a few patrician families would come to dominate the *Sedici*. Among these were the Zembecarri, the Gozzadini (one of the leading families in the Maltraversi), and the Bentivoglio.[61] In 1398, members of these three families fought a three-year war for the dominion of the city. Giovanni Bentivoglio's roots in the *popolani* gave him an edge that proved decisive.[62] The *Anziani* declared him *gonfaloniere di giustizia* for life, though his reign only lasted for fifteen months. In June of 1402, the Milanese Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti defeated Bologna and added its territory to his conquests on the Italian peninsula. Giovanni died in the battle, and was buried in the church of the Augustinian Hermits of S. Giacomo Maggiore, near his family home on the Via San Donato.[63] Milanese control rule over Bologna would be short-lived as well – Giangaleazzo died in 1403, and his widow returned Bologna to direct papal rule.[64]

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[60] Terpstra, 16.

[61] Cecilia Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna: A Study in Despotism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969 [1937]), 7-8.

[62] Sorbelli, 15-16.

[63] Ady, 9-10.

[64] Fasoli, 184.

Papal control of Bologna did not prevent Giovanni's sons from playing a prominent role in Bolognese politics. Antongaleazzo Bentivoglio studied law at the university and became an advisor to Pope John XXIII, the pope to whom Bologna adhered during the Great Schism. In return for his service in this and in other matters – Antongaleazzo probably was instrumental in suppressing a popular revolt in 1412 – the pontiff gave him the right to collect a tax on moneylenders.[65] During another war among prominent families in 1420, Antongaleazzo seized power once again, only to have it stripped away by the new pope, Martin V, who enforced papal suzerainty over Bologna. He was exiled from 1423 until the overthrow of the papal government in 1434, during which time he and his brother Ercole spent time in Florence and allied with the Medici. He returned to his home on the Via San Donato in 1435, but soon afterward agents of the pope attacked and beheaded him on his way to church, and he was buried at S. Giacomo with his father.[66] Furor over his assassination helped Antongaleazzo's son Annibale to gain power, which with the exception of the three years after Annibale's assassination in 1445, stayed in the hands of his successors until Pope Julius II regained dominion over Bologna in 1506.[67]

**The Bentivoglio and religious patronage**

During their reign over Bologna, members of the Bentivoglio family joined several confraternities. The family also became patrons of monastic establishments.

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[65] Ady, 10-11.
[66] Ady, 14-15.
[67] Ady, 19-28; Fasoli, 131.

The family was most closely associated with the confraternity of S. Maria della Baraccano, which developed around a shrine to the Virgin Mary that was founded in the wake of the Bianchi processions and in the years of the Bentivoglio's rise to prominence. Giovanni II Bentivoglio (1462-1506) and his sons enrolled in S. Maria degli Angeli and S. Maria dei Centurati, and patronized the Ospedale degli Esposti, an orphanage.[68] Participation in the confraternities and support for their charitable works allowed the ruling family of Bologna to participate in their spiritual benefits and to maintain control of organizations that were associated with Bologna's past as a city governed by the *popolani* and could either be sources of unrest in an attempt to recapture the communal government or could be directed toward pacification of the city and respect for its current hierarchy.[69]

In addition to pious lay groups, the Bentivoglio were associated with several monastic houses. The monastery church of S. Giacomo Maggiore was on the same street as their family home, and was the burial place for many of their family members. Also on the Via S. Donato was the nunnery of S. Caterina e S. Maria Maddalena, for which Giovanni I Bentivoglio procured an indulgence from Pope Boniface IX in 1402, which he ordered to be announced throughout the city.[70] The Bentivoglio came to be more closely

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[68] Terpstra, 77;185.

[69] Terpstra, 214-216. Terpstra draws on studies by Edward Muir and Richard Trexler demonstrating the use of civic religion in Venice and Florence, respectively, as a means of control. Edward Muir, "The Virgin on the Streetcorner: The Place of the Sacred in Italian Cities", in S. Ozment, ed., *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1989), 25-40; Richard Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1973), 7-41.

[70] ASB Dem 14/4498, nos. 15 and 18.

identified with the Observant Franciscan house of Corpus Domini, which the mystic Caterina dei Vigri founded in 1453. Ginevra Sforza, who was first the wife of Sante Bentivoglio and then of his cousin, Giovanni II, after Sante's death, visited Caterina regularly. Two of her daughters, Isotta and Camilla, became nuns in this convent.[71] Many seigniorial families in other cities sought the council of mystic women who functioned as court prophetesses and whose holiness reflected on their rule and became foci of civic piety. Caterina fulfilled this role for the Bentivoglio.[72]

**Conclusions**

In Bologna, as in most cities in late medieval Italy, internal factions and external influences produced a climate with a few brief periods of calm in a usually turbulent society. As the *popolani* wrested the reins of government from the aristocratic consulate and as new religious movements such as the mendicant orders and penitential processions arose, the citizens founded new pious organizations for male and female monastics and for lay devotion. The communal government supported the growth of the monastic community, subsidizing the building of monasteries, nunneries and their churches, and supplementing the diet of nuns and needy friars with grain. Because of tension between the episcopal curia and the cathedral chapter on the one hand and the citizens on the other, the cathedral fell out of favor as the center for significant events in the city. The

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[71] Ady, 136-144.

[72] See Gabriella Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century" in Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 231-241.

citizens turned instead to the mendicant churches in each quarter of the city, and during the second communal period, they built the basilica of S. Petronio, which surpassed the cathedral of S. Pietro in size and in importance.

Lay piety movements served to unify members of the upper and lower guilds and the petty nobility during the communal period. Penitential processions organized by friars and hermits appealed to the people of Bologna and other Italian cities as a means to achieve a temporary respite from endemic conflict and to invoke divine mercy. In the wake of these movements, Bolognese citizens founded confraternities to perpetuate the spiritual benefits of the processions. In addition to their collective benefits, confraternities also gave the laity the opportunity to participate in the individual religious merits of the religious groups with which they were affiliated. As Bologna came under seigniorial rule, dynasties such as the Pepoli and Bentivoglio families bolstered their legitimacy through their patronage of monastic houses, confraternities, and other pious organizations, turning groups that had once symbolized the independence of the Bolognese *popolo* into means of maintaining control.

# CHAPTER 2

## RULES, CONSTITUTIONS AND ORDERS

Monastic orders and their structures changed over time. In the early Middle Ages, monasteries were autonomous units. This does not mean that personnel and other decisions were completely at the discretion of the monks and their leaders; lay patrons often exercised considerable influence in monastic affairs. But in this early period, monasteries and nunneries were not part of monastic "orders" defined by which rule and statutes they followed, or as a group with a governing institutions which regulated their member houses and to which a monastic house or religious individual could belong; "orders" in this sense began to develop in the tenth century at the earliest.[1] In the years before the rise of the Carolingian dynasty of the Frankish kingdoms in the eight century, some groups of monks or nuns arranged their lives according to a single rule, such as the ones written by Benedict of Nursia or Caesarius of Arles or Columbanus; more often monasteries of monks or nuns would borrow from several rules. They also developed customs outside the rule, which may have been written but frequently were not.

A series of changes in monastic practice and regulation set the stage for the growth of monastic orders. In the eighth and ninth century, the Carolingian monarchs

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[1] Based on searching for the term *ordo* in the databases of the *Corpus Christianorum* and the *Patrologia Latina*, Constance Berman argues that *ordo* was not used in this manner until the mid-twelfth century. Before the late 1140s, the word *ordo* is modified by such words as *monasticus*, *clericus*, or *laicus*, denoting a particular status in society rather than describing the rule, practices, or affiliation of a particular monastic house. Beginning in the late twelfth century, the word *ordo* came to be used in this latter sense, in which a house that follows Cistercian customs or belongs to the order is describes as being of the *ordo cisterciensis*. Constance Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 68-69.

attempted to reform monastic practice, using the Benedictine rule as the standard for monks and nuns, and designating all houses not following this rule as canons and canonesses. In the eleventh century and twelfth centuries, a rule based on a letter written by Augustine of Hippo in 423 giving guidelines for maintaining peace in communal life gained currency as the rule for canons. Thus the Benedictine and Augustinian rules came to provide the basic structure for monastic life, but each monastic group supplemented and complemented these rules with customaries and constitutions.

Although many houses remained autonomous, some monastic groups expanded into networks of houses with similar customs, or congregations. Most of these congregations were small and could be governed by an abbot or abbess at the head of the congregation who visited the subordinate monastic houses in order to ensure that they followed correct practices. As congregations such as the ones governed by the abbots of Cluny and Citeaux expanded, this system of governance was no longer sufficient, and they developed more elaborate institutions. The heads of the subordinate houses met regularly with the abbot of the main house to set policy for the growing order. By the thi1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council, Innocent III held up the practices of Citeaux as exemplars for other monastic groups to emulate. The rules and constitutions of the monastic orders developed from groups of people following the same customs to large institutions with governmental bodies, or general chapters, that passed statutes and had mechanisms designed to enforce uniformity of practice. The effectiveness of these attempts at regulation varied from order to order. Where nunneries were concerned, the general chapters of most orders were reluctant to incorporate women's houses, fearing

the administrative burden of providing care for enclosed nuns and the temptation that proximity to women might cause. Popes of the thirteenth century such as Gregory IX (1227-) and Innocent IV (1243-1254) attempted to find compromises between the nunneries that wanted inclusion in orders such as the Cistercians, Dominicans and Franciscans on the one hand and the monks and friars that did not want to be required to provide care for nuns on the other. In the end, many nunneries that followed the rules and statutes of these religious orders remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop instead of receiving care and oversight from the order with which they identified. Some nunneries were able to prevail upon popes to force the orders to recognize them, but even in these cases, the orders successfully insisted that their care of these houses was voluntary. Further demonstrating the variety of practice of women's nunneries, many houses followed the Augustinian or Benedictine rules and were considered to be part of the Order of Saint Augustine or the Order of Saint Benedict, which did not have governing bodies; thus, religious houses that were parts of these "orders" remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop and in many cases continued to follow their previous practices.

**Benedict and Augustine**

Benedict's rule was intended to be a reasonably comprehensive guide to communal life for monks, though Benedict knew that monasteries would develop customs in addition to the rule. Augustine's letter that eventually came to be called a rule was written to address specific questions, concerning allocating a community's resources

fairly and enabling people who were of different stations before they adopted the monastic life to live in harmony. Because his letter was not intended to regulate the details of communal life, Augustine's precepts leave much to be worked out by the inhabitants of communities loyal to it.

The predominant monastic rule for a large part of the Middle Ages was associated with Benedict of Nursia (ca 480-ca 550). Relatively little is known about Benedict or the circumstances in which he wrote his rule. According to the *Life of Saint Benedict* from Pope Gregory the Great's (d. 604) *Dialogues,* the main source for details about Benedict, he was a student in Rome who grew disenchanted with the sinful life of his fellow students, and fled to a cave in the Sabine hills several miles outside of Rome. He soon drew groups of followers, whom he organized into groups of twelve over whom he appointed a head of each group, called an abbot. He eventually established a single larger community on Monte Cassino. Gregory mentions that he wrote a rule, but gives no details about it since that aspect of Benedict's life is not Gregory's focus.[2]

Benedict compiled the rule from several sources. The most important of these is the *Rule of the Master*, from which Benedict and his contemporary, Caesarius of Arles (ca 470-542), drew much of their rules. The Rule of the Master, which contains ninety-five sections, is considerably longer than Benedict's own rule, which has only seventy-three chapters and does not contain many of the parables in the Master's rule. Thus, Benedict's rule was shorter and more concise than the Master's. Though Benedict's precepts cover many areas of monastic life, he did not intend his rule to stand alone and

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[2] C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, second edition (London and New York: Longman Group, 1989 [1984]), 19-22.

expected that communities would supplement it with their own customs. Both male and female religious used Benedict's rule, sometimes in conjunction with other rules.

The text that came to be called Augustine's rule emerged from a letter of 423 to a community of nuns, giving guidelines for living in a community of monastics, especially for establishing peace between devotees who had come to the nunnery from different stations in life.[3] The letter served as a rule for some monastic communities in North Africa, and then was probably brought to France by some monks fleeing persecution at the hands of the Vandals, and also to Spain during the Byzantine reconquest of the western Mediterranean in the sixth century.[4] In the early Middle Ages, the letter almost certainly was known to Caesarius of Arles and Benedict of Nursia, and Leander and Isidore of Seville, and influenced the rules that they wrote.[5] Yet it was not itself in widespread use as a rule.

Benedict makes clear in the first chapter of this rule that he is establishing a way of life aimed at cenobites, "those who live in a monastery, doing battle under a Rule or an Abbot."[6] For Benedict, it is important that religious life be carried out in a community and under the authority of an abbot. He contrasts cenobitic monks to three other

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[3] Jo Ann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millenia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), 85.

[4] David Gutierrez, *The Augustinians in the Middle Ages 1256-1356* (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Augustinian Historical Institute of Villanova University, 1984), p. 6.

[5] Gutierrez, 10.

[6] "monasteriale, militans sub Regula, vel Abbate." Lucius Holstenius, *Codex Regularum Monasticarum et Canonicarum* (Graz: Akademische Druck-U. Verladsantalt, 1957 [Rome, 1896]), I:115. He lists three other kinds of religious: anchorites or hermits, mature monks who have been tested in a cenobitic community; sarabaites, who live alone or in small groups in society, and gyratory monks, who move from monastery to monastery.

categories of religious: anchorites, sarabaites, and gyrovagi. He approves of anchorites who decide to pursue their solitary life only after being tested in a monastery under a rule and an abbot. Sarabaites live in small communities of two or three without a rule to provide guidance; Benedict accuses them of substituting their own desires for a rule. Worst of all, for Benedict, are the gyrovagi, who traveled from place to place, taking lodging in monastic communities for a few days at a time. These men were "servants of their own pleasures and of the enticements of gluttony, and in all things worse than the Sarabaites," about whose practices it was better not to speak.[7] The Rule of the Master was also critical of gyrovagi, complaining that they abused the hospitality of their hosts, who had barely enough to live on themselves.[8] Benedict believed that obedience to a rule and submission to a superior were, for most people seeking to live the ascetic life, the only way to train one's desires and achieve a state in which one could focus on devotion to God.

His following chapters are devoted to the qualities an abbot should exhibit and the importance of the abbot taking counsel from the brethren, especially the more senior ones. Chapter Four is a list of seventy-two "instruments of good works", admonitions of things that should and should not be done. Following that are three chapters on qualities monks should strive to attain: obedience, silence and humility. After the initial seven chapters setting the tone for life in a monastic community, much of the remainder is devoted to regulating the activities of monks in matters such as daily prayer and the

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[7] "propriis voluptatibus, et gulae illecebris servientes, et per omnia deteriores Sarabaitis...." Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, I:116.

[8] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 27.

chanting of the Divine Office, sleeping, working, and eating. There are also guidelines for correcting the faults of the monastery's inhabitants and for dealing with the sick or the elderly.

**Benedict's Rule and Carolingian reform**

For about three centuries, Benedict's rule was one of many in use and was sometimes combined with other rules, such as that of St. Columbanus, an Irish monk who traveled through Gaul down to Northern Italy in the late sixth century.[9] The rule of Caesarius of Arles remained in use among men and women in the Frankish lands as well, and in Spain, various rules were in use, most prominently that of Isidore of Seville.[10] Columbanus' rule was often used for "double communities" in Gaul, and one rule in Spain, the *Regula Communis*, was made specifically for communities that included men and women.[11] Caesarius wrote different versions of his rule for men and women. One of the main differences was that his rule for nuns stressed strict enclosure, whereas his rule for monks allowed mobility to conduct necessary business.

Under the Carolingians, the Rule of Saint Benedict came to a place of prominence. Charlemagne sought to bring uniformity to monastic practice and chose the Benedictine rule as the basis for monastic practice in his realm, perhaps because of the influence of the chief architect of his father's ecclesiastical reforms, the Anglo-Saxon monk Boniface.[12] To this end, he sent for a copy of Benedict's rule from his abbey at

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[9]Lawrence, 43-53.
[10]Lawrence, 53-54.
[11] Lawrence, 51-54.
[12] Lawrence, 65-66.

Monte Cassino in order to be sure that he possessed an authentic and precise copy.[13] Under Charlemagne, all monasteries in the Frankish kingdoms had to adopt the Benedictine rule, and they came under episcopal control. According to Suzanne Wemple, "increased episcopal authority [over monasteries] was the bishops' reward for cooperating in the creation of the Carolingian 'Reichskirche.'"[14]

Some monastic communities resisted the reforms. Religious houses that chose to retain other customs came to be considered canonries. One example of such an organization was Saint-Martin de Tours, which followed some aspects of Benedict's rule, but did not follow all of the rule's precepts. Charlemagne sent his adviser Alcuin to Tours to impose the complete rule, but after Alcuin's death, "the community of Tours ceased to be composed of monks and became a college of canons, around 806."[15]

The Carolingian reforms affected communities of men and women differently. Boniface and other Anglo-Saxon reformers chose to enforce the Rule more strictly for nunneries than for their male counterparts. Following the Council of Verneuil in 755, bishops were allowed to imprison nuns who refused to accept the Benedictine rule and recalcitrant nunneries could be excommunicated, but no similar actions were prescribed for monks and their communities.[16] In the late eighth and early ninth centuries, the reformers attempted to force women living the religious life in small groups, but without a rule, to combine into large houses under the jurisdiction of the bishop. As with male

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[13] Philibert Schmitz, *Histoire de l'ordre de Saint Benoît* (Liège: Editions Maredsous, 1948 [1941]), I: 97.

[14] Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 165.

[15] Schmitz, I: 101.

[16] Wemple, 166.

religious groups, communities of women who adopted the Benedictine rule were considered nuns, and those who did not were sometimes called canonesses; in practice there was little difference. This was especially the case after the Council of Aix in 816 produced legislation regarding women religious called the *Institutio sanctimonialium*, which was heavily influenced by the Benedictine Rule.[17]

Another difference between the treatment of men and women religious in the application of the Carolingian reforms was the issue of cloister. Jo Ann McNamara describes Boniface as "one of several episcopal monks whose continued interest in their female companions, many of whom were their sisters and mothers, tended to smother them with killing kindness."[18] An example of this is the Council of Verneuil's prohibition against abbesses leaving the monastery unless the king summoned them.[19] No similar provision existed for monks.

Charlemagne's son and successor, Louis the Pious, continued his father's program of imposing uniformity of practice on monks and enlisted the aid of the reformer Benedict of Aniane, whose influence on the development of monasticism in the west was second only to that of Benedict of Nursia.[20] Though for his own spiritual progress, Benedict of Aniane originally rejected Benedict's rule in favor of more austere ones, once he began to establish and govern monasteries he came to believe that Benedict's moderate rule was best suited for the communal life. He began reforming monasteries,

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[17] Wemple, 168.

[18] McNamara, 159.

[19] Wemple, 166.

[20] "[a]près le grand Patriarche, saint Benoît du Mont-Cassin, personne n'a influé largement sur les destinées du monachisme, en Occident, que Benoît d'Aniane." Schmitz, 102.

and formed a congregation of reformed Benedictine houses that remained under his jurisdiction. Around 816, Louis the Pious placed all of the monasteries of his realm under Benedict of Aniane and charged him with reform. At the Council of Aix (817), Benedict of Aniane drew up a capitulary regulating the practice of the rule, which was ratified by Louis. According to Jo Ann McNamara, Benedict "structured community life around a liturgical reform that greatly expanded the devotional tasks of the religious life. Long, elaborate chants, processions, and prayers were woven into the daily routine to enhance the religious' sense of closeness to God and focus their intensive study of Scripture."[21]

Despite the efforts of Louis and Benedict, this attempt at centralization and uniformity did not last long. The deterioration of the Carolingian empire beginning under Louis the Pious and continuing under his sons made any reform program impossible to maintain. As the Carolingians lost the power to enforce the reforms, attempts to impose strict cloister on communities of women also failed. [22] But the Carolingian reform program established Benedict of Nursia's rule as the dominant monastic way of life in western Europe. Moreover, the expanded liturgy of Benedict of Aniane's capitulary influenced the practice of Benedictine communities, including Cluny.

**Cluny and Citeaux**

The abbeys of Cluny and Citeaux and the organizations that grew around them played important roles in the development of the conception of the monastic order, in

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[21] McNamara, 152.
[22] Wemple, 172.

which an order is a group of houses that follow the same rule and statutes or constitution, and has an administrative structure such as a general chapter, in this case a meeting of abbots and priors that can promulgate decrees that all its member houses were expected to follow. The general chapter could decide which monastic houses belonged to the order and had a system [23]of visitations in place designed to promote uniformity of practice. For much of the Middle Ages, orders in this sense did not exist. Most monastic houses were independent foundations. The idea of an order as a group of houses with a well-articulated hierarchical structure and mechanisms for promoting conformity did not develop until the twelfth century.

The abbey of Cluny and its congregation of houses that were either dependent on the main abbey or were influenced by Cluniac customs represents a transitional stage from the earlier norm of autonomous houses to the later centralized orders. At the time of Cluny's foundation in 910, lay patrons had considerable influence over most monastic houses. These patrons filled the offices of these houses with family members who may or may not have had monastic vocations. To ensure that the abbey he founded would not have this problem in the future, Duke William of Aquitaine renounced any seigniorial rights over Cluny. He also helped the abbey to gain direct protection of the papal see in order to protect its autonomy.[24] Under the second abbot, Odo (926-44), Cluny became a model for other reforming monasteries, and the influence of Cluny spread rapidly in

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[23] Berman , 68-79.

[24] Barbara Rosenwein, *Rhinoceros Bound: Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), xvii.

France and in parts of Italy.[25] This growth continued in the eleventh century under two renowned and long-lived abbots, Odilo (994-1048) and Hugh (1049-1109).[26]

Cluny's influence had a variety of forms. New houses were founded as Cluniac establishments, and some existing houses became priories of Cluny, accepting the abbot of Cluny as their superior. Others monasteries sent members to Cluny to learn its practices and bring them back to their home institutions, which remained independent. The distinction between dependent and independent houses meant less and less as the congregation grew; the priories of Cluny were far too numerous for the abbot to visit or regulate, and there were no regional organizations to assist the abbot. For much of the eleventh century, there was no standard set of written usages, and abbots of Cluny changed details in Cluny's customs when necessary.

Some written versions of Cluny's usages from the tenth and early thirteenth century exist, and these are built around Benedict of Aniane's liturgy from the early ninth century.[27] The 817 liturgy was already a considerable expansion on the daily offices of the Benedictine Rule itself; Cluny's practices supplemented the liturgy with additional psalms for patrons and donors, longer offices at Matins, and detailed instructions for processions.[28] The usages of Cluny were finally compiled into the *Consuetudines cenobii Cluniacensis* in 1068, and then revised in the *Consuetudines antiquiores* of the 1080s.[29]

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[25] Lawrence, 88-90.

[26] Bede Lackner, *The Eleventh-Century Background of Citeaux* (Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1972), 41-48.

[27] Lackner, 48.

[28] Lawrence, 100-101.

[29] Lackner, 49-50.

Abbot Peter the Venerable (d. 1156) developed an administrative structure in the twelfth century. Peter held the first Cluniac chapter general in 1132. Before the institution of the chapter general, Peter and his predecessors had tried to manage the unwieldy congregation on their own. Giles Constable writes,

> The policy of Peter the Venerable himself looked partly backward, with his extensive travels and correspondence; partly forward, with his collection of statutes, the first meetings of the chapter-general, and the increasing role of the council of monks; and partly toward his own time with his active recruitment of able administrators and personal control over his agents and appointees.[30]

Though some historians have seen in Cluny the development of the first international monastic order with well-articulated lines of accountability and jurisdiction, Constable argues persuasively that these institutions did not arise in the early years of Cluny, but instead developed in the twelfth century, contemporaneously with administrative structures of the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians.

The spiritual motivation of the foundation of Citeaux in 1098 was a return to the Benedictine rule without the accretions of the centuries, such as the elaborate liturgy from Benedict of Aniane's capitulary and Cluny's customs. Citeaux's founder and first abbot, Robert of Molesme, led a group of dissidents from Molesme to found a new monastery that would follow a life of asceticism and would, in their view, return to the tradition of

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[30] Giles Constable, "Cluniac Administration and Administrators in the Twelfth Century," in *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph Strayer*, ed. William C. Jordan, Bruce McNab and Teofilo F. Ruiz (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1976), 30.

the Apostles and Benedict, requiring the monks to provide for their needs by their own labor.[31]

Under the third abbot, Stephen Harding (1109-1134), Citeaux grew large enough to establish new houses at La Ferté, Pontigny, Clairvaux and Morimund, which would become, as the order grew, the four chief daughter-houses of Citeaux.[32] Instead of having direct jurisdiction over all Cistercian abbeys, the abbot of Citeaux was responsible for overseeing its immediate daughter houses, which in turn governed monasteries founded by their monks. According to the traditional history of Cistercian development, the Cistercians held the first chapter general of abbots in 1119, though it is not clear that they continued to hold regular meetings until much later. In the first half of the twelfth century, the Cistercians developed the *Consuetudines,* or "Book of Customs", which included a compilation of the decisions of general chapters, descriptions of standard liturgical practice, and guidelines for regulating the *conversi*, the lay brothers who carried out much of the manual labor in Cistercian monasteries. The traditional dating of the Cistercian constitution, the *Charter of Charity*, attributes its creation to Stephen Harding. The eminent Cistercian historian Louis Lekai argues that the Charter may have existed in early stages during Stephen's abbacy, but did not reach its final form until some time between 1165 and 1190.[33]

Recently, Constance Berman has re-examined the traditional dating of these documents and the history they suggest. Based on examinations of existing copies of the

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[31] Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, Ohio:Kent State University Press, 1977), 14.

[32] Lekai, p. 18.

[33] Lekai, 26-29.

relevant texts and their groupings in codices, she placed the creation of these texts in the third quarter of the twelfth century, agreeing with Lekai's reassessment of the *Charter of Charity*'s development and calling into question the existence of a consistent chapter general before the 1150's.[34] The implication of this reassessment is that the institutions of the Cistercian order developed over a longer period than tradition suggests. The early Cistercians could not have anticipated the scope that their order would achieve, and its extensive governance system would not have been needed.

**Women in the Cluniac and Cistercian movements**

There were few nunneries associated with Cluny. Abbot Hugh founded Marcigny, the first Cluniac nunnery, in 1056, nearly a hundred and fifty years after Cluny's beginning. Just as the monks of Cluny drew heavily on the Carolingian reforms for their way of life, Hugh followed the Carolingian custom of adding elements of Caesarius's rule to that of Benedict when organizing women's monasticism. The chief outcome of this practice was a much stronger emphasis on enclosure for nuns than could be found in the Benedictine rule alone. Over the next century, Marcigny was joined by one convent in Italy, two in Germany and one in England.[35] Outside these few houses, Cluniac monks excluded women religious from the Cluniac organization.

The role of Cistercian nuns in the order is the subject of some scholarly debate. Some historians of the Cistercian order hold that only nunneries that gained official incorporation into the order by the general chapter can be considered Cistercian, and that

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[34] Berman, 46-92
[35] McNamara, 219.

the general chapter's refusal to incorporate nunneries in the early thirteenth century reflects a policy that had been consistently held since the order's inception.[36] Other historians have argued that the ties between many houses of nuns that followed Cistercian practices, such as Tart and its eleven daughter houses, resembled the relationship between Cistercian houses for men and their subordinates. One scholar has noted if official recognition by the general chapter is necessary for membership in the order, no houses of men could be said to belong to the order until 1190, nearly a century into the order's history.[37] Brigitte Degler Spengler argues that "when the incorporation of women's monasteries became an object of official church policy in the thirteenth century, [the Cistercian Order] could already look back to a hundred-year-old tradition of service in houses of women which they had themselves set up in the most feasible manner."[38] The view that the lack of official incorporation of nunneries indicates that the Cistercian order eschewed responsibility for nunneries rests on the assumption that the Order's governing institutions and procedures for acknowledging membership in the order were fully in place from its very early years. Those scholars inclined to see a gradual development of the Cistercian's administrative structures believe that the rejection of responsibility for new nunneries in the thirteenth century does not mean that there had been no place for

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[36] For an example of this view, see Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 94-96.

[37] Berman, xi.

[38] Brigitte Degler-Spengler, "The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns into the Order in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," in *Hidden Springs: Cistercian Monastic Women, Medieval Religious Women* vol. III, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 96

female monastics in the Cistercian order from its inception. Applying this standard, well-established in the thirteenth century, to twelfth-century practices risks anachronism.

**The discovery of Augustine's "Rule" and rise of canons regular**

At the same time as the Orders of Cluny and Citeaux were developing, another kind of religious life was emerging: the canons regular, which tended to use the Rule of St. Augustine as their basic rule. Augustine's fifth-century letter was not widely used as a rule for religious until much later in the Middle Ages. Upon its re-emergence, it was primarily used by groups of priests who lived in groups and did not profess the Benedictine rule. These clerics who lived together and who may or may not have lived according to a rule were called *canons*. There were also women who lived in groups without adopting the Benedictine rule, and these women were sometimes called canonesses, though in practice there was little difference between canonesses and nuns.

Since Augustine's rule was written in the context of quarrels between religious over possessions, this question features prominently. Augustine states that all property should be held in common and that the superior should allocate to each person in the community what that person needs. Those who had been wealthy should not maintain their property, and they should not take pride in the status of their families or think themselves better than others because they have given their goods to the community. Those who were poor before entering the community should not seek to have material goods that they did not have before, or think that they are better than they were because they are now in a community with people of a higher station. These concerns are central

to the rule; though there are suggestions about daily life in a religious community such as prayer, dietary considerations, and the keeping of common goods, these provisions are much less detailed than in Benedict's rule.

The Rule of St. Augustine came into widespread use in the eleventh century. According to the historian of monasticism C. H. Lawrence, the form that came into use at that time was not the original letter, but a version that had additions that were probably from the fifth century. This edited version also had liturgical instructions that did not fit with those commonly in use in the high Middle Ages. Lawrence writes, "In 1118 the canons of Springiersback sought and obtained from Pope Gelasius II the authority to dispense with that part of it. Thereafter, for the rest of the twelfth century, what passed as the Rule of Saint Augustine was the doctored version of letter No. 211 - the so-called *Regula Tertia* – together with the shortened liturgy, known as the *Regula Secunda*."[39] The Augustinian historian David Gutierrez finds that "in the second half of [the eleventh] century, the formula 'according to the Rule of St. Augustine' is repeated in no less than fifteen instances where common life was introduced among groups of canons in Germany, Belgium, France and Spain."[40]

The flexibility of Augustine's rule contributed to its widespread use, including among such groups as the Victorines, who were based at the Abbey of St. Victoire in Paris, and the Premonstratensians, a group founded by the itinerant preacher Norbert of

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[39] Lawrence,166. For more about the proliferation of Augustinian groups in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, pp. 240-250.

[40] Gutierrez, 11.

Xanten.[41] This rule became one of three acceptable rules after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215; the others were Benedict of Nursia's rule, and the rule of St. Basil, which was primarily used in southern Italy. In the thirteenth century, the use of the Augustinian rule expanded beyond canons regular – the Dominicans, the Servites, the Augustinian Hermits and several military orders professed the Augustinian rule and added their own statutes and constitutions to it.[42] These were more cohesive orders and are to be distinguished from the many communities that followed the Augustinian rule and that were referred to simply as being part of the Order of St. Augustine. This "order" did not have a single governing body, but was comprised of many small, disparate congregations and autonomous houses of regular canons.

**The Fourth Lateran Council and the emergence of the mendicants**

The Fourth Lateran Council changed expectations for the character of monastic orders. Concerned that there were too many different varieties of religious practice, Pope Innocent III and the fathers of the Council decreed that henceforth all religious houses should belong to an approved order and profess an approved rule. They also proclaimed that each religious order should hold meetings in their kingdom or province every three years, if their order did not already have a system of general chapter meetings.[43] In practice, these decrees had mixed success. Many Benedictine houses remained autonomous and did not develop these regional institutions – in fact, the Benedictines did

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[41] Gutierrez, 12.
[42] Gutierrez, 12.
[43] Lawrence, 168.

not attempt to do so until the nineteenth century.[44] Though some of the Augustinian congregations unified into the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine in the mid-thirteenth century, many communities of Augustinian canons remained outside this order. Nevertheless, new monastic or canonical groups were more likely to identify from this point with an existing or emerging religious order. Two of the most influential of these orders are the Franciscans and the Dominicans.

The early thirteenth century saw the emergence of the mendicant orders, exemplified by the Franciscans and the Dominicans. These orders departed from the practice of previous monastic associations in that their ideal was not to withdraw from the world into a monastery, but rather to minister to the laity. Whether they adopted this practice as a strategy to attract people in heretical groups who rejected worldly wealth back to the Catholic Church, out of a genuine desire to live a life of apostolic poverty, or both, in their early years the mendicant orders did not want to live in a monastery or to accumulate property and wealth. The founders of these groups served as the leaders initially. Whereas in other orders, the abbot of the main house served as head of the order, the Dominicans and Franciscans were not based around a focal monastery, and thus had to find another way to establish a succession. These orders created the office of Minister General or Master General, who presided over a general chapter composed of provincial officials. Whereas the early Cluniacs and Cistercians would not have expected to need institutions to govern international orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans could

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[44] Butler, 258-265.

look at their predecessors for examples on which to model their constitutions, general chapters and systems of visitation.

**The Franciscans**

Francis Bernardone began his ministry in 1206. The son of a wealthy cloth merchant, Pietro, he had been a bon vivant in his youth, but through a series of visions came to believe that he should abandon his former ways, give away his possessions and adopt a life of poverty and service. The final turning point came while he was at prayer in the dilapidated church of San Damiano, where it seemed to him that the figure of Jesus on the cross spoke to him, saying "Francis, go and repair my church which, as you see, is falling down."[45] Francis followed both the literal and figurative meaning of the command. To finance rebuilding of San Damiano, he sold some cloth from his father's shop and one of his horses, leading to a confrontation with his father before the bishop of Assisi, who ultimately recognized Francis's piety and allowed him to carry out his mission, though Francis had to repay his father for the goods he had taken.[46]

In 1208 or 1209, Francis began to attract disciples.[47] Soon the number grew to eleven, and Francis recognized the need to get formal recognition of his group, since the people around Assisi showed some concern at this growing band of eccentrics who sold their property and lived by begging. Francis probably wrote a rule in 1209, but it does

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[45] John Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 6.

[46] Moorman, 7.

[47] Moorman, 11-12.

not survive.[48] It was probably little more than a collection of passages from the gospels.[49] The guiding principle of the Franciscans was absolute poverty. They were not allowed to own property individually or collectively and were even prohibited from touching money.

Francis and his companions traveled to Rome to get approval for their activities from Pope Innocent III. Before they met Innocent, one cardinal advised them to join an existing order. They faced initial reluctance from Innocent, but in 1210 he gave them his blessing.[50] Francis continued to attract followers, and they began to have regular chapter meetings at the church of the Portiuncula near Subasio. By 1217, the friars decided to extend their activities outside Italy, and they organized provinces and sent teams of brethren on missions. Either at that council or the next, Francis "dramatically renounced all control over the Friars Minor and himself promised obedience to Peter Catanii, whom he had nominated in his stead."[51] After this point, Francis had no official position in the order, even though he still served as the spiritual leader. In 1221, Francis and the brethren who attended the council at Portiuncula revised the rule. The rule of 1221 is referred to as the "First Rule" of St. Francis, or the *Regula non bullata*, to distinguish it from the "Second Rule," which received papal approval in 1223 and is therefore called

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[48] Moorman, 15-16.
[49] Lawrence, 247.
[50] Moorman, 18-19.
[51] Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government: Elias to Bonaventure*, in Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

the *Regula bullata*.[52] The first rule is considerably longer, containing twenty-four chapters, while the second rule has only twelve. In some cases, several headings from the first rule are combined in a single chapter of the later one, but the provisions of these headings are usually more concise than in the first rule. The First Rule also includes several specific prayers that are omitted in the later version, and most chapters include several more bible verses than are present in the Second Rule, probably reflecting the character of the "primitive rule" of 1210. Before his death, Francis also wrote a testament that he said should not be considered another rule; he did, however, express a desire that the testament should be carried with the rule and read along with it.

One of the elements that sets Francis's rule apart from other monastic legislation is the provision that the members of the order not be allowed to have any possessions at all, individually or held in common, and they could not touch money or receive it through an intermediary.[53] They could work for the things they needed. They were not allowed to ride horses, but rather had to travel on foot. They were encouraged to fast voluntarily in the forty days after Epiphany, and were bound to fast during Lent, and on Fridays during the remainder of the year. There were some provisions for the sick: as in other orders, they could receive dispensation from fasting, they could be given the clothes and food they needed, and they could ride on a horse if their strength did not allow them to walk.[54] Just as Benedict struggled against gyrovagi and the Cistercians sought to return to

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[52] Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady, ed. and trans., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 107.

[53] Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, III: 31-2

[54] Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, III: 31-2

a simpler observance without the expanded liturgy of Benedict of Aniane, Francis rejected the model of monks and canons who accumulated wealth, and instead desired to live a life of apostolic poverty in the midst of the increasingly wealthy society of thirteenth-century Italy.[55]

Where organization is concerned, Francis provided that there should be a minister general in charge of the order, and that there should be ministers in the provinces and territories to oversee the friars. The general chapter was to hold elections of the minister general roughly every three years, and the ministers in the provinces could hold regional meetings in the same year as the general chapter if they saw fit to do so. The ministers were bound to visit and correct the members in their territories.[56] Though the term "minister" in the section of the rule concerning governance refers to anyone in a position of authority over other friars, Francis also mentions the position of "custodian" when discussing the care of sick friars. In practice, the term "minister" came to refer to the head of a province, and a "custody" was a subdivision of the province governed by a "custodian".[57]

Regarding their relations with women, as in other things the First Rule is more elaborate than the second. In the earlier rule, Francis wrote more extensively about the dangers of proximity to women, warning against impure glances and frequent contact with women, and ordering that "no woman is to be received into obedience in any way by

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[55] See Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 146-149.

[56] Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, vol. 3, 32.

[57] P. Gratien, *Histoire de la fondation et de l'évolution de l'Order des Frères Mineurs au XIIIe siècle* (Gembloux: Librairie J. Duculot, 1928), 42.

any Friar."[58] Priests of the order can impose penance on women and give them spiritual advice, after which the woman should go do her penance in the way that she saw fit. Francis made no specific mention of nuns. The Second Rule warns about the dangers of consorting with women and specifically prohibition against entering a nunnery unless a friar has papal dispensation to do so, indicating that Francis accepted that some friars would be responsible for the care of nuns.[59]

**Clare of Assisi and her Order**

Clare of Assisi holds a unique position in the history of monastic movements. Her close association with Francis ties the order that she founded to the Franciscans. When she expressed to Francis her desire to live the monastic life, he installed her in the rebuilt church of San Damiano, a site that held an important place in his own conversion. Yet as with other orders, extensive contact between friars and nuns or other women was prohibited, and the formal relationship of the Franciscans and the nuns remained in flux for many years.

In 1212, at the age of seventeen, Clare heard Francis preach in Assisi and began to have conversations with him. When it became clear that Clare wanted to follow Francis, he instructed her to receive a palm from the bishop on Palm Sunday and to meet him at the church at the Portiuncula. There she professed her vows to live in poverty, chastity and obedience, and Francis cut her hair off. He then took her to a nearby

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[58]"Et nulla penitus mulier ab aliquo Fratre recipiatur ad obedientiam..." *Codex Regularum*, III: 26.

[59] Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, III: 33.

Benedictine nunnery, San Paolo at Bastia. The next day, her family sent knights to retrieve her from the nunnery, but she clung to the altar and they abandoned their mission. She moved to another Benedictine nunnery, Sant' Angelo. There her younger sister, Agnes, joined her, also against the wishes of their family.[60]

The guiding principle for Clare was the desire to follow Francis, manifested particularly in her dedication to absolute poverty. Clare and Agnes were not satisfied with life at the Benedictine convent, and Francis gave them the repaired church of San Damiano, where he had received one of his early visions. They lived without a rule for three years. Then in 1215, Francis wrote a *formula vitae* for them, which does not survive, but was probably mostly composed of biblical verses, much like the early rule for the friars.[61] To satisfy the requirements of the Fourth Lateran Council prohibiting new rules, he also gave them the Benedictine rule.[62] Around this time Francis persuaded Clare to become abbess of the community. Clare and her companions probably did not observe cloister at this point. Regarding food, shelter and bedding, Clare lived an extremely ascetic ,life, fasting three days of the week and sleeping on twigs with a stone for a pillow until Francis persuaded her to accept a straw mattress.[63] Despite moderation in these matters, Clare remained committed to absolute poverty, and she convinced Innocent III to bestow on her community the "Privilege of Poverty", stating that San

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[60] Moorman, 33-34

[61] Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses a l'age classique de droit canon: recherches sur les structures juridiques des branches féminines des orders* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967), 142-143.

[62] Fontette, 143.

[63] Moorman, 36.

Damiano was not obliged to accept any property whatsoever.[64] This privilege proved difficult to apply to the entire order. Future rules (except the one written by Clare herself) would not mention the privilege, and many emerging communities of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano chose to accept property.

The fifty years following the establishment of Clare's community was marked by a proliferation of different rules. In 1219, Cardinal Ugolino (the future Pope Gregory IX) wrote a constitution for Clare and her followers, probably prompted by the formation of at least four new communities and their appeal to the papacy for recognition.[65] Ugolino's constitution ordered that the sisters should follow the Benedictine rule, and makes no specific provisions for any relationship between Clare's followers and those of Francis. It is an extremely ascetic rule, imposing strict cloister and extensive fasting. The only reason that a sister could leave the cloister was to found another nunnery; on entry into the cloister, the nuns effectively entered their tomb, dying as they were even to be buried inside the cloister. Thus, they died to this world in the hope of entering the next. They were to fast on bread and water four days a week during Lent, and three days a week during the forty days after Epiphany.[66] During the rest of the year, they were to abstain from cooked food on Wednesdays and Fridays.[67] The young, the sick, and the old could be exempted from these austerities, and for that reason, in effect the number of sisters

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[64] Fontette, 143.

[65] Moorman, 38.

[66] *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Volume I (Assisi: Typografia Porziuncola, 1984), 264.

[67] Fontette, 144.

who actually observed these fasts was probably small, comprising only the healthiest and most devout.[68]

Another issue with Ugolino's rule was the inclusion of Saint Benedict's rule. Micheline de Fontette raises the question of the extent to which the Poor Clares followed the rule: "Ugolino indicated that it was not obligatory except regarding the three vows [of poverty, chastity and obedience], and to the extent that it was not in contradiction with their own rule, but the fact of their dependence on two rules created a malaise in some scrupulous souls".[69] One example she gives is Agnes of Bohemia, who founded a monastery in Prague and wrote her own rule incorporating both Ugolino's rule and that of the Franciscans, though Agnes never gained papal ratification for her combined rule.[70] In addition, Clare's own community of San Damiano did not follow Ugolino's rule immediately – for example, the sisters there did not observe enclosure – though Ugolino (Pope Gregory IX from 1227 to 1241) forced them to do so by the end of the 1220's.[71]

In 1247, Innocent IV wrote another rule for the Poor Ladies that did not include the observance of Benedict's rule. It specifically provided ministers of the Franciscan order had authority over that the nunneries of the Poor Ladies.[72] Since these two changes tied the Poor Clares more closely to the Franciscans, they can be interpreted as victories.

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[68] Fontette, 144.

[69] Fontette, 145. "Hugolin avait indiqué qu'elle n'était obligatoire que dans les trois voeux et quant à ce qui ne serait pas en contradiction avec sa propre règle, mais le fait de dépendre de deux règles créait cependant un malaise dans certaines âmes scrupuleuses."

[70] Fontette, 144.

[71] Luigi Pellegrini, "Female Religious Experience and Society in Thirteenth-Century Italy," *Monks & Nuns, Saints & Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society*, ed. Sharon Farmer and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 111.

[72] *Bullarium Franciscanum*, vol. I, 482.

As a concession to the Franciscans who worried about the prospect of having to provide care for the expanding number of nunneries, Innocent included the provision that no one could establish a new Clarissan nunnery without the permission of the Franciscan general chapter.[73] A further impediment, which played a part in prompting Clare to write her own rule, was Innocent's failure to guarantee or even mention the privilege of poverty in his rule.[74]

Clare's brief rule was consciously modeled on Francis's rule. It also emphasized her ties to Francis and his successors, and the obedience of her sisters to the Franciscans, and also provides that the nuns should say the Divine Offices according to Franciscan customs. Clare's rule prohibits her sisters to accept property individually or collectively.[75] Innocent IV confirmed the rule as Clare approached death in 1253, but only for her own house of San Damiano. Nevertheless, some other Clarissan communities probably did follow the rule as well.[76] Innocent's own rule did not achieve a wide following among Franciscan nunneries. Thus, by the end of his pontificate, Innocent failed to unite the houses of Poor Clares under a single rule.

Other rules followed. In 1259, Innocent IV's successor, Pope Alexander IV confirmed a rule for the nunnery of Poor Clares at Longchamp, a house founded by Louis IX's sister, Isabelle. This rule is sometimes referred to as the Rule of Longchamp, or the Isabelline rule. Written by a Franciscan friar named Mansuetus, the Rule of Longchamp

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[73] Lezlie Knox, "Audacious Nuns: Institutionalizing the Franciscan Order of Saint Clare," *Church History* 69:1 (March 2000), 45.

[74] Fontette, 143.

[75] Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, vol III, 34-36.

[76] Fontette, 146.

was probably approved by Bonaventura, the Minister General of the Order at the time.[77] In some respects, this rule was more lenient that that of Saint Clare – for example, it allowed the nunnery to own property collectively – but it elevated perpetual enclosure to the status of a fourth vow.[78]

In 1263, Urban IV attempted to unite all nunneries under a single rule. Urban wrote his rule in the context of a flare-up in the controversy over the relationship between the nuns and friars of the Franciscan order.[79] At the beginning of Urban's pontificate, the friars succeeded in convincing him to appoint separate cardinal protectors for the Poor Clares and the Friars Minor, contrary to the previous practice of having both groups under the authority of a single cardinal.[80] The friars were content to see themselves as aiding their cardinal protector in providing for the care of the nuns, but believed that it was an infringement upon their liberty when the nuns' cardinal protector, Stephen of Hungary, expected the friars to serve the nuns as part of a direct relationship. After two years of controversy, Urban resolved this matter when he returned to the practice of appointing one cardinal to oversee both the nuns and the friars, although Urban recognized that the friars performed their service to the nuns out of custom and were not bound legally to do so.[81]

As the controversy drew to a close, Urban issued his new rule for the Franciscan nuns. According to Lezlie Knox, two considerations motivated this new rule. One was to

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[77] Moorman, 213; Knox, 55 n. 54.
[78] Fontette, 148.
[79] For more on this issue, see Chapter 4, "Consolidation into Orders".
[80] Knox, 47. John Caetano Orsini was the Cardinal Protector for the Friars; Stephen of Hungary served in that capacity for the Sisters.
[81] Knox, 47-54.

"reassure the brothers by giving the sisters a rule that did not require the Order of Friars Minor to provide spiritual care as some of the earlier rules had done."[82] Urban also took this opportunity to attempt to unite all Franciscan nuns under a single name, the Order of Saint Clare. The sisters resisted the new rule, especially in Italy.

The difficulty of settling on a rule for Franciscan nuns highlights one of the unique characteristics of the mendicant orders. Many of the women who joined the Franciscans, especially in the early years, were drawn to it by the example of Francis and his early companions, including Clare. The Franciscan way of life for men involved poverty, begging, and the rejection of the stability of a monastery and its endowments. Though Clare and her early followers were not subject to the strict cloistering that would later prevail for her order, at every point in their history, regulations for nuns in the mendicant order had to be substantially different from those of their male counterparts. The challenge was to arrive at a form of life that was acceptable to the women, who wanted to be part of the mendicant movement, and to the men in those orders, who were concerned that having to care for nuns would divert them from their own calling, bogging them down in administrative details and tying them down to a single location just as the nuns were confined to their nunneries.

**The Dominicans**

Like Francis, Dominic founded a group dedicated to a life of mendicancy; where Francis pursued this life due to his belief in the holiness of poverty, however, Dominic probably arrived at this life as a strategy for his ultimate goal – converting souls through

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[82] Knox, 55.

preaching and providing a counter-example to the Cathars. When Dominic finished his university education around the age of twenty-five in the late 1190's, he was appointed to the court of Bishop Diego of Osma. There he was ordained as a canon and professed the rule of St. Augustine and the constitutions of the Osma cathedral canons.[83] Dominic accompanied Diego on diplomatic missions that led them through lands in southern France that were inhabited by Cathars, a sect of dualistic heretics who rejected the physical world, and therefore the material wealth of the Church, as evil. During their travels, Diego became a Cistercian and decided to bring some Cistercian monks with him to Spain to establish new houses.[84] The group also encountered some Cistercians that Innocent III had charged with preaching to the Cathars in an attempt to re-convert them to Catholicism, and joined them in this endeavor.

At first Dominic, Diego and their Cistercian companions had very little success in their mission, but a turning point came when Diego came to believe that the company should live a life of apostolic poverty in order to appeal to the Cathars, who were put off by the large and elaborate entourage of the Cistercian missionaries.[85] After adopting this new strategy of traveling on foot without a retinue, Dominic, Diego and their companions engaged in disputations with Cathars and were successful in convincing a number of Cathars in the towns of Servian and Carcassone to return to Catholicism. They

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[83] William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500*, vol. 1 (New York: Alba House, 1965), 17-18.

[84] Hinnebusch, 20-21.

[85] Lawrence, 251.

established a base at Prouille, where Dominic also founded a convent for women, many of whom had probably once been Cathars.[86]

Diego returned to Spain, probably to enlist recruits and to raise revenues, but died in 1207.[87] Dominic continued to preach through the Albigensian crusade against the Cathars in 1209. Though he was offered bishoprics in 1212 and 1215, he decided not to take these positions and to continue his work at Prouille and to found a new house at Toulouse.[88] By June of 1215, Bishop Fulk of Toulouse gave official approval for the activities of Dominic and the companions he recruited, authorizing them to preach in his diocese and to live in apostolic poverty.[89] Dominic's companions divested themselves of any property they had, though the bishop provided a meager income with which they could purchase their most basic necessities. Dominic also accompanied Fulk to Rome for the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 in order to gain papal confirmation of his new order.[90] Pope Innocent III did not give his approval at that time, but promised to do so once Dominic met with his companions to choose a rule.

After returning from Rome, Dominic convened a council the following year at Toulouse, where he and his companions chose the rule of St. Augustine, which Dominic had already vowed to follow.[91] To this rule, they added a customary adapted from the

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[86] Fontette, 90.
[87] Hinnebusch, 21-26.
[88] Hinnebusch, 31.
[89] Hinnebusch, 41.
[90] Hinnebusch, 42.
[91] Hinnebusch, 44.

Praemonstratensians.[92] When Dominic returned to Rome to gain papal approval for their order and rule, the new pope, Honorius III, granted it.[93] The order never sought or received approval for their customary, nor did they do so later for their statutes. By 1217, Dominic decided that the brothers should scatter, and he sent them first to Spain and to the university towns of Paris and Bologna.[94]

The constitution that governed the Dominicans was the product of legislation at the general chapters. The first meeting of the Dominican general chapter was held at Bologna in 1220.[95] After the preface, the constitution is divided into two *distinctiones*, the first of which deals with the practices within a monastery, and the second of which sets rules for the governance of the order, such as granting permission for building a new house, providing for general chapter meetings, and election of officials.[96]

The administrative structure of Dominic's order was in place and described in detail from a very early point in its history, whereas Cluny and Citeaux had developed systems for governing their growing order over decades as the need arose. By the time Dominic gained approval for his order, the example of these existing well-developed international orders provided a template. The mendicant orders did adapt some of the governing structures to their needs. For example, where Citeaux's chain of authority worked through a series of filiations, and the abbot of Citeaux was the head of the order,

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[92] Simon Tugwell, ed. *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, in Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 455.

[93] Hinnebusch, 48.

[94] Lawrence, 253.

[95] R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), 280.

[96] Holstenius, 17.

Dominic and Francis both provided for a Master General or Minister General who would be elected by the officials who attended the council and was thus not tied to a certain monastery. Both of these mendicant orders developed administrative provinces. For the Dominicans, the general chapter decided how many new monasteries could be built in a province and left to the head of the province the decision of where those houses should be established. Thus the growth of the order proceeded according to the plans of a centralized authority. This structure was in part a result of Dominic's methodical planning, but it also reflected a profound change in the expected characteristics of a monastic order.

**The "Second Order" of Dominicans**

Though there is no figure to match Clare in the history of the Dominican order, Dominic clearly had female followers from the time of the founding of Prouille in the early days of his ministry. During his lifetime, Dominic also founded a house for nuns at S. Sisto in Rome as well as one in Madrid.[97] Before his death, he planned to establish another house in Bologna for Diana d'Andolò. The rules for the original houses in Prouille and in Rome were probably based on the constitution of the Praemonstratensian order. In the early days of the order, a new house would request that some nuns from an existing house would come to instruct them in the rule. For example, when Diana d'Andalò founded S. Agnese in Bologna in 1223, the Master General of the order, Jordan of Saxony, asked the convent at Prouille to send six nuns to Bologna. Prouille refused,

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[97] Fontette, 95.

but S. Sisto agreed.[98] The codification of the practices for female Dominicans came to be called the Rule of S. Sisto. The earliest extant version of this rule is from 1232, but the practices outlined in this rule are probably very similar to the ones followed at Prouille.[99]

Not all houses of Dominican nuns followed the practices of S. Sisto or Prouille. After 1245, Innocent IV gave nunneries newly incorporated into the Dominican Order a rule that was more closely modeled on the constitutions for Dominican friars.[100] In 1250, Humbert of Romans, the Master General of the order, approved a rule written for the nunnery at Montargis. Finally, at the general chapter meeting at Valenciennes in 1259, Humbert directed the writing of a rule that would apply to all houses of Dominican nuns.[101] Like Montargis's rule, the redaction of 1259 was modeled on the constitution of the Dominicans. Some of the significant differences from the friars' constitution were that the nuns' statutes called for enclosure, whereas friars engaged with the world – especially in their principal purpose, preaching – and did not include material from the second *distinctio* in the men's rule which governed the relations among Dominican houses and set procedures for general chapters and election of the order's officials.[102]

**Augustinians**

Though established orders such as the Cluniacs, Cistercians, Dominicans and Franciscans continued to grow, many religious houses did not belong to these orders.

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[98] Fontette, 98.
[99] Fontette, 96.
[100] Fontette, 100.
[101] Fontette, 101.
[102] Holstenius, ed., *Codex Regularum*, 128-140.

Some houses that had been Benedictine but were not part of orders such as Cluny or Citeaux made half-hearted and unsuccessful attempts to initiate a system of general chapters. These monasteries and nunneries were described as being part of the Order of St. Benedict. Similarly, groups of canons followed the Rule of St. Augustine and lived in autonomous communities or one of the countless Augustinian congregations, and were described as being part of the Order of St. Augustine. This so-called order did not have a centralized administration and regular meetings of a general chapter, despite the Fourth Lateran Council's decree that all orders should meet at least every three years. Some congregations did form the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, a union of five multi-house congregations of friars in Italy who were also known as the Augustinian friars. The order grew first from the "Little Union" of the Hermits of the Order of St. Augustine of Tuscany. In 1243, Pope Innocent IV united various groups of Augustinian friaries in Tuscany, decreeing that they should elect a prior general to supervise the order, and designating Cardinal Richard Annibaldi as their protector. In accordance with Canon Twelve of the Fourth Lateran Council, the hermits enlisted the aid of Cistercian abbots in developing their general chapter and constitution. In 1244, Innocent exempted the order from episcopal jurisdiction and gave them other privileges that most monastic orders enjoyed. These included the ability to grant admission to lay people or clerics seeking to join their order, exemption from taxation, and the ability to grant burial in their churches.[103] Expanding on this regional union, the "Great Union" occurred under Pope

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[103] Gutierrez, 28-9.

Alexander IV in 1256, joining four additional congregations of Augustinian friars to the Tuscan hermits.

Like their male counterparts, women who lived in Augustinian communities could either be in autonomous houses that were generally described as being part of the Order of St. Augustine, or they could be subject to the general chapter of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine and participate in the privileges of that order. Gutierrez describes the most common development of the autonomous houses of women: they began as houses of penitents, then the communities grew large enough that a bishop or official of one of the monastic orders gave them a rule to follow. At this point, they came to be considered nuns. Most of these groups of women "were Augustinian only in the broad sense of the term, that is, they professed the rule of St. Augustine and were not formally incorporated into any of the other Orders."[104] A few convents, however, were officially recognized by the Augustinian Hermits.

**Conclusions**

For much of their history, religious houses did not organize themselves into monastic orders, but rather were autonomous monasteries or at most small congregations of religious communities with similar customs, usually under the authority of the abbot of one particular house. As some of these congregations grew in size, they developed institutions such as general chapters, designed to aid in governance and to set policies beyond the Benedictine or Augustinian rule, ensuring that customs and constitutions of

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[104] Gutierrez, 202.

their member houses over vast distances remained the same.

Though Innocent III's reforms aimed to remake monasticism in the form of centralized orders such as the Cistercians, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, several independent models of monasticism continued to exist. Some houses belonged to orders such as the Cistercians, the Franciscans, or the Dominicans. Nevertheless, many Benedictine or Augustinian communities remained under episcopal jurisdiction and were not connected to other houses. Many other religious groups belonged to small, local congregations. Without the prohibition on the formation of new orders, some of these congregations might have grown to resemble some of the larger orders. For the most part, these houses assimilated into recognized monastic orders, but sometimes this process could take a century or more.

Where women's monasticism in Bologna is concerned, houses formed before the Fourth Lateran Council tended to be autonomous Benedictine houses or part of small congregations following the Augustinian rule or their own rules and customs. The reforms of the Fourth Lateran were effective in that new religious groups tended to consider themselves part of a recognized order. Even for these nunneries, questions remained about their role in those orders, as battles raged among the nuns, their male counterparts in the orders, and the secular clergy about the extent to which monks and friars had obligation to include nuns in their orders.[105] The reforms were less successful at encouraging the integration of existing nunneries into monastic orders. By the middle of the thirteenth century, most groups that had not historically followed one of the

[105] For a discussion of these controversies, see chapter 5 on the consolidation of nunneries into monastic orders.

approved rules had taken the Augustinian rule, and thus could be considered part of the amorphous Order of St. Augustine. In practice, they continued with their previous customs and jurisdictional standing, whether that standing was under episcopal jurisdiction or, in a few cases, direct protection of the papal see. Houses of different orders could unify into one community, usually due to economic or material circumstances, and a single community could change its rule and the order with which it was affiliated, sometimes more than once. Nunneries in Bologna reveal the extent to which women's monastic communities were integrated into the emerging religious orders and responded to the new expectations that religious houses would belong to those orders, and paradoxically the extent to which the model of autonomous also nunneries persisted.

# CHAPTER 3

## EARLY THIRTEENTH-CENTURY FOUNDATIONS IN BOLOGNA

Though a few nunneries were probably extant in Bologna and its environs before the beginning of the twelfth century, the trail of records begins shortly after 1100. Of the five nunneries founded in the twelfth century, four were independent houses following the Benedictine rule; the fifth was a Camaldolese Benedictine nunnery, S. Maria di Biliemme.[1] By the turn of the thirteenth century, a different kind of organization appeared. In the years between 1193 and 1209, three religious communities that included both men and women emerged. Some of these communities would become parts of regional associations of religious houses that shared a common rule or custom. The regional organization shows an intermediate step between the independence of the Benedictine houses and the large, international orders that would rise in importance in the thirteenth century.

Though these houses would eventually become nunneries, at their inception that outcome was certainly not clear. Three foundations from the years around 1200 show the diversity of these new houses. The first, Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, began in 1193 as an oratory for a hermitess named Angelica Bonfantini. The church attached to her residence was served first by priests from a nearby canonry, then by a group of

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[1] These Benedictine houses were S. Columbano, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, S. Margherita, and SS. Vitale e Agricola. Another Camaldolese Benedictine nunnery, S. Cristina di Stifonte, had been founded in the late eleventh century; it was located about 20 km from Bologna. Gabriella Zarri, "I monasteri femminile a Bologna tra il XII e il XVII secolo," *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna: nuova serie*, XXIV (1973), 135 no. 6.

canons residing at the church near her oratory. Only after Angelica's death in the middle of the thirteenth century and the transfer of three women from another house did Maria del Monte della Guardia begin to resemble a traditional nunnery. Another group, Santa Caterina di Quarto, was founded by an itinerant preacher named Alberto, and started as a church that had dormitories for both male and female ascetics. Like Maria del Monte, Caterina di Quarto became a nunnery (although it retained a prior at its head), but not until it had been in existence for over a hundred years. S. Caterina was also the mother house of a small congregation of religious communities in the archdiocese of Ravenna, beginning in 1225 and lasting into the fourteenth century. At least three of the five daughter houses were also double monasteries. SS. Trinità di Ronzano also began as a double house and a member of the congregation of S. Marco di Mantua. From this group, small cells of women would move to found new nunneries, such as S. Giovanni Battista, or revive depopulated ones, including S. Maria del Monte della Guardia after the death of its foundress.[2]

One element these new foundations shared with other groups of their time was a search for an alternative to Benedictine monasticism. The men and women associated with these institutions were a part of a larger religious movement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries identified by Herbert Grundmann in 1935. Grundmann traced a common movement that focused on apostolic poverty and resulted in the rise of new forms of religiosity, some of which found a home inside the Catholic Church while others

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[2]All three of these new foundations initially also followed the rule of S. Marco, but soon became Augustinian or Dominican See Chapter 4, "Nunneries and Religious Orders in Bologna", 132-140.

were judged to fall outside orthodoxy.[3] Orthodox movements included Fontevrists, Premonstratensians, and Gilbertines, all of which were congregations of houses founded by itinerant preachers and peopled by men and women who desired to live a life of religious poverty. The founders of these groups organized their followers into communities following an approved monastic rule such as the Benedictine or Augustinian rule, with some form of additional instructions such as a constitution to codify their particular vision of the community's practices and customs. Other movements primarily aimed at lay people, such as the Waldensians and the Humiliati, were not always welcomed in the church. Grundmann also brought to light the existence of communities of women who lived a religious life but were not nuns. He mainly focused on the Beguines of the Low Countries, but this phenomenon had analogs in other parts of Europe: the *pinzochere* or *bizoke* of Italy, the *papalarda* of France, the *coquenunne* of Germany.[4] The Humiliati and some of the Waldensians reconciled with the church under Innocent III, who established rules for lay houses of Humiliati and for those who made a formal profession of vows. It is probable that the same impulses that led to the formation of Humiliati groups and communities of *pinzochere* inspired the founders of the Bolognese communities of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, SS. Trinità di Ronzano, and S. Caterina di Quarto.

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[3] Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame, 1995 [1935, 1961].

[4] Katherine Gill, "Open Monasteries for Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy: Two Roman Examples," in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Craig A. Monson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 19.

**Religious movements in Europe**

In France in the early twelfth century, two itinerant preachers, Robert of Arbrissel and Norbert of Xanten, founded houses in which both men and women could live the religious life. Both had spent their early careers in the church, Robert in the court of the bishop of Rennes, and Norbert as a canon at Xanten. Unlike preachers in other movements, they carried out their activities with the permission of the church. Eventually, both decided that those who followed them in their preaching would be better off in stable communities with well-defined rules, in part reacting to ecclesiastical concern about the propriety of their large female following.[5] Toward the middle of that century, the English preacher Gilbert of Sempringham arrived at a similar plan to found religious communities for men and women.

The foundations of Robert, Norbert and Gilbert are often referred to as "double monasteries." Recently, scholars have raised questions about the use of this term, arguing that this phrase obscures more than it illuminates because of the variety of different arrangements it can cover. Penny Schine Gold argues that the term is misleading because it is "often used with the implication that both communities, joined for convenience under the authority of one person, were of equal importance. But the term 'double' disguises the fact that most of these communities were originally founded for the benefit of either men or women rather than both."[6] One reason it is important to consider the original intention of this monastic arrangement is that in many cases, groups

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[5] Grundmann, 18-19.

[6] Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 101.

founded primarily for or governed by men tended increasingly to discourage the participation of women over time. A comparison of the Fontevrists and the Premonstratensians demonstrates this trend.

After a short attempt at the eremitic life, Robert of Arbrissel became a preacher. Fearing that unstructured contact among his male and female followers would cause scandal, he founded a community at Fontevraud in which they could share a church but live in separate quarters. Robert gave the women the Benedictine rule to follow, supplemented by statutes detailing the precepts by which he wished the women and men of Fontevraud and its daughter houses to live.[7] The women were primarily assigned a life of contemplation, while the men served them by performing the manual labor needed to keep the community running.[8] Robert continued preaching and founded fifteen new houses over the next fifteen years, placing all of them under the authority of Fontevraud. In Robert's absence, a widowed woman, Petronilla of Chemillé, governed the main house at Fontevraud. When his death was near, Robert chose Petronilla to be abbess and head of Fontevraud, preferring to give the government of the community's by now considerable patrimony to a woman who had had life experience outside the protection of the cloister. He required the men to pledge their allegiance to her. By placing an abbess

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[7] Bruce Venarde, ed and trans., *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 84-87. Three different versions of the statutes survive. The religious status of the men of Fontevraud is disputed. Venarde suggests that the men followed neither the Augustinian nor the Benedictine rule, since they are not called canons or monks, but *fratres*. Berenice M. Kerr speculates that the men in Fontevrist communities were canons regular, as was Robert. See Kerr, *Religious Life for Women, c. 1100-c. 1350: Fontevraud in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 57-63.

[8] Gold, 94.

in charge of both men and women, Robert made clear his intention that women should have the primary place in his congregation. Thus Fontevraud and its daughter houses remained centered on female inhabitants. At its largest in the thirteenth century, Fontevraud had as many as seventy daughter houses. It is probably that in the middle of the twelfth century, prioresses of the daughter houses attended a general chapter at Fontevraud, though records of these meetings do not survive and it is not clear how regularly they were held. It is probable that the abbess of Fontevraud retained considerable authority, and that the main means of governing the congregation was through the appointment of visitors to act on her behalf.[9] The size of Fontevraud's congregation and the patronage of illustrious figures such as Count Fulk V of Anjou and members of the Plantagenet dynasty of England, including Eleanor of Aquitaine, allowed it to prosper as a monastic group dedicated to women, with men in a supporting role.

Like Robert, Norbert of Xanten chose to found a house for men and women, and in 1121, he established such a community at Prémontré, soon followed by others like it in France and Germany. This group differed, however, in one important respect from the Fontevrists: Premonstratensian houses were centered around a group of male canons following the Augustinian rule, with a prior at the head. Though women probably comprised the majority of inhabitants of Premonstratensian houses in the early years, they played a decidedly secondary role in the congregation's mission.[10] Whereas the men were able to follow Norbert in his preaching, Premonstratensian sisters lived in strict

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[9] Kerr, p. 132-137.

[10] Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1997), 69.

cloister. Soon after Norbert's death, the general chapter of the Premonstratensian canons began gradually distancing themselves from the women of their order, first forbidding the establishment of new 'double houses', then in 1137 requiring that women move to new establishments at a prescribed distance from the men's houses, finally barring the entrance of women to the order in 1198. These decrees were not universally followed; well into the thirteenth century, the Premonstratensian general chapter continued to make pronouncements that women should not be allowed in the order.[11] These continued attempts to remove women from the Premonstratensian order, however, indicate that women were at greater risk of being expelled from a monastic order when their inclusion in a community was not central to the order's identity and when, unlike Fontevraud, they did not play a primary role in its government.

This assessment is reinforced by the fate of women in the Gilbertine order in England. Though women were originally the focus of Gilbert of Sempringham's mission, the responsibility for governing was given to a male prior. Sharon Elkins argues that Gilbert's account of the foundation of Sempringham in the 1130s and the growth of its congregation shows that he recognized a need to explain why the houses had both male and female inhabitants and to demonstrate that their living arrangements were conducive to austerity and virtue. Gilbert stressed that the double houses emerged from necessity rather than from his original design. In a brief history of his foundations,

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[11] An often-quoted example from 1270 is Conrad of Marchthal's statement that the order "should no longer receive, to the increase of our perdition, any more sisters, but avoid their reception as if they were poisonous animals." Cited in Venarde, 177; Patricia Ranft, *Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 52.

Gilbert recounts that he had originally intended to found houses for men, but that he could not find men willing to take on the strict Benedictine life he proposed. [12] He did, however, find women who were inspired by his preaching to take up a life of religion. To literate women who were eligible to be nuns of the choir, he added lay sisters to attend to their temporal needs, then lay brothers for the manual labor and other duties to which he believed women were not suited. After his followers became too numerous for him to oversee on his own, he traveled to Citeaux to ask that the Cistercians take on the care of these communities, but his request was denied. Finally, he decided that the best course of action was to add canons under the Augustinian rule to govern the houses in order to minister to the spiritual needs of the others, making them fourfold foundations of nuns, lay sisters, canons and lay brothers.[13]

Most of the double houses that Gilbert founded remained viable and continued to attract new professions into the thirteenth century. All was not calm, however, in the relationship among the various constituents of the order. During Gilbert's life, the lay brothers revolted and sent letters to Pope Alexander III, complaining of too much contact between the nuns and the canons and also that the lay brothers were subject to too harsh a life. This was perhaps triggered by a scandal in the house at Watton in 1165, in which a nun became pregnant by a man who was also a member of that house.[14] Perhaps another

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[12] Sharon Elkins, "The Emergence of Gilbertine Identity", in *Medieval Religious Women I: Distant Echoes*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, (Kalamazoo, 1984), 170-172. Elkins draws on Gilbert's account of the history of his order that appears in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library [Bodleian Douce 136, folios xii (v) – 1(v)].

[13] Elkins, 169-182.

[14] Elkins, 106-110.

factor of the revolt was the discontent the lay brothers felt at being superseded in the community by the addition of canons.[15] After Gilbert's death, a few new houses for nuns were founded, but most new foundations were only for canons.[16] Though in the beginning, Gilbert seemed to center his foundation on religious women, with lay brothers and sisters to serve them following the Cistercian model, the addition of canons shifted this focus, especially after Gilbert's death.

Whatever difficulties and controversies arose in these three orders, there was never a question of orthodoxy. Other movements, such as the Waldensians in southern France and the Humiliati in northern Italy, did not fit as well into the structure of the Church. This was due in part to their lay character, their emphasis on apostolic poverty, and other beliefs such as the rejection of oath-taking. They were first declared heretical in 1179, but in the first years of the thirteenth century under Pope Innocent III, many who had been part of these groups were able to reconcile with the Church.[17] The Humiliati movement may have inspired some of the groups who were part of S. Caterina's congregation.

Innocent divided the Humiliati into a first order of canons and canonesses governed by priors, a second order of lay men and women living a common life who were governed by officials called *ministri*, and a third order of lay men and women following the general practices of the others but living with their families. They lived according to a rule combining some elements of the Benedictine and Augustinian rules.

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[15] Elkins, 116.
[16] Ranft, 51-2.
[17] Grundmann, 22-32.

They were permitted to hold assemblies and to hear preaching from their members, provided that the preachers dealt only with moral exhortation and not theological matters. Though they were centered in Lombardy, other houses were founded in northern Italy; the integration of the Humiliati movement with the church was a success.[18]

**Hermitesses in Bologna**

In Bologna, three foundations from the years around the turn of the thirteenth century in Bologna emerged as a part of this religious movement. Two of these, S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and SS. Trinità di Ronzano, began as hermitages for women located in the hills to the south of Bologna. S. Caterina di Quarto was a double house following its own rule; over time five other houses, some of which were also double houses and some of which were inhabited by only men or women, became part of their small "order". These foundations reflect the diversity of forms of religious life in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia began its existence as an oratory for a hermitess named Angelica, who was initially affiliated with a nearby group of canons at the church of Santa Maria di Reno e San Salvatore. Eventually, Angelica was served by a group of canons living at S. Maria del Monte della Guardia's church. Only after the death of the hermitess did the church become a convent for nuns. The convent would later become important to the city of Bologna as the repository of an icon of the Virgin Mary; legends would grow around its foundation. Some later accounts claim that

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[18] Grundmann, 33-40.

Angelica's older cousins Azzolina and Beatrice Guezi were her predecessors, living on the mountain as early as 1143, along with a companion named Thecla who had transported an icon of the Madonna and Child with her from Greece for safekeeping; indeed, the nunnery would in later years possess an icon that became a focus for the city's civic piety, giving the nunnery that grew from Angelica's oratory a privileged position.[19] Other stories claim that Angelica and another hermitess named Angela lived on the Monte della Guardia as early as the late eleventh century.[20] These stories may indicate that the Monte della Guardia was the site of communities of hermitesses before Angelica, but there is no extant contemporary evidence of these foundations. In the mid-twelfth century, the canons of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia refer to Angelica as their foundress, and in the late twelfth century, the nuns seeking to confirm a papal privilege also point to Angelica as the foundress and do not attempt to argue for a longer history of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia.

Angelica built an oratory on the Monte della Guardia using her dowry, which had been given to the canons regular of S. Maria di Reno e S. Salvatore, also known in the area as the Canons Renani. The group was probably founded around the year 1100, but the first extant records date to 1136. They had previously been members of the cathedral chapter, but decided to found a settlement on the guard hills. The earliest records are "a series of privileges from Archbishop Gualtiero of Ravenna, from bishop Enrico of

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[19] Giuseppe Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano e memorie di Loderingo d'Andolò, Frate Gaudente* (Bologna: Società Tipografica Bolognese, 1851), 79-80, no. 4. For the role that this icon, the Madonna di San Luca, would play in the city, see Chapter 1.

[20] Giovambattista Melloni, *Atti o memorie degli uomini illustri in santità nati o morti in Bologna,* ed. A. Benati and M. Fanti (Roma: Multigrafica Editrice, 1971), 351.

Bologna, and from Pope Innocent II, with which the new congregation was exempted from paying tithes and was placed at the head of a series of churches in the countryside."[21] Thus Angelica's foundation would have been one of several churches over which they had oversight.

In August of 1193, Celestine III wrote to Bishop Gerardo of Bologna to advise him that he had granted the hermitess Angelica permission to build an oratory in honor of the Virgin Mary.[22] The pope confirmed an agreement between Angelica and the canons in March of 1194 and in May of that year, the bishop laid the first stone of Angelica's church. The record of the event lists fourteen witnesses by name and mentions that there were others present. If Angelica attended the groundbreaking, she is not one of the named witnesses.[23]

Celestine's involvement in the founding of Angelica's church indicates that he took a particular interest in her endeavors. The special relationship between the pope and the oratory was confirmed in 1197 when Celestine explicitly extended the protection of the Holy See to S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and all of its property. The bull also exempted the church from episcopal jurisdiction. The following year, the new pope,

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[21] "una serie di privilegi, dell'archivescovo di Ravenna Gualtiero, del vescovo di Bologna Enrico, del Papa Innocenzo II, con I quali la nuova congregazione veniva esentata dal pagamento delle decime e veniva posta a capo di una serie di chiese del contado." Paola Foschi, "Gli Ordini Religiosi Medievali a Bologna e nel suo territorio", in *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, 2 vols. eds. Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), 474.

[22] ASB Dem. 2/5763, no. 3.

[23] ASB Dem. 2/5763 no. 3

Innocent III confirmed the acts of his predecessor, also mentioning that the archdeacon and cathedral canons of Bologna agreed to the exemption.[24]

In 1204, there were already signs of tension between Angelica and the canons of Maria di Reno. The main issue was the number of priests that were to celebrate the divine office in Angelica's chapel. The hermitess maintained that she was promised two priests, but the canons considered this excessive. Innocent III wrote to Lanfranc, a cathedral canon and also to Azo, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of S. Stefano, one of the oldest monasteries in Bologna. He gave them the details of the quarrel between the two parties. The two sides had appeared before a subdeacon to present their cases, and this judge had ruled that the canons were required to provide two priests to Angelica. Both priests returned to the chapel and made an oath that they would only stay for eight days, after which they left the chapel again. When Angelica complained of this, the prior and canons argued that two priests were to serve in the last days before her death, but until then, only one was required. They further complained that the endowment she brought with her was insufficient to cover the costs of the chapel and her own maintenance, and that the profits had gone to alms and oblations. Their expenditure on the chapel, they claimed, exceeded one hundred pounds. Innocent charged the addressees of the letter to investigate whether the grant of two priests was absolute. The sindico of the canons appeared before Abbot Azo of S. Stefano. The abbot confirmed a previous opinion promulgated by the abbot of another monastery, stating that Angelica's chapel

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[24] ASB Dem. 2/5762 no. 10.

had indeed been promised two priests.[25] The canons renounced their suit and both parties promised to live by the terms of the agreement.

By 1206, however, the dispute arose again. This time representatives of the canons appeared before the abbot of S. Felice. They asked for eight days to send a canon and a converso to Rome to renounce their ties to Angelica's church. The abbot instead gave them fifteen days to come to an accord with Angelica and threatened them with excommunication if they were not able to do so. Two chamberlains and the *sindico* of S. Salvatore were ordered to appear before the abbot of S. Felice after the nones on 5th of February, but they did not appear.[26] Unfortunately, the convent record does not contain information on the fate of the canons. However, later disputes make it clear that the two houses maintained an affiliation, although this is the last document with information about this particular matter.

By 1210, it must have been increasingly clear that the interests of Angelica and the canons of S. Maria were not compatible, and each side began to protect the property they believed was their due. In 1210, Innocent commissioned the cathedral canon Otto to investigate Angelica's complaint that the canons of Maria di Reno had stolen movable goods from her. In March of that year, Angelica and representatives of Maria di Reno appeared before a group of judges in the canon's cloister to present a lawsuit and countersuit. The prior and the *sindico* of the canons asked that Angelica return several pieces of land, including a house next to the church of Maria del Monte. They also asked for all their oblations of the last sixteen years, which they estimated to be worth one

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[25] ASB Dem. 2/5763 no.14-15
[26] ASB Dem. 2/5763 no.16.

hundred Bolognese lire. In addition they requested to be reimbursed their expenses of the last sixteen years, which they thought to be worth a hundred imperial lire. They placed the value of the usufruct of the land for the past sixteen years at one hundred Bolognese lire. Finally, they asked to have other furnishings and agricultural equipment replaced or to be paid for the loss of them.[27]

In Angelica's counterclaim, she referred again to the suits concerning the services of priests. She claimed that according to the opinion of the abbot of S. Felice, she owed nothing, since priests from the canonry were supposed to perform the divine offices at her church but did not. She also claimed that the priests carried off several items with them. Among these items were several bushels of produce, a missal, an antiphonarium, and bound copies of the gospels and epistles. She asked that these things be returned or paid for. In addition, she asked for reimbursement for the cost of carrying on the lawsuit, including expenses for trips to Rome for her and a servant, which she estimated at sixty-six Bolognese pounds. Finally, she asked for the return of her dowry, which she estimated at a thousand Bolognese pounds. The case must have been decided in Angelica's favor, for in December of that year, the canons gave Angelica five pieces of land.[28]

By the 1220's, it was clear that Angelica's church in the guard hills had its own group of canons. The church records do not indicate whether these were canons who broke from Maria di Reno, nor do they tell when the priests began to consider the church their home. As early as 1209, a prior named Pietro acted on behalf of the church in land

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[27] ASB Dem. 52/5813, no. 4.
[28] ASB Dem 52/5813, no. 4.

purchases; there is no indication of what if any role he played in the 1210 dispute between Angelica and S. Maria di Reno; he may have served mainly as a procurator for legal and financial matters.[29] A bull addressed to Angelica from Pope Honorius III in 1222 renews and confirms the privileges of the church but makes no mention of a prior, convent or any brothers.[30] In 1229, however, Pope Gregory IX wrote to the prior and brothers of the church of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, extending papal protection to them and placing them under the rule of Saint Augustine.

The settlement of the suit with the Renani canons and the establishment of a group of canons in her own church provided Angelica with the basic temporal and spiritual needs. Her church continued to acquire property over the next several years. The efforts of Angelica and her canons turned to gaining periodic reaffirmation of their papal privilege in order to assert their community's exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. By the time of Angelica's death in the 1240's, the dwindling number of canons led Bishop Ottavio of Bologna to transfer three sisters from SS. Trinità di Ronzano to the church.[31]

There is disagreement on the founding date of SS. Trinità di Ronzano. Raimondina Piatesi established the church of SS. Trinità in 1209, though as with Angelica some accounts credit an older relative, Cremonina Piatesi, with founding a small community of hermitesses as early as 1140.[32] The inhabitants of SS. Trinità lived

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[29] ASB Dem 2/5763 no. 19.

[30] ASB Dem. 52/5813, non numerata, dated 1 July 1222.

[31] Gozzadini, p. 130. The document contained in Gozzadini regarding this matter is probably the same as ASB Dem. 52/5813 no. 8, which is lost.

[32] Melloni, 389-393; Zarri, 215-216.

in the hills of Bologna to the southwest, farther from the city than S. Maria del Monte or the Renani canons. They are described as followers of the rule of S. Marco of Mantua, though it is not clear what the rule entailed.[33] Between 1239 and 1265, several small groups of women left SS. Trinità to establish or repopulate other nunneries.

In May of 1239, Villana di Calderini and at least two other sisters left SS. Trinità to establish the nunnery of S. Giovanni Battista in the southwestern suburbs of Bologna. Several witnesses gathered to place the first stone for a monastery at that site. Present as witnesses were Buonmartino a converso of S. Caterina and the sindico of that church; Guido di Venetico who was acting in place of the papal notary Gregorio di Monte Longo; the papal penitentiary Stefano; Angelo of Venice of the Order of Preachers and Villana, who would become the prioress of the nunnery.[34] At this time, the new monastery followed the rule of S. Marco.

In 1247, Villana and her sisters, Elisabeth and Francesca, sued their former monastery, SS. Trinità di Ronzano, for the property that their father Dominic the Notary had left them. The hearing took place in the *parlatorio* of the sisters of SS. Trinità. The judge in this case was Stefano the Penitentiary, who decided that the sisters should have the property left to them by their father. Dominic also had a son named Bartolomeo, who is referred to both as their "*frater carnalis*" and also as "frater Bartolomeus", indicating that he had also been a member of SS. Trinità. Bartolomeo's land stayed with the

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[33] Melloni suggests that the Rule of S. Marco di Mantua called for absolute poverty, eschewing any possession of property, but it is clear from the dispute over Villana. Elisabeth and Francesca Calderini's dowry that if the rule did call for this form of poverty, the community did not adhere to this provision. Melloni, 393-394.

[34] ASB Dem. 3/4487, no. 11.

canons.[35] Though it is impossible to be certain since the monastery's records do not include the will, it is probable that the land was the sisters' dowry for entry into the monastery and was meant to cover their expenses. This transaction elucidates the dotal practices for women religious. In many cases, a woman in a monastery had usufruct of the land given by her family for her support. Many times when one sister died, another family member would take her place. Though the land was technically a donation to the monastery, it stayed in the control of the family. When a nun or sister transferred from one monastery to another, she was usually able to bring her property and its profits with her.[36]

A second colony of canonesses left SS. Trinità in 1249 to move to Angelica's church. Upon their move, they were given the Rule of S. Augustine to follow, as the two remaining clerics in that church did. Soon afterward, they established a suburban nunnery named S. Mattia. The final group of sisters would leave SS Trinità in the mid-1260's, after which the church was turned over to a military order called the Frati Gaudenti. In the late years of the 1240's, S. Giovanni Battista and S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, now single-sex houses, would assume the rule of S. Augustine, as would the brothers and sisters of S. Caterina. Over the next several decades, many of them would come into some relationship with the Dominican order, by far the strongest in Bologna due to Dominic's presence there during his life and in death.[37]

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[35] ASB Dem. 3/4487, no. 31.

[36] For examples of the financial details of transfers of nuns from one house to another, see Chapter 6, "Unions and Suppressions," *passim.*

[37] See Chapter 4, "Nunneries and Religious Orders in Bologna," 124-144.

Though not enough is known about SS. Trinità di Ronzano to allow a comparison with the double-houses of France and England, a study of S. Caterina di Quarto sheds further light on the question of women's place in male-governed institutions. In contrast to the Premonstratensians and Gilbertines, the women of S. Caterina became more important over time, and eventually the house was transformed into a nunnery with a few male clerics attached for its support. Its experience may also demonstrate the assimilation of groups influenced by lay movements such as the Humiliati into the developing monastic orders.

**S. Caterina di Quarto and its congregation**

In 1205, a group gathered in the episcopal palace in Bologna to commission the building of a new parish church to bless the first stone to be used in the building of a church "in honor of God, the Virgin Mary and Santa Caterina and all the saints."[38] The group included priests and laymen, men and women. The three main actors mentioned were Verardo, Alberto and Blanco, who gave the first stone to be blessed for the building of the church. Verardo was listed as the main recipient, with Alberto and Blanco listed as his associates (*socii).* Present as witnesses were the archpriest of the parish church in Marano, just outside of Bologna, Alberto, priest of the church of S. Maria at the Porta Ravenata, the northeast gate of Bologna, as well as the laymen Bonmarcino Medici and Amerigo, whose last name is not given, and a woman named Adelasia, who would become the first *magistra* of S. Caterina's female inhabitants. Though the bishop of

[38] ASB Dem 1/4485 no. 5 "ad honorem dei, sancte marie virginis et sancte catelline et omnium santorum…"

Bologna, Gerardo, is not listed as one of the witnesses, the record of the event says that the bishop had received a letter from Pope Innocent III notifying him of the new foundation.[39] A year later, several of these same people met at S. Maria di Porta Ravenata to confirm the donation of the land. In this case, Blanco Blanchi donated two pieces of land, one on which the church was being built and one nearby, "for the remedy of his soul and that of his ancestors."[40] The prior of the church, Alberto, received the land "on behalf of the aforementioned church of Santa Caterina and the brothers and sisters who dwell there now and in the future."[41]

Little is known about Alberto. He may have been a friend of Saint Dominic, though he did not join his own foundation to Dominic's growing movement. Alberto appears in a *Vita* of Saint Dominic at Dominic's funeral, in a story that emphasized the closeness of Alberto and Dominic. After comforting the mourning friars, Alberto approached Dominic's remains and embraced the dead saint, whereupon he had a vision of Dominic, who foretold that Alberto would follow the saint to Christ in that very year.[42] Thus Alberto's reputation as a holy man merited his inclusion in Dominic's *Vita*.

The church grew and also apparently enjoyed the favor of Innocent III, who in 1213 asked the bishops of Parma, Reggio and Modena to donate whatever money they

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[39] Relations between Innocent III and Gerardo were strained; in 1202, Gerardo had refused a papal request to dedicate an altar, and there were other conflicts throughout Gerardo's episcopate. Augusto Vasina, "Chiesa e communità dei fedeli nella diocesi di Bologna dal XII al XI secolo," *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, 2 vols. eds. Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), I:121.

[40] "...pro remedio anime sue et parentum suorum..." ASB Dem 1/4485 no. 6.

[41] "pro predicta ecclesia sancta Catherine et fratribus et sororibus ibi commorantibus presentibus et futuris..."

[42] *Acta Sanctorum Online*, August. I, Dies 4, S. Dominicus conf. Bononiae, Acta Ampliora, Cap. XII.IV. http://80-acta.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/.

took in from the feast of S. Vitale to help the nascent church.[43] An indulgence from 1240 shows the diocesan clergy's positive evaluation of the rapidly growing community. Ottaviano, the archdeacon and future bishop of Bologna, addressed his indulgence to the clergy and faithful of Bologna and encouraged them to visit the foundation and give alms.

> We believe that this is known to all of you, either by reputation or by sight. We notify you… that in the church of Saint Catherine in the diocese of Bologna a great multitude of men and women are gathered to serve God. They serve God in true religion and in the greatest poverty…. Persevering in prayers day and night, they strive to implore the mercy of the Lord for themselves and for all sinners. Indeed, the light of the good works they do shines before humanity in such as way that many men and women, seeing their good works, glorify the Father who is in heaven.[44]

As the reputation of the community grew, other groups sought to place themselves under S. Caterina's authority and a small congregation of houses began to emerge. The houses that affiliated with S. Caterina were varied, including groups that were comprised of only men or only women, as well as communities with inhabitants of both sexes. The first such church was S. Giacomo della Mella in Brescia. On October 29, 1225, Bishop Alberto of Brescia gathered with nine canons of that church and, with their consent, placed them under the temporal and spiritual authority of Ugo, the prior of S. Caterina, giving him and his successors the right of visitation, correction and instruction,

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[43] ASB Dem 1/4485 no. 8.

[44] "Omnibus vobis fere pro fama ut pro visum credimus esse notum. Nos vobis … notificamus quod magna multitudo virorum et mulierum congregata est ad serviendum deo in ecclesia sancte catherine bononiensis episcopatus qui creatori nostro in vera religione ac maxima paupertate serviunt …. [P]erseverantes in orationibus diebus et noctibus student pro se ac pro cunctis peccatoribus domini misericordiam implorare. Denique lux bonorum operum que faciunt lucet coram hominibus ita quod multi tam viri quam mulieres videntes eorum opera glorificant patrem qui in celis est." ASB Dem. 3/4487 no. 14.

saving only the authority of the bishop himself.[45] Though eventually there would be women among the inhabitants of S. Giacomo, at this point there is no mention of their presence. Four days later, a group of friars of the Order of Preachers in Brescia met at S. Giacomo to send to the bishop their acknowledgement that the church and all of its goods were now under the authority of the prior of S. Caterina.[46]

The letter from the Friar Preachers raises the likelihood that S. Giacomo or some of its inhabitants had been affiliated with Dominic's nascent order before becoming part of S. Caterina's congregation. If so, why would they choose to change allegiance? One possibility that must be considered is that S. Giacomo was a double house from the beginning, and an affiliation with a group that also included both men and women would be less problematic than participation in the Dominican order, which in the years after Dominic's death became hesitant to commit to the care of women.

By 1250, there were both men and women in the church, though there is no indication of the proportional population of either group. At that time, the prior of S. Giacomo, brother Geminiano, issued his resignation to prior Alberto of S. Caterina.[47] Two years later when S. Giacomo chose a new prior named brother Giacomo, they notified the prior of S. Caterina, a man named Geminiano. Whether this is the same Geminiano who had resigned as prior of the daughter house is unknown, but the coincidence of names raises the possibility that S. Caterina attracted members from its daughter houses and that those members could rise to the rank of prior. In 1252,

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[45] ASB Dem. 2/4486, no. 11.
[46] ASB Dem. 2/4486, no. 12.
[47] ASB Dem. 4/4488 no. 7.

Geminiano and others traveled from S. Caterina to Brescia to oversee the investiture of the new prior, placing a book in the hands of brother Giacomo, who then placed his hands into Geminiano's as a sign of obedience.[48]

In 1262, S. Caterina asserted its authority over S. Giacomo by compelling their newly elected prior to renounce his investiture, which had been performed by a representative of the bishop. On March 6 of that year, Geminiano, still prior of Santa Caterina, arrived at S. Giacomo to confirm the election of the new prior, Amadeo. It appears that Amadeo had already been sworn into office by the bishop's vicar general. Claiming that he wanted to follow tradition and avoid innovation, Amadeo renounced the confirmation he had received from the vicar general and was re-invested with the office of prior at the hands of Geminiano. After his confirmation, Geminiano ordered that all the brothers and sisters should make manual obendience (*fecerunt obedientiam manualem*) to Amadeo, and had their names listed on the record of the confirmation. The record of this event provides a picture of the monastery's population. Those who pledged obedience to Amadeo were three priests, six lay brothers, and twenty-six sisters, with the leader of the women, or the *magistra*, Patientia, listed first.[49] Amadeo resigned his charge nine years later, and there are no records in S. Caterina's archives to indicate whether he was replaced.

In the 1230s, two other communities placed themselves under the authority of S. Caterina. The first was the Ospedale of S. Maria di Misericordia in Ferrara. In this case, a group of women appeared before the bishop of Ferrara in 1233 "saying that they

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[48] ASB Dem 4/4488, no. 14.
[49] ASB Dem. 5/4489, no. 21, 22.

wanted to live chastely and to observe the rule of S. Caterina."[50] The bishop invested the prior of S. Caterina with temporal and spiritual authority over the church and the hospital with the condition that the church should offer a census of a pound of incense of the altar of the bishop's chapel on the Feast of Saint George. Unfortunately, the records do not indicate whether the relationship between the two churches endured.

Similarly, in 1236, the ten friars of the church of S. Nicolò in Bologna placed themselves under the governance of S. Caterina, which was this time represented by a converso who also acted as procurator of the church.[51] The only other record besides the submission of S. Nicolò to S. Caterina is a document from 1289 having to do with the leadership of the church. In this case, S. Nicolò's leader, who is called the rector, has been elected to lead another church and the brothers of S. Caterina are asked to choose a new rector, whom they confirm with the agreement of the two brothers left at S. Nicolò.[52]

A final member of the congregation raised the suggestion that there was overlap between S. Caterina's congregation and the Humiliati. S. Maria di Valverdi in Cremona placed itself under the authority of S. Caterina's prior in 1255. The charter in which the brothers and sisters pledged their allegiance to S. Caterina and its prior, Geminiano, alternately refers to Geminiano as prior, rector, and *minister*, in addition to calling the leader of the thirteen sisters a *ministra*, echoing the title of the Humiliati's leadership. Only three brothers were present at the time, though reference is made to others who were absent. The use of the titles suggests that S. Maria di Valverde may have been part

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[50] "Dicentes que volebant caste vivere et regulam sanctae caterinae ibidem observare..." ASB Dem. 3/4487 no.1.

[51] ASB Dem 3/4487, n .7.

[52] ASB Dem. 7/4491 no. 5.

of the Humiliati movement. Though there is no way to be certain, it is also possible that the same was true of S. Caterina, especially in light of its formation just a few years after the compromise between the Humiliati and Innocent III.

As it gained daughter houses, S. Caterina continued to thrive, and by 1259, there were over ninety inhabitants, including sixty sisters. However, changes to its rule and life lay around the corner. S. Caterina's inhabitants followed neither the Augustinian nor the Benedictine rule, and they had not gained papal approval for their own rule. Reforms beginning in the late 1240s and continuing into the first years of the fourteenth century would eventually lead S. Caterina to become an Augustinian nunnery in the fourteenth century, then to be incorporated into the Dominican order in late fifteenth century. These changes would also lead to some confusion about the obligations and observances of its daughter houses.[53]

**Conclusions**

S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, SS. Trinità di Ronzano, and S. Caterina di Quarto all differed from traditional monastic establishments, demonstrating the diversity of religious establishments arising during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Two of them began as retreats for hermitesses, around which a community of canons also formed. One was established by an itinerant preacher, and became the motherhouse of a small congregation, which included some double-houses and some single-sex communities. These groups formed after similar groups in France and England such as

[53] See Chapters 4, "Nunneries and Religious Orders in Bologna", 141-144, and Chapter 5, "Movement into the City," 169-176.

the Gilbertines and the Premonstratensians had already begun to expel women from their congregations. As is demonstrated by the fate of some of the "colonies" that left SS. Trinità, including the group who settled at S. Maria del Monte della Guarda, over time these groups would all come to adhere to more widely-known rules and would integrate into monastic orders. In contrast to the Gilbertines and Premonstratensians, S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, S. Caterina di Quarto, and the houses formed by residents of SS. Trinità di Ronzano would all become nunneries in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Fontevraud was the only group that maintained its inclusion of both men and women over time, perhaps due to its longer history. Whereas Santa Caterina di Quarto, which developed its own rule, and houses following the rule of S. Marco of Mantua were still in the early stages of developing their identity when expectations about what monastic houses looked like shifted, by the time of the thirteenth century reforms following the Fourth Lateran Council, Fontevraud was the head of a well-established congregation with important patrons. Santa Caterina maintained elements of its own rule own rule into the late thirteenth century, and there is some indication that they continued to see themselves as the head of their own order into the fourteenth century, but this uniqueness was increasingly difficult to maintain, and along with other religious communities founded before the Fourth Lateran Reforms, over time they came to resemble other, more traditional houses of religious women.

# CHAPTER 4

## NUNNERIES AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN BOLOGNA

The twelfth and early thirteenth century saw a proliferation of new types of religious life. Groups such as the Waldensians, Humiliati and the mendicant orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans flourished. These groups focused on apostolic poverty and preaching. Some of these movements and others like them had existed in the twelfth century, though the popes of the twelfth century considered these groups heretical, and their exclusion from the church sometimes had a radicalizing effect. By contrast, Pope Innocent III decided to integrate them into the church. At the same time, he engaged in a program of exerting greater oversight with respect to religious groups.

Pious women desired affiliation with new religious orders for a variety of reasons. Some, like Clare of Assisi, Diana d'Andolò, and their companions, had strong connections to Francis and Dominic, respectively. Clare may have at one point aspired to a life that differed little from the friars. Jordan of Saxony, the first Master General of the Dominican Order wrote frequently to Diana, asking for her prayers. Though enclosed nuns in these new orders could not lead the life of preaching and begging that distinguished their brethren from traditional monks, they live an ascetic life beyond the requirements of traditional nunneries, and they could support the friars' mission with their prayers. Many nuns felt strongly that they were as much a part of a particular order as their brethren, and wanted recognition of that fact.

There were also practical reasons for wanting official incorporation into monastic orders. Whereas autonomous Benedictine houses remained under the jurisdiction of the

bishop, nunneries that were incorporated into monastic orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans or Cistercians enjoyed the privileges of the order, including exemption from episcopal control and from the payment of tithes. Nevertheless, many nunneries followed the rule and statutes of the Dominicans and the Cistericans even though they remained under the bishop's jurisdiction and did not enjoy the privileges associated with official incorporation into orders. In some cases, it is difficult to ascertain the precise affiliation of a nunnery. For example, Dominicans used the Augustinian rule, and sometimes nunneries that may have been Dominican were described as Augustinian communities. Similarly, the Cistercians were a reform order of the Benedictines; therefore, if a nunnery is sometimes described as Cistercian and other times called Benedictine, it is difficult to know if this represents a change in practice or if it merely indicates that there was not yet a systematic way of describing the observance of religious houses.

Though some nunneries pursued close affiliation with monastic orders, others, by contrast, assiduously maintained autonomy from the oversight of orders and bishops for centuries after the Fourth Lateran Council. In Bologna, the community of S. Caterina di Quarto, a double house until the early fourteenth century, considered itself the head of its own order, though ecclesiastical officials considered it part of the Order of Saint Augustine. Another Augustinian community, S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and its sister house S. Mattia, enjoyed direct protection of the Holy See, and despite its ties to the Dominican order, zealously guarded its papal privilege, making sure, for example, that those who performed the office of visitation were acting as agents of the pope and could not claim their own authority over the community.

In their initial years, new religious groups tended to show greater acceptance of women as part of their movement than they would in later years. For example, Dominic established convents for his female followers, and Francis counted Clare among his closest advisors, though even in his lifetime Francis showed some reluctance to commit his friars to the care of nuns. As the Franciscan and Dominican Orders developed, their leaders grew more reticent about incorporating nunneries, and, along with the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians, these orders attempted to divest themselves of responsibility for the care of women religious in the 1240s and 1250s.[1]

Two main motivations account for attempts to sever ties with nunneries. One reason was the administrative burden that, according to these male monastics, accompanied responsibility for the care of nuns. Nuns needed chaplains to provide them with sacraments and procurators to carry out their legal and financial dealings. The leaders of the mendicant orders, with their ideal of itinerancy for their friars, were reluctant to tie their brethren to one place. For monks such as the Cistercians, the *cura*

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[1] Max Weber treats this phenomenon in the context of newly-formed religions, though it frequently applies as well to new movements within a particular religion. Weber argued that prophets such as Buddha, Christ and Pythagoras maintained "completely unrestrained relationships with women.... But only in very rare cases does this practice continue beyond the first stage of a religious community's formation, when the pneumatic manifestations of charisma are valued as hallmarks of specifically religious exhaltation. Thereafter, as routinization and regimentation of the community relationships set in, a reaction takes place against pneumatic manifestations among women." Though Francis and Dominic can not be said to have had "unrestrained relationships with women," in the early years of their movements, Francis, Dominic and their followers were more receptive to women than would be the case once their orders became established and the spiritual and temporal implications of taking on the care of women became clear to their successors. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963 [1922]), 104.

*monialium* was an unwelcome tie to the world outside of their own monasteries, a distraction from their own devotions.

Underlying the general disinclination to undertake the care of nuns, some male monastics feared that the contact with women that accompanied this responsibility. The Premonstratensian Conrad of Marchtal famously remarked that "the poison of asps and dragons in more curable and less dangerous to men than the familiarity of women", and that his order had decided that they would "on no account receive any more sisters to the increase of our perdition, but will avoid them like poisonous animals."[2] Religious leaders could point to sensational stories of affairs between religious men and women to highlight the dangers of contact between the sexes.[3]

Nevertheless, the popes of the thirteenth century made attempts to tie women's houses to religious orders, often despite the protests of the monks and friars, who by and large did not want the responsibility, and despite the periodic attempts of bishops to reclaim jurisdiction over religious houses in their dioceses, including nunneries. Two popes who took a strong interest in the regulation of monastic groups were Gregory IX (1227-1241), who had been Cardinal Protector of the Franciscans and the Poor Clares as

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[2] R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 314, citing *Annales Praemonstratenses,* II: 147.

[3] One of the more sensational and famous incidents occurred at the Gilbertine nunnery of Watton, in which a nun and a lay brother conceived a child, after which the community forced the pregnant nun to castrate her lover. The sisters then chained the nun in her cell, and the pregnancy miraculously disappeared, saving the community from scandal. The nuns consulted Gilbert and bishop Aelred of Rivaulx, who recorded the story in his visitation account. See Sharon K. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 106-108.

Cardinal Ugolino, and Innocent IV (1243-1254).[4] Their attempts had mixed results; Ugolino's rule for the Poor Clares did not satisfy Clare and many of her followers, who wanted, among other things, a more explicit guaranty of their ties to the Franciscans. Innocent IV conceded to the Dominicans in 1243 and the Cistercians in 1251 that popes would no longer force them to add nunneries to their orders without a *non obstante* clause acknowledging that they were contravening the orders' wishes; nevertheless, he continued to incorporate nunneries into these orders and also endeavored to reach a compromise that satisfied both monks and nuns.

**Dominican houses in Bologna**

In Bologna, the differences among monasteries that followed the same rule and constitution are most clear for nunneries in the Dominican sphere of influence. Some nunneries had clear connections to the Dominican Order and were acknowledged by the general chapter; others remained under episcopal jurisdiction but clearly identified with the Dominicans. Still others had ties to the order but attempted to remain outside of the order's authority.

The Bolognese nunnery most closely identified with an order was S. Agnese, a Dominican house founded by Diana d'Andolò. Diana, the daughter of a prominent

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[4] As a cardinal, Ugolino had taken an interest in communities of pious women living in poverty in Tuscany and Umbria, and had gained direct papal protection for these communities from Honorius III in the late 1210s in order to protect their decision to live in poverty. Many of these communities became part of Poor Clares, especially once Ugolino became Pope Gregory IX. Luigi Pellegrini, "Female Religious Experience and Society in Thirteenth-Century Italy," in Sharon Farmer and Barbara H. Rosenwein, eds., *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 101-113.

family, had displayed an early inclination to the religious life, even attempting to enter a convent but being denied due to the intervention of her family. When the Friar Preachers, including Reginald of Orleans and later Dominic himself, arrived in Bologna in 1219, Diana renewed her resolve to commit to the religious life. She began to live an austere life, even in her family's home, and also helped the Dominicans to gain the church of San Nicolò as their base in Bologna, a church over which her family had the right of patronage.[5] Diana vowed at that church that she would enter the religious life. In 1220, Dominic decided to found a convent for Diana and other nuns in Bologna and assigned four friars to oversee the task.[6] Because of the opposition of Diana's family, the four friars could not find a site for the monastery that was acceptable to the bishop of Bologna. In summer of 1221, Diana decided to flee to SS. Trinità di Ronzano. Her parents tracked her down at Ronzano and forced her to leave Ronzano, breaking her rib in the process of bringing her home.[7]

Dominic died while Diana was recuperating at home. Determined to adhere to her decision to become a nun, Diana again fled to Ronzano on the feast of All Saints, and this time her parents made no attempt to retrieve her from the nunnery. Jordan of Saxony, Dominic's successor as Master General of the Order, continued to work with Diana to establish a nunnery for her in Bologna. In June of 1223, Diana and four companions took the Dominican habit at their new monastery, S. Agnese, and Diana

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[5] BCB, Mss. B 2019, printed in M. Giovanna Cambria, *Il Monastero Domenicano di S. Agnese in Bologna: Storia e Documenti* (Bologna, Tipographia SAB, 1973), 227.

[6] William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order,* vol. 1 (Staten Island: Alba House, 1966), 102.

[7] Hinnebusch, I:103.

became their abbess.[8] From about 1222 to 1236, Jordan continued to correspond with Diana about many matters, including the status of the nunnery's relationship with the order.[9]

S. Agnese's connection to Dominic himself was of some help in keeping the house part of the Dominican order at various times when the Friar Preachers sought to divest themselves of the care of nuns. The fact that Dominic had decided to help Diana found a house for nuns ranked S. Agnese among the houses of Prouille in France, S. Sisto in Rome, and Santo Domingo in Madrid, which all owed their origins to the order's founder. Because S. Agnese was not founded until after Dominic's death, however, its special position among women's houses was less secure than these others. Though Jordan wrote to Diana to tell her that her house was now confirmed as part of the Dominican order in 1227, it is not clear that this had always been his preferred course of action. The nuns of S. Agnese had appealed to Pope Honorius III to order the Dominicans to undertake their care. The next year the general chapter forbade the incorporation of any new nunneries.[10]

As part of the obligation to provide spiritual and temporal care for the nuns, the Dominicans stationed six friars at Prouille, San Sisto, and Santo Domingo.[11] Though S. Agnese was considered part of the order at this time, there were no friars in residence at

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[8] Hinnebusch, I:103.

[9] Jordan's letters to Diana are compiled in Jordan of Saxony, *Beati Iordani de Saxonia Epistulae*, ed. Angelus Walz. Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, Vol. XXIII (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, Santa Sabina, 1951).

[10] Jordan of Saxony, XXIII, 27. Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order,* I, p. 389.

[11] Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses a l'age classique de droit canon* (Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967), 116.

the nunnery. Part of the order's reluctance to incorporate new houses was the fear that a large number of friars would be taken from the order's primary mission, preaching, in order to tend to the women's houses. In the decades to come, the general chapter would try to rid itself of its obligations to these nunneries through appeals to the papacy and also through decrees forbidding its members to provide spiritual or temporal care to women.

In 1234, while illness delayed Jordan on the road, the general chapter decided to expel S. Agnese from the order.[12] Though the letter in which Jordan informed Diana of this turn of events does not make it clear, it is possible that the other participants of the general chapter took advantage of Jordan's absence to rid the order of one of the nunneries under their care. The following year, the general chapter attempted to divest themselves of the care of all nunneries. In the end, even the patronage of the Master General did not assure S. Agnese's continued status as a Dominican nunnery; S. Agnese and the other three original nunneries had to appeal to the pope to be reincorporated into the order. S. Agnese and S. Sisto had already been incorporated into the order by papal decree. The nunneries at Prouille and Madrid obtained similar orders.[13]

Though the friars had failed to absolve their order of obligations for these four nunneries, they were loath to take on any new charges. In 1239, Jordan's successor, Raymond of Peñafort, obtained a privilege from Gregory IX that neither he nor future popes could compel the friars to incorporate any new convents without making express mention of the privilege and acknowledging that he was suspending it in an individual case. Innocent IV confirmed this bull in 1243 for John of Wildeshausen, Raymond's

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[12] Jordan of Saxony, XLVII, 53.
[13] Hinnebusch, I: 390.

successor. The privilege required a pope to acknowledge that he was going against the order's wishes by incorporating new nunneries, but it did not stop the incorporations.

In addition to their concern about papal incorporations, Dominicans who attended the general chapter also had to worry about the actions of individual friars. In 1240, the Chapter decreed that friars could not administer any sacrament except penance to religious women.[14] Two years later, they elaborated on this decree.

> To friars who administer the sacrament of extreme unction to nuns or other religious women, or who institute or establish their prioresses, or who perform the office of visitation in their houses, we order seven days of bread and water, seven psalms and seven *disciplinae* ...Whoever visits these women is not excused from this penalty or injunction by letters from the lord pope unless they include a *non obstante* clause etc., or a special precept of the lord pope. Neither should any friar translate any sermons at all or manuscripts or other holy scriptures from Latin into the vernacular.[15]

Despite the best efforts of the general chapters, there remained many loopholes in the prohibitions designed to limit the contact between friars and nuns and to shield the order from responsibility for the care of nunneries. The pope could suspend the privilege with a "*non obstante*" clause, and individual friars could, with the pope's specific suspension of the privilege, administer sacraments and perform visitations. The 1242 statute suggests that there were friars who continued their associations with nunneries despite the best attempts of the general chapter to limit their activities.

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[14] Jordan, *Epistulae*, 17.

[15] "Fratribus qui monialibus, vel aliis religiosis mulieribus sacramentum extreme unctionis administraverunt, vel prelatos earum instituerunt vel destituerunt, vel officium visitacionis in earum domibus exercuerunt, iniungimus vii die in pane et aqua,vii psalmos et vii disciplinas .... Qui autem eas visitaverunt non excusentur ab hac pena vel precepto propter litteras domini pape, nisi in eis continenatur "non obstante" privilegio, etc., vel domini pape preceptum speciale. Nec aliquis fratrum de cetero sermones vel collaciones vel alias sacras scripturas, de latino transferant in vulgare." MOPH, III: 24.

By 1252, Innocent IV had incorporated at least nineteen nunneries into the Dominican Order and perhaps as many as forty, mostly in Germany.[16] In most cases, however, he did not require residence by friars. For example, in the bull regarding the incorporation of the nunnery of Montargis, he allowed that the Dominicans could assign suitable chaplains, which could be Dominican friars but could also parish clergy or members of other orders.[17] This concession did not decrease the friars' alarm at the rapidly growing number of nunneries with ties to the order.

At the general chapter of 1252, the Dominican leaders decided to take matters into their own hands. With the exception of Prouille and San Sisto, they decided to abandon any responsibility for nunneries. Even S. Agnese in Bologna and Santo Domingo in Madrid were on the chopping block. Innocent IV, for many years an ally of religious women seeking affiliation with religious orders, acquiesced to the wishes of the friars in this case.[18]

Nuns had fared badly under the Master Generalate of John of Wildeshausen. His successor, Humbert of Romans, seemed more sympathetic. In 1255, the general chapter decided that they would allow women's houses in the order if three general chapters approved each new affiliation. There is no evidence from the decrees of the general chapter that this statute was actually put into practice until 1266, and even then the incorporation of the single nunnery in question was only approved by one general

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[16] Fontette, 120-121; Hinnebusch, 390.
[17] Fontette, 120-121.
[18] Fontette, 122.

chapter.[19] The main effect of the 1255 decree was to signal that the Dominicans were newly receptive to undertaking the care of nuns, in however limited a fashion. Montargis and S. Agnese obtained letters from Pope Alexander IV reincorporating them into the Dominican order; these nunneries were followed by many others, until once again, the influx of women's houses became a cause for concern. The general chapter of 1257 charged the provincials with the task of ascertaining the number of women's houses in their jurisdiction, the number of women in the nunneries, and the nature of their affiliation. The results must have alarmed the chapter; Humbert asked Alexander IV to release the friars once again from the care of nuns, and his request was granted.[20] The Dominicans must have had a quick change of heart. Two years later, they allowed that nunneries with bulls of affiliation from a master general, a general chapter or a pope could be considered Dominican houses.[21]

As the provincial friars no doubt discovered when they took a census of women's houses in 1257, there were many nunneries that had various reasons for considering themselves Dominican and made various claims on the order. The frequent changes in official Dominican policy toward religious women and the independent action of popes, prelates and friars produced a situation in which there were many nunneries that followed the rule of Saint Augustine and the statutes of the order, but did not have bulls of affiliation and so did not meet the criteria for official recognition.

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[19] The nunnery is question is the "domus sororum in Caturco." MOPH, III:134.
[20] Fontette, 123.
[21] Hinnebusch, I:392.

In Bologna, there were other houses besides S. Agnese that had ties to the Dominican Order. In addition to the houses that considered themselves Dominican from their inception, there were some that had originally been part of small, local congregations. In most cases, these communities had been given the rule of Saint Augustine under the papacy of Innocent IV and were usually referred to as part of the Order of Saint Augustine. Because of the nature of that order and Dominican prominence in Bologna, the boundary between Augustinian and Dominican proved to be quite porous.

Unlike the other orders who could point to an individual founder or a mother house, the Order of Saint Augustine came from the joining of many small communities of ascetics that followed the rule of Saint Augustine. In the "Little Union" of 1244, Pope Innocent IV unified several Augustinian houses into the Tuscan Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine. Innocent's successor, Alexander IV, united the Tuscan Hermits with other congregations in Italy. This "Great Union" occurred in 1256. The combined order was called the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine.[22] Women's houses were not officially part of this unification, though the Augustinian Hermits later accepted oversight of some nunneries. Most nunneries following the Augustinian rule were referred to as

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[22] A.C. Shannon, "Augustinians", *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1967), 1072; Philip E. McWilliams, "Augustinian Friars/Hermits", *The Encyclopedia of Monasticism* (Chicago, Fritz Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 103-104. Other congregations in the Great Union were the followers of John the Good, called the "Bonites", and the Hermits of Brettino. The Tuscan Hermits brought 70 houses to the union, compared to 26 for the Bonites and 45 for the Hermits of Brettino. Their organization was similar to that of the other mendicant orders, with a master general presiding over chapters general and provincial masters governing territorial jurisdictions.

part of the "Order of St. Augustine," which consisted of largely autonomous houses and did not have a regional or international hierarcy, as did the Augustinian Hermits or the Dominicans. It is possible that Innocent IV's involvement in the organization of Tuscan hermits caused him to turn his attention to other ascetic groups in Italy, such as the communities that had been a part of the congregation of S. Marco of Mantua and S. Caterina di Quarto. In Bologna, these included the double community of S. Trinità di Ronzano and another house founded by women from S. Trinità, S. Giovanni Battista, along with S. Caterina di Quarto itself.

S. Giovanni Battista had been established in 1239, when three sisters moved from S. Trinità di Ronzano.[23] In August of 1247, Stefano the Penitentiary presided over a meeting at S. Giovanni Battista at which the sisters professed the rule of Saint Augustine and were given the statutes of the Dominicans to follow. The record of the event specifically notes that the duty of visiting and correcting the sisters fell to the bishop of Bologna and not to the Dominicans, and that Stefano was presiding by the authority of the bishop. Thus, the sisters' relationship to the order was tenuous, since they were not necessarily granted affiliation with the Dominicans by the general chapter or by the pope.

Subsequent papal letters do not entirely clarify the status of S. Giovanni Battista. In November of 1250, Innocent IV took S. Giovanni Battista under papal protection and confirmed that they were to follow the rule of Saint Augustine, but made no mention of

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[23] Gabriella Zarri, "I monasterii femminili a Bologna tra il XIII e il XVII Secolo" in *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna*, vol. XXIV (1973) , 185. The congregation of S. Marco of Mantua was founded in 1194 by Bishop Enrico and approved by Innocent IIII in 1204. According to the Dictionary of Religious Orders, they followed the Rule of Saint Albert. Peter Day, *Dictionary of Religious Orders* (London: Burns and Oates, 2001), 264.

the Dominican statutes.[24] Two bulls from Alexander IV in 1259 are addressed "to the prioress and the convent of the monastery of S. Giovanni Battista in Bologna, of the order of Saint Augustine, living according to the institutes of the Order of Friar Preachers."[25]

It is difficult to interpret the differing descriptions of S. Giovanni Battista's observance. Innocent IV's 1250 bull confirming the rule of Saint Augustine for the community occurred during a period in which he was not reluctant to affiliate women's houses with the Dominican order. By the time of Alexander's indulgences, the Dominicans had clarified the cases in which a nunnery could be considered part of the order. Alexander's phrasing suggests that the convent was known to follow Dominican practices but was not considered officially part of the order.

What was the local understanding of S. Giovanni Battista's observance? In this period, order affiliation is seldom mentioned by ecclesiastical officials in their correspondence with nunneries. Most documents produced locally involved property transactions, which mention only the monastery's name and perhaps that of the prioress or procurator. The only indication of the sisters' understanding of their own observance comes from a 1275 record of the entrance of woman named Bonadomana into the nunnery. Her profession states that she "has accepted the rule of the Blessed Augustine in the monastery of S. Giovanni Battista of Bologna," making no mention of the

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[24] The nature of this protection is not clear. Though sometimes a papal privilege exempts a monastery from the jurisdiction of the bishop, this seems not to be the case for S. Giovanni Battista. There are subsequent receipts of the monastery fulfilling obligations to the bishop and of his nomination of officials to act as procurator for the nuns. See ASB Dem. 7/4491, nos. 3 and 35; ASB Dem. 4/4488 no. 9.

[25] "Priorisse et conventui monasterii Sci. Johannis Baptiste Bononiensis ordinis Sci. Augustini secundum insitututa ordinis fratrum predicatorum viventibus." ASB Dem 5/4489 nos. 13-14.

Dominican statutes.[26] This omission does not mean that the nunnery did not follow Dominican practices, but it does indicate that the nuns in this community were not as solicitous in asserting their Dominican status as some other nunneries were. In 1287, however, the convent was said to be "under the order and institutes of the Friar Preachers" in a receipt from the Bolognese bishop's notary when a representative of the nunnery paid its annual obligation of a pound of wax to the bishop.[27] From these various descriptions of S. Giovanni Battista, it seems that the nunnery was to some extent identified as a Dominican house despite their tenuous relationship to the order. There does not seem to be a rigid distinction between Augustinian and Dominican, however.

S. Giovanni Battista was not the only nunnery formed by women from SS. Trinità di Ronzano. In 1249, ten years after the formation of S. Giovanni Battista, Cardinal Legate Ottaviano Ubaldini allowed three women religious named Balena, Dotta and Marina to transfer from S. Trinità to Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia. This arrangement was meant to revive the struggling church, whose canons had declined in number to only the prior, Alfredo, and one other canon after the death of its foundress, the hermitess Angelica.[28] The three women were absolved from obedience to the prior of Ronzano. Balena became the group's first prioress and served in that capacity until 1271.

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[26] "acceptavit regulam beati agustini in monasterio sancti johannis baptiste," ASB Dem 6/4490 no. 22.

[27] "sub ordine et institutes fratrum predicatorum", ASB Dem. 7/4491 no.3.

[28] The document in which Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna ordered the transfer on August 6, 1249 (ASB Dem. 52/5813 no.8) is missing from the Archivio di Stato di Bologna, but its cover with a description of the document's contents is there. A copy of the decree is printed in Giovanni Gozzadini's *Chronaca di Ronzano e Memorie di Loderingo d'Andolò, Frate Gaudente,* (Bologna, 1851) p, 150-151, document n. 3. Also missing is Alexander IV's papal confirmation of the church's donation to the three women in January of 1257.

Alfredo appears to have stayed on the Monte della Guardia and is described in 1250 as their priest and *converso*.[29] Though it is not clear what rule the sisters followed when they moved to the Monte della Guardia, early documents refer to them as following the rule of Saint Augustine. Like S. Giovanni Battista, they would gradually come into the Dominican sphere of influence. Unlike that other nunnery, S. Maria del Monte della Guardia was not subject to the bishop because of a privilege of exemption that Angelica had obtained from the Holy See.

During Balena's time as prioress, the group built another nunnery, S. Mattia. Whereas S. Maria del Monte was located in the hills southwest of Bologna over a mile outside the walls, S. Mattia was just outside the city's southwestern gate, the Porta Saragozza. S. Mattia began with a 1254 bequest from a woman named Emma, who left to S. Maria del Monte a house along with twenty tornatures of land and twenty Bolognese lire to help with the building of a church.[30] Though the sisters had acquired a new building, they maintained the old one, and would continue to do so well into the sixteenth century.

One of the prioress's concerns was to secure from Pope Alexander IV a confirmation of the privilege Angelica had gained for her oratory. In January of 1258, the pope issued a bull granting this confirmation of the papal protection and exemption from episcopal jurisdiction his predecessors had given to Santa Maria del Monte. At this point, there is no mention of S. Mattia – the bull is simply addressed to the "prioress and

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[29] "Frater Alfredus sacerdos et conversus dicte ecclesia…" ASB Dem 5/5766 no. 6.

[30] ASB Dem. 5/5766 no. 8.

sisters of the church of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, order of Saint Augustine."[31] They must have remained on good terms with the bishop despite seeking to maintain independence from his jurisdiction, because in 1268, Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna sent letters to the bishops of several nearby towns informing them of the new convent and asked them to issue indulgences to the faithful of their diocese, encouraging them to visit S. Mattia and to give alms to the nuns there.[32]

Balena's successor, Dotta, pressed to extend Maria del Monte's privilege to S. Mattia. To this end, the sisters wrote two letters, probably to the pope, explaining the relationship between the original nunnery and the new one. A letter addressed only to "your reverend Father" from the "prioress and sisters of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, order of Saint Augustine" recounts their history.[33] According to this account, when the number of canons at Santa Maria del Monte had dwindled to a number that no longer allowed them to support themselves suitably, the monastery was reformed and Balena, Dotta and Marina moved there in order to live a more rigorous life. The letter mentioned Alexander's confirmation of the papal privilege. The sisters argued that because of the large number of newly professed nuns, it was no longer possible for them to live at their current location, thus justifying their move to a house closer to the city. Since they were immediately subject to Rome and not under the jurisdiction of the

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[31] ASB Dem 5/5766 not numbered, dated January 28, 1258.

[32] ASB Dem 52/5813 no. 9. Ottaviano sent his letter to the bishops of Modena, Imola, Faenza, Rimini and Cervia, all towns in the Romagna. Ecclesiastical officials would often issue indulgences for new foundations or those in need of repairing or rebuilding their monasteries.

[33] ASB Dem 4/5765, not numbered, not dated, beginning "Significant Reverende Paternitate vestre. Priorissa et sorores sancte marie montis guardie ordinis sancti augustini…"

bishop, they asked the pope to appoint a suitable representative to confirm the election of the prioress and do such things as perform the office of visitation and correction. This detail dates the letter to 1271 or earlier, because in September of that year, Pope Gregory X instructed the prior of S. Romano in Bologna to confirm Dotta's election.[34]

A second letter continues to make the case that S. Mattia should enjoy the privileges of its sister house. Like the first one, this letter is undated. The only information that helps to date the letter is that Dotta is the prioress, which means that the letter was written between 1271 and 1296. This second letter asks that S. Mattia be exempt from episcopal jurisdiction since the sisters of Maria del Monte della Guardia had it built in order "to serve the Lord under the discipline of the rule more securely, more honestly, and more fittingly."[35] They then asked that the prior of the Dominican province of Lombardy or some other suitable Dominican be named as their visitor.

Papal privileges were to be guarded and defended for many reasons. It was essentially a grant of extraterritoriality. In lawsuits, monasteries could and did often use the privilege to argue that the bishop and his representatives did not have jurisdiction over their cases, thereby perhaps enabling them to find a more favorable forum. They could also avoid paying any exactions that the bishop might charge. Furthermore, in S. Maria del Monte's case, it exempted them from any sentence of interdict imposed upon the city. In 1271, the privilege was used to allow Maria del Monte della Guardia to be exempt from the interdict in place on Bologna. Eight years later, S. Mattia received

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[34] ASB Dem. 52/5813 no. 12.

[35] ASB Dem. 6/5767, not numbered, not dated, with incipit "Significat sanctitate vestre": "securius, honestius et commodius sub regulari disciplina domino famulari"

confirmation that their privilege allowed them to continue to hold masses despite an interdict. In some cases, bishops tried to consolidate their power within their dioceses and establish the right to visit and receive tithes and other fees from monasteries that had claimed papal protection in the past. Religious houses zealously defended themselves and their privileges, and as was the case with S. Maria and S. Mattia, appealed often for confirmation that exemptions granted by previous popes would be honored by the current holder of the throne of Peter.[36]

In the late thirteenth century, the combined convents came under the Dominican sphere of influence. As early as December of 1271, Pope Gregory IX described S. Mattia as a part of the Order of St. Augustine, living according to the institutes of the Friar Preachers.[37] The two letters from the prioress and sisters suggest that their association with the Dominicans had grown stronger from the time of the first letter to that of the second. Whereas in the first letter they simply asked for the pope to name a suitable visitor, in the second letter they requested a specific Dominican official, and a relatively high-ranking one at that, the prior of the province of Lombardy.[38] There is no indication whether S. Mattia had already made contact with the provincial himself or other Friar Preachers, or whether in appealing to the pope, they were attempting to secure the services of reluctant Dominicans by going over their heads.

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[36] For examples of other battles between bishops and monasteries claiming exemption, see Robert Brentano, *The Two Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 109-129.

[37] ASB Dem. 6/5768 no. 3.

[38] In addition to priors of individual houses, the Dominicans had priors of provinces. In the late thirteenth century, Lombardy was one of 12 Dominican provinces. Hinnebusch, I: 175.

Another link to the Dominicans came through the testament of Bishop Teodorico Borgognoni of Cervia, who was also a member of the Order of Preachers and who had developed a tie to S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and S. Mattia. The first evidence of contact between Teodorico and Maria del Monte della Guardia was a 1268 indulgence issued at the request of bishop Ottaviano of Bologna.[39] He appears again in the record at the groundbreaking of a new church for S. Mattia in 1294, and to confirm the election of a prioress two years later.[40] In 1298, S. Mattia received 1100 lire from Teodorico's estate, which was to be used to buy land. The bequest included specific instructions for disposing of the profits from the cultivation of the land. S. Mattia could keep one tenth of the proceeds; the remaining nine-tenths were to be given to a house of the Friar Preachers in Lucca, Teodorico's home town. The rationale for this arrangement is not clear from the surviving documents.[41]

Teodorico chose to set up a relationship in which the nuns of S. Mattia would have to pay the Dominicans of Lucca annually *in perpetuo*. There is some evidence that the payment to the Dominicans served in part as compensation for masses said on the anniversary of the bishop's death. It is likely that the payment was meant to tie S. Mattia and Maria del Monte della Guardia more closely to the Dominican order, if not by any official incorporation into the order, at least by a link to a group of Dominicans who were

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[39] Ottaviano's request is found in ASB Dem. 52/5813 no. 9. He also requested indulgences from the bishops of Imola, Modena, Favena, and Rimini. Teodorico's indulgence, addressed to the cities and dioceses of Cervia and Bologna, is found in ASB Dem. 52/5813 no. 10.

[40] The 1294 document is ASB Dem. 52/5318 no. 14. The 1296 acts are listed as belonging to ASB Dem. 52/5318 no. 15, but both documents are missing from the busta.

[41] ASB Dem. 1/5762 nos. 3, 12-13.

close enough to see to some of the needs of the sisters. Putting the bequest in the hands of the sisters also insured that they would continue to receive income from the inheritance, as he seems to have recognized might not have happened if he had given the responsibility to administer the bequest and its income to the friars.

It is not clear, however, that the nuns welcomed this relationship. Though they had once requested Dominicans as visitors in the late thirteenth century, by the mid-fourteenth century they seem to have had a change of heart. When a small group of visitors including two Dominicans and the abbot of a Benedictine house from the diocese of Reggio nell'Emilia appeared to carry out the office of visitation in May 1330, the nuns notarized a letter of protest, arguing that this visitation should not detract from the privilege they held from a long list of popes stating that only the pope had jurisdiction over them.[42] The tie of the property related to Teodorico's will seems also to have been a burden. There are some records of the friars of Lucca receiving payments from S. Mattia in the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century, the main result of this bequest seems to have been prolonged legal strife when the sisters refused to pay, though it is difficult to determine the outcome of these lawsuits.[43] The relationship between the Dominicans and S. Mattia remained unofficial for centuries until Pope Alexander VI ordered the nuns to submit to the Order of Preachers in 1496.[44]

Another house that came very gradually into the Dominican sphere of influence is Santa Caterina de Quarto, which was originally located a few miles outside of Bologna

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[42] ASB Dem 9/5770, not numbered, dated May 30, 1330.
[43] ASB Dem. 1/5762 no. 12-14.
[44] ASB Dem. 14/5775 not numbered, dated November 6, 1496.

but moved inside the city walls in the 1290's. Throughout the thirteenth century, this ascetic community included both men and women. In 1247, Innocent IV agreed to take Santa Caterina under papal protection and stipulated that in return, the group should henceforth follow the rule of Saint Augustine.[45] Up to this point, it had followed its own rule. No copies survive in the monastery's archives, but the rule probably existed in written form because a visitation record mentions that the house's institutes were read aloud to the clerics at dinner. This rule was probably the basis for some of the monastery's atypical practices, such as abstinence from meat and eschewing of comforts such as beds, which are not a part of the rule of Saint Augustine but which S. Caterina di Quarto continued to embrace well after 1247.[46]

Though other groups of women religious had religious men living nearby and perhaps serving them as priors, they were clearly women's houses. In S. Caterina, by contrast, both men and women were usually mentioned in any correspondence. The fact that both men and women played important roles in the monastery into the fourteenth century makes this group an anomaly.

In 1250, Innocent IV assigned the abbot of S. Procolo, a Benedictine monastery in Bologna, to look into the situation of S. Caterina. After receiving his preliminary report that a large number of men and women were present in that community, the pope ordered a more thorough inspection. He sent the bishop of Ferrara, the abbot of Columba and the archdeacon of Bologna to visit the monastery and charged them with ascertaining

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[45] ASB Dem. 3/4487 no. 29.

[46] ASB Dem 5/4489 no. 15. For more on changes to S. Caterina's rules and statutes, see Chapter 5, "Movement into the City," 169-176.

whether its inhabitants were living according to the Augustinian rule and especially with making sure that men and women lived in separate dormitories. The visitors attempted to relocate the women to San Giovanni di Castenaso, a nearby church. They tried unsuccessfully to convince the patrons of that church to allow the sisters to live there. The visitors decided, "forced as if by a certain necessity, that they both would live in the church of S. Caterina under one pastor, but separated from one another in different houses."[47] The inability to move the women to another location did not seem to have cost the community papal support. The group had apparently complained that the bishop was exacting excessive fees from them, and the visitors recommended that the pope confirm his protection of the house. Innocent decreed that the bishop and his successors could not receive more than a pound of wax per year from the house.[48]

The events of the visitation suggest that the visitors were reasonably satisfied at this point with the manner in which the inhabitants of S. Caterina conducted their lives. Though Innocent had already united several Augustinian communities in 1244, when he placed S. Caterina under the Augustinian rule in 1247, he does not appear to have included them in the Order of the Augustinian Hermits, since a nearby bishop, an abbot who was probably from a Cistercian house, and the archdeacon made up the visitation committee appointed by the pope on an ad hoc basis after the report of a local Benedictine abbot raised concern. If there had been any changes in the community's practices after Innocent made them Augustinian three years before, there is no evidence

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[47] "quasi quadam necessitate compulsi ut in ecclesia Sancte Caterine sub uno pastore divisis tamen domibus et abinvicem separatis pariter habetis." ASB Dem 4/4488 no. 12.

[48] ASB Dem 4/4488 no. 12.

for it in this document. More important to the group was the protection of the papacy, which would allow them to limit their obligations to the bishop.

The next visitation would not be far away. In 1259, Pope Alexander IV wrote to the canon lawyer and papal legate Henry of Segusio, commissioning him to look into two issues. First was the population of the monastery and whether the community's resources were sufficient to allow them to accept additional members. Second was the continuing use of the monastery's own statutes beyond those contained in the rule of Saint Augustine. Henry entrusted this task to the prior of S. Michele in Bosco, a local Augustinian house that was not affiliated with the Augustinian Hermits, but rather was subject to the bishop of Bologna.[49] The report led Henry to decide that the house could exceed the established limits for men (eight clerics and twenty-five laymen), but that the number of sisters should not be more than sixty.

Regarding the practices of S. Caterina that were not contained in the rule of Saint Augustine, Henry made several changes, mostly aimed at moderating some of the more ascetic practices. Under S. Caterina's statutes, the clerics dined separately from the laymen; they were ordered instead to dine together. Though neither the sisters nor the friars slept in beds, they were given permission to do so when traveling outside of the monastery.

In 1291, the community built a new house inside Bologna in the parish of S. Maria Maddalena. By this time, there were only a few men left. The prior of the

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[49] Paola Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi medievali a Bologna e nel suo territorio", in *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, II, ed. Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini (Bologna: Istituto per la Storia della Chiesa di Bologna, 1997), 481.

monastery became the parish priest for S. Maria Maddalena, and the convent was from this point sometimes called by its original name, sometimes called S. Maria Maddalena, and frequently referred to by both names combined. Though for a short time correspondence to the monastery continued to be addressed to the brothers and sisters of S. Caterina and S. Maria Maddalena, the house soon came to be seen as a nunnery. Perhaps because of the continuing presence of the prior, S. Caterina was much slower than many other Augustinian houses in seeking the aid of Dominicans or adopting their statutes. The first evidence that S. Caterina was becoming Dominican does not come until the fifteenth century.[50] In 1434, they are described as being Dominican, but in 1440 they are said to be Augustinian.[51] In 1468, S. Caterina united with S. Giovanni Battista, and both houses are Dominican.[52]

**Other Orders**

The strong Dominican presence in Bologna may explain the fact that there was only one successful house of the second order of the Franciscans founded in Bologna in the thirteenth century, the nunnery of S. Francesco.[53] In 1231, Giacomo Pizzolo gave

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[50] ASB Dem 16/4500 no. 18.

[51] Zarri, "I monasteri femminili," 175, n. 45.

[52] ASB Dem 17/4501 no. 20-21.

[53] Zarri, "I monasteri femminile." A second house called the Hermitesses della Catena was founded in 1287 outside one of the eastern gates, but few documents are left and it is not thought to have lasted very long. The next successful monastery of Clarissas, SS. Ludovico e Alessio, was founded in the 1336; it is the only female house founded in the first half of the fourteenth century to survive for longer than the life of the founder, and lasted until the mass suppressions during the Napoleonic invasion. The most famous nunnery for Poor Clares in Bologna, Corpus Domini, was founded by the Blessed Caterina de' Vigri in 1456.

five and a half tornatures of land into the care of the bishop, Enrico, on which he was to establish a "*collegium* of women who are to live according to the order and rule of the enclosed nuns of San Damiano of Assisi."[54] By 1257, Pope Alexander IV referred to the group as being "*ad Romanam ecclesiam nullo medio pertinens*", meaning that they were exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and under the direct protection of the Papal See.[55] The community grew in both numbers and endowment rapidly, and by 1273 there were over 50 professed nuns in San Francesco. Some of these nuns came from the most illustrious families in the city, such as the Lamberti and the Gozzadini families.[56]

As was the case with the Dominicans, the relationship between the Franciscan friars and the women of the Order of San Damiano was a source of tension. The Franciscan women were in the unique position of being part of an order with a foundress, Clare of Assisi. With Francis' help, Clare had entered the religious life in a Benedictine monastery, but wanted to live a life of true poverty, a condition that they believed did not obtain in a traditional Benedictine establishment. Francis then installed Clare and her sister, Agnes, at the church of San Damiano, and a community began to grow up around them. They did not have a rule for the first few years, but in 1215, Francis gave them the rule of Saint Benedict to follow and added other instructions to it.[57] Francis also helped

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[54] "...collegium mulierum que vivere debeant secundum ordinem et regulam monialium inclusarum apud sanctum damianum de assissio..." ASB Dem 1/5696 no. 3.

[55] ASB Dem 64/5759 no. 6.

[56] ASB Dem 1/5696 no. 22.

[57] John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 32-34. The instructions Francis left are no longer extant. What is known of them is gleaned from dietary restrictions in Clare's own rule and from a letter to Agnes of Bohemia.

Clare and her companions gain the right of poverty from Innocent III, allowing not only the individual sisters but also the community as a whole to eschew the gaining of assets.[58]

The prominence of the foundress in the early Franciscan movement did not necessarily make the relationship between the Franciscans and the Poor Clares easier to negotiate. The rule and the relationship between the Friars Minor and the Minoresses would be reconsidered several times in the thirteenth century. In the beginning Francis himself accepted the spiritual care of San Damiano, but he left it in the jurisdiction of the bishop. Later, S. Damiano and nunneries following the same way of life were entrusted to the care of Cardinal Ugolino, who became the order's Cardinal Protector. San Damiano enjoyed a special status, and the other nunneries were not given the same right of poverty. Though they all shared the rule of Saint Benedict, all other nunneries besides San Damiano were given a *formula vitae* issued by Ugolino in 1218.[59]

One of the problems with Ugolino's rule was that it did not specify the relationship between the Minoresses and the Friars Minor. The Cardinal Protector was charged with assigning chaplains, confessors, visitors, and other necessary personnel to care for the various nunneries that followed in the Order of San Damiano. These could be Friars Minor, but did not have to be, and often were not. As Pope Gregory IX, Ugolino would make several attempts to join the first and second orders of the Franciscan movement, as would his successor, Innocent IV. In 1247, Innocent even attempted to have the Order of San Damiano follow the same rule as the friars and to give the government of the nunneries to the officials of the Franciscan order, removing the

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[58] Moorman, 35.
[59] Fontette, 132.

Cardinal Protector from the picture. By 1250, however, the Cardinal Protector Raynaldi wrote a letter to the general chapter of the Friars Minor in which he demanded to be given back the supervision of the Order of San Damiano, and the friars consented.[60] Despite the fact that the Franciscans were not obliged to oversee houses of Poor Clares, in Bologna and many other places they did provide care to nuns. In the fourteenth century, S. Francesco supported a group of thirteen friars in residence near their nunnery, along with a male servant. The nuns provided the community of friars with food and a stipend of 340 Bolognese pounds.[61]

Not all new foundations wanted to be part of the mendicant movement. Among Benedictine houses founded in Bologna in the thirteenth century, several considered themselves Cistercian. The relationship between Cistercian monks and nuns goes back to the early years of the order. The nunnery at Jully, founded in 1113, housed wives and relatives of monks who had entered the houses of Molesme and Citeaux. Eventually a group of nuns from Jully would establish a new house at Tart, and in this they were probably aided by Citeaux's third abbot, Stephen Harding. It is likely that the nuns of Tart followed the same observance as their Cistercian brothers.[62] Other nunneries soon began to follow the institutions of Citeaux. Some of these were originally part of the congregations of Savigny and Obazine, which were both incorporated into the order around 1147. When those congregations were accepted as Cistercian, the nunneries began to follow Cistercian usages. In her history of a Cistercian nunnery in northeast

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[60] Fontette, *Les religieuses*, 134-136.
[61] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 412.
[62] Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, 1977), 347-348.

Italy, Catherine Boyd has outlined three different possibilities for the relationship between Cistercian nunneries and the order:

> "(1) Benedictine nunneries which voluntarily adopted the Cistercian observance and wore a modification of the Cistercian garb …; (2) nunneries affiliated with Benedictine or other monasteries for men which had joined the Cistercian order …; (3) nunneries such as Tart, which were founded under the auspices of Cistercian abbots, who introduced the Cistercian institutes and probably in most cases exercised some oversight of their affairs."[63]

Some of these nunneries organized into chapters that emulated the general chapter of the Cistercian order. In the late part of the twelfth century, the abbess of Tart became the head of an annual meeting of eighteen houses in Burgundy. Similarly, the abbey of Las Huelgas in Burgos, founded by King Alfonso VIII and Eleanor of Castille, became the mother house to other Cistercian nunneries in the kingdom and held its first general chapter in 1189. The first mention of Cistercian nuns in the records of the general chapter occurred when Alfonso asked the assembly to compel the nunneries who did not send representatives to the first meeting to do so in the future, but the Cistercians rejected this responsibility, arguing that they did not have jurisdiction over nuns.[64]

Whether the Cistercian general chapter accepted jurisdiction over nuns or not, there were in fact many nunneries that adopted the Cistercian *Carta Caritatis* and the Benedictine rule and considered themselves Cistercians. Many of these houses received assistance from neighboring houses of Cistercian monks.[65] In 1213, the chapter's third mention of Cistercian nuns referred to "nuns who are already incorporated into the

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[63] Catherine E. Boyd, *A Cistercian Nunnery in Medieval Italy: The Story of Rifreddo in Saluzzo, 1220-1300* (Cambridge, 1943), 80-81.

[64] Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 348-349.

[65] Fontette, *Les religieuses*, 30-31.

order"[66] decreeing that they should not leave their cloister and that only nunneries that observe strict cloister should be permitted into the order.[67] In 1220, the general chapter refused to admit any more nunneries whatsoever, and two years later asked the pope to stop admitting houses of women to the order.[68] These actions did not achieve the desired effect, and the 1220 statute had to be repeated in 1225 and 1228. In 1251, Innocent IV gave the Cistercians a privilege similar to the one he had granted the Dominicans in 1243 – he and his successors would not be able to incorporate new nunneries into the order without expressly mentioning the privilege and acknowledging that he was contravening the order's wishes.[69]

Though in Bologna there were at least three nunneries that considered themselves Cistercian, only one of them, S. Maria del Cestello, obtained incorporation into the order. Interestingly, the origins of the monastery date to 1251, the year that Innocent promised not to incorporate any new monasteries without a *non obstante* clause, which does not appear in S. Maria del Cestello's incorporation decree. Nevertheless, in June of the following year, Innocent incorporated S. Maria del Cestello into the Cistercian order and endowed it with all of the order's privileges, exempting it from episcopal jurisdiction and from payment of tithes.[70]

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[66] "moniales quae jam sunt incorporatae Ordini" Fontette, *Les religieuses*, p. 31, drawing from *Statuta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab Anno 1166 ad annum 1786*, ed. J. M. Canivez (Louvain, 1933), Vol I, 1213, 3.

[67] Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 349.

[68] Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 352.

[69] Fontette, *Les religieuses*, 32.

[70] "In primis siquidem statuentes ut ordo monasticus qui secundum deum et beati Benedicti regulam atque institutionem Cisterciensis fratrum a nobis post concilium

In 1266, the general chapter of the Cistercians ordered an inspection of S. Maria del Cestello to determine whether it met the order's standards for incorporation. If the delegation determined that the nunnery should be incorporated, the order said, it would be supervised by S. Maria of Columba. The order also stated that another name would have to be chosen for the house. The delegation was ordered to report back to the general chapter the following year. Ugo of Fonte Vivo and Enrico of S. Maria di Strada visited S. Maria del Cestello. "Having seen and inspected the building, the resources, the books and other things consistent with the character of our order," they wrote, "we judge that this monastery ought to be incorporated and unified into our order in spiritual and temporal matters...."[71] The visitors also proposed that the name of the house be changed to S. Maria delle Stelle (S. Mary of the Stars). There is no explicit rationale given for the importance of name change as part of the process of incorporation. Perhaps the Cistercians would accept the *cura monialium*, but were not comfortable with having the name of their order as part of the name of a nunnery, since "Cestello" was derived from "Citeaux". The name change seems not to have made much difference locally; all but a few of the documents in the nunnery's archive refer to the house by its original name. The agreement to incorporate the house was promulgated in the chapter room of the nunnery on August 4, 1268. The document lists the names of the house's inhabitants: the abbess Carità, the prioress Aldegarda, and twenty-four other nuns.

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generale susceptam in eodem monasterio institutus esse dinoscitur perpetuo ibidem temporibus inviobiliter observetur." ASB Dem 2/3244 no. 5.

[71] ASB Dem 2/3244 no. 11.

Though S. Maria del Cestello's incorporation demonstrates that the Cistercians were not able to block papal intervention and in some cases were willing to take on the care of new nunneries, there remained many nunneries that considered themselves Cistercian but remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop. Two other Cistercian houses were founded in the thirteenth century – S. Maria della Misericordia by the 1240's and S. Guglielmo around 1260. The earliest clear record of S. Maria della Misericordia's existence as a monastery is an indulgence from Innocent IV in 1244.[72] There is an earlier record of a bequest of land and money to the church of S. Maria della Misericordia, but it is not clear whether there was a community of nuns at the church at this point.[73] By 1245, there were at least seventeen nuns living in the convent.[74]

If S. Maria della Misericordia ever attempted to gain affiliation with the Cistercian order, there is no record of it in the convent's archive. The necessity of obtaining the bishop's confirmation of abbess's elections indicated that they remained under the bishop's jurisdiction.[75] Though they were excused from paying tithes such as the one imposed to help support the Kingdom of Sicily, it was by reason of their poverty and not of any exemption they may have had as a result of being part of the Cistercian order.[76]

While many of the nunneries discussed so far had some changes in their observance or for some period of time occupied space in the interstices of the orders,

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[72] ASB Dem 2/3244 no. 1.
[73] ASB Dem 8/3250 no. 3.
[74] ASB Dem 8/3250 no. 5.
[75] ASB Dem. 9/3251 no. 4.
[76] ASB Dem. 9/3251 no. 1.

some had more pronounced changes than others. Two such houses were S. Nicolò di Carpineta, originally a Benedictine nunnery, and S. Guglielmo, a Cistercian house. S. Nicolò di Carpineta was founded around 1264 as a Benedictine house. Unlike other new Benedictine monasteries in Bologna around the middle of the thirteenth century, there is no sign that it adopted the Cistercian constitution. In that year, three sisters professed the rule of Saint Benedict. All were daughters of a man about whom nothing is known but his name, Auliviero. The sisters made their vow to the prior of S. Maria Nova di Treviso, but came under the protection and supervision of S. Nicolò di Lido di Venezia.[77]

The first residence of these sisters was outside the city walls, near the Porta Maggiore on the southeast side of town. They lived there until the last decade of the thirteenth century, when they moved to a monastery inside the walls. This new house had been the abode of the Carmelites of S. Nicolò di Avesa, which the friars abandoned in 1292 to move to a new monastery. The sisters of S. Nicolò were living in their new abode by 1297.[78] By 1306, there were thirteen women living in the monastery.[79]

Sometime during the early years of the fourteenth century, the sisters of S. Nicolò decided to abandon the rule of Saint Benedict and follow instead the rule of Saint Augustine. Three separate documents from December 1317 describe S. Nicolò as

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[77] Zarri, "I monasteri femminili", 213.

[78] Zarri, "I monasteri femminili", 212-213, n. 246. Zarri uses ASB Dem. 1/3483 no. 1 in the archive of S. Martino, the friar's new monastery ,for the last date the friars were living in S. Nicolò di Avesa and ASB Dem. 2/3484 no. 31 to approximate the arrival of the sisters at the church.

[79] ASB Dem 1/735 no. 15. The new monastery was next to the Campo del Mercato, and from this point on, S. Nicolò di Carpineta is also referred to as S. Nicolò del Campo del Mercato.

belonging to the Order of Saint Augustine. These documents also list the names of the ten inhabitants of the house.[80] Unfortunately, since the records that exist from this period are all property transactions, it is not possible to determine the reason for the change in rule. It would not last, however. By 1322, the new monastery was ruined when the Aposa River flooded its banks. At this time, the sisters chose to unite with another nunnery, S. Guglielmo, which followed the rule of Saint Benedict and the constitution of the Cistercians. In Pope John XXII's bull permitting the union, it seems that this union happened at the volition of the sisters of S. Nicolò. Part of the bull seems to reflect a petition sent to him by the sisters. He says that "the prioress, sisters and convent desire to transfer themselves to the rule of Saint Benedict in order to lead a more austere life, and humbly serving Christ, their heavenly husband," they might receive mercy.[81]

S. Guglielmo, however, did not remain Cistercian. Though the nuns there followed the rule of Saint Benedict throughout the fourteenth century, probably encompassing the lifespan of the women who chose to unite with the house in part because of its Benedictine observance, sometime in the early fifteenth century, S. Guglielmo became Augustinian. The documents from this period do not indicate a reason for the change.[82] By 1460, S. Guglielmo had again taken up the Benedictine rule, though it is not clear whether they considered themselves Cistercian again at this point.[83] Finally, in 1506, they were reformed by the combined Dominican house of S. Giovanni

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[80] ASB Dem 1/735 nos. 21, 22, 23.

[81] "Priorissa sorores et conventus cupiant ad beati benedicti regulam se tranferre ut in ipsam austeriorem vitam ducentes et Christo ipsarum celesti sponso humiliter famulantes..." ASB Dem. 1/735 no. 34.

[82] ASB Dem. 3/737 no. 23.

[83] ASB Dem. 4/738 no. 2.

Battista and S. Caterina. From this point on, they remained Dominican until their suppression in 1799 during the Napoleonic invasion.[84]

**Conclusions**

In Bologna, a few women's houses such as S. Agnese, S. Francesco and S. Maria del Cestello had a strong and immediate identification with one of the major international orders – the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Cistercians, respectively. S. Agnese and S. Maria del Cestello obtained official recognition from those orders by appealing to the Holy See.

The popes tried systematically, but not always successfully, to find a place for women's houses in monastic orders. Especially in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council, popes such as Gregory IX, Innocent IV and Alexander IV endeavored to find a compromise between nunneries that wanted to receive care and official recognition from monks and friars who professed the same rule and constitution as they did on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the monastic orders that resisted responsibility for religious women, fearing that obligations to nuns would be a source of distraction and even temptation. Complicating this picture, it is clear that there were male religious who, against the wishes of their superiors, still maintained ties to houses of religious women. There were also nunneries that remained under episcopal jurisdiction and either did not seek or did not attain a more formal affiliation with monastic orders. Some of these houses, for various reasons that can only rarely be perceived in existing records, fluctuated not only among orders, but also between rules. Finally, communities such as

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[84] Zarri, "I monasteri femminili," 187.

S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and S. Mattia were able for long periods of time to defend their autonomy against both the bishops and the monastic orders.

Despite the efforts of Innocent III and his successors to bring order to the messy landscape of monasticism, difficulties persisted, especially with regard to women's religious affiliation. Though some nunneries identified strongly with an order and fought for recognition, for many houses this was not the case, and ties to a religious order were not necessarily strong or stable. Especially in the case of nunneries that predated the Fourth Lateran council or had been a part of an earlier local congregation, existing traditions and privileges remained important. Though these communities tended to have some ties to the Dominicans, the relationship between them and the Order of Preachers would not be clarified until the fifteenth century.

Nunneries with sufficient prestige could seek to enhance their status either by arguing for their inclusion as part of a monastic order, or by maintaining their uniqueness. Diana d'Andolo attempted to secure the inclusion of S. Agnese in the Dominican Order, thereby allowing her nunnery to participate in the spiritual prestige of close association with Dominic and his followers. By contrast, another strategy was to use privileges to assert the uniqueness of the community, as did S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and S. Mattia, as they resisted acknowledging their subordination to anyone but the pope and his representatives. Similarly, S. Caterina attempted to maintain its status as the head of its own congregation. Most communities of religious women, however, did not have a basis on which to pursue either of these strategies, and remained on the margins of religious orders.

# CHAPTER 5

## MOVEMENT INTO THE CITY

A woman's profession in a nunnery did not mean that she would remain in the same building for her entire life. Women sometimes left their nunnery to form a new community, or to move to a building in a more advantageous location. Other times the poor condition of a nunnery's building due to age or destruction by war forced them to seek other quarters. The history of the combined nunnery of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and S. Mattia is illustrative of the circumstances that could lead to movement by choice or by necessity. In 1249, three women from the double house of SS. Trinità di Ronzano, which was located a few miles from the city of Bologna, moved from their original monastery to the depopulated oratory of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, which was also at a distance from the city.[1] They soon began to attract new recruits, and, only five years after they moved to their new location, received a bequest of land in the suburbs of Bologna just outside the Porta Saragozza of Bologna's newly constructed wall and built the nunnery of S. Mattia.[2] They first built a nunnery at S. Mattia in the 1250s, and then in the 1290s built a church.[3] Though S. Mattia would become the primary home for most of the nunnery's population, the nuns kept S. Maria del Monte della Guardia as a retreat and probably emphasized their ties to it in order to maintain its privilege of direct

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[1] G. Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano e memorie di Loderingo d'Andalò frate Gaudente*, (Bologna: Società Tipografica Bolognese, 1851), 130-131; Gabriella Zarri, "Monasteri femminile a Bologna tra il XIII e il XVIII secolo," *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna*, XXVI (1973), 198.

[2] ASB Dem 5/5766 no. 8.

[3] ASB Dem 7/5768, not numbered, dated August 29, 1294.

protection of the papacy, and to claim this privilege for their suburban nunnery. The nuns remained at S. Mattia until their nunnery was destroyed in a war in 1357, at which time they moved to a new location on the Via S. Isaia inside the city walls.[4] During the century between the initial move to S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and the final relocation to the second location of S. Mattia on the via St. Isaia, this group of nuns was required to spend a great deal of time, effort and money on building and maintaining an adequate and safe domicile.

Though other communities did not move as often as S. Maria del Monte della Guardia and S. Mattia, their story fits a pattern of building and relocating that did occur in the population of Bolognese nunneries as a whole. The growth and decline of the number of nunneries in Bologna had four distinct phases. In the early phases of monastic building in Bologna, the location of the religious house and the time during which it was built gives important information about its devotional inclinations. Traditional Benedictine houses built in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries were located adjacent to the city, just outside the inner wall but inside the area soon to be encircled by the second wall that would be built in the mid-twelfth century. Four houses fit this description: S. Columbano, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, S. Margherita, and SS. Vitale e Agricola, which were all established by the 1110s.[5] The exception was S. Cristina di Stifonte, one of the first nunneries of the nascent Camaldolese order of Benedictines; S. Cristina was established over twelve miles from the city.

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[4] Giuseppe Guidicini, *Cose Notabili della Città di Bologna*, 5 vols., (Bologna: A. Forni, 1980 [1868]), II: 299; Zarri, 210.

[5] Gabriella Zarri, 177, 183-184, 190-191, 218-219.

After this initial period in which these Benedictine nunneries were built in the suburbs, new religious establishments that housed women tended to be ascetic groups that followed a rule other than those of Augustine or Benedict, and which usually also included men. These religious houses were built at a distance from the city. The houses founded during this period were S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, SS. Trinità di Ronzano and S. Caterina di Quarto.[6] S. Maria del Monte della Guardia was founded by a hermitess in 1193 and eventually also housed a group of priests or canons.[7] S. Caterina di Quarto, founded in 1205, also contained both men and women and would form the basis for a small congregation that would follow their community's form of life. S. Caterina was founded in the year 1205. The details of SS. Trinità di Ronzano's early years are less sure. Although some accounts place the group's foundation in the 1140s, no contemporary documents survive from that period for SS. Trinità– the first records date to the first decade of the thirteenth century.[8] The exception to the rural trend in this period is again a Camaldolese house, S. Maria di Biliemme, which was founded in the suburbs of Bologna in the last years of the twelfth century.

A third phase of building concentrated around the city gates, both inside and just outside the city walls, began with the construction of the Dominican nunnery of S. Agnese in the Bolognese suburbs in 1223.[9] This was the first house built after the arrival of the mendicant orders. The founder of this nunnery, Diana d'Andolò, originally fled to the rural community of SS. Trinità, but chose to leave it to establish her own house that

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[6] For more on the foundations of these nunneries, see Chapter 3.
[7] Zarri, 196, 217-218.
[8] Gozzadini, 10-11.
[9] Zarri, 166.

would be part of the Order of Preachers.[10] The growth of the mendicant orders in general, and the Dominican Order in particular, in Bologna coincided with greater emphasis on building in the city and in the suburbs just outside the walls. This phase of growth would last until the end of the thirteenth century. During this time, not only were new nunneries established in the city and suburbs, but the older establishments that had been located in the rural area, or the *contado*, controlled by Bologna would all find new homes closer to the city. The relocations of these rural establishments were partially motivated by the need to compete with urban and suburban nunneries for recruits and donations.

The building of new nunneries in the city in the thirteenth century occurred because growth and vibrancy of the city exercised a positive attraction on communities of nuns as well as on others who moved in and contributed to Bologna's expansion. By contrast, in the fourth and final phase of building and movement of nunneries, religious communities fled the warfare of the *contado* and sought refuge within the city walls. This phase took place from the mid-fourteenth century and persisted into the fifteenth century. This period was not a time of growth. The number of nunneries declined, even with the foundation of a few new houses. Security was the main catalyst for these moves; the constant war among cities made it unsafe for many of the communities that had remained outside of the city walls during the thirteenth century to continue to live in the *contado* and the suburbs.

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[10] See Chapter 4, 124-127, on Diana's relationship with Dominic and his successor, Jordan of Saxony, as well as on her attempts to attain incorporation of her nunnery into the Dominican Order.

Table 5.1 shows the number of nunneries inside the city walls, in the suburbs just outside of the city, and in the contado at 50-year intervals.[11] Table 5.2 shows the fluctuation in the number of nunneries, taking into account both the foundation of new houses and suppressions or extinction of existing nunneries. At its peak in the late thirteenth century, there were thirty-five nunneries in Bologna and its surrounding area, of which fifteen were located within the city walls and sixteen were in the suburban area, with the remaining four in the *contado*. From this point in time, the number of urban nunneries would remain relatively stable, despite a slight dip in the first half of the fourteenth century. The suburban nunneries, however, would continue to decline in number. In the first half of the fourteenth century, only one new suburban nunnery was founded, while six folded for various reasons. Even within the perimeter of the city, there were still dangers. One nunnery, S. Maria del Cestello, was located within the urban area, but at a point where the walls were not yet finished. It was also next to a fortress that was a site where fighting frequently occurred. It is not clear whether the nunnery suffered actual damages, but the nuns did not feel secure in that location and chose to move to a safer area inside the wall on the Via Castiglione.[12]

Another large decrease in the number of suburban nunneries occurred in the first half of the fifteenth century. In 1400, there were 10 nunneries in the area immediately outside the city walls. By 1450, only four of these remained. Much of this decline was due to fighting between Bologna and other city-states, principally Ferrara. Some of the

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[11] Much of the information for this table is drawn from Zarri, 166-219. The closest nunnery in the contado is S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, which is approximately 2 km from the last circle of the city's walls.

[12] ASB Dem 7/3249 no. 3.

nunneries that had been located outside the walls were able to find new locations within the city. By this time, only one establishment survived in the contado (S. Maria del Monte della Guardia), and it was not autonomous, but rather was part of S. Mattia, a nunnery whose main residence had moved into the city from the suburbs in the mid-fourteenth century. S. Maria del Monte della Guardia served as an oratory where small numbers of nuns from S. Mattia could retreat for prayer, and thus was probably not continuously occupied as a nunnery. Thus, by the end of the fifteenth century, the vast majority of nunneries existed inside the city walls.

**Table 5.1 – Total number of nunneries in Bologna by location**

| Year | 1100 | 1150 | 1200 | 1250 | 1300 | 1350 | 1400 | 1450 | 1500 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| City | | 4 | 4 | 9 | 15 | 13 | 16 | 17 | 16 |
| Suburb | | 0 | 1 | 7 | 16 | 11 | 10 | 4 | 5 |
| Contado | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 4* | 2* | 2* | 1* | 1* |
| Total | 1 | 5 | 8 | 21 | 35 | 26 | 28 | 22 | 22 |

*After 1254, one of these nunneries in the contado, S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, was a rural oratory for a suburban nunnery, S. Mattia.

**Table 5.2 Change in number of nunneries by location**

| Year | 1100 | 1150 | 1200 | 1250 | 1300 | 1350 | 1400 | 1450 | 1500 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| City | | +4 | | +5 | +6 | +3/-5 | +3 | +1 | +1/-2 |
| Suburb | | | +1 | +6 | +9 | +1/-6 | +1/-2 | -6 | +1 |
| Contado | +1 | | +2 | +3/-1 | +2/-3 | -2 | | -1 | |
| Total | +1 | +4 | +3 | +13 | +14 | -9 | +2 | -6 | 0 |

Positive numbers indicate the number of new foundations and recently relocated nunneries in an area; negative numbers indicate the number of suppressions and nunneries that move away from the area.

Whether because of attraction to the urban environment in the thirteenth century or because of need for the protection that the city walls provided in the fourteenth and

fifteenth centuries, many nunneries moved from their original location to within the city walls. An investigation of the effects that these moves had on religious communities highlights the precariousness of women's monastic life. For some ascetic, rural religious groups, the change in environment coincided with reforms and changes in monastic rule that made them conform to practices like those of other urban nunneries and tended to align them with the Augustinian and Dominican orders. In many cases throughout the period under investigation, issues involving the communities' original property continued to arise. The groups also incurred the additional expense of building. Moreover, once in the city, competition for resources among monastics could lead to further instability, as some older nunneries with houses in poor repair due to war or age sought to gain newer nunneries for themselves.

**Physical layout of Bologna**

In Bologna, three circuits inside the city correspond to three sets of walls. The innermost area is a very small rectangle defined by an eighth-century wall. It was referred to as the *cerchia delle "Quattro Croci"* after four crosses and chapels just outside the wall.[13] The vast majority of the religious establishments within this circle are parish churches; the Celestines established the only monastery in this zone in 1358.[14] The Bolognese built the second wall, later called the *cerchia penultima*, while they

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[13] Rolando Dondarini, *Bologna medievale nella storia delle città* (Bologna: Pàtron editore, 2000), 140-144.

[14] Augusto Vasina, "Chiesa e comunità dei fedeli nella diocesi di Bologna dal XII al XV secolo," in *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini, eds. (Bologna: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), I: 133.

fought as a member of the Lombard League against Frederick Barbarossa in the twelfth century. The wall built at this time may have been a reconstruction of an earlier fortification.[15] In the area between the first and second walls, there were only four nunneries, all of which existed at the time of the wall's construction. At least fourteen monasteries were also in this circle, including the prestigious abbey of S. Stefano. Though some of these communities of religious men existed when the walls were built, others established themselves in this area after the city had expanded in the thirteenth century. By contrast, no nunneries were founded in this area after the next circle of walls was built, indicating that women religious did not have the economic resources to acquire property for nunneries in the more sought-after urban center, or could not get permission from parish priests to establish communities in this area, whereas religious men could and did do so. The Bolognese began construction the last perimeter, called the *circla* or the *cerchia ultima*, as a moat with a wooden barrier (*palancato*) during the Second Lombard League's battle against Emperor Frederick II in the mid-thirteenth century. They reinforced it with stone during the fourteenth century, leaving sections of the barrier open during construction.[16] The vast majority of urban nunneries and male monasteries exist inside this perimeter.[17] In addition, several nunneries were located just outside the gates in this outermost wall, a number reaching sixteen at its peak in 1300. At a distance from the city gates were a few religious houses, mostly founded in the late twelfth and early

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[15] Dondarini, 146-150.
[16] Dondarini, 150-155.
[17] Vasina, 135.

thirteenth centuries. These began to decline in number after 1250, as their inhabitants founded new establishments in the city or the suburbs.

**The thirteenth century and *inurbimento***

The first nunnery to move from the contado to the city was S. Cristina di Stifonte, which became known as S. Cristina della Fondazza once it moved into its new house on the via della Fondazza. An important Camaldolese nunnery, S. Cristina was originally located far from the city, approximately twelve miles southeast of Bologna in an area known as Ozzano.[18] Founded in 1097, it was one of the earliest nunneries of the order. Its first abbess, Mathilda, was the daughter of the patrons of the first Camaldolese nunnery, S. Pietro di Luco in Florence, though the precise relationship between the two houses is unclear.[19]

In March of 1245, the nuns of S. Cristina decided to move into the city. In that year, the bishop of Bologna, Giacomo Boncambio, blessed the first stone of their new church and monastery, located southeast quarter of the *cerchia ultima*.[20] Though neither the nuns nor the bishop ever articulated a reason for S. Cristina's move, it follows a general pattern for Camaldolese in that era – the transformation of that order from one based on rural eremitic settlements to urban cenobitic houses:

> Cities held a powerful attraction over monks, which led to the multiplication of suburban and urban monasteries, and also to the participation of monastic

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[18] Zarri, 178.

[19] Cécile Caby, *De L'érémitisme rural au monachisme urbain: Les Camaldules en Italie à la fin du moyen âge* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1999), 108-109.

[20] G. B. Mittarelli and A. Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses Ordini Sancti Benedicti*, 9 vols. (Farnborough: Gregg, 1970 [1758]), VI: col. 586.

> communities in the social, religious and economic life of urban centers. This phenomenon, described in Italian as *inurbimento*, a term consecrated in historiography, is part of a general movement of attraction to the city and affirmation of the hegemony of urban centers over the *contado*, one of the best studied manifestations of which is the immigration of rural populations toward the city.[21]

Like their monastic brethren, Camaldolese nuns tended to move their houses to the city. New orders in this period, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans, also founded houses for friars and nuns inside the city century or just outside the walls.

One of the difficulties for S. Cristina caused by the move from a rural to an urban setting is a dispute over the relationship between the nuns and the bishop. As a member of the Order of Camaldoli, S. Cristina had enjoyed a papal privilege exempting it from episcopal oversight. When the nuns moved into the city and began to build their new house, the bishop dedicated the first stone. By accepting the bishop's authority to perform this symbolic act, the nuns agreed to submit themselves to the bishop's jurisdiction and to pay him an annual sum of a pound of wax.[22] In June of 1246, the order appointed two officials, Jacobus and Peter, to visit the nunnery. They rebuked the nuns for having agreed to this. The following year, the bishop allowed the nuns of S.

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[21] Caby, 4-5. This trend was not only true of Camaldolese in Italy; there is a clear relationship between the growth of cities and the development of the mendicant orders. For more on the growth of urban monasticism in France, see J. Le Goff, "Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: l'implantation des orders mendiants, programme-questionnaire pour un enquête," *Annales ESC*, vol. 23, no.2 (1968), 335-348; Le Goff, "Ordres Mendiants et urbanization dans la France médiévale," *Annales ESC*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1970), 924-946; For Italy, specifically the relationship between the city and the mendicant orders, see Enrico Guidoni, "Città e ordini mendicanti: Il ruolo dei conventi nella crescita e nella progettazione urbana del XIII e XIV secolo", *Quaderni medievali*, vol. 4 (1977), 69-106; and Gregorio Penco, "Un aspetto della società medievale italiana: Il rapporto monasteri-città", *Benedictina*, anno. 26 fasc. 1, 1-17.

[22] Mittarelli, IV: cols. 586-587.

Cristina di Stifonte to move to their new nunnery of S. Cristina della Fondazza and required them to continue to pay the census fee of a pound of wax because of his role in founding the new house.[23] They were allowed, however, to retain the exemption that they had enjoyed in their original location.[24]

S. Cristina was not the only community in the Camaldolese order that transferred from its rural origins to a new house in the city, as described in Cécile Caby's discussion of the general change in the nature of the Camaldolese Order. The hermit Romuald founded a settlement that would be the beginning of the Camaldolese Order, a semi-eremitic order, in the eleventh century. In the same community, some members would be hermits who were reclusive in their cells, some lived in cells but took meals with other monks, and some may have lived in a common dormitory and ate in a common room. The central house of the order was a hermitage, Camaldoli, in the province of Arezzo. While many Camaldolese houses remained in the contado of northern Italian cities and continued to be built at a distance from urban areas, a sizable percentage of foundations were urban, and these tended to be more cenobitic, though urban hermitages did exist.[25] Houses of nuns differed from their male counterparts in that they were entirely cenobitic. Early nunneries tended to be located in rural areas, but by the late twelfth century, some nunneries were founded close to cities, and in the thirteenth century, many rural nunneries moved into cities or suburbs. For example, in Tuscany the first nunnery to move from the contado into Florence did so in 1257; this first transfer was followed by a

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[23] Mittarelli, IV, 370.
[24] Caby, 242.
[25] Caby, 207-234.

number of others continuing into the fourteenth century, including the nunnery that gave birth to S. Cristina, S. Pietro di Luco, which built a new house in Florence when its old one was destroyed in war in 1354.[26]

While the population of S. Cristina transferred to the city en masse, another rural house, Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, a double house and a member of the congregation of S. Marco of Mantua, gave rise to several new communities when colonies of women broke off from it and built new houses in the city and suburbs. The colonies moved from SS. Trinità to found new houses in the city or to re-establish depopulated nunneries. In 1239, three sisters formed the first group to leave SS. Trinità. These sisters established the house of S. Giovanni Battista, which quickly adopted the statutes of the Dominican Order; indeed, their inclinations toward the Dominican order may have been the reason they decided to leave SS. Trinità. The sisters built their new nunnery on the via S. Isaia in the borgo S. Isaia, an area that was at that time a suburb of the southwestern part of the city but that would soon be included in the perimeter of the third and final wall.[27]

The next group to leave SS. Trinità was also made up of three women who left the nunnery, probably answering an appeal from the remaining canon living in the foundation on the Monte della Guardia, slightly closer to the city than SS. Trinità but still at a distance from the city. They were allowed to move to that location to re-establish the house of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia in 1249.[28] But S. Maria del Monte would not be their primary residence for long. In 1254, the nuns of S. Maria del Monte della

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[26] Caby, 235-243.
[27] ASB Dem 3/4487 no. 11. See Chapters 3 and 4.
[28] Gozzadini, p. 16.

Guardia received a bequest from the estate of Emma, daughter of Canonico di Saragozza.[29] They decided to build a new nunnery on the suburban land they had inherited from Emma. They named this new house S. Mattia, and some of the sisters from the original house on the Monte della Guardia moved into the new nunnery in town.[30] They shared a prioress, and both houses were usually mentioned in any correspondence to the community.

In addition to building the house in which the nuns lived, the sisters of S. Mattia also needed to build a church. Perhaps due to finances, they were not able to do this immediately; rather, they waited until the 1290s. In 1294, Teodorico, bishop of Cervia blessed the first stone of their new church on the order of the papal legate Hildebrand.[31] By ensuring that the bishop of Bologna was not involved in the groundbreaking for their new church and that the bishop of Cervia was acting as a papal representative, S. Mattia guarded against challenges to their exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. During the years between the building of the convent and that of the church, several bishops issued indulgences to the faithful of their diocese if they would visit S. Mattia and give alms to help in the construction of the new facility. In May of 1271, Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna sent out a request "to all archbishops and bishops to whom this letter will come" to issue indulgences to aid S. Mattia."[32] In his request, he told his readers that

> the monastery and church of S. Mattia the Apostle is being built near the moat of the city of Bologna outside of the Borgo S. Caterina on a public street, in which

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[29] Guidicini, II: 299.
[30] Guidicini, II: 299-302.
[31] ASB Dem 7/5768, not numbered, dated August 29, 1294.
[32] "universes archiepiscopis et episcopis ad quos littere presentes advenerit..." ASB Dem 6/5767 no. 7.

> the noble ladies, religious sisters of the order of the blessed Augustine in order to carry out penance remain during their lives in celebration of divine things, and conducting prayers and untiring vigils for the salvations of their own souls and the souls of others of Christ's faithful....[33]

In the next few years, at least seven prelates would issue indulgences to those who visited S. Mattia and gave alms, including Pope Gregory X.[34]

Following the foundations of S. Giovanni Battista and the repopulation of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, the final colony left SS. Trinità di Ronzano in 1265, the year the monastery was turned over to the military order of the Frati Gaudenti. These women moved into a house that had been abandoned in the previous decade by a group of Benedictine monks who had chosen to unite with another house of Augustinian hermits.[35] For a few years, the nuns continued to follow the rule of their former nunnery, but sometime in the fourteenth century adopted the Augustinian rule and the statutes of the Dominican Order.[36]

For all three of these groups of women, the move from SS. Trinità to a new urban or suburban nunnery was followed by a change of rule from that of St. Mark of Mantua, the rule of their original home, to the Augustinian rule and perhaps the statutes of the Dominican order. The move of another rural nunnery, S. Caterina, to the city was also accompanied by changes in the rule and in the nature of the community itself. On January

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[33] "quod cum monasterium et ecclesia sancti mathie apostoli apud foveam civitatis Bononiensis extra burgum sancti katrine supra stratam publicam sit contructum in quo nobiles domine religiose sorores ordinis beati augustini ad gerendam penitenciam commorantur vitam suam celebracioni divinorum et oracionum et vigiliis assidue deducentes pro suarum et aliorum Christi fidelium animarum salute et locus ipse et ecclesia tam earundem." ASB Dem 6/5767 no. 7.

[34] ASB Dem 6/5767 nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 6, 10, 32.

[35] Zarri, 208.

[36] Gozzadini, 17.

3 of 1291, the bishop of Bologna's vicar, Leonardo of Cesena, gave the *magistra,* friars and sisters of S. Caterina the right to alienate property and to assume debt in order to build a new nunnery near the church of S. Maria Maddelena.[37] They moved into the city that same year.

This was not the first attempt to move at least part of the population of S. Caterina di Quarto. In 1250, the pope sent the abbot of a nearby monastery to investigate and reform the community of Santa Caterina. The main issue of the visit was to ascertain that the men and women were living in separate houses. The letter from Pope Innocent IV to the prior of Santa Caterina explains that the inquisitor wanted to move the women to the nearby church of San Giovanni di Castenaso, but could not gain the approval of that church's clergy and patrons.[38] Innocent therefore decided to allow the brothers and sisters to remain at Santa Caterina under one pastor, but they were to live in different houses and to remain separated from one another.[39]

Nine years later, Innocent's successor, Pope Alexander IV, instructed his legate, Cardinal Henry of Segusio, to investigate the church again regarding two issues. One was the number of inhabitants, which was growing too large for the foundation's means, and the other was the existence of statutes or practices outside of the Augustinian rule.

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[37] "ut in ea possint predicte sorores liberius et habilius cum aliis familiaribus sibi necessariis permanere nec non et pro aliis utilitatibus et necessitatibus dicti mon. et sorores et maxime pro expensis necessariis ut faciendis circa translationem monasterii et domorum et personarum ipsius." ASB Dem 7/4491 no. 13.

[38] "Verum quia iuxta quod disponere proposuerant ut milieres in ecclesia Sancti Johannis de Castinesio viribue in ecclesia Sancte Caterina manerent seorsum quorumdam patronorum ecclesie sancti Johanis pertinacia non permisit. Statuentes quasi quadam necessitate conpulsi ut in ecclesia sancte Caterine sub uno pastore diversis tamen domibus et abinvicem separatis periter habitetis." ASB Dem 4/4488 no. 12.

[39] ASB Dem 4/4488 no. 12.

The legate again sent the abbot of a nearby monastery to look into matters. The investigator found eight clerics, twenty-five lay brothers (*conversi*), and sixty sisters. After receiving the report and consulting with others, Henry decreed that new clerics or lay brothers could be accepted into the monastery, "lest by their absence the worship of the Divine Name seem to grow cold," but ordered that no more women be accepted into the church.[40] Thus it appears that despite the larger number of women in the house, the legate considered the priests and lay brothers to be the heart of the community.

Regarding the customs of the monastery that were not part of the Augustinian rule, he also modified some of the more austere practices. For instance, when one of them, either male or female, might leave the grounds after getting the required permission from the prior, if they were to stay overnight as a guest, they were now to be allowed to sleep in a bed, though they had previously been refused this comfort:

> When any of you, whether friars or sisters, undertake to leave the monastery for a legitimate cause after obtaining the necessary permission, or perhaps by the authority of your superior you will be sent out, so that it will not seem burdensome to those who will have received you as guests out of reverence for God, that they have prepared a bed for you that you nevertheless do not use because of your zeal, … with thanksgiving, you may lie in an honest bed that will be prepared for you….[41]

In this modification of S. Caterina's practices, Henry placed emphasis on the necessity of receiving hospitality graciously, which for him superseded some concerns of religious

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[40] "ne per horum absentiam videatur in dicito monasterio cultus divini nominis refrigere" ASB Dem. 5/4489 no. 15.

[41] "Ceterum cum vos tam fratres quam sorores extra monasterium vestrum obtenta debita licentia ex aliqua iusta causa egredi contingerit vel forsan superioris vestri auctoritate missi fueritis/ ne fortasse hiis qui ob dei reverentiam in hospitis suis vos receperint videamini onerosi/ ut in lectis pro vobis nullo tamen per vos studio adhibito preparatis … in lectis honestis sicut vobis paratum fuerit cum gratiarum actionibus iacere possitis…." ASB Dem. 5/4489 no. 15.

fervor. He implies that both men and women may have reason to leave the monastic community on travels that require overnight lodging. His inclusion of this provision among a list of seven changes to S. Caterina's practices indicates that the issue of accommodations during travel, for both men and women, arose often enough to merit comment.[42]

Finally in 1291, the residents of S. Caterina de Quarto moved into the parish of S. Maria Maddelena, inside the walls of Bologna, a union between S. Caterina and the parish church.[43] Though the brothers moved into town along with the sisters, their numbers dwindled and soon S. Caterina was a house of nuns with a prior at its head and some conversi associated with it, in spite of the emphasis in 1259 on maintaining or enlarging male portion of the community. Like S. Mattia e S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, the group was frequently referred to by the combined names of the original nunnery and their new location.[44]

As with the rule change in the mid-13th century, the transfer of location was followed by a few re-examinations of the church's constitutions and statutes, both of which resulted in increased specificity regarding the behavior prescribed for the sisters. Both modifications of the constitution occurred in the wake of papal or diocesan reforms

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[42] Of the seven changes in practice prescribed by the legate, three concerned vestments one concerned the litany for the men, one mandated that both clerical and lay men should hold a chapter meeting once a week, and one stated that the statutes should be read in the men's refectory every day. The decrees concerning vestments stated that the inhabitants of S. Caterina should wear brown vestments (*vestimenta brunelli*), that men were allowed to wear garments made of lamb, and women could wear garments of any hide except for goat. ASB Dem 5/4489 no. 15.

[43] For a discussion of unions and suppressions of nunneries, see chapter 6.

[44] ASB Dem. 7/4491 no. 14.

regulating nuns. The first of the changes of S. Caterina's statutes in the years after its move into the city occurred in 1298, the same year that the pope, Boniface VIII, issued the bull *Pericoloso*, which ordered stricter regulation of enclosure for women's communities. Whereas the previous standard for nunneries following either the Benedictine or the Augustinian rule had been that a nun would travel with the permission of the abbess and in the company of older, trusted sisters, *Pericoloso* specifically allows only two circumstances in which a nun might leave the cloister. One permitted reason was in the event that the abbess or a representative of the house was required to pledge an oath such as fealty to a lord. Even in this case, Boniface preferred that a procurator act in the abbess's place if at all possible. The only other circumstance under which a nun was permitted to leave the enclosure was if she had an illness that would make it dangerous for her to remain in the cloister.[45]

The contents of Santa Caterina's 1298 statute modification demonstrate the growing discrepancy between the regulation and mobility of monks and nuns. Even after its move, regulations for S. Caterina still included rules for both women and men. Whereas the constitution forty years earlier had allowed both brothers and sisters to travel, in the 1298 statutes, only brothers are mentioned in any provisions that pertain to behavior outside the monastery or reasons for leaving.[46] In discussing the relations of the

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[45] Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Pericoloso and its commentators, 1298-1545* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 131-2.

[46] A provision regarding behavior outside the monastery in the 1259 constitution reads "Ceterum cum vos tam fratres quam sorores extra monasterium vestrum obtenta debita licentia ex aliqua iusta causa egredi..." ASB Dem 5/4489 no. 15; in 1298 a similar

women to the outside world, the constitution assumed that the sisters will remain in the cloister and that their contact with others would take place in the context of receiving guests into a hostel inside the church compound but outside the cloister. This duty is performed by the *magistra*, the female head, accompanied by two or three older, trustworthy sisters. The prior is allowed to enter the sisters' cloister once or twice a month for hearing confession or for providing other sacraments to the sisters.[47]

The meeting at which these statutes were given took place in the choir of the sisters' church, and was attended by the prior and three brothers, the *magistra* and an unspecified number of sisters, in addition to the bishop's retinue. By 1301, the prior seems to have been the only brother remaining, and a papal legate consolidated that function with the vacant office of the parish priest. He provided that the prior and the sisters could choose a second priest to serve in the parish and the convent and should support that priest by taking him as a converso and giving him a stipend.[48] By this point, it is clear that Santa Caterina had fully become a nunnery. The sole vestige of its earlier status as a double monastery was the prior who remained a member of the community. This prior and his assistant provided for the parish church and offered a solution to the problem of the *cura monialium*.

In 1310, the bishop of Bologna took up the issue of enclosure among nuns in the diocese at a synod. The decrees of the meeting contain complaints that many nuns were not following Boniface's mandate. The tenor of the remarks in the record suggests that

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provision reads, "Si vero extra monasterium contenteret priorem ut fratres ire propter aliquam causam licitam et honestam..." ASB Dem 7/4491 no. 32.

[47] ASB Dem 7/4491 no. 31-32.

[48] ASB Dem. 8/4492 nos.1 & 2.

the main goals were keeping guests out of the cloister and regulating conversation at the gate or windows.[49] In 1318, the bishop's vicar visited Santa Caterina and compiled a list of specific punishments for transgressions, though it is not clear whether the list was meant to correct behavior he observed at the monastery or whether the list was meant only to anticipate punishment for actions that might occur. Though the vicar did make regulations regarding internal matters such as attentiveness in the choir and silence in the refectory, the majority of the precepts involve the enclosure of nuns. One new regulation specifically prohibited speaking at the window or the gate to any person who was not a member of the monastery or its *familia* unless the nun had gained permission from the prior or *magistra* and was protected by the presence of two or three other sisters approved by the *magistra*, echoing the concerns addressed at the diocesan synod. The punishment for transgression was three days on bread and water. If a nun should admit anyone to the cloister without the permission of the bishop or his vicar, that nun would be denied a voice in the chapter meetings and would not be allowed to seek office without a dispensation from the bishop. The visitor reproved sisters for their habit of going outside the interior cloister to make bread, saying that the sisters were not allowed to leave the cloister for any reason without the permission of the bishop or vicar.[50] The transgression of this statute would result in excommunication, or in the case of repeated violations, imprisonment.[51]

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[49] Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna no. 2251 fol. 25r.

[50] In a conversation on March 10, 2004, Maureen Miller suggested that the nuns may have been visiting their female relatives while baking bread outside of the convent.

[51] ASB Dem 9/4493 no.2.

It is notable that the bishop was the authority for the reform of S. Caterina's statutes. At its original location in Quarto Superiore, S. Caterina had direct papal protection, and was not subject to the bishop. Innocent IV had bestowed this privilege on the community when he imposed the Augustinian rule on them in the 1240s. Just as S. Cristina nearly lost its exemption from episcopal jurisdiction when the bishop broke ground on its urban location in 1245, S. Caterina's relocation must have given the bishop the opportunity to reclaim his authority over the house. S. Cristina regained its previous status due to the intervention of Camaldolese officials. S. Caterina had no such defenders to allow it to defend its old privilege.

Perhaps because of its unusual original organization as an autonomous double monastery, Santa Caterina's rules, statutes, and constitution were subject to frequent scrutiny. Because of these changes, it is possible to examine papal and episcopal policy regarding the issue of enclosure and some aspects of the relationship between the brothers and sisters of that house. Soon after the group moved into the city, it came to be a nunnery and not a double house. In the twenty years after S. Caterina became an urban nunnery, it went through three separate modifications of its rule. Perhaps the severity of the penalties in the 1318 statute changes suggests that the nuns had some difficulty adapting to their new status and the urban environment.

**The relationship between old property and new nunnery**

Nunneries that moved from the *contado* to the city had to determine what to do with their rural holdings. In this period, in most cases there remained religious and

economic ties with the old site. With S. Mattia and S. Maria del Monte della Guardia, the connection between the two remained clear – the oratory in the "guard" hills remained a part of the community. In the last half of the thirteenth century, the connection between the two houses would form a large part of the argument put forth by the prioresses of S. Mattia that they should enjoy the same privileges held by S. Maria del Monte della Guardia that had been gained by its foundress, Angelica.[52] The old site thus functioned both as a spiritual retreat and as a tie to the important privilege held by the original house.

S. Cristina and S. Caterina took longer to determine what, if any, importance the old house would retain. One question involved what to do with the relics of the old church. In her discussion of the issues raised when Camaldolese nunneries abandoned their rural nunneries for urban ones, Cécile Caby details the situation of S. Cristina. When the nuns of S. Cristina di Stifonte transferred into the city,

> The community abandon[ed] some of the buildings of the rural monastery, but the church had roots and continue[d] to shelter the relics of the Blessed Lucia, mythical abbess, object of a courtly legend and a local cult, whom the nuns nevertheless abandoned. The site of Settifonti or Stifonte thus became a dependent house, like others belonging to the urban monastery, under the same title as Sant'Andrea d'Ozzano, probably inhabited by some conversi.[53]

During a visit to Bologna in 1433, the Camaldolese prior general and famous humanist, Ambrogio Traversari, would pay a visit to the site of the old nunnery in order to visit the

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[52]ASB Dem 4/5765, no number, not dated (has number "42" written at top of document); ASB Dem 6/5767, no number, not dated (has number "1" written in top left corner).

[53] [l]a communauté abandonne certes les bâtiments du monastère rural, mais l'église reste sur pieds et … continue d'abriter les reliques d'une bienheureuse Lucia, abbesse mythique, objet d'une légende courtoise et d'un culte local, qu'abandonnèrent pourtant les moniales. Le site de Settifonti ou Stifonte devint ainsi un suffragent comme les autres du monastère urbain, au meme titre que Sant'Andrea d'Ozzano, vraisemblablement habité par quelques convers." Caby, 254.

relics of Lucia and to read her *vita*, only to discover that no written record of the *beata*'s life existed.[54] In addition to whatever connections the urban nunnery maintained with its rural origins because of the relics located there, there were economic ties as well. The maintenance of connections with the original site was also in part encouraged by the fact that as part of the nunnery's holdings in that area, S. Cristina enjoyed seigniorial rights over the parish church of Pastino, which involved the right to name the priest and a share of the tithes.[55]

Religious and economic reasons played a role in the relationship between the urban nunnery of S. Caterina e S. Maria Maddelena and its original home, S. Caterina di Quarto. After the sisters had moved into their new nunnery, problems arose with the old one. In June of 1322, some thirty-one years after its move, the "prior, *magistra, vicaria, procuratrix* and sisters" of the monastery of SS. Caterina di Quarto and Maria Maddelena petitioned Bishop Guido of Ferrara in his capacity as the subdelegate of Cardinal Bertrando to allow them to send

> six or eight of the older sisters to the aforesaid monastery in order to keep continuous residence in the monastery of Saint Caterina of Quarto, which is the head and origin of our order … where lie the bodies of more than a thousand deceased.[56]

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[54] Caby, 254-255.

[55] Caby, 254.

[56] "sex ut octo ex sororibus de anthiquioribus monasterii prelibate ad faciendum continuam residentiam in monasterio sancte Catherine dei Quarto quod fuit caput et principium ordinis ipsorum … apud quem sunt mille et ultra corpora defunctorum et defunctarum." ASB Dem 9/4493 no. 7.

The petition further stated that people living near the old church and monastery at Quarto were consuming and destroying the property belonging to that house.[57] Thus, they proposed to send several of their older sisters, who were presumably less in need of oversight than younger nuns, to maintain residence at their original house at which their order was founded, and to avert the depredation of the property around that older residence.

In the decree approving the petition, Guido of Ferrara referred to the petitioners as the sisters of "the monastery of Santa Maria Maddelena of Bologna, order of Saint Augustine … who were once of the monastery of Santa Caterina of Quarto of the said order, in the diocese of Bologna."[58] Where the sisters had listed as the first reason for needing to maintain residence the fact that the house in Quarto had been the head and origin of their order, in granting the petition, Guido did not acknowledge this fact; rather, he made a point of mentioning that S. Caterina of Quarto was also part of the Augustinian Order. He concentrated on their need to protect the property in Quarto as his reason for granting their request. Unfortunately, this is the only information we have about the proposal to send nuns to occupy the monastery in Quarto Superiore, so it is impossible to tell how many sisters actually went there and how long they remained or precisely what properties or property rights were involved.

Once a nunnery moved from a rural house into the city, the inhabitants were often faced with financing the building of a new nunnery or the renovation of an old one that

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[57] "destruunt et consumunt," ASB Dem 9/4493 no. 7.

[58] "monasterii sancte marie mononiensis ordinis sancti Augustini ... que ispe olim de monasterio sancte Catherine de Quarto dicti Ordinis bononiensis diocesis." ASB Dem 9/4493 no. 8.

had been abandoned by its previous occupants. The building of the monastery and church could take forty years or more, as was the case with S. Mattia. Sometimes the communities still held assets located at the site of the old nunnery and needed to find a way to protect those holdings now that the group no longer resided there. In addition to the economic interest in maintaining these properties, sometimes a nunnery's original location contained an element of the community's spiritual identity. S. Mattia's connection to S. Maria del Monte della Guardia gave it a special status as a nunnery directly protected by the pope. S. Caterina's desire to repopulate its original house may represent not only the guarding of assets, but also an attempt to maintain its status as the head of its own order, though the bishop to whom they sent their petition rejected this rationale.

**Fleeing wars in the *contado***

While communities that left their old houses in the thirteenth century to establish new nunneries in the city did so largely by choice, in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, several groups moved because wars threatened their safety and sometimes damaged their buildings beyond repair. In particularly destructive wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a relatively large number of nunneries found themselves in danger. During the fourteenth century, Bologna often waged war with neighboring cities such as Ferrara, and houses outside of the protection of the city walls suffered pillage. In some cases the destruction of nunneries led to the union of two houses. Sometimes a group could move into a building that had been abandoned by another monastic organization, though this

situation could involve substantial renovation to the structure. In other cases, the sisters had to build new nunneries, putting further strain on the already meager resources of these convents. The communities financed these new buildings by selling land and possessions, including the materials from the destroyed monastery, and by gaining indulgences from popes and bishops by which those who contributed alms or labor would gain spiritual rewards.

Sometimes, the cost of building a new nunnery drove a nunnery into financial difficulty. In 1351, the Camaldolese nunnery of Sant'Anna, which was located outside the Porta Galliera to the north of the city, was destroyed in war. The nuns managed to build a new house in the city, in an area called Bagno Marino in the northern part of the city but inside the gates. The cost of the new building added to their economic difficulties and, in 1409, they were forced to abandon it as well. They attempted to raise revenue by renting out their nunnery and staying in private houses, but soon the community died out. The Camaldolese order took over the building and sold it in the 1430s to a confraternity.[59]

Even the successful building of a new nunnery did not ensure that the community would be able to retain the house indefinitely. The Cistercian nunnery of S. Maria del Cestello financed the purchase of their new house -- possibly with favorable terms from the seller of the new house or the buyer of materials from the old one. In the fifteenth century, however, a larger community of nuns displaced them from this new house as well.

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[59] Zarri, 171.

In 1354, the city of Bologna built a fortress very near to S. Maria del Cestello. Fearing that the proximity to the fortress would make them subject to attacks of invading armies, the nuns decided to abandon their house and move to a new nunnery inside the city walls.[60] They bought a house with a large garden enclosure from the procurator of Giovanni Pepoli, son of the *signore* of Bologna, Taddeo Pepoli, for the sum of 1700 lire.[61] To finance the purchase of their new house, they obtained permission from their superior, the abbot of S. Maria di Columba, to demolish their old nunnery and sell the materials, although they did not want to sell the land on which it had stood. They commissioned Gabrele Brevi, a monk of the Cistercian monastery of Chiaravalle near Milan, and Rustigano Rustigani, a Bolognese notary, to act as their procurators.[62] They sold the wood, stone, concrete and iron used to build the nunnery to Pietro Balbo for 2100 lire.[63]

It is not clear whether S. Maria del Cestello's original nunnery had been damaged by the war or whether they chose to move once the new fortress had been built near their nunnery. During this period of war on the Italian peninsula, other nunneries faced similar circumstances. Katherine Gill discusses the choice of the Roman nunnery of Santa Maria *prope Portium sancti Petri* to move when papal soldiers set up camp in the vicinity once the pope had returned from Avignon. The nuns asked for permission to move in order to avoid "scandal." Gill argues that the modern sexual connotations of the word scandal do

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[60] ASB Dem 3/3245, not numbered, titled *Breve, et esatto ristretto dell'origine e fondatione del Venerabile Monasterio delle RR Monache di S. Leonardo dette di S. Orsola dell'Ordine Cisterciense delle Città di Bologna,* 1r.

[61] ASB Dem 3/3245 not numbered, 1r-1v.

[62] ASB Dem 7/3249 no. 2.

[63] ASB Dem 7/3249 no. 7.

not convey the entire meaning of *scandalum* in the middle ages. She suggests that phrases such as "'public conflict,' or 'disruptive polarization of potential interest groups,' or even 'disturbance of the peace' would all be better translations than our tabloid tainted word 'scandal.'"[64] She continues:

> "These women ... were not thinking primarily of sexual scandal. They wanted to avoid the public violence which would ensue between their kinsmen and the papal soldiers if one of them should suffer insult or assault. Doubtless, they also wanted to reduce the possibility that any of their relatives might have reason to be in the vicinity.... In the event of an incident, feminine honor would not have been the only issue in the hopper."[65]

The examples of S. Maria del Cestello and S. Maria *prope portium Sancti Petri* illustrate the factors that went into displacing a monastic community in wartime.

While S. Maria del Cestello was able to find land in the city and finance the building of their new nunnery, they eventually moved from this house as well. Cestello's nearby neighbor, S. Lorenzo – whose inhabitants themselves had been transferred to that location from a nunnery outside the city in the 1430's – successfully argued that S. Lorenzo's sixty nuns would put the large and relatively new convent to better use than the small community residing in S. Maria del Cestello at the time; the nuns who originally lived in the house transfered to another community rather than unify with the house's new inhabitants.[66]

Finding a new location proved difficult, and sometimes a monastic community spent several years in private houses before they could find or construct a suitable

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[64] Katherine Jane Gill, *Penitents, Pinzochere and Mantellate: Varieties of Women's Religious Communities in Central Italy, c. 1300-1500.* (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994), 120.

[65] Gill, 121.

[66] For more on the union of S. Maria del Cestello and S. Lorenzo, see Chapter 6.

enclosed building. This was the case with S. Mattia and S. Maria del Monte della Guardia. In 1357, their main nunnery, S. Mattia, was damaged by the war. They did not immediately begin building a new convent; rather, they lived for nearly twenty years in some houses on the via Sant'Isaia.[67] Few documents survive from this period, so it is difficult to reconstruct the conditions under which the nuns lived. Their prioress, Zana Gozzadini, died in August of 1359, and the nuns elected Francesca Zanetti prioress in that same month, but she did not receive confirmation until October 4, 1360.[68] On that day, Francesca gave her oath to the abbot of S. Felice, who was acting as a representative of the pope, "in the houses in which I live at present with the community of the aforesaid monasteries [S. Mattia and S. Maria del Monte della Guardia]."[69] Finally, in February of 1374, Cardinal Pietro, the pope's vicar general, gave them permission to build an altar for celebrating the divine office.[70] In March of 1376, another cardinal legate, Guglielmo, gave them permission to build a chapel with a bell tower, overriding the parish priest of S. Isaia, who had forbidden them to build a church. Guglielmo also bestowed an indulgence of forty days on anyone who visited the nunnery on Christmas, on the feast day commemorating the circumcision of Jesus, on Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, All

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[67] Guidicini,, II: 299; Zarri, 210.

[68] ASB Dem 9/5770, not numbered, dated August 17, 1359. Another document on the election of an abbess was located in ASB Dem 53/5814 no. 20, but is no longer present in that location. It was dated February 24, 1359. Regarding the confirmation, see 9/5770, not numbered, dated October 5, 1360, and 53/5814 no. 21.

[69] "in domibus in quibus ad presens residio una cum conventu dictorum monasteriorum." ASB Dem 53/5814 no. 21

[70] ASB Dem 10/5771, not numbered, dated February 14, 1374.

Saints, on the four feasts of the Virgin Mary, and on the feast day of S. Matthew.[71] In 1376, they moved into their new convent.[72]

The deterioration of monasteries due to wars and age continued to cause great upheaval in Bolognese monastic communities in the fifteenth century. In 1428, the Augustinian sisters of S. Orsolina abandoned their monastery outside the walls of Bologna because they did not feel safe there due to the wars taking place between Bologna and neighboring towns.[73] Instead, like S. Mattia in the 1350s, they stayed in rented housing near S. Giovanni in Monte, the primary monastery of Augustinian Hermits in Bologna, before uniting with the Augustinian nuns of S. Lorenzo, located inside the Porta Castiglione, in 1431. The three nuns already living at S. Lorenzo did not favor the union, and rather than remaining with their Augustinian sisters they decided to change their professions and move to the Cistercian house of S. Maria del Cestello, just across the Via Castiglione from S. Lorenzo.

The following year, Cardinal Fantino Dandoli, the apostolic legate to Bologna, moved the Cistercian nuns of S. Maria della Misericordia from their location in the suburbs outside the Porta Castiglione into the house that had been abandoned by the sisters of S. Orsolina in order to give S. Maria della Misericordia to the Olivetan brothers of S. Michele in Bosco, whose monastery had been destroyed in the wars.[74] The sisters living in S. Orsolina sought and obtained financial aid from the brothers to repair the war-damaged convent to which they had been forced to move. In 1457, they enlisted the aid

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[71] ASB Dem. 10/5771, not numbered, dated March 16, 1374.
[72] Guidicini, *Cose Notabili*, II: 299.
[73] ASB Dem 9/3377 no. 16.
[74] ASB Dem. 3/3245 no. 2.

of their fellow Cistercian, the abbot of S. Maria Columba, to attempt to regain their old monastery from S. Michele in Bosco, but they were unsuccessful, and remained at S. Orsolina. They came to be known by the name of their new convent.[75]

The shuffling of nunneries in the first half of the fifteenth century led to competition for resources in the second half. S. Maria del Cestello, the nuns from S. Maria della Misericordia living in S. Orsolina, and those from S. Orsolina that were in S. Lorenzo all engaged in controversies surrounding unions that resulted from jockeying for the best buildings to house their populations.[76]

The upheaval continued into the early sixteenth century. In 1511, the first house of Poor Clares in Bologna, S. Francesco, located just outside of the Porta S. Stefano on the southeast side of the city, was destroyed in war between Pope Julius II and the city of Bologna. The nuns were dispersed to live with their relatives and, in October of 1512, they gained permission to take over the urban monastery of SS. Naborre e Felice, formerly a Camaldolese monastery suppressed by Julius II in 1506 and used as a hospital for plague victims for a couple of years afterward.[77] After the nuns moved to their new house, the community of S. Francesco came to be known as SS. Naborre e Felice.

**Conclusions**

Though these moves could be disruptive and unsettling, the nunneries that found urban houses were the lucky ones. While twelve communities of women religious existed in the suburbs and the rural areas of the diocese in 1400, by 1450, this number had

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[75] ASB Dem. 3/3245 no. 6.
[76] See the Chapter 6.
[77] Guidicini, I: 30; Zarri, 183.

decreased to four. As far as can be ascertained, six of these did not move into the relative safety of the city, but rather disappeared from the record.[78]

The nunneries that moved from the rural areas around Bologna to the city and suburbs during the thirteenth century did so during a time of expansion in the number of monastic houses that corresponded with the growth of the city itself. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, those nunneries that were outside the city walls or even inside the city where the walls were not yet complete found themselves in danger because of the wars between cities. These nunneries chose to move to avoid danger or were forced to relocate because of the destruction of their houses. By this time, the absorption of additional monastic communities into the city was more difficult, leading to competition for scarce resources and more disruption of the lives of women religious. Thus, nunneries became geographically restricted to the periphery of the urban area, with a few remaining outside the gates in the suburbs.

At the same time, these moves toward and into the city were accompanied by changes in the mobility of religious women. The location in and near the city offered the nuns some protection, but could also subject them to greater scrutiny. The papal decree *Pericoloso* and similar decrees on the diocesan level articulated strict enclosure for nuns as an ideal in stronger terms than had previously been expressed. The case of S. Caterina is illustrative of this process. As a double house in the countryside, religious women in the community were allowed the same mobility as their brethren. With their relocation

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[78] These communities were S. Antonio di Medicina, S. Maria di Biliemme, SS. Maria di Pontemaggiore, S. Maria Maddelena delle Convertite, S. Marta fuori Porta Mamolo, and SS. Filippo, Giacomo e Elisibetta delle Santuccie. See Zarri, 170-171, 181, 192, 204-2-5, 209.

into the city and the change from double house to nunnery, and from protection of a far-away pope to the jurisdiction of a nearby bishop, the changes in S. Caterina's statutes in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century demonstrate the increasing confinement of religious women, both in their mobility and in the religious choices available to them.

# CHAPTER 6

## UNIONS AND SUPPRESSIONS

Thus far I have investigated the growth of women's monastic communities in Bologna and the development of ties to monastic orders over the course of the thirteenth century. By examining the fortunes of women's houses during periods of decline, one can assess the relationships of women's houses to monastic orders and the strength of their identification with those orders and with their own individual nunneries. It also provides clues about the way men in positions of authority viewed women religious. When faced with situations in which they could no longer maintain their own independent community, nuns showed a strong desire to choose their own fate.

The foundation of new houses slowed dramatically in the last decade of the 13th century and came nearly to a halt during the fourteenth century, even before the demographic crises of plague and famine began. One important factor was another crisis that affected the population of Bologna, the partisan war within the city and among the Italian city-states. The political environment had affected the fortunes of women's monastic houses in two ways. One was the demographic upheaval in Bologna that resulted from the internal struggles among parties. As in other areas of central and northern Italy, the factional strife between the pro-papal Guelf and pro-imperial Ghibelline parties had taken its toll on Bologna. The battle came to a head in the 1270s. The guelfs in the Geremei party defeated the Ghibelline Lambertazzi party, leading to their expulsion. This event caused huge upheaval in Bologna – nearly 12,000 citizens of a total population of more than 50,000 were expelled in 1274. At the behest of Pope

number of nunneries went out of existence as well. Though most of the suppressed nunneries managed to reconstitute themselves after the legate's expulsion from the city, they were again suppressed under a later governor, Cardinal Albornoz, who was also a papal legate.

From point of view of the church officials who ordered them, unions were largely a matter of property management – unions meant the transfer of goods from one house to another. There were times that nuns in both houses seem to have agreed to the union when, for example, a weaker house sought protection and aid by combining with a nunnery whose inhabitants lived in more comfortable circumstances. Many times, however, one party to the union did not consent to consolidation with another house. In these cases, there was some care that women displaced by unions go to houses of the same order, but as long as women could find a suitable situation, consistency of order affiliation was not the primary concern. As was the case with Bertrand de Pouget's unions, often a second action occurred – the suppression of the nunnery as a corporate body. Explicit suppressions tended to take place when one party did not consent to the union, and the officials ordering the union needed to emphasize that the house whose property was transferred to another organization no longer existed and that its abbess or prioress no longer held that office.

Actions of women religious indicate a strong preference that they be able to choose their community. In cases where unions occurred as a result of the nuns' petition and when both parties agreed, a difference of order does not seem to have been a barrier to a successful union. When the union occurred against the wishes of one party, the

Nicolas III, to whom Bologna swore allegiance in May of 1279, the Bolognese allowed the Lambertazzi to re-enter the city, but were expelled again within a few weeks. They were able to gain a foothold in the countryside and they continued to attack Bologna from the outside until they finally gained the right to re-enter the city and reclaim their confiscated goods in 1299. This détente was short-lived, and once the papal legate Napoleone Orsini fell from power in 1306, the Lambertazzi were expelled again for a final time.[1] The upheaval due to the internal strife and the population changes following the expulsions of the Lambertazzi may have contributed to the dearth of new foundations in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

The second and more direct influence of the political environment on the population of female religious in Bologna was the accession to power of the papal legate Bertrand de Pouget as governor of Bologna. After a period of seigneurial rule by Romeo Pepoli in the early fourteenth century, Bologna came under direct papal governance. In 1327, Pope John XXII appointed his nephew, Bertrand de Pouget, to govern the city.[2] Bertrand established four collegiate churches, one for every quarter of the city. To do so, he suppressed several nunneries and unified their property with the collegiate churches.[3] Thus, not only did the foundation of new communities slow almost to a stop, but a

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[1]Gina Fasoli, "Bologna nell'eta medieval" in *Storia di Bologna,* ed. Antonio Ferri and Giancarlo Roversi (Bologna: Edizioni ALFA, 1978), 161- 163; Rolando Dondarini, *Bologna Medievale nella Storia delle Città* (Bologna: Patron Editore, 2000), p. 223-237.

[2] Dondarini, *Bologna Medievale*, 176-177.

[3]Gabriella Zarri, "I monasteri femminili di Bologna tra il XIII e il XVII secolo" *Atti e Memorie della Deputatione di Storia Patria per la Province di Romagna, Nuova Serie* vol. XXIV (1973), 167, n. 9. The discussion of the 1332 suppressions in this chapter owes a tremendous debt to Zarri's collection of the few and widely dispersed references that give shape to the actions surrounding Bertrand's suppression of these nunneries.

transfer of nuns from one house to another, even when both were of the same order, does not seem to have gone more smoothly than those unions that involved two nunneries of different orders. In unsuccessful unions, nuns from the dissenting house usually moved as a group to another convent, suggesting that religious women in a monastic house saw their nunnery as a coherent group. Similarly, all but one of the nunneries suppressed under Bertrand du Pouget reconstituted their communities soon after his expulsion, and did not integrate into other nunneries.

**S. Guglielmo**

Part of the contraction in the monastic community happened as a result of unions between nunneries that found themselves in difficult circumstances and other more stable houses. For example, two nunneries unified with the Benedictine nunnery of S. Guglielmo in the early fourteenth century. The first, S. Maria di Fontana, was a Benedictine nunnery that united with S. Guglielmo at an uncertain date, probably in the last years of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth. The union had definitely taken place by 1315.[4] The records of this event are sparse, so there is no way to know the reason for the consolidation of these two houses. There is no record of any legal problems arising from the union, so it is probable that the two communities combined easily into one house.

The second nunnery to unite with S. Guglielmo was S. Nicolò di Carpineta. S. Nicolò was founded in 1264 as a Benedictine nunnery, but sometime during the

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[4] Zarri, 194; C. Guidicini, *Cose Notabili della Città di Bologna*, 3 vol. (Bologna: Figlio Ferdinando, 1870), III: 206.

beginning of the fourteenth century, the sisters of S. Nicolò decided to abandon the Benedictine rule and follow instead the rule of S. Augustine, as three separate documents from December 1317 indicate.[5] These documents also list the names of the ten inhabitants of the house.[6] Unfortunately, since the records that exist from this period are all property transactions, it is not possible to determine the reason for the change in rule. It would not last, however. In 1322, the Aposa River flooded its banks and ruined S. Nicolò's nunnery. At this time, the sisters chose to unite with another nunnery, S. Guglielmo, which followed the Benedictine rule and the constitution of the Cistercians. In Pope John XXII's bull ordering the union, it seems that this union happened at the volition of the sisters of S. Nicolò. Part of the bull reflects the petition sent to the pope by the sisters. He says that "the prioress, sisters and convent desire to transfer themselves to the rule of Saint Benedict so that leading that more austere life, they might humbly serve Christ, their heavenly husband."[7]

**Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget's suppressions of nunneries**

A much larger contraction in the monastic community occurred under the government of the cardinal legate, Bertrand de Pouget. In 1332, Bertrand disbanded

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[5] Zarri, "I monasteri femminili," 213.

[6] ASB Dem 1/735 nos. 21, 22, 23.

[7] "Priorissa sorores et conventus cupiant ad beati benedicti regulam se tranferre ut in ipsam austeriorem vitam ducentes et Christo ipsarum celesti sponso humiliter famulantes..." ASB Dem. 1/735 no. 34. It is interesting that there is no mention that S. Nicolò had at one point followed the Benedictine rule, nor is there any language suggesting that the destruction of the nunnery might be punishment for the change from the Benedictine to the Augustinian, thus prompting their return to the observance of their original rule as members of another community.

several nunneries in order to finance the creation of four collegiate churches, one for each quarter of the city. These churches were S. Colombano, S. Giacomo de' Carbonesi, S. Sigismondo and S. Michele de' Leprosetti. Chroniclers and recent historians have given different counts for the number of nunneries suppressed. The decree that disbanded the nunneries mentions only four by name but also says that some other nunneries of the Augustinian, Benedictine and Camaldolese orders were to be disbanded.[8] It is certain that Bertrand disbanded at least six nunneries: S. Agostino, S. Columbano, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, S. Maria di Ravone, S. Nicolo della Casa di Dio, and S. Salvatore.[9] Gabriella Zarri lists the Benedictine nunnery of S. Croce di Borgo Galliera as the seventh suppressed house, finding it to be among the properties unified with S. Michele dei Leprosetti in the *Elenco nonantolano* of 1366 and in an *estimo* in 1378, though it is difficult to determine whether this consolidation occurred in 1332 with the other

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[8] "Nuper auctoritate apostolica nobis in hac parte commissa, abbatissas, moniales & familiars personas locorum sancti Columbani, sanctorum Gervasii & Protasii, & sancti Salvatoris de Ravone, & Domus-Dei, olim monasteriorum Bononienses sancti Benedicti, & eiusdem, sancti Augustini & Camaldulensis ordinum ad certa alia monasteria monialium eorumdem ordinum in civitate Bononia constituta duximus transferendas; ac predictum olim monasterium sancti Columbani & Michaelis de Lebroxeto, sancti Jacobi de Carbon. & sancti Sigismundi Bononienses tunc parochiales ecclesias, tam predicta auctoritate apostolica, quam illa , qua fundimus, in collegiatas ecclesias ereximus seculares novem canonicorum capitulum facientium...." G. B. Mittarelli and Anslemo Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulensis Ordinis Sancti Benedicti* (Farnsborough: Gregg International Publishers, 1970 [1760]), app. col. 505-506. Some of the nunneries mentioned in this decree are referred to by alternate names in chronicles and in secondary literature. I will follow the usage of these later works. S. Salvatore di Ravone is more commonly known as S. Maria di Ravone – using this name diminishes confusion, since there is also another S. Salvatore among the suppressed houses; Domus-Dei is S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio.

[9] Gabriella Zarri, 167, n. 9.

properties or at a later date.[10] Of the nunneries that were suppressed by Bertrand de Pouget, one was Augustinian (S. Agostino), three were Camaldolese Benedictine (S. Maria di Ravone, S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio, and probably S. Salvatore), and the rest were autonomous Benedictine convents (S. Columbano, SS. Gervasio and Protasio and possibly S. Croce). Most of them had been founded within the last hundred years – three in the 1250s, one in the 1280s, one in the first years of the fourteenth century – but two were Benedictine houses that dated back at least to the first years of the twelfth century.[11]

This shuffling of religious assets involved two actions –unifying the nunneries' property with the collegiate churches and suppressing the corporation to which the inhabitants of the nunneries belonged. S. Maria di Ravone and S. Nicolo della Casa di Dio and perhaps S. Croce were unified into S. Michele dei Leprosetti; S. Agostino and S. Salvatore were unified with S. Sigismondo; and S. Columbano's goods went to a collegiate church of the same name.[12] In the initial decree of March 1332, however, there was no provision for the specific nunnery to which the nuns would go, other than that they should go to a nunnery of the same order as theirs.[13] At this point, the dispersed nuns went to their new nunneries without any of the goods or money that they had brought with them when they made their vows.[14]

There is little information about the population of the nunneries and the fate of the inhabitants after their houses were suppressed. In some cases, documents survive that

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[10] Zarri, 178 n. 61.
[11] Zarri, 168, 177-178, 199-200, 213-214, and 218.
[12] Zarri, 168, 177-178, 199-200, 213-214, and 218.
[13] Mittarelli, V: col. 505-507.
[14] Guidicini, *Cose Notabili della Città di Bologna*, III: 48-49.

give us a glimpse of the aftermath of the suppressions. A decree from Bertrand in September of 1332 instructed the Benedictines of SS. Gervasio & Protasio and S. Columbano to divide between two other nunneries of the same order (S. Vitale and S. Margherita).[15] The nuns of S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio appear to have all transferred to S. Christina, which, like S. Nicolò, was a Camaldolese nunnery.[16]

Two years after the suppressions of these nunneries, Bertrand de Pouget was expelled from the city. While his army was away on an expedition to fight Ferrara, a group of citizens held him and his retinue hostage and fought off the legate's army.[17] After Bertrand fled to Florence, at least four and perhaps five of the seven suppressed communities were able to re-establish their old nunneries. These were S. Agostino, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, S. Colombano, and S. Maria di Ravone, and perhaps S. Salvatore.[18] The Bolognese chronicler Guidicini mentions that in the year 1334, the sisters appeared before the Bolognese city council to state their plea.[19] They argued that Bertrand had despoiled them of their goods and expelled them from their nunneries without a provision

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[15] ASB Dem 10/4494 no. 7 fol. 1r. (later copy of document from September 7, 1332.

[16] Mittarelli, V: 348.

[17] Cherubino Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, 2 vol. (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1973 [1657]), II: 111-112.

[18] Following several chronicles that had been written long after the suppressions, Zarri suggests that the nunnery of S. Salvatore may have been re-established, but I have not found evidence to verify that the community existed at any point after it suppression 1332. Zarri, 168 n. 9.

[19] The fact that the nuns chose the city council as the forum for their appeal may indicate that they did not think they would receive a favorable hearing before a bishop appointed by the pope, who was Bertrand's uncle. Just as the city supported the building and maintenance of nunneries in the mid-thirteenth century (see chapter 2, p. XX), the council's approval of the nuns' request to recover their property and reconstitute their nunneries illustrates the city government's interest in supporting women's religious communities.

of any dowry. They wanted to have their goods restored. Guidicini says that five of the six nunneries in his list of suppressed houses were reconstituted, with only S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio remaining suppressed. He does not elaborate, so it is not known whether the nuns of this convent did not attempt to have their house restored to them or whether they were unsuccessful in their pleas.[20] The surviving documents do not make it possible to establish whether all of the nuns in the suppressed convents returned to their old houses once they had been reconstituted or whether some of them had assimilated into their new houses.

Of the communities that re-established themselves in 1334, only one, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, was able to survive beyond the middle of the fourteenth century. The rest were suppressed again during the period in which Cardinal Albornoz governed the city. The chronicler Guidicini says that he did so in an attempt to reinstate the earlier decrees of Bertrand de Pouget.[21] The Benedictine nunnery of S. Colombano had been able to regain its possessions from the collegiate church in 1334, but it survived only until 1347, when it was suppressed a second time and its goods returned to the collegiate church of S. Colombano.[22] Its procurator appealed the decision, first to the bishop of Bologna and then to the archbishop of Ravenna, arguing that they did not want their house to be reduced from one that followed the rule of S. Benedictine to one inhabited by clerics who did not follow a rule. Their appeals, however, were unsuccessful.[23]

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[20] Guidicini, IV: 48-49.
[21] Guidicini, IV: 138.
[22] Zarri, 168 n. 9; 177.
[23] Mittarelli, V: 348.

S. Agostino survived a few years longer than did S. Colombano and was disbanded in 1352, and, like S. Colombano, its property was returned to the collegiate church which had received the goods in 1332, S. Sigismondo. It is the only nunnery for which a record of the fate of individual nuns exists, and only two nuns are mentioned. In August of 1352, S. Sigismondo acknowledged that it owed fifty Bolognese lire to the nunneries to which the women had transferred. One of these nuns, Sister Blasia Guasconi, transferred to S. Lorenzo, which, like S. Agostino, followed the rule of Saint Augustine. Another nun, Sister Margarita di Stefano, had gone first to S. Maria di Pontemaggiore, an Augustinian convent, and then had finally entered S. Maria del Cestello, which was Cistercian.[24] In March of 1352, she had formally converted to the rule of Saint Benedict, joining the six nuns who were living in that house.[25]

The Camaldolese house S. Maria di Ravone survived until 1357, the year that its abbess, Margarita, died. Documents in the *Annales Camaldulenses* do not indicate whether other nuns remained and what their fate was after the nunnery was turned over to Camaldolese monks in that year.[26] By 1366, some of this property was again in the hands of the collegiate church of S. Michele dei Leprosetti.[27] The only house to survive was SS. Gervasio and Protasio, a Benedictine house that dated back to the early twelfth century and endured until the Napoleonic invasion, when all monastic houses, both male and female, were suppressed.

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[24] ASB Dem 6/3248 no. 20; Zarri, 168 n. 9.
[25] ASB Dem 6/3248 no. 19.
[26] Mittarelli, VI 49; Zarri, 200.
[27] Zarri, 200.

There is no way to be sure why Bertrand chose to disband these particular nunneries. Some chroniclers indicate that the suppressions happened because of deficiencies in the nunneries.[28] However, the fact that the city council allowed them to be re-established two years after the original suppressions suggests that the nunneries were not such a source of scandal that the governors of Bologna thought that they should remain suppressed. There is no indication of the number of nuns in these nunneries, so we cannot know if they were chosen because they were depopulated. For most of the nunneries, there is little financial information to indicate whether they were either poor or wealthy. The only exception is SS. Gervasio and Protasio, which was financially stable enough that a group of Augustinian nuns wanted to unite with it in 1381, citing its wealth among the virtues that caused them to choose it as their new home.[29] The only clue in Bertrand's decree for his reasoning in suppressing these nunneries is that he chose nunneries from the orders of S. Benedict, S. Augustine and Camaldoli. One noticeable commonality between the Benedictines and the Augustinians was that they did not have a strong organizational structure at this time, and nunneries belonging to these orders lacked many of the privileges of more developed orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans and Cistercians. This explanation does not account for the presence of Camaldolese nunneries on the list. Nunneries seem to have been well integrated into the

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[28] Guidicini, IV, 138. Guidicini cites the chronicler Sigonio as an example of someone who made this accusation against the suppressed nunneries.

[29] ASB Dem 13/4497 no. 15. The Augustinians nuns of S. Maria di Pontemaggiore, which was originally from Florence but moved to Bologna during the worst days of the Black Death, chose to unite with the Benedictine SS. Gervasio and Protasio in 1381.

Camaldolese order, and the nunnery of S. Cristina di Fondazza in Bologna remained an important member of their congregation.

As far as the nuns were concerned, the fact that all but one of the suppressed houses succeeded in re-establishing themselves suggests that it was not enough for them to be among sisters of their own order – they identified primarily with the house where they had professed. Though a significant part of their argument of the injustice of the suppressions involved the lack of financial provision, the end solution in 1334 was not a financial settlement to the nuns and to the houses to which they had transferred, but the reconstitution of the nunneries themselves.

**S. Maria di Pontemaggiore**

The ability of SS. Gervasio e Protasio to thrive after its suppression early in the century is attested to by the fact that it was the stronger house in a voluntary union that occurred in 1381. In October of that year, the papal legate Filippo Martini presided over the union of SS. Gervasio e Protasio and S. Maria di Pontemaggiore, an Augustinian nunnery that had moved outside of Bologna from its original home, Florence, at an unknown date. In 1381, the nuns found themselves in dire circumstances due to the "mortality of the plague and the evil of the times," with their abode in poor repair and no way to restore it to a habitable state.[30] They decided to submit themselves to the nuns of SS. Gervasio & Protasio, a Benedictine house, and to become Benedictine themselves, praising that nunnery for "the industry of its circumspection, the providence of its honor,

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[30]"mortalitatem pestis et temporis maliciam", ASB Dem 13/4497 no. 15, fol. 1r.

and the affluence of its arable fields".[31] The petition requests several times that the abbess of SS. Gervasio & Protasio undertake a "reformation" of S. Maria di Pontemaggiore. In one instance the request for reformation is accompanied by the word "*reparatio*." In the context of a union, it is unclear what the repair and reformation of S. Maria would mean.

Subsequent events suggest that the two parties may have had different expectations about what the union would entail. It appears that the nuns of S. Maria turned their property over to SS. Gervasio & Protasio with the expectation that they would repair the property and have jurisdiction over it. Though the poor condition of the house suggests that the nuns living there would leave it and become a part of SS. Gervasio & Protasio, this may not have been the arrangement. The inhabitants of S. Maria may have expected that their nunnery would be repaired and that they would be allowed to continue to live there or to return there after the house was repaired. The dissolution of the union in 1413 and the petition that led to it lend support to this interpretation.

In 1413, the surviving sisters of S. Maria di Ponte Maggiore petitioned Pope John XXIII to dissolve their union with SS. Gervasio & Protasio and unify them instead with the Camaldolese nunnery, S. Christina. A bull from the pope directs the prior of S. Gregory, which is near Bologna, to oversee the progress of the dissolution and union. The bull reflects the petition, in which the sisters narrate their history. They averred that they were placed under the authority of the abbess of S. Gervasio & Protasio, who held S. Maria di Pontemaggiore but did not exercise care for it or give the sought-for help. The

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[31] "circumspectionis induxtriam, honestatis providentiam, et affluentiam aratatis" ASB Dem 13/4497 no. 15, fol 1v.

two surviving nuns in that house then requested that the union with SS. Gervasio & Protasio should be dissolved and that they would become Camaldolese and unify with S. Christina, bringing the possessions of their nunnery with them.[32]

The situation of S. Maria di Ponte Maggiore illustrates the difficulty posed by the union of two nunneries into one community. In this case, the nuns of S. Maria di Ponte Maggiore were forced to seek help from another house, submitting themselves to the authority of another abbess and changing the rule that they followed. It is not possible to discern from the remaining documents whether S. Maria's inhabitants moved to the house into which they were unified or whether they submitted themselves to SS. Gervasio & Protasio's authority with the expectation that they would be a daughter house and receive aid from the more wealthy nunnery. What is certain is that the surviving nuns from S. Maria retained their institutional identity for over thirty years, and sought to bring the property that came with them into the union with SS. Gervasio & Protasio to their new union with S. Christina. They displayed a willingness to change their rule and order to establish a suitable living arrangement.

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[32] Et sicut etiam ex eiusdem tenore petitionis acceptimus, scilicet unio ipsa postmodum fuerit pacificam assecute, illamque diu tenuerint, prout tenent, non curaverunt tamen, prout neque currant ipsium monasterii statui decenter succurrere, nec speratur verisimiliter id posse sub earum manu fieri, cum etiam in suo proprio varia scandala sint exorta: fuit nobis humiliter supplicatum, ut unionem & incorporationem predictas dissolvere, necnon monasterium ipsum de Ponte-majoir cum duabus ex monialibus translates predictis, que dumtaxat impresentiarum supersunt, quarum etiam ad id accedit assensus, de ordine sancti Benedicti ad ordinem Camaldulensem & monasterium sancti Christine predictos transferre, necnon demum monasterium ipsum de Ponte-majori, cuius transitum cum omnibus juribus & pertinentibus suis monasterio sancti Christine prefato, cuius trecentorum florenorum auri secundum communem extimationem fructus, redditus & proventus, ut eadem abbatissa & conventus asserunt, valorem annuum non excedent, imperpetuum incorporare, annectare, & unire de benignitate apostolica dignaremus. Mittarelli, VI: col. 705-706.

**Late fifteenth-century unions**

Another round of monastic downsizing occurred in the mid to late 15th century. The documents from these are more plentiful and allow a better investigation. Three cases to study are the unions of the Augustinian houses of S. Orsolina and S. Lorenzo in 1431; the Cistercian house S. Maria del Cestello, also called S. Maria delle Stelle, with the Augustinian S. Lorenzo in 1468; and of the Dominican houses of S. Caterina de Quarto with S. Giovanni Battista in 1473. In the first example, Bishop Nicholas Albergati united the two nunneries when one was in danger of destruction due to war, moving the nuns of S. Orsolina into S. Lorenzo, which had only three nuns. Though they were both Augustinian, the nuns of S. Lorenzo decided to move to a Cistercian nunnery, S. Maria del Cestello. In the latter two cases, one monastery had almost become depopulated and the other had outgrown its accommodations. S. Maria del Cestello, which by the late-15th century housed only about 7 nuns despite the transfer of the Augustinians of S. Lorenzo, was located across the street from S. Lorenzo, which had a population of 60 nuns. The nuns of S. Lorenzo wanted to alleviate its crowded living condition and in 1473 petitioned Pope Sixtus IV for access to the monastery across the street to accommodate its large population. To maintain enclosure, they built an underground passageway between the two houses. The bishop decreed the union of the two houses, but the Cistercians of S. Maria decided to move to another monastery of their own order. Adherence to the same rule, however, was no guarantee of a smooth union. Both S. Caterina and S. Giovanni Batista followed the Augustinian rule and Dominican constitution. However, when the populous S. Caterina was unified into the house of S.

Giovanni Battista, they refused to accept the authority of its abbess. The vastly outnumbered nuns of S. Giovanni Battista moved to another Dominican house, S. Pietro Martire.

In November of 1428, the Augustinian sisters of S. Orsolina abandoned their nunnery just outside the eastern wall of the city due to war. They moved into the house of Tommaso Cecca, near the Augustinian monastery of S. Giovanni in Monte in the outermost zone within the city walls. The following year, they received a bequest from Lucrezia Salicetti, intended to help them secure more permanent housing in the city.[33] Perhaps the bequest was not sufficient to allow them to build a new nunnery; in 1431, Bishop Nicolo Albergati united them with another Augustinian nunnery, S. Lorenzo. Twenty-four nuns from S. Orsolina moved into S. Lorenzo, in which three nuns resided. Despite the fact that they observed the same rule, the union did not go smoothly. The three nuns of S. Lorenzo decided to transfer across the street to the Cistercian nunnery of S. Maria del Cestello.[34]

On December 6, 1468, the papal legate Giovanni Battista Savelli, who was also governor of Bologna, ordered the union of two nunneries, S. Caterina e S. Maria Maddalena and S. Giovanni Battista. The nuns of S. Caterina had sent a petition saying that the eighteen professed nuns currently at the house, along with other sisters who served the nuns, exceeded the capacity of the house. Furthermore they argued that the age and ruined condition of the house made it difficult to maintain enclosure, since the house was practically open to the world, and that they did not have the resources to repair

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[33] Guidicini, I: 276-277.
[34] Zarri, 188-189.

or to expand their abode sufficiently. They claimed that unless they were able to find a suitable place to live, they might have to abandon their religious life.[35]

The sisters of S. Caterina did, however, have another solution to propose. Their petition pointed out that there was another nunnery, S. Giovanni Battista, in the parish of S. Isaia, of the same order and habit as Santa Caterina, that was nearly depopulated and was large enough and in a suitable condition to accommodate their numbers. S. Giovanni Battista was home to only a prioress and two sisters, along with, the petitioners claimed, several others who were not of the same order but were allowed to live in the nunnery without the permission of the bishop. Moreover, the nuns of S. Caterina asserted that:

> The prioress and sisters living in the said monastery of S. Giovanni Battista lead a life of dishonesty and lasciviousness, entirely contrary to religion, so that it would be more holy and much more worthy of religion that the sisters living in the monastery of S. Maria Maddalena should stay in the aforesaid monastery of S. Giovanni Battista which is sufficiently large, ample and spacious.[36]

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[35] "Subvingebat autem eadem petitio que numerus dictarum sororum hodiernis temporibus preoter earundem pudicitiam ac vite laudabilis et morum honestatem sit adeo auctis (blank) que numerus ipsarum Sororum professarum decem et octo absque aliis dicto Monasterio et sororibus eiudem servientibus excediet et dictum monasterium in quo presentiatiler habitant in suis stricturis et officinis sit adeo artum et pro maiori parti propter eius vetustate in ruinam colabi videatur ac etiam inter secularum domos fere anexum et contiguum existat. Quorum sorores ipse propter earum paupertate ac reddituum tenuitate non valent dictum monasterium suis officinis ne d?? ampliare et reformare verum etiam nec reparare et seu ad congruam ipsorum habitationem reducere o magnam in pensam que ad dictum Monasterium reparendum et construentem plurima neccessario forte et ob hoc priorissa et sorores ipse propter loci predicti in eptitundinem gravia incomoda ac plurimas infirmitates substinuerunt ac passe fuerunt pro ut in dies substinet et patiuntur. Undeque Religioni cui dedicate sunt laudabiliter pro ut deceret in sistere non possunt et nisi eisdem Priorissa et sorores de aliquo congruo et idoneo Monasterio pro earum habitatione provideatur procul dubio neccessitant Monasterium illud deserer et penitus de relinquere ingrande dedecus dicte religionis." ASB Dem. 17/4501 no. 21.

[36] "Priorissa et sorores in dicto Monasterio sancti Johannis Baptiste ressidentes vitam potius lasciviam et inhonestam et religioni penitus contratriam ducant adeo quo sanctius sit et plurimum religioni condignum ut sorores ipse in Monasterio Sancte Marie

The papal legate Giovanni Battista Savelli ordered the sisters of S. Caterina to be transferred to S. Giovanni Battista.

To tie up loose ends, he also dissolved the union that was then in effect between S. Caterina and the parish church of S. Maria Maddalena. S. Caterina had been unified in 1291 with the parish church of S. Maria Maddalena, which was at the time without a priest. As part of the condition of the union, S. Caterina was required to support a cleric, who would serve both as parish priest and as the chaplain and prior of the nunnery. This union had been carried out by the bishop with the consent of the archpriest and the cathedral chapter. The dissolution of the union required a division of property. S. Caterina was to relinquish the mobile and immobile goods belonging to the parish church, being sure that the resulting patrimony was sufficient to sustain the parish priest and one cleric comfortably.[37]

The sisters of S. Giovanni Battista did not support the union. A letter from December 22 of 1468 registers their protest. Led by their prioress, Margarita de Monzono, the sisters of S. Giovanni Battista claimed that the union was null and void because they did not consent to it and that the order for the union was based on falsehood. They claimed that S. Caterina's monastery at S. Maria Maddalena was indeed sufficient to the population of that nunnery. Trouble arose as well over the office of prioress. Margarita averred that that the union would cause her to be deprived of the position that she had held at S. Giovanni Battista and that she had no intention of stepping down as

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Magdalene degentes in Monasterio prelibato sancti Johanis Baptiste quod satis latu amplum et capax existit. ASB Dem. 17/4501 no. 21.

[37] ASB Dem 17/4501 no. 21.

prioress.[38] The judgment in the case did not go in Margarita's favor. Margarita and the two sisters who had been part of S. Giovanni Battista before the union left the nunnery. They were given the usufruct of a fourteen-tornature piece of land. Margarita also was able to bring some mobile goods with her to her new nunnery, as well as some livestock.[39]

Though the document delineating the division of property does not indicate to what nunnery Margarita and the other nuns of S. Giovanni Battista transferred, a dispute in another nunnery answers the question. In 1474, Sister Veronica Paganelli, a nun from the Dominican convent of S. Pietro Martire, requested permission to transfer to another nunnery, S. Maria Nuova, because she felt that there was too much turmoil in her current nunnery. One of the issues in her complaint was the number of lawsuits against other nunneries, one of which was S. Giovanni Battista. Margarita di Monzano and another nun of the same last name, Antonia, were among the inhabitants of S. Pietro Martire. Thus, the repercussions of the enmity created by the union were felt even in nunneries that were not party to it.

Five years after S. Caterina's union with S. Giovanni Battista, the Augustinian house of S. Lorenzo used a similar argument to make the case that it should be allowed to possess the property of S. Maria del Cestello, which was Cistercian. In the mid-fourteenth century, S. Maria del Cestello had been forced to relocate from its war-ravaged monastery outside the city walls to one on the Via Castiglione, across the street from S. Lorenzo. The nuns of S. Lorenzo, who were nearly sixty in number, believed

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[38] ASB Dem 17/4501 no. 22, fols. 1v-1r.
[39] ASB Dem 17/4501 no. 22, fol. 3r.

that they were more deserving and more in need of this house than its current occupants. They claimed that the six or seven Cistercian nuns living in S. Maria del Cestello had forgotten their profession.

The population of S. Lorenzo was large in part due to a union that had occurred in 1432 between S. Lorenzo and S. Orsolina. S. Orsolina's nunnery had been located outside the city walls. Because constant war in the countryside made their location unsafe, the nuns of S. Orsolina had in 1428 sought refuge in the city, first staying in a house in town, and then finally being unified with the nuns of S. Lorenzo, inside the city walls on the Via Castiglione.[40]

On July 1, 1473, Pope Sixtus IV wrote to the bishop of Bologna regarding the situation of the nuns of S. Lorenzo. His knowledge of S. Lorenzo's plight reflected a petition from the nuns themselves.[41] The nunnery of S. Lorenzo, he stated, held sixty nuns who led the honorable life, but who were reduced to begging and manual labor for their survival. There was, however, a nunnery across the street that contained only an abbess and seven nuns,

> There exists the monastery of the Blessed Maria del Cestello ... of the Order of Citeaux, which is located across from the Monstery of S. Lorenzo, such that between them there is only an average-sized street, having a great and ample space in which are living an abbess and about seven nuns. Their professions almost forgotten and their chastity and religion nearly neglected, they lead a shameless and dishonest life.[42]

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[40] Zarri, 202 n. 190; ASB Dem 3/3245 no. 6 fol. 1v

[41] ASB Dem 7/3249 no. 15.

[42] "Monasterium Beate Marie de cistello Bononiensis ordinis Cisterciensis quod ex opposito dicti Monasterii Sancti Laurentii situatum existit, itaque inter illa non est nisi strata media magnum et amplum locum habens in quo Abbatissa et septem Moniales ut circha inhabitantes sue professionis penitus immemores ac regulari castimonia et

This appeal was very similar to the one made by S. Caterina. In both cases, nuns who felt their house could not accommodate them asked to be given a house which would suit them, and which was inhabited by nuns who, because of their alleged lax way of life, were less deserving of the house than the petitioners. The nuns of S. Lorenzo asked that they be allowed to join the buildings by means of an underground tunnel, so that they could go back and forth between the two houses without having to leave the cloister. They also asked that the office of abbess at S. Maria del Cestello be suppressed.[43]

On September 11 of that year, Alexander, the Cardinal Legate acting on the authority of the papal see and as the vicar of the bishop of Bologna, held an inquiry into the matter. A procurator represented each nunnery – Constantino de Serafino for the nuns of S. Lorenzo and Gratiano di Grasso for S. Maria del Cestello. Gratiano objected to the union, although the grounds on which he did so are not spelled out in the record. His efforts to stop the union failed, and the convent of S. Maria del Cestello was suppressed. The sisters were given the option of staying in the nunnery and accepting the rule of Saint Augustine or transferring to another nunnery of their own order; they chose the latter, and went to the nunnery of S. Orsolina, now inhabited by Cistercian nuns who had formerly lived in the nunnery of S. Maria della Misericordia. All movable and immovable goods belonging to S. Maria del Cestello were also transferred to S. Orsolina, with the exception of the building itself and its enclosure.[44]

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religione penitus neglecta vitam impudicam et inhonestam ducunt" ASB Dem 3/3245 no. 8, fol. 1r.

[43] ASB Dem 7/3249 no. 16.

[44] ASB Dem 3/3245 no. 8.

The case was not settled at this point. In October of 1473, the abbess of S. Orsolina petitioned the pope to settle the question of how the property would be disposed of in the event of that the former abbess and nuns of S. Maria del Cestello should either die or leave S. Orsolina. The possibility remained that the former inhabitants of S. Maria del Cestello only had usufruct of the mobile and immobile goods from their old monastery, and that that property would return to the patrimony of S. Lorenzo after the deaths of the nuns who had once lived at S. Maria del Cestello. Another uncertainty was whether the goods would follow those nuns if they decided to leave S. Orsolina, as the sisters of S. Maria di Pontemaggiore had left S. Gervasio & Protasio. The abbess of S. Orsolina averred that theirs was the only remaining Cistercian nunnery in the diocese of Bologna. Sixtus IV instructed the canon lawyer Jerome di Grasso to investigate the matter and render a judgment.[45] On December 9, Jerome decided in favor of S. Orsolina, consolidating the remaining holdings of S. Maria del Cestello with those of S. Orsolina. This incorporation of goods would remain valid beyond the tenure of the nuns who had formerly lived in S. Maria di Cestello at S. Orsolina, for whatever reason that tenure should come to an end, whether "by dying naturally, or by leaving the Monastery of the Virgins [S. Orsolina], or by other wanderings" they might undertake.[46]

In both of these cases, the nuns who initiated the union made a similar argument – that good nuns were in danger of not being able to fulfill their vows because of the poor condition of their physical surroundings, and that it would be a better use of newer, more

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[45] ASB Dem 3/3245 no. 9.

[46] "naturaliter decedentibus, aut dictum Monasterium de Virginibus exeuntibus, ut alias vagantibus." ASB Dem 3/3245 no. 10.

spacious nunneries for these virtuous nuns to live there than the current inhabitants, who are charged with neglecting their vows. One question that arises from these two late-fifteenth century unions is whether the two components of the petitions – the need of the larger communities for better and larger housing and the allegations of unfitness directed at the smaller communities – can be taken separately or if the combination of the two explain the success of the petitioners in these cases.

One way to address the question is to consider the charges of misconduct. In neither case is there evidence that the nuns accused of laxity received any censure. They were allowed either to remain in their old nunnery with the new inhabitants or to transfer to the nunnery of their choice. Though there appears to have been some trouble in the house to which the sisters from S. Giovanni Battista transferred, causing at least one nun there to seek a more peaceful nunnery, tension among nuns and litigious behavior do not confirm that Sister Margarita and her companions were guilty of the charges that the nuns of S. Caterina leveled against them. Where S. Maria del Cestello was concerned, the only evidence of the nuns' behavior in the fifteenth century comes from a 1429 visitation by the abbot of S. Maria della Columba, in which his main admonitions were that the nuns should remain quiet and should not talk at the window.[47] In 1445, the abbot of S. Maria della Columba transferred Orsina Bentivoglio from S. Maria del Cestello to S. Orsolina and installed her as its abbess, after the nuns of S. Orsolina had elected an abbess without the approval of their superior.[48] In this case, Cistercian officials chose a nun from S. Maria del Cestello to lead a house that had acted against the wishes of its

[47] ASB Dem 4/3246 no. 1.
[48] ASB Dem 4/3246 no. 2-4.

superiors. Though it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these events, especially in light of their chronological distance from the 1473 union, they do not support the portrayal of S. Maria del Cestello as a nunnery in moral disorder.

**Conclusions**

The history of unions and suppression since the early fourteenth century suggests that it was not unusual for ecclesiastical officials to grant requests for unions. While the nuns in the petitioning houses may have thought that contrasting their own virtue with the alleged immorality of the sisters in the nunnery with which they wanted to combine would assure the union, it is probable that the prelates to whom they addressed their petitions saw the unions as management of resources rather than reward or punishment for behavior.

Unlike the suppressions of monasteries under Bertrand de Pouget and Cardinal Albornoz, these fifteenth century mergers occurred at the behest of one of the nunneries involved. These particular consolidations differed, however, from previous ones (for example, the unions of S Maria di Fontana and S. Nicolò di Carpineta with S. Guglielmo, or that of S. Maria di Pontemaggiore and SS. Gervasio e Protasio and S. Christina), in which a weaker house sought to unite with a stronger one. In these earlier cases, there seems to have been agreement to the union. Though the union of SS. Gervasio & Protasio with S. Maria di Pontemaggiore did not last, in the other cases there is no record of power struggles resulting from the deal. In these three fifteenth-century unions, however, the nunneries seeking the merger appear to have been the stronger ones, and the

other houses involved did not welcome the advent of new sisters. In all three cases, the nuns who lived in the house where the union occurred were far outnumbered by their new sisters. It seems that the few nuns from the original community preferred to move to another nunnery rather than to become a minority in their own house. Though in two cases the nuns chose to transfer to another nunnery of the same order, the nuns of S. Lorenzo changed orders. Perhaps they had had interactions with the Cistercians of S. Maria del Cestello across the street from them, and had sufficient familiarity with those nuns that it was possible to bridge the difference in practice. Moreover, given that S. Maria del Cestello had only seven nuns by the time of their union with S. Lorenzo, it is possible that their nunnery was already dwindling in numbers in 1432, and thus the three nuns of S. Lorenzo would have had a larger voice in the decisions of the nunnery than would have been the case had they stayed with the twenty-four nuns from S. Orsolina.

The success or failure of unions and transfers seems to have been determined by the consent of both parties. This remains true whether the uniting houses were of the same order or of different orders. Conversely, where suppressions or large-scale transfers happened against the will of one of the nunneries involved, the fact that both groups followed the same rule and order does not seem to have made the union of the two communities any smoother. When a union failed, nuns from the dissenting house left en masse, suggesting that they maintained an identity as a cohesive group, even if they then had to choose another community with which to combine and could not continue on as an independent nunnery.

# CONCLUSION

The history of women's monastic houses in Bologna, their foundation, growth, and suppression, reveals the range of choices nuns could exercise and what factors constrained their choices. During the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, in Bologna as elsewhere, both men and women formed communities seeking an alternative to traditional monasticism, which took on a variety of forms, from Angelica's oratory of S. Maria del Monte della Guardia to S. Caterina di Quarto's double community, which attracted daughter houses in other towns in the Romagnol. To control the growing diversity of new religious establishments throughout Europe, in 1215 Innocent III decided to confine new monastic foundations to the observance of existing rules. These decrees did not slow the pace of the establishment of new nunneries in Bologna; rather, the years from 1223-1260 saw a continuing increase in the number of new foundations spurred by the growth of the mendicant orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans. Families of newly wealthy guild members sent their daughters to these new communities, and the emerging government, called the *Popolo*, supported the building of new nunneries and churches with money and helped to sustain the communities inside these buildings with donations of grain.

These new convents had to establish their place within the ecclesiastical community. Because the general chapters of the Cistercians, Dominican and Franciscans refused to accept responsibility for the government of nunneries, few women's houses in any area were able to gain full incorporation into monastic orders; those nunneries that

did gain official recognition from monastic orders relied on papal intervention on their behalf. Many convents followed the rules and constitutions of these orders, but remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop. This dependent status left them vulnerable, as demonstrated by the suppressions of at least six nunneries in Bologna in 1332 in order to use their property to finance the formation of new collegiate churches.

In addition to the houses that followed the rules and constitutions of the new religious orders, several nunneries from the twelfth and early thirteenth century remained part of small networks of houses that were independent of any recognized order. Though Innocent IV imposed the Augustinian rule on some of these houses in the 1240s, they retained their distinctive character well into the fourteenth century. S. Caterina di Quarto remained a double house until the early fourteenth century, and it attempted to preserve its role as the originator of the "Order of S. Caterina," consisting of five daughter houses, despite the fact that ecclesiastical officials considered it part of the Order of St. Augustine. Though S. Mattia and S. Maria del Monte della Guardia had ties to the Dominican order, theses combined nunneries used a papal privilege to maintain independence from episcopal oversight and some degree of autonomy from the Dominicans themselves. By the late fifteenth century, though, these houses and several others that originally followed the Augustinian rule had become Dominican as well.

Studies of monastic communities during periods of expansion, such as in the thirteenth century, can show one side of the motivations that led men and women to form religious communities and the practical means by which they achieved their goals; likewise, and investigation of their strategies for dealing with periods of difficulty and

decline can shed light on their religious priorities. In Bologna, the foundation of new nunneries came to a near standstill in the last years of the thirteenth century. This period coincided with intense factional warfare in Bologna, resulting in the expulsion of nearly a quarter of the city's population. It seems likely, also, that the city's pious impulses were diverted to the emerging lay confraternities. In addition to the lack of new monastic foundations for women, some existing nunneries faced the loss of their homes, especially those in the suburbs and *contado* that were exposed to the frequent battles between Bologna and nearby city-states. Many of these nunneries sought safer abodes in the city. The required building programs could strain the community's finances. The nuns of S. Mattia lived in private housing for over twenty years while financing the building of its new nunnery. Though S. Anna's nuns built their new home relatively quickly, they were unable to recover from the expenditure and had to move out of the house and rent the building for income. For S. Caterina di Quarto the movement into the city coincided with changes in their constitution, including increased emphasis on enclosure.

Even some nunneries within the city walls faced economic hardship and could not afford to maintain and repair their aging domiciles, leading to several unions among nunneries. These unions demonstrate the fluidity of rule observance among nuns. In many cases practical matters superseded concerns about whether the two uniting nunneries followed the same rule or constitution. The determining factor in the success of unions was the willingness of both parties to the union. Unions of two houses of the same order could fail disastrously, while two nunneries of different orders could combine successfully into one community if both sides had initially agreed to the merger. The

reaction of ecclesiastical officials to these unions is also telling; the bishops and legates ordering unions or granting requests from the nunneries dealt with these events as property management issues, displaying little concern that sisters would continue to observe the rule that they had professed to follow when they became nuns.

Studying the fortunes of nunneries in one city and its surrounding area allows a breadth of focus that an emphasis on communities of a single order cannot achieve, allowing for an examination of the diversity of religious practice within a region, with implications for the study of women's monasticism beyond that region. Though there is still much to be learned from scholarship on the lives of women in well-known religious orders, investigations concentrating solely on nunneries from those orders, or any particular order, would pass over such communities as S. Caterina di Quarto and SS. Trinità di Ronzano, which provide opportunities to study the persistence of local congregations among the larger monastic orders and the changes that these nunneries and congregations went through over time. Similarly, focus on one order or another runs the risk of missing many of the unions that occurred across orders, as well as some rule changes that occurred independent of any such dramatic events. These examples demonstrate the practicality and ingenuity of women religious, even sometimes at the expense of other nuns, and highlight the porosity of the boundaries between the religious orders.

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