The Military Orders in Catalonia

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ABSTRACT

The Jerosolimitan Orders of the Hospital, the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple reached Catalonia at a very early date, among other reasons because of its relationship with Provence through the marriage of Ramon Berenguer III and Dolça de Provença, as well as through the propaganda spread by the Catalan pilgrims who had visited the Holy Land. The counts and the nobility were the main instigators of donations of land, rights and goods to the orders, which encouraged them to move to the Principality. By the second half of the 12th century, they had already set up their respective networks of convents here, with particular influence in Catalunya Nova. Even though they depended institutionally on the central convents in the East (Jerusalem, Saint John of Acre, Cyprus and Rhodes, the latter the headquarters of the Order of the Hospital), the Catalan houses disassociated themselves with their original Provencal provinces and formed their own districts, which encompassed Aragon, as well as Mallorca and Valencia after they were conquered. The provincial Catalan masters, almost all of them from the middle class and petty nobility, represented the central convents. They managed the districts under the advice of the chapterhouses or annual meetings of the knight commanders or heads of the different houses, who also governed and administered the commandries. Part of the revenue was remitted to the central convents each year. Apart from money, the Catalan provinces also sent foodstuffs, horses, weapons and especially staff to the East. Some Catalan brothers would reach the top echelon of the orders, including Brother Arnau de Torroja, Grand Master of the Knights Templar from 1181 to 1184; and Antoni de Fluvià and Pere Ramon Sacosta, Grand Masters of the Order of the Hospital in 1421-1437 and 1461-1467, respectively. The military orders participated in the territorial expansion campaigns in the 12th and 13th centuries and in the military actions of the Catalan monarchy in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Knights Hospitallers and the Order of Saint James founded convents in Catalonia which noble women entered. Only one military order was founded on Catalan soil, the Order of Saint George of Alfama created in 1201 by Peter the Catholic. Despite the protection of the monarchy, it was subsequently incorporated into the Valencia-based Military Order of Montesa in 1400.

KEYWORDS: military orders, Temple, Hospital, Saint George of Alfama, establishment and organisation, mediaeval Catalonia

REASONS FOR SETTING UP THE MILITARY ORDERS IN CATALONIA

The Jerosolimitan orders came to Catalonia very early on, a fact determined by two circumstances, among other factors. The first was its geographic location at the time of the first expansion of the Order of the Temple and the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem shortly after they were founded in the early 12th century. The marriage of Ramon Berenguer III to Dolça de Provença had placed the Catalan lands in close contact with Provence, where these orders were soon established through the relationship between the port of Marseille and the East, and specifically through trade with the ports along the coastline of Palestine after it was occupied by the West in the wake of the First Crusade. The second circumstance can be found in the knowledge that some swaths of Catalan society had of these organisations in the first half of the 12th century. The stream of Catalan pilgrims to Palestine had risen noticeably after the First Crusade, which culminated with the seizure of Jerusalem in July 1099. Even though many people who made the pilgrimage to the Holy Land did not return, others did after overcoming the difficulties of a long and often perilous journey. The ones who visited Jerusalem after 1120 – when the Order of the Temple was founded – were able to witness the missions that some Church institutions had set up in that
land: the canons of the Holy Sepulchre strove to keep up the church built over the site where tradition had it that Jesus was buried, while the Knights Hospitallers tended to the pilgrims that arrived in the Holy City. The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ, an association of soldiers affiliated with the convent of the Holy Sepulchre, ensured that the pilgrims’ journey from the ports on the Palestinian coastline to Jerusalem and other cities and sites made sacred by Christ’s presence on earth took place safely through the use of weapons, if necessary. When the recipients of these acts of piety, beneficence and policing of the roadways returned to their countries of origin, it should come as no surprise that they often rewarded them with donations of goods. Before the canonical approval of the Order of the Temple at the Council of Troyes in early 1129, this order, the Order of the Hospital and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre were already the recipients of the generosity of people of Catalonia. For example, on the 4th of January 1124, the Urgell native Erovis left many pious donations in his will and granted his mule “to the Holy Sepulchre, the Hospital and the cavalry”. In the following year, 1125, before embarking on a journey he was planning to the Holy Land, the Ampurdan knight Arnau de Cabanes left a will bequeathing his goods; his pious legates included the Order of the Hospital and the Order of the Temple.

THE DONATIONS FROM COUNTS

The approval of the rules and the order of the Council of Troyes led the Knights Templar to deploy a propaganda campaign in the different European kingdoms: they presented their mission to defend pilgrims and the land of Jerusalem to society, including the monarchies, the Church, the nobility and the people, and they enlisted Western aid to help them bring this plan to fruition, especially economic support and the staff needed to conduct the enterprise. Where the Templars’ project yielded the most positive response was on the Eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula, especially in the territories where the sovereigns were struggling to expand their domains by pushing out the Muslims. A few days before his death in July 1131, Ramon Berenguer III joined the Order of the Temple, and, trusting that it would help to promote this feudal conquest of new lands under Saracen control, he gave them the border castle of Granyena de Segarra. The following year, Count Ermengol IV of Urgell donated Barberà Castle, located on the Western frontier. In the neighbouring kingdom of Aragon, the 1131 will of the sovereign Alphonse I the Warrior, confirmed in a second will dating from 1134, made the most generous donation that the military orders would receive in the West when he bequeathed them his entire kingdoms. However, the virtual absence of these orders from Aragon, the opposition from the Aragonese nobility and the separation from Navarre meant that the will of the Aragonese monarch was not carried out. Instead, Ramon Berenguer IV, through his marriage with Peronella, the “heiress” of Aragon, found the solution to Aragon’s institutional problem: he secured an agreement from all three orders to renounce everything and in turn rewarded them with important donations and privileges.

DEFINITIVE ESTABLISHMENT AND TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION IN THE PRINCIPALITY

Initially, the warring actions of the military orders did not encompass the different kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula, which since the Muslim occupation (711-720) had been enmeshed in a constant battle to win back lost land. Even though the circumstances in these Western lands and the lands of Palestine were parallel – the defence of Christianity against Islam – the military orders had circumscribed their actions exclusively to the East. Europe was supposed to furnish the staff and economic resources to carry out the mission they had set out to fulfil, but not become the recipient of their military actions.

For this reason, initially neither the Order of the Temple nor the Hospital had a territorial network of convents in the Principality; rather, to earn revenues they appointed trustworthy representatives called baili who were charged with collecting the yields of their rights and goods.

However, the agreement that Ramon Berenguer IV reached with the orders and particularly with the Knights Templar regarding the inheritance of Alphonse I the Warrior granted the Templars an important legacy that included castles, lands and rights which they were to directly administer. On the 27th of November 1143, the Barcelona count met in Girona with the Papal Legatee Guido, other neighbouring counts, noblemen and prelates from the country, the delegate of the Grand Master of Jerusalem, the provincial master of Provence and Hispania and the leading Templar brothers from Provence and Catalonia. At that meeting, he secured the order’s pledge to also make the Iberian Peninsula the target of its military actions against the Saracens “in defence of Western Christianity”. Although the Templar contingent was quite small, five years later, in 1148, the brothers participated with Ramon Berenguer IV in the feudal conquest of Tortosa, and the following year they did the same in Lleida. Their collaboration in these two military campaigns and in the Catalan occupation of Miravet Castle in 1153, in addition to donations from nobles and knights – who closely identified with the Templars’ idea of combating the enemies of the Christian faith – soon gave the order important assets and rights under the administration and management of the provincial master, who was appointed by the Grand Master in Jerusalem and acted on his behalf in the territory, which was initially comprised of the realms of Hispania and Provence. The first to hold this post, documented between 1143 and 1158, was the Vallès
native Pere de Rovira. The early provincial masters were charged with organising the order’s different establishments around the land, which were called “houses” or “commandries”. Thus, in 1145, the Masdeu commandry was organised in Roussillon in a domain that the brothers had been given in 1138, and in the 1150s the commandries in Palau del Vallès (1151), Tortosa, Miravet (1153) and Gardeny (1156) were also established.

The Order of the Hospital, just like the Temple, had also received numerous donations in Catalan lands even before Pope Callixtus II approved its definitive regulation in 1120. From that year on, under the impetus of the brothers from Saint-Gilles in Provence, who also managed to secure the generous collaboration of counts, noblemen, knights, peasants and citizens, delegated baillis often administered the assets and revenues earned from them; the baillis collected the proceeds and forwarded them to Marseille. The revenues earned by Ramon Berenguer IV through the renunciation of the Order of the Hospital’s rights to its share of the inheritance of Alphonse I the Warrior, along with the gradual rise in donations from the countships, especially after the feudal conquests of Tortosa and Lleida, which enabled the count to generously reward their participation, fostered the appointment of a delegate with the title of “prior” who administered the assets in the Principality, documented since 1149. The following year, on the 8th of January 1150, the same count granted the order Amposta Castle and its extensive surrounding lands, in what is today the county of Montsià. The head of the Catalan and Aragonese zone, who set up his residence in Amposta starting in 1157 and was called the castellan of Amposta, administered the different possessions in the area and founded houses or commandries in important sites or places where there was the potential for growth in the future. Initially, the first commandries on Catalan soil were created in Susterris (1146), Sant Celoni (1154), Amposta (1157), Alguaire (1159), Sant Valenti-Vilafranca (1162), Barcelona (1163), Cervera (1172) and Lleida (1175).

The commandries of these orders fulfilled a direct two-fold purpose. The first was to house the religious community, while the second was to administer their assets. However, the houses also served as centres to declare the orders’ presence in order to recruit new members and receive new contributions of goods and revenues from the nobility and peasants in the respective region.

The expansion of the Order of the Temple and the Order of the Hospital in the last quarter of the 12th century

Once established in Catalonia and after the creation of the first commandries on Catalan soil, donations to the orders started to gain momentum starting in the 1180s, as did the influx of new members, which enlarged the communities. Likewise, Alphonse I’s (1162-1196) favour, manifested in new donations and the granting and expansion of new privileges, led the heads of both orders to set up new commandries. During the leadership of Arnau de Torroja (1163-1181), the Order of the Temple set up the commandries in Corbins (1167), Barbens (1168), Puig-reig-Cerdanya-Berguedà (1169), Barberà (1172), Granyenà (1181) and Ascó (1181). Before the century was over, the commandries in Selma (1190), Aiguaviva (1192), Horta (1193) and Juncosa (1199) were also established. The Order of the Hospital, in turn, created the commandries in Amposta (1184), Siscar (1188), Isot (1190) and Biure (ca. 1193).

The network of religious-military houses around the land did not spread uniformly; rather there were many more in the western and southern parts of Catalunya Nova, where after their feudal conquest the sovereigns had more land to divvy up than in Catalunya Vella, where the Benedictine Order had already become firmly entrenched by the time these orders had arrived there. Thus, Catalunya Nova became the home to the religious
institutions that emerged in the early 12th century: the Cistercians – with their two monasteries in Poblet and Santes Creus and their convent in Vallbona – and the Knights Templar and Hospitaller. Before the commandries of the Temple were annexed after the order was disbanded, the Hospitallers had eleven houses in Catalunya Nova and only six in Catalunya Vella and Roussillon, whereas by the late 13th century the Templars had twelve to the south and five to the north of the Llobregat River.

Likewise, bearing in mind the fact that during this period land ownership was the most profitable asset, most of the commandries were created in the countryside or in small villages in the shelter of the castle, where they could often be better managed and revenues more easily collected through the sound management and administration of the assets.

However, this does not mean that the orders did not also set up commandries in the main cities, given the possibilities they afforded to serve as administrative, mercantile or commercial hubs, not to mention their maritime ports, which were well-connected with other ports around the Mediterranean. On this basis, Tortosa, Barcelona and Lleida were the home to commandries of the Templars and Hospitallers. Precisely in some of these cities, taking advantage of the urban expansion in the second half of the 13th century, both orders also engaged in real estate dealings, such as the Templars’ well-known activities in the 13th century, both orders also engaged in real estate advantage of the urban expansion in the second half of

Territorial structures: The province

The Templar and Hospitaller commandries located on Catalan lands were part of the higher territorial structures known as “provinces” in the former and “priories” in the latter order. Initially, the Templar commandries in Catalonia joined the province called “Providence and Hispania” and later “Providence and certain parts of Hispania”. Apart from the commandries in Catalonia and Aragon, this district also encompassed the southernmost reaches of Castile and Navarre, in addition to those of Provence. Starting in 1178, with the appointment of a provincial master for the commandries in Castile-León, the scope of authority of the provincial master in this part of Castile was curtailed. The conquests of Mallorca and Valencia placed the commandries created in these lands under the responsibility of the Catalan-Provencal master. The presence of the Templars on the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula was equally intense and grew commensurately with the Provençal side, which in around 1240 led former province to be split. The provinces of Provence and Catalonia-Aragon were created, the latter encompassing the commandries of Roussillon, the Principality, Aragon, Navarre, Mallorca, Valencia and Murcia, the latter while it was Catalan. This division lasted until the order was disbanded in 1312.

The Knights Hospitaller of the Catalan-Aragonese Crown belonged to the order’s Provencal province, although gradually the convent of Amposta gained ground as the chief of the district, and in the mid-12th century it won independence from the Provencal priory. With the annexation of the houses and properties owned by the Order of the Temple after it was disbanded, the Order of the Hospital created a new organisation independent of the castellany of Amposta called the priory of Catalonia. It included the commandries inside the Principality, with the exception of those located on the right bank of the Ebro River, along with Valencia, Mallorca and Roussillon.

The Templar provincial masters, the castellans of Amposta and the priors of Catalonia were at the helm of their respective districts as delegates of the Grand Masters of their orders. Given their importance within the regional organisation, they were appointed by the Grand Master usually during the general chapterhouse meetings, although the Hospital suffered from frequent interference from the popes, especially in the late Middle Ages.

These provincial heads usually came from the petty, middle and sometimes even the upper nobility of the country. Surnames like Torroja, Cardona, Montcada, Empúries, Gurb, Santjust, Ribelles, Timor, Guimerà and Oms, among others, confirm this social standing.

However, generally speaking, the provincial heads were already known at the central convent, either because they had journeyed to the East or because they had served there temporarily. For example, the Templar provincial master Arnau de Torroja (1166-1181) was appointed to the position after his sojourn in the Holy Land. The prior of Catalonia for the Order of the Hospital, Brother Guillem de Guimerà, served in this capacity (1377-1396) through his appointment by his friend Juan Fernández de Heredia. However, at times the heads of the Catalan provinces forwarded to the central convent the names of the most suitable candidates for the posts of Templar provincial master, castellan of Amposta or prior of Catalonia. After the death of the Templar provincial master, a lieutenant usually served in the post until the central convent appointed a successor. In the case of the Hospitalers, after the death of the prior in the 14th century, the commanders elected a temporary lieutenant until the master appointed a new head. Upon the death of Brother Pere Guillem d’Oms, the Hospitaler commanders meeting in Sant Celoni chose Brother Guillem de Guimerà on the 7th of March 1372.

Likewise, given the political importance of the provincial heads of both orders, the Catalan monarchs often tried to influence the appointments by proposing to the central convent trustworthy men for the posts, even though they did not always achieve their aims. Nevertheless, James II (1285-1327), his son Alphonse II the Benign (1327-1336) and his grandson Peter III the Ceremonious (1336-1387) conducted a number of actions that somehow signalled control of the supervisory posts of
the castellany and the priory, either by rejecting the individuals appointed by the Grand Master or by threatening to confiscate the contributions to the order (tithes to the central convents in Palestine) or the commandries. Peter the Ceremonious’ intervention in the appointment of the provincial head of the Hospital can be clearly seen in the appointment of Juan Fernández de Heredia as the castellan of Amposta in 1346 and prior of Catalonia in 1372. Still, as Pierre Bonneaud claims, “between 1317 and 1377, the appointments of the priors of Catalonia were almost systematically contrary to the wishes of the sovereigns, who, however, had to accept them more or less willingly”.25

Likewise, the social prestige of these leaders is clear through their membership in the sovereigns’ royal councils and their participation in the ecclesiastical branch of the General Courts of Catalonia. After the creation of the Diputació del General or the Generalitat de Catalunya at the General Court of Cervera in 1359, members of the Order of the Hospital served on this body either as ecclesiastical deputies or as auditors of accounts. They also attended the councils of the Church Province of Tarragona in their capacity as religious leaders.26

Some of these dignitaries from the Catalan provinces of the Temple and the Hospital reached the top echelons of their respective orders. Some examples include Brother Arnau de Torroja, Grand Master of the Temple between 1181 and 1184, after having served as the provincial master of Provence and parts of Hispania between 1164 and 1181;27 Brother Juan Fernández de Heredia, prior of Catalonia between 1372 and 1377 and Grand Master of the Hospitallers from 1377 until his death in 1396;28 and Pere Ramon Sacosta, who had been castellan of Amposta between 1445 and 1461 and served as Grand Master of the order between 1461 and his death in 1467.29

The Templar provincial masters and the priors of Catalonia soon had a small curia located in their provincial headquarters: the Hospitallers had one in the castellany of Amposta and then Zaragoza,31 while the priory of Catalonia’s was usually at the house where the prior lived. Meanwhile, the Templars had curiae successively in Montsó and Gardeny, which were consolidated in Miravet in the late 13th century. These curiae were made up of a small number of members, including a scribe notary, often a clergyman, several brothers and knights from outside the order.32 They often welcomed the heads of the commandries yet needed for the management and administration of the district. In Miravet, the property of the Templar province and the documentation were conserved in a particularly solid chamber called the “torre del tresor” (treasure tower).33

In addition to materially administering the houses in the district, the provincial dignitaries also had to ensure that the convents abided by the religious life and that the members of the communities fulfilled their respective rules and other provisions issued by the central hierarchies. Promoting fulfillment of the religious obligations and detecting and halting vices and laxness was one of their missions, as was punishing the transgressors with the castigation called for in their internal rules.

Ultimately, these dignitaries had to report to the central convent on the status of the province through letters or even personal appearances at the headquarters when needed. The headquarters thus controlled the province through the provincial dignitaries, although they also obtained information through the priors who travelled East for either administrative reasons or military duty. During some periods, the Templar Grand Master got information on the Western provinces and supervised the actions of their leaders through a dignitary called the “mestre deçà mar” (overseas master), who in the second half of the 13th century evolved into the figure of the visitor, to whom the Grand Master delegated many of his functions.34

The provincial chapterhouses

The heads of the districts did not have absolute power; rather they exercised their power in accordance with the rules and provisions that were issued by their respective central convents, along with the agreements that were adopted collegially at the annual meetings or chapterhouses. Convened by the provincial dignitaries, the chapterhouses were usually held at the headquarters or residence of the master or prior, and it was attended by several commanders of the houses and other brothers summoned to discuss the most important affairs affecting the order in the region.35 Soon after both orders were established in Catalonia, these meetings were held at the discretion of the master; however, starting in the second half of the 13th century they gradually came to be held every year. They lasted three to four days and began on a Sunday. The Templars usually held their meetings in April or May, and their preferred venues were Tortosa, Barberà, Montsó and Miravet. The Hospitallers held this kind of meeting for the castellany of Amposta mainly in the convents of Amposta, La Almunia de Doña Godina, Samper de Calanda and Zaragoza,36 while the priory held them in Lleida, Barcelona, Vilafranca del Penedès, Tortosa, Barberà, Gardeny and L’Esplugue de Francolí.37

At these meetings, the heads of the commandries and the provincial dignitary discussed and resolved the affairs related to the internal religious life of the communities,
suitable measures were taken to ensure compliance with the rules, and most importantly the economic status of the different commandries was reviewed. In this vein, starting in the second half of the 13th century, the Templar commanders also had to bring a list detailing their revenues and expenditures, loans and financial obligations, as well as inventories of agricultural products available in their storehouses and the number of slaves and livestock caretakers, defensive and offensive weapons in their possession and liturgical objects and items of worship kept in their chapels. Furthermore, they approved the proposals for new members and decided on the correction or expulsion of current members; they confirmed the appointments of the heads of the commandries; they established each house’s contributions to the provincial treasury; they granted settlement charters and franchises; they resolved grievances submitted by the vassals of the order – such as the approval of municipal ordinances and other justice-related affairs; and they approved acquisitions, exchanges and expropriations of goods, the creation or disbandment of commandries and issues related to the Crown, the prelates and other religious orders, among other affairs.

THE FUNDAMENTAL CORE OF THE REGIONAL ORGANISATION: THE COMMANDRY

The cornerstone of the regional organisation of the military orders in Catalonia, just as in the other countries...
where they were established, was the commandry, preceptory or house, which included the convent where the community lived, along with any goods and rights they owned.  

The commandries were created all over Catalonia, although there were more in Catalunya Nova, where the orders had received more wealth, mainly through donations from the Catalan counts and monarchs. The commandries were founded in large cities such as Tortosa, Lleida and Barcelona; in medium-sized towns like L’Esplugà de Francolí, L’Esplugà Calba, Bajoles, Avinyonet and Sant Celoni; in castles like Barberà, Granyenà, Vallfogona de Riucorb, Puig-reig, Ascó, Riba-roja and Peníscola; and in the midst of the countryside, as in Barbens, Aiguaviva, el Masdeu, Bajoles and Palau del Vallès.

Figure 3. Main commandries of the Order of the Hospital in the Middle Ages, showing the ones belonging to the Priory of Catalonia and the Castellany of Amposta as of 1319 (drawn up by Josep M. Sans i Travé).

Even though the community’s residence was sometimes built from scratch, they more often adapted prior structures to the members’ needs. In this vein, they built or enlarged chapels and churches, conferring on them rich ornamentation and items of worship often crafted from fine materials and precious stones; they established sites for the cemetery; and they arranged the rooms designated as common sleeping quarters and refectories. They also set up storehouses for agricultural products and stables for livestock.

Starting in the second half of the 14th century, after a boost to their wealth with the annexation of the assets of the Temple and important economic resources, the Hospitallers conducted several enlargements and embellishments of their convents, building “new palaces” and new
non-priestly holy orders, not excommunicated, not committed to another order and physically sound. The knights were also required to be “the son of a knight and lady procreated in a legitimately married couple”. According to Anthony Luttrell, the Hospitallers did not require their knights, of whom they had few, to be of noble birth until the 14th century.

The socially diverse background of the members of the order resulted in two classes of religious men: the knights or milites and the sergeants or sergentes, who were joined by the clergy appointed through papal privilege. The main role of the former was limited to military action, often joined in Catalonia by the sergeants. The latter mainly helped the knights and devoted themselves to managing the wealth of the commandry or the domestic services. The clergy, which were a clear minority within both orders, tended to the spiritual needs of the other members of the community and took charge of worship in the chapel or church. The scarcity of clergy often required both orders to seek the services of secular presbyters. Still, even though the Templar clergy rarely ran houses or commandries, Hospitaller presbyters were often put in charge of convents.

The number of members in a community varied according to the order, the house and the time. The Templars had larger communities than the Hospitallers. The former could house between four and ten religious members as a general rule, reaching as high as 20 or even more in the most important commandries: in 1212, Gardeny had 22 religious members, while in 1264 Masdéu reached

Figure 4. View of the monumental complex of Gardeny Castle located atop Gardeny hill, one of the hills in the city of Lleida.
the figure of 17.60 However, the Hospitaler convents rarely had more than six religious members, and most had between four and six.61 Nonetheless, the provincial house, at least after the founding of the castellany of Amposta, must have had a larger community.

These demographic figures suggest the issue of the overall number of brothers in the Catalan provinces from both orders, a question that is difficult to resolve at this point in time. Regarding the Templars, we only have reliable data from the time of the trial. In 1319, permanent pensions were assigned to 109 brothers from the Catalan province of the order, a figure which represents the number of brothers who survived while the trial lasted, whereas between 1307 and 1319 there is proof of 194 Knights Templar.62 This would confirm the fact that at least in the early 14th century, the total number of religious members must not have been much higher than 200.

Nevertheless, this number is relatively high if we compare it with other countries. On the British Isles during the same period (1308-1311), even though there were more commandries, there were only 144 brothers,63 while the same period (1308-1311), even though there were the number of religious members must not have been much much higher than 200.

Around this same time, we also have information on the ranks of 166 of the 194 known Catalan Templars: 101 or 60.84% were sergeants, 55 or 33.13% were knights and ten or just 6.02% were clergymen.64 Neither these figures nor percentages is valid for the end of the 12th century and much of the following century, the apogee of the order in our country, where there are calculated to have been around 2,000 brothers.65

Among the members of the Catalan provinces of both orders, there was a preponderance of brothers from Catalonia, at least until the beginning of the 14th century. Numerous Catalan aspirants joined the commandries outside the Principality, most likely because the commandries in Catalonia had already covered the number of places they had available. This in turn suggests that there was a sort of numeros clausus for each house, determined by the revenues it generated and the capacity of the convent buildings.

Several Catalan Templar brothers ran Aragonese commandries. At the Templar commandry in Huesca, just to cite an example, of the nine knight commanders between the mid-12th century and 1200, six were Catalan, and so were 36% of the total leaders over the course of its history.66 Likewise, Catalan was often the language used in the internal administration of some of these Templar commandries in Aragon run by Catalan brothers. Of the 12 reports from Aragonese commandries on the state of the house submitted to the provincial chapterhouse in 1289, eight were written in Catalan and only the remaining four used Aragonese or Castilian Spanish.

Regarding the Hospitallers, despite the presence of Catalan brothers in the Aragonese houses during the lifetime of the castellany of Amposta, starting in 1319, with the creation of the priory of Catalonia, the Catalan brothers mainly resided in the Catalan commandries. However, in some cases they ran Aragonese commandries, and in fewer instances Aragonese brothers ran houses in the priory of Catalonia. For example, at the chapterhouse meeting of the castellany held in Gandesa in 1454, 13 of the 20 commanders and brothers were Catalan.67 Luttrell mentions that between 1349 and 1352, ten of the 31 commanders of the castellany of Amposta were Catalan, and six out of 60 brethren and five out of 33 priests were also Catalan.

Without being a canonical part of the religious community, the Templar and Hospitaler convents often housed confrères and lay brothers and sisters. These were laypeople linked to the houses to differing degrees who devoted themselves to the houses “in life and in death”. In some cases, this even led the laypeople to participate in community life or served as a first step in their subsequent inclusion as religious members. When lay sisters were associated with male convents, they lived in separate houses.

Often the convents of the military orders served as schools for the children of the nobility, where they were instructed on weapons handling or simply prepared to better perform their future duties.68 One quite famous example is that of James, the future Conqueror, who spent part of his childhood at Montsó Castle under the tutelage of the Templar provincial master Guillem de Mont-rodon (1214 - 1217).69 When James II had Miravet Castle seized after the arrest warrant was issued for all Knights Templar in his kingdoms because the Templar leaders had refused to comply with the royal orders, on the behest of the besieged residents of the castle he authorised numerous young lay people, the sons of knights being educated there, to leave before the final seizure and capitulation.70

The brothers’ community life adapted to the prescriptions of their respective canonical rules – those of the Order of the Temple somewhat followed in the Benedictine tradition, while the Order of the Hospital followed those of the Augustinians – and the statutes, customs and habits that they adopted over the years as annexes to the original texts.

As religious men, their daily lives were governed by mass and offices at the canonical hours, which they generally heard from the clergyman or presbyter, who recited or chanted them. If they were unable to attend, they said a certain number of Our Fathers per day instead. For
this reason, their convents had chapels or churches of their own to tend to the clergymen of the order appointed by papal privileges, although often, because of their scarcity, they also had to enlist the services of secular presbyters who received a salary for tending to the community. Often, too, because of their basic literacy training, they served as the notaries of the convent, although they also enlisted the aid of notary publics at special events. The Templars were accused of not being allowed to say confession to clergymen who were not from the order, a false accusation because, as they testified during the trial, they had received the sacrament of penitence from secular presbyters and from Franciscans and Dominicans.

The habits differed for each member of the order, even according to their rank within the order. Thus, the Templars wore white habits and mantles emblazoned with the sign of the cross in bright red, while the sergeants and clergy wore black habits. The habits and mantles of the Hospitalers were black and emblazoned with a simple white cross. However, in battle, the habits and mantles were red, as shown in the painting depicting the battle of Malta. Another feature that distinguished the members was that the Templars wore beards while the Hospitalers were clean-shaven. When not in battle, the members of both orders wore caps on their heads.

The military orders had a keen interest in the care, tidiness and decoration of their churches, even though they were built somewhat austerely, especially the Templar churches, which were copied from the Cistercian models. They furnished them with true crosses made of silver, glass and gold from Limoges, altar frontals and lanterns of silver, and sacred decorations crafted of silk and gold, as well as Moorish work. The Hospitalers usually dedicated their churches and chapels — as well as many of the parish churches in the towns they ran whose construction the order had helped to finance — to their patron, Saint John, while the Templars preferred the Virgin Mary and Christ the Saviour as the patrons of their churches. Both institutions had a keen predilection for relics, many of which they purchased in the East. They stored them in finely wrought silver reliquaries inlaid with precious stones, including the reliquaries of the True Cross, Saint Barbara, Mary Magdalene and Saint Stephen, as well as the tunic of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

Just like in the other monasteries, the houses of both the Temple and the Hospital housed the remains of the noble benefactors of the district in their churches and cemeteries, often despite the opposition of the diocesan prelates, as this tended to detract from the revenues in their parishes. Through a privilege granted in 1139, recorded in the bull *Omnis datum optimum* issued by Pope Innocent II, regarded as the cornerstone of all the exemptions and privileges enjoyed by the Templars, the brothers were allowed to have their own churches, clergy and cemeteries where not only members of the community but also people with ties to the order could be buried. Despite this, they often ran into the intransigence of the bishops. However, the brothers often achieved their purpose by appealing to the Holy See, which defended their rights, or by reaching agreements through monetary contributions from the brothers or by dividing the rights between the convent and the prelate. In 1200, the Bishop of Huesca refused to consecrate the church and bless the order’s cemetery in this city; however, after the brothers complained to the pope, he ordered the bishop to do it while, to ensure that his will was carried out, he ordered the bishop in neighbouring Lleida to consecrate the church as well. In this same city, in 1245 the prelate assessed the parish rights of 20 parishioners who had let themselves be buried at the cemetery in Gardeny at 500 gold coins. Once this friction had been overcome and after several agreements were reached, it was finally agreed that each part would receive half of the goods left to the church. There were similar problems in Tortosa after 1192, when the provincial master secured the bishop’s authorisation to set up a cemetery at La Suda with the condition that parishioners from the city could not be buried there. In 1281, on a request from the master, this condition was abolished, although it was agreed that one-fourth of the deceased person’s bequests to the order had to be earmarked to the bishop of the diocesan church, with the exception of foodstuffs, horses and weapons, which would go wholly to the brothers.

Oftentimes, people who had not taken religious vows lived in the convents of the orders, although they did have special ties to it; these were the confrères and lay brothers or sisters. However, most of the former kept their secular lives, and in addition to donating money or goods to the communities, they were also allowed to be buried in their churches. They could be men, women or married couples, and they came from all social classes, from nobles to peasants and everything in between, including knights, clergy, tradesmen, artisans or shepherds. While in Aragon and Navarre, Professor Ubieto Arteta counted 526 of them between 1135 and 1182, and Forey tallied 52 associated with the commandry in Novillas in the late 12th century. Meanwhile, Prim Bertran only counted 93 of them in Gardeny from the founding of the commandry until 1204. Likewise, some of the lay brothers and sisters lived in the convent, usually in residences apart from the opposite sex. When they were buried in the cemetery of the order, they wore the corresponding habit and only a half-cross, although judging from the tombs that remain in Catalonia, here they must have worn the entire habit.

The commandry also included the goods and rights that it earned, mainly from the farming of its agricultural lands. Both orders got most of these lands as they were being established in Catalonia thanks to the magnanimity of the 12th century Catalan counts, and their holdings were later expanded by their successors. Ramon Berenguer IV generously rewarded the renunciation of their part of the inheritance of Alphonse the Warrior by granting them...
several castles and properties through an agreement in 1140 with the Hospitaler master Raymond du Puy, who travelled to Catalonia just for this purpose,\(^4\) and in 1143 through an agreement with Everard des Barrés, preceptor of France and delegate of Templar Grand Master Robert de Craon.\(^6\) Another share of their assets was acquired through the orders’ collaboration in the feudal conquest enterprises in the 12th century (Tortosa and Lleida) and 13th century (Mallorca and València).\(^9\) Donations from the faithful, and especially from the nobility, who were very closely ideologically aligned with the bellicose project of both orders, brought a constant influx of new lands and rights. Just like in the other monasteries of the day, part of the lands were farmed directly by the sergeants with the help of the lay brothers, salaried staff, and starting in the second half of the 13th century the labour of slaves purchased for this purpose, along with domestic staff. The remainder of the agricultural lands were farmed with emphyteutic concessions to peasants, who paid with part of the harvest or an annual fee.\(^9\)

In addition to the revenues from agriculture, the Templars and Hospitalers boosted their incomes with proceeds from the exercise of their jurisdiction over numerous villages, as well as by running mills, ovens, tileworks and salt flats and renting urban real estate. The Templars, in turn, had livestock which they moved through seasonal pastures. Livestock was not an activity limited to rural commandries; rather certain urban commandries such as the ones in Tortosa and Gardunya also had numerous animals. In addition to cattle, sheep and goats – in the late 12th century, Gardunya had around 2,000 heads of sheep and in the middle of the following century Masdeu had around 4,000 – both orders also had a large number of horses, usually donated by the nobility and knights, which they used in military campaigns and as a means of transporting people or goods, and often as payment in transactions in which they purchased lands or goods.\(^9\)

The disbandment of the Order of the Temple and the creation of the New Military Order of Montesa; The administrative reorganisation of the castellany of Amposta

In the early 14th century, the disbandment of the Order of the Temple by Pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne in the Delphinate had vast repercussions on the future role that the military orders would play within the domains of the Catalan monarchs. First, after a lengthy trial brought against the Templars throughout Christendom (1307-1312), it entailed the disappearance of the Templar brothers in their regional realm of action and the subsequent assignation of their goods to the Order of the Hospital in general, as well as the creation of a new military order that would carry on with the struggle against the Saracens in the Kingdom of València.\(^9\)

Throughout the Pope’s negotiations in Vienne, when the ultimate fate of both the order and especially its assets was being debated with the representatives of the European princes, there is no question that James II of Catalonia was the most keenly interested in finding a solution that would cater to his own interests. More than any other European monarch, he displayed a desire to reach agreements favourable to his position, refused to accept the excessive reinforcement that the Hospitalers might receive with the Templars goods, and advocated the creation of a new order linked to Calatrava to continue the defence of Valencian lands. His ambassadors managed to convince the Pope to make an exception to the general assignation of the assets that the Order of the Temple owned on the Iberian Peninsula. Later, in 1317, after several meetings between the nuncios and ambassadors of James II, they convinced Clement’s successor Pope John XXII to create the Military Order of Montesa through the bull *Ad fructus uberes* dated the 10th of June of the same year.\(^10\) The papal document stated that in order to defend the frontier, a new order would be created in Montesà Castle with brothers from Calatrava under the guidance and correction of the master of this order, but with the assistance of the abbots from Santes Creus and Valldigna. This new order was assigned the goods that the Order of the Temple had owned in the Kingdom of Valencia, as well as the assets owned by the Hospitalers, with the exception of their church in the capital and the castle and village of Torrent.\(^10\)

The remainder of the goods in the Templars’ Catalan province was assigned to the Hospitalers, which significantly boosted their assets. As a result, in order to better manage these assets, in 1319 the castellany of Amposta was divided into two administrative entities: one that was called by the same name and encompassed all the commandries located on the right banks of the Ebro and Segre Rivers, and another that was called the priory of Catalonia, which consisted of the houses located on the left banks of these rivers plus the three in Roussillon and the one in Mallorca.\(^10\) In the mid-14th century, after the period of territorial reorganisation, according to Maria Bonet Donato the castellany had 31 commandries, including a female one in Sixena.\(^10\) There were other administrative units such as the “mayoralty” which included several commandries, the “members” or domains belonging to a commandry, and the “priories” and “abacaries”, which were exclusively ecclesiastical.\(^10\) Several new commandries were created during the 15th century by dividing the members of a single house. Likewise, according to Anthony Luttrel, in 1320 the priory of Catalonia set up 29 commandries, including a female one in Alguaire.\(^10\) New commandries were also established in the priory in the 15th century, such as the one in L’Esplugà Calba.\(^10\) The lands run by these two Hospitaler entities were so vast that in the early 15th century the castellany controlled almost 24% of the domains in Aragon, with more than 4,300 households, around 2,700
of them in the Catalan Ebro sector. The priory, in turn, had more than 2,280 households, a few more than it had had in 1358, when the figure reached 2,512, and jurisdiction over 111 villages.107

**The provinces’ contributions to the central convents**

The specific purpose of the Western commandries, apart from recruiting new members, was limited to first providing the goods that ensured their mission in the East to support and tend to pilgrims, and secondly to defend the Western enclaves in the Holy Land. This meant that part of the revenues that the European commanderies earned from their holdings had to be sent to the respective central convents as tithes.108 The responsibility for gathering these monies fell on the provincial master for the Templars and the castellan of Amposta or the prior of Catalonia for the Hospitallers. Even though it appears that the amount to be paid in the different European provinces was one-third of the revenues, for the Hospitallers this was lowered to one-fourth or one-fifth in the 14th century.109 These organisations’ special circumstances in both the Principality and the other kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula in their contribution to the fight against Islam led this amount to be lowered to one-tenth.110 In any event, the central house and the province agreed to the amount each year and each period, and the total was proportionally divided among the different commanderies according to their wealth and revenues. The Templars’ tithes to the East in 1304, a year for which we have figures, was 1,000 silver marks or 52,000 silver tornesels.111

In terms of the Hospitallers, the houses’ contribution to the central convent was established in the rules of Raymond du Puy, which were approved by the Pope in 1145; it accounted for one-third of each commandary’s revenues. Initially, each prior was in charge of gathering and sending this amount to the East, but the general chapterhouse meeting in Rhodes in 1358 appointed a person within each priory in charge of ensuring that the payments reached the Treasury of Rhodes. In the early 14th century, the heads of the castellany – which included all the commandaries located on lands within the Catalan Crown – added the amount of 1,000 florins from Aragon, a figure that after the annexation of the assets of the Templars rose to 4,000 “florins bons” (from Avignon, Florence or Rhodes) from the castellany of Amposta and 4,000 more from the priory of Catalonia, which, however, was soon lowered to 3,000 florins.112 At the end of this century and the beginning of the next, the same amount, 3,600 florins from Aragon (equal to 3,000 “florins bons”) remained in place, although in 1415 it was lowered to 3,500 florins from Aragon. With this contribution, of all 26 priorities in the order, the priory of Catalonia ranked the third in its contributions after the priories of France and Saint-Gilles in Provence.113

The general chapterhouse held in Rome in 1446 issued a new system of calculating tithes, which resulted in 5,000 florins for the Catalan priory. Apart from these tithes, the Grand Master also requested extraordinary contributions to cover extraordinary needs. Generally speaking, these amounts were added to the tithes and were divided over three or five years. This kind of aid to the central convent started as far back as the early 14th century and continued during the ensuing century. It was usually justified by the special expenses incurred in countering the Ottoman Turks and Mongols, as well as the Sultan of Egypt’s Mamluks, who laid siege to the city of Rhodes in 1444, where the Hospitallers fought them off for 30 days. The amount of the tithes and the special contributions, called *annuita*, represented an annual contribution of between 5,500 and 7,000 florins for the priory in the 14th and 15th centuries.114

The province’s contributions to the central house were not limited solely to money; rather given the orders’ different needs in effectively fulfilling their missions in the East, the money was often accompanied by horses, harnesses and weapons, as well as food products including grain, oil, cheese and sausages.

Despite the fact that the members of these orders in Catalonia were usually there to help in the monarchs’ military campaigns for territorial expansion, the provinces always heeded the cries of the central convent to expand its staff. Both orders constantly supplied brothers to the East, in either permanent or temporary service, especially after the first quarter of the 12th century, when the supply rose after Catalonia’s southward expansion in which all of Valencia was secured. At some point, the Catalan groups established in the central convent served as veritable lobbies that even went so far as influencing the election of a Catalan as the new Grand Master, as were the cases of the Templar Grand Master Arnau de Torroja (1181-1184) and the Hospitallers Antoni de Fluvià (1421-1437) and Pere Ramon Sacosta (1461-1467). At some points, too, there was a significant presence of Catalan brothers in the Grand Master’s curia, such as in the time of the last Templar master Jacques de Molay (1292-1307), in which they served as his closer advisors and collaborators.115

The Catalan Templar province’s collaboration in the East would last until the order was abolished, as proven by the fact that of the 76 brothers interrogated during the Nicosia trial, seven came from Catalonia, and the Catalans were the second most heavily represented nationality after the French.116 The presence of Catalan brothers in the East is also clear through the four Templars implicated in Tripoli, whose release was finagled by James II, even after the order had been disbanded.117

On the other hand, the presence of Catalan Hospitallers in the East, generally insignificant until the early 15th century, intensified after the Western Schism was over, a period in which Benedict XIII controlled the Hospitaller posts and dignities in both the priory and the castellany.118 After the assembly held in Avignon in 1418, in
which Grand Master Philibert de Naillac convened numerous representatives of the tongues in Spain, France, Auvergne and Provence, the castellany and priory had even closer ties with the central convent on Rhodes. As a result of this new situation, the Grand Master authorised 24 knights to be inducted into the Catalan priory and sent to Rhodes. He did the same shortly thereafter with nine more knights from the castellany and 11 from the priories of Castile and Portugal, that is, a total of 44 from the Iberian Peninsula, while he only authorised a total of 31 from the remaining priories. Between 1417 and 1447, there is proof of the presence of 52 Hospitallers from the Catalan priory on Rhodes; they came from the nobility (32 members), including the Erill, Cardona and Mur families, and from knights (28 brothers) and the urban patriciate (17 members).

The Catalan brothers’ commitment and actions in the East led to the election of Antoni de Fluvia as the Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital in 1421. During his rule (1421-1437), he surrounded himself with Catalan brothers for the main posts in the convent of Rhodes, on both the island and abroad.

Almost one-quarter of a century later, in 1461, another Catalan was elected Grand Master of the Hospital, Pere Ramon Sacosta. He had collaborated with Fluvia, who had appointed him bailli of Rhodes, where there is proof that he visited in 1436. In 1444, he secured the post of dra-perius, and the following year he became the castellan of Amposta, the priory he would run from 1445 to 1461. During his stint as Grand Master (1461-1467), he was also aided by Catalan brothers.

Finally, in the Mamluk attacks in 1440 and 1444 and the attacks by the Ottomans between 1453 and 1454, the Catalan Hospitallers played a major role in defending Rhodes, both on land and aboard the galleys.

THE ORDERS’ PARTICIPATION IN MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

Ever since they pinpointed the Iberian Peninsula as a target of their mission after the agreement reached in Girona in November 1143, the Templars participated in the military campaigns of the counts of Barcelona and were present in the seizures of Tortosa (1148) and Lleida (1149), where they were rewarded with much of the newly conquered land. However, the Templars’ most important contribution was in the conquest of Mallorca and Valencia, after which they also received important assets that helped them to found new commandries (one in Ciutat de Mallorca, or Palma, and others in Xivert, Burriana and the city of Valencia).

Sometimes, as Forey has claimed, the Templars must have also conducted military actions in addition to the royal campaigns, either on their own initiative or to conquer the land that the monarch had granted them. For example, James I granted them the Benhamet and Mantella farmsteads near the town of Burriana on the condition that they conquer them.

In addition to supplying military staff, these brothers often offered their opinions and counsel to the monarchs before the latter undertook military campaigns.

Nonetheless, the Templar contingents that participated in the royal army were never that large, as can be seen by the fact that in the conquest of Mallorca they accounted for no more than 100 knights, and the fact that in 1303 James II initially asked them for 100 knights to repel an attack waged from Granada, although in the end he only asked for 20 or 30 knights.

Likewise, even though they did not initially take part in the campaign to conquer Mallorca, James I later rewarded the Hospitallers with lands. However, they were present at the conquest of Valencia, as a member of his royal council, the castellan Hug de Fullaíquer even encouraged James I to forge ahead with the enterprise, in which the Hospitallers participated. The brothers also made monetary contributions to Peter the Catholic’s campaigns in southern France.

In the wars with Castile, Genoa and Mallorca during the reign of Peter III, the monarch often enlisted the aid of numerous members of the Hospital in his endeavours. In 1358, Juan Fernández de Heredia travelled to Aragon to participate in the war against Castile, to which the castellany also contributed 150 knights and 50,000 sous, while several years earlier, in 1344, Brother Guillem de Guimerà had helped to win back Roussillon.

INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

Almost from the beginning of their presence in the country, the provincial master of the Temple was often a member of the retinue accompanying the king. While this is clear as far back as the first head of the order, Brother Pere de Rovira (1141-1158), the provincial master’s role at the most important events in the monarchy became even more prominent in the reign of Alphonse I (1162-1196). For example, during the 15 years that he ran the Catalan-Provencal province (1162-1196), Brother Arnau de Torroja often appeared documented by the king’s side, without neglecting his obligations to the order. This custom among Templar and Hospitaller leaders would last throughout the entire Middle Ages. In the late Middle Ages, the priors of Catalonia and the castellans of Amposta were members of the royal councils. As such, the Catalan monarchs used them for special missions, often as their ambassadors to the Holy See or to other monarchs. The Templar provincial master Guillem de Mont-rodon was a member of the embassy sent to Rome in late 1213 to arrange the recovery of the child king James I with Pope Innocent III. Another master, Brother Jaume de Pontons, presided over the embassy sent by the Conquerer to Pope Urban IV in 1262 to negotiate the marriage of the monarch’s son, Peter, with Constance of Sicily. And yet anot-
her master, Brother Arnau de Castellnou, was sent to the French court in 1272 to arrange matters for the same king, James I.133

After the death of Blanche of Anjou, James II used the Hospitallers – specifically Brother Mateu de Laodicea, whose brother was the knight commander in Cyprus – to arrange his marriage with Maria of Cyprus (1315).134 Peter the Ceremonious used the services of Juan Fernández de Heredia several times as his ambassador to Castile and Navarre, and especially to the papal curia in Avignon.135

Another example of the Templars’ and Hospitallers’ institutional dealings in Catalonia was their leaders’ participation in the General Court of Catalonia. The provincial master of the Temple attended the court as a member of the ecclesiastical branch until 1307, as did the castellan of Amposta first, followed by the prior after the creation of the priory in Catalonia in 1319. However, when the posts were absent or vacant, or when lieutenants were filling them, they or their procurators attended them.136 Nonetheless, some members of the Hospital played very prominent roles in the top representative body of the country, the Generalitat de Catalunya, which emerged from the General Court of Cervera in 1359. Back in the first government of the Generalitat, Brother Pere Arnau de Paretstortes, prior of Catalonia, was elected deputy for the ecclesiastical branch.137 In this organisation’s early stages (1359-1413), several Hospitaller brothers were elected to the General Court to hold managerial posts in the institution. Brother Pere Toló, commander of Gardeny, served as the ecclesiastical auditor in 1375 and 1376, and Guillem de Guimerà was the ecclesiastical deputy in 1376 and 1377.138 After the consolidation of the Generalitat at the 1413 Court of Barcelona, several Hospitallers came to run the institution either as ecclesiastical deputies or as auditors of accounts. Examples include Joan Desgarrigues, commander of Masdéu, who was the ecclesiastical deputy from 1419 to 1422, and Joan Despilles, commander of Barbens, who served as the ecclesiastical auditor from 1461 to 1464.140 The Generalitat was made up of three deputies, one for the ecclesiastical branch which presided, one for the military or noble branch, and a third for the royal branch or the bourgeoisie, in addition to three auditors of accounts, one for each branch.

**Administrative, fiscal and economic collaboration**

Given the commandries’ expertise in managing economic affairs, in the late 12th and first half of the 13th centuries the Catalan monarchs often enlisted the aid of the Templar brothers in handling their finances. The brothers from the Palau del Vallès-Barcelona commandry played a particularly prominent role in this, as their commanders were in charge of collecting and supervising the accounts of the royal baillages in the late 12th century.141 Even in 1289, Alphonse II the Liberal commissioned Brother Romeu Burguet to collect the accounts of all the royal functionaries.142 From the late 13th century until the arrest of the Templars in late 1307, Brother Jaume d’Ollers served as the Procurator of the King of Mallorca in his trans-Pyrenean states.143

Likewise, both orders lent money not only to noblemen and private individuals but also to the monarchs. Alphonse I, for example, often drew from the Templars’ credit; since he had not repaid his loans totalling 5,000

Figure 5. Peñíscola Castle. It follows the fortress-convent model created in the Holy Land and later spread to the countries in the former Crown of Aragon by the Order of the Temple, which had been tested at Miravet Castle in the mid-12th century.
The military orders performed the important task of colonising the lands given to them by attracting new settlers to live there. This colonisation was particularly intense in the region of Lleida through the Templar commandries in Gardeny, Barbens and Corbins. There, they granted lands to peasants, who had to pay annual tithes or give up part of their harvest.149 The colonisation was even more accentuated around the Ebro River,150 with the granting of settlement charters, particularly through the Templar commandry in Miravet and the Hospitaller commandries in Amposta, a district given to the Hospitallers on the 8th of January 1150, and Ulledecona, which the order was given in 1178. The Hospitallers' actions were mainly conducted between 1220 and 1240. The first settlement was in Ulledecona in 1222, which was followed by Font de l’Ametlla in 1227, Sénia in 1232, Alcanar in 1239, Les Ventalles in 1257, Aldea in 1258, Sant Lluc d’Ulldecona in 1274 and Freginal in 1283.151

The Templars, in turn, colonised the extensive lands of Miravet Castle, given to them by Ramon Berenguer IV in 1153, and the commandry of Ascó, organised back in 1191. They granted settlement charters to the towns of Gandesa in 1192 and 1194;152 Pinell in 1223;153 Batea in 1205;154 Ginestar, Rasquera155 and On in 1206; Les Camposines in 1209; Prat de Comte in 1210; Vilalba in 1224; Garropte in 1237; Vall de Batea in 1244; Gandesola in 1248; Pinyeres and Algars in 1280;156 and La Pobla de Massaluca in 1295.157 Most of the recipients of these town

Figure 6. Ulledecona Castle. It was part of the Catalan frontier with the Saracens until the Valencian campaigns of James I starting in around 1230. Today, you can see a walled area with a round tower with Arab origins and the palace tower of the Order of the Hospital. The square-shaped building features a semicircular arched window. Photo: Jesús Cano Sánchez.
The military orders and Catalan trade in the East

The presence of the Templars and Hospitallers in the East particularly fostered the trade of Catalan merchants, whom these orders provided with not only shelter but also often logistical support for their mercantile transactions. Deposits made to the Templar commandry in Barcelona could be cashed in at the Eastern convents, and vice-versa. In 1270, for example, Guillem de Pujalt received a certain amount of money from the convent of Palau that he had deposited in a commandry in the East.163 Starting in the 14th century, after the Order of the Hospitallers was established on Rhodes, Catalan merchants started to be present on this island. However, they were not a major presence until the end of the 14th century,164 and they continued to flock there in the ensuing centuries, particularly while the orders were being governed by the two Catalan Grand Masters, Antoni de Fluvià and Ramon Sacosta. As Claude Carrère has claimed, just as the Genoese made Chios their base of operations, the Catalans used Rhodes as the platform for their commercial activities in the Levant and the Aegean Sea, from which their ships reached Chios, Cyprus, the Black Sea and even Alexandria.165 The Catalan merchants mainly exported
The female branches of the military orders in Catalonia

Some military orders also set up convents for women in Catalonia with no men present. Even though the rules of the Order of the Temple clearly banned females from joining – “that, then, women in the capacity of sisters shall not be welcome in the house of the Temple”166 – the reality was quite different, as there were female convents in several places around Europe.167 In Catalonia, there were cases of noblewomen who were part of Templar communities at several different levels. In 1133, the lady from Rousillon, Açalaida, gave herself to the Temple “in order to live under the obedience of the master with no property”,168 while Adelaida de Subirats stated in the document attesting to her donation to the order that “she gave herself as such to live under the obedience of the master and rules of the house of the Temple and its brothers”.169 A more unique case was Ermengarda de Banyeres, who after having offered herself to the Temple as a soror in 1196,170 appeared two years later as “preceptor” of the commandry of Rourell, in El Camp de Tarragona.171 Nevertheless, this female commander existed for a relatively brief period of time, and the commandry ceased to be mixed after Ermengarda’s death.172 The women had a stronger presence in the Order of the Hospital, and we are aware of four convents: Isot, located near Bellfort in the township of La Baronia de Rialp (La Noguera), documented in 1190;173 Siscar, documented in the early 13th century;174 Santa Maria de la Ràpita, founded in the 13th century and present there until 1477, when the nuns were transferred to Tortosa;175 and Cervera-Alguaire, founded in Cervera in 1245 by Marquesa de Saguàrdia, Lady of L’Espluga de Francolí, and transferred to Alguaire between 1250 and 1262.176 The latter was the most important convent in the Principality, where girls and ladies from the Catalan nobility took shelter. The prioress had the right to attend the provincial chapterhouses of the order alongside the heads of the other commandries.177 Those who had taken their religious vows lived in private houses within the convent; however, they also had spaces for communal life including the church, the chapterhouse and the dormitories. In the convent complex, there were quarters for the chaplains, the prioress – where cloth, almonds, metals and coral, and they imported spices, sugar, cotton, alum and slaves.166

Figure 8. Weapons courtyard at the Templars’ Miravet Castle.
documents and books were kept – and the monarchs, the latter called the “royal chambers”. The convent suffered from the effects of the Catalan Civil War in the 15th century, and even more intensely from the Reapers’ War, when around 36 nuns were transferred to the bishop’s palace in Lleida in March 1644, and to Barcelona in late May, to return to Alguaire in 1653. However, the ruinous state of the convent led the Hospital authorities to decide to permanently move the community to Barcelona in 1699, and the Alguaire convent was abandoned. Despite the fact that the Order of Saint James from León and Castile had a fairly weak presence in Catalonia, unlike in Aragon, where it had a commandery in Montblán on which all the other commanderies founded in the Catalan Crown depended and another in Teruel, it did have a commander to administer the assets of Sidamon and Palau d’Anglesola; it held rights in Lleida, Alcoletge and Montblanc; and it ruled the Hospital of Olesa de Bonesvalls. However, the two female convents of this order were quite prominent, Sant Pere de la Pedra founded in Lleida in 1260 and especially Santa Maria de Jonqueres.

The earliest information we have on the church of Sant Pere de la Pedra dates from 1260, in which James I placed the properties that the Order of Saint James owned in Lleida under his protection. The church patron was Constantia d’Anglesola i de Montcada, who was its first prioress. Even though there were plans for a community of 13 religious women, in reality Sant Pere de la Pedra was quite small during its entire 70 years of existence. In 1320, for example, it only had two nuns. Its assets included several mills in the city of Lleida and the rights to the irrigation channel in Fontanet, Alcoletge and Vallesguer. Poor administration, a dearth of vocations and the religious volunteers’ gradual move to Jonqueres meant that by 1342 the master of Santiago merged the community with Barcelona’s Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria de Jonqueres, which was also assigned the assets of Sant Pere de la Pedra, on the condition, however, that it keep a chapel in the church to pray for the benefactors.

The monastery of the Order of Saint James in Santa Maria de Jonqueres was founded in 1214 by a noblewoman in Sant Vicenç de Jonqueres, near Sabadell, with the authorisation of the Bishop of Barcelona, Berenguer de Palou, and under the rule of Saint Benedict. The same year, the community was confirmed by Pope Innocent III. Countess Garsenda de Provença, the benefactress of the community, managed to get it to join the Order of Faith and Peace set up in Gascony and affiliated with the Order of Saint James.

Protected by the monarchs and privileges from the popes – in 1246 Innocent VI welcomed it under his protection and confirmed its possessions, in 1273 the community lived next to the Carbonell mill outside the walls of Barcelona on the edge of the township of Sant Martí de Provençals, which James I had granted it in 1270. The sanitary conditions derived from the existence of the irrigation ditch that ran alongside it led Alphonse II in 1289 and James II in 1293 to authorise the community to move inside the city of Barcelona. In around 1300, the nuns were living in their third and permanent monastery inside Barcelona.

The community was made up of the daughters of noblemen, knights, merchants and honourable citizens of Barcelona. The future nuns often entered the convent at a young age and received the training appropriate for their class. Later they could choose between taking their vows or leaving the convent to marry, which they were also allowed to do after having taken their vows. Even after taking their three vows, the nuns had a certain degree of freedom to dispose of and administer their personal assets and to interact with the outside world, as closure was quite lax. They lived in their own houses built inside the monastery complex, although they performed certain acts together as a community, such as mass, the prayers of the canonical hours in the choir and certain meals. In the Middle Ages, the community had around 30 members (24 in 1326 and 33 in 1390), although this number rose considerably in the ensuing century, when it reached its ceiling of 40 members in 1531 as deemed by the visitors for reasons of revenue. However, it began to experience a significant downswing in the 18th century, which was accentuated at the beginning of the following century; it had only six religious members in 1806, when it finally disappeared.

Given its characteristics, the community hired external women to serve the community, in addition to servants who lent a hand in the sisters’ houses. There is also evidence of several male and female slaves between 1368 and 1541. Additionally, they also made use of the services of numerous professionals, including barristers, procurators, notaries, archivists, doctors, surgeons, vicars, sacristans and organists, who were paid their due salaries.

The 1697 siege of Barcelona, an episode in the Nine Years’ War, led the nuns to abandon the convent, and the buildings were seriously damaged from the bombs. Once the quarters were restored in 1702, the siege of 1713 once again negatively affected the convent.

During the occupation of Barcelona by French troops, in September 1808 the nuns had to abandon the monastery, which was turned into a hospital, while its church was turned into a gunpowder storehouse. Even though Ferdinand VII ordered the buildings and goods to be returned to the military orders in 1814, the building continued to be used as a military hospital for the Spanish troops. Despite the fact that in 1822 there were plans to move the university into the building, and that the nuns of Valldonzella in 1825 and the Piarist fathers in 1828 wanted to reside there, none of these three projects flourished. However, the building was used as a reformatory in 1856, and in 1868 the Revolutionary Junta, in agreement with the Barcelona Town Hall, decided to conserve just the church and tear down the rest of the complex. The former was moved to the Eixample in 1869 to become La
Concepció parish see and church, which was officially opened in 1871. The cloister was also moved beside the parish church, albeit in a smaller form.201

The Order of Saint George of Alfama: The Catalan Military Order

The only truly Catalan military order was Saint George of Alfama (Sant Jordi d’Alfama), or the Knights of Saint George, founded in 1201 by Peter the Catholic with the mission of defending and resettling the desert-like, arid, inhospitable coastal lands stretching between El Coll de Balaguer and L’Ampolla.202 Initially, its members, which were never very numerous, were governed by the Augustinian rule until Pope Gregory XI, at the behest of Peter the Ceremonious, canonically approved the institute and the new rules in 1373, which meant adapting these rules to the order’s own needs.203 Its organisational structure was profoundly feudal, since its members were made to swear an oath of loyalty to their superior.204 The men of the cloth, most of them Catalan, could be either knights or clergy and wore habits that consisted of a white serge scapulary over which they wore a cape of the same colour with the red cross of Saint George emblazoned on the left side.205 The order’s leaders successively received the titles of “quaestor of alms”, “prior”, “commander”, “grand commander” and, starting in 1355, the definitive name of “master”.206 Until 1365, the heads of this order were chosen by the chapterhouse of the brothers; however, from that year on the monarchy exerted such a heavy influence on the institution that the Catalan monarchs came to appoint the leaders of the order.207

For many years, the order’s assets were limited to what it had been granted in the first royal donation. As a result, it mainly had use of the alms donated by the faithful and the bequests of its benefactors to fulfil its objectives. However, its participation in the conquests of Mallorca and Valencia was rewarded by James I with numerous properties in these kingdoms, which made it possible for the order to create a priory in the city of Valencia.208 Its assets extended throughout all the states in the Catalan Crown, with major possessions in Alcarràs (Catalonia), Valencia and Morvedre (Valencia), Bujaraloz (Aragon), Valldemossa (Mallorca) and Toraxia (Menorca).209

The order reached its peak in the mid-14th century, enhanced by Peter the Ceremonious’ favour:210 it increased its assets, earned the Pope’s approbation in 1373 and participated in the monarch’s military campaigns alongside the other orders. Its members lent their help to the wars against James of Mallorca, Castile and Sardinia.211 Even though these partnerships meant new donations of assets from the sovereign, as well as the granting of new privileges, the poor economic management of its leaders, the frequent internecine squabbling and the general laxity of its members at the end of this century212 triggered a crisis which ultimately led the order to be amalgamated with the Military Order of Montesa at the suggestion of Martin the Humane. This merger was confirmed by Pope Benedict XIII in 1400, whereupon the order because known as the Order of Montesa and Saint George of Alfama.213

Notes and references

[1] Catalunya Nova, or “New Catalonia”, refers to the part of the Principality of Catalonia lying to the west and south of the Llobregat River basin, which mainly encompassed the land conquered in the mid-12th century by Ramon Berenguer IV, specifically the counties of Lleida and Tarragona.


[5] Regarding the presence of the canons of the Holy Sepulchre on the Iberian Peninsula, see “Die ritterorden und der orden vom heiligen grab auf der iberischen halbinsel”. In: Militia Sancti Sepulcri. Idea e istituzioni, a cura di Kaspar ELM e Cosimo Damiano FONSECA. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale tenuto presso la Pontificia Università del Late-


[25] Catalunya Vella, or “Old Catalonia”, refers to the part of the Principality of Catalonia existing prior to Ramon Berenguer’s 12th century conquest.


[30] Unfortunately, there is a dearth of prosopographical works by the provincial heads of both orders. Regarding the Temple, however, we should mention the contribution by Jaume Vilaginés on Grand Master Pere de Rovira (1143-1158) (Jaume Vilaginés i Segura. “Pere de Rovira, un temple del Vallès”. Notes, no. 20 (2005), pp. 43-61). Also worth noting is the biography of Arnau de Torroja written by Josep Maria Sans i Travé (Josep Maria Sans i Travé. Arnuau de Torroja: un catalá mestre major de l’orde del Temple (1118/1120?-1184). Discurs lligat el dia 10 de desembre de 2006 en l’acte de recepció pública de... a la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona. Barcelona 2006). Regarding the provincial master Guillem de Mont-rodon (1214-1218), there are important studies by Antoni Pladevall (Antoni Pladevall i Font. “Mont-rodon. Esbós d’història del castell i família”. Taradell, no. 143-153 (1959-1960), pp. 1-42; Antoni Pladevall i Font. Guillem de Mont-rodon. Mestre del Temple i tutor de Jaume I. (Ordres Militars, 3). Pagès, Lleida 1993; Antoni Pladevall i Font. Mont-rodon: passat i present d’un gran llinatge i d’un casal osunc. Vic 2001). A brief biography of Ramon de Saguàrdia was written by Josep Maria Sans i Travé for the Diccionari d’història eclesiàstica de Catalunya (Josep Maria Sans i Travé. “Saguàrdia, Ramon de”. In: Diccionari d’història eclesiàstica de Catalunya. Vol. III. Generalitat de Catalunya and Clarret, Barcelona 2001, pp. 316-317), and he has stressed the role of the order in Catalonia during its dying days (Josep Maria Sans i Travé. La defensa dels Templers catalans. Cartes de fra Ramon de Saguàrdia durant el setge de Miravet. (Els Ordres Militars, 7). Pagès, Lleida 2002). Also worth noting are the biographies of the provincial masters who earned the rank of Grand Master discussed in the work by Marie-Luise Bulst-Thiele, which contains information on Arnau de Torroja, Gilbert Eral and Pere de Montagut: Marie-Luise Bulst-Thiele. Sacrae Domus Militiae Templi Hierosolvimitani Magistri. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Templordens 1118/19-1314. Göttingen 1974, pp. 99-105 (Arnau de Torroja), pp. 135-143 (Gilbert Eral) and pp. 170-188 (Pere de Montagut). A few brief biographies of the Templar masters and castellans of Amposta during the reign of James I can be found in the work by López Elum (Pedro López Elum. “Aportación al estudio de maestres y comendadores de las órdenes del Hospital y del Temple durante el reinado de Jaime I (1213-1276)”. Ligarzas, no. 2 (1970), pp. 39-56). Regarding the Order of the Hospital, the literature is somewhat more extensive, especially on the personality of the great Juan Fernández de Heredia, who has attracted the interest of numerous historians because of his multiple facets. I am referring to the extensive bibliography contained in my introduction to the reissue of the work by Miret i Sans on the Catalan Templars and Hospitallers (Joaquim Miret i Sans.


[34] Maria Bonet Donato. La orden del Hospital en la Corona de Aragón. Poder y gobierno en la Castellanía de Amposta (ss. xii-xv). CSIC, Madrid 1994, pp. 266-275.


[46] Regarding the chapterhouses of the castellany, see Maria Bonet Donato. La orden del Hospital en la Corona de Aragón. Poder y gobierno en la Castellania de Amposta (ss. xii-xv). CSIC, Madrid 1994, pp. 266-275.


The embellishment projects conducted by Brother Guillem de Guimerà at Barberà Castle are paradigmatic; see Josep Maria Sans i Travé. Guillem de Guimerà, fraire de l’Hospital, President de la Genera


This can be gleaned regarding the Templars from the answers to the inquisitors during the questioning: Josep Maria Sans i Travé. La fi dels templers catalans. (Els Ordes Militars, 10). Pagès, Lleida 2008, pp. 203-205; Alan J. Forey. “Recruitment to Military Orders (Twelfth to mid-Fourteenth centuries)”. Viator, no. 17 (1986), pp. 130-171.

This can also be gleaned from the declarations during the trial of Brother Ramon Oliver, knight commander of Zaragoza: Josep Maria Sans i Travé. La fi dels templers catalans. (Els Ordes Militars, 10). Pagès, Lleida 2008, pp. 203-205.


The Military Orders in Catalonia


[93] See, for example, the tomb of Bernat Guillem de Foixà from the chapel of the Foixà Castle, preserved today in the church of Nostra Senyora de l’Esperança in S’Agaró.


[131] Maria Bonet Donato. La orden del Hospital en la Corona de Aragón. Poder y gobierno en la Castella de Amposta (ss. xii-xv). CSIC, Madrid 1994, pp. 73 and 75.

[152] Anton Monner i Estopinyà. “Les cartes de poblament de la Terra Alta”. In: *Actes de les Premeres Jor-


[158] The “Usatges” of Barcelona consist of a series of legal norms from different sources, including rulings from the countship court; common law; council canons; feudal Lombard common law; excerpts from the Visigothic “Liber Iudiciorum”; the royal constitutions of Alphonse I, Peter I, and James I; and excerpts from the “Etymologies” of Saint Isidore of Seville (even though manuscripts from the late 12th century are still preserved, its final draft was written during the reign of James I). As a source of Catalan common law, its text is gathered in several compilations from the Constitutions and other laws of Catalonia (1422-1704).

[159] The “Costums” of Lleida consist of a series of laws from Lleida compiled in 1228 by the jurist and city councillor Guillem Botet. They include the rules bestowed upon the city by the counts-kings, as well as other elements of common and municipal law. In addition to the territory of the city of Lleida, its laws were applied in other towns in Catalonia Nova, especially after the new colonisation south-west of Lleida.


[171] The document can be seen in Josep Maria Sans i Travé. *Col·lecció diplomàtica de la casa del Temple de Barberà (945-1212)*. Department of Justice, Generalitat


[182] Josep Lladonosa. Història de la vila d’Alguaire i el seu monestir santjoanista. Lleida 1981, p. 189-209. In Barcelona, they lived in the former seat of the priory of Catalonia until 1835; they moved to Sant Gervasi de Cassoles in 1860 and to Valldoreix in 1977. They remained in Valldoreix until the community was disbanded in 2005, when the two surviving nuns joined the community of Saint John in Salinas de Añana (Álava).


[205] Eufemià Fort i Cogul. Sant Jordi d’Alfama; l’orde militar català. Dalmau, Barcelona 1971, pp. 21-22;

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