The Latin word Melitensisia denotes “things pertaining to Malta,” and it is most frequently used in the world of rare books and manuscripts to describe written collections of the history and culture of the island of Malta.

This newsletter reports the activities of the Malta Study Center, and features information about the history of the Knights of Malta and the history and culture of the country of Malta itself.

We welcome your comments and your communication about others who might share an interest in this core program of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library.

The Militia of Mdina
Theresa M. Vann

During the 1565 Ottoman siege of the island of Malta, the army of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent focused its attack on the strongholds of the Knights of the Order of the Hospital in the Great Harbor. The Ottomans ignored the old city of Mdina, even though its outdated fortifications probably could not withstand an extended siege. On August 7, 1565, during an intense Ottoman assault upon the bastion of St. Michael in Senglea, approximately 200 cavalry and infantry left Mdina and raided the Ottoman base camp at Marsammet Harbor. The Ottomans, mistaking the townsmen for a relief force, abandoned their attack. The militia of Mdina thus won a breathing space for the Knights, who were able to hold out until reinforcements arrived the following month.

This was the best-known action of the militia of Mdina, which had been in existence since at least the fourteenth century. Before the arrival of the Hospitallers in 1530, Malta’s isolated position in the Mediterranean left it at the mercy of Muslim raiders. As the island’s Università complained to its Aragonese rulers in the fifteenth century, Malta was “a rock in the middle of the sea far from help and comfort.” The Università frequently requested help and assistance in garrisoning the island and arming its inhabitants. A captain, appointed by the king, garrisoned the Castle by the Sea (in the Great Harbor), and the island’s militia served as lookouts against attackers. The post was no sinecure. Raids depopulated Malta and Gozo in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and settlement patterns show that the Maltese chose to live near the citadel of Mdina rather than along the fertile coasts of the island. The defense of Malta was not assured until the Knights of the Hospital arrived in 1530 and assumed responsibility for the safety of the entire island. The Knights took command of the local militias, which gradually declined in importance.

Militias composed of townsmen existed elsewhere in Northern and Western Europe during the middle ages and the renaissance. Because no medieval kingdom had a standing army to patrol its boundaries, frontier societies needed viable municipal militias to patrol settlements against raids. In return, the townsmen demanded rights and privileges from the monarch, which helped shape town institutions.

The increasing professionalization of warfare during the late middle ages and renaissance, however, caused a decline in
civilian militias. Municipal militias, which only served for a limited period of time and resisted moving far from their homes, had restricted military utility as armies became larger and better trained. Rulers preferred to hire mercenaries, professional soldiers who served as long as they were paid. However, this presented an additional problem, because unpaid mercenaries could turn on their employers.

The fifteenth-century wars in the Italian peninsula persuaded Niccola Machiavelli with all the proof he needed of the faults of mercenaries. Machiavelli argued in his *Art of War* that a citizens' army was preferable, because citizens were more zealous than mercenaries in defending their homes. But his arguments failed to convince the average townsman to adopt the life of a soldier.

The Università of Malta, located on the sixteenth-century Ottoman frontier, had no difficulty recruiting townsmen to defend their homes. Some of the correspondence suggests that the men of Malta considered militia service one of the requisites of a free citizen. Indeed, the militia's displays of military prowess could serve to challenge any feudal overlord of the island. But it is clear that the Università could not afford to assume responsibility for the defense of the island, because it lacked the resources to build and maintain fortifications strong enough to resist gunpowder artillery.

The arrival of the Order of the Hospital, with its international resources, made possible the construction of the massive fortifications that still exist on the island today. Although the local militias continued to perform guard duty and take part in skirmishes, the ideal of the citizen soldier never flowered on Hospitaller Malta.
HMML at the Library of Congress

November 13th marked a festive day in the history of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, as an audience of over two hundred gathered at the Library of Congress in Washington to hear Library director Eric Hollas speak about the Archives of the Knights of Malta. Co-sponsors of the event were the Embassy of Malta and the Federal Association of the Knights of Malta, and Dr. John van Ouderenin, head of the European section of the Library of Congress, opened the evening with words of welcome. Ambassador George Saliba of Malta followed with his own greetings and with the introduction of the speaker.

In his presentation Hollas spoke about the character of the Archives of the Knights of Malta and their almost miraculous survival as they moved from Jerusalem to Rhodes and then to Malta in the course of several hundred years. The passage of time resulted in the loss of much of this documentation, but major portions were preserved in spite of sieges, transport to new homes, and ultimately the threat by Napoleon in 1798 to destroy them or relocate them to Paris.
Fifteen Years Restoration in the Medieval Town of Rhodes. A Curator’s Report
Theresa M. Vann

The cultural institutions of the Greek Government and the city of Rhodes sponsored an international symposium entitled “Fifteen Years Restoration in the Medieval Town of Rhodes” on the 13th - 18th of November 2001. The symposium provided a rare opportunity for archaeologists, historians, art historians, restorers and interested members of the public to talk about historical research and preservation on Rhodes and elsewhere in the Dodecanese. Most of the papers were presented in Greek, but the symposium provided simultaneous translators for French and English speakers.

The symposium invited me to attend because the Archives of the Knights of Malta, located in Valletta, Malta, and microfilmed by the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, contain the written records for Rhodes’ medieval period. This means the modern Rhodians have to travel to another country to research whole eras of their own history.

The symposium served as an intensive seminar on the history and artifacts of Rhodes. The old city of Rhodes has many layers of occupation. Hellenistic Rhodes, one of the great cities of antiquity, was famed for its Colossus, a giant statue that marked the harbor until its destruction in an earthquake in 224 BCE. Then the Romans and the Byzantine Empire ruled the island until 1204, when it was taken by the Genoese during the 4th Crusade. Later, the Knights of the Hospital ruled the island between ca. 1309 and 1522, when the Ottoman Turks captured Rhodes. They governed the island until 1912, when Italy took it over. The Italians ceded Rhodes to Greece in 1947. Each era left a notable historical and cultural legacy.

The participants in the symposium discussed what to do with this legacy. Rhodes is a world heritage city, which attracts many visitors because of its medieval appearance. There is a delicate tension between restoration to the historically-authentic appearance and creating modern access for tourists. In addition to fostering the tourist economy, historical restoration (or, as the translators called it, intervention) had to choose which period to recreate in its restoration.

The Marine Gate, Rhodes
There was also the problem of what to do with previous restoration attempts. For example, the Hospitallers' conventual church and the master's palace stood until the nineteenth century, when a lightning strike hit a stash of gunpowder in the church that was apparently left over from the 1522 Turkish siege. The explosion destroyed the church and severely damaged the adjacent palace. The Turks built a school in the ruins of the church. Italian restorers rebuilt the palace as a summer home for Mussolini, who, however, never stayed there. These restorations proceeded according to early twentieth-century practices, and have introduced some anachronisms that are now part of the Rhodian landscape.

The symposium also raised the problem of the identification of sites and the problem of signage. A sign provides needed direction or information. In the case of historical monuments, the sign is a useful label, giving meaning to what otherwise might appear to be no more than a pile of rocks. The city of Rhodes still contains many buildings constructed by the Hospitallers. Most visitors accept the signs on the building as accurate identification of what the building used to be. These signs, however, may be unintentionally misleading. When the Hospitallers left in 1522 and the Turks moved in, there was no continuity in the usage of the major public buildings. The Turks converted churches into mosques, and reused the auburges (inns, or residences) of the Knights. The names the buildings bore under the Hospitallers were forgotten. Modern identification of buildings is tentative, and today many of the old churches in Rhodes carry assigned names that they may (or may not) have borne before the arrival of the Turks.

The ravages of time—erosion, earthquakes, wars, and catastrophes—have left their marks on Rhodes. Its restoration is an ongoing process, one that involves the community and serves many different constituencies. The symposium shows that the Greeks are involving all the interested parties in the process. They were also warm and hospitable hosts and made me feel truly welcome.
The Archives of the Inquisition

The Cathedral Museum of Mdina contains the archives of the Roman Inquisition on Malta, one of two complete sets of Inquisitorial archives in Europe. Sicilian Inquisitors had jurisdiction over Malta before 1561, and occasionally visited the island. The Bishop of Malta handled most problems of ecclesiastical discipline. But when the Emperor Charles V gave the island of Malta to the Order of the Hospital in 1530, he also introduced possible conflicts between two ecclesiastical overlords. Pope Pius IV ordered a resident inquisitor on Malta in 1561, where the office lasted until 1798.

The Roman Inquisition on Malta ostensibly guarded against the introduction of Lutheranism and rooted out heresy, ignorance, and superstition. But the Inquisitor also checked the power of the Grand Master on Malta and reported to the Pope about the ecclesiastical misconduct of the Knights and their servants. The Maltese Inquisitor's tribunal in Birgu formed one of the three centers of ecclesiastical power on Malta, balancing the Bishop in Mdina and the Grand Master in Valletta. The office of the Inquisitor provided a stepping-stone to ecclesiastical promotion. Many inquisitors went on to become bishops and cardinals, and two—Fabio Chigi and Antonio Pignatelli—became Popes (Alexander VII and Innocent XII). The French abolished the tribunal when they took the island in 1798, and its records were transferred to the Cathedral.

The inquisition on Malta had no connection with the Spanish Inquisition, which Ferdinand and Isabella set up to enforce religious conformity in Spain. Instead, the word "inquisition" describes the nature of tribunal, which summoned those accused of religious improprieties and interrogated them to determine the facts of the case. Like the Spanish Inquisition, the interrogation could include torture. Unlike the Spanish Inquisition, the Roman Inquisition on Malta released few people to the secular arm for execution (church courts could not execute the condemned, and heresy was considered a capital crime). Instead, the Inquisitor sought to convince the accused to admit his or her errors and to impose the appropriate penance.

The Inquisitors realized that most of the cases coming before them arose out of ignorance of religious orthodoxy: husbands feigning illness to eat meat on fast days, foreign sailors blaspheming in taverns, and slaves who claimed to work magic. Questions of religious identity arose concerning Maltese sailors who had been captured by Muslims and who may have converted to Islam. The local parishes encouraged the Maltese people to denounce blasphemers, sorcerers, and heretics to the tribunal. These denunciations reflect village conflicts and tensions. Therefore, the records of the Maltese Inquisition reveal much about daily life in Malta, particularly, the lives of the peasants and other classes usually hidden from the historical record.

It seems that the greatest challenge facing the foreign-born Inquisitors was not eradicating heresy but understanding the language of the islanders. Few incidents of Lutheranism came before the tribunal, and the most famous outbreak, involving two religious teachers at schools in Mdina, occurred before 1561. The Grand Master shielded French members of the Order who were suspected of being Huguenots. The best-known example of non-conformists was that of two English women, members of the Society of Friends, who tried to proselytize on Malta. The Tribunal of the Inquisition...
held the women for five years (1658-1663) before finally expelling them from the island.

Although the Inquisition is long gone, visitors may still see the Inquisitors’ Palace in Boffa Street, Vittoriosa/Birgu. The complex is undergoing restoration, but the court room, the Inquisitor’s living quarters and the prison cells are open.

**Brief Index of the Archives of the Maltese Inquisition.**

(Short descriptions of each volume will be incorporated into the HMML online catalogue during Spring 2002.)

- Acta civilia (580 mss) 1557-1798
- Computa depositarii tribunalis sancti officii (5 mss) 1658-1798
- Corrispondenza (104 mss) 1588-1698
- Lettere consolari (Letters to the French Consul in Malta) (33 mss) 1664-1798
- Memorie lasciate agli inquisitori di Malti (35 mss) 1711-1798
- Miscellanea (77 mss) 1487-1797
- Processi e denunzie (296 mss) 1546-1798
- Processi de spogli (40 mss) 1686-1750
- Registrum actorum civilium sancti officii sanctissimae inquisitionis meltensis (19 mss) 1676-1795
- Registrum brevium apostolicorum ac decretorum congregationum (3 mss) 1614-1754
- Registrum litterarum patentium (1 ms) 1739-1792
- Registrum sententiarum causarum civilium sanctissimae inquisitionis (1 ms) 1753-1786
- Repertoires (41 mss) 1628-1793
- Registrum depositorum causarum civilium (22 mss) 1676-1790
- Sentenze commissarii spogli (37 mss) 1571-1687, 1772

**Additional Reading**


San Gwann: P.E.G.


idem, *Sex, Magic and the Periwinkle*, (Malta, 2000).


Andrew P. Vella, *The Tribunal of the Inquisition in Malta* ([Valletta]: Royal University of Malta, 1973).

Malta Speaker

Joseph F. O’Callaghan, Professor Emeritus of History, Fordham University, delivered the Malta Study Center Lecture entitled “The Interior Life of the Military Orders of Medieval Spain,” on October 26, 2001, at the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library. His presentation outlined the monastic rules and lifestyle followed by members of the Spanish military orders.

Malta Records Online

Over the past two years the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library has been entering its microfilm inventory into an online database. In the fall of 2001 the Library entered approximately 8330 records of the Archives of the Knights of Malta from the National Library of Malta in Valletta. This includes all the major series in the main archives, such as the Liber bullarum, the Liber conciliorum, proofs of Nobility, the Treasury, the Navy, the Hospital, and the provisional cataloguing records of Treasury Series A and B, which had not been available before. Although the handlists on the Malta Study Center website will remain available online, the records in the database are more complete and will be updated in the future.

To search the online catalogue for the archives of the Knights of Malta, go to www.hmmnl.org and click on “search.” The search form gives you the option of searching by Shelfmark, City and Library (use the drop-down menus) Author, Title, Date and Incipit. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to browse all the manuscripts in one city or library.

Some suggestions for searching:
- If you know the archival number that you are interested in, enter it in shelfmark. For the Archives of the Knights of Malta, the archival designates are AOM [number].
- If you are interested in the papers issued by a particular person (including masters, grand masters and knightly proofs of nobility) try entering the name or a variation of it in the “Title” field.
- Search on one field at a time. The catalogue runs off an Access database and does not permit Boolean searches.
- If you don't get any results, try entering Latin or Italian spellings. Also try entering only part of the word or name you are looking for.

Email the curator with suggestions, corrections or questions at tvann@csbsju.edu.

Curator's Activities

Theresa Vann, the Joseph S. Micallef Curator, published “Guillaume Caoursin’s Descriptio obsidione Rhodiae and the Archives of the Knights of Malta,” in Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity: The Crusades and the Military Orders edited by J. Laszlovsky and Zs. Hunyadi (Budapest: CEU Department of Medieval Studies). (See announcement under Bibliography for more information about the volume.) She presented a paper entitled “The Siege of Rhodes of 1480 and the Military Revolution Debate,” at the Eleventh Meeting of the Texas Medieval Association, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, September 1, 2001. In November 2001 she stopped off in Washington, DC to hear Fr. Eric Hollas’ talk at the Library of Congress, and from there she traveled to Rhodes, Greece, to attend the symposium “Fifteen Years Restoration in the Medieval Town of Rhodes” on the 13th -18th of November 2001, where she presented “The Walls of Rhodes and the Military Revolution.” (See travel account)
Rare Books and Special Collections at the Catholic University of America

The Foster Stearns Collection

Foster W. Stearns was born in Hull, Massachusetts, in 1881, and died in Exeter, New Hampshire in 1956. A graduate of Amherst College, Harvard University and Boston College, he was a librarian at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and State Librarian for Massachusetts before serving in the infantry in World War I. He then served as a foreign service officer until 1924, when he returned to library work at Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1937 he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served three terms. Mr. Stearns also served as Privy Chamberlain of Sword and Cape to Pope Pius XI and was a Knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

The Foster Stearns Collection, donated to The Catholic University of America in January 1955, covers over 800 years of history from the founding of the Order of the Knights of St. John in Jerusalem in 1113 to the twentieth century. The original gift collection, assembled over a period of 25 years, consisted of 281 items described in a catalog prepared in 1955 by Rev. Oliver L. Kapsner, O.S.B., later of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library. The Collection consists of books of statutes and regulations, privileges of the Order, lists of members and chronologies, as well as historical works on the Order from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. General histories of Malta and Rhodes are also included.

Special topics include materials about the charities, coins, hospitals, insignia, monuments, literature, biography, languages, castles, churches and all those areas that contribute to the life of a political, ecclesiastical, benevolent and sovereign society. Since the original gift from Foster Stearns, the Catholic University Library has continued to build the collection through gifts and the purchase of new and antiquarian materials as they appear on the market. To date, 83 books, two maps, several periodicals and a number of pamphlets have been added.

The Carol Saliba Family Collection

Letters and Documents Relating to the Order of Malta

The Carol Saliba Family Collection was a gift of Dr. N. Alex Saliba of Louisville, Kentucky, in July 1999. Dr. Saliba, a retired physician, was born in Malta, but has lived in the United States since 1958. He inherited this collection of letters and documents upon the death of his father, Carol, in 1981. A native of Malta, Carol Saliba was a Commander of the St. John Ambulance Brigade of Malta (an English branch of the Order) for 70 years. The family had been avid collectors of antiques for generations, and Carol acquired these materials over his lifetime. Dr. Alex Saliba had been seeking an appropriate “home” for this collection for some years before deciding to place it with the Stearns Collection at The Catholic University of America.

The Saliba Collection consists of 142 manuscripts including autograph letters and a variety of documents, both originals and copies, dating primarily from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. A selection of Maltese stamps and coins, memorabilia of Carol’s activities in the Ambulance Brigade, and a seventeenth-century watercolor of the flag and coat of arms of the Order are also a part of the collection.

The material deals almost exclusively

Although the Malta Study Center contains the archives of the Knights of Malta from the National Library in Valletta, the Order has other archives and research centers located throughout Europe. Melitensia welcomes the opportunity to inform its readers about these other research centers and collections.
with the internal workings of the Knights of Malta, and is illustrative of the involvement of the Order in European politics over the years. There are some sixty letters and documents relating to the particularly complex and troubled state of the Order from about 1798 to 1815, during which time the Knights lost the island of Malta and were unable to elect a Grand Master because of political conditions. Of considerable interest are four collections of documents which have been stitched into "volumes," one of which contains thirty documents from the sixteenth century, which have yet to be identified. Another "volume" contains 31 documents, both originals and copies, which range in date from 1137 to 1788, and cover a wide range of topics. Letters to and from a number of Grand Masters of the Order, including Ferdinand von Hompesch, Giovanni Battista Tommasi, and Nicolas Cotoner enrich the collection.

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Recent Acquisitions

Microfilms

The Malta Study Center acquired microfilm copies of the Commandary of St. John in Cologne from the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln. The collection consists of about 500 records and 112 files and manuscripts on sixteen reels of microfilm. The originals date from the middle ages to the eighteenth century and include medieval charters, correspondence, records of indulgences, imperial privileges and records of chapter meetings. These microfilms may be consulted at HMML; any requests for copies must be addressed to the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln.

Books

In December 2001 the Malta Study Center acquired three signature books made possible through the generosity of the friends of the center:


Robertus Remensis, Historia della Guerra fatta da Principi Christiani contra Saracini per l’acquisito di terra Santa. Translated by M. Francesco Baldelli. Florence: Lorenzo Torrentin, 1552. Robert the Monk wrote the Historia Hierosolymitana, a Latin history of the First Crusade, sometime in the twelfth century. This is the first Italian translation and was once in the library of Baron Ferdinand Hoffmann-Grünepühl, a sixteenth-century bibliophile.

Pietro Gentile, Della storia di Malta: et successo della Guerra seguita tra quei religiosissimi cavalieri, et il potentissimo gran Turco Sulthan Solimano, l’anno 1565. Bolgna: Rossi, 1566. This book describes the Great Siege of Malta, which occurred in 1565 (see photo of cover on page 2).

Other recent acquisitions
• Journal of Maltese Studies, Volumes 1-16
• Birgu: A Maltese Maritime City. Eds. Lino Bugeja, Mario Buhaigar, Stanley Fiorini (Msida, Malta: Malta University Services, 1993)
• Shirley Jackewicz Johnston, Splendor of
Publications Received

Monographs


Offprints


Bulletins and Newsletters


Announcement

Jozsef Laszlovzky and Zsolt Hunyadi announce the publication of The crusades and the military orders: expanding the frontiers of medieval latin christianity (Budapest: Department of Medieval Studies, CEU, 2001). The volume contains papers presented at a conference “Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity: The Crusades and the Military Orders” February 26-28, 1999, sponsored by the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. The volume was presented to the public by Alan V. Murray (University of Leeds) in Budapest, October 3, 2001. The purpose of the conference was to bring together scholars from Eastern and Western Europe to share the results of their research, particularly for Western scholars to delineate the principal trends in Western historiography and for Eastern scholars to describe the source material available in Eastern Europe.

You Can Help Our Mission

As a privately endowed, independent research library and cultural center, HMML depends on the support of library patrons to maintain and advance the Malta Study Center. We invite your support of our work to preserve the legacy of the Maltese archives by making a gift to the Malta Study Center Annual Fund, by establishing or augmenting a memorial book fund, or through direct capital gifts to the Center. Your investment will ensure the development of a growing network of financial support for the programs and activities of the Malta Study Center. In addition to a cash gift, planned gifts involving securities, trusts or real property offer you the opportunity to establish a lasting endowment in support of the Malta Study Center. At the same time you will enhance your own financial well-being through distinct tax advantages. For more information about gifting options that are most convenient or appropriate for you, please contact the HMML Development Office at (320) 363-2095.