Military Orders (Helen Nicholson)


The military order was a form of religious order established in the first quarter of the twelfth century with the function of defending Christians, as well as observing the three monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The first military order was the Order of the Temple, formally established in the kingdom of Jerusalem in January 1120, while the Order of the Hospital (or Order of St. John of Jerusalem) began in the eleventh century as a hospice for pilgrims in Jerusalem and later on as a military order. Although the military orders were involved in maintaining hospices, the military orders were involved in ransoming prisoners from the Muslims, although only the Spanish orders of Santiago and Mountjoy (Sp. San Juan de la Peña) became significant in this activity. As well as maintaining hospices, the military orders were involved in ransoming prisoners from the Muslims, although only the Spanish orders of Santiago and Mountjoy (Sp. San Juan de la Peña) became significant in this activity.

The concept of the military order originally appeared in the Holy Land, not the Iberian Peninsula. If we must seek outside influence to explain the beginnings of the military order, a more likely influence was the crusaders could have adapted the concept. There were military confraternities in the Iberian Peninsula before the Templars and Hospitallers were established there, and some of the Spanish military orders, such as the Order of Monreal and the Order of Santa Maria de España, began as confraternities. The distinction between a military confraternity and a regular military order was not always well defined. Those who played a part in regular military orders were not fully professed members, while some military orders did not expect their members to take all of the three monastic vows when they professed. The members of the Knights of the Hospital of Jesus Christ, established by a Dominican friar at Parma in 1223 to fight heretics, did not take the vow of chastity; the Order of Santiago admitted married knights and their wives to full membership, and these did not have to vow chastity. Despite the missing vow, these institutions had papal approval as religious orders. The military order, then, can be regarded in a sense as a knightly confraternity that was regularized and brought formally into the organization and under the authority of the Latin Church.

It has been object that as Christianity is a pacifist religion, the concept of the military order—a religious organization that fights—must have been taken from outside Christianity. The most obvious source has been suggested, was the Muslim military orders. This Arabic word has different meanings, but in this case it meant a fortified building on the frontier on Islam in which the faithful served for a period as volunteer fighters against Islam’s enemies. Specialists on the history of the military orders and the crusades have not accepted this theory. They argue that the concept was already present within Latin Christian society in the early twelfth century. The concept of holy war, prominent in the Old Testament, had been part of Christian thinking from the early days of Christianity. The recent First Crusade (1096–1099), initiated by the pope and preached by the clergy, had allowed lay people to fight and shed blood in God’s name in defense of, and to recover, Christian territory in return for a spiritual reward. Contemporary lay literature, such as the Chanson de Roland, emphasized the role of the Christian warrior and glorified the warrior who died fighting for God. In any case, it is not clear that there were any ribās in the Holy Land after the First Crusade from which the crusaders could have adapted the concept. There were ribās in the Iberian Peninsula, but the concept of the military order originally appeared in the Holy Land, not the Iberian Peninsula. If we must seek outside influence to explain the beginnings of the military order, a more likely influence was the example of military saints of the Orthodox churches, such as George, Demetrius, and Mercurius.

Organization and Structure

All military orders shared certain characteristics. Each followed a religious rule, approved by the authorities of the Latin Church, which allowed the combination of military activity with religious activities such as prayer and attending church services. Members were admitted in a formal religious ceremony. They were a religious habit, but did not follow a fully enclosed lifestyle. Many of the Muslim leaders predominated over priests in the early years, while the military orders became active in military affairs.

The military orders were part of a religious trend of the late eleventh and early twelfth century toward wider participation in the religious life and more emphasis on action as against contemplation. The Cistercian Order, founded at the end of the eleventh century, allowed lay people from noble families to enter on a permanent basis and to engage in monastic tasks; orders of canons, founded in the eleventh century, also enlarged their activities. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, could play an active role in society as priests working in the community, unlike traditional monasteries who lived enclosed lives in their monasteries. In the same way, the military orders did not follow a fully enclosed lifestyle, followed an active vocation, and were often used as staff to the lay community for the spiritual needs of the lay members. All the military orders had associate members who did not take full vows but who were attached to the order—for example, making an annual donation—and whom the order supported in some way. The orders also admitted women in various degrees, as sisters as or associates.

The great supranational orders were granted extensive ecclesiastical privileges from the papacy, such as exemptions from the jurisdiction of diocesan bishops and from tithes. In practice these privileges led to considerable friction at the local level. Secular rulers made extensive use of the military orders’ members in matters not directly connected with their vocation such as diplomacy and finance, and although the military orders were in theory exempt from royal jurisdiction, in practice they were dependent upon and closely tied to the rulers of the regions where they held property. The military orders were never noted for their learning, although individual members might achieve distinction, and the orders did patronize artists and writers. All, like the traditional monastic orders, were involved in economic and commercial activities to support their vocation.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the membership of the military orders was drawn largely from the lesser knightly families and families of just below knightly status. For such families, joining a military order—which did not limit membership to noble families—was a method of rising in social status. During the course of the later Middle Ages, as knighthood became more prestigious, the military orders became noble orders. By the sixteenth century, the knightly members of both the supranational and the Spanish military orders were drawn from the highest nobility, and a higher proportion of members were priests, while the relative number of nonknightly, servant members had fallen. The Spanish military orders became dominated by the ruling families of the Iberian Peninsula, and in the sixteenth century they became effectively honorary noble institutions.

The heyday of the military order was the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the concept was put to use by many ecclesiastical and secular rulers in need of a standing army for a religious purpose. However, only the military orders were founded as such. Two of the supranational military orders, the Order of the Hospital and the Teutonic Order, as well as smaller orders, such as the English Order of St. Thomas of Acre, began as hospitals or hospices, caring for poor, sick pilgrims to the Holy Land. Medical care for Christians as they traveled to the Holy Land was a natural corollary of hospital care for the same Christians. The Order of St. Lazarus began as a hospice for sufferers from leprosy. As well as maintaining hospices, the military orders were involved in ransoming prisoners from the Muslims, although only the Spanish orders of Santiago and Mountjoy (Sp. Montesa) made this a major part of their activities. However, the conversion of non-Christians was not a primary function of military orders, although some donors envisaged the income from their gifts of land being used for that.
purpose. There were some exceptions: from the sixteenth century the Portuguese Order of Christ was involved in the spread of Christianity in the New World.

In theory, the military orders were fighting defensive wars—a form of warfare acceptable to Christian thinking. In practice, warfare on the frontiers of Christendom, whether in the Holy Land, the Iberian Peninsula, or in the Baltic region, typically took the form of raids against the enemy's land and fortresses, which were as aggressive as they were defensive. The orders also garrisoned and built forts, and they provided advice to Christian commanders, and they played a significant military role in crusades. The orders' warfare was initially on land, although the supranational orders from early in their existence employed ships to carry resources, personnel, and pilgrims to the Holy Land. In the third quarter of the thirteenth century the Order of Santa Maria de España was founded by King Alfonso X of Castile to fight the Moors of Africa at sea, in an attempt to reduce their raids upon his coasts. In the fourteenth century, the Order of the Hospital, based on the island of Rhodes from 1309, developed naval operations against the Turks. The order itself owned only a handful of war galleys, but it extended its operations through the corso, a form of licensed piracy against Muslim shipping. Naval warfare against Muslim pirates continued to be an important role of military orders until the late eighteenth century.

Military orders brought discipline and organization to Latin Christian warfare. Their fighting members were already professional warriors before admission. The statutes of the Order of the Temple (and other military orders based on it) and the statutes of the Order of the Hospital after 1240 set out (for example) the military organization and command structure of the orders, the required weapons and equipment, and procedures for drawing up troops and for making a cavalry charge. A brother who charged too early or who fell out of line was disciplined. Within a secular army, the various groups under different commanders could be in competition with each other and more concerned about winning booty and honor than in obeying the commander in chief. The military orders provided a commander in chief with a military unit that was ready to muster and would obey orders, rather than seeking booty and glory, and that had extensive experience in the field. However, the military orders' forces were always relatively small in relation to the overall size of crusader and secular armies.

Problems

The smaller military orders, whose property was largely restricted to one kingdom or region, suffered from a lack of secular rulers, who tended to regard their orders as a branch of their own administration, and from a lack of resources in personnel, money, and supplies. These problems led to the smaller orders amalgamating with larger ones: in the 1230s the Orders of the Sword Brethren (in Livonia) and of Dobrin (in Prussia) amalgamated with the Teutonic Order, while in Spain, in the early thirteenth century, the Order of Mountjoy was effectively divided between the Order of the Temple and the Order of Calatrava. The Order of Calatrava itself was assimilated to the Cistercian Order, although it maintained a distinct identity. Even the great supranational orders could not always maintain military activity outside the major area of their operations: the Temple and the Hospital reduced their military operations in the Iberian Peninsula in the second half of the twelfth and the second half of the thirteenth century because their resources were needed in the Holy Land. In contrast, some of the smaller orders did gain land and responsibilities outside their area of operations: the Order of Calatrava briefly held land in Pomerania, while the Order of Mountjoy held land in the kingdom of Jerusalem.

As the function of the orders was to defend Christendom, they initially resisted involvement in wars between Christians, which diverted resources from their proper vocation. However, as secular rulers were protectors of the orders and their leading patrons, it was difficult for the orders in the localities to resist determined pressure from secular rulers who wanted to use their military or financial resources for "national" ends. French Hospitalers were, apparently, involved in the French crusade against Aragon in 1285, and prominent Hospitalers were present in the French army at the battle of Crécy in 1346 during the wars against the English.

The supranational orders faced potential problems of language difference and also cultural difference in their dealings with the brothers of other orders of the same language. The problem of language would be minimized by ensuring that brothers in the West only worked within their own linguistic area, at the order's central convent clashes were unavoidable. As a result, from the late thirteenth century the brothers of the Hospital of the Order's central convent were more or less formally into seven tongues (literally, "tongues"), that is, linguistic groupings. During the course of the fourteenth century the number of these increased to twenty. Each tongue had its own organization (in increasing order of authority) as a central meeting hall and administrative center, and the seven conventual bailiffs, the chief officials of the order, were each drawn from one of the seven languages. International disputes in the secular world could lead to conflict between the different nations within a military order, and sometimes the brothers of the different tongues on Rhodes came to blows. By the mid-fifteenth century, however, this problem only significantly affected the Order of the Hospital, as the Order of the Temple had been dissolved in 1312, while the Teutonic Order's field of operations had shrunk to the Holy Roman Empire, Prussia, and Livonia.

Later History

Despite the conflicts inherent in the concept of supranational religious orders exempt from local authority operating in an increasingly secularized and nationalized Europe, the concept of the military orders continued to be popular with patrons and rulers throughout the later Middle Ages. Even after the loss of the states of Outremer in Syria and Palestine in 1291, crusade planners expected the military orders to play an active role in future crusades. After the dissolution of the Order of the Temple in 1312, Pope Clement V gave its property to the Order of the Hospital to carry on the order's original purpose: even if the order had been defamed beyond saving, its vocation remained important to Christendom. From the early fourteenth century, the Order of the Hospital was focused on navy. In the early fourteenth century, the Order of Calatrava, while still engaged in military operations against Muslims, gave hospitality to pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. In northeastern Europe, the Teutonic Order continued its war against the pagan Lithuanians; arguably it was the military pressure applied by the order that led to the alliance between Poland and Lithuania and the official conversion of Lithuania to Christianity in 1386. Even after the Hospital had lost its base on Rhodes, at the beginning of 1481, Emperor Charles V was anxious to make use of the brothers' military and naval skills elsewhere. This concept remained largely unquestioned, even when the orders failed to carry out their vocation successfully.

Although the expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century ended the military role of the Spanish military orders on land, and the Teutonic Order's military function in Prussia and Livonia ended in the sixteenth century, the military orders continued to play a valuable if reduced military role for the benefit of Latin Christendom until the eighteenth century. From its base on the island of Malta from 1530, the Order of the Hospital, with the new Order of St. John of Jerusalem ( knights who were poor knights and who lived in religious communities ) tried to prevent the raids of Barbary pirates on Christian shipping and to obtain the military experience necessary for promotion. However, by the eighteenth century the Teutonic Order's military operations were mainly against the Christian enemies of the empire. By the late eighteenth century, the military orders' vocation of holy war seemed outdated and barbarous to Enlightenment thinkers.

Though military orders have survived until modern times, no military orders now fight; the Order of the Hospital's military function ended with the loss of Malta to Napoleon in 1798. The Teutonic Order continued its involvement in military activity until the First World War, and thereafter was reformed as a charitable order, without a knightly branch. Both orders still carry on hospitalier and charitable activities. The military orders in the Iberian Peninsula were abolished and refounded during the nineteenth century: the Portuguese orders are now state orders of merit, while the Spanish are charitable orders.

Order of the Temple


The Order of the Temple was a military religious order founded around 1119 in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. It was dissolved by Pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne in 1312. The order took its name from its headquarters in the al-Aqṣa mosque at the southern end of the Temple platform in the city of Jerusalem, which the crusaders believed to be the site of the Temple of Solomon (Lat. Templum Solomonis).

In January 1129 at the Council of Troyes, the order received a Latin Rule; subsequently, further statutes were added in Rhodes in the 1260s, and by the end of the thirteenth century. In 1291 Pope Innocent II issued the bull Omne datum optimum, which took the order directly under papal protection and granted it a range of basic privileges. Members could be knights or sergeants, to which
In the idea of a military order as early as the 1120s, the first known castle granted to the order was in notably Miravet on the Ebro River. However, although Alfonso I of Aragon had shown intense interest province. This request is reminiscent of the methods of expansion used by contemporary monastic the future. The wording of the charter shows a clear intention to encourage the order to commit more and more into the hands of the military orders. Thus the castle at Jacob's Ford, situated at an important crossing point on the river Jordan, north of the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias), which Raymond Berengar IV ceded them five major castles, including Monzon and Chalamera, as well as the kingdom because the Frankish territories, carved out by opportunism and necessity in the early stages in the 1140s; a generation later it had been established as a formidable enclosure protected by a huge intended to provide temporary refuge for pilgrims on the routes between Jaffa and Jerusalem, and which was intended to replace the order's much smaller fort at nearby Destroit; and Saphet (mod. 1127–1129, 1130) had been given responsibility for the defense of the castle of Baghras in the Amanus Mountains north of Antioch (mod. Antakya, Turkey). In the kingdom of Jerusalem, they may have taken over the site of the castle of the bull added a smaller group of priests. Knights wore white mantles with a red cross, and sergeants a black tunic with a red cross and a black or brown mantle, a distinction mainly based on previous social status. In addition, seculars could become associates for set periods without joining the order for life.

Origins

The origins of the order remain obscure, since they were not recorded by contemporaries. However, during the first generation of Frankish settlement in Outremer after the First Crusade (1096–1099), there was little aid for pilgrims visiting the holy places. This circumstance seems to have inspired Hugh of Payns (from Champagne) and Godfrey of Saint-Omer (from Flanders), together with a small group of other knights resident in the Holy Land, to devote themselves to the protection of pilgrims. This duty was formalized by taking vows before the patriarch of Jerusalem and was probably recognized by the Latin Patriarchate at this time. The Council of Nablus in 1120, The knights may also have been expected to complement the care facilities offered by the Order of the Hospital, and they may have once occupied the Templars’ site in the Muristan in Jerusalem. This would have placed them close to the Augustinian Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, with whom they appear to have been associated. Both King Baldwin II of Jerusalem and Warmund of Piquigny, the Latin patriarch, encouraged their efforts, and they received benefits on the Temple platform. They seem to have taken up residence in the “Temple of Solomon” in the mid-1120s, when it was vacated by the king, who moved across the city to the cited.

In 1127 Hugh of Payns and some of his companions traveled to the West as part of the drive by Baldwin II to stimulate interest in the crusader states, and, specifically, to complete the negotiations that would lead to the marriage of Fulk V, count of Anjou, to Melisende, the king’s daughter. This journey ended Hugh’s wish to present his case for papal recognition at Troyes and to recruit new members and crusaders for the East. A letter to the brethren remaining in the Holy Land written by a certain “Hugo Pecator” (“Hugh the Shiner,” possibly Hugh of Payns himself) at this time suggests that some of them were losing confidence in their mission, but this seems to have been forgotten in the rapid expansion that followed the granting of the Rule in 1129. Nevertheless, the problems discussed in the letter serve to emphasize the novelty of the concept of a military religious order, and to a degree foreshadow the legitimacy of such an organization, the emergence of a form of ecclesiastical authority, and the doubts were countered in part by the willingness of Bernard of Clairvaux to support the order, first by making a substantial contribution to the shaping of the Rule, and second by responding to Hugh’s request to write a treatise in support of the order. The treatise, De laude novae militiae, praised the Templars as both monks and knights, for, quite uniquely, they performed both functions.

Functions

Although the original founders had been primarily motivated by the charitable desire to protect pilgrims on the road from Jaffa (mod. Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel) to Jerusalem, as the order gained popularity it was able to accumulate sufficient resources in the West to finance a greatly enlarged role in Outremer. This role included garrisoning castles, supplying troops for Frankish armies, and providing military and logistical support for visiting crusaders. By the late 1130s, the Templars had been given responsibility for the defense of the castle of Baghras in the Amanus Mountains north of Antioch (mod. Antakya, Turkey). In the kingdom of Jerusalem, they may have taken over the site of the castle of the Latin Church in the East at the Council of Nablus in 1120. The knights may have once occupied the Templar bank. All the main houses and many of the other preceptories had their own churches, which provided military and logistical support for visiting crusaders. By the late 1130s, the Templars had been given responsibility for the defense of the castle of Baghras in the Amanus Mountains north of Antioch (mod. Antakya, Turkey). In the kingdom of Jerusalem, they may have taken over the site of the castle of the Latin Church in the East at the Council of Nablus in 1120. The knights may have once occupied the Templar bank. All the main houses and many of the other preceptories had their own churches, which performed specialist functions, such as horse-breeding; others were set up in unoccupied territories that the order aimed to develop. In Paris and London, large houses were founded by the mid-twelfth century; both of these became financial as well as administrative centers. From the time of King Philip II of France, the treasurer of the Temple in Paris had become a central figure in Capetian demesne administration, acting both as a royal auditor and financial adviser and as head of what became the GST. 

During the order's history, Francia (the region north of the Loire) and Languedoc always praised the Templars as both monks and knights, for, quite uniquely, they performed both functions. In addition to their responsibilities in the north and south, the Templars were granted extensive rights In addition to their responsibilities in the north and south, the Templars were granted extensive rights in the city of Tripoli, including a substantial portion of the coast and the castle of Chastel Blanc (Safita) inland, enabling them to maintain east-west communication in a state that was particularly vulnerable to attack because of its small size. In the third quarter of the twelfth century, the order's wealth, together with the declining power of the Frankish aristocracy, made it even more important. Its role was symbolized by two castles: the great sea-castle of Château Pélérin (Athlit), built between 1217 and 1221 next to the road between Haifa and Caesarea, which was intended to replace the order’s much smaller fort at nearby Destroit; and Saphet (mod. 1217–1221), situated between 1210 and 1214, an inland castle situated on a volcanic outcrop 800 meters (c. 2,600 ft) above Galilee and overlooking the route between Acre and Damascus. The Templars also became heavily involved in the Reconquista in Iberia; among the grants made to them were a number of important castles in Aragon and Portugal. The expertise gained from their various activities was utilized by Western rulers, especially the popes and the kings of France and England, who employed the Templars in their administrations as well as using them as bankers,cardinal, and other to guarantee treaties of peace.
Portugal at Sourie on the river Mondego, given by Queen Teresa in 1128. In 1147, following the capture of the Templars received Cera on the river Tomar, which later developed into their main house in Portugal.

The order never established houses in eastern Europe on an equivalent scale to the West, but the inclusion of Hungary in the list of provinces of the 1160s shows that its rulers were well aware of contemporary developments. Hungary lay across the land routes used by crusaders to the East, and the Croation extension of the kingdom incorporated Dalmatian ports with Eastern connections. From 1219 there are regular references to the master of Hungary and Slavonia. To the north, in the fragmented kingdom of Poland, recorded donations are mainly from the thirteenth century, when the aim seems to have been to use the Templars (like other monastic orders) as colonizers, especially on the borders with Germany in Silesia, Pomerania, and Greater Poland, where their estates acted as a buffer against German expansionism. In Germany itself, the first donations date from the time of the Second Crusade (1147–1148). For the most part, from this initial period, boldly, partly because of its uneasy relations with the Staufen rulers, who favored first the Hospitalers and then, in the thirteenth century, the Teutonic Knights. Generally the Templars of Central Europe were not intended as fighting forces; on the one occasion when they were involved in a major battle, at Liegnitz against the Mongols in 1241, their contribution was mainly in the form of peasant dependants, for only the few knights present.

The Order in the Thirteenth Century

Although the disasters that struck Outremer at Hattin in 1187 and subsequently did not enhance the Templars’ reputation, they nonetheless continued to perform their military and financial functions as far as was possible in the changed circumstances. By the 1290s, however, the flow of donations characteristic of the formative years of successful monastic orders began to falter, and by 1250 the order was no longer as fashionable as it had been a century before. The problems arising from this decline differed according to region. On the one hand, in Aragon thirteenth-century expansion left the order stranded, with most of its strongholds now a considerable distance behind the frontier: there were only three precepitae in Valencia. In Outremer, on the other hand, the rise of the Mamluks in the east precipitated a crisis for the Franks. Fighting to prevent a shrinking area of land being basedogged by the internal rivalries of the Franks (to which the Templars made a significant contribution), and committed to apparently endless defense spending, the order was caught in a situation from which ultimately there was no escape.

When the Franks were driven out of Palestine in 1291, the military orders inevitably came under scrutiny, since their presence had failed to prevent the loss of Outremer despite their enormous military consumption of resources. Plans for reform, which had been circulating since the Second Council of Lyon in 1245, were now energetically promoted; the most common idea was the creation of an order unifying the Templars and the Hospitallers, perhaps under a new master appointed from outside their ranks. In practice, nothing came of these ideas, and during the 1290s the Templars continued to organize attacks on the Syrian and Egyptian coasts, even by briefly establishing themselves on the Island of Cyprus (mod. Ayvalık, Turkey), off their old base at Tortosa. Their garrison there was wiped out in 1302 and thereafter their closest bases to the Holy Land were on Cyprus.

The Trial of the Templars (1307–1312)

This new situation certainly made the military orders vulnerable, at least in the eyes of those who believed that they could not be effective without fundamental changes in structure and outlook, but none of the more radical reformers predicted the events of October and November 1307. On 13 October, the Templars in France were suddenly arrested by the officials of King Philip IV, nominally acting on the orders of William of Paris, papal inquisitor in France. Accused of denying Christ, worshiping idols, and promoting institutionalized sodomy, the great majority confessed to one or more of the charges within six weeks of the arrests. The master, James of Molay, repeated his own confession before a public assembly of university theologians and leading ecclesiastics. Pope Clement V, who had not been forewarned, tried to prize control from the French Crown by taking over the proceedings; on 22 November 1307, he issued the bull *Pastorals preeminentiae*, ordering a general arrest of the Templars in the name of the papacy. This began a series of trials in England, Spain, Germany, Italy, and Cyprus in addition to those already instituted in France and territories within the French sphere of influence, such as the kingdom of Navarre.

Encouraged by the papal intervention, the leaders of the order withdrew their confessions at Christmas in an effort to change his mind, the French Crown attempted to marshal academic and popular opinion by posing a series of questions to the masters of theology at Paris. It circulated anti-Templar and antipapal propaganda, and called a general assembly for May 1308. This put the French Estates for May under pressure to back the pope in his opinion met with mixed success, but the pope was finally obliged to meet the king at Poitiers in June, where he was virtually imprisoned by French troops. Following powerful speeches by two government ministers, William of Gloucester and Giles Ayelin, archbishop of Narbonne, a face-to-face confrontation eventually found. A group of seventy-two carefully selected Templars was brought before the pope and the cardinals, where they repeated their previous confessions. Then, in the bull *Faciens misericordiam* (12 August 1308), Clement instituted two inquiries: a papal commission to investigate the order as a whole, and a series of episcopal hearings into the guilt or innocence of individual Templars, or ecclesiastic bishops’ own dioceses. In a second bull, *Regnans in coelis*, issued on the same date, the pope announced that a general council would meet at Vienne in October 1310, where the agenda would comprise their reform, and plans for the Templars, church reform, and plans for the Templars. But the French Crown had no intention of allowing such an outcome. After secret discussions with Philip’s representatives in February 1312, reinforced by the appearance of the king and his forces; on the one occasion when they were involved in a major battle, at Liegnitz against the Mongols in 1241, their contribution was mainly in the form of peasant dependants, for only the few knights present.

The Council of Vienne began a year later, in October 1311. Opinions had been sought from leading theologians, and the inquiry into the guilt or innocence of the Templars, now assembled in Paris in far greater numbers than before, began to find their voice. By April 1310, nearly 600 of them had pledged themselves to the defense of the order, although the master, James of Molay, contributed little, continuing to insist that he would present his case before the pope once the opportunity arose.

The defense was led by two lawyer-priests: Peter of Bologna, a former procurator of the order at the papal court, and Reginald of Provins, preceptor of Orleans. They castigated the proceedings as illegal and arbitrary, declared that the Templars had only confessed because of torture and threats of force, and claimed that the king and the pope had been deliberately misled by malicious and venal informers. Since this, at least it demonstrated that the French government was determined to have the Templars, or at least some of them, judged and punished. In May 1310, Philip of Marigny, archbishop of Sens, and brother of the king’s finance minister, Enguerrand, condemned Templars from his province as relapsed heretics; they were handed over to the supervision of the local authorities, with orders to proceed to death. At the same time, the pope appointed a commission from making any further appearances before the commission, which was now led by a succession of witnesses apparently so terrified by the news of the executions that they could be guaranteed to confirm it. However, a minority of these are listed among the defenders of the previous April, so it is by no means certain that the defense would have collapsed had not the French government been able to exploit its position as jailer.

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The dissolution of the Order (1312–1318)

The dissolution of the order brought its own problems. The French Crown continued to press the French Estates for May for the Templars, church reform, and plans for the Templars. But the French Crown had no intention of allowing such an outcome. After secret discussions with Philip’s representatives in February 1312, reinforced by the appearance of the king and his forces; on the one occasion when they were involved in a major battle, at Liegnitz against the Mongols in 1241, their contribution was mainly in the form of peasant dependants, for only the few knights present.

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The dissolution of the order brought its own problems. The French Crown continued to press the French Estates for May for the Templars, church reform, and plans for the Templars. But the French Crown had no intention of allowing such an outcome. After secret discussions with Philip’s representatives in February 1312, reinforced by the appearance of the king and his forces; on the one occasion when they were involved in a major battle, at Liegnitz against the Mongols in 1241, their contribution was mainly in the form of peasant dependants, for only the few knights present.
The Order of the Hospital (also known as the Order of St. John, and later as the Knights of Rhodes and the Knights of St. John), was an international military religious order that originated in the city of Jerusalem before the First Crusade (1099–1109). Originally established as an order whose function was to provide hospital service, it gradually assumed military responsibilities and became involved in the defense and internal politics of the Frankish states of Outremer. At the same time, the order received European properties that were organized into tongues (literally, “tongues”) that paid annual dues, called responsor, to the central convent.

The order moved its central convent and hospital to Acre (mod. ‘Akko, Israel) when Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187. After the fall of Acre in 1291, the order briefly moved to Cyprus. By 1301 it had captured the island of Rhodes (mod. Rodos, Greece) from the Byzantines, and it became a naval power in the eastern Mediterranean, maintaining a fleet of galleys and garrisoning castles. On Rhodes the Hospitals faced several major sieges, including two by the Mamiliks in 1440 and 1444 and two by the Turks in 1516 and 1522. The Hospitallers surrendered Rhodes to the Ottomans in 1522. In 1530 Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain, gave the order the island of Malta. The Hospitallers ruled Malta until 1798, when Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch surrendered the island to Napoleon Bonaparte. Subsequently the order briefly found refuge in Russia and in Italy. Today, the order is still sovereign and devoted to hospital activities, administering medical charities worldwide from its headquarters in Rome. It no longer has a military character.

Origins and Militarization

The Order of the Hospital began as a pilgrim’s hospice, established in the city of Jerusalem by merchants from the city of Amalfi. The hospice was operated by a lay fraternity under the auspices of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary of the Latins. The Hospitallers of St. John began receiving grants of lands and properties in Europe and Outremer after the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 and were recognized as a separate order by Pope Paschal II in 1115. The first master, Gerard, died in 1120 and was succeeded by Raymond de Pay (1120–1128), a French knight who had come to Jerusalem with the First Crusade (1096–1099). Raymond’s leadership shaped the order, and it was under his mastership that the Hospitallers began to assume military duties in addition to the care of pilgrims. The order’s role in the defense and the sick in favor of Terry. Jerusalem saw some vocal criticism of the Hospitallers by their critics as being more interested in financial gain (even if only in the short term) to a monarchy under immense pressure from Muslims. By the end of the twelfth century, the Hospitallers, along with the Templars, provided military forces for the Christian states of Outremer and garrisoned frontier castles. They were granted their first castle, Bethgibelin (mod. Bet Guvrin, Israel), in 1136 by Fulk of Anjou, king of Jerusalem. In 1142/1144 Count Raymond II of Tripoli gave them the Krak des Chevaliers (mod. Isn al-Akrūs, Syria). The order was able to recruit, and there are signs that it was beginning to adapt to the new military setting of naval warfare, which, as the Hospitallers later demonstrated, was becoming the most effective means of crusading combat.

The dissolution of the Templars (an act unprecedented in papal history in the early fourteenth century) after nearly two centuries of fame and power, and achieved after what was seen as a humble and pious beginning, has encouraged deterministic interpretations of its history, for it seems to offer a classic example of the Bohemian Wheel of Fortune. However, despite conflict with other institutions, a decline in financial support, and some visible criticism from parties who were themselves often far from disinterested, the order continued to perform important functions. This was acknowledged by Edward II of England and James II of Aragon, both of whom, at least initially, were reluctant participants in the fall of Acre in 1291. The Hospitallers had been a tremendous blow to the Hospitallers, and they were still able to recruit, and there are signs that it was beginning to adapt to the new military setting of naval warfare, which, as the Hospitallers later demonstrated, was becoming the most effective means of crusading combat.

The Order of the Hospital (Theresa M. Vann)


The king’s own religious sensibilities, combined with a strong sense of monarchical obligation, probably deriving from his perception of the reign of his revered grandfather, may have convinced him that the Templars were guilty of heretical crimes and that, once known, toleration would bring down divine wrath upon his people. Before him lay the example of the Jews from whom, in Capetian propaganda, God had withdrawn his favor, replacing them with the French as his chosen people. In these circumstances, the king may have seen the confiscation of Templar wealth as his Christian duty. Nevertheless, in succeeding centuries some were unable to accept the order’s demise, and legends about the continued secret existence of linear successors still persist. The manner of the order’s end has created a unique historical afterlife of such tenacity that for many, “Templum” is more real than the known history of the order in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.
The Hospitallers in Outremer (to 1291)

Under Roger of Les Moulins (1177–1187), the Hospitallers became more involved in the politics of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. In particular, the succession of Guy of Lusignan and his wife Berengaria to the throne of Jerusalem in 1186. Roger, a supporter of the faction led by Count Raymond III of Tripoli, died with Gerard of Ridefort, the master of the Temple, who supported the Lusignans. Roger was killed in May 1187, at the battle of the spring of Creisson, leaving the Hospitallers leaderless at the battle of Hattin (4 July 1187). There the order suffered considerable losses, and in the aftermath it lost its castles of Bethgibelin and Belvoir (mod. Kokhav ha-Yarden, Israel), although Saladin did not attempt to besiege Margat and Krak des Chevaliers.

After Hattin, the Hospitallers and Templars became more important as military and political advisors to the Frankish rulers, and their western resources became vital for the survival of European rule in Outremer. The Hospitallers received money and provisions from their western priories in addition to income from their properties in Outremer and from their participation in the coastal sugar trade. They contributed substantially to the campaigns of the Third Crusade (1189–1192), serving as senior advisors to King Richard I of England.

The two major religious orders also assumed some administrative responsibility in the kingdom of Jerusalem, which for much of the thirteenth century was ruled by a series of regents for an absentee monarchy. As Mamülîk power increased in the later part of the thirteenth century, the Hospitallers played an important role in making treaties with Egypt. Masters such as Hugh Revel actively acquired properties around the Krak des Chevaliers and adopted an aggressive policy against the Mamülîks. However, the Mamülîks took Krak des Chevaliers in 1271 and Margat in 1288. The Hospitallers left Outremer after the fall of Acre in May 1291, when the master, John of Vellius, was severely wounded during the city's defense and was evacuated to Cyprus with the remains of the convent.

The Hospitallers on Rhodes (1310–1522) and Malta (1530–1798)

After the fall of Acre, there was some discussion in western Europe about combining or dissolving the Hospitallers and the Templars. The two biggest military and religious orders had been criticized for their sometimes rancorous participation in the politics of Outremer and their apparent hesitancy to pursue the immediate recovery of the Holy Land. The Hospitallers' establishment of their central convent and infirmary on Rhodes coincided with the dissolution of the Order of the Temple and the concomitant loss of its properties. Although there is no evidence that the Hospitallers planned for this eventuality, they avoided a fate similar to that of the Templars by removing their convent from any possible interference from European rulers.

From 1306 to 1310 the Hospitallers conquered the island of Rhodes (located off the southwestern coast of Anatolia) from the Byzantines. They subsequently acquired other islands and territories in the Dodecanese, notably Kos, Simi, Kastelorizo, and Rodrum. On Rhodes, although still subject to the authority of the pope, the order became a sovereign state and naval power involved in the politics of the Aegean and Mediterranean. The order entered into treaties with and collected tribute from Muslim powers. The last grand master on Malta, Ferdinand von Hompesch, surrendered the island to Napoleon Bonaparte and his fleet in 1798.

Structure and International Organization

As an exempt order of the church, the Hospitallers were under the direct jurisdiction of the pope. The head of the order was the master, who governed with the central convent through meetings of the chapter general. The extent of the master's executive powers is unclear for the early period, although it appears he shared authority with the convent. The chapter general, which did not meet annually, acted as a court to decide disputes among members, issued licenses for travel, and discussed the military preparedness of the order. Generally, the meetings took place at the location of the main hospital, although some were held in Rome, most notably in 1462. Attendance at the chapter general consisted of the master, the senior members of the order, the order's top officials, and two representatives from each province (Fr. langue). The master became known as the grand master in the thirteenth century, when the order moved from the island of Rhodes to the mainland of Italy.

In 1530, when the Hospitallers occupied Tripoli (mod. Tyre, Lebanon) after the fall of Acre, the Ottoman Empire began its conquest of the Mediterranean. The Hospitallers on Rhodes (1310–1522) and Malta (1530–1798) remained loyal to their pope and fought against Ottoman expansion, but in 1557 they signed a treaty with the Ottomans. After the fall of Acre, there was some discussion in western Europe about combining or dissolving the Hospitallers and the Templars. The two biggest military and religious orders had been criticized for their sometimes rancorous participation in the politics of Outremer and their apparent hesitancy to pursue the immediate recovery of the Holy Land. The Hospitallers' establishment of their central convent and infirmary on Rhodes coincided with the dissolution of the Order of the Temple and the concomitant loss of its properties. Although there is no evidence that the Hospitallers planned for this eventuality, they avoided a fate similar to that of the Templars by removing their convent from any possible interference from European rulers.

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performed service for the order. The knights of grace remained of lower status and could not hold high office in the order.

It is possible that in the twelfth century female members served in the hospital, although they were not mentioned in the Hospitaler rule. At the end of the twelfth century, cloistered female convents dependent on the order emerged. Of these, the most important was the convent of Sigena, founded in 1187. The cloistered female Hospitalers neither fought nor served in the hospitals, although they contributed responses to the main convent. There were also associate members (called donates): men and women who took vows of obedience and promised to join the order in the future. Confraters and consors gave an annual donation to the order and were promised care in their old age in a hospital.

The Hospitalers acquired property throughout those parts of Europe that belonged to the Latin Church. Initially, the first grants were in southern France and Iberia. In the aftermath of the Second Crusade (1147–1149), the order began to receive more donations elsewhere, particularly in the British Isles, France, Germany, and Italy. Eventually it also acquired property in Hungary, Bohemia-Moravia, Poland, and Scandinavia. The basic unit of Hospitaler property was the commandery, usually with an estate and a small religious house attached. Serving brethrens and novice knights lived in the commandery, with a chaplain. By the fourteenth century, a knight who had served some time in the central convent and made at least three trips in the order’s galleys could be granted a commandery within his own province. He then administered the commandery and received a portion of its income.

Commanderies were grouped by region into priories, each headed by a prior. The oldest priory was the Priory of Saint-Gilles, founded circa 1155; the Priory of Aragon (later the Castellany of Amposta) was founded in 1149. By the late thirteenth century, the priories were grouped into langues, “tongues,” according to nationality. Initially there were seven langues: Saint-Gilles (or Provence), Auvergne, France, the Castellany of Amposta (Aragon), Italy, England (which included Ireland, Scotland, and Wales), and the central and eastern Europe. These priories were enlarged when the Hospitalers acquired former Templar lands in France, Aragon, England, Scotland, and Brandenburg after the Templars’ dissolution in 1312. In 1462 the order created the langue of Castile-Portugal.

Each langue was headed by the conventual bailiff (piller) who held one of the chief offices of the order and served as an advisor to the master. The office of grand preceptor, who functioned as the second-in-command, was traditionally held by the bailiff of Provence. The bailiff of France was the hospitaler responsible for the infirmary. The bailiff of Germany was the marshal, the chief military officer of the order. The bailiff of Italy was the admiral, commanding the fleet of the order. The bailiff of England was the curmopolier, commanding the mounted native mercenary troops. This office was later assumed by the grand preceptor when the English priory was dissolved in 1540. The bailiff of Aragon was the draper, an office that initially issued clothing, fabric, and alms, and later provisioned the order’s military forces. The bailiff of Germany was the treasurer, but when Germany was demoted to a province, the treasury was subordinated to the grand preceptor. When the new langue of Castile-Portugal was created in 1446, the office of chancellor was elevated to the council and became the bailiwick of the langue of Castile-Leín. In addition to assuming responsibility for each of the chief offices of the order, each langue maintained and defended a portion of the towns defenses of Rhodes and, later, Valletta.

The archival records from the Rhodian era reveal more information about the role of the langues in the organization of the order. Although the central convent had income from local revenues, first from the Hospitalers’ estates in Outremer, and then from coastal trade and the estates on Cyprus, the Western priories paid yearly responses that subsidized the hospital, the necessities of the convent, and its defense. In times of emergency, the langues provided men, money, and materials for military campaigns. The langues also formed the basis for conventional life and administration. Knights were admitted to a langue when they had served in the infirmary, when in residence in another langue, or when in their langue’s own auberge (residence). The system by which bailiffs of the langues served as the chief officials of the order broke down during the Great Schism; between 1378 and 1409 local obedience in some langues to the Roman pope reduced the payment of responses to the central convent, which obeyed the Avignon pope. During the fifteenth century, the order faced a severe financial crisis, and Pope Paul II had to call a meeting of the chapter general in Rome in 1462 to reform the statutes and to collect the responses. The power of the grand master to collect responses increased, thus improving the revenues of the main convent.

**Medical Activities**

The order maintained a hospital at the site of the central convent, allocating one-third of its yearly income from its European priories for its needs. The first hospital, in Jerusalem, was located in the Fasterna in Muristan, near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Recent archaeological excavations have revealed the true size and layout of the hospital complex in Acre. The infirmary buildings in Rhodes and Malta survive intact. The physical remains suggest that the hospitals of the order were large and able to accommodate many patients. Hospitaler concerns with hygiene and isolation of infectious diseases were influenced by the desire to provide luxuries for the sick, as well as by Greek and Muslim medical practices. The rule of the order referred to the patients as “our lords the sick,” illustrating the order’s precept that the sick represented Christ, and that the Hospitalers served Christ by caring for them. In this spirit of hospitality, the statutes of the order dictated that patients should receive white bread and comfortable beds in addition to their spiritual care. The Hospitalers had separate wards for male and female patients, provided sicketic care, and made provisions for children. The order employed qualified physicians and surgeons to diagnose and care for the patients’ ailments. Serving brethrens worked in the hospital, and chaplains attended to the patients’ spiritual health. In acknowledgment of their hospitaler duties, the chief officers of the convent, including the master, performed regular service in the infirmary on Rhodes and on Malta.

**Hospitalers and the Arts**

The Hospitalers in Outremer were not noted patrons of the arts, although frescoes in their church at Abu Ghosh survive. On Rhodes, Master Juan Fernández de Heredia was a noted humanist, with strong connections to the Avignon papacy and the king of Aragon. It was on Malta that the Hospitalers left a lasting artistic legacy, with the construction of the city of Valletta, and the patronage of the painters Caravaggio and Matteo Preti. The order’s most noted contributions were to the field of military architecture, particularly with the castles of Belvoir, Lindos, and Bodrum, the citadel of Rhodes, and the fortifications of Valletta.

**Teutonic Order (Jürgen Sarnowsky)**


The Teutonic Order (Ger. Deutscher Orden), also known as the Teutonic Knights, was one of the three great international military religious orders, alongside the orders of the Temple and the Hospital of St. John. It possessed houses and administrative structures in the Mediterranean countries, but it was mainly based in the Holy Roman Empire, from which most of its members were recruited.

The Origins of the German Hospital at Acre

The origins of the order date back to the foundation of a field hospital by German crusaders at the siege of Acre (mod. ‘Akko, Israel) around the year 1190 during the Third Crusade (1189–1192). When the siege ended in July 1191, the hospital was transferred into the city, where it found a site close to the Gate of St. Nicholas. In September 1190 Sibrand, the master of the German hospital, was granted the hospital of the Armenians in Acre by Guy of Lusignan, king of Jerusalem. Although this donation was never realized, the document recording it is the first relating to the order’s early history. Today there is a consensus that there was no personal or material connection with an older German hospital in Jerusalem that was incorporated by the Hospitaliers in 1143. Yet one remaining problem concerning the hospital’s early history is presented by an account of its foundation given in a text known as the Narratio de primordiis ordinis Thesauronici. Here two men named Konrad and Burchard are claimed as its founders and first masters: the account states that they had come to Jerusalem in the company of Duke Frederick V of Swabia, the younger son of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, and that they took over a temporary hospital from citizens of Bremen and Lübeck. However, these two (described as chaplain and chamberlain of the duke) were probably inserted into the story to stress the close relationship between the early order and the Staufen emperors, which lasted until the middle of the thirteenth century. Sibrand is most likely to have been the real founder of the hospital.

Sibrand’s successors Gerhard (1192), Heinrich (1193/1194), and perhaps Ulrich (1195) were probably priests, since Heinrich is referred to as a prior. Already during the time of Sibrand, a fraternity had been formed at the hospital, which was recognized by Clement III in February 1191. This fraternity received another papal privilege in December 1196 from Celestine III, who freed the brethren from the payment of the tithe from newly cultivated lands and gave them the...
rights to elect their own master and to bury people who were not members of the community. King Gerhard of Prussia and his successor, Leopold the Blind (mod. Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel) along with additional rights in the kingdom of Jerusalem.

The Formation of the Military Order

A new development was initiated by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, who was planning a crusade when he died in Sicily in 1197. A first German contingent had already reached the Holy Land by this time, and when its leaders discussed the situation, together with the clergy of the Frankish states, in March 1198, they decided to ask the pope to allow the brethren to engage in warfare against the pagans. This request was granted by Innocent III in February 1199, who gave to the fraternity the Rule of the Hospitalers for their charitable tasks and the Rule of the Templars for their military activities. This was probably only a provisional regulation, since the brethren soon (at least after 1209) started to formulate their own customs (Lat. consuetudines). In 1244 Pope Innocent IV gave them permission to adapt some of their regulations in the light of the current problems of the order. This led to a final revision of the statutes, divided into a rule, laws, and customs, to which only some laws of the later grand masters were added. After 1299, the order consisted of knight brethren and priests, but there were also half-brethren (Ger. Halbbrüder or Graumäntler) of non Noble origin who took full vows, (half-)sisters, and friends of the order (Lat. familiaria). The order took over the white mantle of the Templars but with a black cross, while half-brethren were dressed in grey.

The order was basically oligarchic. It was led by a master, who from the time of Hermann von Salza was termed “grand master,” literally “high master” (Ger. Hochmeister), probably to distinguish him from the “land masters” (Ger. Landmeister) of Prussia and Livonia. The master depended on the council of the most senior brethren and on the yearly chapters general (the assemblies of brethren in the East). Later, the chapters general met only rarely and were formed by the representatives of the order’s bailiwicks (Ger. Balleien) and houses.

Soon other officials were introduced. The earliest known high dignitaries (Ger. Grosgemeinleiter) were in 1208 the grand commander (Lat. praeceptor, Ger. Grankomtur), the marshal (Lat. mariscalus, Ger. Marschall), and the steward (Lat. custos infringr, Ger. Spittler). The grand commander was the lieutenant of the master, responsible for provision and finance; the marshal had mainly military tasks, while the steward was the director of the master’s main hospital. In 1228 a draper (Ger. Trapper) is mentioned for the first time; after 1240 there was a treasurer (Ger. Tressler), while the castellan of the order’s castle at Montfort near Acre, constructed in 1220, became equally important.

These offices were modelled on to the statutes of the Hospitalers. Unlike the earlier case of the Hospitalers, the militarization of the fraternity in the Holy Land at Acre obviously met no resistance, though its first European donations were only concerned with hospitals. In May 1197 Emperor Henry VI donated the hospital of St. Thomas in Barletta, and donations of hospitals in Halle, Bolzano, and Friesach followed between 1200 and 1203. By 1209 the order had also acquired property in Tripoli, Antioch, Cilicia, Cyprus, and Greece, although not all donations were realized. Houses were founded in Italy, Germany, Spain, and France, which were subordinated to local commanders. A hospital was an administrative unit of several houses under a land master (Lat. custos infringr). The custos infringr in Sicily is mentioned for 1212, and a German land commander in 1218. Other bailiwicks were soon instituted in Cilicia, Romania (i.e., Greece), Apulia, and Austria, then in Lombardy and Spain. When in 1220 a German land commander became the superior of another regional land commander, the Kalmünster (the territory of mod. Chelmno, Poland) and the area east of the river Vistula from Thorn (mod. Toruń, Poland) in the south as far as the Baltic coast in the north. Castles were built and towns were founded with the help of German settlers mainly from northern Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. When in Livonia a new military order was founded by the bishop of Riga, suffered a heavy defeat by the Lithuanians at Saule, in 1237 the surviving Sword Brethren were incorporated into the Teutonic Order following an order by Pope Gregory IX. In contrast to Prussia, the order succeeded in establishing an “order state” (Ger. Ordensland), government in Livonia was shared with other powers: the bishop (later archbishop) of Riga, the bishops of Insel-Wiek, Couronia, and Dorpat (mod. Tartu, Estonia), the town of Riga, and even the (Baltic) states of the Cuman and Lithuanian regions of Harria and Vinovia in North Estonia. With this order the king of the Danish king Valdemar IV in 1346. But the order now became responsible for Livonia’s defense, also in the conflicts with the Russian principalities of Pskov and Novgorod. After the order’s defeat at the battle of Lake Peipus by the prince of Novgorod, in April 1242 the Prussians rose against the Christian mission.

Thus from 1242 to 1249 the order had to face a serious rebellion by the native Prussians (helped by the duke of Pomerelia), which only ended after mediation by a papal legate. Then, in the short interval
before the outbreak of a second rebellion in 1260, there emerged the first signs of tensions between the order’s headquarters in Palestine and its distant branches. About 1251, the Grand Commander Erhard von Sayn was sent to Prussia and Livonia as land master to reorganize the order’s structures there. He stressed that the order’s headquarters were in the Holy Land and that the brethren were not allowed to promulgate new regulations without the consent of master and chapter. The land masters had to submit written reports every year and to come to the central convent every three years. In the Holy Land, an important factio within the order sought to ensure that the master remained in the East. Thus in the time of Master anno von Sangerhausen (1256–1273), statutes were passed according to which the master had to ask for permission of the chapter to return to the West.

Even after Montfort was lost in 1271, large sums of money were spent in extending the property around Acre. At the same time, the Prussian branch had to defend its lordship against the rebellious native Prussians, and it was only in 1283 that all heathen territories in Prussia were brought under the order’s control. Since men and money were needed in both Prussia and Palestine, opposing factions soon quarreled about the order’s future policies. After the resignation of Burchard von Schwanden, who adhered to the Palestinian faction, in 1291 Konrad von Feuchtwangen, a member of the Baltic faction, was elected. When Acre was lost to the Mamluks, the order’s headquarters were moved to Venice. This new site was of course an important starting point for crusading activities, but it was also closer to the Baltic region than was, for example, Cyprus, and Konrad clearly cared little about the situation in the Holy Land. This changed again with the next master, Gottfried von Hohenlohe (1297–1305), but the Palestinian faction lost ground when it became clear that there would be no new crusade to the Holy Land in the near future. Finally, in 1309 Grand Master Siegfried von Feuchtwangen transferred the order’s headquarters to Marienburg (mod. Malbork, Poland) in Prussia.

The Grand Masters in Prussia and the Order’s Role in Late Medieval Christianity

Siegfried von Feuchtwangen’s successor, Karl von Trier (elected 1311), also faced serious internal resistance; he was deposed in Prussia in 1317, reinstated at a chapter general in Erfurt 1318, and thereafter resided in his home town of Trier, where he died in 1324. Yet the decision of 1309 had a lasting impact. Far away from strong secular authorities such as the king of France, who had brought a crusading military order like the Teutonic Order into its existence in the first place, the Teutonic Order in the Baltic region could only maintain its lordship in Prussia if its leaders were able to establish a German settlement that had already started in around 1250 and that became more intensive after 1283, but also on a loyal native Prussian nobility that helped to organize the order’s military campaigns against rebellious native Prussians. It was in the time of Grand Master Werner von Oelsen (1234–1236) that the later medieval structures took shape. The grand masters were supported financially by some of the Prussian commanders and advocates (Ger. Vogteien), while the high dignitaries were based in other commanderies: the marshal (1226), the grand master (mod. Kaliningrad, Russia), the hospitaler in Elbing (mod. Ełbąg, Poland), and the draper in Chrustow (mod. Chrzanow, Poland), while the grand commandor and treasurer remained in Marienburg.

After the final conquest of Prussia in 1238, the order turned against the still heathen Lithuanians, with the help of crusading contingents from all over Christian Europe. It was only the Polish-Lithuanian union (1385) that cast doubt on the Teutonic Order’s policies into question and led to a series of conflicts, all of which were lost by the order. The first major defeat was that of Tannenberg (Grunwald) in July 1410, in which Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen and about 300 knight brethren died. The immense indemnities that had to be paid to Poland and Lithuania caused internal conflicts, and the Orderland was widely devastated, as it was in the following wars. Finally, after the Thirteen Years’ War (1454–1466), in which the Prussian estates (towns and knights) subjected themselves to Polish authority, the order lost two-thirds of its Prussian territories.

From the fourteenth century onward, the order concentrated its activities on the eastern Baltic area, but it also remained an international military order with houses in different parts of the Mediterranean region. It received large donations in Castile from the 1220s (in La Mota near Valladolid, in Seville, Córdoba, and in the vicinity of Toledo), having somehow participated in the final phase of the Reconquista (the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslims) after the campaign of Las Navas de Tolosa (1221).

Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, the order’s commanderies were mostly governed by German knight brethren, but in 1453 La Mota had a Spanish commandor, Juan de la Mota. The order’s Spanish properties were lost during the Thirteen Years’ War, when it tried to sell rights and possessions outside La Mota. The situation was similar in southern Italy, where the order’s first

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Martin Luther suggested the secularization of the order and its territories, and thus after some negotiations Albrecht received Prussia as a fief dependent on the kingdom of Poland in April 1525.

The Order's Survival into the Modern Period

Yet this was not the end of the order's history. The Livonian branch was secularized in 1561 under military pressure from Muscovy during events similar to those in Prussia, the last Livonian Master Gotthard Kettler becoming duke of Courland. The German branch survived attacks during the Peasants' War of 1525 and was reformed by the German master Walter von Cronberg, who became administrator of the grand mastership in December 1527. He and his successors tried in vain to recover the order's Prussian and Livonian territories.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the order became closely associated with the Habsburg dynasty. When at the diet of Regensburg in 1576 Emperor Maximilian II proposed that the order should take over and defend one of the castles on the borders of Hungary (with support from the empire), Grand Master Heinrich von Bobenhausen (1572–1585/1590) opposed the plan, still hoping to regain Prussia. The situation changed when one of the Habsburg princes, Maximilian, was received into the order and soon (1585) became coadjutor (i.e., lieutenant) of the aging grand master. After Bobenhausen resigned in 1590 and Maximilian became grand master (until 1618), he also took over the administration of Styria for the young archduke Ferdinand II. In this situation, the chapter general at Mergentheim decided to support the defense of Styria against the Turks with men and money (about thirty knights with seventy servants). The grand master continued with campaigns in Hungary and Croatia from 1595 to 1597, though he was not very successful. One of the knights of the order present in Maximilian's campaigns was the later grand master Johann Eustach von Westenach (1625–1627), who in 1627 again proposed to the chapter general that the order should reconquer Prussia or take over one of the castles in Hungary. Neither scheme came to fruition, probably because of the consequences of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in Germany, but at least the coadjutor for Grand Master Johann Kaspar von Ampringen and later Grand Master Ludwig Anton von Pfalz-Neuburg fought in the defense of Vienna in 1683 and in the campaigns against the Turks until 1687.

When Napoleon seized the order's properties and its territory around Mergentheim in 1809–1810, Grand Master Anton Victor of Austria (1804–1835) was thrown back on the Austrian houses of the order. Thus the Teutonic Order under its grand and German master (Ger. Hoch- und Deutschmeister) became an order of the Austrian Empire. Finally, in 1923, the knightly branch of the Teutonic Knights was dissolved. Today the order consists of priests and sisters who are mainly engaged in charitable activities.