



A Pope, a King, and a Chapel:

A reappraisal of the host desecration tale in Paris

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Table of Contents

Introduction and Status Quaestionis.....	Page 4.
Chapter 1: The Reign of Philip the Fair.....	Page 11.
Chapter 2: Chappelle des Billettes.....	Page 18.
Chapter 3: The Motivations of Boniface VIII and Philip IV.....	Page 22.
Conclusions.....	Page 28.

Acknowledgements
Bibliography

Introduction and Status Quaestionis

The history of the Jewish communities in Europe, is littered with tales of violence. This can be interpreted twofold. On the one hand, Jewish communities could become victim to exploitation, massacres and expulsion; on the other hand, Jewish communities were sometimes accused of inflicting injuries to the Christian community as a whole. David Nirenberg showed that these events were not just the result of a European Christian set of believes, but that these believes were only set in motion, when certain conditions made it useful for people to use them to their advantage. Ritual murder and host desecration accusations are perfect examples of this. In the wake of Nirenberg, this thesis will reevaluate the host desecration case which played out in Paris in 1290. This casus will help to illuminate how different people could influence the way an accusation like this could play out.¹ The main part of this thesis will investigate the roles of two major political figures at the time, pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) and Philip IV of France (1285-1314), who were involved in the way the accusation would take form over the years between 1290 and 1299.

Gregory the Great (590-604) was the first pope to issue a letter of protection for the Jews, called: *Sicut Iudaeis*. In this letter, Gregory explicitly forbade Christians to harm Jews. He did as a reaction to a petition from the Jewish population of Palermo, who felt mistreated by the Bishop of Naples.² The practice of papal protection was rooted in the writings of St Augustine, St Paul and the Theodosian Code. St Paul (3-64/67) stated that the Jews would be reconciled with the Christian faith at the end of days, and they should live unharmed in Christian society, since they were witnesses to the truth of the Old Testament. St Augustine (354-430) expanded on Paul's writings: the Jews were a living testament to the truth of Christianity, their dispersed state of existence should be interpreted as a punishment from God for denying Christ's importance.³

In addition to these writings, papal policy was influenced by the Theodosian Code. This code was a set of laws, promulgated by Emperors ranging from Constantine I (272-337) to Theodosian II(401-450), and contained a set of rules concerning the treatment of Jews in the Roman empire. Although some laws were restrictive, like the restrictions on Synagogue-building, the Code also provided protection for the Jews in the form of basic rights. For example, the Code affirmed the citizenship of Jews in the Roman Empire. The papacy modeled its own policies on these sources and as such, they treated the Jewish populations in both a restrictive and protective matter.⁴

¹ David Nirenberg, *Communities of violence: persecution of minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton 1996) 6.

² Rebecca Rist, *Popes and Jews, 1095-1291* (New York 2016) 43.

³ Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations 1000-1300: Jews in the service of Medieval Christendom* (New York 2014) 7; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 73-74.

⁴ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 13; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 74.

Therefore, it was logical that Gregory the Great would send a letter with the goal of protecting the Jewish communities of Palermo and the Jewish community as a whole.

The bull was reissued sixteen times, starting from the twelfth century, and became known in the High Middle Ages as the *Constitutio pro Iudaeis*.⁵ Often, these reissues were a reaction to other developments in Christian society, like the crusades. Crusaders could target Jewish communities on their way to the Holy land, so Jewish communities often appealed to the pope to issue the bull in order to protect them.⁶

Ritual murder and blood libel accusations against Jews could be a reason for popes to reissue the bulls as well. These allegations became more and more common in the thirteenth century.⁷ The first of these accusations always involved a group of Jews, who would torture and murder a Christian child in the same way as it had happened to Jesus Christ. The second accusation was similar, but it added to the mythos that Jews would consume the blood of Christians for ritual purposes. According to Stacey, it was believed, that by doing so, Jews expressed their malice towards the Christian society as a whole.⁸ Innocent IV (1243-1254) and Gregory X (1271-1276) responded to these allegations by reissuing *Constitutio pro Iudaeis*. Innocent IV refuted the charges of ritual-murder made against Jews in Valréas in 1247. He understood that making allegations against the Jewish communities was an easy way for Christians to extort money and property from Jewish communities. Therefore, he added a paragraph denouncing the ritual-murder and blood-libel allegations.⁹ Gregory X denounced the allegations by stating that, according to Jewish law, it was forbidden to consume blood, and thus the allegations should be considered nonsense.¹⁰

Taking into account Innocent IV's considerations and the fact that a considerable number of popes reissued the *Constitutio pro Iudaeis* in the second half of the thirteenth century, it is remarkable that one of his successors, Boniface VIII (1294-1303), did not. This is remarkable because during Boniface's pontificate, a new allegation against the Jews surfaced, namely: the host desecration accusation.¹¹ In this allegation, Jews were accused of torturing the consecrated host, and thus the body of Christ itself. The specific case that will be the focus of this thesis, is the host desecration case of Paris in 1290. This was the first fully-documented case of a complete host desecration, and one that played out in Paris, a well-governed city. As such, the King himself was

⁵ Rist, *Popes and Jews*, x, 79-81.

⁶ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 50; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 13.

⁷ Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 80-81.

⁸ Robert C. Stacey, 'Ritual crucifixion to host-desecration: Jews and the body of Christ', *Jewish History* 12:1 (1998) 11-28 there 14.

⁹ Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 89.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 90.

¹¹ Miri Rubin, *Gentile tales: the narrative assault on Late medieval Jews* (New Haven 1999) 41-49.

involved. Because of these facts, the actions Boniface VIII took, concerning the matter, could have important consequences.

The tale in short: a Jewish pawnbroker promised the cancellation of her debt to an impoverished Christian woman, if she would give him a consecrated host. The woman accepted the deal and provided the pawnbroker with a consecrated host she held in her mouth when receiving communion. Once delivered, the Jewish man started to torture the Eucharist in different ways. Throughout the torture, the Eucharist remained intact, but started to bleed. The Jew also decided to put the Eucharist in boiling water, which turned the water red. The host then hovered above the water and turned into a crucifix.¹²

William Chester Jordan and Miri Rubin have tried to explain how and why this particular host desecration tale, the first of its kind, could gain credence. Jordan points to the fact that in 1260, the administration of the host changed drastically. First, the host was now elevated for the congregation, which means that the Eucharist became a more public phenomenon. Second, the feast of Corpus Christi gained traction which spurred a new devotion towards the Eucharist.¹³ The host desecration tale, according to Rubin, could take hold in a society where the Eucharist became increasingly important. Public display of the Eucharist, like processions, became more and more frequent and because of that, worries about possible harm happening to this most valued and venerated object also developed.¹⁴ It should also not be forgotten that at the end of the thirteenth century, Christians saw the Eucharist as the 'true body of Christ'.¹⁵ These factors, in combination with the fact that rich Jews had Christian servants and thus access to the Eucharist, only served the rapid development of a tale which would first emerge in 1290's Paris.¹⁶

Possible reasons as to why the host desecration tale could emerge, are mostly based in devotional developments. However, several aspects concerning the tale have remained understudied, namely, the role of the papacy and the Crown in the matter. There is no evidence that Nicholas IV (1288-1291), who was pope in 1290, had ever heard about the events that occurred in Paris. Though he reissued the bull of protection of Jews, historians have not been able to date the bull. Therefore, it is impossible to link the bull of protection that Nicholas IV issued, with the host desecration case in Paris.¹⁷ Boniface VIII however, did know of the host desecration case. In 1295 he was petitioned by a wealthy member of the Parisian bourgeoisie: Renier le Flamenc. Renier, an

¹² Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 41.

¹³ William Chester Jordan, *The French monarchy and the Jews: from Philip Augustus to the last Capetians* (Philadelphia 1989) 192.

¹⁴ Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 29.

¹⁵ Stacey, 'Ritual crucifixion', 11-28 there 13.

¹⁶ Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 40-48.

¹⁷ Solomon Grayzel and Kenneth Stow, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth century: 1254 -1314* (New York, 1989) 191-192.

extremely wealthy man who worked in the French King's administration, asked Boniface permission to build a chapel on the place where the alleged crime had taken place.¹⁸ In a letter to the bishop of Paris, dated July 17 1295, Boniface ordered the bishop to allow the establishment of the chapel.¹⁹ By writing this letter, Boniface gave credence to the host desecration tale. In doing so, the highest ecclesiastical authority helped to establish the belief that at least some Jews were actively trying to harm Christendom.

The decision made by Boniface VIII in the matter of the 'miraculous host of Paris', comes somewhat as a surprise. As I have already showed, popes were generally eager to protect Jewish communities. So why did Boniface not do so? To this day, this question has not been answered satisfactorily. Authors who touch upon the host desecration case are Robert Chazan, Kenneth Stow and Rebecca Rist, in addition to the aforementioned Jordan and Rubin.²⁰ Chazan appraises Boniface's choice, to give permission for the building of the chapel, as notable, because papal recognition of the alleged crime created a new addition to anti-Jewish mythology.²¹ Both Jordan and Rubin mention the story but take no time to discuss the possible motives behind Boniface's decision.²² Kenneth Stow was the first historian to explicitly raise the question. Although he posited some possible answers, in his own eyes, none were very convincing. One option Stow posits, is that Boniface simply saw a chance to build an extra chapel. Because the host desecration had not stirred up popular riots in the five years since its appearance, it was safe for Boniface to allow the chapel to be built.²³ Another possible option given by Stow imagines Christian logic at the time: 'Why should Jews not despise and torture the corpus verum of Christ, the host, just as they had despised Christ in person?'²⁴ This, of course, was one of the oldest Christian perceptions of Judaism. The redactors of the New Testament had assigned the responsibility for the death of Christ to an organized group of Jews.²⁵ Again, this is nothing more than a possibility, since Stow's statement is not backed up with evidence of any kind and seems more like an assessment of Stow than of Boniface.

In her monograph, published more recently, Rebecca Rist states that Boniface reacted in contrast to other popes, but she does not elaborate on this. Why did Boniface, surprisingly, decide not to protect the Jewish population of Paris in this instance? Could it have been personal aversion towards Jews from Boniface? This is unlikely, as in 1299, Boniface issued a papal bull, wherein he

¹⁸ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 194.

¹⁹ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 196-199.

²⁰ Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in northern France* (Baltimore, 1973) 182; Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 194; Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 44; Kenneth Stow, 'The Church and the Jews: St Paul to Pius IX' in: Kenneth Stow eds., *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot 2007) I, 39-40; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 89.

²¹ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 182.

²² Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 194; Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 41-49.

²³ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 199.

²⁴ Stow, 'The Church and the Jews', 39-40.

²⁵ Stacey, 'Ritual crucifixion', 11-28 there 11.

protected the Jewish population of Rome from unfair trial by the inquisition.²⁶ Additionally, the fact that the conduct of Boniface in the Parisian and Roman case differs so dramatically, suggests a calculated decision in both cases. This leads us to wonder what the underlying rationale behind Boniface's decision might have been. This thesis strives to shed more light on the situation by examining the entire context in which Boniface's decision took place. By considering all the factors that may have had an influence on his decision, new insights regarding this host desecration and similar cases might be obtained. Boniface VIII, knowingly or unknowingly, gave credence to a tale, utilized by the Christian communities of Europe, to destroy a substantial amount of Jewish communities. In doing so, he opened a Pandora's box which had profound consequences for the Jewish communities in Europe. After 1290, host desecration accusations were made in Austria, Franconia, Northern Germany, Silesia, Catalonia and Brabant.²⁷

A new and promising way of approaching the question is to look at the host desecration case in the context of different facets of Philip IV the Fair's (1285-1314) reign, and especially his own involvement in the case. Next to his direct involvement, certain elements of his regime can be brought into the equation as well: his conflict with Boniface VIII, his lust for power and wealth, his general treatment of French Jewry, his relationship with the French clergy, as well as the expensive wars he waged in Gascony and Flanders. Furthermore, this thesis will examine the relationship between Philip IV and Renier le Flamenc. Most historians, except for Jordan, have only mentioned him as the petitioner of Boniface VIII without giving further attention to him. Jordan is the only one who mentions that Renier le Flamenc was part of Philip's administration. Other research has shown that at some point at least, Renier acted as mint master in the Kings administration.²⁸ The information this research will yield, might be essential in shedding further light on Boniface's decision. The goal is to forge these seemingly unrelated elements into a coherent story that can provide us with a context, wherein a logical rationale can be attributed to Boniface's decision.

The conflict between Boniface VIII and Philip IV has been extensively discussed by authors such as Cecilia Gaposchkin and Joseph Strayer.²⁹ Gaposchkin sheds light on the strained relationship between Philip IV and Boniface VIII in an important article. Her main goal is to show that although relative peace was restored between Philip and Boniface, for a brief period starting in 1297, Boniface still used calculating methods to criticize his 'former foe'.³⁰ He did this by using his writings about

²⁶ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 204; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 215-216.

²⁷ Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 69.

²⁸ Marc Bompaire, 'Richard Huguet, de Florence, maître des monnaies de Philippe de Bel', *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* 2007(2009) 90-106 there 95; Julien Havet, 'Compte du trésor du Louvre (Toussaint 1296)', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 45:1 (1884) 237-299 there 244.

²⁹ M. Cecilia. Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII, Philip the Fair, and the sanctity of Louis IX', *Journal of Medieval history* 29:1 (2003) 1-26; Joseph Reese Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton 1980).

³⁰ Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII', 1-26 there 18-22.

Louis IX as a veiled criticism on Philip's kingship.³¹ This is important information since her conclusion supports the assumption that Boniface's decisions were generally very calculated. He was, of course, a high-profile politician, so in most cases he had to be calculating, but Gaposchkin shows that in the case of Philip and France, he was especially aware of this necessity. Therefore, his decision concerning the petition should be investigated in this light. To explore this question properly though, the work of Joseph Strayer is indispensable. Strayer has written about the relationship between Philip IV, the French clergy and the papacy extensively. He delivers an insightful thesis, wherein he explains that every actor in this relationship had to tread very lightly when dealing with one another. For example: Boniface VIII and Philip IV were notorious for demanding certain conflicting actions from the entire French clergy. Considering this relationship in light of the host desecration case might lead to new insights.³² Strayer also wrote about the wars in Gascony and Flanders extensively. These wars, as we will see, had a key role in the conflict between Boniface and Philip.³³

Two already mentioned authors, Robert Chazan and William Chester Jordan, have written about the relationship between the French King and the Jewish population of France. They both point out that Philip had a very strict policy towards the French Jews. Furthermore, they are both convinced that although there was a certain theological aspect to Philip IV's treatment of the Jews, the focus of his policies was financial exploit. No religious organization or measure could get in the way of Philip taxing 'his' Jews.³⁴ This 'economic approach' seems like an unmissable and promising element from which to look at the host desecration case. By combining all these elements and giving different propositions for a possible rationale behind Boniface decision, this thesis hopes to shed more light on a mystery that already grabbed the attention of Kenneth Stow in 1989. Also, this has the potential to reveal Philip's involvement in the case.

To be able to solve this mystery, this thesis will seek to answer the following questions: what underlying rationale might have pushed pope Boniface VIII to make an unexpected decision, considering the protection given to Jews by other popes, on the matter of the Parisian host desecration case in 1295? And: what underlying rationale might have been at the root of Philip IV's decisions concerning the host desecration case? Since Philip's and Boniface's political decisions were so entangled at the time, it is considered impossible to answer the first question without answering the second.

The first chapter will be dedicated to illustrating the situation in Philip IV's France (1285-1303). This will encompass the beginning of Philip's reign until the death of Boniface VIII. It will deal

³¹ Ibidem, 1-26 there 4, 13, 17-18, 20-21.

³² Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 251, 253, 265, 267.

³³ Ibidem, 317-345.

³⁴ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 157-175; Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 182-189.

with the conflict between Boniface and Philip and their interests in this situation. This chapter will also look at additional actors in the conflict, the Jews of France and the French clergy. The second chapter will be committed to show the involvement of all the main players in the case; Boniface VIII, Renier le Flamenc and Philip IV. The third chapter will be devoted to the description of possible outcomes for both Philip and Boniface in light of their decisions concerning the host desecration case, and in doing so will strive to answer the research questions. The research for these chapters will rely for the most part on secondary literature relating to Philip the Fair's reign in general, his policy towards French Jewry and his relationship with Boniface.³⁵ Furthermore, literature concerning papal policy towards Judaism will be used. Additionally, literature concerning host desecration accusations in general, and the Paris case especially, will be used.³⁶ Additionally, primary sources will be used. This will include a papal bull, a part of Philip's administrative documents, an 19th century document concerning streets and monuments in Paris, and an 18th century document concerning the history of monastic orders.³⁷ These sources will be used in the second chapter, which will dedicate itself to shine light on the dealing concerning the chapel which was built in honor of the desecrated host.

³⁵ Robert Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval western Christendom: 1000-1500* (Leiden, 2006); Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*; Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII'; William Chester Jordan, *Unceasing strife, unending fear: Jacques de Thérines and the freedom of the Church in the age of the last Capetians* (Princeton 2005); Jordan, *The French monarchy*; Ginger M. Lee, 'French war of 1294-1303', in: Ronald H. Fritze and William Baxter Robison eds., *Historical dictionary of late Medieval England, 1272-1485* (Greenwood 2002); Joseph Reese Strayer, 'The costs and profits of war: the Anglo-French conflict of 1294-1303', in: David Herlihy, Harry A. Miskimin and A.L. Udovitch eds., *The Medieval city* (New Haven 1977); Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*.

³⁶ Amédée Boinet, *Les églises Parisiennes* (Paris 1958); Camille Salatko Petryszcze, *Le mystère de la sainte hostie: introduction, édition du texte et notes par Camille Salatko Petryszcze* (MA thesis, University of Rennes II, Rennes 2014) https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 May 2018); Rubin, *Gentile tales*.

³⁷ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*; Félix Lazare, *Dictionnaire administrative et historique des rues de Paris et de ses monuments* (Paris 1855); Havet, 'Compte du trésor'; Maximilien Bullot, Jean Baptiste Coignard & Pierre Hippolyt Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres monastiques, religieux et militaires, et des Congrégations séculières de l'un & de l'autre sexe, qui ont été établies jusqu'à présent* (Paris 1714-1719).

The reign of Philip the Fair

In order to give a satisfying answer to both the research questions, it is pivotal to sketch the appropriate context in which both Boniface's and Philip's decisions can be placed. This context can then be used to reappraise the consequences of the Parisian host desecration case. For this reason, this chapter will investigate two major political events that were taking place in France between 1294 and 1305: the Anglo-French war over Gascony as well as the Flemish war. Secondly, we will see how these wars influenced the relationship between Boniface and Philip. This chapter will also show how the French clergy had to maneuver when dealing with both the papacy and the Crown. Finally, we will discuss the position of the Jews in France under Capetian rule. This chapter will show how the wars influenced not only Philip's relation with Boniface and the French clergy, but also how it changed Philip's economic policy towards the Jews.

The War, the Conflict, the Clergy

In 1294, Philip IV declared war on the English King, Edward I.³⁸ The reasons as to why he did this are not completely known. Jordan entertains the options that it was just an act born out of a young king's bravado or that Philip felt like he could erase the disgrace brought over France when they lost the war over Aragon.³⁹ Lee thinks, that Philip wanted to recover the last English holdings in France, to demonstrate the divine authority of the French Monarchy and to expand royal authority.⁴⁰ Whatever the reason, a series of petty incidents in Gascony provoked the French King to declare war in 1294.⁴¹ According to Strayer, the war was not bloody, which meant that it was very costly.⁴² To put it more crudely, soldiers were not dying, so they had to be sheltered, fed, armed and paid. Consequently, the Crown needed to raise a substantial amount of money, to meet these costs. The Gascon hostilities ended with a truce in October 1297, leading to real peace in 1303. The truce of 1297 however, did not end the war for France, since they still had to put down the Flemish.⁴³ Gui count of Flanders, and Edward I had forged an alliance in 1297. Edward wanted another front, and Gui wanted to resist the French King who was slowly taking Flanders away from him.⁴⁴ Edward backed out in the same year, and the French could occupy Flanders. This led to the Flemish war which lasted from 1302 to 1305.⁴⁵ This war would be extremely costly for the French in terms of both

³⁸ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 197.

³⁹ Ibidem, 179, 197.

⁴⁰ Lee, 'French war of 1294-1303', 216.

⁴¹ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 197; Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 317-318.

⁴² Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 250; Strayer, 'The costs and profits of war', 271.

⁴³ Strayer, 'The costs and profits of war', 271.

⁴⁴ Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 320-321.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 321.

their pride and their purse. In 1302, the French suffered a disastrous defeat at Courtrai, which put considerable economic pressure on the King.⁴⁶ This pressure forced Philip to sign the 1303 peace treaty which saw Gascony return to English hands.⁴⁷ Because the war in Flanders had become so costly, Philip needed to remove Edward from the war as soon as possible. To do this, he had to sign a peace treaty which was more favorable to England.

All in all, the years between 1294 and 1305 were very costly for the French Crown. Money was borrowed from banks and the bourgeoisie, new sales taxes were imposed, and minorities like the Jews and the Lombards were targeted with heavy taxes.⁴⁸ It was also decided to impose a tenth (10 percent income tax) on the French Church. In 1294, a series of provincial councils granted a tenth for two years; when the war ceased, the granting of the tenth would also cease.⁴⁹ In 1296, Philip requested another grant of tenths, but before negotiations could begin, Boniface VIII issued the bull: *Clericis laicos*. This bull forbade lay governments to tax the clergy.⁵⁰ Although the bull was not directly aimed at Philip, it started a bitter quarrel between the two men.⁵¹ Four months later, Philip issued an ordinance, forbidding the export of gold, silver and war materials. This influenced the papacy gravely and brought it into considerable trouble, since the pope could not receive money from the French Church. An example Strayer gives, is that of a proposed alliance between Rome and Aragon which had to be suspended because Boniface was not able to transfer the required funds for the deal.⁵²

Boniface reacted furiously. In reaction to the ordinance he issued: *Ineffabilis Amor*. In this bull, Boniface criticized Philip's financial demands and threatened to join the English King who complained about French aggression.⁵³ Boniface however, had made more enemies than Philip alone. The high profile Roman family of the Colonna had declared the abdication of pope Celestine V illegal as a consequence of a family feud.⁵⁴ This situation, paired with the fact that Philip needed peace in Europe to be able to start a new crusade, made him decide to let go of his grievances over the taxation of the clergy. In January 1297, Boniface allowed the grant, and on July 31, Boniface issued the bull: *Etsi de statu*. This bull allowed the King to tax his clergy without permission of the pope. On 11 August, Boniface canonized Philip's grandfather, Louis IX, as a sign of goodwill.⁵⁵ Taking

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 256, 272.

⁴⁷ Strayer, 'The costs and profits of war', 271.

⁴⁸ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 197-198.

⁴⁹ Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 251.

⁵⁰ Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII', 1-26 there 4; Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 251.

⁵¹ *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 251.

⁵² Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII', 1-26 there 5; *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 251-252.

⁵³ Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII', 1-26 there 5; Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 252.

⁵⁴ Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 254.

⁵⁵ Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII', 1-26 there 1,5; Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 251.

everything into consideration, Boniface had to make this decision, but it was an embarrassing one nonetheless.

On first glance, the fact that Boniface made the taxation of the clergy illegal, might sound like an advantageous situation for the French Church. But that would be far from the truth. They knew that their taxes, payed to the papacy, were often given to the French Kings, who used the money to pay for their crusades.⁵⁶ Therefore, they were used to paying for war. However, there was a substantial difference between directly paying to the papacy and directly paying to the King. By doing the latter, the clergy was often able to gain privileges from the King, which could benefit them immediately or in future dealings.⁵⁷ Thus, when Boniface issued *Clericis Laicos*, the clergy of France saw a chance to gain privileges vanish in thin air. By issuing the bull, Boniface completely took this bargaining position away from the clergy. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that most of the French clergy, according to Jordan, were also driven by a sense of loyalty to the King, so they wanted to pay for the war expenses.⁵⁸

One year before the loss at Courtrai, Boniface and Philip became involved in a second argument. This time they disagreed on the imprisonment of a bishop. Philip wanted to appease the leading families of the Languedoc (a historically rebellious region) by curbing the privileges of the inquisition. This in turn agitated the bishops in that region. Saisset, bishop of Pamiers, spoke out against the King, and was arrested and imprisoned by Philip.⁵⁹ In doing so, Philip had infringed on the rights of the clergy, who could only be imprisoned by an ecclesiastical authority.⁶⁰ Boniface acted upon this infringement by issuing the bull: *Ausculda fili*. This bull suspended the rights of the King to ask for tenths and gathered a council of bishops to discuss the wrongdoings of the King to both clergy and laity. Boniface even claimed to be Philip's superior.⁶¹ Philip countered the bull by stating that Boniface was entering on temporal terrain. Philip's chief minister organized a council of Barons, prelates and representatives of the towns of France, to discuss the wrongdoings of the Pope in order to refute *Ausculda fili*.⁶² Consequently, attendants of the meeting wrote letters to the bishops of France, expressing their resentments.⁶³

These bishops and other clergy found themselves in a difficult position now. At the one hand, they were loyal to their King, at the other hand, they had to be loyal to the "Head of the Church". In the end, they recognized the fact that the King could do more for them and by siding with the him,

⁵⁶ Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 250.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 250.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 250.

⁵⁹ Gaposchkin, 'Boniface VIII', 1-26 there 23; Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 262-264.

⁶⁰ Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 266.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 268.

⁶² Ibidem, 271.

⁶³ Ibidem, 271.

they could hope for more privileges. This moved the clergy to write a letter to the pope, asking him to revoke the council he had planned to discuss Philip's wrongdoings. Boniface was furious. He threatened to depose every prelate who would not react to his summon.⁶⁴

In 1302, Boniface issued *Unam Sanctam*. This bull declared that every Christian (including Philip) should be subordinate to the Roman Pontiff, this was the only way they could attain salvation. He also demanded that Philip would allow his prelates to travel to Rome (Philip had forbidden this in order to stop Boniface's council).⁶⁵ Since Philip was not budging, Boniface decided to use his most powerful weapon: excommunication. When the envoy carrying the required letters was arrested, Philip counter-moved by organizing a council, which was meant to depose the pope.⁶⁶

The conflict between Boniface VIII and Philip IV ended in 1303. While Boniface was drafting the bull *Super petri solio*, which excommunicated Philip, one of Philip's chief ministers, Nogaret, was in Italy. To prevent the bull from being issued, Nogaret, together with the Colonna family, forced themselves into Boniface's castle at Anagni.⁶⁷ Although the people of Anagni rescued the Pope, Boniface was devastated. Three weeks later, he died in Rome.⁶⁸

We have seen how the Anglo-French war of Gascony and the Flemish war heavily influenced the relationship between King Philip the Fair, pope Boniface VIII and the French Clergy. These relationships were mostly impaired by Philip's economic policies. The following will show how the Capetian Kings dealt with their Jewish subordinates, and how costly expenditures by the Crown could have disastrous effects on both their economic situation and place in society.

The Jewish Position in 12th and 13th century Northern France

The twelfth century marked the beginning of moneylending by Northern French Jews.⁶⁹ Since moneylending could ensure revenues, it was stimulated by the government authorities. Additionally, because the Jews loaned the money against landed property, they needed assistance to seize the property if a debt could not be paid. This assistance came from the same ruling classes that stimulated the practice. As such, the Northern French Jews and the ruling classes became very much entangled.⁷⁰ The Church on the other hand, tried to protect the Christian communities from the hardships that sometimes came in conjunction with the banking business. As such, Jewish

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 272.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, 272, 274.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, 275-276.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 277.

⁶⁸ Robert Fawtier, 'Nogaret and the crime of Anagni', in: Charles T. Wood eds., *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII: State vs. Papacy* (Huntington, 1976) 72-80 there 72; Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 279.

⁶⁹ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 62; Chazan, *The Jews*, 132.

⁷⁰ Chazan, *The Jews*, 133-134; Mark R. Cohen, *Under crescent & cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages* (New Jersey, 1994) 83.

moneylenders quickly became victims of usury allegations.⁷¹ The Jewish reputation diminished even more during the crusades, and stories of them deliberately attacking Christian society proliferated. The ritual murder allegations were especially alarming and spread like wildfire over Northern Europe in the twelfth century.⁷² In 1171, such an accusation led to the execution of thirty Jews in the city of Blois.⁷³

In the first instance, the French Crown protected the French Jews from such allegations. Louis VII (1137-1180) denounced the allegations and course of events in Blois.⁷⁴ However, his successor Philip II Augustus (1180-1223) attacked the Jews in an adjacent principality on a murder charge, killing eighty Jews.⁷⁵ Philip II's Jewish policies, according to Chazan, began Northern French Jewry's demise.⁷⁶ Philip carried out a couple of anti-Jewish actions. Firstly, he organized a confiscation of Jewish goods. Secondly, the King ordered the remission of debts owed to Jewish moneylenders (one fifth had to be paid to the Crown though). Thirdly, in 1182, all Jews were expelled from the Royal realm, with all Jewish property, except for synagogues, going to the Royal treasury.⁷⁷ The fact that Philip II readmitted them in 1198 to revive Jewish moneylending, shows us that Philip II's decisions were pragmatic.⁷⁸ The first three anti-Jewish actions were meant to raise money for the Crown fast. The readmittance could give a boost to the French economy.

Three developments in Philip II's reign had major consequences regarding the French Jews. First, Philip II enlarged his kingdom substantially. This meant that more Jewish communities were brought under his protection and taxation. Second, he expanded royal control over the Jews. This was meant to tax and exploit them more effectively. Such exploitation would be 'perfected' under Philip IV.⁷⁹ Thirdly, under some pressure from Innocent III (1198-1216) Philip set a maximum interest rate that the Jewish moneylenders could ask.⁸⁰ Thus, the moneylending business became heavily restricted.

Under Louis IX (1226-1270) the protection and assistance for moneylending given by the royal authorities, was completely demolished.⁸¹ The Barons and the King attested that they would

⁷¹ Chazan, *The Jews*, 134-135.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 136.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 137.

⁷⁴ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 62.

⁷⁵ Chazan, *The Jews*, 138.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 142.

⁷⁷ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 63; Chazan, *The Jews*, 142; Jordan, *The French Monarchy*, 2, 180.

⁷⁸ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 64; Chazan, *The Jews*, 143.

⁷⁹ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 61; Jordan, *The French Monarchy*, 184, 187, 188.

⁸⁰ Chazan, *The Jews*, 143-145; John Tolan, 'Of milk and blood: Innocent III and the Jews, revisited', in: Elisheva Baumgarten and Judah D. Galinsky eds., *Jews and Christians in thirteenth-century France* (New York, 2015) 139-149 there 141.

⁸¹ Cohen, *Under crescent & cross*, 86.

not aid Jewish moneylenders in collecting debts.⁸² According to Chazan, Louis even completely forbade moneylending against interest.⁸³ Next to this economic attack, a religious attack was also in the making. Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) ordered the Bishop of Paris to examine the Talmud, which, at least in France, led to the conclusion, that the book was intolerable and as such, should be forbidden. This led to the burning of the Talmud in Paris, and the outlawing of this Rabbinic-Jewish book.⁸⁴

Under the early years of Philip the Fair's reign, Jewish moneylending had grown to such a level that anti-usury stipulations were once again decreed.⁸⁵ Philip even went as far as ordering his agents to aid in the collection of obligations owed to the Jews.⁸⁶ In this way, royal taxation could not be impeded. Fiscal documents of Philip's reign, concerning the Jews, shows that efforts were undertaken to maximize royal profit from them.⁸⁷

Aside from Philip's economic policies, the first years of his reign were also characterized by mass-expulsion of Jewish communities living in the borderlands of his domain. On December 8, 1289, Charles II of Anjou decided to expel the Jews from his lands.⁸⁸ Also, in 1290, Edward expelled the Jewish communities from his lands (England and Gascony). Consequently, there was mass immigration towards the royal French domain. Because these Jews had been living under economic constraints before their expulsions, they were very poor.⁸⁹ As such, cities and towns in France saw influxes of impoverished Jews. This caused problems, since these cities and town were overrun by poor Jews who peddled second-hand wares and dubious medicines.⁹⁰

Philip responded to this influx in different ways. First, he started to arrest refugees and people who sheltered them. Second, he forbade the settlement of Jews in small villages, partly because they paddled curious medicines, and probably because Philip, just as his father, believed that 'petty' villagers could come under the influence of the settling Jews.⁹¹ This law ensured that all fleeing Jewish communities flocked to France's major cities including Paris. Here they were impoverished even more, because they had to pay a residency tax to the Crown. This deal was brokered by native French Jews, who wanted to give their religious brethren shelter, which Philip had forbidden initially.⁹² The fact that Philip did not expel the Jews from his royal domain in the early

⁸² Chazan, *The Jews*, 147.

⁸³ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 79; Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 155.

⁸⁴ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 81 Chazan, *The Jews*, 148.

⁸⁵ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 163.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 163.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 166.

⁸⁸ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 185-186.

⁸⁹ Cohen, *Under crescent & cross*, 86.

⁹⁰ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 182-184.

⁹¹ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 156, 183; Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 184.

⁹² Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 183-185.

years of his reign, in contrast to his neighboring princes, could be explained by a feeling, on Philip's part, that these Jews could also be exploited over the years.

When the Anglo-French war began, the Jewish communities of France were generally impoverished. Still, they had to contribute to the war effort. According to Strayer, it was expected that the Jewish communities would contribute 215.000 French pounds to the war.⁹³ To put that amount in perspective, a normal annual tallage would cost the Jewish communities 15000 pounds.⁹⁴ Unsurprisingly, this must have brought the Jewish population of France in considerable financial problems.

The above discussed wars thus had a substantial impact on different facets of the situation in France. The fund-raising for these wars lay at the root of the quarrel between Boniface and Philip. It also put the French clergy in a difficult position and it brought the Jewish communities of France in considerable financial problems. In this context, decisions were made regarding the host desecration tale that had allegedly occurred in 1290. Before we start to analyze the host desecration consequences in light of this chapter, we first have to establish what the consequences of the host desecration exactly were. The next chapter will be dedicated to this.

⁹³ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 198; Strayer, 'The costs and profits of war', 275.

⁹⁴ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 198.

Chappelle des Billettes

This chapter will show the direct consequences of the host desecration accusation in Paris. After establishing the consequences, both the findings of the first and second chapter will be combined in an attempt to answer both of the research questions. Our starting point here is the *Chappelle des Billettes*, which was built in remembrance of the host desecration tale of 1290 and would become a famous place of pilgrimage.⁹⁵ The following will show how Boniface VIII, Philip IV, Renier le Flamenc and a Christian order called the Brethren of the Charity of the Blessed Virgin, were all involved in the dealings of the chapel. After the involved parties are established, their relation to each other will be demonstrated and investigated. In the next chapter, the established information will be used to show that the chapel was not just a place of worship, but a place to remember a crime, inflicted on Christian society.

It must be mentioned though, that much of the information stated below (concerning the chapel) is based on literature and sources ranging from 1855 till 1958. Literature and sources of this kind require careful treatment. Mostly, because sources mentioned in these texts cannot be checked. Some of the literature and sources used for this chapter fall victim to this situation. The reason that they are included anyway, is that they contain information not found in English-language historical literature about the subject. This of course, is not enough of an argument to just include them. But since all of these sources contain the same information they are reasonably trustworthy, although there is still a chance that these sources quote each other.⁹⁶

Another piece of literature that is used for this thesis, an online published MA thesis written by Camille Petryscze, gives the same information as the sources mentioned above.⁹⁷ Here, the author explicitly mentions her source for the concerning information; an article by V. Paget from 1912. It contains the patent letters and official pieces that show how the Brethren of the charity of Blessed Virgin came into possession of the chapel and the adjacent house. Therefore, this article also strengthens the credibility of the above-mentioned sources. The only problem is that this source is unfindable. Therefore, we must hesitate to use Petryscze's thesis. However, since the thesis was supervised by Denis Hüe, a professor at the University of Rennes, and is published via the universities of Rennes' own website, the article shall be considered credible. To be certain, more research in this area is needed, but for now the sources will be used. This way, we are able to create the most

⁹⁵ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 198.

⁹⁶ Boinet, *Les églises*; Bullot, Coignard & Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres*; Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif*.

⁹⁷ Petryscze, Le Mistere de la sainte hostie, https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 mai 2018).

complete picture of the *Chapelle des Billettes* up until now and use this promising information to reappraise the chapel in a satisfying way.

Renier le Flamenc and Boniface VIII

Most historians mention Renier Flamenc simply as a wealthy Parisian bourgeois, who petitioned Boniface VIII about the chapel he wanted to build.⁹⁸ However, Jordan claims that Renier was not only a wealthy Parisian, but that he was also working in the administration of King Philip IV when he petitioned Boniface.⁹⁹ Although Jordan does not specify his exact role in the administration; a combination of materials help to deduce that he was mint master of the King.¹⁰⁰ A mint master was responsible for the production of coin and managing of mints in general.¹⁰¹ One of the materials used for deducing Reniers position shows us that Renier in this capacity, raised 17.836 pounds for the Kings treasury in 1296, which makes it safe to assume that he was a significant man in Philip's administration.¹⁰²

In 1295, Renier sent a letter to pope Boniface VIII to ask permission to build a chapel in honor of the host desecration.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, the letter Renier sent, is lost. But the papal bull that Boniface sent to Simon Batifart de Bucy, the bishop of Paris, has been preserved. On July 17th, 1295, the pope ordered Simon to allow Renier to build a chapel on the place where the alleged crime had taken place and stated that Renier would become the patron of this chapel.¹⁰⁴ According to canonic law, this would mean that Renier would have influence in electing the chaplains for his chapel.¹⁰⁵ His patronage however, did not mean that he was able to receive income from the chapel. According to canonic law, It was forbidden for laymen to receive spiritual income.¹⁰⁶ However, there is an example of a patron in England, Gilbert de Clare's, who was able, irregularly, to attain income via his patronage.¹⁰⁷ So Renier might have been able to receive some income from his chapel, but on the other hand, it is equally possible that he respected canon law.

⁹⁸ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 196-199; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 23,89; Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 44.

⁹⁹ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 194.

¹⁰⁰ Bompaire, 'Richard Huguet', 90-106 there 95; Havet, 'Compte du trésor', 237-299, there 244.

¹⁰¹ Marc Bompaire, 'Richard Huguet', 90-106 there 95.

¹⁰² Havet, 'Compte du trésor', 237-299, there 244.

¹⁰³ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 196-199.

¹⁰⁴ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jew*, 96-199; Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 44.

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Gemmill, *The nobility and ecclesiastical patronage in thirteenth-century England* (Suffolk, 2013) 18; Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 199.

¹⁰⁶ Gemmil, *The nobility*, 18.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem, 120.

Philip IV and the Brethren of the charity of the Blessed Virgin

According to Jordan, it seems plausible that the Christian woman who brought the wafer to the Jewish pawnbroker, made up a story to get her belongings back without paying.¹⁰⁸ Since there exist a substantial number of versions of the story, it also seems plausible that the accusations really were made, and that consequences appear real enough.¹⁰⁹ In this case, the properties of the Jew would be transferred to the King. If we look at the Troyes case (1288), wherein a group of Jews was accused of murder and consequently executed, we also see that their properties were transferred to the Crown.¹¹⁰ Petryszcze, Boinet and Lazare also state that the properties of the Jews were confiscated for the profit of Philip IV. Again, this is suggested by the Troyes case.¹¹¹ Philip was heavily involved in the Troyes case, where Dominican friars were in charge of the arrests. He decreed a royal order (May 16th 1288) which forbade ecclesiastical punishment or incarceration of Jews. Consequently, the Jews were handed over to secular authorities and the executions were carried out anyway.¹¹² He probably decreed the order because he wanted to make sure that none of the profits would go to the Dominicans.¹¹³ The host desecration case played out in a similar way. The bishop of Paris handed the Jew over to the secular authorities, who then carried out the execution.¹¹⁴ It would be illogical to assume that the property would not transfer to the Crown, since this was a comparable case to Troyes and the host desecration case played out in Philip's capital city.

This means that Renier had to buy the property from Philip to build his chapel, which leads us to the conclusion that Philip was involved in the affairs of the chapel from the beginning. His selling of the property to Renier was not the only time Philip got involved in the affairs of the chapel. In 1299, Philip donated an adjacent house to the chapel.¹¹⁵ He also gave the chapel and the house to the Brethren of the charity of the Blessed Virgin by letters patent.¹¹⁶ This order, established by Gui de Joinville, was an order of hospitallers. As such, it took care of the diseased and the poor.¹¹⁷ Renier had to give his consent to donate the chapel to the Brethren since that was his right as patron.¹¹⁸

¹⁰⁸ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 193-194.

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 193; Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 40-43.

¹¹⁰ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 190-191.

¹¹¹ Petryszcze, *Le Mystère de la sainte hostie*, https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 mai 2018); Boinet, *Les églises*, 338; Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif*, 75.

¹¹² Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 190-191.

¹¹³ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 170.

¹¹⁴ Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 43.

¹¹⁵ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 188; Jordan, *Unceasing Strife*, 14; Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 194.

¹¹⁶ Bullot, Coignard & Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres*, 392; Boinet, *Les églises*, 339; Petryszcze, *Le Mystère de la sainte hostie*, https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 mai 2018).

¹¹⁷ Bullot, Coignard & Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres*, 390; Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif*, 75.

¹¹⁸ Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif*, 75.

Petryscze also refers to amicable accords between Flamenc and De Joinville.¹¹⁹ Thus, taking the literature into consideration, it is fairly safe to assume that Renier and Philip had some sort of close connection both via the chapel and the fact that Renier was working in Philip's administration.

Renier le Flamenc and Philip IV were therefore heavily involved in the dealings of the *Chapelle des Billettes*, for at least four years: between 1295 and 1299. Boniface VIII gave permission for its establishment and the Brethren of the charity of the Blessed Virgin started to run a hospital next to the chapel from 1299 on and took over the chapel at some point. If we look at this situation, different questions arise. Why did Renier want to build the chapel? Was it pure zealousness, or did other reasons lay at the base of his decision? Why did he build it five years after the fact? Why was Philip so heavily involved in it? What profit was there to gain for him? But most importantly: why did Boniface VIII allow the chapel to be built?

¹¹⁹ Petryscze, Le Mistere de la sainte hostie, https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 mai 2018).

The Motivations of Boniface VIII and Philip IV

This chapter aims to reappraise the events surrounding the establishment of the *Chappelle des Billettes*. This means that the contexts which were outlined in the first chapters will be combined to show the possible driving forces for Philip IV and Boniface VIII during their involvement in the chapel. In doing so, the goal of this chapter is to answer both research questions. Before we start, it is important to know that the following is an interpretation based on lacking evidence, and as such, it cannot be taken for granted. More research is required and a good place to start is in the archives of the *Chappelle des Billettes*. Unfortunately, access to this place was not possible during the research period of this thesis. On the bright side: it is cause for hope that there are still places which could add important new information to the subject of this thesis. This chapter is thus somewhat speculative in nature, because it is only based on surviving printed material, and more printed materials may yet be found.

Philip IV

It has been demonstrated that Philip IV very probably was the owner of the property on which the *Chappelle des Billettes* was built. The builder of the chapel, Renier le Flamenc, worked in Philip's administration. We know that in 1299 Philip donated an adjacent house to the Brethren of the Charity of the Blessed Virgin and that they also took over the chapel at some point.¹²⁰ Philip must have consulted Renier before doing this.¹²¹ In the same year, Philip also mentioned host desecration in royal legislation as a Jewish offense.¹²² Two questions arise: how involved was Philip in the building process of the chapel in 1295? Why did Philip both donate an adjacent house to the Brethren of the Charity of the Blessed Virgin, and include the host desecration accusation in royal legislature in 1299?

Considering the first question, this thesis will entertain the following possibility: Philip IV and Renier le Flamenc were working together in trying to create a strong, anti-Jewish propaganda campaign. Unfortunately, there are no official documents that prove such a relation. Still, there are facts in place, that make this option quite possible. The chapel was created in 1295. However, the allegations of host desecration were voiced in 1290. This delay raises suspicion, since 1295 was the year in which the French Crown was in dire need of funds. As we have seen, the war over Gascony started in 1294. In 1295, Philip launched a major attack in Gascony. An army led by his brother,

¹²⁰ Bullot, Coignard & Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres*, 392; Boinet, *Les églises*, 339; Petryszcze, *Le Mystère de la sainte hostie*, https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 mai 2018).

¹²¹ Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif*, 75; Petryszcze, *Le Mystère de la sainte hostie*, https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif (consulted 28 mai 2018).

¹²² Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 178, 182; Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc* (Farnborough, 1971) 235-236.

Charles of Valois (1270-1325), pushed the English back to their key positions. Therefore, this military advance had to be followed up by a siege to keep the army's position.¹²³ The year 1295 was therefore very costly for the crown and, as Jordan mentions, it saw the height of French aspirations to raise as much money as possible for the war effort.¹²⁴

As seen in the first chapter, it was expected that the Jews would pay 215.000 pound, where it normally would have been around 15.000 pounds in a year.¹²⁵ This was an enormous amount, and Philip did not shy away from using inhumane methods to get what he needed. Jordan gives the following example to show Philip's position in this situation: in 1295, the Jews of Beaucaire-Nîmes were accused of dissimulation and got arrested. In Paris, these arrested Jews were robbed of all their money and outstanding debts.¹²⁶ This policy must have had disastrous consequences for the economic situation of the King's Jews, but at the same time, must have benefited Philip greatly.

Having depleted Jewish resources so dramatically, the only option left for Philip in order to get more money out of the Jewish community, was expulsion. In retrospect we know that Philip only resorted to this option in 1306.¹²⁷ But it is reasonable to assume that he already entertained this option in 1295, since, as we have seen in the first chapter, Capetian Kings could devise shrewd methods to take advantage of their Jewish communities.

Expulsion Taxes

If we entertain the option that Philip already was thinking about expulsion in 1295, it is interesting to take a closer look upon two expulsions that happened just prior to 1295, one in which Philip was not involved, and one in which he was. In 1289, Charles II, King of Sicily and count of Anjou and Maine, ordered the expulsion of the Jews from the counties of Anjou and Maine. He did not take all the property and outstanding debts from the Jews, but he invented a new way in which he could benefit from the expulsion economically. He levied a tax on the residents of the affected areas to pay for the privilege of the expulsion.¹²⁸ The second expulsion was one ordered by Philip IV. In 1290, Philip had made an arrangement with the residents of Saintonge and Poitou to expel the Jews from these areas. He even increased the rate of the expulsion tax.¹²⁹ The fact that Philip made an arrangement must be emphasized here. This means that certain negotiations with the residents of an area where an expulsion would take place, determined the rate of the expulsion tax. Chazan states that the deeper

¹²³ Strayer, *The reign*, 320.

¹²⁴ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 198.

¹²⁵ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 198; Strayer, 'The costs and profits of war', 275.

¹²⁶ Jordan, *The French monarchy*, 198.

¹²⁷ Chazan, *Medieval Jews*, 191-201.

¹²⁸ Chazan, *Medieval Jews*, 184-186; Joseph Reese Strayer and Charles H. Taylor, *Studies in early French taxation* (Westport 1972) 19.

¹²⁹ Chazan, *Medieval Jews*, 186; Strayer and Taylor, *Studies*, 19.

the hostility against Jews was, the more easily an expulsion could be executed.¹³⁰ It would also be plausible to conclude that a very hostile anti-Jewish climate could 'positively' influence the rate of an expulsion tax. Strayer mentions that there exists no evidence that property was taken from the Jews in this expulsion. This means that outstanding debts probably were not taken over by the King. Therefore, an expulsion tax was also beneficial to the residents of the provinces since they did not have to pay their debts anymore.¹³¹ In this way, Philip would not only acquire financial gain, but also gain more popular support. So, if Philip wanted to gain as much benefit as possible from an expulsion, he had to influence the peoples' attitudes towards Jews. The host desecration tale offered Philip a powerful tool to influence this climate.

Precedents

It might be possible, but this is speculation, that Philip would have been made aware of a host desecration accusation that took place in Laa-an-der-Thaya, a small town in Austria. The accusations here were made in 1294 and concluded in what Rubin calls a "small" massacre. This shows that the populace was ready to act violently on these kinds of accusations.¹³² If he would have known, which is not impossible for the King of France, this could have strengthened a believe that by reviving interest for the host desecration of 1290, the anti-Jewish sentiments could be intensified and a high expulsion tax could be negotiated.

In 1298 a dramatic course of events unfolded for the Jews of Franconia. A host desecration accusation led to a persecution of Jews in that region, which lasted from July 25 until September 21 and was led by a Franconian noble called *Rintfleisch*. Gotfried, a notary in the court of the Archbishop of Strasbourg estimated that a total of 10.000 Jews was killed. The killings were carried out by an army that swept through the land. The army led by Rintfleisch, allegedly, consisted of a popular crowd.¹³³ A major event like that cannot have gone unnoticed by the French court. So once again, as in 1294, Philip might have seen the potential of the host desecration tale as a vehicle for heightening anti-Jewish sentiment among both nobles and commoners. Both precedents occurred less than a year before events surrounding the *Chappelle des Billettes* would happen.

¹³⁰ Chazan, *Medieval Jews*, 192.

¹³¹ Strayer and Taylor, *Studies*, 19.

¹³² Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 48.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, 48-57.

The Chapel

The placement of the 'desecrated' eucharist strengthens the idea that the chapel, created by Renier le Flamenc, was meant to spur anti-Jewish sentiments. The eucharist continued to be kept in the Paris church of St-Jean-en-Grève.¹³⁴ Therefore, there was no necessity to build a place that would hold the wafer, since it was already placed in the parish church. Instead, the chapel became home to the knife that supposedly stabbed the Eucharist.¹³⁵ Furthermore, the chapel was built on the location where the Jewish house had been before. These facts raise the suspicion that the chapel was really built as a monument to commemorate the violent and wicked nature of the Jews, and to show that they were a legitimate danger to Christianity. A monument like that could obviously be very effective in intensifying hatred towards Jews.¹³⁶

Considered from Philip's perspective, one way to show the importance of the chapel and add to the credibility of the host desecration tale would be to involve the pope. Although we do not have the original petition of Renier le Flamenc, the reaction of Boniface has been saved. On July 17th 1295, Boniface ordered the Bishop of Paris to allow Renier to build a chapel under his own patronage.¹³⁷ The fact that the Pope gave permission in person is noteworthy. It would have been impossible for him, to do that for every chapel built in the Christian world. The involvement of the pope thus made the 'monument of the wicked Jew' more powerful. This could very effectively add to a 'propaganda machine' of which the chapel was a possible element.

Philip became heavily involved in 1299, which strengthens the suspicion that he was involved in the chapel from the start. He donated an adjacent house to the Brethren of the charity of the Blessed Virgin and decreed royal legislation in which he spoke about the host desecration.¹³⁸ If we continue in the wake of the theory as explained above, this would be a logical course of events. In 1299 Philip was still involved in the wars over Gascony and Flanders.¹³⁹ Additionally, Philip had increased the value of his coin by three times the original value, which led to substantial inflation.¹⁴⁰ Consequently the need for money was high. The events of 1295 did not lead to a mass expulsion, because anti-Jewish sentiment perhaps did not run high enough and Philip did not see an expulsion as an economically viable plan at the time.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, 44.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, 44.

¹³⁶ Chazan, *The Jews*, 151; Rubin, *Gentile tales*, 44.

¹³⁷ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 196-199.

¹³⁸ Bullot, Coignard & Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres*, 392; Boinet, *Les églises*, 339; Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 178, 182; Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc* (Farnborough, 1971) 235-236; Petryszcze, *Le Mistere de la sainte hostie*, [https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La maison du Juif](https://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/Edition%20Hostie/ostie.html#La_maison_du_Juif) (consulted 28 mai 2018).

¹³⁹ Strayer, *The reign of Philip the Fair*, 317-338.

¹⁴⁰ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 83.

We entertain the option here that Philip tried to heighten anti-Jewish sentiment again in 1299, by placing a hospitallers order next to the chapel, which would draw attention to the 'monument'. And although this is speculation, the fact that Philip added the host desecration in royal legislation, as mentioned before, seems to be no coincidence.¹⁴¹ The legislation was decreed on June 6th, 1299. Although this was almost ten months after the events in Franconia, it does not seem like a long enough period for the two facts to be unrelated, since the information about the account would have taken some time to reach Philip. In addition, he would have to think about acting on the account, discuss it with his advisors and then write the legislation before issuing it.

The events of 1298 may therefore have influenced Philip's decision to issue the legislation and put the chapel in the spotlight again. He donated a neighboring house to the chapel, and to the above mentioned-order, which would take over the chapel later. Again, he could examine if anti-Jewish sentiments would run high enough to make an expulsion economically viable. If there was a plan to levy an expulsion tax, it failed. In 1306, Philip must have felt the pressure on the treasury had become to substantial, and he settled for their property and outstanding debts.¹⁴²

Boniface VIII

The other main player in the course of events surrounding the chapel, is Boniface VIII. It is much more difficult to explain why he decided to allow Renier to build a chapel in honor of the host desecration case. The only proof we have of his involvement, is the bull in which he allowed the building of the chapel. As such, the degree of speculation is somewhat higher than in Philip's case. Still, this should not keep us from trying to give a rationale behind his choice, since it is a question that has puzzled historians for decades.¹⁴³ As already seen in the introduction, Boniface was not a pope who despised Jews. In 1299, he protected the Jewish community of Rome from unfair trial by the inquisition.¹⁴⁴ This makes his decision concerning the chapel remarkable. Even more so, if we take into account the fact that his predecessors protected the Jewish community from accusations of ritual murder and blood-libel.¹⁴⁵

Boniface, who worked as a diplomat in England and France before becoming pope, was quite experienced in foreign relations between the papacy and royal houses.¹⁴⁶ Boniface, known as Benedict Caetani at the time, brokered a deal with Philip in 1290, in order to settle a dispute

¹⁴¹ Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 182.

¹⁴² Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish relations*, 83; Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 191-205.

¹⁴³ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 199.

¹⁴⁴ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 204; Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 215-216.

¹⁴⁵ Rist, *Popes and Jews*, 89-90.

¹⁴⁶ Philip Hughes, 'Benedict Gaetani: the Church's salvation', in: Charles T. Wood eds., *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII: State vs. Papacy* (Huntington, 1976) 15-18 there 18; Strayer, *The reign*, 242,245.

between the King and the papacy.¹⁴⁷ Thus, even before the quarrel between Boniface and Philip started, as seen in chapter 1, they were acquainted. If we look at the situation surrounding the quarrel, we see that the French clergy was often forced to choose between two masters. Boniface, who had worked as a papal legate in the beginning years of Philip's reign, might have already discerned this. These factors might all have been in play when Boniface received the petition and had to react to it.

Boniface was a pope who was not oblivious to events that happened in the world around him. He might have known about the host desecration situation in 1294 in Austria. If he was acquainted with the situation, he must have realized that there was at least some risk that the chapel could have a negative effect on the Jewish population of France. Could this have been beneficial to him? In a certain way, it could. Boniface saw the war over Gascony break out in 1294. As seen in chapter 1, a tax (one tenth of the income) was asked from the clergy, which was a significant amount of money. Boniface might have hoped, but we must be aware that this is speculation, that by helping to stir anti-Jewish sentiments, an expulsion would free his subordinates from further substantial taxation. This could help to strengthen his position among the French clergy, which he would have saved from this taxation. If the creation of the chapel would have had the desired effect, a conflict between himself and the King of France could have been averted. Of course, this did not happen, so in 1296 he faced the problem of clerical taxation head-on (see chapter 1).

The problem is, none of this can be proven. So, although a new possible explanation has been raised, it is equally possible that Boniface, who had been in office for just a few months, liked the idea of being involved in a chapel that would be built in one of the most important cities in France. Frustrating as it is, the option that Boniface analyzed the situation and saw that the host desecration of 1290 did not have major consequences for the Jewish population in France, might also still be true.¹⁴⁸ No problems arose, so why not give permission to build the chapel? Of course, if proof could be found that Boniface knew about the incident in Austria of 1294, this theory could be seriously questioned. Unfortunately, no such proof has been found yet. That means this chapter must conclude that in the case of Boniface, we are still speculating. Still, a couple of promising research directions have also been found. In order to pursue them, documents concerning Boniface would have to be unearthed to continue the search for the rationale behind his decision.

¹⁴⁷ Strayer, *The reign*, 245.

¹⁴⁸ Grayzel and Stow, *The Church and the Jews*, 199.

Conclusions

The focus of this thesis has been to show that the host desecration allegation of 1290's Paris, had implications that transcended the allegation as just an event in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. As seen in chapter 1, the Jewish communities were easy targets for exploitation if a king needed money quickly. We saw this in the reign of Philip II Augustus, as well as the reign of Philip IV. We also discerned that Philip IV, some years after the alleged host desecration took place, was in desperate need to raise money, since both the War over Gascony and Flanders took a heavy toll on his treasury. The second chapter showed, that in 1295, a chapel was built in honor of the host desecration. This thesis implicates that the date of building and the involvement of Philip IV and Boniface VIII were no mere coincidences. Different circumstances, as shown in chapter 1 and 3, point in the direction of a preconceived plan, at least on Philip's part, that could strengthen his bargaining position in negotiating an expulsion tax. Boniface might have analyzed the situation and decided to act in a way that could potentially benefit him.

Scholars to this point, have written about the host desecration of Paris in a more describing way. William Chester Jordan and Robert Chazan used the event to show that Philip the Fair saw the story as credible, and that by giving it credence, the accusation could develop even more. Miri Rubin, in an extensive work, showed how the host desecration stories evolved and what kind of repercussions it could have on society. Whereas both Kenneth Stow and Rebecca Rist asked questions about the motives behind Boniface's choice to allow the building of the chapel. It has been an honor and a pleasure to extend on their work, and be able to open up a new way to analyze the Parisian case and by implication each and every other host desecration case.

Although the results of this thesis are speculative in nature, especially in the case of Boniface, we can still draw the important conclusion that more research is needed, concerning the Jewish-Christian relations in light of the allegations like ritual-murder and host desecration. As has been shown in this thesis, these allegations could be used by kings and popes alike to influence the living conditions of the Jewish communities in Europe. Therefore, each and every case of ritual-murder and host desecration could and should be reappraised in light of their different contexts. This could open up a substantial amount of new insights about these allegations made against Jews by Christians. If we look at this thesis especially, one notices that most is based on secondary literature and a few primary sources. This of course, limits the range of this work immensely. If, for example, the archive belonging to the *Chappelle des Billettes* could be investigated, this might lead to tantalizing new evidence.

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