

Introduction

Emanuel Buttigieg and Simon Phillips

1291 was a significant year for the main military orders: uprooted from their foundations in the Holy Land, they took refuge on Cyprus, and in the following years they found themselves vulnerable to those who questioned the validity of their continued existence. The Teutonic Order negated this by successfully transferring their headquarters to mainland Europe, building on a growing involvement in Prussia dating back to 1225. The Knights Templar, however, faced suppression. Meanwhile, the Knights Hospitaller conquest of Rhodes assured both their survival and independence.

The papers in this volume explore the role that islands played in the development of the military orders and in turn how the military orders affected the islands they inhabited. While this is mainly relevant to the Hospitallers, it is not exclusively so. This is a basic question, but surprisingly one that has not been dealt with before. In the case of the Knights Hospitaller, who were island-based from 1291 until 1798, except for a brief spell in the 1520s, it is an essential question. In the decade since the publication of Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), there has been much debate concerning relationships and interconnections within the Mediterranean. A further aim of this book is to contribute to this debate, through the example of the military orders. In choosing the title *Islands and Military Orders*, this volume seeks to transcend chronological and geographical boundaries and take a thematic approach. The military orders are known to have a strong association with the Mediterranean; importantly, in this book, connections outside the Mediterranean are also highlighted.

At the heart of this volume is a concern with exploring levels of interaction between two particular objects of study, islands on the one hand, and military orders on the other. Islands are often, by definition, seen to be embodiments of 'insularity' – of an effort to be separate, distinct, and cut-off. Military Orders are, conversely, international in scope, nature and personnel, the 'first international orders of the Church', as they have often been described. Therein lies the crux of the matter: how did insular outposts and international institutions come together to forge distinct and often successful experiments? Hospitaller Rhodes and Malta still impress with their magnificent architectural heritage, but their success went beyond stone and mortar, and the story of islands and military orders, as will be shown in this volume, also goes beyond these two small islands. The interaction between the two levels – insulation and internationalisation – and the interstices therein, created spaces conducive to both dynamism and stability, as military orders and islands adapted to each other's demands, limitations and opportunities.

The six thematic sections of the book reflect this interest in understanding a complex and fascinating relationship. Part I, 'Ideas and Ideals about Island Existence', sets the tone of the book with a strong theoretical framework elaborated from four distinct angles and firmly rooted in a sound empirical grounding. Part II, 'Relocation and Adaptation', follows the meanderings of the Hospitallers – and the people they came in contact with – as they adapted to new realities dictated by both internal and external factors. Part III, 'Life on an Island: Interaction and Innovation', picks up from the previous part in analysing how something unique tended to develop once the passage of time allowed military orders and islands to adapt one to the other. In Part IV, 'Regional Political Dynamics and the Military Orders', we see how an island existence did not equate to the adoption of an inward-looking approach; instead islands served as practical launching pads whence military orders could play significant roles in their specific regions. Part V, 'Fortifications, War and Defence', deals with a classic element that is so intimately tied to the military orders and reveals how islands presented particular military challenges (as well as opportunities) to which Templars and Hospitallers responded 'organically', building on the inherent strengths of an island existence and trying to minimise the disadvantages. Finally, Part VI, 'Economic Aspects of an Island Existence', deals with the all-important 'bread and butter' issues that were ultimately so necessary for the survival of the military orders. This section is rich both in terms of perspectives (archaeological, as well as historical) and in terms of geographical scope (ranging from Rhodes to Cyprus, Malta and the Caribbean). The sum total of the six parts and their essays offers a rich variety of perspectives on a subject that has extensive potential for further exploration. Invariably, the Hospitallers claim the lion's share in this volume, with 18 of the 22 chapters dealing with them; however, the Templars, Teutonic Order and Order of Christ, as well as others, also feature.

In her chapter on the impressions of travellers on eighteenth-century Hospitaller Malta, Patricia Micallef introduces us to the German Baron Johann Hermann von Riedesel; his impressions of a small, heavily fortified island are worth reflecting upon:

I was struck by the aspect, the grandeur and the multiplicity of so many bastions ... but soon after, I could not refrain from pitying the situation of those who, already restricted by nature and by the sea that surrounds them, have only as their home a very small stretch of land, and who are evermore restrained by skill in an even smaller space of this same rock.¹

¹ See Chapter 10: The Vision of the Island of Malta and its Role in the Transformation of the Order's Mission as Seen by the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Traveller, p. 119.

Riedesel was beholding the Malta that the Hospitallers had been forging over the previous 200 years or so; the eighteenth century would also turn out to be the last century of the Hospitallers' island existence. While full of admiration for what the hand of humanity working upon the canvas of nature had created in the Grand Harbour of Malta, he also felt himself locked up. The three words that sum it all up are: 'pity', 'restriction' and 'restrained'. Islands are not just geographical expressions, but are loaded with cultural associations and assumptions which are frequently taken to be universal. A number of contributions in the present volume seek to go beyond 'taken for granted' suppositions about islands in historical analysis. In broad terms, the chapters in this volume might be said to fall into two particular – albeit overlapping – categories, those that deal with the 'history of islands' and those that focus more on 'history on islands'. The former group includes the chapters by Simon Phillips, Emanuel Buttigieg, Elena Bellomo, Anthony Luttrell, Ann Williams, Nadia Bagnarini and Karol Polejowski. Running across these contributions is a focus on islands as 'categories of analysis' to be problematised and brought to bear on the study of the military orders. In their chapters, Phillips and Buttigieg present discussions of theories, terms and even identities that are linked to discourses about islands. In both chapters, religion is utilised as a prism through which islands and military orders can be viewed; Phillips looks at the veneration of the icon of the Virgin Mary in the Holy Cross Church of Apollona, Rhodes, while Buttigieg focuses on the workings of the Roman Inquisition on land (in Malta) and at sea. Working on the same Order, the Hospitallers, but in different times and places, these two chapters highlight the importance of rethinking common assumptions about islands and some of the ways this can be done.

Fascinatingly, Bellomo draws our attention to the projected naval and island-based Order of St Mary of Bethlehem. This fifteenth-century endeavour failed to come to fruition. However, Bellomo's analysis of the plans and discourse surrounding the project brings into focus the beauty of an ideal plan in which an island (in this instance Limnos) was considered the best site for a new military order, in many ways similar to that of St John. Far from being viewed negatively, islands looked increasingly suited for the purposes of military orders. A blueprint for an 'island order state' emerged steadily as a result of the relocation of the Hospitallers to Rhodes in the early fourteenth century, as can be seen from the proposed project for Limnos and the actual success of Malta from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In his chapter, Luttrell offers a synthesis of the island order state on Rhodes, reflecting on how a distinct formulation emerged on Rhodes as the various categories of 'island', 'state' and 'order' came together. Underlying the successful operation of the island order state on Rhodes was the religious compromise the Hospitallers reached at the outset with the local Greek population. On Rhodes, Greeks, Latins, Hospitallers and various transient groups and individuals both merged and maintained their own distinctiveness. The defence of this outpost depended on both land and sea defences; its economic viability depended on the income derived from the West. An island order state was

never self-sufficient; nevertheless, it was resilient enough to turn into a 'mobile order state' in the critical transitory years of 1523 to 1530, thence to be adapted to the new reality of Malta.

The importance of the comparative dimension to the study of Rhodes and Malta is drawn out in Williams' chapter; here the author chooses to talk about 'island ports', emphasising the harbour dimension of the island order state, which was arguably its most important and vital facet. The chapters by Bagnarini and Polejowski take the category of the island further by discussing the 'quasi-islands' of Santa Maria della Sorresca on Lake Paola and the Tower of San Felice Circeo (in Lazio) and the Duchy of Athens, respectively. Taking her cue from Fernand Braudel, Bagnarini delves into two Templar properties in central Italy in the late twelfth into the mid-thirteenth centuries, looking at land acquisition and management, and architectural developments. Though not islands in the traditional sense, these outposts acquired an island character due to their geographical setting and their belonging to the Templars. Similarly, the Duchy of Athens, investigated by Polejowski, though not physically an island, operated in the fourteenth century as a political island, caught in the turbulent waves of French-Burgundian-Catalan-Aragonese competition. It also illustrates the links between mainland and islands, with the Hospitallers on Rhodes drawn into the affairs of Athens. Significantly, the downfall of de Brienne Athens, as a result of the lack of interest in the West in the affairs of the Eastern Latin states, foreshadowed the eventual downfall of Hospitaller Rhodes nearly 200 years later.

The chapters looking at 'history on islands' throw light upon the ways in which the coming together of islands and military orders shaped agricultural and economic activity, war, fortifications, architecture and material culture, as well as the political and social fabric. The papers by Nicholas Coureas (on Hospitaller estates on Cyprus), Gregory O'Malley (on mills on Rhodes and Cyprus) and William Zammit (on the Hospitallers' short-lived Caribbean possessions of the mid-seventeenth century) have one element in common: sugar. Coureas provides an overview of agricultural production on medieval Cyprus, in particular as reflected on the estates of the Hospitallers. Sugar naturally predominated, although Coureas emphasises that other products were also important. O'Malley focuses on the ownership and use of mills by the Hospitallers on Cyprus and Rhodes, with the grinding of sugar playing a key role. Mills reflected a careful, intelligent and intensive use by the Hospitallers of the available land, water and wind, along with technological and human resources. The same principles can be seen in operation in a very different time and place, namely the Caribbean islands of the Order of St John. The overall successful management of these islands by Frà Philippe de Lonvilliers de Poincy, and the key role of sugar production, are both echoes of the Order's medieval tradition of land management and a reflection of its success in adapting in a changing world. Another facet that emerges in Coureas' chapter is the vital economic link that existed between Cyprus and Rhodes; a parallel link existed between Sicily and Malta. In both instances, the Order of St John ruled the smaller island, which depended for various supplies on the larger island,

where the Order held assets but was not the overall political authority in charge. Victor Mallia-Milanes looks at the long-term transformation of Malta under the Hospitallers, paying special attention to various economic activities. A key element in this transformation was what he terms the ‘de-Sicilianization’ of Malta, that is, the sustained effort by the Order to cut the umbilical cord that linked Malta to Sicily. While this was never fully accomplished, the economic base of the island was successfully expanded and diversified.

Anna-Maria Kasdagli offers us an insight into the workings of the urban and commercial economy of Rhodes by delving into the pockets of Hospitallers and Rhodiots in search of their small change. This archaeological perspective sheds light on aspects of daily life on Rhodes, including material culture; it clearly emerges how coins were issued, re-issued and re-used. This monetary analysis of Rhodes can then be set alongside the architectural considerations made by Katerina Manoussou-Della. This chapter contains an important discussion on the location of the hospital and *Castellania* buildings, which in turn serves as a blueprint for a discussion of the wider development of the town. Manoussou-Della identifies Rhodes town as a ‘transit town’, a busy meeting point for various travellers of all sorts (and hence the crucial role of the small change discussed by Kasdagli). A similarly transitory role can be identified for Valletta and the Grand Harbour of Malta, as emerges in the chapters by Micallef and George Cassar. Various travellers willingly or accidentally made their way to Malta, writing down their impressions for posterity. Both authors reflect on the mutually transforming effect that the Order of St John and Malta had on each other. Cassar reflects on a variety of aspects – sexual mores, religious ideas, fortifications, finance – and their adaptation and functioning on the island-state of Malta. Micallef, on the other hand, guides us through the movements of early modern travellers to Hospitaller Malta as they travelled towards the island, caught their first glimpse of it and often spent time in quarantine. Significantly, in the eighteenth century, the Sicily–Malta crossing was still one full of perils – or at least perceived to be such. There was much to be thankful for when reaching the Maltese harbour safely.

Distance from a mainland that one considered friendly was always going to be an issue for those living on an island. Thus, projecting into the open spaces of the Atlantic Ocean, Fernanda Olival takes the island of Madeira and its links to the Portuguese Order of Christ (constituted from former Templar assets in 1319 with the King of Portugal as its master) as a case study of the workings of the relations between a military order and an island. Far from constituting an island order state as was the case with Rhodes and Malta, in Madeira the relationship between the Order of Christ and the island was of a much more limited nature. In contrast to the increased security of Rhodes and Malta under the Hospitallers, Madeira did not benefit in any such way from its contact with the Order of Christ. What is intriguing is to follow the career paths of ‘insular knights’ of Christ, that is, those knights born on Madeira or who relocated there, which reflected some very particular social patterns of the Portuguese ruling classes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A similar centre–periphery relationship can be seen in

operation in Hubert Houben's overview of the activities of the Teutonic Knights in the Mediterranean up to about 1500, with a special focus on Sicily. The Teutonics were a 'national' order with their headquarters in north-east Europe, but with activities ranging from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. In Sicily (and Apulia) Teutonic numbers on the ground were always limited, so it was necessary to co-operate with locals, forging specific relationships over time. Another way of measuring the interaction between military orders and islands is to trace the entry and development of an idea in an island setting. In this manner, Karl Borchardt studies the introduction of humanistic script in the chancery of the Order on Rhodes in the fifteenth century (while also recognising the limits of the sources that have survived). What emerges is that Rhodes was not late in adopting and following changes in the script; rather, there was a gradual change from one script to the other, which also included a co-existence of (new) humanistic and (old) gothic scripts, as well as adaptations to the gothic script itself. All of this reflected the administrative needs of the workings of the chancery, but also a willingness to be innovative.

An additional area of innovation for the Hospitallers during their island sojourns was the continuum consisting of international relations, war and fortifications. In his chapter, Constantinos Georgiou focuses on the axis between preaching, crusading and the conquest of Rhodes by the Hospitallers. He traces the ideal and difficulties related to the preaching of crusading, reflecting on how preaching became institutionalised as it became part of everyday liturgy and piety. Mike Carr's contribution follows on from Georgiou's by looking at anti-Turkish alliances in the first half of the fourteenth century. In a situation where there were various Turkish emirates and forces in Asia Minor (as opposed to the later situation where the Ottomans became the dominant force), there were opportunities for the Hospitallers to play these separate Turkish powers against each other, while as the same time they had to face occasions of joint Genoese–Turkish actions against them. In general terms, the Hospitallers operated in conjunction with other Latin forces in the Aegean. They became the prime – if always small – Latin naval force in the Aegean; as in other instances, their operations remained subject to the wider scenario prevailing in Western Europe. If there was a Christian power with whom the Hospitallers were generally at odds, that was Venice. Their diametrically opposed views in relation to the Muslim world generated a long, thorny relationship; in her contribution Photeine V. Perra highlights an exception to this antagonistic rule in the rare instance of co-operation consisting of the Second Venetian–Ottoman War (1499–1502/03). Here, briefly, the two sides worked together, and island warfare was a key element in this war. While the Hospitallers excelled in naval warfare – which was why the Venetians sought their help in this instance – they also expended considerable energy in the development of land fortifications. As illustrated by Michael Losse, they were among the earliest users of bastions and gunpowder technologies. In a sense, the Hospitaller islands of the Aegean served as places where experiments in military architecture could take place. An interesting paradox to emerge in Losse's analysis is how the Hospitallers

