

# Offering Shelter to Pilgrims: Patterns of Land Acquisition among the Hospitaller and the Templar Military Orders

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## The Origins of the Commandery

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, a knight Hospitaller undertook the enduring task to write a treatise about the commanderies of the Order of St. John. The author was the Grand Cross and Prior of Lombardy Gio Maria Caravita and the title of the work was *Trattato delle Commende ed Amministrazione*.<sup>1</sup>

The opening chapter of Gio Maria Caravita's treatise on the commandery is entitled *Della Prima Origine delle Commende e del loro Nome*. No historical background to the origin of the commanderies is given. On the contrary, Caravita approaches the commanderies from a synchronic point of view defining the basic unit of the Order's organization as landed property being given out as a temporary benefice. This territorial cluster could consist of one or more of these units, hospices, churches, chapels, convents, units of land, livestock<sup>2</sup> and in some cases even a cemetery.<sup>3</sup> That was what the term meant at the time Caravita was writing. He does not go into the evolutionary process which the concept of commandery had undergone through the ages, although he makes occasional references to its history which he borrows from Giacomo Bosio's work. Caravita's primary concern was the set-up of the Hospitaller commandery as this emerged from the current statutes and the decisions taken on the matter by the Venerable Council.<sup>4</sup>

## Explaining the Term

Several authors have sought to trace the etymological derivation of the term commandery. Caravita himself, quoting from the *Summa Verba Commendarum* of Sylvestrus explains the term commandery as being derived from *comedenda* (sic), implying that only a part of the fruits of a commandery were intended for the subsistence of the commander, its current holder. He is not sure, however of this definition. He himself suggests another possible source of origin: *i nostri maggiori raccomandano o sia incommendano ai nostri fratelli, an entity per reggessero e governassero*. R. A. de Vertot, in his *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de St Jean de Jerusalem*, gives another definition. He links the origin of the word to the formula used in the letter of appointment assigned to the chosen commander, which began with the word *commendamus*.<sup>5</sup> Hermes Filipponio, in his general work on the Knights of St John entitled on *La Croce di Malta*, adopts Vertot's explanation and at the same time rephrases it in the conditional tense. He says that the Latin verb *commendare* signifies 'to recommend', 'to entrust' temporarily *in commendam* a benefice to an unentitled person.<sup>6</sup> G. Poggi links the etymology of the word to the word *accomendator*, used in the Genoese dialect.<sup>7</sup> This word, he claims had the same meaning of *accomandante* or *accomandatario*. However, Paolo A. Poggi

<sup>1</sup> NLM, Lib. 189.

<sup>2</sup> I. Grech, *The Hospitaller Commandery of San Giovanni di Prè in Genoa*, Unpublished M.A. (History) thesis submitted to the University of Malta, 1996, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> A. Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers of Rhodes and their Mediterranean World', *Templari e Ospedalieri in Italia: la chiesa di San Bevignate a Perugia*, ed. M. Roncelli, P. Scarpellini, F. Tommasi (Perugia, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> NLM, Lib. 189, 3.

<sup>5</sup> P. A. Poggi-Bonifanti, 'La Commenda di Gavi dei Cavalieri Gerosolimitani ed i suoi rapporti con le commende di Genova e di Savona', *Rivista Araldica*, D (1952), 223.

<sup>6</sup> Filipponio, Hermes, *La Croce Di Malta*, 64-5.

<sup>7</sup> Poggi-Bonifanti, 223.

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considers G. Poggi's hypothesis as 'a bit unilateral' and 'somewhat debatable'.

The origin of the term *commandery*, [continues Poggi], is still unknown. It is yet unknown why such a term refers both to the benefices and to the holder's right to enjoy them, and hence the reason why the holder is called a commander. This term therefore applies both to the holder in his personal capacity or to his being conditioned by certain religious and assistential purposes, duties performed for his own necessities or for the contentment of others.<sup>8</sup>

The use of the term 'commandery' is already found in early-fourteenth-century records. Francesco Giunta draws attention to the word *commendarum* with reference to the Albanian colony in Sicily.<sup>9</sup> In two notarial acts of 1339, found in the Notarial Archives of Modena, the *commenda* of S. Giovanni del Cantone appears for the first time.<sup>10</sup> Michel Balard notices the use of the word *commenda* in the same period as a sort of company. During this period, this word had a maritime significance and was used to denote a *societas maris* ('sea company') made by two partners, where one partner provided the capital and the other the labour and sometimes complemented by contribution to the invested capital. Balard continues to explain that 'how one chose the exact type of contract depended on the financial resources of the contracting party. From the last quarter of the tenth century, it was the *commenda* of the Mediterranean world that became

the most commonly used type of contract: its flexibility made it an instrument of progress not just in business affairs but also progress up the social ladder.'<sup>11</sup>

The Knights developed the concept of *commenda* during the same time frame. It is also of particular interest, that such a concept was developed by the knights during their stay in Rhodes, when the Order became for the first time in its history a maritime power. Judging from Balard's explanation, the *commenda* carried a maritime significance. Such a maritime significance given to a commandery was practically lost to the Order during the early Modern Times. However, the social significance described by Ballard, the idea of social progress and revenue became the principles governing the whole system of commanderies within the Order. The term gains currency within the Order only towards the end of the fifteenth<sup>12</sup> and late sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Until then other terms were used to denote the concept of commandery, such as *preceptoria*, *mansio*, *xenodochium*, and hospice. It was only in the seventeenth century that the word *commandery* definitely gained prevalence. The last term to be replaced was that of *preceptoria*, even though it was not perhaps completely supplanted. Isolated uses of the term 'preceptor' continued to be made. The Church of Saint William in Pavia was still being referred to under the title of preceptory in 1545.<sup>14</sup> The Hospital of Voghera was still functioning under the heading of *Preceptorie dell'Ordine di Malta* towards the end of the eighteenth century, until it was banished by

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 222-3. 'ancor oggi non e' stato possibile trovare perche' con essa ci si riferisce tanto ai benefizi quanto al diritto di goderli, da parte del suo preposto, detto perciò' Commendatore sia a lui personalmente sia condizionatamente in tutto o in parte per se o per terzi in relazione a certi determinanti scopi religiosi ed assistenziali'.

<sup>9</sup> F. Giunta, 'Commende e commendatari di colonie Albanesi di Sicilia', *Annali della Facoltà di Economia e Commercio dell'Università di Palermo*, iv (1950), 142.

<sup>10</sup> E. Trota, 'L'Ospitale e la Commenda Gerosolimitana di S. Giovanni del Cantone in Modena', *Atti e Memorie, Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Antiche Provincie Modenesi*, sers xi-viii (1986), 105. E. Trota fails to give the place and the name of the notary who attested the notarial acts in which the word *commandery* is recovered.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 105. Ezio Trota attests that in the case of the commandery of S. Giovanni del Cantone the term *commandery* reached a more frequent use 'soprattutto dalla seconda metà del secolo XV, mentre il termine 'Hopitale' venne usato, saltuariamente ed a titolo onorifico quale reminiscenza degli originari compiti dei Cavalieri'.

<sup>12</sup> Filipponio, 64. Hermes Filipponio attests the use of the word *commandery* appeared in the twelfth century, first in the documents of the Templars, followed by those of the Hospitallers.

<sup>14</sup> M. Bruché: 'Documenti per la Storia dei Gerosolimitani a Pavia', *Bollettino Storico Pavese*, 4, 1, (1940), 16. The document mentioned by Bruch refers to the 'preceptores preceptorie s. Guglielmi - extra et prope moerda Papiæ, Miles Raphaellus de Rubeis et Miles Franciscus Ayatia'.

the Franco-Piedmontese Government.<sup>15</sup> By the use of the term commandery, the Order referred to a benefice entrusted to a senior knight. Etymologically, the word preceptory was now normally used to indicate a unit with the commandery, in particular the Orders' hospices.<sup>16</sup>

The military monastic Orders, particularly the Templars, and the Hospitallers, generally referred to their property units as preceptory or mansio. Preceptory meant the governance of a place or territory, while mansio literally signified a house. The latter definition did not exclude the existence of land or its use for distinctive purposes other than residence, such as a hospice. *Xenodochium* was another Latin term used to refer to the hospices administered by these Orders. The Greek etymology of the words *xeno* (alien), and *docia* (place), indicates the Order's philosophy behind its charitable activity, that of providing shelter to pilgrims. The term *xenodochium* also did not exclude the existence of other property attached to such a building. However, *preceptoria* was the term most frequently used to denominate the estates of these Orders. The estates of the Templars were referred to as preceptories.<sup>17</sup> When official reference was made to lands possessed by the Hospitaller Order, as when the Pope authorized an inventory of the Order's property at Trani in 1373,<sup>18</sup> or in notarial scripts, the word *preceptoria* was used. In the sixteenth century, scribes were widely using the word commandery even if, not to confuse the reader, they reminded him that it was just another term for preceptory. Clement VII, in his bull of

21 July 1529, refers to Annibale de Caziis as *commendator seu preceptor comendarie seu preceptorie Sanctae Mariae*.<sup>19</sup> In 1531, the commander of the commandery of St Mary is once again referred to as *praeceptor comendarie seu preceptorie S. Mariae*.<sup>20</sup> In the same century, the commandery of S. Maria in Salice in Fossano was referred to by both terms.<sup>21</sup>

The introduction of the word commander must have signified more than just a change of name. The term preceptor implied not only administrative but also spiritual duties. Boisgelin associates the name of the preceptors with the spiritual preparation and the mental formation of the Order's novices.<sup>22</sup> The seventeenth-century commander had no such spiritual duties. His duties regarding Religion concerned more the temporal needs. The commander, in contrast to the twelfth and thirteenth-century preceptor, worked in a much more complex administrative system. Curzio Maria Ghini<sup>23</sup> and Emilio Nasalli Rocca di Corneliano, reflecting on such a transformation, came to associate the term commandery with the strengthening of the economic characteristics of the Order's benefices.<sup>24</sup> This rather 'lay' administrative connotation that the words commander and commandery came to denote were discussed by the author in his M.A. thesis.<sup>25</sup> This was further reflected within the Order administration in the fact that identical terminology was being currently employed for other governing offices. The head of the Treasury was referred to as the Grand Commander. The

<sup>15</sup> A. Cavagna Sangiuliani *L'Ordine di Malta in Voghera*, viii (1910), 132

<sup>16</sup> Grech, 19.

<sup>17</sup> A. Rubini, 'I Templari e l'Abruzzo', *Bollettino della Deputazione Abruzzese di Storia Patria*, Lxxiii (1983), 93.

<sup>18</sup> Vendola, 163.

<sup>19</sup> L. Tacchella, 'Il Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta nella Storia di Vicenza, Padova, Verona e Brescia', *Studi Storici Veronesi Luigi Simeoni*, xviii-xix (1968-69), 263.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> E. Nasalli Rocca Di Corneliano, 'Tra Costanzo Operti fossanese Ammiraglio e Gran Priore di Lombardia dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano di S. Giovanni', *Bollettino della Societa' per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici nella Provincia di Cuneo*, new sers, xxxv (1955), 71.

<sup>22</sup> L. de Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta*, i, 246-7.

<sup>23</sup> C. M. Ghini, *L'Ordine Gerosolimitano di Rodi e di Malta nella Romagna: Le Commende di Cesena, Rimini e Forlì*, iv (1950), 5.

<sup>24</sup> E. Nasalli Rocca di Corneliano, 'Istituzione dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano di Rodi e di Malta nell'Emilia e nella Romagna contributo alla storia del diritto ospedaliero', *Rivista di Storia del Diritto Italiano*, xix (1941), 68. 'si chiamano commende e tali divennero con il prevalere di caratteri economici'.

<sup>25</sup> S. Mercieca, *Aspects of the Hospitaller Commandery 1631-1798*, unpublished M.A. thesis submitted to the University of Malta, 1993.

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person assisting in the pharmacy of the Sacra Infermeria was called the commander of the *piccola commenda*,<sup>26</sup> while the head of the Arsenal also carried the title of commander.<sup>27</sup> The term was also applied to the female branch of the Order. The abbess of the Hospitaller monastery of Florence was referred to by Moroni,<sup>28</sup> and Ugo Morini,<sup>29</sup> as *commendatrice*, commandress.

Morini seems to have been on the footsteps of Moroni even if the date of foundation of this Monastery is given one year after that given by the latter, i.e., 1392. However, both authors fail to accredit their source. Consequently, one cannot establish the context in which the term commandress was being used, nor the date when it was exactly recorded, even if it is associated with the date of foundation. Neither is any reference made, for example, to whether such a name implied the administrative responsibility of the nuns' estates.

In his book *The Knights of Malta*, H.J.A. Sire puts forward an important consideration regarding the use and purpose of the Hospitaller's commanderies during the High and Late Middle Ages. According to Sire, pilgrims expected to find shelter at these places. However, Sire continues to add that in actual fact, only a minority of the commanderies had the structures, capability or were expressly designed as a hospice. At these hospices, pilgrims were given shelter for a maximum period of three days.<sup>30</sup>

### From a Mansio to a Commandery

The origin of the commandery as a land unit goes back to the origin of the Hospitaller Order itself. Donations of land or of other immovable property have accompanied the military Orders, as well as other similar institutions, from their cradle. The Archives of the Order in Valletta

still house a collection of pergamena, dating back to the twelfth century; some originals have still their lead seal attached, while others are medieval copies of original acts of land donations both in what is today the Middle-East as well as in Europe. Donations to the Order were made by kings, nobles, and pious individuals. The first King of Jerusalem, Baldwin, donated land and villages [casalis] in Jerusalem, Acre, Capharnaum, Neapolis, Samaria, Loppe, Caesarea, Azothi, and Ascolon in 1110.<sup>31</sup> King Roger is known to have donated vast lands in Sicily to the Order's Hospital at Messina in 1136.<sup>32</sup> Towards the middle of the twelfth century the Order is said to have been acquiring lands in Portugal through royal donations.<sup>33</sup> Pope Paschal II's bull, *Pie postulata voluntatis*, recognizing the Order within the general structure of the Church, provides further evidence of the presence of hospices or xenodochia belonging to the Hospitallers in various parts of Europe by the year 1113.

The Order of the Templars also makes its presence felt in the Italian peninsula during the same period. In 1138 it is recorded as having been at S. Mária dell'Aventino in Rome, and a few years later, they began gradually to scatter all over Northern Italy: Treviso 1140, Milan 1142, Albenga 1143, Piedmont 1170, Susa and Biandrate 1174, Mondovì 1178, Vercelli and Ivrea 1179, Savigliano 1181, Acqui 1186, Chieri 1190, Moncalieri 1196, Turin 1203, Asti 1203, and Tortona 1252.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the thirteenth century a dual presence, that of the Hospitallers and that of the Templars, could be attested, among other places, at Vercelli,<sup>35</sup> Forlì, Faenza, Bologna, Modena, Parma, Firenzuola, Piacenza<sup>36</sup> and Rome. The German Order of the Teutonic Knights is also recorded on Italian soil at this point in time. In Puglia a strong concentration of the Teutonic Knights began to develop and to expand slowly into the hinterland. The much lesser-known Order

<sup>26</sup> NLM, Lib. 185, f 151r.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 206. NLM, Lib. 206, 477.

<sup>28</sup> Moroni, 319.

<sup>29</sup> U. Morini, 'Il Sovrano Ordine Militare di Malta in Firenze', *Firenze Rassegna Mensile del Comune*, ii, 6 (1934), 171.

<sup>30</sup> H.J.A. Sire, *The Knights of Malta* (Yale, 1994), 103.

<sup>31</sup> AOM 1, no. 3,5.

<sup>32</sup> C. Marullo di Condojann - *La Sicilia ed il Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta*, 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> D. Campo Bello, *A Soberana Militar Order da Malta*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> L. Avonto, 'Templari In Piemonte Ricerche e Studi per una Storia dell'Ordine del Tempio in Italia', *Bollettino Storico Vercellese*, xi, 1 (1982), 10.

<sup>35</sup> L. Avonto, 'Presenza Gerosolimitana. a Vercelli Nel Secolo XIII', in *Atti del Primo Congresso Storico Vercellese*, Societa Storica Vercellese, 2-3 ottobre 1982, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Nasalli Rocca Di Comeliano, 'Istituzioni', 73.

of the Knights of Altopascio, which Bertelli claims, perhaps debatedly, as probably preceding even that of the Hospitallers,<sup>37</sup> attests its presence in Italy through donations of land by reigning monarchs in the twelfth century. In 1155 its presence is recorded in Valdarno and in the Piano di Lucca. The central part of Italy presumably constituted their largest land possessions. Around the year 1239, under their General Grand Master Gallico, they obtained large territorial domains, especially in the North. Ironically, Philip the Fair of France set up a commandery of the said Order in Paris in 1322,<sup>38</sup> thereby encouraging these knights to spread out in various parts of France.<sup>39</sup>

The negotiation of part of this acquired patrimony was an unavoidable consequence. The selling out of the ecclesiastical property was not supported by the Church. Instead, the Military Orders are known to have exchanged property among themselves. Thus, while making sure that they kept the property, they struck a property deal without infringing on any Church regulations. The Hospitallers and the Templars resorted to such a practice. At Giovinazzo, a province in Puglia, Italy, the Templars are recorded to have exchanged in 1310 the Church of St Peter in return for some estates that the Hospitallers' Church of St Clement had in France. The Templars were again involved in property exchanges in Puglia, this time with the bishop of Canne, Aitardio, in 1196.<sup>40</sup>

This increasing landownership in Europe by the military monastic Orders, attests to the popularity of these institutions among the wealthier land proprietors, but, as has been well noted by Luigi Avonto, it also indicates an attempt by these Orders to consolidate their presence on the continent, especially in Italy and France. The crusading adventure had proved from its

very beginning a tragic enterprise. The creation of the military monastic Orders, under the direct rule of the papacy, was intended to provide a permanently stationed force in the East, under a unifying sovereign - the Pope. However, after their first euphoric successes and the waning of interest in the West, the military Orders in the East had to adopt a defensive policy. Already from the twelfth-century, but especially in the thirteenth, they were being forced to accept a slow but constant retreat in the East. Such retreat was to be counterbalanced by an endeavour to consolidate their position in Europe.<sup>41</sup>

In Europe, the military Orders, particularly the Hospitallers, Templars, Saint Lazarus, Holy Sepulchre and the Teutonic<sup>42</sup> sought to link their hospitality closely to their military activity in the Holy Land. Hospitium or *xenodochia* began to emerge at strategic points on the principal routes of communications that connected Italy with other countries, like France, or that crossed the country from the Alps to Messina, leading either to Italy's main harbour cities or to Rome. At the hospitium, travellers, especially pilgrims, not only found physical comfort<sup>43</sup> but also spiritual assistance, as these hospices were often endowed with an adjacent chapel.

At the important embarkation port of Brindisi, the Teutonic Order constructed hospices or mansions in the form of fortified towers, catering mostly for Germans who were on their way to or returning from the Holy Land.<sup>44</sup> The Templars, more than the Teutonic, had concentrated on offering service to pilgrims on their way to Palestine. Their most important preceptories are said to have been located along the Adriatic ports from where the pilgrims and crusaders sailed to the Holy Land.<sup>45</sup> Other operating mansions of the Templars were placed at Chieri and Testona, two passage ways of the Via Francigena that converged towards the plains

<sup>37</sup> L. Bertelli, 'L'Ordine dei Cavalieri di Altopascio', *Giornale Storico della Lunigiana e del Territorio Lucense*, xvi (1965), 39-40.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>40</sup> F. Bramato, 'I Templari in Terra di Bari', *Nicolaus Rivista di Teologia Ecumenico-Patristica*, vii, I (1979), 177.

<sup>41</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 28.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> K. Forstreuter, 'Per la Storia del Baliato dell'ordine Teutonico in Puglia', *Studi di Storia Pugliese in Onore di Giuseppe Chialli*, ed. Michele Paone, 1972, 594.

<sup>45</sup> Rubini, 93.

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between Turin and the Val di Susa<sup>46</sup> and at Vercelli,<sup>47</sup> a city placed at the crossroads between those roads that led to Rome, better known as *Viae Romae*, and those leading to important cities of embarkation, like Venice. However, as has been rightly noticed by Ivan Grech, the Hospitallers did not discard the possibility of creating settlements in salient Mediterranean ports. An important choice was taken to adopt Genoa as their port of transit<sup>48</sup> to the extent that by the twelfth century, the Hospitaller knights established an important settlement along the coast of Genoa. By such a choice, the Hospitaller guaranteed a harbour that had links with both the Levant but also, was the pivot in a network of small ports linking mainland Italy with southern Western Europe. Pilgrims from central Europe, in particular France on their way to Rome used to walk down to the French Mediterranean coast, and from there take a boat up to Genoa from where they continued their voyage on land to Rome. This was by far a more practicable way than crossing over the Alps Mountains.

The Order of St John also created what has been defined as a proper network of hospices along the major ways of communications in Northern Italy.<sup>49</sup> Mansios were opened at strategic points of transit. Hospices could be found on transit roads across the Alps, as at Assola, a place on the road of Sempione, and around the

first decade of 1300 two other hospices were set up on the crossing of the Sempione.<sup>50</sup> In Friuli, considered to lie on the important route frequented by the pilgrims of *Oltre Mare*, the Hospitallers had founded a hospice<sup>51</sup> in 1199.<sup>52</sup> The presence of a good network in the northern part of Italy did not mean the total abandonment of the southern part. In Calabria, the Hospitallers built similar structures at various points on the Tyrrhenian coast, as well as on other strategic points of transit, as at Castrovillari and Cosenza or along the road that led to the embarkation port of Messina.<sup>53</sup>

However, the Hospitallers, while not relinquishing points of embarkation to the East, concentrated, more perhaps than the Templars, on the *Viae Romae*,<sup>54</sup> frequented by pilgrims on their way to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>55</sup> The presence of the Hospitallers along the Roman road was, claims Luigi Avonto, successive and uninterrupted.<sup>56</sup> In Emilia and Romagna, all the domus of the Hospitallers were posted on the axis of the ancient Roman road, the *Via Emilia*,<sup>57</sup> like Bologna, Castel San Pietro, Imola, Faenza, Forli, Cesena and Rimini, or at towns having roads radiating to such important localities as Ravenna, Ferrara and Roncastaldo, a town on the Bolognese mountains.<sup>58</sup> Hospices of the Order of St John were to be found on other arteries of the Roman road system. At Vercelli, a

<sup>46</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 10.

<sup>47</sup> Id., 'Presenza Gerosolimitana', 115.

<sup>48</sup> Grech, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Trota, 'L'Ospedale', 101.

<sup>50</sup> E. Rizzi, 'Il Porto della Masone di Vogogna e la Commenda dei Cavalieri di Malta'. *Oscellana Rivista Illustrata della Val D'Ossola*, v,4 (1975), 170.

<sup>51</sup> G. Comelli, 'Fondazione di un Ospedale dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano di S. Giovanni in Friuli', *Memorie Storiche Foro Giuliesi*, xliii (1958), 173.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 76-177.

<sup>53</sup> G. Valente, 'Il S. M. Ordine di Malta in Calabria', *Almanacco Calabrese*, xv (1965), 76-77.

<sup>54</sup> Bruché, 12-29.

<sup>55</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 9.

<sup>56</sup> Id., 'Presenza Gerosolimitana', 114. "L'Ordine e' comprovato dalla successione ininterrotta delle istituzioni gerosolimitane lungo le vie romane!"

<sup>57</sup> Nasalli Rocca, 'Istituzioni', 69. All the Hospitaller domus located on the axis of the *Via Emilia* "Si sovrappongono come abbiamo già accennato ad antiche Stationes, Mansiones, Mutationes del sistema stradale antico romano (Cursus Publicas) da cui trassero origine o sviluppo anche molti dei maggiori o minori centri abitati attuali."

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 69. The domus Gerosolimitane in Romagna were those of Bologna - Castel San Pietro, Imola, Faenza, Forli, Cesena - Rimini. All these are placed "sulle grande strade, ma ad esse sono da aggiungere alcune Domus poste su strade radiali pure di grande comunicazione, innestate alla Via Emilia, quelle di Ferrara, di Ravenna, di Roncastaldo in Comune di Loiano nella montagna bolognese, quest'ultima assai presto scomparsa, e altre minori."

strategic city on the *Viae Romae*, in which those pilgrims who intended to go to Rome "were compelled to make a stop"<sup>59</sup> the Hospitallers had also their hospices. Pavia, like Vercelli, was also a city on the crossroads. From Pavia passed the road leading to Vercelli, Lodi, Brescia, and Venice: from Pavia, too, passed the so-called 'Roman itinerary', that is, that system of roads that led to Piacenza, Bologna, and hence to the *Città Pontificia*, or Rome.<sup>60</sup> The mansions of the Order in Pavia were erected at the city exits which led to Rome.<sup>61</sup> In Florence, one of the three hospitals that the Order owned in the city, that of St John's, was already in existence by 1317, receiving pilgrims who were on their way to Rome or the Holy Land.<sup>62</sup>

In the circumference of Rome, as at Ferentino (in the south), Corneto, Civitavecchia, Sutri, Orvieto, Lake of Bolsena and Viterbo, the Order is known to have had preceptories<sup>63</sup> and in some particular cases also hospices or mansions, like the hospice and church of Santa Maria in Risiere in Viterbo.<sup>64</sup> In Rome itself the Hospitallers were established at San Basilio.<sup>65</sup>

The Hospitallers were therefore heavily concentrating on the Roman pilgrimage, even though the roads to the Levant were not forgotten. Such a concentration on the Roman pilgrimage could be a further explanation, besides the traditional hostility of the Venetian Republic towards the Hospitallers,<sup>66</sup> why a centre so important for the embarkation to the Levant as Venice lacked Hospitallers facilities for travelling pilgrims similar to those the Hospital held elsewhere. It was only with the appropriation of the property of the Templars that the

Order of St John had had to reorganise their position in Venice. Nonetheless, the ex-Templar structure, the hospice of St Catherine, would not be used for pilgrims, but was converted into a hospice for the aged.<sup>67</sup> The fact, that such an important commercial city lacked for centuries the presence of a Hospitaller mansion can be taken as another evidence that the Order's network of hospices across the Italian peninsula followed commercially important routes on the *Viae Romae*.

Moreover, even when the pilgrims destination was the Holy Land, many of those who crossed over the Alps and moved towards the South from where they took a boat to Jerusalem, they made it a point to stop over in Rome and at the sanctuary of St. Michael Archangelo at Gargano in Apulia. In the southern part of the Adriatic coast, the main ports were Bari, Trani, Barletta, Brindisi and Otranto. Judging from the writing of a late Medieval English traveller, Matthew Paris, the Hospitaller hospices along this way that from the central Italy arrived up to Monopoli in Puglia, were well known with pilgrims.<sup>68</sup>

The Hospitallers' concentration on Rome could probably explain why their institution was less popular in terms of donations from pilgrims than other similar Orders. Their rivals or competitors,<sup>69</sup> the Templars, possessed much more extensive landed wealth in Europe and were often more preferred in testamentary bequests. The Templars' concentration on the *viac* radiating to ports of embarkation must have made them more popular with pilgrims and land seekers destined for Palestine. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem remained until the late thirteenth century the preferred destination

<sup>59</sup> Avonto, 'Presenza Gerosolimitana', 115. 'erano costretti a far tappa'.

<sup>60</sup> Bruché, 11.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> Morini, 166.

<sup>63</sup> A. T. Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers around Narni and Terni: 1333-1373'. *Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*, Lxxxii (1985), 5.

<sup>64</sup> O. Puletti, *I Cavalieri di Malta e la Madonna della Quercia* (Viterbo 1968) 43. Santa Maria in Risiere was the hospital and church of the Order in Viterbo constructed in the twelfth or in the first half of the thirteenth century.

<sup>65</sup> Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers around Narni', 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*, 'The Hospitallers' Hospice of Santa Caterina at Venice; 1358-1451'. *Studi Veneziani*, xii (1970), 373.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 369-80.

<sup>68</sup> M. Camilleri, *The Historical Development of the Hospitaller Commandery of San Giovanni di Monopoli*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis in History, submitted to the University of Malta, 2007 25.

<sup>69</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 68.

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for religious devotees. The strong concentration of hospices administered by Templars founded on the way to Jerusalem made such a Military Order, one of the most popular institutions with these pilgrims. The result was that the Templars became more favoured for bequests than the other military Orders. The acquisition of vast territories made the Templars by the thirteenth century an economic and a political force,<sup>70</sup> earning them privileges and independence.<sup>71</sup> Such a political power brought with it allies and foes,<sup>72</sup> troubles with the local authorities,<sup>73</sup> or a greater need to safeguard their autonomy.<sup>74</sup> Serious trouble began with the dwindling of the 'crusading adventure', reaching its peak with the fall of the last Christian bulwark, in Acre in 1291. The fall of Acre forced the Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights to divert their crusading ideal, the former by attempting the conquest of Rhodes, the latter by concentrating on the defence of the German borders. The Templars returned to Europe, but made no effort to engage themselves in any particular activity. Instead, they settled down on their landed estates in France. In France, they set up their institution, becoming a strong and independent force for the French realm to reckon with. The inertia of such a military force invited criticisms from many quarters, and fears in others, while it provoked malicious gossip on their supposed licentious behaviour.

In Europe, as the Hospitallers had concentrated on the *Viae Romae*, their mansions began to acquire an exceptional value, especially since Rome was now being looked upon as the second Jerusalem. On the other hand, the Templars' hospitality structures lost much of their value. Their hospice network ended up on the periphery of the emerging pilgrim destination. Such a situation further undermined their hospitaller activity,

gradually causing them to lose the reputation they had enjoyed with pilgrims. Even if they still continued to perform acts of hospitality, their military set-up seemed to have been shadowing their few nursing activities. The Templars began to be accused (perhaps not altogether justifiably) of having abandoned their *raison d'être* and fallen into loose conduct.

On 12 August 1308, Clement V with the bull *Faciens Misericordiam* nominated a commission to investigate the presumed crimes of which the Templars were being accused. It proved to be a difficult task. The papal inquisitors were not all of the same opinion on the matter. Some sought to defend or protect the Templars,<sup>75</sup> others, were overzealous in their prosecution. In Tortona, the inquisitor was threatened by the Nobles of the city, at various points of his investigation between 1308 and 1312, for daring to undertake criminal procedures against the Templars.<sup>76</sup> This conflicting situation brought the Pontiff to pronounce another bull, *Alma mater ecclesia*, on 4 September 1310. The inquiring magistrates were exhorted to terminate in the shortest time possible their investigations against the Templars and submit their compiled testimonies to Avignon. The appeal must have fallen on deaf ears, as other reminding bulls had to follow<sup>77</sup> until, on 3 April 1312, Clement V bowed to the pressure exerted by the King of France, Philip the Fair, and published during the course of the Council of Vienne the bull *Vox (Clamantis) in Excelso*,<sup>78</sup> suppressing the Templars. The bull seems to have been intended to please both worlds, those in favour and those against the Templars. The Templars were not excommunicated; they were forbidden to operate within the framework of the Catholic Church. If the King had thought that the papal provision was going to earn him the title to the rich

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 14, 117.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 5-129. In Tortona the Inquisitor was menaced by the Nobles of the city in his work during 1308-12 for undertaking criminal procedures against the Templars. Ibid., 34. On the other hand, there were inquisitors protecting or exercising power to protect the Templars. Ibid., 36.

<sup>73</sup> In Chieti, for example, the Templars had trouble with the town commune. Ibid., 93.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 40. When Pope Urban IV asked a member of the Templar Order to resign, he was answered that no one could interfere in the Order's affairs. The Templar affirmed that he was only ready to obey the Grand Master.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>77</sup> L. Tacchella, 'Templari e Giovanniti in S. Vitale di Verona', *Studi Storici Luigi Simeoni*, xxxii 1982 135.

<sup>78</sup> Id., 'La Mansio Gerosolimitana di Gazzo di Pressana in Territorio Veronese'. *Studi Storici Veronesi Luigi Simeoni*, xxvi-xxvii (1976-77), 27.



lands of the Templars in France, he was disillusioned. In a month's time, on 6 May,<sup>79</sup> a second bull *Ad Providam* was issued. The Pope allotted all the property of the Templars to the Order of St John, with the exception of their estates in Aragon, Castile, Portugal and Majorca.<sup>80</sup>

In contemplating that the Order of St John was the legitimate heir of the Templars, the act *Ad providam* was distant from reality. In France and other parts of Europe, the immovable property of the Templars was ransacked. In some cases, the property was appropriated by other institutions or religious Orders, parts are said to have remained either unclaimed or were lost.<sup>81</sup> In Puglia, in Italy, the property of the Templars was divided among the Teutonic knights, the Commune and third parties, while others were abandoned. In Andria, for example, a Templar church was assigned to the Teutonic Order.<sup>82</sup> The Templar church of St Magdalene in Barletta was first passed to the secular chaplains, to be then rehabilitated for the use of the Council of the Università until 1531, when Clement VII passed it to the Dominican Order.<sup>83</sup> At the Italian town of Cavallermaggiore, the property of the Templars was divided in the presence of the bishop of Turin, Guido Canalis, between the Hospitallers and the Cathedral Chapter.<sup>84</sup>

The Order of St John's endeavour to appropriate itself of the bequeathed property carried with it a great financial burden and, presumably, a very strong resistance.<sup>85</sup> The fatiguing process took decades to complete, and in the fifteenth century the Order was still receiving ex-

property of the Templars. In 1331 the Order had received only part of the Templars' property at Cavallermaggiore, as they had to divide it with the Chapter of the Cathedral of the City.<sup>86</sup> In Viterbo the preceptory of the Templars, the Santa Maria in Carbonara, passed to the Hospitallers only towards the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>87</sup> In the sixteenth century, the Order was still acquiring ex-property of the Templars. The ex-Templar church of St Nicholas in Molfetta is said to have been occupied by the Order of St John as late as 1527.<sup>88</sup>

The inheritance of the Templars' property must have perpetuated the already existing confusion in the identity of the Templars and the Hospitallers. Such was in part the result of the similarity in name between the Templars and the Hospitallers, the former called *Templum sive domum Millicie Templi Gerosolimitani*<sup>89</sup> or Templari for short, while the latter were called *Templari Sanctii Johannis*.<sup>90</sup> Fra Saulo (Sabba) da Castiglione is recorded to have once signed in the first decade of the sixteenth century as *Milite Jerosolimitano sive Templario*.<sup>91</sup> The resulting confusion continued to drag on to the present day.<sup>92</sup> The passing of the Templars' property further increased the confusion, as some of the property continued to be called del Tempio while others continued to retain their original name, undergoing slight variations, or having their original appellation extended by the addition of the name of the Hospitallers' patron saint. The preceptoria of St Nazario<sup>93</sup> in Ivrea became the commandery of San Giovanni and Nazario, while Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 still spoke of the preceptoria *Domus sancte Marie*

<sup>79</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 58.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 16; Tacchella, 'Templari', 135; Moroni, 226.

<sup>81</sup> Nasalli Rocca, 'Istituzioni', 73.

<sup>82</sup> Bramato, 'I Templari', 173.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>84</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 62.

<sup>85</sup> N. Housley, *The Later Crusades 1274-1580: From Lyons to Acre*, 213

<sup>86</sup> Avonto, 'I Templari', 62.

<sup>87</sup> Puletti, 23-24.

<sup>88</sup> Bramato, 'Templari', 179.

<sup>89</sup> Tacchella, 'Templari', 132.

<sup>90</sup> F. Tommassi, *Templari e Templarii Sancti Johannis, Studi Medievali*, 3rd sers, xxiv, 1 (1983), 371-384.

<sup>91</sup> A. Luzio, 'Lettere Inedite di Fra Sabba Castiglione', *Archivio Storico Lombardo Giornale della Societa' Storica Lombarda*, xiii, 3 (1886), 103.

<sup>92</sup> The confusion about the name led some to think that the church at Fossano was passed to the Order of St. John in 1312, when it was already a preceptory of the Hospitallers. Avonto, 'I Templari', 66,

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 106.

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*de Templo* in a bull he addressed to the Hospitallers.<sup>94</sup> This confusion could have encouraged the Order to assert itself both in the acquired property as well as in those already possessed by the Order. In the sixteenth century, extensive use began to be made of the eight pointed cross of the Hospitallers, finding its place in church ceilings or on facades of its buildings, in an effort to identify such edifices with the Hospitaller Order. At first the eight-pointed cross was depicted or engraved in a rather shabby form, but it gained a more geometrically accurate representation in later centuries.<sup>95</sup>

The Hospitallers' use of emblems coincides with a slow but progressive transformation which was then going on within the structure of the Order. From the late fourteenth century, but especially during the fifteenth, the Order's hospices began to be stripped of their charitable character and transformed into an integral part of the leased preceptory. Small preceptories began to be absorbed by larger ones in the same locality, while the buildings that used to house pilgrims, the infirm or the aged ended up being used as the residence of the procurator of the preceptory. In Gazzo, in the province of Verona, the hospital of the Order was reduced to a member,<sup>96</sup> or part of an existing preceptory,<sup>97</sup> towards the end of the fourteenth century. Also in that century, the hospital and church of the Order of Santa Maria in Risiere in Viterbo were incorporated with the Commandery of Santa Maria in Carbonara.<sup>98</sup> The hospice adjoining the Commandery of San Giovanni di Pre' in

Genoa became, by the fifteenth century, a mere mansion or commandery.<sup>99</sup> In 1542 the pilgrims' hospital of San Sepolcro in Florence is recorded only as the residence of the commander,<sup>100</sup> while the mansions of Pavia, that were used for the care of the sick, were by the year 1560 only a rural benefice entrusted to a procurator.<sup>101</sup> A similar fate awaited the Templar's benefices. In some cases, as in Venice, the Order at first continued to administer those hospices along their traditional lines of hospitality, opening their doors to the *infirmi pauperes et debiles*<sup>102</sup> but by the end of Middle Ages such character had changed, the hospice transforming itself into the *preceptorium* or commandery,<sup>103</sup> or, as was the case with Venice, lost to one of the Venetian *Scuole*.

This silent process of transformation was also being felt by the rest of the preceptories which had always been part of the Order's estates. A pyramidal structure began to be developed, by which each mansio or preceptory had to have points of reference. Small preceptories became changed into members, and incorporated into another preceptory. A number of preceptories were by the late fifteenth century grouped into a bailiwick. A bailiwick or two, plus a cluster of preceptories, constituted the priory. A group of priories constituted a Langue. Until 1317, the property of the Order was common to all members. That year, according to Bosio, it was divided into seven Langues,<sup>104</sup> a set-up, which would remain unchanged for more than a century. In 1462 the eighth Langue of the Order was set up. The distinctive spirit that marked

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>95</sup> The representation of the Hospitaller cross on the facade of the ex-Templar church of St. James in Ruspaglia, lacks in the exact proportional dimensions usually associated with the eight-pointed cross. Avonto, 'Templari', 104-105. The country chapel at Cavallermaggiore, known as *della Motta S. Giovanni*, offers another example. The eight-pointed cross as frescoed at the beginning of the *cinquecento* together with saintly figures in the middle of the church's ceiling again lacks in geometrical sharpness. A. Bonino, 'Chiesa Campestre di S. Giovanni della Motta S. Giovanni presso Cavallermaggiore', *Bollettino Della Societa' Piemontese di Archeologia e Belle Arti*, x, 1-2 (1926), 2, table. II.

<sup>96</sup> Tacchella, 'La Mansio', 23.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>98</sup> Puletti, 43.

<sup>99</sup> Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers' Hospice', 371-2.

<sup>100</sup> Morini 168.

<sup>101</sup> Bruché, 3-4.

<sup>102</sup> Luttrell 'The Hospitallers' Hospice', 375.

<sup>103</sup> Bruché, 12.

<sup>104</sup> See NLM, Lib, 189, 221.

the Castilians from the Aragonese caused a division in the Spanish nation. The Castilians set up their own Langue to distinguish themselves from the Aragonese. The Langue of Aragon held Navarre, and Catalonia, while that of Castille comprised Leon and Portugal. The structural development effected in 1317 marked the end of any difference that could have still existed between the Templars' property and that of the Hospitallers. An inventory of the Order's property, drawn up in 1371, does not distinguish between the property acquired by the Templars and those originally held by the Order.<sup>105</sup>

The redefinition of the preceptories' confines was often intended to boost the meagre revenue of some of the land units. A preceptory, having a low revenue, was often annexed to another preceptory found in a similar situation. The united preceptories would earn their administrator a higher revenue.<sup>106</sup> The revenue collected from the preceptory, known as responsions, was handed to the prior, or head of the priory, who in turn was to pass it to the convent. The preceptor was entitled to a share of the revenue. Taking into consideration a normal priory of some forty preceptories, the average value of the responsions for the year 1372-74 was 23 florins per house. This calculation is based on the accounts of the Priory of Pisa.<sup>107</sup>

This development of the Hospitallers' estates into rural benefices must have helped the Order to overcome an acute crisis in the *proprietà fondiaria* which seems to have hit, among other large religious convents at least in Northern Italy from the eleventh to the sixteenth century.<sup>108</sup> The landowning institution sought to overcome the crisis by creating new units of property,<sup>109</sup> while many of the religious orders, the Hospitallers included, reorganized small entities of land into larger

ones, an organization that continued to progress in the sixteenth century and afterwards.<sup>110</sup> But the transformation within the Order was the expression of a more efficient organization, a more economically viable administration of property. The economic viability would find a place in the late sixteenth-century statute formulations, where it was explicitly claimed that, owing to the distance as well as the political division of nations, the land could no longer be directly administered from the centre i.e. the Common Treasury; rather, it would be better to hold third parties responsible. *I nostri Maggiori*, retorts Gio. Maria Caravita, *raccomandano o sia incommendarono ai nostri fratelli, a chi una parte ed a chi un'altra per regessero e governassero.*<sup>111</sup> Thus, the land was given out to the so-called commanders, who themselves would farm out units of their commandery, known as members, to be administered by lay individuals.

This change within the Order's organization reflected the new land structure that began to assert itself further in Southern Europe. This process, called by some the refeudalization of the land, was one that had begun in the sixteenth century and assumed an accelerated pace during the seventeenth. In an economic crisis that began to weigh more and more on Southern Europe, the aristocracy, in league with the merchant class, sought new sources of investment. This crisis, which was reflected most in the building activity and the acute devaluation of money, made the land appear as the safest source of investment, one that offered the most secure guarantees.<sup>112</sup> This created a new movement towards the country, bringing nothing new to the organization of production, but reinforcing the existing feudal structure and consolidating it with the admission of new elements,<sup>113</sup> including the system of the *fidei commissi*<sup>114</sup> and the making of the land terriers or *cabrei*. The

<sup>105</sup> Tacchella, 'Templari', 136.

<sup>106</sup> A. Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers of Rhodes between Tuscany and Jerusalem: 1310-1431', *Revue Mabillon International: Review for Ecclesiastical History and Literature*, new series, Dxxiii, 3 (1992), 119.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>108</sup> C. M. Cipolla, 'Une crise ignorée. Comment West perdue la propriété ecclésiastique dans l'Italie du Nord entre le XI[e] et le XVI[e] siècle', *Annales*, 3 (1947), 217-327.

<sup>109</sup> A. Stella: reference mislaid.

<sup>110</sup> R. Francovich, 'L'Arena Toscana', *Storia d'Italia- Atlante*, ed. G. Einaudi, vii (1976), 591.

<sup>111</sup> NLM, Lib. 189, 2-3; Ibid., 185, f 347v.

<sup>112</sup> G. Carocci, 'Problemi Agrari del Lazio nel '500', *Studi Storici*, i 1 (1960), 19.

<sup>113</sup> R. Villari, 'Il Riformismo e l'Evoluzione delle Campagne Italiane nel Settecento, attraverso gli Studi Recenti', *Studi Storici*, v, 4 (1964), 614-5.

<sup>114</sup> G. Papagno, 'L'Area Veneta', *Storia d'Italia*, ed. G. Einaudi, vii (1976), 546.

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profusion of ecclesiastical and noble privileges brought an involution in the relationship between proprietor and production. This period of consolidation and extension of the great feudal – property, was accompanied by the reduction of the surface of the land for cultivation and a large-scale degradation of the agrarian landscape.<sup>15</sup> Matters were destined to grow worse, as the city became the centre for the consumption of the feudal revenue, The new 'feudal lord' preferred the commodious life of the city to his being secluded in a castle on his terrains, hence contributing further to the degradation of his land. The effects were destined to be seriously felt in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The continuous devaluation of money implied that some of the fiefs became so ridiculously small, that they did not reach the city. After 1570, the Hospitaller Common Treasury in Valletta was one such institution pondering on how to solve such a serious problem.

In other words, the feudal system did not come to an end. The once feudal services were commuted into cash rents adaptable and updated to the current needs of the ancien regime society up to the French Revolution, and persisting thereafter. What Marc Bloch defines as the forces of cultural change were themselves responsible for the internal transformation or involution of the Order's feudal structure. To face the politico-cultural transformation, the Order activated an involutory process, updating its structures to meet the current exigencies demanded by the society of the time.

The Order, as Riley-Smith has shown, was by 1299 already an anachronistic institution. To survive, internal changes were unavoidable in order to make the Religion keep abreast with the new currents that would invest Europe. When the Order ceased to grasp the European esprit, particularly the French revolutionary spirit, it would endanger profoundly its existence, only to be practically resuscitated in the aristocratic revival of the 1830's. The loss of Acre in 1291 brought to an end the

Hospitallers' mission in the Holy Land, forcing them to accustom themselves to a new political reality, the retreat to Cyprus, from where they passed to the conquest of Rhodes and the building of a maritime squadron.<sup>16</sup> On the European mainland, the Knights Hospitallers' activity had two main components. The first concerned acts of hospitality given to pilgrims on their way to Rome. Concurrently they began to develop their sanitary services for which they are now mostly famous. When the Medieval pilgrimage declined in importance and lost its medieval aura, the Knights kept the running of a hospital as one of their missions in Malta. The second point concerned the administration of its landed property. On the European mainland, the Order, in the spirit of the movement of 'refeudalization, was in a continuous process of restructuring its land organization by incorporating small commanderies within larger ones and introducing the concept of the *fidei commissi* and the acquisition of further privileges. The restructuring of the agricultural setup caused money to be invested (as the nobility did in the principal cities) in prioral palaces in the major European cities, or in Valletta, which had been rightly described as, an epitome of Europe.<sup>17</sup> Where such centres of power were absent, as in the case of the prioral palace at Barletta, the seat was transferred to Naples. The prioral palaces in the principal cities of Europe were witnesses of profound structural changes and satisfied the new demands of the emerging Baroque city. The Hospitaller palaces at Messina, Rome, and Prague passed through a facial uplifting, often at the hands of reputable architects, like Giovanni Battista Piranesi for Rome, turning the priory into as grand a structure as was expected in a Baroque city.

The apparent security offered by the Baroque city hid to the Order the social ailments that began hermetically to voice their protest. Peasants working on their European estates were getting more dissatisfied with their state of vassals, while their subjects in Malta were voicing their cries of dissatisfaction louder and louder.

<sup>15</sup> R. Villari, 'Il Riformismo', 614-5.

<sup>16</sup> Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers of Rhodes between Tuscany and Jerusalem', 117.

<sup>17</sup> P. Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta in a series of Letters to William Beckford, Esq of Somerby in Suffolk*, i (London 1773), 338; V. Mallia-Milanes, 'Valletta 1566-1798, An Epitome of Europe', *Bank of Valletta Annual Financial Statement 1988* (Malta 1989), i-xxxviii.

In Europe, the aristocratic landowning world sought to solve the degradation of the agrarian land towards the end of the *seicento* and in the *settecento*, keeping at the same time control over the land. The figure of the *fittanziere* or middleman, with capital in hand, appears on the scene, paying money to the landowner in return for the control of the cultivation of land. Such an intrusion would heavily contribute to immerse the whole system into a crisis. It brought to the foreground the manifestation, aptly defined as the 'normal' absenteeism of the landowner from his land, allowing his image to be projected only as a parasitic figure, living in the distant city.<sup>118</sup> Some of the nobles gradually realized their weakened position, by making way to the *fittanzieri*. The *fittanzieri* or *gabellotti*, as they were also called, began

slowly to replace the nobility by themselves making capital investments in land.<sup>119</sup> For the rising bourgeoisie it was more difficult to intrude into the ecclesiastical entities (including those of the Order), which enjoyed a different concept of landownership. The Order, as, the other ecclesiastical institutions, reserved its property to its members. Employing third parties could only be effected through the commander, although, in most cases, only small units or members were available. The chance of acquiring the Order's property through cash, as was the case with other ecclesiastical institutions, was beyond even the remotest possibility. Intrusion had to come from outside, and it became possible only in the late eighteenth century through a movement towards the nationalization of land.

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<sup>118</sup> Papagno, 544.

<sup>119</sup> L. Scaraffia and P. Sereno, 'L'Area Piemontese: Monocultura e conduzione capitalistica: La risaia vercellese', *Storie d'Italia*, ed. G. Einaudi, vii (1976), 511.

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The main ethos of the Monastic Military Orders set up in the 11th and 12th centuries was essentially pilgrim oriented. This could assume any aspect of pilgrim care from the creation and manning of hostels, hospices and even hospitals to the provision of military defence and protection. This assistance to pilgrims especially the military arm was further necessitated by the invasion of the Seljuk Turks who defeated the Byzantines at the famous battle of Manzikert in 1071. As Asia Minor, Nicaea and Antioch fell to the Turks, pilgrimages to the Holy Land trickled and ceased owing to the aggressor's inimical hatred of Christianity and its Holy Sites. This was one of the reasons used for launching the Crusades