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Anne Brogini, *Une Noblesse en Méditerranée: Le couvent des Hospitaliers dans la première modernité*. Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2017. 353 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliographie, et annexe. €25.00 (pb). ISBN 9791032000946.

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Over the past two decades, scholars have crafted a history of nobility in the early modern period that moves beyond national historiographies, examining noble families that moved across and between early modern societies. In many of these works, French and Francophone nobles appear as transnational actors, contributing to the broader history of elites, mobility, and migration in early modern Europe.[1] Certain studies construct a comparative history of nobilities across early modern states and societies, sometimes conceiving of a pan-European nobility.[2]

Anne Brogini extends this approach into the Mediterranean world, considering the *chevaliers de Malte*, or Knights of Malta, as a specific group of nobles with a significant role in southern Europe and the central Mediterranean during the early modern period.[3] The Order of Saint John of Jerusalem (Hospitallers) had been founded during the twelfth century as a military order of *moines-soldats* (monk-soldiers) with the specific mission of defending the Latin Christian kingdoms in the Holy Land. Nobles from across Europe joined the Knights of Saint John, took religious vows, and accepted a conventual life in order to defend Christian holy sites and protect Christian pilgrims in the Levant. The progressive loss of Latin Christian territories in Palestine and Syria forced the Hospitaliers to retreat to Cyprus in 1291 and then to Rhodes in 1309. The conquest of the island of Rhodes by the expanding Ottoman Empire in 1522 forced a radical transformation of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.

Une Noblesse en Méditerranée: Le couvent des Hospitaliers dans la première modernité focuses on the early modern history of the Order, as the Knights of Saint John settled on the island of Malta in the central Mediterranean and adopted a new identity. King Charles I of Spain (Emperor Charles V) granted the island of Malta to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem as a fief in 1530, effectively subordinating the Hospitallers to the Spanish monarchy. Throughout the early modern period, the Knights of Malta had to negotiate their complex positions as vassals to the king of Spain, religious subjects of the Pope, and members of a nascent maritime state in the central Mediterranean. Brogini argues that this political situation forced modifications in the Order that eroded the ideal of a noble republic among the *chevaliers* (pp. 224–230). Grand Masters such as Jean de La Valette, Jean de La Cassière, and Alof Wignacourt attempted to maintain the international status of the Order, while reinforcing its political, religious, and bureaucratic institutions at the new capital city of La Valette. The historical contexts of Ottoman expansion,

Spanish-Ottoman warfare, confessional reform, and religious warfare all shaped the Knights of Malta in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The book is organized into three parts: 1) *Race et vertus: Les chevaliers de Malte, une parfaite noblesse*, 2) *Crise et renouveau: Le temps des Réformes religieuses*, and 3) *Troubles et convulsions politiques: L'identité ambiguë du couvent*. In each part, Brogini mines a rich body of manuscript sources from the Archives of the Order of Malta (La Valette), National Library of Malta (La Valette), Archivio Segreto Vaticano (Rome), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Rome), Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris), and several departmental archives and municipal libraries (Aix-en-Provence, Marseille, Draguignan). The book exploits the records of the chapter general of the Order of Malta and its various Languages: statutes, *ordonnances*, rolls, *mémoires*, correspondence, proofs of nobility, trials of nobility, and treatises on nobility.

The author adopts a social history methodology to examine the members of the Knights of Malta and the identity of the Order as an exemplary nobility. This approach focuses particularly on the differences between the various “nations” (French, Spanish, Italian, German, English) and “languages” (Provence, Auvergne, France, Aragon, Castile) that structured the Order. Despite the multicultural composition of the Knights of Malta, French nobles dominated the Order and its leadership. Provençal noble families such as the Félix, Suffren, Clapiers, Pontèves, and Villeneuve became especially involved in the Knights of Malta during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, often by placing cadets in the Order (pp. 37-61).

The profession of arms shaped the social identity of the Knights of Malta, promoting martial virtues associated with violence, blood, sacrifice, and holy war. The Order attempted to inspect the noble origins of candidates through a rigorous process of proofs of nobility that gradually evolved from oral testimonies and examination to written proofs (p. 86-105). The Order promoted its exemplary identity as a noble body through printed and painted histories and martyrologies of the Knights of Malta, which focused especially on the epic siege of Malta of 1565.

The Order celebrated the heroic defense of Malta by the *chevaliers* against the Ottoman besiegers, as well as God’s divine protection in prompting the Ottomans to abandon the siege (pp. 112-113). Authors such as Edmond Auger, Antonio Possevino, and Pierre de Boissat presented the Knights of Malta as Christian soldiers engaged in a just war simultaneously against Ottomans and Moors in the Mediterranean and against Protestants in Europe (pp. 118-124). The Order thus represented a perfect nobility in arms, engaged in a permanent crusade against infidels and heretics (p. 123). The successful defense of Malta thus allowed the Order to renew itself and create a new identity as defenders of Christianity worldwide. In the aftermath of the victory, Grand Master Jean de La Valette directed the construction of the new fortified city of La Valette as a “rampart of Christianity” in the central Mediterranean (p. 127).

Despite this image of a perfect nobility, the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem faced an identity crisis in the early modern period. During the sixteenth century, the Knights of Malta embraced Catholic reform movements, prompting an erosion in recruits from England, Germany, and other Protestant areas. Some of the *chevaliers* converted to Protestantism and deserted the Order, but a few were actually condemned for heresy in the mid-sixteenth century as the Order sought to purify the convent. The Order also had to deal with disciplinary problems and violations of its rules, including disobedience, irreverence, pillage, violence, dueling, concubinage, and rape.

The Knights of Malta constantly had to balance their interests between France, Spain, and the Papacy as Franco-Spanish rivalries intertwined with political conflicts and major wars in Italy, the Mediterranean, the Netherlands, and Germany. Brogini finds that the Grand Masters promoted their own princely authority through ritual and ceremonial, but never fully developed monarchical and state-building tendencies (pp. 269-306). The author might have further explored the involvement of the Knights of Malta in the Italian Wars, the Habsburg-Valois Wars, the Dutch Revolt, the French Wars of Religion, the Thirty Years' War, the Fronde, and the Franco-Spanish War.[4] The book examines *chevaliers* who departed Malta to engage in religious warfare in France (p. 183), hinting at connections between noble violence and the political and military activities of the *chevaliers*. [5]

The religious dimensions of the Knights of Malta appear through the tensions between the Order, the Papacy, and the local bishops. The warrior monks seem to have constantly struggled with issues of claustration and religious discipline. Brogini's rich manuscripts expose the Order's attempts to implement Tridentine reforms and to promote the Catholic Reformation. She places the Knights of Malta within the history of religious orders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as new and reformed Catholic Reformation orders expanded rapidly across southern Europe. The establishment of an Ursuline convent at La Valette in 1595 brought a strong feminine presence of Catholic Reformation to Malta and generated new concerns about gender relations on the island (pp. 175-180). The Order's approach to the religious reform seems to have had strong connections to the *dévo*t movement in France and to changing forms of Catholic devotion across early modern Europe and the Mediterranean. [6]

The Knights of Malta renewed its Hospitaller legacy by assisting the sick and founding new hospitals, such as the Sacrée Infirmerie at La Valette. The impulse to found new hospitals and engage in new forms of charity seems clearly linked to the broader Catholic Reformation movement, so the reader wonders about possible connections with the great wave of hospital foundations in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France. [7] The book examines the quarantine practices of the Order and the construction of the lazaret de Marsamxett as a quarantine area near La Valette (pp. 207-212). Brogini's study is suggestive on the relevance of the Order's records for the history of medicine in the early modern period.

Although the book presents the Knights of Malta as a *noblesse en Méditerranée*, the author rarely engages directly with the field of Mediterranean history. This study might have responded to important works by Molly Greene and Emanuel Buttigieg on the Knights of Malta. [8] Studies of the history of violence, galley warfare, and slavery in the Mediterranean could have enhanced the book's analysis of the *chevaliers'* galley operations, *guerre de course* (raiding warfare), *caravanes*, and slavery practices. [9]

Une Noblesse en Méditerranée is an impressive monograph that demonstrates the continuing significance of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem in the early modern period. Far from being nostalgic relics of a Crusading past, the Knights of Malta clearly represented a vital part of a renewed Catholic nobility engaged in new forms of religious warfare in Europe and across the Mediterranean. Anne Brogini succeeds in situating the *chevaliers* as transnational actors within the Catholic Reformation and European noble culture. She argues that the Knights of Malta effectively became a model for Catholic nobles across Europe in the late sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries through their double military/religious identity as warrior monks engaging in holy war (309-310).

NOTES

[1] On French and Francophone nobles as transnational actors, see: Matthew Vester, *Renaissance Dynasticism and Apanage Politics: Jacques de Savoie-Nemours, 1531-1585* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2012); Jonathan Spangler, *The Society of Princes: The Lorraine-Guise and the Conservation of Power and Wealth in Seventeenth-Century France* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Ariane Boltanski, *Les ducs de Nevers et l'état royal. Genèse d'un compromis (ca 1550 – ca 1600)* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2006); Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power during the French Wars of Religion: The Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[2] On the historiography of early modern European nobles and trans-European nobilities, see: Hamish Scott, ed., *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007) and Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[3] This book builds on the author's previous work on Malta in the early modern period: Anne Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté (1530-1670)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006).

[4] Michael Mallett and Christine Shaw. *The Italian Wars, 1494 - 1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014); David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands 1520-1635* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); Peter J. Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[5] On noble violence in early modern Europe, see: Jonathan Davies, *Aspects of Violence in Renaissance Europe* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016); Stuart Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise Family and the Making of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Brian Sandberg, *Warrior Pursuits: Noble Culture and Civil Conflict in Early Modern France* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Stuart Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[6] Megan C. Armstrong, *The Politics of Piety: Franciscan Preachers During the Wars of Religion, 1560-1600* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2010); Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Robert Sauzet, *Au Grand Siècle des âmes: guerre sainte et paix chrétienne en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2007); Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[7] Daniel Hickey, *Local Hospitals in Ancien Régime France: Rationalization, Resistance, Renewal, 1530-1789* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); Tim McHugh, *Hospital Politics in Seventeenth-Century France: The Crown, Urban Elites, and the Poor* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). L. W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

[8] Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Emanuel Buttigieg and Simon Phillips, eds., *Islands and Military Orders, c. 1291 - c. 1798* (London: Routledge, 2016); Emanuel Buttigieg, *Nobility, Faith and Masculinity in the Order of Malta, c. 1580 - c. 1700: The Hospitaller Knights of Malta, C.1580-C.1700* (London: Continuum, 2011).

[9] Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

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