



BOOK REVIEW

Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001, pp. xii+180, 9 coloured+ 12 black-and-white plates, 4 maps, 1 genealogical table. ISBN 0-8545-845-5.

Mostly known for its two prolonged stays, in 1309/10-1522/23 on Rhodes and some of the Dodecanese (called "South Sporades" in the medieval and a significant part of the modern period, until 1833) and in 1530-1798 on Malta, the predominantly French Order of the Knights Hospitaller of Saint John, one of the military orders founded in the crusader states, is certainly a favourite topic among medieval historians and crusader specialists. Fully called the "Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta", or "Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem", it was founded between the late 11th-early 12th century in the Holy City, near the Church of Saint John the Baptist (whence the Order's appellation), and was soon to play a crucial role in the intermittent 12th and 13th-century wars between crusaders and Muslims in the Holy Land by providing at first medical services to wounded crusaders and then military services to the Latin rulers of the Latin East (Outremer).

Following the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin (1187) the Order settled in Saint John of Acre, while after the expulsion of the crusaders from there by the Mamluks (1291) –which in fact ended Latin rule in the Middle East- the Order sought refuge in the Frankish Lusignan dynasty of Cyprus, wherefrom however the Knights were soon expelled and forced to seek settlement elsewhere in the

southeastern Mediterranean. Between 1306 and 1309/10 the Hospitallers succeeded in occupying Rhodes and some of the surrounding Dodecanese, where they were, like a medieval microcosm of united European nations, to establish their headquarters for over two centuries. They waged war against the maritime Turkoman principalities or emirates (beyliks) of the opposite Anatolian coast (14th c.) and against the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria (1st part of 15th c.) as well as against the Ottoman Turks (2nd part of 15th-early 16th cc.), withstanding Mamluk attacks in the 1440s and a major Ottoman siege by sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror in 1480, which was thwarted by the 39th Grand Master of the Order, Pierre d' Aubusson. Finally, however, they succumbed to the forces of sultan Suleyman II the Lawgiver (known as "Magnificent" in western historiography), in late 1522.

Following the pact between the victorious sultan and the 43th Grand Master, Philippe Villiers de l' Isle Adam, the Knights were allowed to leave the heavily battered city of Rhodes on 1 January 1523 and, following some years of adventures in Italy, they were eventually allowed by the Holy Roman emperor Charles V to settle on Malta. There, a few decades later, they were to withstand yet another major Ottoman attack by Suleyman II's fleet, in 1565, while their stay on Malta was even longer than that of the Dodecanese,

lasting for over 250 years until 17 June 1798, when the Corsican general Napoleon Bonaparte and the French fleet accepted the surrender of the Hospital's last Grand Master, Ferdinand von Hompesch.

Once again the Knights Hospitaller were forced to abandon their seat, this time "leaving behind their archives and their treasure, although they were allowed to take some of their relics..." (pp. 136). A semblance of preservation of the Order continues up to the present with its seat at Rome since 1834 and with various branches in Italy, Germany, Spain, Britain, Sweden, Holland and elsewhere, while its significant property extends to over 30 countries. Its recent charter was ratified in 1961 by the Holy See.

Dr Helen Nicholson, a senior lecturer in medieval history at Cardiff University, Wales, and associate editor of the newly launched journal *CRUSADES* (published by the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East/ SSCLE), has produced a highly readable account of the Order's almost 900 years of history. The topic is familiar to her, for she has authored, among others, the book entitled *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights: images of the military orders, 1128-1291* (Leicester P.U. 1993). In seven well-structured chapters she attempts to provide an overall picture of Hospitaller history from the late 11th century to the present: The origins of the Hospital of St. John in Jerusalem/ Holy War in the Latin East and on the European frontiers, 1130-1291/ The Hospitallers on Rhodes, 1306-1522/ The Hospitallers' organization and religious life/ Relations with the rest of Christendom: the Hospitallers' political and economic activities in Europe/ The Order of Malta, 1530-1798/ The Order of St. John from 1798 to the present day.

The chapters are preceded by a handy list of the Hospital's Grand Masters (pp. xi-xii) and ensued by a thematically compiled 'Further reading' section (pp. 147-167) and a general index of names, places and various terms. The book is also enriched by carefully

selected illustrations, figures, a detailed family tree of the rulers of Jerusalem in 1099-1291 (pp. 32-33) and four maps. The bibliography utilized in heavily resting on publications in English, as Dr Nicholson herself admits (pp.147) and obviously the authoritative publications of the foremost specialist on Hospitaller history internationally, Dr Anthony Luttrell, feature impressively in her bibliography –almost on every single page of it, while other important contributions (older and new) are also accordingly cited. Among others, the Order's relations with the late Byzantine Empire of the Palaiologan dynasty (especially the Knights' connection with Peloponnesian/ Moreote affairs in the late 14th-early 15th cc.) are adequately covered (Dr Luttrell has recently contributed a pertinent article: «Το Βυζάντιο και οι Ιωαννίτες Ιππότες της Ρόδου, 1306-1409», Σύμμεικτα Κέντρου [Ινστιτούτου] Βυζαντινών Ερευνών/ Εθνικού Ιδρύματος Ερευνών 11, 1997, pp. 189-214; on Hospitaller-Byzantine contacts see also recently D. Kasapides, «Ιωαννίται Ιππότες», in N. Nikoloudes [ed.], *Λεξικόν της Βυζαντινής Πελοποννήσου*, Athens 1998, pp. 166-169 with refs; cf. in brief: Alice Mary Talbot, "Hospitallers", *Oxford dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan et alii, New York-Oxford 1991, pp. 951-952; P. Lock, "Hospitaller Knights of St. John", *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic tradition*, ed. G. Speake, I, Chicago-London 2000, 779; Dr. Lock has also touched on the Hospitallers in his manual *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204-1500*, London-New York 1995, s.v. index). Likewise a satisfactory account of the Order's relations with the Menteshe Turkomans until the early 14th century is provided, though there is no reference in the book to the Aydin Turkomans, who carried on with raids against Rhodes and the Dodecanese from 1318/19 onwards (cf. A. Savvides, *Η Βυζαντινή Ρόδος και οι Μουσουλμάνοι. Προβλήματα σχετικά με τις αραβικές και τις τουρκικές επιδρομές κατά του νησιού από τα μέσα του 7^{ου} έως τις αρχές του 14^{ου} αι.*, Athens

1994 and 2nd ed. 1995, p. 26 ff., esp. 31-32).

Some other bibliographical omissions of substance in the book, particularly regarding the Knights' Rhodian/Dodecanesian period, would be A. Failler's account of the Hospitaller takeover of Rhodes ("L'occupation de Rhodes par les Hospitaliers", *Revue des études byzantines* 50, 1992, pp. 113-135), C.E. Bosworth's treatment of the Mamluk attacks of the 1440s ("Arab attacks on Rhodes in the pre-Ottoman period", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, vol. 6.2, 1996, pp. 157-164), N. Vatin's important monographs on Hospitaller-Ottoman relations (*L'Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, l'Empire ottoman et la Méditerranée orientale entre les deux sièges de Rhodes, 1480-1522*, Louvain-Paris 1994, esp. pp. 343-374 on the Ottoman conquest of 1522, essentially reproduced with additions from his "La conquête de Rhodes", in the collective volume *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps*, Paris 1992, pp. 435-454) and on the Order's Rhodian period in general (*Rhodes et l'Ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem*, Paris 2000), J.-Ch. Poutiers' contributions on the Order's heraldry ("*Les chevaliers de Rhodes à la Croisade de Nikopol, 1396*", *Études balkaniques* no. 1, 1981, pp. 89-123 and *Rhodes et ses chevaliers, 1306-1523*, Liban 1989) and –mostly– the major studies by Greece's leading scholar on the history and archives of the Hospital, Z. Tsirpanles (*Μελέτες για την ιστορία της Ρόδου στα χρόνια των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών*, Thessalonike 1970; *Η Ρόδος και οι Νότιες Σποράδες στα χρόνια των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών, 14ος-16ος αι.*, Rhodes 1991 [with English summaries of all 15 contributions]; and *Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα για τη Ρόδο και τις Νότιες Σποράδες από το αρχείο των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών, I: 1421-1453*, Rhodes 1995; his recent 2002 monograph is cited below). Of course, the omission of Professor Tsirpanles' contributions is to be attributed to the fact that the author of the present book under review does not read Greek; this is understandably to be expected if one takes into account the fact

that even several Anglophone byzantinists in England, the United States and elsewhere (who are supposed to be familiar at least with original Byzantine Greek texts of the primary sources) publish without taking into consideration the pertinent modern Greek bibliography, while on the other hand they rely more often than not on modern translations (in western languages) of the sources!

Thus, unfamiliarity with modern Greek bibliography regarding publications on Rhodian history in general or on the Hospitaller period in particular, accounts for the fact that no reference is made here either to the old and useful book by J. Delendas (*Οι Ιππότες της Ρόδου [Αγίου Ιωάννου της Ιερουσαλήμ, Ρόδου, Μάλτας]*, Athens 1947, repr. 1955) or to Ch. Papachristodoulou's good manual of Rhodian history, including a good deal on the Hospitallers (*Ιστορία της Ρόδου από τους προϊστορικούς χρόνους έως την ενσωμάτωση της Δωδεκανήσου, 1948*, Athens 1972, 2nd bibliographically updated ed. 1994, pp. 266-327). Papachristodoulou's new edition includes useful bibliographical appendices on ancient, medieval and Rhodian history and civilization, especially those by E. Kollias on palaeochristian art and archaeology (in fact, Kollias' two important books on medieval Rhodes are fortunately saved from oblivion and are cited in Dr Nicholson's bibliography on p. 157, due to the fact that apart from their original Greek edition they were also translated into English) and by Z. Tsirpanles in Rhodian history from Byzantine times to 1948, especially on pp. 725-733, where several new publications on the Hospitallers are discussed (Tsirpanles' most useful essay was also published in the journal of Ioannina University *Δωδώνη* 20.1, 1991, publ. 1994, pp. 373-406).

Other important contributions published in Greek include the bilingual papers (in Greek and English) by A. Mingos («Ρόδος: το πεδίο μάχης των Ιπποτών»/ "Rhodes: the Knight's battleground", pp. 158-197) and Q.

Hughes-A. Mingos («Η οχυρωματική αρχιτεκτονική των Ιπποτών της Ρόδου και οι τουρκοικές πολιορκίες», pp. 373-407) in the collective volume *Ρόδος 2.400 χρόνια. Διεθνές Συνέδριο 1993*, Rhodes 1994, publ. by the Society for Rhodian Studies) (original publ. of Mingos' contribution in the journal *Fort* 18, 1990, pp. 5-28). Also, of importance here is the recent Greek translation (heavily annotated and splendidly illustrated) of a 17th-century account (initially published in 1676, in Paris) of the life of the Grand Master Pierre d' Aubusson, written by father Dominique Bouhours (Pierre d' Aubusson, *Μεγάλος Μάγιστρος της Ρόδου. Πολιορκία 1480-άλωση 1522*, Athens 1996). On the other hand, the important papers included in the recently published acts of a 1993 international congress on Rhodes city (*Ρόδος 2.400 χρόνια. Η πόλη της Ρόδου από την ίδρυσή της μέχρι την κατάληψη από τους Τούρκους, 1523*, vol. II, Athens 2000, co-publication of the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Rhodian 25th Ephorate of Prehistorical and Classical Antiquities and the 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities) probably appeared too late for consultation by Dr Nicholson (cf. recent review notice [in Greek] by A. Savvides, *Βιβλιοφιλία* vo. 96, April-June 2002, 12-14 with a survey of recent publications on Rhodes until 2001).

Moreover, as historiography on Rhodes progresses by leaps and bounds, a future edition of Dr Nicholson's book will also benefit from two major monographs published quite recently, Jürgen Sarnowsky's *Macht und Herrschaft im Johanniterorden des 15. Jahrhunderts: Verfassung und Verwaltung der Johanniter auf Rhodos, 1421-1522* (Münster 2001, Band 14 in the series 'Vita regularis. Ordnungen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter') and Z. Tsirpanles' *Στη Ρόδο του 16ου-17ου αιώνα. Από τους Ιωαννίτες Ιππότες στους Οθωμανούς Τούρκους* (Rhodes 2002, published by the Archaeological and Historical Foundation of Rhodes, with a preface by Dr E. Kolias). Similarly, the

Knights' fortifications in the Dodecanese are carefully studied in a survey by E. Kollias («Ιπποτοκρατία. Τα κάστρα των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών στα Δωδεκάνησα», pp. 165-181) and in a series of detailed entries by Dr Alexandra Stephanidou («Ιπποτικά κάστρα», pp. 184-253), in the recent collective volume *Everoί και Ιωαννίτες Ιππότες-Δίκτυα οχυρωματικής αρχιτεκτονικής (πειραματική ενέργεια ARCHI-MED* (Athens 2001, publ. by the Greek Ministry of Culture/ Directorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments).

The above bibliographical observations, however, in no way impair the validity of this most readable manual, which will doubtlessly consist of one of the most important introductions to the history of the late medieval and early modern southeastern Mediterranean, not only for Anglophone readers but also for the international reading public. It is hoped that a future second edition will utilize—at least in part—pertinent modern Greek publications concerning Hospitaller history in the Rhodian period (par excellence those of Z. Tsirpanles, whose important article on the transitional period from Rhodes to Malta [«Από τη Ρόδο στη Μάλτα, 1523-1530. Οι Ροδίτες πρόσφυγες και οι βυζαντινές εικόνες της Παναγίας Δαμασκηνής και της Παναγίας Ελεημονίτρας», *Δωδώνη* 17, 1988, pp. 197-236] has also appeared in a shortened English version as "From Rhodes to Malta, 1523-1530. The Rhodian refugees and the Byzantine icons of Our Lady of Damascus and of Our Lady Eleemonitra", in J. Azzopardi [ed.], *The Order's early legacy in Malta*, Valletta-Malta 1989, pp. 81-82 and 107-116).

It is high time that Anglophone medievalists and other scholars of the western world rendered null and void the language barrier and sent to the dustbin the unacceptable motto of "graeca sunt, non leguntur"!

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ERRATA

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