

Staging Holiness: The Case of Hospitaller Rhodes (ca. 1309–1522)

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Staging Holiness: The Case of Hospitaller Rhodes (ca. 1309–1522)

By

Sofia Zoitou



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Introduction

1 Aims and Context of This Study

This book is the result of an investigation conducted in the framework of the research project “From Venice to the Holy Land: *Mise-en-scène* and Forms of Perception of Holy Sites along the Sea Routes to Palestine (1300–1550),” supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation and supervised by Professor Michele Bacci at the University of Fribourg. The project’s objective was to study the ways in which the towns that served as ports of call for the ships sailing along the Venetian sea routes to the Holy Land were invested with new cultic meanings and became associated with the idea of “site-bound” holiness, linked with Jerusalem and the Holy Land.¹ The project team explored a specific network of sites that were geographically linked to the Holy Land as the destination of the journey, but also traced a sacral topography that had been shaped by the maritime nature of the travelers’ experiences. The individual case studies surveyed Venice, Zadar, Dubrovnik and Lesna, Durrës, Vlora and Pllanë, Corfu, Strofades, Crete, and Rhodes, and each one was intended as a contribution to the exploration of the entire topographical network that developed over the course of late medieval pilgrimage. Within this scope, the research focused on previously neglected, but important, sacred sites of the Middle Ages; it considered them in perspective and examined whether and how they came to constitute part of a new sacral topography; their ritual and religious significance in the perception of pilgrims was investigated; and their art-historical significance was re-evaluated in light of the different cultural realities that were established amid the effects of local traditions being combined with Byzantine and Western culture.² The case studies were analyzed through an interdisciplinary, but fundamentally art-historical, outlook, in order to address the issue of the special function and characteristics of the holy and sacred Christian cultic sites.³

The core of the research lay primarily in the examination and indexing of more than 300 pilgrims’ texts written between 1300 and 1550 in

1 This idea has been extensively investigated by Michele Bacci. See indicatively Bacci 2004b, 223–248; Bacci 2012, 179–194; Bacci 2013a, 7–16; Bacci 2013b, 175–197; Bacci 2014, 67–76; Bacci 2017a, 127–153; Bacci et al. 2018, 350–396. For an introduction to the maritime itineraries, see Balard 2013, 33–50.

2 These criteria were developed by Michele Bacci during the preparation of the project.

3 Studies in anthropology and religion have investigated this distinction; see Turner and Turner 1978; Turner 1979; Smith 1987; Stoddard and Morinis 1997.

various European languages, namely: Latin; Middle, High, and Early New High German; Old and Middle French; Italian; Czech; Middle Dutch; and Spanish. In general, these sources have mostly been studied until now from a linguistic, philological, and literary point of view, and their importance as a tool for an art-historical approach to the sites on the Eastern Mediterranean sea route has not been fully appreciated.⁴ No systematic collections of these texts have been published, in contrast with the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods.⁵ The available bibliographies remain the basic guide to locating the existing editions, mostly in old and often rather obscure publications.⁶

In this context, this book examines the port of Rhodes, an important station on the sea route to and from Palestine, during the presence of the Knights Hospitaller on the island (ca. 1309–1522). The close ties of the Order of Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem with the Holy Land laid the ground for the establishment and promotion of diverse cultural attractions: pilgrims' descriptions attest the continuous presence of visitors to the Knights' churches and associated buildings on Rhodes and their treasures. These were the Conventual church, with a rich collection of major Christological and saintly relics, including John the Baptist's right hand, part of the True Cross, a cross made from the basin of the Washing of the Feet, and one of Judas' thirty pieces of silver; the chapel of the Grand Master, which held, among other items, a miraculous thorn from Christ's Crown; the hospital, visitors to which enjoyed indulgences; the church of St. Catherine's hospice, with a large collection of relics; St. Anthony, the cemetery of the Knights, which had a miraculous image of the saint and was also granted with indulgences; St. John the Baptist *de Fonte*, where, according to legend, the head of the Baptist had been found; the shrine of Our Lady of Phileremos, with the famous miraculous Lucan icon; and Our Lady of Victory, erected on the site of the victorious battle against the Ottomans, won through the Virgin's intercession.

The history and setting of these sites at Rhodes have to date not been studied as part of the aforementioned network, and until now the travel reports of pilgrims have not been used extensively and in their totality concerning

4 Ganz-Blättler 1990; Howard 1980; Gomez-Géraud 1999; Chareyron 2005; Allen 2004; Noonan 2007.

5 Geyer 1965; Wilkinson 1977; de Sandoli 1979–1984; Wilkinson, Hill and Ryan 1988; Huygens 1994; Pringle 2012.

6 The most complete remains the work by Reinhold Röhricht; see Röhricht 1890; Röhricht and Meisner 1880. See also Paravicini 1994–2000; Schur 1980; Blättler 1990; Gomez-Géraud 1999. Paravicini's work provided the basis for www.digiberichte.de, a particularly useful database of late medieval and early modern European travel accounts.

this topic.⁷ The sites and their treasures have sometimes been referenced in works concerning the general history of the Order and its presence at Rhodes, as well as in works about the island.⁸ Art-historical and archaeological research, conducted by the Italian Archaeological School during the Italian occupation of the Dodecanese (1912–1947) and, subsequently and continuing presently, by the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese, has mainly been devoted to the description and analysis of architectural, stylistic, and iconographic elements of the monuments.⁹ To supplement these sources, the works of 19th-century eyewitnesses have been invaluable;¹⁰ and the work of the French architect and archaeologist Albert Gabriel on the monuments of the town remains unsurpassed.¹¹ The effort to identify the town's edifices—many of which have been destroyed or heavily renovated—and to redefine the urban topography is ongoing and has resulted in important works that proved extremely valuable for the present study.¹²

7 The sole effort toward the use of these medieval texts is the collection, in two short volumes, of some pilgrims' excerpts, transcribed in their original language. However, the work is fragmentary and remains unpublished in the Library of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese, Rhodes; see *Ευρωπαϊκοί περιηγητές στη Ρόδο*.

8 The historian of the Order, Giacomo Bosio, continues to be a valuable resource; Bosio 1630. Various aspects are explored in Delaville Le Roulx 1913; Papachristodoulou 1972; Waldstein-Wartenberg 1988; Waldstein-Wartenberg 1978, 39–47; Tsirpanlis 1991; Tsirpanlis 1995; Nicholson 2001a; Luttrell 2003b; Hasecker 2008. Anthony Luttrell has published extensively and remains the main authority on the Rhodian period of the Order; see his collection of articles, Luttrell 1978a; Luttrell 1982; Luttrell 1992a; Luttrell 1999; Luttrell 2007. See also Luttrell and O'Malley 2019. The legislation up to 1310 was published by Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906. For the subsequent period, the revised statutes of Guillaume Caoursin, the vice-chancellor of the Hospitallers from 1489 to 1493, have been published by Hasecker and Sarnowsky 2007.

9 For some basic works, see Gerola 1914, 169–365; Lojacono 1936b, 247–274; Lojacono 1936a, 289–365; Livadiotti and Rocco 1996; *Ρόδος 2.400 χρόνια* 2000; Kollias 2001; Kollias 2005; *15 Χρόνια έργων αποκατάστασης* 2007; Kollias 2008; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2008. Concerning the work of the Ephorate at Rhodes, see indicatively Kasdagli, Katsioti and Michaelidou 2007, 35–62.

10 Rottiers 1828; Rottiers 1830; Guérin 1856; Flandin 1858, vol. 2; Biliotti and Cottret 1881; Sommi Picenardi 1900; de Belabre 1908. To these should be added the unpublished manuscript of the Swedish doctor Johannes Hedenborg, which includes an atlas with valuable illustrations, at the Library of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese in Rhodes; see Papamanolis 1984, 93–127; Stefanidou 2001, 69–77.

11 Gabriel 1921; Gabriel 1923.

12 Archontopoulos and Papavassiliou 1991, 307–349; Kollias 2007, 283–297; Roger 2007, 113–170, 359–433; de Vaivre 2009b, 323–387; Maglio 2016a, 145–165; Maglio 2016b; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 137–150; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2019, 139–160.

Concerning the treasures of the Order that were taken to Malta in 1530, some research has been done in order to reconstruct their afterlife.¹³ This has greatly benefited from the 18th-century inventories found in the Maltese archives, especially from the illustrated one in the Archives of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mdina, which is on display in the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum.

The collected evidence was appraised in order to trace the various forms of creation, staging, and perception of the cultic sites at Rhodes, with attention to the conditions that occasionally led to the transformation of the local character of sanctuaries or cultic objects into an “international” one. The focus was twofold: on the one hand, on the pilgrims, whose devotion was characterized by the anticipation of their final goal and its symbolic expression taking place along their sea journey; and on the other hand, on the way in which the local establishment of the Hospitallers responded to and handled these expectations. In this view, the material aspects of the examined sites—such as architecture, location in the natural environment, interior design, decoration, furnishings, and various means of visual emphasis and staging of the cultic objects—were approached as an integrated whole that constituted an artistic strategy aiming at the *mise-en-scène* of the sacred.¹⁴ The buildings under investigation were understood as monumental frames for cultic objects, and the way in which they contributed to the symbolical meaning of the Rhodian urban structure was assessed. The conclusions of this investigation shed light on the complex dimensions of the cultic phenomena that emerged in Rhodes as part of the wider context of the maritime sacral topography of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The aim of this work was not to expand to include all of the Rhodian religious buildings and institutions, but to highlight the network emerging from the literature and evidence. In this aspect, the Greek local element might at times seem underrepresented, a fact determined by the lack of textual evidence and interplay. A comprehensive study of cultic sites and practices on the island remains an ambitious desideratum for future scholarship. On the other hand, the material under consideration here, along with the other case studies in the Eastern Mediterranean basin that were examined in the framework of the “From Venice to the Holy Land” research project, can provide a starting

13 Oman 1970, 101–107, 177–185, 244–249; Hetherington 2000, 39–55; Azzopardi 1989; Buhagiar 2000, 41–56; Buhagiar 2009b, 29–54; Buhagiar 2009a, 13–27; Buhagiar 2017, 61–70.

14 This methodology was devised by Michele Bacci during the preparation of the “From Venice to the Holy Land” project.

point for future comparative research on various aspects of the investigated phenomena.

2 Historical Context

The Order of the Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem emerged as an institution in the crusader states; it grew out of a Jerusalem pilgrim hospice founded by merchants from Amalfi in the abbey of St. Mary of the Latins, next to the Holy Sepulchre, shortly before 1071.¹⁵ Gradually, during the 12th century, it became militarized, although it always maintained its basic aim of caring for the sick and poor. By virtue of a papal bull of February 15th, 1113, issued by Paschal II, the monastic community which ran the hospital was recognized as an autonomous organization, an international lay-religious order dependent only on the Holy See. At this time, the Order was also obliged to take on the military defense of the sick and the pilgrims, as well as the protection of the hospitals and main roads of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, thus adding the task of defending the faith to that of its medical mission.¹⁶ Its members took the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and an additional vow to serve the *domini infirmi*;¹⁷ the vows of obedience prevented them from taking other vows, and, although closely connected with the crusades, they were forbidden from taking the crusader vow.¹⁸ The brethren were Latins and followed a rule approved by the pope that was probably determined in the 1130s.¹⁹ They lived in commanderies that were organized into priories and belonged to four distinctions: knights or *milites*, priests or chaplains, sergeants, and sisters.²⁰ They had to follow certain rules that regulated the specifics of their everyday life, such as property and food, and followed a defined liturgical routine.²¹

15 For the protohistory and origins of the Order, see Luttrell 2017, 3–9.

16 For the history of the hospital up to 1310, see Riley-Smith 1967; Riley-Smith 2012.

17 The concept of lordship of the sick poor was primary to the Hospitallers and constituted a novel ideal that was supported by the papacy; see Riley-Smith 1967, 41.

18 Like the crusaders, they wore a cross and received plenary indulgences; but, unlike them, the military orders were continuously and strictly in opposition to the infidels and committed for life to this struggle, independent of campaigns proclaimed by the pope; see Luttrell 1998c, 77–88; Luttrell 2000b, 5–10.

19 Luttrell 2000b, 5–10.

20 Luttrell 1993, 76–77. For the organization of the Order, see Luttrell 1975, 279, with bibliography.

21 Luttrell 1993, 79–84; Legras and Lemaître 1991, 77–137.

After the loss of Jerusalem in 1187, the Hospitallers' headquarters were transferred to Acre. There, the Knights fought heroically in 1291, when the last Syrian Christian possessions were lost to the Mamluks. The remaining brethren escaped to Cyprus and settled in Limassol, where the Order had been present since 1210, thanks to the concession of important properties, privileges, and commercial rights; but tension with Henry II of Cyprus and the brethren's lack of resources there made it clear that Cyprus could serve only as a provisional base.²² At the dawn of the 14th century, times were difficult for the military orders; general discomfort and suspicion of them had spread in Europe, with a feeling of mistrust and betrayal prevalent after the loss of the crusader states. The Templars were arrested in late 1307 and finally suppressed in 1312. The Hospitallers needed to restore their role as warriors against the infidels and to reassure their financiers of their continued commitment to their vows.

The Hospitallers' decision to move toward the conquest of Rhodes proved successful: the island would provide them with independence, was strategically situated on the trade route to the Levant, Egypt, and Constantinople, and could serve as an ideal base against the Ottomans and for any prospective crusader activity.²³ Rhodes was in Byzantine control at the time and under various Venetians and Genoese who occasionally occupied the island. After he negotiated with the Genoese Vignolo di Vignoli, who claimed to hold imperial fiefs in the Dodecanese, the Master Foulques de Villaret launched the attack on Rhodes in 1306, eventually achieving the conquest of the city in 1309 on the day of the Dormition of the Virgin; from there, the Hospitallers gradually expanded their rule to the surrounding islands of the Dodecanese.²⁴ Pope Clement V had already confirmed the possession of the island by the Order in 1307. Moreover, he granted the Hospitallers independence from other nations, as well as the right to maintain and deploy armed forces and to appoint ambassadors. In 1313 the majority of the possessions of the Templars was transferred to the Hospitallers, after the former's dissolution in 1312. This considerably increased the Order's properties in Europe, which were their main source of income, as all European Hospitaller commanderies were obliged to pay the standard dues owed, the *responsiones*, to the Convent in Rhodes.²⁵ Furthermore, the papacy

22 Luttrell 1975, 280–286.

23 Ibid.; Failler 1992, 113–135; Dupuy 2017, 343–348.

24 Dupuy 2017, 343–348; Luttrell 1997a, 737–761; Luttrell 1997b, 189–214; Luttrell 2003b, 75–77.

25 Delaville Le Roux 1913, 28–50; Luttrell 1978b, 161–171; Luttrell 1998a, 595–622; Vann 2010, 339–346.

would continuously support the Knights and their Rhodian rule by granting indulgences to support their defense.²⁶

The Knights established themselves in the northern part of the town of Rhodes at the *collachium*, or *castrum*, a district on the site of the Early Byzantine acropolis of the town.²⁷ The rest of the city, the *borgo*, lay to the south-southwest and was divided from the *collachium* by an existing Byzantine fortified wall that ran from east to west.²⁸ The *collachium* was divided into two parts: to the west the palace of the Grand Master and the Conventual church were erected; and to the east were the hospital and other public buildings, as well as the brethren's houses and *auberges*, the latter corresponding to each *langue*—the regional or national groups that evolved at Rhodes, into which the brethren were divided.²⁹ The main street in the *collachium* was—and remains—the famous Street of the Knights (Ippoton St.). The Hospitallers gradually engaged in the construction of their institutional buildings, churches, and dwellings and organized their fleet and the port, which became a major commercial center. They invested in the construction of strong fortifications; the walls, along with their corresponding surrounding areas, were divided and assigned to the defense of each *langue* (Figs. 1, 2).³⁰ The main access to the *borgo* was provided by the Marine Gate, west of the Gate of St. George, with a wide unoccupied space, the *magna platea*, and to the northeast end of the town toward the Mole of the Mills by the coastal road of the walled city, the *via circa mare* (Fig. 3).

The local Greek population was not alienated by the presence of the Knights; on the contrary, a balanced co-existence was established, more or less, and the position of the Greek inhabitants of the *borgo* was supported alongside the Latins, religion being a central aspect. With the *sacramentale* of 1309, an agreement drawn up at the time of the surrender to the Hospitallers, the Rhodians recognized papal supremacy in return for the Order's protection; as Uniates, they kept their clergy, continued to worship and perform their religious duties according to the Byzantine rite, and kept most of their churches,

26 Papal indulgences were obtained by the Hospitallers on numerous occasions: in 1308 for the support of a *passagium particulare*; in 1342 for the naval operation that resulted in the conquest of Smyrna and in 1390 for its defense; in 1409 for the defense of Bodrum; in the mid-15th century for the defense of Rhodes against the Mamluks; in 1479 and 1480 for the defense against the Ottomans. See Borchardt 2017, 195–218. Plenary indulgences were also granted in 1430 and 1431 to anyone supporting the island's defense against the Muslim threat; Tsirpanlis 1995, 216.

27 Manoussou-Ntella 2012a, 313–330.

28 Luttrell 2003b, 78–148; Luttrell 2016, 132.

29 Luttrell 2003b, 78–148; Luttrell 2016, 132.

30 Luttrell 2003b, 72.

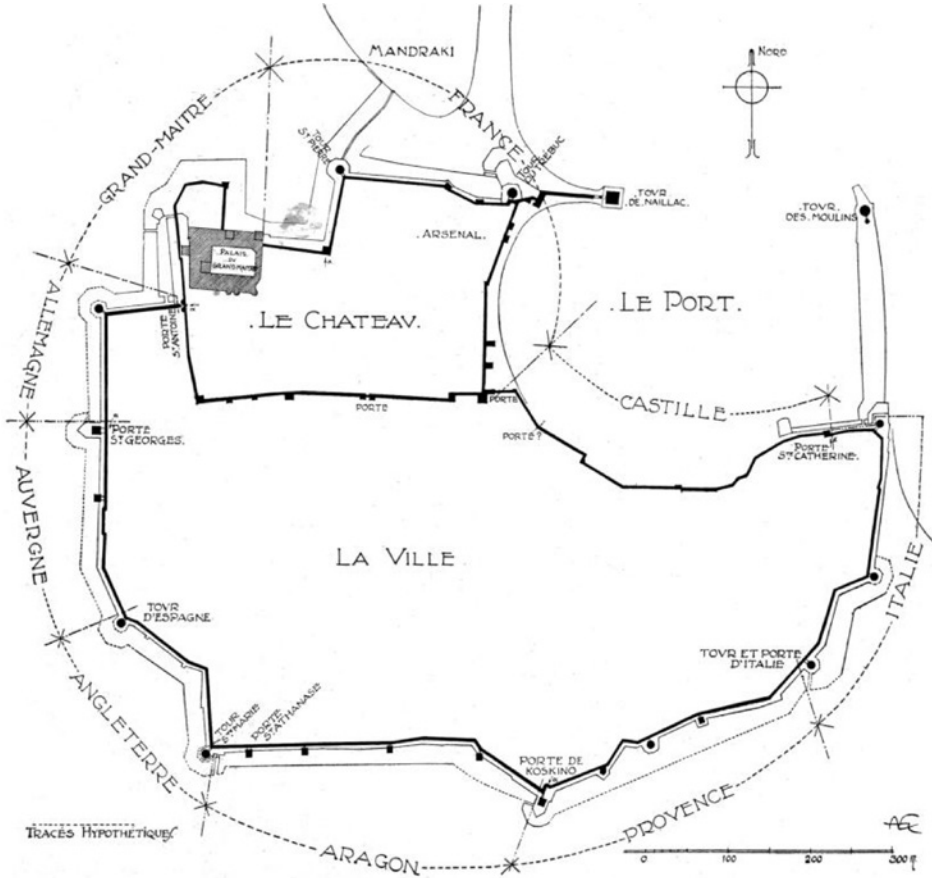


FIGURE 1 Map of the town of Rhodes in 1465, with the contemporary divisions of the *langues*

although their affairs were controlled by the Grand Master. The Patriarch of Constantinople did not accept these developments and continued to appoint absentee Rhodian metropolitans; after 1369, the title was given to Orthodox bishops of other provinces. In the meantime, a dean or vicar—a *dichaios*—was in charge of the Greek Church on the island, and, after the papal bull regarding the union of the Roman Catholic Church with the Eastern Orthodox Churches at the Council of Florence of 1439, the Rhodian metropolitan throne was occupied by Uniate orthodox prelates.³¹

31 Tsirpanlis 1991, 254–286; Luttrell 1992b, 193–223; Tsirpanlis 1995, 204–216; Luttrell 2016, 134–135.

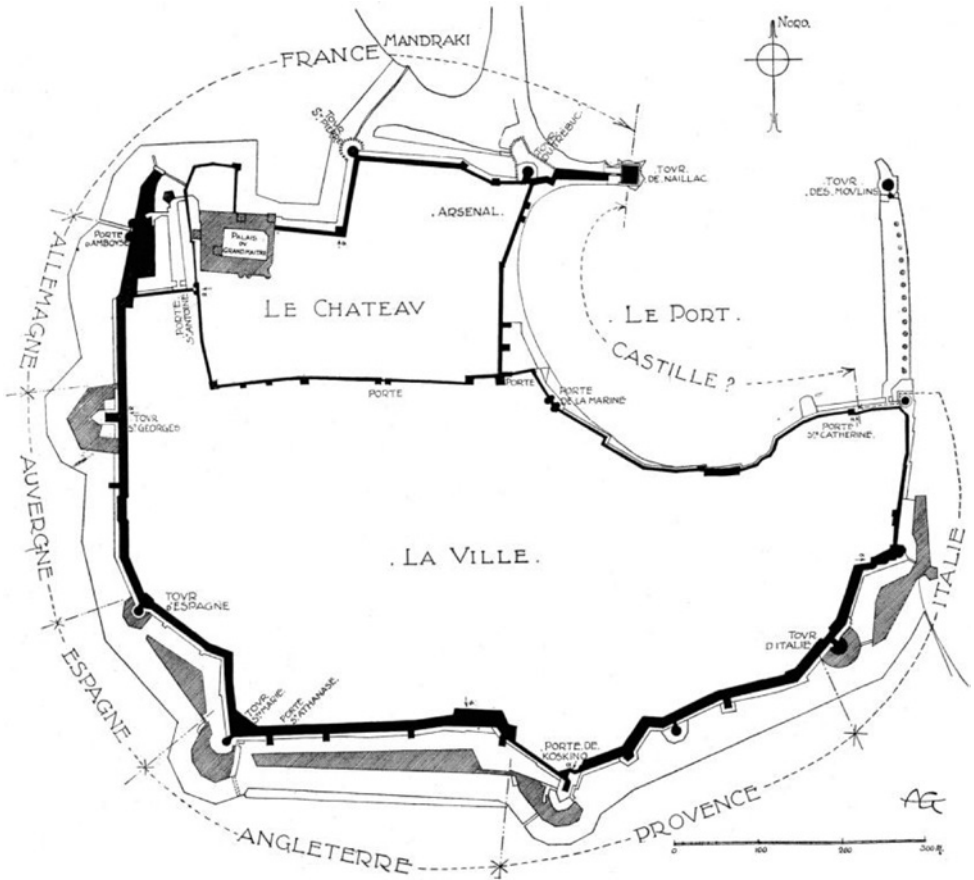


FIGURE 2 Map of the town of Rhodes in 1522, with the contemporary divisions of the *langues*

The town acquired a cosmopolitan character, with many Latin settlers, Greeks, Jews, Cypriots, Syrians, Armenians, and others.³² The brethren were constantly renewed with arrivals from the Western priories; nevertheless, most in the town were Greeks. Lastly, the constant flow of visitors to the strategically situated port should be considered: commerce flourished, and, at the same time, the stream of Western pilgrims headed to Jerusalem filled the town with visitors during summertime.

32 Luttrell 2015.



1. Grand Master's Palace
2. St. John of the *Collachium*
3. Earlier Hospital
4. 15th-century Hospital
5. Latin Cathedral
6. St. Anthony
7. Augustinian Church
8. *Commerchium*
9. Unidentified Greek Church (presently on Thiseos St.)
10. St. Catherine's Hospice [?]
11. Our Lady of Victory and St Pantaleon [?] (presently on Kisthiniou St.)
12. Greek Metropolitan Church
13. St. George
14. St. Mark
15. Our Lady of the Burgh

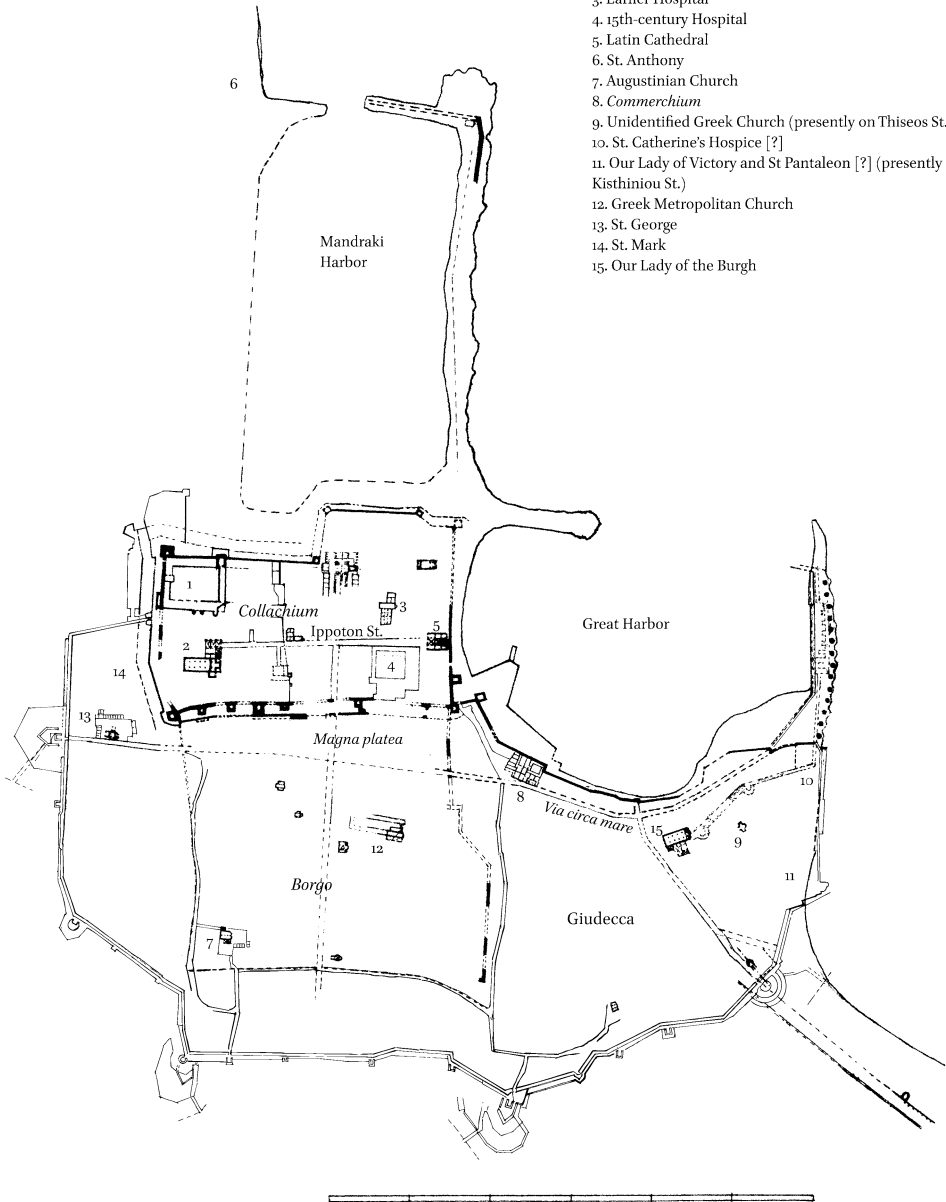


FIGURE 3 The town of Rhodes. Schematic drawing

During the period under consideration, ships from Venice moved hundreds of pilgrims toward Jerusalem every year. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land³³ had been a common practice since the 4th century, but the crusading activity in the 11th century and the subsequent Christian control of lands in Syria led to its increase and to the establishment of a standard maritime route dominated by Christians.³⁴ Venice and Marseilles emerged in the early 13th century as the main ports from which pilgrims embarked, and the latter was dominated by the Hospitallers and the Templars.³⁵ Indulgences—first granted to the crusaders, then to pilgrims, and gradually attached to several sites and monuments—actually transformed the essence of the journey into a practical step toward salvation.³⁶ This new formality endowed pilgrimage with a fresh character and led to its massive popularity, even while Jerusalem was under Muslim rule.³⁷ By this time, Venice monopolized the trip by ensuring safe navigation, thanks to Venetian agreements with Egypt for unhindered passage, and controlled the conditions aboard the ships, as well as the care of pilgrims who lodged in Venice and took pleasure in visiting its churches and treasures while waiting to set sail for Palestine.³⁸ Upon reaching the Holy Land, the pilgrims were left to the Franciscan monks of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, who served as their guides from the mid-14th century on.³⁹

Never having abandoned the prospect of restoring their active presence in the Holy Land, in 1403 the Hospitallers proposed a treaty to the Mamluks in order to secure Hospitaller control of the Jerusalem pilgrimage, revive their old Jerusalem hospital, and subvert the Franciscan monopoly: they would reopen the hospice at Jerusalem and repair the churches in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Mt. Zion, Nazareth, Saidnaya, and elsewhere. However, the treaty was not

33 The bibliography on Christian pilgrimage is vast; see indicatively Brown 1981; Brown 1982; Hunt 1982; Maraval 1985; Bowman 1991, 98–121; Wilken 1992; Coleman and Elsner 1995; Coleman and Eade 2004; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005; Brouskari, Skoulas and Kazakou 2008. On medieval pilgrimage, see Sumption 1975; Cardini 1996; Graboš 1998; Webb 2002; Sumption 2003; Chareyron 2005; Allen 2004; Noonan 2007; Craig 2009; Mylod 2013; Figliuolo and Saletti 2016, 383–390.

34 Jacoby 2016, 75–97.

35 *Idem*, 88.

36 The standard work on indulgences is by Nikolaus Paulus; Paulus 1922–1923. See, more recently, Bysted 2015, with a thorough historiographical discussion.

37 Savage 1977, 66–67. Even at times when Jerusalem was not accessible to the pilgrims, Acre, which had been bolstered with indulgences in the mid-13th century, acted as a substitute to the Holy City; see Jacoby 2001, 105–117.

38 Jacoby 1986, 35–47; Jacoby 2016, 96.

39 Concerning the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, see Saletti 2016.

ratified by Sultan Faraj and was never implemented.⁴⁰ In any case, the flow of pilgrims to Rhodes was continuous and was disrupted only occasionally, namely due to the Mamluk attacks in 1440 and 1444 and especially during the Ottoman sieges of 1480 and 1522.⁴¹

The pilgrims would generally stay in the town of Rhodes for a few days, some even longer if the weather conditions were not suitable for sailing. Their anticipation to reach Jerusalem would have built up increasingly as they approached; from very early on, an ensemble of cultic attractions supplemented the Rhodian urban fabric and provided them with ample experiences, as will be examined in detail below.⁴² In this light, it should be noted that, apart from the specific places of interest, the whole of Rhodes functioned as a memorial site evoking the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Colossians—all due to a misinterpretation: Rhodes, and sometimes the ancient town of Ialyssos specifically, was mistaken for the Phrygian city based on the similarity of the name “Colossae” with “Colossus,” the giant Rhodian statue of the titan sun-god Helios that had adorned the island in ancient times and from which the Byzantines called the Rhodians “Colossaeis” or “Colassaeis.” Thus, when Clement v appointed the Latin archbishop of Rhodes in 1307, he assigned him with the title *Archiepiscopus Colossensis*. References to Paul's letter are abundant in the pilgrims' accounts and usually serve as the introduction to their narration concerning Rhodes.⁴³

In 1522, after six months of siege and combat against the fleet and army of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, Rhodes fell to the Ottomans. The Knights, under the Master Philippe Villiers de L'Isle Adam, left the island. They departed on January 1st, 1523, sailing to Candia, where they stayed for some weeks; on March 1st they arrived at Messina and in the summer at Civitavecchia and Viterbo, from where the plague drove them away, then to France (Villefranche, Nice) and to Syracuse. They eventually settled on Malta in 1530 with the support of Charles v of Spain as King of Sicily—Malta was a dependency of Sicily—and the approval of Pope Clement VII. Thus, the chapter of the history of Rhodes as part of the pilgrimage network in the Eastern Mediterranean came to its end.

40 For details of the treaty, see Luttrell 1987, 194–199.

41 On the Ottoman sieges, see Vann and Kagay, 2015; Vatin 1994. Pilgrim accounts of the siege of 1480 have been collected by Vaivre and Vissière 2014.

42 For recent studies on aspects of the pilgrims' perception and appreciation of art and architecture, see Inglis and Christmon 2013, 257–327; Rudolph 2018, 36–67.

43 See indicatively Deycks 1851, 25; Piccirillo 2003, 28; Bayer 2007, 20; Bernoulli 1920, 80; Kohl 1868, 94; Heers and de Groer 1978, 360; Golubovich 1900, 244; Mozer 2010, 104; Nori 1996, 78; Denke 2011, 347; Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 181; Paoletti 2001, 155; Röhrich 1901, 7; Muller 2016, 31; Martin von Baumgarten, 1594, 142; Schefer 1884, 123; Ceruti 1886, 20; van Beurden 1896, 173.

The Hospitallers' Institutions

1 St. John of the *Collachium*

1.1 *Historical and Archaeological Investigation*

The church of St. John of the *Collachium*, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, has been in ruins since it was destroyed by a large explosion in 1856; only some of the eastern and northern parts of the foundations are now visible (Figs. 4a, 4b). Bearing that in mind, the reconstruction of its history, based mainly on written sources, has been supported by limited visual evidence confined to the few archaeological remains and the valuable 19th-century depictions by the Flemish Colonel B. E. A. Rottiers (1828) and the French artist Eugène Flandin (1858).¹ Additionally, the excavations by the Italian architect Pietro Lojacono and, later on, by the 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities have enabled the reconstruction of at least the basic structure of the church.

Construction appears to have started almost immediately after the settlement of the Order on Rhodes, during the years of the Master Foulques de Villaret (1305–1319).² Based on a manuscript by the monk Eleuthère,³ Rottiers reports that the Master laid the foundation stone in 1310, on the feast day of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. It seems, though, that the existence or authenticity of this manuscript—if it ever existed—is highly dubious.⁴ The completion of the works may have occurred under the command of the Master Hélon de Villeneuve (1319–1346), as his coat of arms was found over a gate in the north wall of the church, along with those of the papacy and the hospital.⁵ The church and all its affairs and belongings were controlled by the Grand Prior of the Convent—*prior ecclesiae S. Johannis*—who served as the senior Hospitaller priest on Rhodes, in charge of the Order's ecclesiastical matters. He

1 Rottiers 1828; Flandin 1858.

2 Rottiers 1830, 301; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 81; Gabriel 1923, 169; Lojacono 1936b, 254; Ntellas 2007, 371, 374.

3 Concerning Eleuthère, see Lacroix 1853, 158–159; Sathas 1868, 178–179.

4 Biliotti and Cottret 1881, 164–165; Deliyannis 2013, 6.

5 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 83; Stefanidou 2001, 71. Luttrell gives the extract of a version of *The Chronicle of the Deceased Masters* elaborated in 1367–1383, mentioning the Conventual church as constructed during Villeneuve's time; Luttrell 2003b, 32, 191.



FIGURE 4A Remains of the church of St. John of the *Collachium*, Rhodes. View from northeast



FIGURE 4B Remains of the church of St. John of the *Collachium*, Rhodes. View from the north

was a member of the Order's Council and could come from any of the Order's *langues*.⁶

The earliest extant written evidence is found in the chapter general's statutes of November 4th, 1314, where it is defined that, "The Conventual church should be served by the Prior of the Convent, five Hospitaller priests, four secular priests, two deacons, two subdeacons, four acolytes and two sacristans, and that the service be held as in *l'iglise maistre* at Acre."⁷ It is thus evident that by that time the functional aspects of the church had already been regulated. An additional testimony that corroborates this conclusion is the tombstone of a woman who died in 1318, found in the underground passageway beneath the sanctuary;⁸ and on March 1st of the same year an assembly took place in the church so that a delegation to the pope could be designated.⁹

It is no surprise that the construction of St. John would have been undertaken as soon as possible; the Conventual church played a central role in the religious and administrative life of the Order, whose essentially religious character was constantly intertwined with it: all members had to observe the canonical hours of prayer and to follow the established and continually updated liturgical calendar.¹⁰ As the sources indicate, the Conventual church was the location where all official religious ceremonies took place, as well as the regular and emergency meetings of the chapter general—the highest legislative authority of the Order—and the election of the Grand Master.¹¹ Likewise, the liturgical habits associated with St. John are documented early on; the 13th statute of the third chapter general under Héliion de Villeneuve (September 13th, 1332), referring to the anniversary celebration of Rhodes' conquest by the Hospitallers on the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, delineated that a solemn procession ought to take place around St. John, leading to an altar—perhaps a chapel—dedicated to the Virgin.¹² As stated in the 135th custom, the processions to

6 The Franciscan Jean Thenaud, who stopped on Rhodes in 1512 during his pilgrimage to Palestine and Egypt, reported that the Grand Prior bore a miter and a pastoral staff, as would a Latin bishop: "[...] estait une magnifique et belle eglise de Sainct Jehan Baptiste au palays, et le grant prieur d'icelle avoit myttre et baston pastoral;" Schefer 1884, 131. For information and lists concerning the successive priors of the Convent at Rhodes, see Paciaudi 1755, 356–370; Ferris 1866, 149–150; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 93–95.

7 Luttrell 2003b, 174.

8 Lojacono 1936b, 266; Luttrell 2003b, 43.

9 Luttrell 2003b, 176.

10 Luttrell 1993, 75–76, 80–81; Luttrell 200a, 105–106; Legras and Lemaître 1991, 83–94.

11 Bosio 1630, 362. For a description of the Grand Master's election by Pero Tafur (1436–1437), see Pérez Priego 2006, 284–286.

12 "Quodque Rhodi sacra ara, idest altare, in honorem virginis erigatur, ubi capellanus frater ad hoc deputatus die qualibet missam celebret in tante victorie memoriam atque debitam recordationem. Die quoque assumptionis quotannis illuc omnes fratres processionaliter

take place at the Conventual church must have been numerous; they included the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, the Ascension, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Assumption, and all feast days that occurred on a Sunday.¹³

The material aspects of the edifice have been deeply affected through time. After the huge explosion of 1856, the Ottoman authorities buried the remains and built a school on the site, evidently using architectural members of the church's ruins in the construction of its foundation.¹⁴ During the Italian occupation, the location was excavated under the supervision of Pietro Lojacono; two excavations were conducted in an attempt to reveal the remaining foundations, the first in 1932 and the second in 1934.¹⁵ Lojacono was initially guided by Flandin's prints, which depict accurate topographical information. However, even after the second excavation works, the determination of the precise size and position of the church remained highly partial, since the explosion of 1856 had blown up even the substructures.¹⁶ Still, graphic representations were possible (Figs. 5, 6a, 6b, 7).¹⁷ Kleovoulou Square was constructed between the school and the palace in this period. After 1989, when heavy rain caused the eastern embankment of the school to collapse, systematic excavations were conducted by the 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities.¹⁸

St. John was a three-aisled rectangular basilica with a transept about 25 meters long and a rectangular, cross-vaulted apse. The overall length was 48–50 meters, 15–18 meters wide, the nave measured 6.9 meters wide, and the south aisle 4.15 meters. Four ribbed vaults topped the transept and the sanctuary, resting on the outer walls and on compound piers. The aisles were roofed in timber, the lateral ones single pitched, while the elevated nave had a keel-shaped roof that developed into a coffered barrel vault. They were separated by two arcades with pointed arches bearing openwork tracery trefoils inscribed within

ecclesiam sancti Ioannis lustrando accedant et missa solemnis cantetur;" *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 16. The erection of this altar was designated in 1311; Luttrell 2003b, 173–174.

13 "Processiones solennes in ecclesia hospitalis fieri solent his tantum diebus: videlicet purificationis virginis Marie, ascensionis domini, nativitatis sancti Ioannis Baptiste, assumptionis beate Marie virginis et quolibet die dominico. Aliis autem fieri non consuevit processio, nisi festa inciderint die dominico;" *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 7.

14 Kasdagli 1995, 821.

15 Lojacono 1936b, 247–274.

16 Idem, 252.

17 Idem, pls. 2a, 3, 4a, 5a.

18 Kasdagli 1990, 511–514; Kasdagli 1991, 497–499; Kasdagli 1992, 670–671; Kasdagli 1993, 569–570; Kasdagli 1994, 815–816; Kasdagli 1995, 821–823; Sigala 1997, 1150; Psarologaki 2001–2004, 379–381.

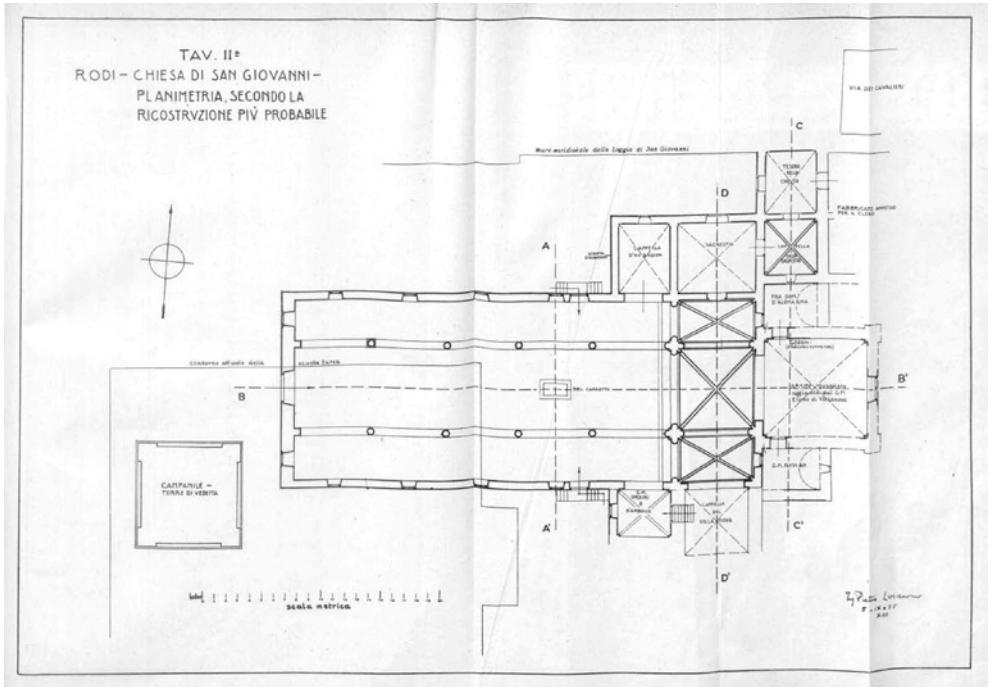


FIGURE 5 St. John of the *Collachium*, plan

oculi that lightened the spandrels, with four granite columns of ancient origin on each side, their diameter measuring about 55 centimeters and the distance between them around 6.35 meters. The columns' capitals were Corinthian and Doric, and, according to one of Rottier's depictions, only the first column on the left rested on a base, while the capital of the first on the right bore the cross of the Order (Fig. 8).¹⁹ Excavations in 1995 revealed further bases, one of which bore an ancient Greek inscription, attesting that these components were spolia.²⁰

According to a document dated 1334/1342, there was a suggestion to enlarge the church so that it could accommodate all the Convent's brethren.²¹ The conjecture that the western wood-roofed wing was constructed initially²² and that

19 Rottiers 1830, 300–301; Rottiers 1828, pl. 24; Guérin 1856, 133–136; Gabriel 1923, 167–168; Kasdagli 1995, 821; Kollias 2005, 100–101; Ntellas 2007, 384–385.

20 Kasdagli 1995, 821.

21 Luttrell 2003b, 179.

22 Ntellas 2007, 375.

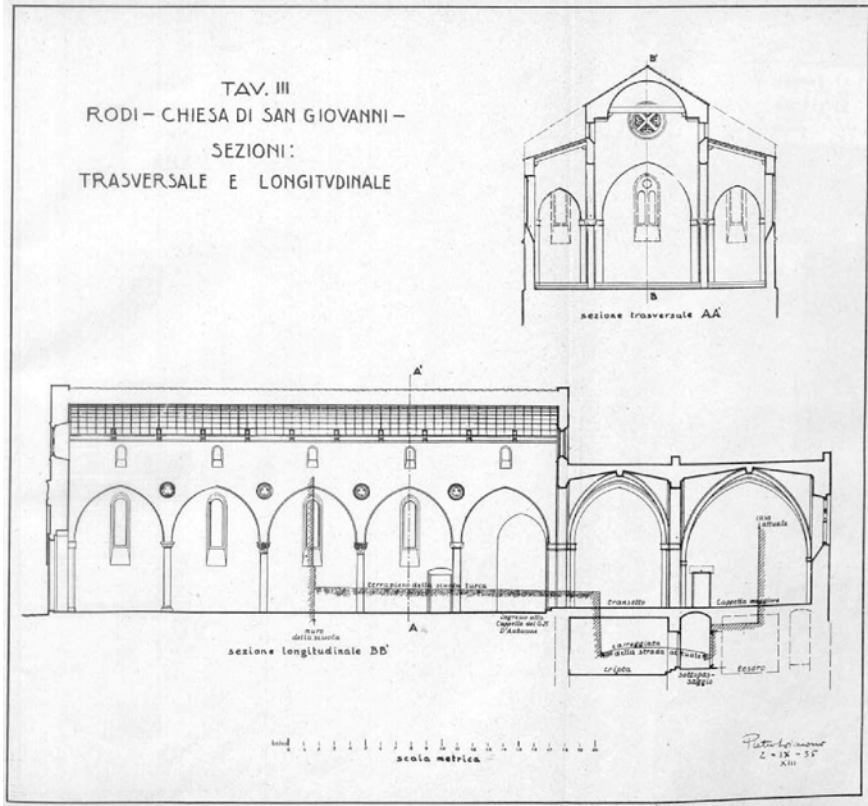


FIGURE 6A St. John of the *Collachium*, section

the church was enlarged by various Grand Masters²³ could be connected with this evidence.²⁴ It seems, though, that the basic 14th-century plan and layout of the church was not altered much, and there is no indication supporting the opposite.²⁵

A number of chapels were added over the course of time, and, since St. John was the burial place of many Grand Masters and members of the Order, some of them were constructed to house their tombs.²⁶ Sources attest the existence

23 Lojacono 1936b, 256.

24 The 19th-century depictions seem to treat the building, and especially the masonry, in a simplified manner, as belonging to a single construction phase; this is contradicted by the extant evidence and, as the British archaeologist Charles Newton reported, the church seemed to have been enlarged and altered by successive Grand Masters; Newton 1865, 152. Discussion and citation in Papanikolaou 2017, 505.

25 Gabriel 1923, 169; Luttrell 2003b, 95–97; Ntellas 2007, 384–385.

26 De Belabre 1908, 103.

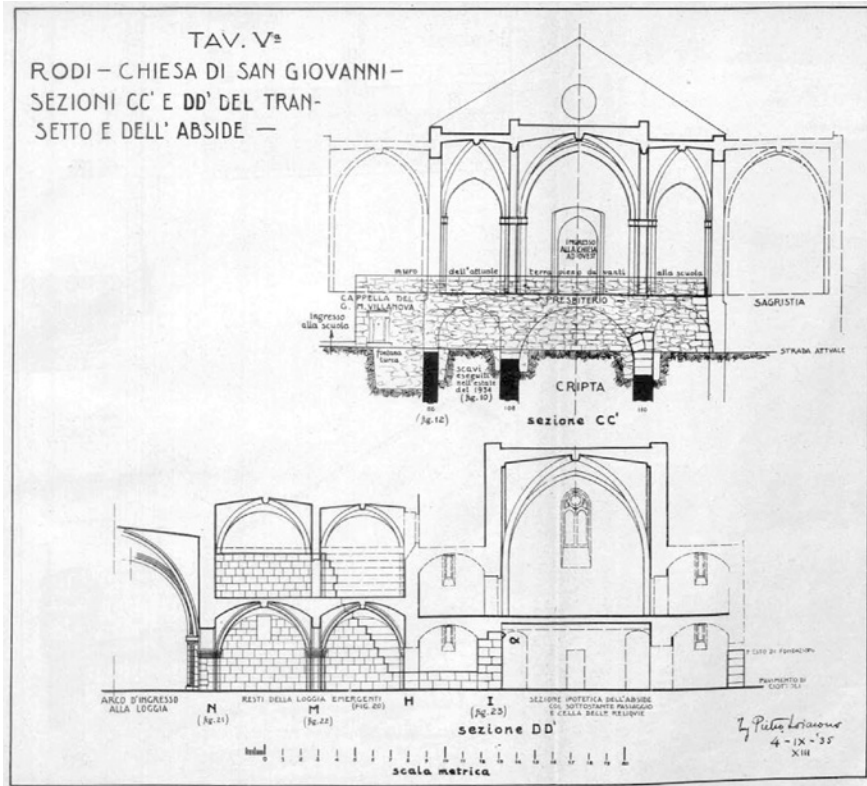


FIGURE 7 St. John of the *Collachium*, graphic representation: section, apse, and transept

Domenico de Alamania.³⁰ The Master Antoni Fluvià (1421–1437) also built a richly endowed chapel, ministered by four chaplains and a deacon.³¹

The first thing that caught Rottiers' eye when entering the church were the tombs of Pierre d'Aubusson (1476–1503) and Emery d'Amboise (1503–1512), both looted by the Ottomans after the 1522 capitulation,³² although he describes that only two niches survived and that the inscriptions had been destroyed, which would have rendered the identification of the tombs fairly improbable; he provides a drawing of part of one of the niches (Fig. 9).³³ Lojacono assumed that because of its size this niche could have contained the stone funerary arc

30 “[...] nella quale si dovesse dire ogni giorni in perpetuo una messe;” Bosio 1630, 145; Gabriel 1921, 59; Gabriel 1923, 227; Ntellas 2007, 375.

31 Christoforaki 2000, 450.

32 Rottiers 1830, 298–299.

33 Rottiers 1828, pl. 53.



FIGURE 8 St. John of the *Collachium*, interior view from the west, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

with the heart and entrails of the Grand Master,³⁴ in what was a popular funerary custom, especially with French royalty and aristocracy of the time;³⁵ this seems speculative, considering the partial rendering of the architectural elements. Moreover, based on the description given by Giacomo Bosio (1544–1627), historian of the order, Aubusson built his own funerary chapel,³⁶ which can be identified in Rottiers' depiction of the church from the west, where the Grand Master's coat of arms can be seen in the western wall of a chapel constructed in the northeastern part of the edifice (Figs. 10a, 10b).³⁷ However, the aforementioned depiction is at odds with the textual sources, perhaps an erroneous portrayal. The Czech pilgrim Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic, who visited

34 Bosio 1630, 567; Lojacono 1936b, 268.

35 Giesey 1960, 20–22.

36 Bosio 1630, 567–568; Ntellas 2007, 375.

37 Rottiers 1828, pl. 40.

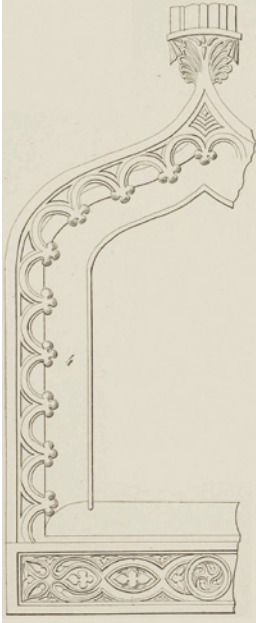


FIGURE 9
The niche of Aubusson's tomb, 1828, lithograph after
P. J. Witdoeck



FIGURE 10A St. John of the *Collachium*, view from the west, 1828, lithograph after
P. J. Witdoeck

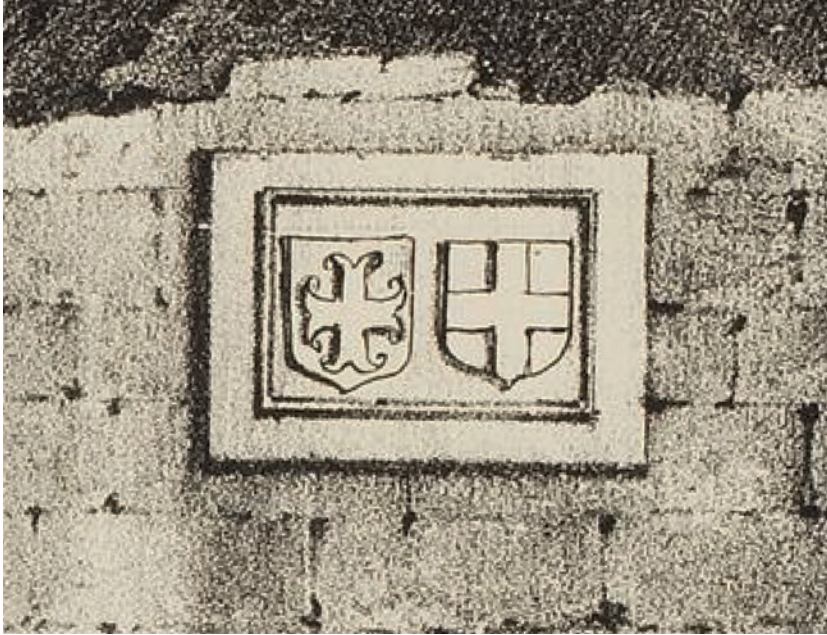


FIGURE 10B Detail with the arms of Aubusson

Rhodes in 1493, saw the newly built chapel constructed by Aubusson located to the right of the choir, which would mean that it was in the southeastern part.³⁸ The location of the tomb at the south is also corroborated by foundation documents that moreover define that Aubusson founded two oratories, with his tomb situated in the middle.³⁹ It has been reported that the Master Amboise was initially entombed there as well, because the construction of his own had not yet been concluded upon his death, but no further hypothesis can be made.⁴⁰ Finally, Rottiers depicted the funerary composition of the Master Fabrizio del Carretto (1513–1521), situated in the central part of the nave's floor, comprised of colored marble, his coat of arms, his tomb slab in relief, and a funerary inscription, all plundered after 1856 (Fig. 11).⁴¹ The actual tomb can

38 Strejček 1902, 40–41; French translation in de Vaivre and Vissière 2014, 805: “À main droite du chœur, il y a une chapelle neuve, proprement construite, que le même maître a fait édifier. Et là, de temps en temps, il participe aux offices.”

39 Vaivre, Marchandise, and Vissière 2014, 633. It has been shown that the architectural frame of Aubusson's tomb was reused at the portal of the facade of the Suleiman Mosque at Rhodes; de Vaivre 2011, 143–173.

40 Bosio 1630, 601; Gerola 1922, 324.

41 Rottiers 1828, pl. 41.

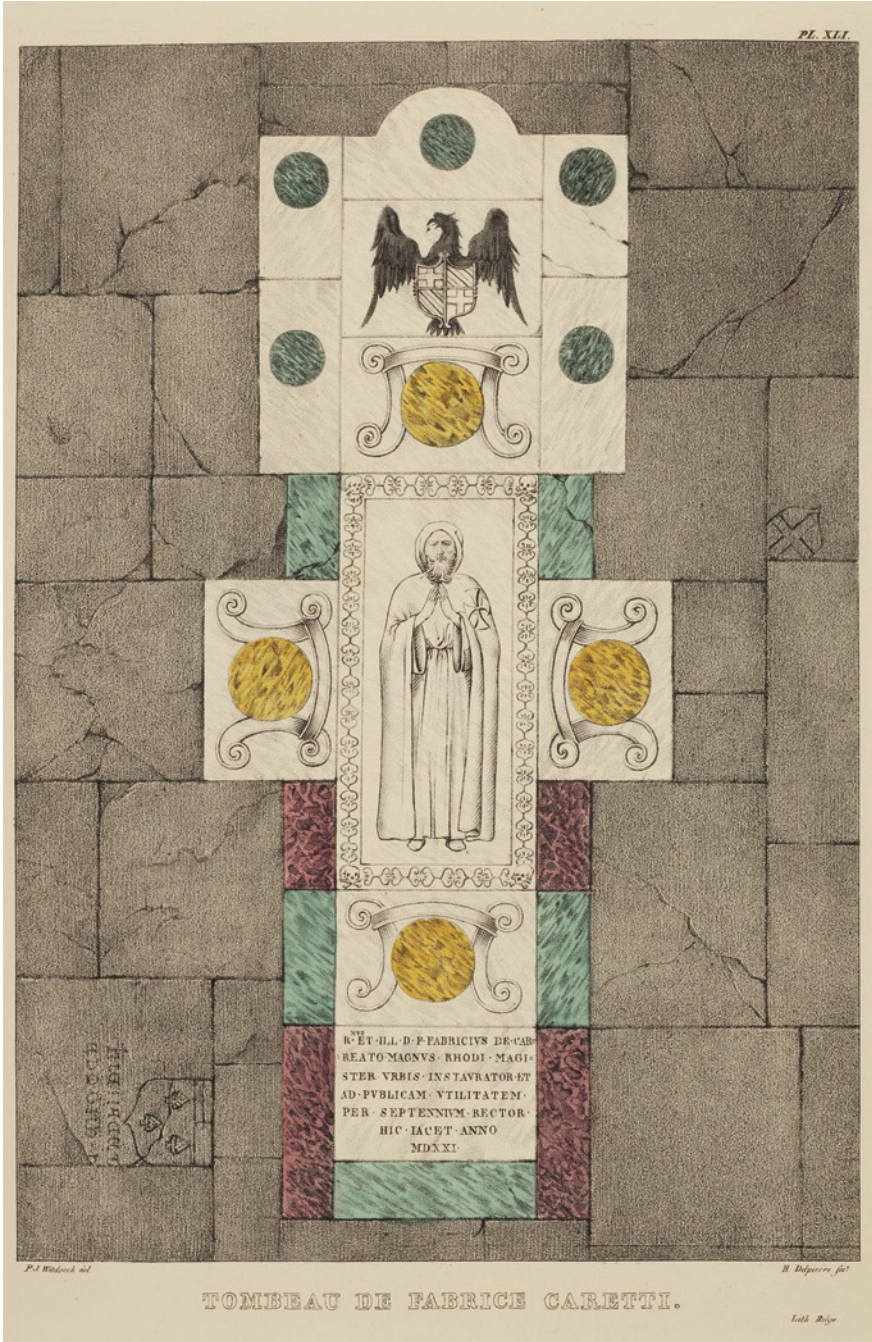


FIGURE 11 The tomb slab of the Grand Master Fabrizio del Carretto, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

be identified with the one excavated in 1995; a second funerary crypt was also found at that time, consisting of a plundered and especially rich burial, from what can be inferred from its findings.⁴²

In sum, 13 of the Grand Masters of the Rhodian period died and were buried on Rhodes, among whom were Dieudonné de Gozon (1346–1353), whose tomb was probably near the main altar;⁴³ Pierre de Corneillan (1353–1355), Robert de Juilly (1374–1376), Jacques de Milly (1454–1461), and Giovanni Battista degli Orsini (1467–1476), whose tomb slabs or parts of their sarcophagi were transferred to the Musée de Cluny in 1877. The date of the acquisition of these pieces, after the explosion and destruction of the monument, corroborates the possibility that they were initially situated in the Conventual church.⁴⁴

The tripartite division of the transept continued in three discrete spaces under it, which could have served as crypts or storage rooms; likewise, the foundations of a crypt or chapel under the central apse have been revealed, which would probably have had access to the loggia connecting the church with the palace.⁴⁵ Excavations have pointed to the existence of a total of eight annexes added during the time of the Knights; the probable plan worked out by Lojacono, in which he tried to identify the chapels and liturgical spaces, has been—as much as possible—reviewed and corrected in light of the most recent excavations (Fig. 12).⁴⁶ Villeneuve's chapel was at the south end of the transept, and the sacristy was at its north end. On the west side of these annexes were the chapels of Amboise and Aubusson, respectively. It seems that instead of the chapel of the sacristy—as assumed by Lojacono—the Prior's residence was situated to the east of the sacristy.⁴⁷ The rest of the annexes, as well as the chapels built by Domenico de Alamania and the Master Heredia, cannot be identified.

Most pilgrims' texts make no reference to the structure of the church, with a few exceptions. The valuable testimony of Pierre Barbatre, who visited Rhodes in 1480, corroborates the hypothesis of the sacristy being located in the north part. This is further confirmed by Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic (1493), who reports that the sacristy was on the left, near the main altar.⁴⁸ At least as early as 1479 there was an architectural structure, perhaps a niche, to the north of the

42 Kasdagli 1995, 821.

43 Luttrell 2003b, 40.

44 Gerola 1922, 319–324; Gabriel 1923, 213–218; Ntellas 2007, 376, 378.

45 Ntellas 2007, 385.

46 Lojacono 1936b, pl. 2; Ntellas 2007, 385, pl. 329; Papanikolaou 2017, 506, note 28.

47 Ntellas 2007, 385–386.

48 Strejček 1902, 40–41; French translation in de Vaire and Vissière 2014, 805: “À main gauche, près de l'autel majeur, il y a une seconde chapelle, la sacristie.”

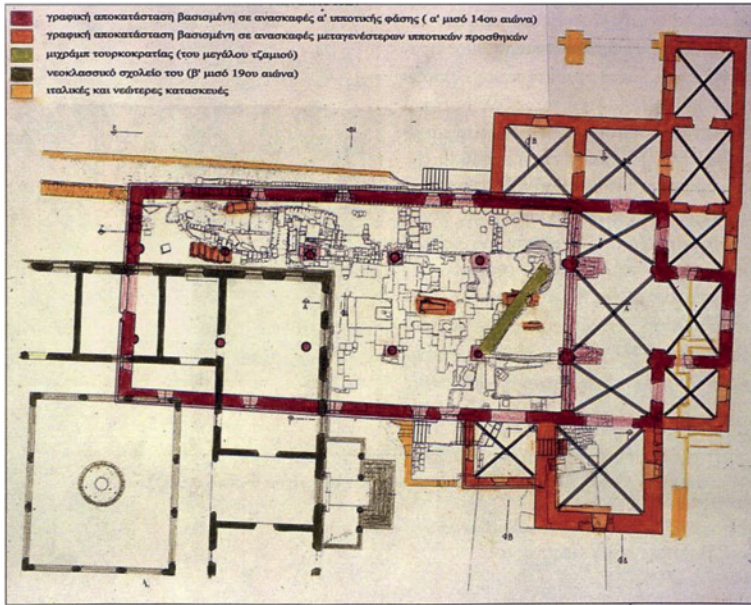


FIGURE 12 St. John of the *Collachium*, plan

chancel on top of the sacristy's entrance, housing the body of St. Euphemia, attested by the pilgrims Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) and Pierre Barbatre (1480).⁴⁹

Natural light came through pointed stained glass windows on the north and south walls, two of which were depicted by Rottiers and bear the arms of the Masters Fluvia and Orsini (Figs. 8, 13, 14);⁵⁰ smaller ones were located on the north and south walls of the nave over the roof of the lateral aisles, and there were circular ones, with x-shaped Gothic decorations and trefoil-shaped openwork, on the east and west sides.⁵¹ The central window of the sanctuary's apse was mullioned, as seems to have been the case for all the windows on the east side. The vault of the nave was decorated with a cypress framework of

49 "La testa di sancta Euphemia vergine et martyre, il cui corpo è soppellito suso alto nel muro a la mano dextra dell'uscio della sagrestia della chiesa di Sancto Giovanni di Rody, serrato dinanzi con una craticula di ferro et chon una lampana pendente a honore della sancta;" Calamai 1993, 132. "Et premierement, a senestre, pres du ceur, est une chapelle hault. La est le corps de sainte Eufemie en char et en os;" Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 158.

50 Rottiers 1828, pls. 37, 42, 43.

51 Idem, pls. 40, 42.

wood-carved rectangles and golden stars on a blue background.⁵² Only fragments of the architectural decoration have been found, of Gothic style,⁵³ while the painted decoration has not survived, except in a plaster fragment depicting the head of a female saint figure, as yet unpublished.⁵⁴

Medieval travelers report that the church's famous collection of treasures was kept in the sacristy of the church,⁵⁵ and historical sources mention the chapel of the sacristy, the *Capella della Sagrestia*, for example in the description of the election of the Master Aubusson.⁵⁶ The treasures were notable, yet some of them were repurposed in times when a shortage of resources in the city deemed it necessary; in 1475 it was decided to use a number of precious old pieces of metalwork from the Order's treasury for the current needs of the military preparations for battle against the Ottomans.⁵⁷ On the other hand, church furnishings proliferated, thanks to the fact that the Conventual church received all ecclesiastical and liturgical items of deceased brethren, unless they had already been bequeathed to the churches of their commanderies.⁵⁸ Additionally, there were numerous precious donations; one of them could be the *armario* with many statues—of the Virgin, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, and other saints—described by Antonio da Crema, an Italian pilgrim traveling in the year 1486.⁵⁹ These figures may well have been commissioned by the Prior of Saint-Gilles, Charles Alleman de Rochechinard, a Knight who donated generously to the Conventual church. Among others gifts, during Master Aubusson's time he offered a gold cross and 15 gold panels dedicated to the Virgin that depicted the Mysteries of the Rosary in relief, with the request that they be displayed on the main altar, but also on the condition that they would not be used by the Knights apart from cases of extreme necessity against the infidels for lack of any other resources; he also donated 12 silver statues of the apostles and three golden statues, one of the Lamb of God, the other of the

52 Idem, pl. 42; Rottiers 1830, 300–301.

53 The body of a possibly 15th-century sculpture of Mary Magdalene was also discovered during excavations; Kasdagli 1990, 511, 513.

54 Archontopoulos and Katsioti 2007, 456.

55 Calamai 1993, 78; Feyerabend 1584, f. 126v; Golubovich 1900, 245; Nori 1996, 140; Tschudi 1606, 85.

56 Bosio 1630, 362. Concerning the cultic collection of the Conventual church, see pp. 31–103 below.

57 Bosio 1630, 349.

58 See the 13th statute of the first chapter general under the Master Fr. Juan Fernández de Heredia on March 18th, 1383; *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 21.

59 Nori 1996, 140.

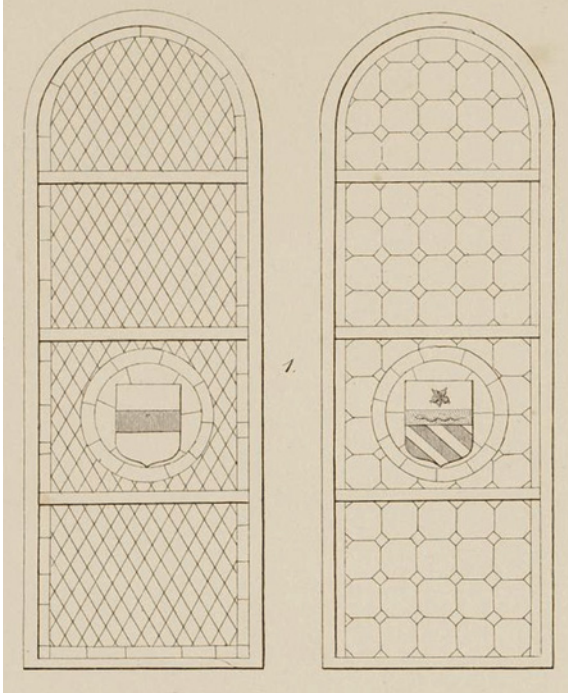


FIGURE 13 Stained glass windows from St. John of the *Collachium*, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

Virgin, and the third of the Baptist.⁶⁰ Rottiers described seeing two armoires of some sort, which used to house the gilt statues of the 12 apostles, part of the aforementioned prior's donation, as his coat of arms is depicted along with the Order's, set in the flowering tracery of the lower register;⁶¹ when Rottiers saw the them, they were hanging on the wall (they were formerly placed on either sides of the high altar), and their doors were missing, but the main compartments, painted and gilded, were perfectly preserved (Fig. 15).⁶² As also reported by the German archaeologist Ludwig Ross in 1844, "On both sides of the choir there is a wooden panel with painting and gilding, each of which appears to have contained small carvings of the apostles in six niches."⁶³

60 Bosio 1630, 598–599; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 87–88; Derbier 2000, 208–209.

61 Rottiers 1830, 302; Steyert 1892, 119.

62 Rottiers 1828, pl. 72.

63 Freely translated here; see Ross 1852, 56; Newton 1865, 153.



FIGURE 14 St. John of the *Collachium*, west side, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

Regarding the exterior of the church, the main door, on the west facade, was made of sycamore wood with a window on either side and the aforementioned rose window at the top center (Fig. 10).⁶⁴ The pointed portal was framed by a cornice with floral decoration, crowned with three sculpted palmettes, the middle one significantly larger. Horizontal moldings ran around the building on two levels: along the base of the windows and at the level of the springing line of their arches.⁶⁵ The north door seems to have had a structure similar to the west one, while the south one—despite Rottiers' print depicting a pointed arch (Fig. 14)—must have had a rectangular shape.⁶⁶

The prominent bell tower of the church stood in front of the west facade. It was probably repaired or redeveloped in the late 15th century or the early 16th, since in Rottiers' depiction from its northwestern side one can distinguish the coats of arms of Aubusson and Amboise, the latter bearing the date 1509

64 Rottiers 1830, 237.

65 Rottiers 1828, pl. 40; Gabriel 1923, 168.

66 Rottiers 1828, pl. 43; Flandin 1858, pl. 26; Ntellas 2007, 390.

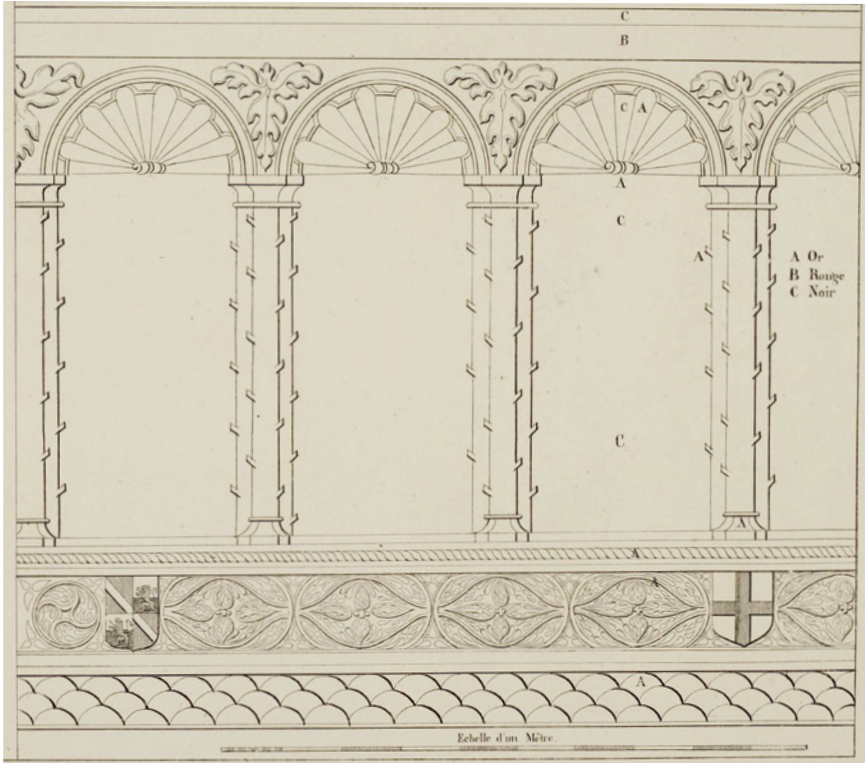


FIGURE 15 Niches that housed the statues of the apostles, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

(Fig. 10);⁶⁷ there is also evidence that there was a tablet with the date 1522.⁶⁸ These dates possibly hint at construction works that took place as a result of damages caused by the Ottoman siege of 1480 and the earthquake of 1481.⁶⁹ The bell tower is depicted only partially in the 19th-century prints, since its upper part had by then been destroyed, and a minaret had been erected in its place. According to Rottiers' depiction (Fig. 14),⁷⁰ the two lower levels formed a square tower with a base, horizontal moldings, and pilasters reinforcing the corners of the upper level. There were windows on the west and north sides of the top floor; the north entrance was through a pointed door on the ground

67 Rottiers 1828, pl. 40.

68 Biliotti and Cottret 1881, 513.

69 Ntellas 2007, 375.

70 Rottiers 1828, pl. 43.

level, and the east one was from a rectangular door on the first floor, accessed via a stairway from the south of the church.⁷¹

After the surrender to the Ottomans in 1522, when the Order left the island, the Knights were allowed to take their treasures with them, thus removing all portable valuable liturgical objects, relics, and works of art from the church. St. John was turned by Suleiman the Magnificent into the Great Mosque of Rhodes, and entrance was forbidden to non-Muslims, marking a new, dull chapter in the history of the monument, which from then on became inaccessible to Western visitors—it was only in the 19th century that some Europeans visited the site.⁷² Two earthquakes occurred in the mid-19th century, the first in 1851, when the upper part of the belfry fell, and a particularly powerful one on October 12th, 1856, that destroyed the minaret. The final blow was struck on November 6th of the same year, when a bolt of lightning passed through the bell tower and ignited the tons of gunpowder stored in its basement, causing a huge, disastrous explosion that wrecked the whole western section of the *collachium* and completely destroyed St. John and its surroundings.⁷³ It has been claimed that the gunpowder had been stored there by the traitor Andrea d'Amaral as far back as 1522, but no evidence exists to back up this hypothesis.⁷⁴ The Ottoman administration built the aforementioned school on the southwestern part of the church's remains in 1876; construction seems to have been completed in 1885 and it still exists today.⁷⁵

The church's plan and appearance, as interpreted and conceived by the Italians, were replicated in the church of the Annunciation at Mandraki port, opposite the fortress of St. Nicholas, under the supervision of the Italian architect Florestano di Fausto in 1924/5–1929 (Figs. 16a, 16b).

1.2 *Cultic Phenomena*

The church of St. John was famous for its treasures, housing the Hospitallers' main collection of relics, which included Christological as well as saintly ones. The collection, housed in the church probably from the moment of its construction on, was kept in the church's sacristy, and the relics were placed in precious silver and gold monstrances, as attested by pilgrims visiting the site, such as Ogier d'Anglure (1395), Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474), Hans

71 Flandin 1858, pl. 26.

72 Such as Rottiers, Flandin, Biliotti, and Cottret.

73 Biliotti and Cottret 1881, 511; Gehlhoff-Volanaki 1982, 54–59; Maillis, Skandalidis, and Tsalahouris 2002, 192–198; Ntellas 2007, 378.

74 Biliotti and Cottret 1881, 229–230, 511; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 96; Gehlhoff-Volanaki 1982, 56; Ntellas 2007, 378.

75 Ntellas 2007, 378.



FIGURE 16A The church of the Annunciation, 1924/1925–1929, Mandraki port. View from the northwest



FIGURE 16B The church of the Annunciation, 1924/1925–1929, Mandraki port. View from the west

Werli (1483–1484), Antonio da Crema (1486), and Ludwig Tschudi (1519).⁷⁶ Some of the contents of the collection must have arrived at Rhodes with the Knights as part of the relics they had obtained in Palestine, while others must have previously belonged to the Templars, the possessions of whom were transferred to the Order of the Hospitallers in 1313, after the former's dissolution in 1312.⁷⁷ Private and official donations also continuously enriched the sacred treasures.⁷⁸

The German priest Ludolf von Südheim, who traveled to the East in the years 1336–1341, delivers the first reference to these relics, specifically to the bronze cross made by the basin which Christ used to wash the feet of his disciples, a much-venerated former Templar relic.⁷⁹ More extended and frequent reports appear from the end of the 14th century onwards, the most detailed one coming from Nicola de Martoni, who visited the island in 1394. This fact corroborates the idea that the Order only gradually began to take advantage of its relic collection; indeed, historical circumstances support this conclusion. The increase in pilgrimage to Palestine and, subsequently, of pious visitors to Rhodes, would cause the Knights to realize the importance of pilgrimage as a way of re-establishing the Order's connection with the Holy Land—after all, the protection of pilgrims had always been their fundamental task⁸⁰—but also as a means of revenue in times when, after the Papal Schism in 1378, the lack of balance in political affairs resulted in many incongruities, a significant one being the disruption of the payment of the standard dues, the *responsiones*, owed to the Convent at Rhodes by the European Hospitaller commanderies.⁸¹ The revenues resulting from the pious contributions of pilgrims could in part compensate for this financial loss. Thus, the interest and care of the Knights turned to the collection of relics at the Conventual church, whose richness and diversity attracted the devoted attention of pilgrims from all over Europe uninterrupted until 1522, when the Order left the island.

Indicative and of particular importance concerning the popularity of the site is its inclusion in the litany known as the *Santa parola*, or *Bonna parola*, dated between 1389 and 1475, which was read by the ship crews before embarking

76 Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 9–10; Calamai 1993, 78–80, 131–133; Feyerabend 1584, f. 126v; Nori 1996, 140; Tschudi 1606, 84–86.

77 Delaville Le Roulx 1913, 28–50; Luttrell 1989, 10; Luttrell 1978b, 161–171; Luttrell 1998a, 595–622; Vann 2010, 339–346.

78 Detailed information on the cultic objects is presented below; see pp. 36–103.

79 Deycks 1851, 29.

80 Burgtorf 2008, 27–50; Riley-Smith 2012, 22–23.

81 Luttrell 1980, 259–260.

and on board, in times of misadventures or setbacks.⁸² The litany lists holy sites situated on the maritime sea routes known to late medieval mariners, describing the religious topographical network of the *peregrinagia maritima*; in the case of Rhodes the church of St. John is mentioned first, followed by St. Anthony and the Virgin of Phileremos.

Christological, Marian, and saintly relics were to be found in the church's sacristy; the impressive collection of Passion relics, as well as the relics of saints connected with Palestine, evoked the Holy Land by means of a synecdochical association that reinforced their sacral identity.⁸³ Apart from being well-kept treasures, the relics could also be admired during processions for specific feasts, which were denominated in the Order's liturgical calendar. The collection and its course through history, as well as the multilayered connotations connected with its composite cultic dimension, rely on the individual stories connected with each object, which will be examined below in more detail.

The setting in which these treasures were exhibited is left mostly to the imagination: medieval sources are sparing in their descriptions, and no concrete visual evidence has been preserved. The available pieces of information are limited and mostly pertain to the interior of the church in a general way; this evidence from travelogues derives from the late 15th century and the early 16th. The church was richly decorated with gold, and in the early 16th century the lighting was produced by 13 or 16 silver lamps, which hung from silver chains in front of the sanctuary, and by many candlesticks.⁸⁴ The reflection of the light on the gilt statues of the apostles flanking the high altar would have produced a radiating effect that, combined with the gold ornamentation of the church, must have dominated in the eyes of the visitors; among them was the gold statue of the *Agnus Dei*, part of the donation from Charles Alleman de Rochechinard in the years of the Master Amboise, which was obviously placed in a prominent position in the sanctuary.⁸⁵ On great solemnities, a set of silver-gilt kneeling angels, each bearing two candlesticks, was placed on the high altar.⁸⁶

A basin of fine chalcedony with silver gilding along its rim, used for the ablutions of the hands at the *Lavabo* (the ceremonial washing of hands in the

82 Bacci 2004b, 223–248; Bacci 2013a, 7–16.

83 Bacci 2017a, 127–153.

84 Van Beurden 1896, 174; Hoogeweg 1889, 193.

85 Röhricht 1893, 173; Calamai 1993, 79–80.

86 Calamai 1993, 79–80.

liturgy), was mentioned in 1474.⁸⁷ Moreover, the church was equipped with lavish ecclesiastical silver and silver-gilt images, of which Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) saw one depicting the Virgin and Child, measuring around 60 cm in height, and one with the Baptist holding the *Agnus Dei*, of similar measurements.⁸⁸ Lastly, there were beautiful liturgical vestments, made of red and blue velvet, of variously colored silk, and of gold thread.⁸⁹ A set of vestments consisting of a chasuble, two dalmatics, and a cope, bearing a shield with the arms of the Master Aubusson quartered with the Order's cross, has survived in Malta, in the collegiate church of San Lorenzo, Birgu; it is a Gothic work associated with the northern international style.⁹⁰ The Museum of St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta preserves two chasubles, one made of gold cloth and embroidered silk that seems to be a Flemish work with Italian influences, dated to the early 15th century, and one of purple velvet and embroidered silk, gold, and silver thread, of French provenance, dated to the 15th century; the association of these items with Rhodes cannot be excluded.⁹¹

The setting of the main liturgical space of the church was heightened by an acoustic experience that must have been particularly striking. Apart from the skillful chanters,⁹² the church was equipped with a sumptuous organ, constructed in and brought from Venice in 1476.⁹³

The central role played by the Conventual church should be reiterated: as mentioned above, all the official religious ceremonies, the regular (every five years) and emergency Grand Chapters, and the election of the Grand Masters, as well as their funerals, took place there. This would mean that the pilgrims, entering the church in order to see the relics, were immersed in a setting that eloquently articulated the Knights' political and religious essence; on their way to the chapel of the sacristy they could wonder at the funerary monuments of departed Grand Masters and at the votive offerings given by officials and members of the Order. Thus, a direct, reflex connection must have taken place in the

87 Ibid. The same basin must be the one mentioned by Georges Lengherand (1485–1486), who speaks of a precious basin made of agate; Godefroy-Ménilglaise 1861, 106.

88 Calamai 1993, 79–80. Some of the precious objects of the church were transported to Malta; see Sommi Picenardi 1900, 89, esp. note 8; Ferris 1881, 157–159; Buhagiar 1989a, 49–58.

89 Gebele 1932–1933, 114.

90 Buhagiar 1989b, 60–62.

91 Ibid.

92 Röhricht 1893, 173.

93 Bosio 1630, 366: "un organo molto sontuoso e ricco."

minds of the visitors between the Order's rule and the sacrality established by the holy relics.

1.2.1 The Hand of St. John the Baptist

The right arm of St. John the Baptist and the hand with one/two outstretched finger(s) with which he pointed to the son of God—*Ecce Agnus Dei*—and baptized Jesus is a bodily relic that falls into the category of saintly as well as Christological relics, since it is connected with a major incident of Christ's life. The Forerunner was considered to be the ideal monk and the biblical figure closest to Christ after the Virgin, traits that established his popularity in monastic foundations and institutions; and as he was the patron saint of the Order, his relics were considered to hold special significance for the Knights. His right arm and hand bore particular value, as they were connected with the two cardinal events of his life.⁹⁴

Eusebius of Caesarea reported already around 330 that the remains of St. John the Baptist were kept at Sebaste,⁹⁵ as this was said to be the place where he had been decapitated.⁹⁶ Sources from the following centuries provide additional information: according to Philostorgius (ca. 430), Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 450), and the *Chronicon Paschale* (7th century), his tomb was desecrated during a persecution under Julian the Apostate, and his bodily remains were burned and dispersed.⁹⁷ Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 400) adds that some bones were saved by the monks of the monastery of Phillip, one of the Seven, who were on their way from Jerusalem to Antioch to pray. They took them back to the monastery, and some of them were sent to Athanasius of Alexandria. He placed them inside a reliquary, which he put in a crypt that he then sealed, keeping the presence of the bones a secret due, to the prevalent local instability and religious agitation; later on, when Theophilus of Alexandria converted the Serapion into a church, he put the relics in a tomb in the center of the nave.⁹⁸ The *Synaxarion of Constantinople* (10th century) enriches the

94 Kalavrezou 1997, 70–75. In her article, Kalavrezou highlights the connection of the relic's ritualistic presence and its symbolism with the establishment of imperial images and the development of the concept of the Byzantine emperor. This phenomenon contributed to shaping the relic's identity, as will be seen by the subsequent pursuits to acquire it.

95 Timm 2017, 204: "This is said to be (now-called) Sebaste, now a city of Palestine (where relics of St. John the Baptist are kept)."

96 For example, see Malalas, *Χρονογραφία* X, col. 364.

97 Philostorgius, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία* VII, col. 541; Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία* III, col. 1092; *Chronicon Paschale*, col. 740B.

98 Rufinus Aquileiensis, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II, col. 536. The transfer of the relics to Alexandria is also mentioned by Theophanes, *Χρονογραφία*, col. 212. Concerning the role

above information in the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist on 7 January, when the transfer of the relic of his right hand from Antioch to Constantinople in 956 is also commemorated;⁹⁹ this information seems to have been derived from the commemorative speech by Theodore Daphnopates, the *Oratio de translatione manus Ioannis Baptistae* (10th century).¹⁰⁰ According to him, and based mostly on old legends rather than on historical evidence, Luke the Evangelist took the right hand of the Baptist from his tomb in Sebaste and transferred it to his native city of Antioch, where it became the source of many miracles. One of the most famous of these occurred when the daughter of a Christian was to be offered as a human sacrifice to a dragon that savaged the city, its people, and environs. The father asked to pray before the relic and, while pretending to kiss it, he bit off a piece of its thumb. When the day of the sacrifice arrived—and in the presence of all the local population—he accompanied his daughter and, as soon as the dragon appeared with his mouth wide open, he hurled the sacred thumb right in his pharynx, killing him instantly. A second miraculous act was manifested on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, when the hand was lifted by the high priest and either extended or contracted, the first case meaning that there would be abundance in the crops, while in the latter infertile and poverty would fall upon the land. Such miraculous powers, which were also connected with prosperity, made the relic coveted by rulers. Finally, during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and upon his request, a deacon in Antioch named Job stole the hand and took it to Chalcedon and then to Constantinople, where the emperor placed it in the palace.¹⁰¹ Ioannes Skylitzes (late 11th century) reports the translation of the hand to the Byzantine capital and its reception by Patriarch Polyeuktos, along with all the clergy; the scene was also depicted in the accompanying miniature of the 12th-century illustrated copy of Skylitzes in Madrid (Fig. 17).¹⁰²

of Theophilus of Alexandria, John of Nikiou (late 7th century) provides additional information; see Zotenberg 1883, 315.

- 99 *Synaxarium CP*, cols. 375–376. Concerning the dating of the text of the *Synaxarion*, see Kalavrezou 1997, 77, note 99.
- 100 Latyše 1910, 17–38 (Greek) and 44–76 (Russian); *Theodori Daphnopatae sermo*, 739–743. Daphnopates was at the time *protasecretis* (head of the imperial notaries); see “Theodoros Daphnopates,” in Winkelmann et al. See also Sinkevič 2014, 127–129.
- 101 It had been reported that Emperor Justinian had already brought the hand to Constantinople, along with the Baptist’s head, in order to sanctify the famous church in the Hebdomon, which he restored; later on, he sent the relics back to Antioch. See Du Cange 1665, 44; Ebersolt 1921, 79–80. For the relic in Constantinople, see also Wortley 2004, 143–158.
- 102 Thurn 1973, 245.27–32. For the miniature, see Grabar and Manoussacas 1979, 81, fig. 169.



FIGURE 17 The translation of the hand of the Baptist at the palace in Constantinople, 12th century, manuscript illumination. Madrid, VITR/26/2

Indeed, medieval sources of the 11th and the mid-12th centuries attest the presence of the right hand with the arm in the emperor's chapel.¹⁰³ When Anthony of Novgorod visited Constantinople in 1200, he saw the arm of the Baptist in the palace chapel of the Virgin of the Pharos and reported that it was used for the consecration of the emperor; he further attested that one of the fingers was in the Monastery of Stoudios.¹⁰⁴ Later evidence from Russian travelers of the second half of the 14th century and the early 15th place it in the Peribleptos Monastery,¹⁰⁵ where the Spanish ambassador Ruy González de Clavijo also saw it in 1404:

This was the right arm and it was fresh and healthy; and, though they say that the whole body of the blessed St. John was destroyed, except one finger of the right arm, with which he pointed when he said *Ecce Agnus Dei*, yet certainly the whole of this arm was fresh and in good preservation, but it wanted the thumb.¹⁰⁶

103 Ciggaar 1995, 121; Ciggaar 1976, 245; Riant 1876–1878, vol. 2, 212–214. See the relevant table in Bacci 2003, 243–244.

104 Ehrhard 1932, 57–58; Kalavrezou 1997, 67–68. Apart from the hand, an iron staff of John the Baptist was to be found there, “with which the newly appointed emperor is blessed at the moment of the coronation;” Kalavrezou 1997, 74.

105 Stephen of Novgorod ca. 1350; Ignatius of Smolensk in 1389; Deacon Zosima ca. 1420; see de Khitrowo 1889, 122–124, 138–139, 204; Majeska 1984, 96–97, 186–187.

106 Markham 1859, 32–33. Ruy González de Clavijo also saw the left arm of the Baptist in the monastery at Petra, *infra*, 57.

Ruy González de Clavijo continues his report with the justification of the thumb's absence by repeating the aforementioned legend found in Daphnopates and the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*. An anonymous Russian source of the second quarter of the first half of the 15th century also mentions the hand of the Baptist in Constantinople, mounted in gold but lacking a finger, this time in the Monastery of Philanthropos Soter.¹⁰⁷ As far as the evidence related to Constantinople is concerned, it should be noted that at the end of the 14th century the digit of the Baptist—*digitus sancti Johannis Baptiste*—was reported to be revered in the church of St. Catherine at Rhodes, having arrived there with the Hospitaller Domenico de Alamania, donated along with many other relics by the Emperor Manuel II in Constantinople.¹⁰⁸

Charles Du Fresne Du Cange, in his treatise of 1665 on the head of the Baptist, gathered many medieval sources concerning the fate of the saint's relics. Part of the hand (not specified whether it was the right or left one) was found in Alexandria in 1219 and was perhaps taken from there to Italy by a Carmelite monk. This could even have been the right hand that Pope Pius II presented at Siena on May 6th, 1464 (Figs. 18a, 18b),¹⁰⁹ although it was recorded that the Despot of the Morea Thomas Palaeologus offered it to the pope, having acquired it from his son-in-law, the Serbian despot Lazar Branković, after the fall of Constantinople,¹¹⁰ a fact that is in keeping with the connections of the hand's early reliquary with the Monastery of Žiča.¹¹¹ However, Du Cange seems certain that the right hand found in Constantinople was given by Emperor Baldwin II to Othon de Cicons, lord of Carystus, as repayment for a loan of 5,000 hyperperi from the latter to the former. Othon took it to the Monastery of Citeaux, in his native Burgundy, in 1263;¹¹² there it was kept whole inside a gilt reliquary, apart from the index finger, which was put separately in a gold receptacle. Du Cange based his certainty on the Greek inscription on the reliquary,

107 Majeska 1984, 146–147, note 63.

108 The source is Nicola de Martoni; Piccirillo 2003, 126. For further details concerning the relics of the church, see pp. 150–151 below.

109 Du Cange 1665, 180–181; Paciaudi 1755, 220; Smith 2005, 213.

110 This relic was said to have been transferred to Italy along with the head of St. Andrew from Patras, both offered to the pope; see May 2012, 99–128, esp. 105, note 9. May cites the Sienese historian Orlando Malavoti; in his work *Dell'istoria di Siena* he provides the above information, adding the detail concerning Lazar Branković; see Orlando Malavolti 1599, ff. 68r–v.

111 Sinkević 2014, 130, note 27. For a complete overview of the relic and its history, see Popović 2017, 77–94.

112 Documents concerning the translation in AASS, Iunii vol. 4, 768–770; Riant 1876–1878, vol. 1, CLXXXII–CLXXXIII, vol. 2, 145–149. Concerning the literature on the event, see also Setton 1976, 95, esp. note 43.



FIGURE 18A Reliquary with the Baptist's hand, 18th century, Siena Cathedral



FIGURE 18B
Relic of the Baptist's hand, Siena Cathedral

which related that it was Emperor Constantine (Porphyrogenetos) who took the hand from the barbarians, brought it to Constantinople, and put it in a treasury, from where it provided protection and power to the empire.¹¹³

113 Du Cange 1665, 182–183; Martène and Durand 1717, 223. According to the latter, the inscription read as follows: *ΗΝ ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΣ ΧΕΙΡ ΧΕΙΡΑ ΤΗΝ ΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΥ / ΚΑΤΕΙΧΕΤΟ ΠΡΙΝ ΝΥΝ ΕΚΕΙΘΕΝ ΕΛΚΥΣΑΣ / ΑΝΑΣ ΜΕΤΗΣΕ ΠΡΟΣ ΠΟΛΙΝ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ / ΤΑΥΤΗΝ ΔΕ ΤΗΔΕ ΘΕΣΑΥΡΩ ΘΗΣΑΥΡΙΣΑΣ / ΣΚΕΠΟΥΣΑΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΠΛΟΥΤΗΣΕΝ ΤΟ ΚΡΑΤΟΣ*. Paciaudi also noted the inscription, albeit with minor differences; Paciaudi 1755, 216–217.

The right hand of St. John has also been claimed by Venice. According to Paolo Ramnusio, it was there before the fall of Constantinople to the Latins, housed in the church of Sts. Hermagoras and Fortunatus.¹¹⁴ Francesco Sansovino mentions in the same church the finger of the Baptist, with which he pointed at Christ and exclaimed *Ecce Agnus Dei*, and adds that it had been taken to Venice from Sebaste in 1109.¹¹⁵ The same finger was also said to have been among the relics that were sent from Sebaste to Alexandria, and medieval sources given by Du Cange mark the presence of that finger in Germany, Italy, and France.¹¹⁶ It is noteworthy that relics of the hand were also kept in two other major ports on the sea route to Palestine: Ragusa and Zara. The relic in Ragusa, consisting of the saint's right forefinger (although the sources make reference also to a left-hand relic), was mentioned by only a few pilgrims and, according to the Hungarian Franciscan Gabriel of Pécsvárad (ca. 1514–1518), had been taken secretly to Ragusa from the Holy Land by a bishop, even though local tradition connected its arrival with a Franciscan friar from Jerusalem in 1482.¹¹⁷ The relic is still kept in Dubrovnik in a hand-shaped silver-gilt reliquary from 1624, placed in an 18th-century casket that perhaps imitates the one described in the *Visitatio apostolica* by Giovanni Francesco Sormani in 1573.¹¹⁸ At Zara, another relic of the Forerunner's arm was to be found in the cathedral's treasury, again bearing the finger with which he pointed at Jesus.¹¹⁹ It is currently placed in an early 14th-century hand-shaped reliquary that bears a cross opening, giving a view of the forefinger and the inscription *digitum s[an]cti johannis baptiste* around the wrist.¹²⁰

The Baptist's left hand was to be found at the church dedicated to him in Sebaste in 1185, gilded and in a golden vessel above the tomb of the Prophet Elisha and the one containing the ashes of the Forerunner.¹²¹ Du Cange seems certain that this is the hand conserved, until his time, in the Dominican convent in Perpignan; a pilgrim on his way to Santiago de Compostela around 1323 had entrusted the relic to the prior of the convent, Pierre d'Alenya, to guard it

114 Paolo Ramnusio 1634, 133; Du Cange 1665, 184.

115 Francesco Sansovino 1663, 145.

116 Du Cange 1665, 184–185.

117 Gabriel aus Pécsvárad 1519, f. 19v. The evidence has been studied by Vesna Scepanovic, to whom these pieces of valuable information are owed; see Scepanovic 2019.

118 Scepanovic 2019.

119 The information comes from the German traveler Conrad Grünenberg (1486) and the visitation report of the bishop of Verona, Agostino Valier (1579); see *ibid.*; Bacci et al. 2018, 367.

120 Scepanovic 2019.

121 Phocas, col. 940.

in secret until his return.¹²² After some years had passed with no sign of the pilgrim, the prior revealed to the other monks the treasure he had been hiding, and the Dominicans placed it in their church for worship from 1375 until the French Revolution, when the convent was decommissioned; the reliquary was then deposited at the city's cathedral, which was already dedicated to the Baptist, and the relic was placed in a new reliquary in 1898.¹²³ The description of the Byzantine reliquary in Du Cange matches the form and decoration of the early 14th-century wooden Byzantine reliquary that has been preserved in Perpignan Cathedral (Figs. 19a, 19b).¹²⁴ It bears a depiction of the saint with wings, identifying inscriptions, and Greek iambic verses, for which the Dominicans sought translations in Greece and Cyprus in order to certify the contents, as well as the authenticity of the object.¹²⁵ The relic comprised the forearm, from the elbow down, and the hand and fingers with the skin, and even bore marks on the wrist from the chains with which the Baptist had been constrained.¹²⁶ The thumb was missing though, purportedly having been bitten off by a queen who, afterward having a terrible headache because of her action, sent it to the Dominican convent in Urgell.¹²⁷

A left hand is moreover mentioned by the Spanish ambassador Ruy González de Clavijo, who saw it in the monastery at Petra in Constantinople in 1404: "On this day the ambassadors were shown the left arm of St. John the Baptist, from the shoulder to the hand. This arm was withered, so that the skin and bone alone remained, and the joints of the elbow and the hand were adorned with jewels set in gold."¹²⁸

It is evident that the history of the aforementioned relics is obscure and often anachronistically overlapping, as in the case of the bitten thumb from

122 Du Cange 1665 186–192.

123 Durand 2014, 365. For the modern 19th-century reliquary, see the open heritage platform of the French Ministry of Culture, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/palissy/PM66001429>, accessed June 2nd, 2020.

124 Durand 2014, 365.

125 The inscriptions on the reliquary's lid read as follows: on top of the Baptist's head *Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ*; on the book he is holding with his right hand *ΦΩΝΕΙ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ ΥΠΗΡΕΤΗΣ ΛΟΓΟΥ. ΜΕΤΑΝΟΩΝ ΔΕΙΚΝΕΙ ΤΗΝ ΦΥΣΙΝ ΤΩΝ ΒΡΟΤΩΝ*; on the bottom *ΤΙ ΣΕ ΚΑΛΕΣΩΜΕΝ; ΠΡΟΦΗΤΑΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΝ Η ΜΑΡΤΥΡΑ*. The inscriptions are given, with slight differences in AASS, Iunii vol. 4, 773, where *ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΝ* comes before *ΑΓΓΕΛΟΝ* in the sequence of the qualities of the saint; and in Du Cange 1665, 192, where the apostolic quality is omitted. For the verses, see AASS, Iunii vol. 4, 773; Paciaudi 1755, 217–218.

126 Du Cange 1665, 192–193.

127 Ibid. The action cannot but bring to mind the legend surrounding the right hand's missing thumb or part thereof.

128 Markham 1859, 30.



FIGURE 19A Reliquary of the arm of John the Baptist, Paris, Musée du Louvre (on loan from the treasury of Perpignan Cathedral)

both hands. At some point after 1405, the Baptist's thumb—whether it was the right or left one is uncertain—appears at another location. In 1391, while in Constantinople, the Florentine Giovanni Corsini, brother of Cardinal Pietro, Archbishop of Florence, and “a Rhodian landholder,”¹²⁹ had acquired the relic, as well as a piece of the Seamless Robe of Jesus, which he gave to his brother;

129 Luttrell 1978c, 132; Luttrell 1992c, 127–128. His association with the Hospitallers was strong—he seems to have been involved in the mercantile activities of the Florentines at Rhodes and was thought to have been a Knight as well; see Passerini 1858, 66–67; Benvenuti Papi 1983, 638–640. Bosio refers to him as *Cavaliere*; see Bosio 1630, 139. He was buried in the Augustinian convent in the Rhodian *borgo*; Luttrell 2003b, 145.

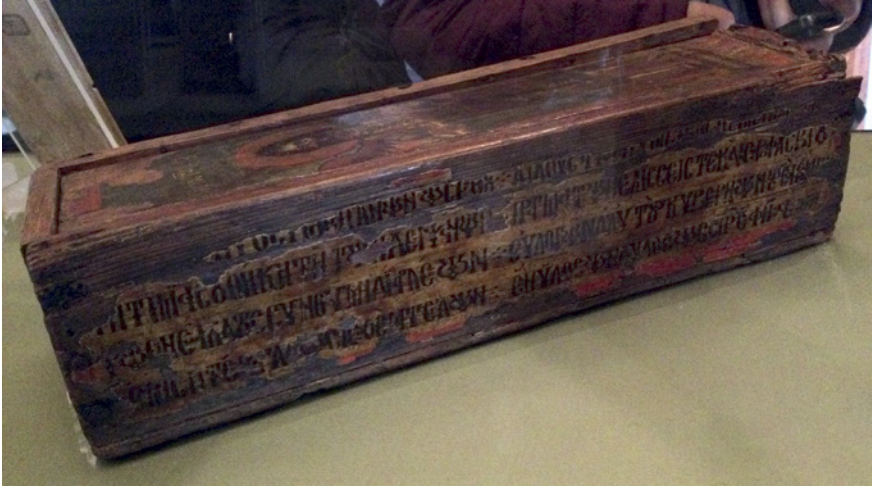


FIGURE 19B Lateral side with inscription

the cardinal, in his turn, donated it to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, where his burial chapel would be built.¹³⁰ The relic was accompanied with a document from Patriarch Anthony IV of Constantinople attesting its authenticity.¹³¹

Matters become increasingly complicated from the early 15th century onwards, when the frequent pilgrims' reports start providing more and more evidence. According to them, the hand of the Baptist was kept by the Hospitallers in the church of St. John of the *Collachium* at Rhodes. The first reference comes from Luchino da Campo in 1413, mentioning the arm of St. John the Baptist in the sacristy, a piece of information that is repeated by many other pilgrims; but the testimonies clarify as much as they confuse.¹³² An anonymous pilgrim of ca. 1420 speaks only about the digit of the right hand with which the Forerunner pointed at Christ, saying *Ecce Agnus Dei*;¹³³ in 1440 Hans Rot and Girnand von Schwalbach report seeing the same.¹³⁴ Moreover, according to

130 Concerning the donation of Pietro Corsini with a detailed discussion of the historical issues involved, see Cornelison 1998, 138–156.

131 The document, dated 1391, appears in Gamurrini 1673, 152–154; Cornelison 1998, 143, expresses her doubts on its authenticity.

132 “[...] il brazo di S. Ioane Baptista;” Brandoli 2011, 77.

133 Moranvillé 1905, 103.

134 Bernoulli 1882, 351; Huschenbett 1998, 117.

William III, Landgrave of Thuringia, traveling in 1461, and Jacob Kreyneck in 1479, the Order was in possession of the right hand of the saint.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, it was in 1484 that the right hand of the Baptist historically reached Rhodes, sent as a gift by Sultan Bayezid II from Constantinople,¹³⁶ with the aim of pleasing the Knights and to ensure friendly relations between the two parties.¹³⁷ The translation of the hand has been described and some of its scenes depicted in woodcuts (Figs. 20a, 20b) in the work of the eyewitness Guillaume Caoursin, vice-chancellor of the Order, *De translatione Sacrae Dextrae sancti Johannis Baptistae Christi praecursoris ex Constantinopoli ad Rhodios commentarium*, which was translated along with his other works into many European languages, thus propagating the feats of the Hospitallers in the West.¹³⁸

135 Kohl 1868, 96; Gaspar 2013, 3v.

136 Bayezid's father, Mehmed the Conqueror, was known for his habit of collecting Byzantine relics, which he used for political reasons, but possibly even worshipped. Bayezid became the heir to these treasures and used them in his negotiations with the West; see Babinger 1992, 411–412.

137 This effort was underlined by the defeat of the Ottomans in the siege of Rhodes in 1480 and, even more so, by the arrival of Prince Djem, the younger half-brother of Bayezid II and a pretender to the Ottoman throne, at Rhodes on July 19th, 1482, where he was received with great honors and stayed under the protection of the Master Aubusson. He was basically under the status of a privileged prisoner, as Aubusson reached an agreement with Bayezid, who offered an annual amount of 40,000 ducats for the detainment and maintenance of Djem. See the eyewitness account of Guillaume Caoursin entitled *De casu Regis Zyzymy*, printed in Caoursin 1496. See also Bosio 1630, 439–482; Brockman 1968, 15–25; Rossi 1975, 326–327; Lefort 1981; Delhoume 2004; Howard 2017, 76–77. While on Rhodes, the prince resided in a building that was part of the *auberge* of France on the Street of the Knights, which is now fully restored and houses the photographic archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese. After Rhodes, Djem was taken to the West; one of the efforts Bayezid made for his extradition included the offer of some of the numerous relics he had in his possession, for which a partial catalogue has been preserved; see Babinger 1956, the catalogue found on pp. 17–21.

138 This and his other works (*Obsidionis Rhodie Urbis descriptio; De Terremotus labe qua Rhodii affecti sunt; Oratio in Senatu Rhodiorum de morte magni Thurci habita pridie Kalendas Junias 1481; De casu regis Zizimi; De celeberrimo foedere cum thurcorum rege Bagyzit per Rhodios inito; De admissione regis Zyzymy in Gallias; Ad summum pontificem Innocencium papam octauum oratio; De traductione Zyzymy Suldani fratris magni Thurci ad vrbem*) are in one volume under the title *Rhodiorum historia (1480–1489)*, published by Johann Reger in Ulm in 1496, with the addition of numerous woodcuts. See Vann and Kagay 2015, 65–72. Concerning the translation of the relic, see also Paciaudi 1755, 321–327; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 92–93; Luttrell 1989, 11–12; Archontopoulos 1999, 77.

What, then, was the identity of the hand that the pilgrims saw at the Conventual church before 1484?¹³⁹ Three possibilities may be examined. The first is that the pre-1484 relic did not belong to the Baptist, meaning that the pilgrims mistook another relic for his own. This hypothesis is somewhat unsound, as it is based only on the testimony of Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg:¹⁴⁰ when he visited Rhodes in 1507, he saw, among others, the right hand of St. John the Merciful. Could the presence of relics of two different saints with the same name have confused the pilgrims? It seems improbable, if one considers the significance of the Baptist, as well as the fact that the relics were shown to the pious visitors by members of the Order, who also provided the relevant information about them; such confusion could thus be perceived as the result of a deliberate act, for which there seems to be no grounds.

The second possibility is that the relic indeed belonged to the Baptist and either consisted of a small part of his right hand/forearm or was not the right one at all—in any case the pilgrims did not specify the size or part of the hand, and it was not uncommon to refer to a body part (such as an arm, head, etc.) when only a piece of bone existed. In fact, there are indications that the Hospitallers owned relics of the Baptist during their time in the Holy Land; it was even reported that a merchant, after seeing the relic of the right hand at the hospital in Jerusalem, stole it from them by taking advantage of a Hospitaller's lustfulness toward women and took it to Groningen in Frisia.¹⁴¹ That would not mean, though, that the Order did not keep other relics of the Baptist, from the same or different body parts. Georges Lengherand, mayor of Mons, traveling in the years 1485–1486 may well be speaking about two hands at Rhodes: “[...] en l'église Saint Jehan [...] la main de monseigneur saint Jehan Baptiste en char et en os saulf le petit doyt; la moictié de l'autre main après, et est la main dont il baptisa nostre Seigneur comme ilz dient, et a esté espruvé par miracle [...]”¹⁴² This would mean that the pilgrims reaching Rhodes before 1484 would have seen a relic that the Knights had acquired possibly even before reaching the island; corroborating this hypothesis is the existence of the 13th-century European liturgical calendars of the Order that include a feast of the *Praesentatio brachii S. Johannis Baptisti* on the day of the Presentation of

139 It should be noted that Felix Fabri, who visited Rhodes in 1483, speaks about the Baptist's hand and its transmission to the island as a gift from the sultan, obviously a fact already known at the time of the final synthesis of his narrative; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 288–290.

140 Waldstein-Wartenberg 1978, 46.

141 Strange 1851, 125–126; Smith 2005, 222.

142 Godefroy-Méniglaize 1861, 106.



FIGURE 20A The Ottoman ambassador presents the Baptist's hand to the Grand Master, 1496, woodcut

Angelus monet Turcum: vt manum dexteram Johannis bap- magistro donat.



FIGURE 20B Two angels present the hand and an angel points out to the Ottoman ambassador that it is a gift to the Grand Master, 1496, woodcut

the Virgin (November 21st), a fact that underlines the importance of the feast and presupposes the existence of a relic.¹⁴³

A third hypothesis is that the relic was not an authentic one. This holds true for a vast number of relics from medieval times until today, a fact stated even by pilgrims in a casual manner, such as the German Wilhelm Tzewers, traveling in the years 1477–1478. Reaching Rhodes in August 1477, he visited the Conventual church and reports that the digit of the Baptist was kept there, although also exhibited in Rome at San Giovanni in Laterano with Christ's blood and the cloth he wore on the cross; and the said digit is again found in a church in Basel.¹⁴⁴ This could partly justify why the Knights, after receiving the sultan's gift, took thorough care of confirming its authenticity, since—in this case—they would have probably known of or suspected the dubious identity of the already possessed relic.

The right hand reached Rhodes with Cariati Bey, the Ottoman ambassador, on April 20th, 1484¹⁴⁵ (Figs. 20a, 20b), and was deposited in the Grand Master's chapel, while the Master Aubusson sent a committee of high-ranking dignitaries (one of them being Caoursin himself) to Constantinople, headed by the prior of the Conventual church, Fra Pietro Papefust, in order to verify its authenticity; the enquiry successfully confirmed that the hand had come to Constantinople from Antioch and that Justinian had placed it in the monastery at Petra, where it remained until the fall of the city in 1453. The deputation returned to Rhodes, and in May 1484 the relic was taken from the palace to the church of St. John in a solemn procession, led by Pietro Papefust and followed by all the clergy, Greek and Latin, the Knights, and the lay people (Fig. 21).¹⁴⁶ The procession started from the Conventual church with the accompaniment

143 Waldstein-Wartenberg 1972, 38–52; Waldstein-Wartenberg 1978, 45.

144 “[...] digitus sancti Iohannis Baptiste, *Ecce agnus Dei*, qui eciam Rome ostenditur ad sanctum Iohannem Lateranensem cum sanguine Cristi et panno, quem Dominus habuit in cruce. Idem eciam dicitur digitus fore in ecclesia nostra Basiliensi,” Hartmann 2004, 108. Concerning the common attributes and social and cultural processes that determined the relics' authenticity—and thus their value, see Geary 1986, 177–181.

145 The sultan's gift seems to have been historically associated with the right wing of a monumental altarpiece by Geertgen tot Sint Jans depicting the *Legend of the Relics of St. John the Baptist*, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna. In this work, commissioned for the chapel of the Knights of St. John in Haarlem in 1484, just after the translation of the hand to Rhodes, the monks that were said to have collected the relics of St. John from Sebaste have been replaced with officers of the Haarlem commanderie of the Order; for the work, see Bischoff 2010; Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *Schicksal der irdischen Überreste Johannes d. Täufers*, www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/784/, accessed October 2nd, 2019.

146 Caoursin 1496, n.p.; Bosio 1630, 478–479, 483–486; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 91–92.

of hymns and music and reached the palace, where the Grand Prior entered the chapel of the Grand Master, worshiped the relic that had been placed on the high altar and then received it from the hands of Aubusson. He then directed the procession, followed by all the population, out of the city walls, entering again from St. Anthony's Gate and headed to the town's square, where a throne surmounted by a baldachin of silk and gold brocade had been erected to receive the relic. The Grand Prior placed it on a brocade cushion for everyone to admire, and, after he and all the people took their positions, an Augustinian monk ascended the pulpit and delivered an eloquent sermon in Latin. Afterward the Prior ascended the throne, took the hand, blessed the audience, and then moved again toward the *collachium*, to the Conventual church. There, the relic was placed upon the high altar and was offered to the pious audience for veneration after the mass; it was finally put in the sacristy among the other sacred relics of the Order.

The involvement of the hand within the context of cultic practices in the Conventual church was documented in the travel report of Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495–1496), who happened to visit St. John on the feast day of the Beheading of the Baptist. The feast was celebrated by the brethren and the Grand Master, who were the protagonists in the liturgical celebration, performed by singing and accompanied by the church's organ. After its completion, the faithful were invited to venerate the hand of the Baptist—as Wolfgang reports, they kissed it—which was most probably exhibited in the sanctuary and not in the sacristy on this day.¹⁴⁷

The Master Aubusson donated a rich reliquary, made of solid gold, precious stones, and pearls, to house the hand. It is depicted in the watercolor drawings of the inventory of the treasure of the Conventual church of St. John in Valletta, which is kept in the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum in Mdina, dated 1756; the depiction is almost identical with the one published by Paolo Maria Paciudi in 1755 (Figs. 22a, 22b).¹⁴⁸ The watercolor actually shows two reliquaries, one inside the other. The inner one was the gold reliquary in which the

147 Gebele 1932–1933, 84. It should be added that in 1501, the future Master Emery d'Amboise, then Prior of France, donated a lavish gold plate with a small piece of the Baptist's skull; see Paciudi 1755, 331–332; Oman 1970, 106; Buhagiar et al. 1989, 73. However, this relic is not included in the ones mentioned by the pilgrims visiting the church, with the exception of Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg; Röhrich and Meisner 1878, 122.

148 Mdina, ACM 150, f. 19; Paciudi 1755, 324. The inventory records the treasures before their looting by Napoleon in June 1798. The descriptions of the items are accompanied by estimates of their value in gold, silver, and precious stones, and the ones deemed most important were illustrated in watercolour drawings by the painter Alberto Pullicino; see Buhagiar et al. 1989, 69–78.

Prior ecclesie Rhodi: processionaliter sacram manum deferens:



FIGURE 21 The processional transfer of the relic to the church of St. John, 1496, woodcut

hand may have reached Rhodes from Constantinople, which is said by Bosio to have arrived inside a cypress box lined with crimson satin;¹⁴⁹ it tries to imitate the shape of the hand and bears a *porticella*, or small window, at the front, giving a view to three fingers of the Baptist—the thumb and the index and middle fingers—with which he showed and baptized Jesus, while the rest of the hand was covered in gold and not visible (Fig. 23).¹⁵⁰ It was decorated with a large ruby, six sapphires, and more than one hundred pearls; around the wrist there was a band with a floral scroll pattern and underneath it another one with palmettes, characteristic of the art of northwest Europe of the late 12th century.¹⁵¹ This reliquary was placed inside a gold monstrance, a Late Gothic work by a Venetian artist, which is the one commissioned by Aubusson.¹⁵² The surviving depictions offer only a view of the front. However, there is a description by Paciaudi¹⁵³ and, more important and detailed, another account coming from the 18th-century manuscript in the National Library of Malta entitled *De quampluribus solemnibus functionibus extraordinariis a S. Ordine S. Joannis peractis*, with information on the sacred relics in the churches of Malta.¹⁵⁴ The reliquary was rectangular with crystal on each side and a quadrilateral lobed base with depictions in relief on the lateral sides. The one on the right bore the Baptist reproving Herod with the inscription *Praedicatio S. Johannis Baptistae. Sanctus Johannes Baptista externa Salutis Nuncius Herodem, et Herodiadem*

149 Bosio 1630, 478.

150 “[...] Della Sagra Mani si vedono da tre porticelle con cristalli li tre dita pollice indice, e medio, il resto della S. Mano e incrostata d’oro;” Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 97r.

151 Oman 1970, 104. Oman refers to the decorative bands at the wrist as decorated with filigree, even though the watercolour does not seem to allow the detection of techniques to such a degree. Comparisons of the decorative motifs can be made with such works as the Mosan reliquary, depicting St. Oda between the figures of Religion and Charity, in the British Museum: www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1978-0502-7, accessed September 18th, 2020.

152 Oman 1970, 105. A summarized description can be found in Buhagiar 2009b, 30–31. Bosio’s description of the reliquary delivered to Papefust is more in keeping with Aubusson’s reliquary: “entrò nella Cappella ch’ à Santa Caterina era dedicata; dove trovò il Gran Maestro, che accompagnato da’ Signori del suo Consiglio; e da altri più principali Comendatori, e Cavaliere di quest’Ordine; divotamente aspettando lo stava, à canto all’Altare maggiore; sopra del quale stava la Mano santissima, in un ricco Tabernacolo, e Reliquiario d’Auro, e d’Oro, e di Gioie, con varie figure, e lavori ornato, e da chiarissimi Cristalli circondato; In maniera, che la Mano Sacratissima, molto bene vedere si poteva;” Bosio 1630, 485.

153 Paciaudi 1755, 323–326.

154 Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 97r–v. The two inventories in Mdina and Valletta provide more or less the same descriptions, with the Valletta manuscript being a little more detailed, hence its use in the present study.



FIGURE 22A Reliquary with the Baptist's hand, 1756, watercolor drawing



FIGURE 22B Reliquary with the Baptist's hand, 1755, engraving



FIGURE 23 Reliquary with the Baptist's hand, 1756, watercolor drawing

adulteros increpat, et carceri mancipatur. On the left one, the beheading was depicted with the inscription *Decollatio Sancti Johannis Baptistae. Herodis Regis iussu Herodiade suadente Sanctus Johannis Baptistus decollatus et in disco sacrum Caput Regi discumbenti praesentatur.* The rear one carried the coat of arms of the Grand Master, and the front bore the inscription: *HANC DEXTERAM S. IOHANNIS BAPTISTAE / RELIGIONIS RHODIORUM PROTECTORIS / QUA REDEMPTOREM HUMANI GENERIS OSTENDIT ET BAPTIZAVIT / EX CONSTANTINOPOLI TVRCORVM TYRANNVS BAGIASIT / RHODVM MISIT VNA CVM PACTO TRIBVTO ANNVO / COACTVVS INDVSTRIA / RMI CARD. ET MAGNI MAGISTRI FRIS PETRI D AVBSSON / QVI EADEM A SANCTA SEDE*

*APOSTOLICA APPROBATAM / HIS GEMMIS ET AVRO OBRIZO ORNAVIT / ANNO SALVTIS MCCCCLXXXIII.*¹⁵⁵

The pilgrims' evidence completes our view of the relic and reliquary. The fact that the hand was completely covered with gold, apart from the fingers, could make it seem as if the whole hand was inside, as mentioned by Georges Lengherand (1485), "la moictié de l'autre main," and Nicholas le Huen (ca. 1487), "la main droicte de mon seigneur saint Jehan tout entire."¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the cultic importance of the fingers as the mediators of the holy acts of the Baptist, reflected in the structure of the reliquary leaving only them visible, could explain why in some pilgrims' narratives only the fingers are mentioned. This is the case with Alexander, Count Palatine of Zweibrücken, and Johann Ludwig, Count of Nassau-Saarbrücken, in 1495 ("die zwei Finger von St. Johannes Baptist, damit er zeigte und sprach 'ecce agnus Dei'"); with Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg in 1507 ("in einer Monstrantzen von purem goldt ist der daum vnd der Zeigerfinger, Johannis des Teuffers, mit welchem er auff Christum hat gezeiget beim Jordan sprechende, nehmet war, dass ist dass Lamb Gottes"); with Jean Thenaud in 1512 ("le doygt de Saint Jehan Baptiste"); with Jan Want in 1519 ("den vynger van sunt Jan, daer hy mede wees, seggende: Ecce agnus"); with Juan de la Enzina in the same year ("Reliquias preciosas allí, cierto, vimos del gran precursor del celestial Rey, el índice dedo del 'Ecce Agnus Dei,' con muy muchas otras, que en mucho tuvimos"); and with Greffin Affagart, again in 1519 ("en l'église est le doy de saint Jehan-Baptiste avecques lequel il monstra Nostre Seigneur en disant: Ecce Agnus Dei").¹⁵⁷

Only one pilgrim, Jan Hasištejský z Lobkovic, mentions the hand having the thumb, and this could be a hypothetical reference, as the reliquary does not seem to have offered a view of the thumb, but rather hinted at its presence.¹⁵⁸ The travelogues written in German before and after 1484 make reference to the

155 The inscription is also recorded in Paciaudi 1755, 325.

156 Godefroy-Méniglaize 1861, 106; le Huen 1488, n.p. It is not certain whether Nicholas le Huen actually traveled, as his text relies heavily on Bernhard von Breydenbach's work; it has been considered either to be an extended French translation of von Breydenbach's Latin text or to quote extensively from it; https://digiberichte.de/travel/?ID=33&FID=355&N=F&suchen1=Nicolas%20le%20Huen%20%28auch%20%5C%22de%20Pont&Vollname=Nicolas_le_Huen_%28auch_%22de_Ponteau%22%29_%5B%29%29Cbersetzung_Breydenbach%5D, accessed November 9th, 2019.

157 Karbach 1997, 62; Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 121–122; Schefer 1884, 131; van Beurden 1896, 173; Rambaldo 1978, 204; Chavanon 1902, 7.

158 "Potom vkazali nam ruku prawu Swateho Jana po loket, v kterežto ruky palecz a dwa nay-menssije prsty wedle palcze. A tiech wostatnich dwu prstu nenije. A nevmieli mi pow-iedieti zadny, kam su se dieli" [Afterward we were shown the forearm of St. John, and his hand with the thumb and two fingers next to the thumb. The other fingers are not there

relic with the term *arm*, and only five use *hand*, while the Latin ones use variations of *brachium*, the French of *bras* and *main*, and the Italian of *braccio*.¹⁵⁹ Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic again appears more detailed and makes reference to the forearm of the Baptist. In the aforementioned excerpt, it would seem that this was the older relic, consistent with the 1480 testimony of Pierre Barbatre,¹⁶⁰ even though this would mean that the older relic was closer in appearance to the one depicted in the Caoursin's woodcuts, regardless of the ambiguous degree or realism with which these depictions could be associated (Figs. 20a, 20b, 21).

In fact, these depictions correspond more closely to the relic identified as the right arm of St. John, formerly kept at the Emanet Hazime Treasury and now in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul (Fig. 24).¹⁶¹ The reliquary, in the shape of an arm and its hand with the fingers in the familiar blessing gesture, is a Venetian work probably executed while the relic was in the possession of the Hospitallers, as is evident from the depiction of the Venetian lion and the cross of the Order.¹⁶² Only the bones of the upper part of the palm are visible through a small rectangular opening. The metalwork is decorated in low relief with a continuous motif of vine foliage forming medallions and bears three inscriptions. An identifying one is around the wrist, *AYTH H XEIP ECTI IQANNOY TOY BAIITICTOY* [This is the hand of John the Baptist]; on the index finger, referring

anymore, and no one knew where these other two had disappeared to]; Strejček 1902, 46. English translation based on the French in de Vaivre and Vissière 2014, 811.

- 159 Concerning the terms describing the hand relics, often used invariably, see Braun 1940, 61–63.
- 160 “[...] le bras de monseigneur saint Jehan Baptiste tout entier depuis le couté;” Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 158.
- 161 Concerning this relic, see Kalavrezou 1997, 68–70, with a detailed description and bibliography; Köseoğlu 1987, 35–36; Aydın 2004, 150–151.
- 162 Unfortunately, it was not possible to visit the Topkapı Palace Museum to see the work. In the pictures published by Kalavrezou and Aydın (see note 161 above), a small cross pattée is discerned; even though Kalavrezou describes it as a Maltese cross, its shape does not correspond to the standard eight-pointed cross. The type of crosses used by the Order cannot be specified with accuracy, since a detailed historical and iconographical study on the subject is still lacking. It is certain that different types of the cross were in over during the centuries, as well as that the octagonal cross had been used since very early on in their history, as stated by Caoursin in 1485 while addressing Pope Innocent VIII; the text is cited by Sommi Picenardi 1900, 71. In this light, the cross depicted cannot contribute to the dating of the object. See, for example, a 14th–15th-century Hospitaller seal in the British Museum: www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1872-0603-8, accessed September 18th, 2020.



FIGURE 24 Reliquary with the Baptist's hand, silver gilt, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul

to the identification of Christ as the Messiah by John the Baptist, *ΙΔΕ Ο ΑΜΝΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ* [Behold the Lamb of God]; and at the elbow, mentioning an unknown monk, *+ ΔΕΥΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΔΑΝΙΑ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ* [Prayer of God's servant Daniel the monk].¹⁶³

It has been argued that this is the hand gifted to the Knights by Bayezid and restored to Constantinople through Nicosia, Cyprus, sometime in the 16th century.¹⁶⁴ This view, however, is in conflict with the documented history of the relic now in Cetinje, Montenegro, known as the Rhodes Hand of St. John the Baptist (Fig. 25).¹⁶⁵ This seems to be the one that reached Rhodes in 1484; after the Ottoman occupation in 1522 when the Knights left the island, it was among the treasures they managed to take with them, finally arriving in Malta, where it was placed in the newly built church of St. John, elevated to the status of Co-Cathedral in 1882.¹⁶⁶ The relic was placed in the chapel of the church known as the Shrine of the Holy Relics, now the chapel of the Anglo-Bavarian *langue* (in the mid-17th century it was decided to assign each chapel to a specific *langue*). The aforementioned depictions in the Maltese archives and in Paciaudi's work make the identification plausible, as the present appearance of the relic seems to be one fitting in such a reliquary. In 1689 a large silver and gilt-bronze Baroque case for the reliquary of the hand was donated by the Master Gregorio Carafa (1680–1690), designed by Ciro Ferri and manufactured in Rome. It was originally placed on the altar of the cathedral's oratory

163 Kalavrezou 1997, 69, figs. 8c–d.

164 Köseoğlu 1978, 36; Kalavrezou 1997, 68.

165 Sinkević 2014, 125–141.

166 Concerning the church, see Scicluna 1955; de Giorgio 2007.



FIGURE 25 Reliquary with the Baptist's hand, gold, silver, and precious stones, Monastery of Cetinje

(Fig. 26),¹⁶⁷ and at some point in the 18th century a diamond eight-pointed cross pendant that had been used as a finial for Aubusson's reliquary was added.¹⁶⁸ On the vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of St. John (June 24th), the relic was ceremonially taken out of the monstrance and placed on the high altar, from where, the following day, it was carried through the city of Valletta in a grand procession.¹⁶⁹

The medieval reliquaries were melted down after Napoleon's conquest of Malta in 1798,¹⁷⁰ while the one by Ferri escaped destruction and is now displayed in the treasury of St. John's Co-Cathedral.¹⁷¹ Upon seeing the relic, Napoleon is said to have taken the diamond ring that adorned the hand reliquary, donated by Fra Sigismondo Piccolomini, Prior of Barletta, on December 25th, 1759.¹⁷² Subsequently, since many Knights were forced into exile by Napoleon, the hand was carried away—along with the relic of the True Cross and the icon of Philereimos—by the Master Ferdinand von Hompesch (1797–1799) on

167 Oman 1970, 245.

168 Mdina, ACM 150, ff. 17v, 19r, 20r; Oman 1970, 105.

169 Porter 1858, 206; Denaro 1958, 36; Sinkević 2014, 134–135.

170 Many of the reliquaries were melted down, and some were taken on board the French flagship *L'Orient*, which was blown up in the Battle of the Nile and sank in Aboukir Bay in August 1798; see Brockman 1962, 51–58.

171 De Giorgio 2007, 134–136. Concerning Napoleon's presence, see Porter 1858, 430–460; Nicholson 2001a, 135–137.

172 Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 97r–v; Ferris 1881, 86; Ferris 1866, 141.



FIGURE 26 Case for the reliquary of the Baptist's hand, 1689, silver and bronze gilt, St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

June 18th, 1798. Some months later, it was presented by the bailiff Count Giulio Renato de Litta, plenipotentiary minister of the Order to the Russian Court, to Tsar Paul I of Russia—who in the meanwhile had been irregularly elected Grand Master¹⁷³—in the imperial palace of Gatchina, arriving on October 12th, 1798, and carried in a procession in the chapel of the palace.¹⁷⁴ In 1799 the

173 Delaville Le Roulx 1883, 7–8; Buhagiar 1989c, 22; Nicholson 2001a, 139–140. Nicholson comments on the consequences of the fact that the Order's most precious relics passed to the hands of a secular Orthodox prince, which resulted in the Order's loss of "its spiritual link with its past and even its validity as a religious order." It should be noted here that the fate of the hand, from this point on, coincides with that of the relic of the True Cross and partly of the Phileremos icon.

174 Piatnitsky 2002, 306–308. The date of the translation was planned to coincide with the wedding of Paul's daughter, the Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna; a week later his second daughter, Alexandra Pavlovna, was also married, and Paul blessed the couple with the Baptist's hand.

imperial family moved to St. Petersburg, and the relics were transported to the Grand Chapel of the Winter Palace, where the hand was placed in the newly commissioned, still extant reliquary (Fig. 25).¹⁷⁵ The new container, made of silver and gold and adorned with precious stones, offered a much more detailed view of the hand; indeed, the antiquarian and scholar Cecil Torr noted in 1889, after seeing the relic in the Winter Palace, the following description, which is in keeping with its present appearance:

The Right Hand is sadly dilapidated. The fourth and fifth fingers are gone, so that it can no longer gesticulate in response to inquiries about the harvest. There is a very large hole in the thumb, far too large for the little morsel of the thumb that choked the man-eating dragon at Antioch. And it is all very black indeed. The remaining fingers are long and slender, and the nails are delicately formed. It is the hand of an Egyptian, and a mummy.¹⁷⁶

The cult of the relic became particularly popular in Russia: each year on October 12th from 1852 until 1916, in commemoration of the relic's arrival in Russia and in imitation of the service held in Constantinople on the anniversary of the hand's translation from Antioch, it was carried to Gatchina in an impressive procession and remained there for ten days, allowing for huge crowds to venerate it.¹⁷⁷ It should be noted, though, that the hand was not unknown to Russian dignitaries before arriving in Russia; there is evidence of at least one encounter with the holy relic in 1698, when Tsar Peter the Great sent an embassy to Malta under the broader scope of a possible collaboration against the Ottomans.¹⁷⁸

After the Bolshevik revolution, the hand, along with the cross and the icon, left Russia with the White Guard and passed to the Tsarina Maria Feodorovna in Copenhagen in 1919;¹⁷⁹ after arriving in Denmark, it was then taken to Berlin in 1928, to the Russian Orthodox Church, and finally came into the possession of Alexander I of Yugoslavia in 1929. When his successor, Peter II, fled the country during World War II, he took the relic and its companion treasures to

175 *Idem*, 310–311.

176 Torr 1921, 46. Reference in Denaro 1958, 36.

177 Concerning the relic's stay in Russia, see Sinkević 2014, 135–138; Denaro 1958, 36. The translation is commemorated in the Russian synaxarium on October 12th.

178 Denaro 1958, 36; on this occasion, the Russian ambassador prostrated before the relic.

179 Denaro 1958, 36–37.

Montenegro, where it was hidden at the Ostrog Monastery and, from that point on, was thought to have been lost during the Belgrade attacks.¹⁸⁰ During this period its location was kept a secret under the communist regime, and it seems that in 1953 the communists raided the monastery and confiscated all the treasures, secured by the Department of Safety and Security. In 1978, the hand and the True Cross relic were entrusted to the Metropolitan of Montenegro and taken to Cetinje Monastery, where their presence was kept undisclosed until 1993, in fear of a possible second confiscation;¹⁸¹ from then on, they have been openly kept in the monastery.¹⁸²

What would be the most vivid expression of the relic's impact in recent years is the journey of the hand to Russia in the summer of 2006, where it remained for six weeks for the veneration of believers.¹⁸³ The visit was organized by Patriarch Aleksy II of Moscow and All Russia, and the attendance proved to be massive, accompanied by reports of miracles among the faithful worshippers.¹⁸⁴

In conclusion, returning to Hospitaller Rhodes, it seems that the Knights possessed two relics of the Baptist's hand. In light of the pilgrims' reports, it

180 For information and references to Russian, Serbian, and other Slavic sources, see Sinkević 2014, 138–139.

181 The Philereimos icon was entrusted to the National Museum of Montenegro in Cetinje; see p. 222 below.

182 Details in Sinkević 2014, 139. In the aftermath of the public announcement of the Metropolitan of Montenegro, Amfilohije Radović, on January 22nd, 1994, that the relic of the Baptist and a part of the True Cross were kept at Cetinje, the press coverage was overwhelming. See indicatively the articles in the *Vreme News Digest Agency*, no. 125 (February 14th, 1994), where it is reported that a journalist from the Serbian newspaper *Politika Ekspres* discovered the relics; <http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/serbiandigest/output4.php?file=125/t125-6.htm&query=baptist&#fhit>; and no. 129 (March 14th, 1994), with a report by Aleksandar Ćiric, who covered the relics' presence in Montenegro, even citing a former superior of the Monastery of Cetinje who supported that the relics had been brought in 1219 from Constantinople to the Monastery of Žiča by Rastko Nemanjić, later to become St. Sava—a version that mixes up information connected with the relic of the aforementioned Baptist's hand found at Siena; <http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/serbiandigest/output4.php?file=129/t129-6.htm&query=baptist&#fhit>, accessed November 6th, 2019.

183 See indicatively the relevant articles: www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/10/russia.religion; news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5060004.stm; en.fap.ru/programs/translation-of-orthodox-relics/projects/translation-of-relics-of-john-the-baptist/, all accessed November 6th, 2019.

184 mospat.ru/archive/en/2006/06/31732/, accessed November 9th, 2019; concerning the miracles and the relic's impact, see www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/152182/Miracle-of-John-the-Baptists-hand.html, accessed November 10th, 2019.

could be assumed that the hand known as the “Rhodes Hand” is the relic that was donated by Bayezid in 1484 which subsequently accompanied the Knights in their turbulent history until the late 18th century, when it passed to Russia, then to former Yugoslavia, and ended up in its present location in Cetinje, Montenegro. The hand now in the Topkapı Palace Museum, which is definitely connected with the Knights as evidenced by the reliquary stamp, could be the relic owned by the Order before 1484; the fact that it ended up in Cyprus and then Constantinople could indicate that it was not considered to be the authentic one and thus not deemed worthy of including among the sacred treasures the Knights took along to Malta after leaving Rhodes in 1523. This, of course, is a mere hypothesis, whose strength or weakness could be further challenged with the possible identification of the unknown monk Daniel, who commissioned the Topkapı reliquary.¹⁸⁵

1.2.2 Relics of the True Cross

The wood of the True Cross is a contact relic, indeed the ultimate one, since it served as the main instrument of Christ’s Passion and death. Being one of the most important Christological vestiges as the foremost symbol of Jesus’ sacrifice and of the hope for mankind’s redemption, it is one of the most popular relics in Christianity.¹⁸⁶

According to legend, the True Cross was discovered by Helena, the mother of Constantine I, in Jerusalem.¹⁸⁷ The initial version reports that Helena went to Jerusalem on the request of her son and that the Holy Spirit guided her there toward the finding of the Cross on Golgotha; it was also believed that she had been aided by the Jews and Bishop Macarius. The legend evolved further with

185 It should be noted here that there are many pieces of the hand and fingers of St. John all over the world. For example, see the Gothic silver-gilt reliquary dated ca. 1400, once part of the Guelph Treasure and now in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri, which is thought to contain the Forerunner’s finger (<https://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/10809/monstrance>, accessed October 5th, 2019), as well as the relics found in Greek churches and monasteries, such as the hand relic at the Monastery of Dionysiou on Mt. Athos; see Meinardus 1970, 198.

186 *BHG* 81–102. Much scholarly attention has been dedicated to the True Cross; see mainly Frolow 1965; Frolow 1961; Klein 2004a.

187 Veneration of the Cross is evidenced since the 4th century, after a piece of wood that was thought to be the True Cross was discovered in the mid-320s, according to tradition. The connection with Helena was established from the end of the 4th century on and was current in the East and the West ca. 500; apart from the works mentioned in the previous note, see Drake 1985, 1–22; Borgehammar 1991; Drijvers 1992; Baert 2004, 15–41; Wortley 2009b, 1–6; Jensen 2017, 59–62.

the addition of the figure of Judas Cyriacus, a Jew, who pointed out the position of the Cross after seven days of starvation in a well; the spot he indicated was correct, and three crosses were discovered, the true one distinguished from the others when a man or woman was resurrected after coming in contact with it.

After its discovery, parts of the True Cross were transferred to Constantinople—the new capital became the place with the greatest collection of True Cross relics and, by the 6th century, a dissemination point of many of its fragments.¹⁸⁸ However, the main relic was still to be found in Jerusalem, held in the church of the Holy Sepulchre,¹⁸⁹ until 614 when the Sassanids conquered the city and Shah Khosrow Parvīz captured it and took it to Ctesiphon.¹⁹⁰ Some years later, the relic was returned by Heraclius to Jerusalem,¹⁹¹ only to be taken to Constantinople shortly before the Arab conquest of Jerusalem in 637/8.¹⁹² In the meantime, while the Crusaders established the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the Holy Land, a relic of the True Cross was discovered by the grace of God in the Holy Sepulchre in August, 1099, an *inventio* that cannot but have had a connection with the ceremonial, imperial, and military use of the relic in Constantinople, already well-established and known to the Latins.¹⁹³ Almost a century later, the relic of the True Cross was carried in the Battle of Hattin in 1187 and seized by Saladin, never to be returned.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, the fate of Constantinople's relics of the True Cross after the Crusaders' sack of Constantinople in 1204 became apparent by their multiplication and dispersion, especially in the West.¹⁹⁵

188 Wortley 2009b, 9–10. The dissemination of pieces of the Cross seems to have begun two centuries earlier, since Cyril of Jerusalem stated in the 4th century that fragments of the wood filled the whole world; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Κατήχησις IV*, col. 469.

189 Sozomenus, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία II*, col. 933. Concerning the relic's early dispersion, see Jensen 2017, 63–68.

190 Wortley 2009b, 10–12; Kaegi 2003, 78.

191 For a discussion concerning the dating and the circumstances of the relic's restitution, see Zuckerman 2013, 197–218.

192 Klein 2004b, 43.

193 Idem, 57–58; Klein 2006, 94–96; Bacci 2004c, 225; Murray 1998, 221–222; Frolow 1961, 286–290.

194 Riley-Smith [1987] 2014, 834–835; Folda 2005, 37–40. After the reconquest of Acre by the Crusaders in 1191, the cult of the True Cross was newly reestablished in Acre; Folda 2005, 47–49.

195 Klein 2004c, 300–303; Bacci 2004c, 223–224; Eastmond 2004, 58–59; Lester 2017, 88–117. Riley-Smith draws a parallel between the sack of Constantinople in 1204 and a “massive *furtum sacrum*” on the background of the loss of the True Cross in 1187; Riley-Smith [1987] 2014, 185. See also Folda 2005, 69, 74, and *passim*.

Ever since its early years in the Holy Land, the Hospitaller Order was strongly associated with the cult of the True Cross, clearly evidenced in the iconography of the seal of the Grand Master, which was also initially used as the Order's great seal, depicting the Master kneeling before a patriarchal cross: an image of the True Cross or its reliquary (Figs. 27a, 27b).¹⁹⁶ The use of the Cross relic in battle was also a key element;¹⁹⁷ connected with the Hospitallers' activities and the process of the militarization of the Order, a custom established by Raymond du Puy, possibly before 1136, designated that, "The Hospitallers should not bear arms except when the standard (probably the relic) of the Holy Cross is carried for the defense of the kingdom or for the siege of a pagan city," referring to the reliquary containing a piece of the True Cross that was used as their battle standard.¹⁹⁸ It should be noted that the Order's religious character always remained dominant, so the cross was used as a symbol of Christ's suffering and not as the crusader cross, according to an early 13th-century interpretation of the cross worn by the brethren.¹⁹⁹

Accordingly, it is certain that the Order possessed a relic of the True Cross while in the Holy Land; this was definitely present in the years of the Master Jean de Villiers, who was elected ca. 1285. In a 1330/32 manuscript copy containing his brief biography written in 1296,²⁰⁰ it was reported that during the Master's election an oath was to be taken by the commander of the election and the 12 electors on the Eucharist (consecrated host), on a relic of the True Cross, and on the Gospels.²⁰¹ The reference to the *lignum domini* was absent

196 On the double-armed cross as the distinctive shape indicating the True Cross for the Crusaders, see Folda 2008, 26–27; Folda 2005, 48, concerning also the Hospitaller seals; King 1932. The iconography of the double cross remained in the coins of the Hospitallers at Rhodes; see Kasdagli 2001; Metcalf 1995, 107–116.

197 Murray 1998, 217–238, including a catalogue with a chronological list of known occasions of military deployment of the True Cross relic in the armies of the Kingdom of Jerusalem; Jones 2014, 105, esp. note 3, with further bibliography concerning the use of the Cross in battle in Byzantium and its adaption by Western rulers; McCormick 1990, 247–248, who cites further sources and also investigates the subject of victory relics.

198 Riley-Smith 2012, 29. Document in Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906, vol. 1, 360–361, no. 527.

199 Luttrell 2000b, 6.

200 The brief life was part of the volume consisting of a collection of Hospitaller documents and their translation into French, commissioned by the Hospitaller Fr. Guglielmo di Santo Stefano and realized in the years between 1278 and 1304; the compilation survives in three manuscripts with statutes and various documents and texts; see Luttrell 2003a, 11–13; Luttrell 1998b, 139–143.

201 "Après maistre Nicole Lorgne fu maistre Johan de Viliers. Au tens de cestui fu moult eforciee la election dou maistre et a grant prejudice de l'arme de ceaus qui bien ne iront et feront l'office qui lur sera comis. Car en son tens fu establi que le comandor d'eslection jurast sus le cor nostre seignor et sur le lignum domini et sor les seins evangelis que



FIGURE 27A Casts of a lead bulla of the Master Roger des Molins, Museum of the Order of St John, London



FIGURE 27B Casts of a lead bulla of the Master Guillaume de Villaret, Museum of the Order of St John, London

in the 1305/11 copy, in which only the *sains euangelis* was mentioned, while statutes after 1314 include it.²⁰² This inconsistency has been assumed to have been the result of the Order's loss of the relic in the fall of Acre in 1291 and the possible subsequent acquisition of a Templar relic of the Cross around 1312.²⁰³ Indeed, during the fall of Acre the Hospitallers lost their rule and must have lost many possessions, but there is no specific testimony thereof.²⁰⁴

The first pilgrim account during the Rhodian period of the Order, by an anonymous Rhenish pilgrim, to mention a *frustum sancte crucis* dates to 1350–1360.²⁰⁵ During the same period, the chapter general of 1354 under the Master Corneillan introduced the worship of the Holy Cross, to be performed every Friday in the churches of the Order.²⁰⁶

Throughout the time of the Knights on the island, the relic is repeatedly mentioned by the pilgrims. Even though the references lack detail in their descriptions, a basic understanding of the state of the relic and the reliquary can be surmised. The feature that is mostly—the sole one, one could even say—highlighted by the pilgrims is that the piece of the True Cross that they saw in the Conventual church was of a respectable size; indicatively, the relic is described in these terms: “une grant piece,” “eyn grosz stuck,” “unam magnam peciam,” “portio non parva,” “notabilis pars,” “un gran pezzo,” and “une grand portion.” Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) is more specific about the size, as he determines the width of the piece in one span and its length more than a span, thus forming a Latin cross.²⁰⁷ So, what would the term “big” mean? According to Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini, the cross would measure around

leument se portera et sens nul malengieing a l'election dou maistre. Cel meisme sarament doivent faire et font les xiiij. freres ensemble lors qui sont esleus si con est devisé as establimens dou Margat. Car il jurent sur le cors nostre seignor et sur le lignum domini et sur l'evangile, après qui seront confés é puis sont comunies. Et cestes choses ensi i feites doivent mantenen entré en la election;” Luttrell 2003a, 18.

202 Idem, 19, esp. note 77.

203 Ibid.

204 Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906, vol. 3, 801, no. 4496. Cited by Luttrell 1989, 10.

205 Conrady 1882a, 46.

206 “Que le vendredi soient faictes neuf leçons de la sainte Croix. Nous ne pouons assez honorer la croix de nostre saulveur Ihesucrist, de la quelle suymes aornez et icelle en noz pectz portons. Pourtant nous establissons que chascun vendredi soient leuez neuf leçons de la sainte Croix en toutes les esglises de nostre religion, excepté en l'Advent, et Septuagesime jusques à Pasques, et Penthecouste, et les solennitez de neuf leçons, et les octaves des festes, et vigilles des Quatre-Temps;” *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 17.

207 “[...] una crocetta di legno di più pezzi, di lunghezza in alto più che spanna e in traverso circha a spanna, connessa in una croce d'argento dorato, la quale crocetta affermano essere fatta del legno della verace croce del salvatore nostro Christo Iesu;” Calamai 1993, 79.

23 centimeters in width, if one takes in mind the span unit, which could also be 9.5 centimeters if a little span is meant; thus, the height would be around 46 centimeters in the first case and 19 centimeters in the second.

Ogier d'Anglure (1395) gives a different report, mentioning two crosses—relics and reliquaries.²⁰⁸ His description could perhaps be combined with the one by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini. The Knights could have had two, possibly even more, pieces of the Cross in their possession and at some point perhaps they deemed it necessary or useful to integrate some of them into a single reliquary, possibly thinking this would benefit the materiality of the relic and, thus, its impact on the reverence it would inspire. This could explain why Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini speaks about a cross made of pieces of wood and not a single piece. Nevertheless, in 1493 Jan Hasištejský z Lobkovic saw one large piece that was longer than two thumbs and two smaller pieces, one of which was the size of a small finger, without mentioning their receptacles.²⁰⁹

The cross-shaped reliquary as evidenced by Ogier d'Anglure's description was initially silver; by 1474 it either had been reworked or a new one had been commissioned, as silver gilt is stated by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini. The same is hinted at in 1493 by Botho, Count of Stolberg, who mentions silver and gold.²¹⁰ In 1507, however, Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg, described a gold work.²¹¹ The variety met in the travelers' texts concerning the materials of the work can be equally attributed to a synoptic narration or to a possible reworking of the reliquary.

Fortunately, the relic was transported along with the other treasures of the Order to Malta, where additional information has been preserved. The 18th-century inventories located by scholars in Malta make reference to four crosses containing wood from the Holy Cross, three of which had been brought from Rhodes. The first, and oldest, one is a silver-gilt patriarchal cross, still in a good state of preservation at St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, ascribed to Paris, ca. 1240 (Fig. 28).²¹² On the front side, pieces of the True Cross are set under

208 "Item, en deux croix d'argent a deux croix de la sainte vraye Croix de Nostre Sauveur Jhesus Crist;" Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 10. At around the same time, according to the revised statutes of 1489/1493, the cross was kept in the sacristy: "Etiam crux in sacrario reposita ex ligno vere crucis, in qua Christus dominus et salvator noster pro nostris peccatis, fabricata colenda est;" *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 1.

209 Strejček 1902, 46.

210 "[...] eyn grosz stuck van dem heyligen crucze in kostlichem silber vnd golde geworcht;" Jacobs 1868, 203.

211 "[...] in einem Creutze von klarem golde ist ein gross stücke von dem H: Creutz;" Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 121.

212 Oman 1970, 104.



FIGURE 28 Reliquary of the True Cross, silver gilt and wood, St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

rock crystal panels, framed by bands of filigree scroll work of vine tendrils. The arms of the cross carry ornate finials with depictions in high relief at their ends: the four Evangelists and two angels with instruments of the Passion.²¹³ On the reverse, the decoration of the finials has been executed in low relief with the four Evangelists and two Old Testament prophets in quatrefoils. A full-length Christ in Majesty, also in quatrefoil, is found at the crossing of the long lateral arm, while the *Agnus Dei* is depicted in a square frame at the crossing of the short one. The stem is a late 16th- or 17th-century Roman or southern Italian work, while the pedestal has the form of a sarcophagus with rails that give a view to a figure of the dead Christ.²¹⁴

This refined metalwork was exhibited every Good Friday above the high altar for the Adoration of the Cross. It could have been produced for the

213 The cross has been studied and described in Luttrell, Buhagiar, and Azzopardi 1989, 46, no. 18. See also Buhagiar 2000, 52; Buhagiar 2009b, 32–33. The cross is catalogued in Mdina, ACM 150, f. 11v, and Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 96r, the latter entry being much more descriptive.

214 Oman supports a provenance from Toledo or Cuenca ca. 1560, but Buhagiar supports an earlier Late Gothic date based on his stylistic examination, which seems more probable; Oman 1970, 105; Luttrell, Buhagiar, and Azzopardi 1989, 46.

Conventual church at Acre and then transported to Rhodes.²¹⁵ Indeed, it could well have been the reliquary seen by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini: both he and the Maltese inventories speak about a silver-gilt reliquary that framed several pieces of wood from the True Cross. However, the size stated by the former renders this hypothesis implausible, as the reliquary now in Malta houses a much smaller relic, unless the measurement unit denoted is the small span.

The second cross was the one made for the relics that the Master Emery d'Amboise (1503–1512) received as gifts, together with the sword of St. Louis of France, from the French King Louis XII.²¹⁶ It is documented in the 18th-century inventories, but is now lost, having belonged to the treasures that were pillaged by the French in 1798. The cross contained three relics of the Passion: a piece of the True Cross, a thorn from the Crown of Thorns, and two small pieces of cloth from Christ's Purple Robe. It was gold, with the splinter and the thorn placed on the upper part, and the two pieces of fabric, which had in the meantime turned a bit greenish, on the lateral sides; the arms of the Master were above the pedestal. On the reverse, there were the symbols of the Evangelists on the arms' endpoints and on their crossing an engraved depiction of St. John the Baptist.²¹⁷ The cross was used every Friday in the mass and was carried in procession inside St. John's Co-Cathedral. Again, one cannot distinguish whether any of the pilgrims' descriptions corresponds to this reliquary. The aforementioned report by Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg, which speaks about a gold cross, is at odds when it comes to the size: he is speaking about a large piece of wood, while the above reliquary seems to have contained only a small one.²¹⁸

The third cross was made of gold and was richly decorated with an impressive number of precious stones, whose astonishing lavishness perhaps inspired the two watercolor illustrations executed in the inventory of 1756 (Figs. 29a, 29b).²¹⁹ The piece of the relic, in the shape of a small cross, was placed at the crossing of the arms of the reliquary, which stood on a silver-gilt foot.²²⁰ Its

215 Buhagiar 2009b, 33.

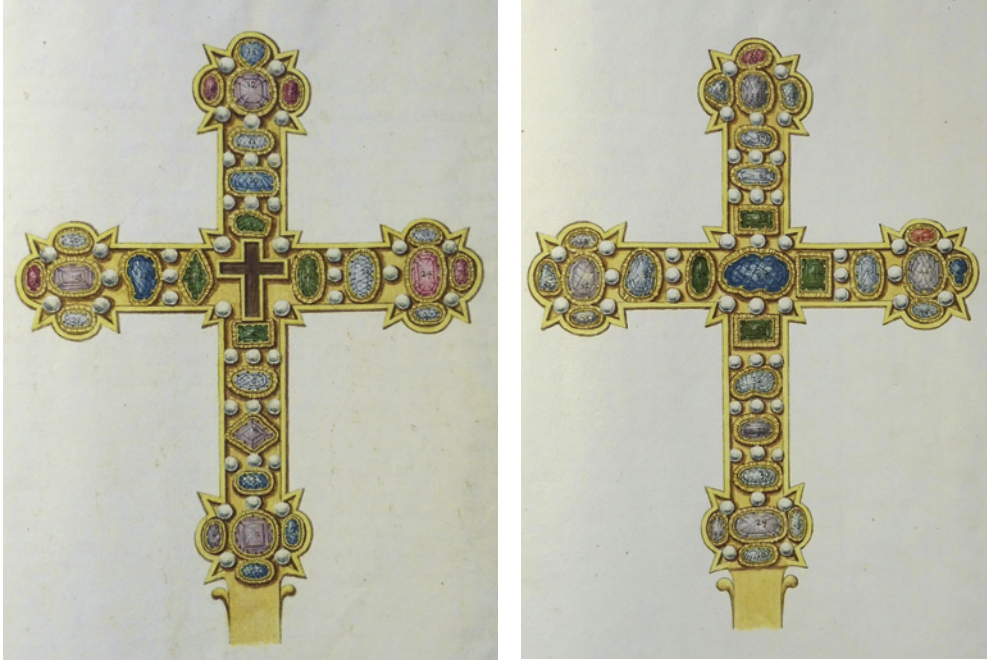
216 Idem, 32–33; Bosio 1630, 574–575.

217 Mdina, ACM 150, f. 11r, with a transcription in Azzopardi 1989, 118; Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 96r–v.

218 Luttrell 1989, 12, where he suggests that the Amboise reliquary may have been the one included in the aforementioned statutes; see note 208 above. Buhagiar 2009b, 32, note 20, challenges this hypothesis on the grounds of the size: in the statutes it is stated that the cross was made from the Holy Wood (*crux in sacratio reposita ex ligno vere crucis*), so it must have been a large piece. However, since the evidence is only textual and rather laconic, the degree of validity of any hypothesis is indeterminable.

219 Mdina, ACM 150, ff. 11v, 13v, 14r–v, 15r.

220 Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 96r–v.



FIGURES 29A, 29B Reliquary of the True Cross, 1756, watercolor drawing

provenance appears to be northern Italian, perhaps Venetian, ca. 15th century.²²¹ There are no hints concerning the size or other possible clues that would enable further hypotheses of identification, since this reliquary was also lost during the French occupation. However, it is obvious that such a luxurious object would have been connected with a significant donor.

Based on the aforementioned data, it could be possible that the above relic, housed in the lavish cross, is perhaps the relic of the True Cross of the Knights that traveled to Russia in 1799 with the Philereimos icon, the hand of the Baptist having arrived in 1798.²²² In 1799, when the relics were taken to St. Petersburg, a new reliquary was commissioned for the True Cross. After the Bolshevik revolution and several adventures in Europe, the relic is now in the Monastery of Cetinje in Montenegro (Fig. 30).

²²¹ Oman 1970, 105; Buhagiar 2009b, 33.

²²² See pp. 58–61 above; the history of the relic of the True Cross after 1799 coincides with that of the Rhodian hand of the Baptist.



FIGURE 30 Reliquary of the True Cross, after 1799, gold, silver, and precious stones, Monastery of Cetinje

1.2.3 A Cross Made from the Basin of the Washing of the Feet

The cross made from the basin which Christ used to wash the feet of his disciples before the Last Supper is a Christological relic by contact. Since the pilgrims mentioned a cross, but also the actual basin itself, both cases will be treated and examined here.²²³

This cross-shaped relic proved to be particularly popular among the island's visitors. It originated from the Temple's collection of relics that were allocated to the Hospitallers after 1313. This cross was much venerated in Palestine: in times of drought, the Templars used it in solemn processions in Acre, after which the rain would come, and many people sought its miraculous curative

²²³ For a brief study of the relic based on some pilgrims' accounts, see Waldstein-Wartenberg 1978, 40, 43–44.

powers, as well as its efficacy against evil spirits, which were driven out upon seeing it.²²⁴

The relic's provenance from the Templars was indicated by the German priest and pilgrim Ludolf von Südheim, who visited Rhodes ca. 1340 and delivered the first available reference to its presence there:

There are many venerable relics on Rhodes, among them a bronze cross that is said to have been made from the basin with which Christ washed the feet of the disciples, and the wax impression that we took from it is very effective against the storms at sea. This cross and other venerable relics in the possession of the brothers of St. John formerly belonged to the Templars, whose goods and castles the brethren received.²²⁵

This first mention is of particular importance, because it sums up three of the four basic pieces of information concerning this relic, as early as the period of its initial presence in the Conventual church: its provenance, its material, and its miraculous properties. The missing fourth detail is connected with the legend concerning the creation of the relic, and this was provided by many other pilgrims, as shall be seen below.

The provenance from the Templars is documented only in Ludolf's account, even though references to this relic are frequent up until 1522. Therefore, it would seem that the Hospitallers most probably succeeded in discarding this information in the passing of time, thus fully appropriating the relic and disconnecting it from any link to the Temple.²²⁶

According to legend, Helena, the mother of Constantine, had three crosses made from the basin of the Washing of the Feet. Apart from the one held by the Knights, one of them was to be found in Constantinople. In medieval sources of the 11th, 12th, and early 13th centuries, the basin is documented among the relics of the Pharos chapel in the Great Palace, although a cross is not mentioned.²²⁷ The fate of the third cross was much more unexpected.

224 Michelet 1841, 646–647; Tommasi 1989, 204. The cross was thought to have been made from the basin or trough Christ used to bathe.

225 "Item in Rhodo multae sunt reliquiae venerandae, inter quas est crux aerea, quae de pelvi, ex qua Christus discipulis lavit pedes, creditur esse facta, et cera ipsi impressa in mari multum valet contra tempestates. Haec crux et aliae reliquiae venerandae, quas habent fratres sancti Ioannis, quondam fuerunt Templariorum, quorum etiam iidem fratres habent omnia bona et castra;" Deycks 1851, 29.

226 The cross, while in the possession of the Templars, was carried in procession in Acre during times of adverse weather conditions and was also thought to bear curative properties, thus attracting the sick; see Barber 1994, 199–200.

227 Bacci 2003, 244.

Recounted in the work of a French anonymous pilgrim who traveled ca. 1419–1425, the story appeared as follows:

[...] another cross from the actual basin where Our Lord washed the feet of his apostles; from this particular basin it is said that three crosses were made, and one is there [in Rhodes], for which they say that when a person has the devil in his body and the cross is suddenly shown to him, the devil leaves. The second cross is said to be with the relics at Constantinople. And about the third cross, they say that St. Helena threw it into the Gulf of Attaleia to calm down the winds and the insatiable torments of the sea, due to which hardly any ship could pass from there.²²⁸

The story about Helena throwing the cross into the Gulf of Attaleia in order to calm the waters and make the passage safe for navigation was a recurring theme in the travelogues. Girnand von Schwalbach (1440), Hans Rot (1440), Hans Bernhard von Eptingen (1460), William III, Landgrave of Thuringia (1461), Eberhard von Württemberg (1468), Wilhelm Tzewers (1477), and Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485) all give the same information.²²⁹ The gulf had always been a dangerous strait for seafarers, and the legend concerning the impact of a holy relic on the calming of the sea had for centuries been connected with one of the Holy Nails.²³⁰ Thus, it seems that the Knights promoted the cult of their cross based on this legend.²³¹

Many pilgrims were aware of the legend of the Holy Nail. Indicatively, Hans Lochner (1453) relates that when St. Helena hurried from Jerusalem to Constantinople and had to pass through the gulf, she calmed the waters by throwing one of the nails into the sea.²³² Likewise, the legend of the nail is mentioned by Gabriele Capodilista (1458), Anselmo Adorno (1470), Santo Brasca

228 “Item, une aultre croix du propre bacin où Nostre Seigneur lava les piez à ses apostres: duquel bachin ilz disent que furent faictez trois croix dont là en est l’une, laquelle ilz disent que quant aucune personne a le dyable ou corps et elle lui est monstrée soubitement, le dyable s’en part et y en eust il mille. La deuxième croix disent que elle est es relicques de Constantinople. Et la IIIe disent que sainte Ellayne la fist getter dedens ledit gouffre de Saptallies pour abatre les vens et les insassiables tourmens de la mer par lesquels à paynne estoit navire qui y peust passer;” Moranvillé 1905, 103–104.

229 Huschenbett 1998, 116–117; Bernoulli 1882, 350–351, 380–381; Christ 1992, 228–229; Kohl 1868, 96; Faix and Reichert 1998, 150; Hartmann 2004, 108; Godefroy-Méniglaise 1861, 107.

230 Gregory of Tours in the late 6th century gives the details concerning the throwing by Helena of one of the four nails into the sea, while returning home from Jerusalem; see Jensen 2017, 64.

231 Bacci 2004c, 235.

232 Geisheim 1858, 214–215.

(1480), Philippe de Voisins (1490), Pietro Paolo de' Rucellai (1500), Hessel van Martena (1517), and Barthélemy de Salignac (1522).²³³ Some years after the occupation of Rhodes by the Ottomans, when the Order of St. John had already settled at Malta, Denis Possot and Charles Philippe narrate in their travelogue that Helena threw one of the nails and some parts of other relics into the Gulf of Attaleia, combining—in some generic sense, since the cult of the relic of the cross made from the basin of the Washing of the Feet appears to have been active for longer—the memories of the previously existing legends.²³⁴

In this respect, the testimony of Martin Ketzell (1476) is of particular interest; he relates the story about Helena calming the waters of Attaleia by throwing in the cross and half a nail.²³⁵ The inclusion of the nail in the legend possibly reveals the impact of the word-of-mouth stories circulating at the time, as it seems rather improbable that the Order would have promoted a version that contained relics not in its possession. This information is unique to Martin Ketzell and most probably belonged to his own personal narrative.²³⁶ His comment that despite the actions of Helena the sea was still agitated by strong winds in his time would have worked as a reminder of the need of the relics' potency in order to calm the waters.

Thus, the essential intrinsic properties and miraculous value of the relic were connected to the legend surrounding it: wax impressions were produced and distributed to the pious visitors for protection during navigation. As already mentioned in Ludolf von Südheim's excerpt, they were used to mediate

233 Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 120–121, 177; Heers and de Groer 1978, 356–357; Tamizey de Larroque 1883, 24–25; da Civezza 1879, 508; van Leeuwen 1844, 246; Barthélemy de Salignac 1593, 150. Anselmo Adorno makes reference both to the basin and the nail: “Aliqui dicunt sanctam Helenam, dum pertransiret gulpham dictam, in eam projecisse pelvem in qua dominus Jhesus lavit pedes discipulorum. Alii dicunt quod projecit clavum qua a manus Domini perforata fuit.”

234 Schefer 1890, 133.

235 “Es ist auch ein Creutz da, hat Santa Lena lassen Machen aus dem Peck, daraus unsser Her seinen Jungern ir Fies zwuog, wan si lies zway Creutz daraus machen; das ain sanckt si in den Gollffo von Satalia, und ain halbenn Nagell, der unserm Heren durch sein haylig Hand ward geschlagen, wan es so ungestem alweg auff dem selbigen Gollffo was, das fill Schiff ertracken und untergiengen. Und als si nun den Nagell und das Creutz hineinwarff, wart das Mer gestiemer. Aber noch hewtt pey Tag ist großer Wind auff dem selben Gollffo; wan mir das Faren nie wunschen tett und andren Friedern dan auff dem selben Gollffo hin und herwyder. Und ligt zwischen Rodis und Zipern;” Rhenanus 1832, 42.

236 Concerning the information reproduced in the pilgrims' texts, this would not be an uncommon circumstance; a Flemish anonymous of 1472 thought that the cross at Rhodes was made by St. Helena from the basin Pilate used to wash his hands; Conrady 1882b, 171.

good weather at sea, and the fact that this attribute and practice had already been established in the 1340s demonstrates the popularity of the relic from early on.²³⁷ Almost a century later, in 1432, Coppart de Velaines probably saw the cross, even though he speaks about a cross from the basin with which Our Lord “la Nostre Sires fist le caine” in the chapel of the Grand Master and not in St. John;²³⁸ still, there were “bulettes” distributed, probably meaning impressions made on a rounded substance, most possibly wax. In 1479, Hans Tucher confirms the miraculous powers associated with the copies,²³⁹ and a few years later, Bernhard von Breydenbach (1483), Felix Fabri (1483), and Conrad Grünenberg (1486) repeat the same information: if someone carries the wax impression while traveling by sea, the sea will be calm and the journey safe from bad weather.²⁴⁰ The miracle’s reputation is reproduced as late as 1519, as seen in the account of Ludwig Tschudi.²⁴¹

Again, connected with this miraculous property is the relic’s materiality. It is commonly repeated that the cross is made out of a copper alloy, brass or bronze. Peter Sparnau in 1385 reports that no gold or any precious stone was used, apart from latten;²⁴² and in 1493 Botho, Count of Stolberg, mentions that it had no additional special decoration.²⁴³ This type of plain cross would be suitable for the practical aspect of producing wax impressions from the object. Its size was medium, “measuring in length more than half an arm and in width four fingers,” according to Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474);²⁴⁴ thus, the copies were practical to carry.

237 Deycks 1851, 29.

238 Likewise, Ulrich Brunner must have seen the cross in the chapel in 1470 and probably refers simply to the basin without mentioning the cross; it was not uncommon for relics to be moved to and from the Grand Master’s chapel, as will be shown in the case of the miraculous thorn from the Holy Crown. Apart from the times when a relocation was dictated by specific cultic or liturgical needs, the reasons for other occasions cannot be but highly speculative; Paviot 2007, 292; Röhricht 1906, 25.

239 “Vnd man sagt, wenn man dasselb creucz jn wachß truck, so soll eß helfen auff dem mer fur vngestumikeyt;” Herz 2002, 365.

240 Mozer 2010, 102; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 287; Denke 2011, 348.

241 Tschudi 1606, 85.

242 “[...] daz selbe crütze wil keyn golt noch edil gesteyne an ym lyden;” Röhricht 1891a, 489.

243 “Item eyn missinges kruzze gemacht vusz dem becken dar vusz vnser here den Jongern dye fusze wosche vnd daz lidet geyn sunderlichen gesmuck, als dy hern zeu rodisz sprechen;” Jacobs 1868, 203.

244 Calamai 1993, 78. Moreover, Louis de Rochechouart (1461) specifies that it stood on two feet; Couderc 1893, 235.

The relic's cultic function was expanded by the gradual attribution of different miraculous powers. As seen above, it was used ca. 1420 for possessed people and could exorcise the devil. In 1435 Hans Lochner reports that it worked many miracles, and toward the end of the century it was also known for its use as a treatment for fever.²⁴⁵

Not much is known about the subsequent history of this relic. It was carried to Malta and placed in the reliquary chapel of St. John's Co-Cathedral, which later became the chapel of the Anglo-Bavarian *langue*; however, its cult does not seem to have survived in the Order's newly established home.²⁴⁶ Had it been made of precious materials, this may have been justification for the French to appropriate it in 1798; in any event, it has not survived.

It is evident that this relic was inseparably connected with navigation and the seafarers' practice, and this explains its constant popularity while in Rhodes, a safe port for all ships going to and returning from the Holy Land just before entering or leaving one of the most dangerous passages on their route, the Gulf of Attaleia. Indeed, the pilgrims did not fail to highlight the hazards of this strait and their stressful experience there, also revealing the contradictions the experience entailed: the dangers included rocks and tempests, but also dead calm, all of which were believed to be successfully dealt with by objects imbued with extraordinary qualities. A case described by Santo Brasca is to the point:

[...] we turned the bow toward Rhodes, through the Gulf of Attaleia, which is very dangerous due to many covered rocks; in the aforementioned gulf, St. Helena, on returning from Jerusalem with the nails with which our Redeemer was placed on the cross, and finding themselves there during a big tempest and fearing of perishing, she threw a nail into the water and immediately the sea calmed down and became quiet. In this gulf we also stayed with calm sea and without winds for about 16 days before being able to dock, during the most extreme heat in the world. Seeing this, the patron called all pilgrims and asked that they bring all the water from the river of Jordan that they had and throw it into the sea, because it is said that as long as the water of the Jordan is in the galley,

245 Information from Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic (1493); for a French translation, see de Vaivre and Vissière 2014, 81.

246 Scicluna 1995, 117–123.

the sea will stay calm; and he also commanded that neither the crew nor anyone else would play cards or dice.²⁴⁷

The popularity of the relic's cult at Rhodes was interwoven with the travelers' and sailors' need for protection from the perils of the sea, and it seems that it served this requirement well. While at Malta, these circumstances, which had nourished its cult, were no longer current, and this could explain its decline.

1.2.4 One of the Thirty Pieces of Silver

The 30 coins with which Judas was paid to betray Christ, often called Judas coins or Judas pennies, are Christological relics connected with a major incident in Christ's life. In its essence, the cult of this relic could be considered rather ambiguous or even enigmatic, if not for its medieval origins; although the coins were one of the means that opened the path toward Christ's Passion, they had not come into contact with Jesus and thus had not been sanctified, so as to be considered a holy relic by contact. The cult was based on the memorial properties that emanated from association with the biblical event of Judas' betrayal and also from the connection with Jesus, as established by the legends surrounding it. Since an effort to trace the history of such everyday object as coins would be futile, it could be useful instead to turn to the legends surrounding the silver coins, so as to acquire an understanding of what was thought to be their historical context in the Middle Ages.²⁴⁸

The legend seems to appear fully developed first in the *Pantheon* by Godfrey of Viterbo around the end of the 12th century.²⁴⁹ The Assyrian King Ninus issued the coins, in gold, and Abraham took them with him to Canaan; subsequently they found their way to the First Temple, from where Nebuchadnezzar carried them to Babylon. They ended up in the hands of the Three Magi, who offered them to Jesus. When the Magi left, God sent from heaven the Seamless Robe for Jesus; but the Virgin accidentally left the robe and the Magi's gifts behind when the family fled to Egypt. An Armenian astrologer aware of Christ's

247 Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 120–121, freely translated here. The earth and water that had come into contact with Christ had been sanctified, resulting in their supernatural power; see Bacci 2017a, 128–129.

248 The only complete comparison and analysis of the various legends is by Hill 1920, 91–116. At some points, the text that follows relies heavily on Hill's valuable and thorough research, not least because some of his bibliographical sources, as he also asserts, are difficult to access.

249 Hill offers a free translation of the text; see *idem*, 91–93.

coming took them and, when Jesus began teaching, brought them back to him. Jesus wore the seamless robe, which miraculously took his proper size, and sent the 30 denarii to the temple treasury, from where Judas received them as reward for his betrayal. Judas repented and returned the coins to the priests. They then bought the potter's field and also paid the soldiers who guarded Christ's tomb. The writer continues to explain that the fact that the coins were gold does not contradict the New Testament's words that they were silver, as the ancients used more than one name for gold and called different metals by the name of silver.

A different version, influenced by the legend of King Abgar of Edessa, has survived in the Syriac *Book of the Bee* by Solomon, Bishop of Basra, from ca. 1222.²⁵⁰ The beginning of the story is similar, but when the Magi were on their way to meet the child, they fell asleep near Edessa and left the coins behind. They were found by merchants and were brought to the city, where an angel appeared and gave the seamless robe to some shepherds in exchange for the coins. Both items eventually came into the possession of King Abgar, who sent them to Christ, thankful for the goodness he had shown to him. Christ kept the robe and sent the coins to the Jewish treasury, and the rest follows as in the Gospel of Matthew.²⁵¹

The legend became popular in the 14th century through two authors: the German priest and pilgrim Ludolf von Südheim and the Carmelite friar Johannes von Hildesheim. According to Ludolf, the first part of the legend was the one that was already known.²⁵² Among the Three Magi, Melchior presented Christ with the coins, and they were subsequently lost by the Virgin when the family fled to Egypt. A shepherd found them and years after, hearing the word of Jesus, went to him. From here on the version agrees with the one of Godfrey of Viterbo. Finally, when the denarii had fulfilled their purpose, they were dispersed. Johannes' version is more or less similar, with the added detail that it was a Bedouin shepherd that found the Magi's presents and offered them to Jesus, looking for a cure to his disease. Jesus ordered that these be put on the altar,

[...] and the priest burned the frankincense, and put the myrrh with the coins in the treasury. In order that all the Jews indifferently should be responsible for the Passion and death of Christ, the priests took the coins out of the common treasury and gave them to Judas. Part of the myrrh

250 Budge 1886, 95–97.

251 Matt. 26.3–10.

252 Deycks 1851, 84–85.

was mixed with the vinegar offered to Christ on the cross, and the rest was given by Nicodemus for the embalming of the body. The coins, when returned by Judas, were divided.²⁵³

Lastly, the discrepancy between the Gospel and legend concerning the metal of the coins is explained, again by the various names used for different metals. More than a century later, the Dominican Felix Fabri gave his account, based heavily on Ludolf and Johannes.²⁵⁴

Thus, the 30 pieces of silver had been associated with Christ not only concerning Judas' betrayal, but also connected with his birth, teaching, and healing actions. What is also of interest is the association of the pieces with the legend of the Rood, according to which David had planted the three rods from which the Holy Cross was made. He forged a silver hoop of 30 pounds around the trunk annually, for 30 years, and when the tree was cut, 30 plates were made out of the 30 silver hoops and hung in the temple: this was the silver with which Judas was paid.²⁵⁵ It has been suggested that this story may have been inspired by the 30 rings, or crowns, above the ciborium of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, as also seen by Anthony of Novgorod.²⁵⁶

In Rhodes, the provenance and appearance of the Judas coin in the Order's collection of relics is not known, although it has been supported that it arrived on the island with the Hospitallers, having been one of the relics they acquired in Jerusalem.²⁵⁷ Its presence was reported by pilgrims already from the mid-14th century.²⁵⁸ Firstly, around 1350–1360, an anonymous Rhenish pilgrim writes that, "One of the 30 denarii is exhibited, for which Christ was sold by Judas, and it is silver and thick, similar in form to the ancient turnose from Frankfurt;" this testimony serves as the *terminus ante quem* concerning the coin being in the possession of the Hospitallers.²⁵⁹ A few years later, in 1385, Lorenz Egen also attests the presence of the coin at Rhodes, as does Nicola

253 Hill 1920, 98.

254 Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 1, 426.

255 Napier 1894; Hill 1920, 102.

256 Hill 1920, 102. "Au dais sont suspendues de petites couronnes, au nombre de trente, pour rappeler à tous les chrétiens les trente deniers d'argent pour lesquels Judas livra le Seigneur notre Dieu qui a dit: 'Celui qui mange mon pain m'a trahi';" Ehrhard 1932, 52–53.

257 Bosio 1610, 71. Bosio's statement, though, is not backed by any historical evidence and seems to be more of a personal estimation.

258 Waldstein-Wartenberg 1978, 44.

259 "Ibidem eciam ostenditur vnus ex de[nariis] triginta, pro quibus xpistus a iuda vendebatur, et est argenteus spissus in forma sicut antiqui thuroni franckf[urtenses];" Conrady 1882a, 47.

de Martoni in 1395.²⁶⁰ Evidence from the same year is somewhat contradictory though; when Ogier d'Anglure describes his stop at Rhodes on his way to and from Palestine in 1395 and 1396 respectively, he speaks about a coin of St. Helena and not one of the silver coins of Judas:

[...] one of the denarii of St. Helena covered in lead, on which they make the bullets of Rhodes that are of such great virtue; and they make them on Good Friday. [...] Also, in the aforementioned church of St. John we were shown one of the gold denarii of the Holy Empress Helena that lies on a brass hinge and is soldered with lead. On which, many bullets are made every year, out of virgin wax, on the day of Good Friday, as the divine office is said in the church; these bullets carry many fine and noble virtues.²⁶¹

In fact, he attributes to this coin relic the practice of producing wax impressions, carriers of divine powers, during the liturgy on Good Friday, which, as will be shown, is the custom closely connected with the Rhodian Judas coin. What should be noted is that Ogier d'Anglure alone makes reference to a coin of Helena, and that all other pilgrims before and after him speak about the Judas coin.

The explanations concerning this discrepancy have relied on unawareness of the earlier testimonies mentioned above. On the assumption that Ogier d'Anglure's text provided the earliest reference to a coin at Rhodes, it was supposed that, at some point between 1395 and 1413, when the next testimony (chronologically) of the presence of a Judas coin by Luchino da Campo occurs, the Knights replaced the coin of St. Helena with the Judas coin, thus "upgrading" the identity of the relic by transforming it into a Christological one.²⁶² Nevertheless, the existence of the earlier sources rules out this hypothesis. One of the scenarios that would now seem logical is that Ogier d'Anglure's account

260 Keinz 1865, 919; Piccirillo 2003, 124.

261 "Item, ung des deniers de sainte Helene envaissellé en plomb, sur lequel on fait les bulletes de Rodes qui sont de si grant vertu; et les fait on le jour du Grant Vendredi. [...] Item, en laidicte esglise de Saint Jehan nous fuit montrés ung dez denier d'ors l'amperise sainte Eslainne, qui est aissis en ung pomelz de laiton et soldéz di plont, car aultrement ne se lait ledit denier asseoir ne solder. Sor lequelz denier on fait chescun ans plussour bullete de virge sire, c'est aissavoir le jour don Saint Vanredi, en tant que on dit l'office en l'esglise; lezquelle bullete porteet on plussour vertus belle et noble;" Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 9, 94.

262 Hill 1920, 113.

could be a misinformed one; the so-called coins of St. Helena did circulate and were objects of much veneration, perhaps resulting in such confusion.²⁶³

The relic is one of the most mentioned ones in the travelogues. All the testimonies refer to a single coin, apart from Pero Tafur who, in 1436, saw many.²⁶⁴ From the numerous sources, the ones hinting at its material, size, decoration, and use are most helpful for the understanding of the relic's presence and status in the Conventual church's collection.

As far as the material and size is concerned, the pilgrims perceived the qualities of the coin depending on their own origin and experiences. The Rhenish pilgrim compares the coin to an ancient turnose from Frankfurt, while Luchino da Campo refers to the agontano coin of the Republic of Ancona, measuring between 18–22 millimeters.²⁶⁵ In 1461, Louis de Rochechouart informs us that it is silver and compares it to a ducat; the size would again be 20–21 millimeters, if one takes the Venetian ducat as a comparison measure.²⁶⁶ The testimony of Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) agrees with the material and size and compares it to a grosso.²⁶⁷ A few years later, Wilhelm Tzewers (1477) gives his own parallel, ranging between 22–24 millimeters,²⁶⁸ and Felix Fabri (1483) agrees.²⁶⁹ Finally, Heinrich Stültz (1519) mentions its relative size in reference to half a pfennig.²⁷⁰

The coin bore the depiction of a male head on the obverse and a flower on the reverse, both of which were variously identified by the pilgrims. Luchino da Campo (1413) speaks about a head in relief and a flower similar to a daisy; Louis de Rochechouart (1461) about the image of Caesar and a lily; Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) about a head with long, messy hair and a flower much like a blue lily or iris; Pierre Barbatre (1480) about the image of Caesar

263 Hill examines the circulation and identification of the *santelene*, which had been associated with the Byzantine solidi, often used as amulets and a remedy against epilepsy and other conditions; idem, 106, note 4.

264 “[...] gran parte de los dñeros por que fue vendido Nuestro Señor;” Pérez Priego 2006, 243.

265 “[...] et uno de li proprii denari di argento per li qualli fu venduto il Nostro Signore Messer Jesu Cristo, e questo è di grandezza di uno agontano;” Brandoli 2011, 77.

266 “Hic denarius totus argenteus est, in forma unius ducati sed spissior;” Couderc 1893, 235; Ives and Grierson 1954, 5.

267 “[...] una moneta di grandezza d'uno grosso et è d'argento;” Calamai 1993, 79.

268 “Quantitatem habet blaphardi Basiliensis;” Hartmann 2004, 108. “Blaphordus”, or “plafardus”, is the “Blaffert”, current in Germany and Switzerland in this period; see Hill 1920, 107–108, esp. note 3.

269 “Quantitas est sicut blaphordorum crucis;” Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 1, 426.

270 “[...] ouch ein phennig, dorumm vnser Herr verkouft wart, ist fast lutter silber, klar silber, vnd ist als groß als ein halben dicken pfennig;” Schmid 1957a, 233.

and a tuft-like plant; Felix Fabri (1483) about a face and a lily; Konrad Beck (1483) about a face; Antonio da Crema (1486) about the image of Caesar, in his youth and with long hair, and a flower with five leaves; and Kaspar von Müllinen (1506) about a face and some sort of bramble or thistle—a direct allusion to Christ's Passion.²⁷¹ The reference to the image of Caesar must have resulted from the association of the appearance of the coin with the episode in the Gospel of Matthew in which a denarius bearing Caesar is shown to Jesus.²⁷²

Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini furthers his description with many important details, some of which match the information provided by Ogier d'Angleure; the coin was inserted in a circular frame bearing a chain. Moreover, as evidence that it truly was one of the 30 pieces given to Judas, each year on Good Friday the priests in charge of the safekeeping of the relic produced impressions in white wax, like the *Agnus Dei* wax disks that were made in Rome. Afterward they dipped them in a glass of water, saying five Pater Nosters and five Ave Marias in reverence of the five wounds of Jesus, and gave the water to those with fever, who were miraculously cured upon drinking it; and this had been experienced not long beforehand in Florence, the pilgrim's native city. Moreover, the impressions were deemed powerful against fire, as had been witnessed at some point at Rhodes when a bell tower, where the gunpowder for the cannons was stored, caught fire.²⁷³

The use of wax copies is also attested in 1477 by Wilhelm Tzewers, according to whom the Grand Master of the Order made the impressions on Good Friday and they were of great devotion; namely, they were efficient against bad weather conditions during which the sea would calm down if they were thrown in it, as reported by many witnesses.²⁷⁴ Around 1480, an English anonymous traveler confirmed that the wax copies were given to pilgrims and other strangers, who cast them out in times of great tempests at sea and, with God's grace and the wax's virtue, the tempest would cease.²⁷⁵ Pierre Barbatre (1480) received one of these impressions made on Good Friday.²⁷⁶ Apart from being efficacious against weather and fire, women who had them near their breasts

271 Brandoli 2011, 158; Couderc 1893, 235; Calamai 1993, 132; Pinzuti and Tucuo-Chala 1972–1973, 158; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 288; Szegzárdi 1916, 70; Nori 1996, 140; Röhricht 1888, 187.

272 Matt. 22.19–22. Based on the New Testament text, Ambrosio de Morales writes that any coin without the image of Caesar cannot be one of the thirty coins of Judas; Flórez 1765, 74.

273 Calamai 1993, 131–132.

274 Hartmann 2004, 108–109.

275 Brefeld 1985, 152.

276 Pinzuti and Tucuo-Chala 1972–1973, 158.

could give birth easily, and, if anyone suffered from the illness of St. John, he would be cured upon touching one of the copies with his lips.

At least as early as 1480 there was a custom of producing metal copies, as in the case of Hans Tucher, a wealthy patrician of Nuremberg and soon to become mayor of the city, who made a lead mold and cast silver copies, which he distributed to his friends and to each brother in the assembly of the provincial chapter at Nuremberg in 1485, information that was provided by the eyewitness Felix Fabri.²⁷⁷ Likewise, Conrad Grünenberg took copies made by a Dutch goldsmith to his friends in Constance. The use of silver in the copies of these coins is understandable, as it was the material of the original; and their translation to the West in large amounts boosted the reputation of the relic. Indicatively, Arnold von Harff (1497) and his companions each received 30 copies from the Grand Master at Rhodes, a respectable number.²⁷⁸ The above testimonies demonstrate Master Aubusson's active involvement in the cultic practices connected with the relic, and, since the vast majority of pilgrims reached Rhodes during the summer, it becomes plain that either there were large amounts of copies made on Good Friday or that at some point the copies were produced all year long.²⁷⁹

Pilgrims' testimonies are in accordance with the depictions of the coin in works published in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries—showing a Rhodian coin—and, more importantly, with the two coins surviving at Malta. These have been identified with ancient Rhodian coins depicting the god Apollo/Helios on the obverse and a rose/rosebud on the reverse; the ones without any inscription and in which the head does not bear rays are dated ca. 400–200 BCE, while the ones with rays around the figure are dated ca. 304–168 BCE (Figs. 31a, 31b).²⁸⁰ The documented presence of these coins in the West from at least the late 15th century is indisputable proof of their propagation and popularity.

277 Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 1, 426.

278 Brall-Tuchel and Reichert 2007, 100. One of this kind of copy could be the false tetrachm of Rhodes kept in the Cabinet des Médailles in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, published by de Mély 1901, 262–264. Hill states that it was cast, not struck, and describes it as a particularly debased reproduction, bearing the inscription *IMAGO CAESARIS* in 15th-century lettering; Hill 1920, 262. This seems to have been a copy of the Rhodian Judas coin made by someone who added a hint to the New Testament episode of the coins of Caesar, so as to affirm the religious identity of the object.

279 Pilgrimage souvenirs were considered proof of a pilgrimage and one of the identity markers of pilgrims; moreover, they came to be considered as retaining the original shrine's or relic's virtue. See Foskolou 2012, 82–83.

280 See indicatively the listings in *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* (<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org>); also de Mély 1899, 503; Head 1911, 637–642.



FIGURE 31A Rhodian drachm, 360–340 BCE, silver



FIGURE 31B Rhodian didrachm, 250–230 BCE, silver

The coins in Malta are kept in the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum in Mdina (Figs. 32a, 32b), silver and silver gilt, mounted with a collar and a loop for suspension, more or less in the form described by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini.²⁸¹ No inscription is visible, but it could be possible that it was eliminated when mounted or over time. The existence of more than one coin is in accordance only with Pero Tafur; still, a thorough technical examination

²⁸¹ “[...] chomune et poi è inserta in uno cerchietto chon una chatenuzza appicchata;” Calamai 1993, 131–132; Luttrell, Buhagiar, and Azzopardi 1989, 48, no. 20.



FIGURE 32 One of the two Rhodian Judas coins, silver and silver gilt, Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina, Malta

could assert whether each of the coins is an original or a medieval copy. Bosio (1610) and Paciaudi (1755) write about one coin found in Malta and published its reproduction, which agrees with the appearance of the extant ones (Figs. 33a, 33b).²⁸²

In the 18th-century manuscript in Valletta the two coins of Judas are recorded in a silver-gilt box reliquary;²⁸³ more specifically, they appear to have been placed inside a box for hosts, which was melted down in 1761, when war against the Ottomans was imminent.²⁸⁴ After that, it is possible they were hung on a precious reliquary that was melted down along with the other treasures in Napoleon's time, and it was perhaps due to the lack of elaborate furnishings that they were preserved. In 1880 they were to be found in the Cathedral Treasury in Mdina, catalogued as "due piccole medaglie d'argento chiamate monete di Giuda." Further details are provided in an inventory of 1933:

282 Bosio 1610, 71–72; Paciaudi 1755, 408. Bosio copies the engraving of Budé. Based on the Budé's description, this coin must have been the same as the one kept in Saint-Jean-de-Latran in Paris; Budé 1514, f. 132v.

283 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 104r.

284 Luttrell, Buhagiar, and Azzopardi 1989, 48.



FIGURE 33A
The Judas coin kept in Malta,
1610, engraving

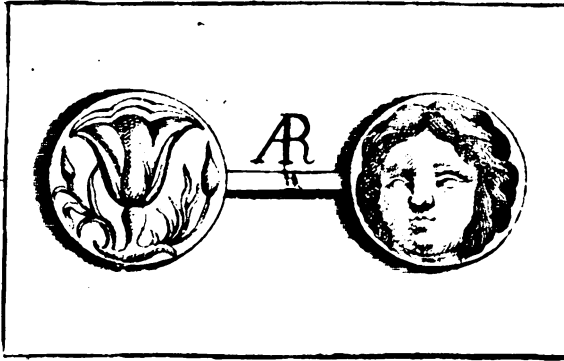


FIGURE 33B
The Judas coin kept in
Malta, 1755, engraving

[...] the coins, described as two current in Judaea at the time of Jesus Christ and bearing the figures of the sun and a rose, both symbolic of Rhodes, are said to have once belonged to the Order of St. John who held them in high esteem as two of the coins paid to Judas. They are compared to two similar coins conserved in the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.²⁸⁵

The custom of distributing copies, well-established at Rhodes, was preserved in Malta as well and confirms the longevity of the relic's cult; the Prior Antoine Gressin, who held office from 1556 to 1584, distributed wax impressions, covered with silver or gold leaf, on Easter Sunday;²⁸⁶ the copies were much revered, having been proven powerful against storms and other hazards.²⁸⁷ More than a century later, the inventories also make note of this practice: wax impressions

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Paciaudi 1755, 408, 375. The original source of this information seems to be Bosio 1602, 395, cited in Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 104r.

²⁸⁷ Bosio 1602, 395.

were given to the Grand Master, the Council, the brothers, and the entire congregation on Holy Saturday, during the singing of the *Magnificat* canticle.²⁸⁸

The popularity of the relic's cult was not unchallenged though. In 1793 Carlo Castone, a patrician from Como and Knight of the Order of Malta, reproached the Grand Master for the veneration the Order showed, and promoted, to what clearly were ancient coins from Rhodes.²⁸⁹ This fact was justified early on by Bosio, who explained that the 30 coins of Judas could have belonged to a different type of coins, and specifically Rhodian ones, as they circulated widely in the Roman Empire at that time.²⁹⁰ In reality, the type and value of the 30 pieces of silver seems to have belonged to a completely different currency.²⁹¹

Bosio reproduced the early 16th-century depiction by the French humanist Guillaume Budé of the coin found in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome, whose 15th-century reliquary was also reproduced. The inscription *POAIION* was misspelled as *POAIION* (Figs. 34a, 34b);²⁹² such mistakes were not uncommon and could have even been connected with various differentiations related to the origin of the coin, since the Rhodian identity seems to have been deemed incompatible with its status as a Judas coin. A case in point is the engraving in Guillaume Rouillé's work, in which the inscription is reproduced as *POAIION* (Fig. 35); when combined with the fact that he identifies the coin with a common Roman denarius, the replacement of Δ with *A* could perhaps allude to the term *POMAIION* [Roman].²⁹³ Moreover, the legend *POAIION* on a similar coin in the Capuchin convent in Enghien was interpreted as [*H*]*POAIION*, meaning the

288 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 104r.

289 Eynaud 1989, 55–56.

290 Bosio 1610, 71. This idea was subsequently supported by Paciaudi 1755, 411. Sanderus, when speaking about a Rhodian Judas coin in Heverlee, also supports their wide circulation in everyday life and commerce in Judaea; Sanderus, 1727, 176. The Rhodian coins were thought to be of great beauty as well; see Babelon 1901, 68, 76.

291 The coins in circulation in Judaea during the first half of the 1st century would have been the Roman silver denarius and the staters of Antioch and Tyre; see Hill 1920, 114–116. For some hints concerning their value, see de Fleury 1870, 262–263.

292 Bosio 1610, 71. Concerning the coin, it was said that “Cosimo de’ Medici the Elder received it from the Greek Patriarch who came to the Florentine Council;” Hill 1920, 104. The reliquary seems to have been donated by the Cardinal of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Bernardino López de Carvajal, during his years there (1495–1507); see de Mély 1899, 507, with a depiction of the reliquary. Apart from these last references in the late 19th century and early 20th, no further information could be found. Oral communication with the priests of the church in Rome confirmed that the coin is not there and that its fate is unknown.

293 Rouillé 1577, 10. Hill is certain that the misspelling was “a mere slip on the engraver’s part,” though not taking into account Rouillé’s identification; Hill 1920, 112.



FIGURE 34A
The Judas coin kept in Santa
Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome,
1610, engraving

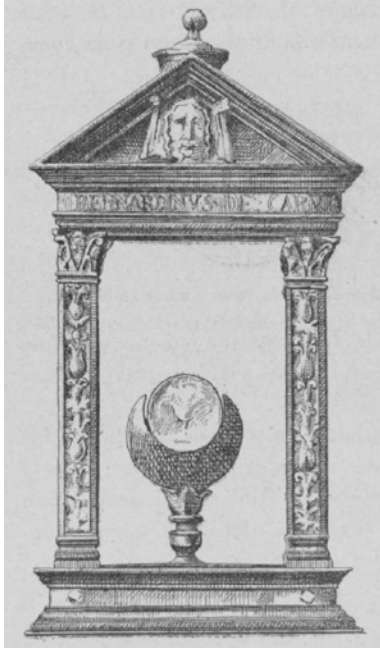


FIGURE 34B
Reliquary of the Judas coin kept in Santa Croce in
Gerusalemme, 1899, engraving

coin of Herod.²⁹⁴ In any case, it would seem that, to a certain extent, at some point the connection between Rhodes and the coin faded to oblivion; when Henri Sauval describes a Judas coin kept in Vincennes, he states that its origin is an unknown matter.²⁹⁵

294 De Villenoisy 1900, 4; Hill 1920, 112; de Mély 1899, 509; Babelon 1901, 79–80, note 3.

295 “Les deniers de Judas qu’on montre à Vincennes, à St Jean de Latran et au Temple, ou plutôt les pièces d’argent des trésors du Temple, de St Jean de Latran et de Vincennes ont été frappées à Rhodes assurément, mais que ce soient de ces deniers que reçut le malheureux Judas pour recompense de sa trahison, c’est un conte fait à plaisir, et dont on ignore l’origine;” Sauval 1724, XIV, 55. Likewise, it is noted that “De estas Reliquias no hay mas testimonio de la tradicion y antigüedad;” Flórez 1765, 73.



FIGURE 35 A Judas coin, 1577, engraving

In total, Rhodian coins identified with the silver pieces of Judas have been documented in the following places: Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome, Saint-Jean-de-Latran and the Temple in Paris,²⁹⁶ the Camara Santa in Oviedo,²⁹⁷ Vincennes,²⁹⁸ Roses in Catalonia,²⁹⁹ San Francesco dei Riformati in Spezia,³⁰⁰ and the abbey of Heverlee, near Leuven, whose coin was moved to the Capuchin convent in Enghien.³⁰¹ From these, the ones at Enghien, Rome, and the Temple in Paris bore an inscription. What is of particular importance is that from the 32 Judas coins recorded in various post-medieval sources in the West, 9 out of the 11 that can be identified are coins from Rhodes.³⁰²

Overall, it would seem that the establishment of the Rhodian coin's cultic identity as a Christological relic by the Order of St. John, which occurred from the mid-14th century onwards, and its popularity among the Western pilgrims, led to its propagation and final appropriation in European religious institutions as the Judas coin, as pilgrims traveled with copies of it—it would have been easy for them to find even authentic coins on the island—and presented them in the West. This phenomenon clearly demonstrates the dynamics triggered by a singular object when put in a specific cultic context and framed by the suitable social circumstances, despite its—often obvious—contradictory nature.

296 De Mély 1899, 506.

297 Idem, 504–505. The information is given by Ambrosio de Morales, who notes that all of the Judas coins he had seen were Rhodian coins; Flórez 1765, 73–74.

298 De Mély 1899, 508.

299 Hill 1920, 109.

300 Ibid.

301 Ibid.; de Mély 1899, 502–503.

302 Hill 1920, 91–116.

1.2.5 A Bowl Used by Christ

The bowl used by Christ at the Last Supper is a Christological relic by contact. The extant references are not many, but cover the entire Hospitaller period on the island. As early as the mid-14th century, there is a reference to a *scutella*, probably made out of clay, that was associated with Martha and out of which Christ had often drunk, possibly when he was at her house in Bethany.³⁰³ This kind of flat bowl, as can be imagined, was subsequently presented as used by Christ for eating on Maundy Thursday during the Last Supper. Hans Porner (1418) speaks about some sort of stone plate from which Christ and the disciples ate the bitter herbs;³⁰⁴ around the same time, an anonymous pilgrim refers to a large *escuelle*, used many times by Jesus to eat.³⁰⁵ Felice Brancacci mentions the *catino* Jesus used at the Last Supper, which seems to imply the already popular Holy Grail, and Mariano da Siena refers to vessels used at the Last Supper made of jasper and precious stones.³⁰⁶ German-speaking pilgrims report a *schüssel* from which Jesus and the disciples ate; Hans Rot and Girmand von Schwalbach add that it was not known whether the material was stone, glass, or other, and according to Wilhelm Tzewers it seemed to be of stone and chalcedony.³⁰⁷ Moreover, Botho of Stolberg reports that this was the vessel used for the bread at the Last Supper.³⁰⁸

The reports of pilgrims are rather limited and possibly reveal a lack of interest in this relic, a hypothesis that is further supported by the existence of so many variations in the sources; unfortunately, one cannot learn the subsequent fate of this object, and no evidence has been found in the Maltese archives to date. It could be, though, that the Christological relic associated with Martha was cultically upgraded by the Knights to the one connected with the Last Supper and, thereby, the Passion.

1.2.6 The Head and Body of St. Euphemia

The head and body of St. Euphemia are saintly relics. The cult of the saint, a young virgin who was tortured and martyred in Chalcedon in 303, was

303 Luke 10.38–42; John 11.5–44, 12.2–4. Reference by an anonymous Rhenish pilgrim (1350–1360); Conrady 1882a, 47.

304 One of the traditional items of the Passover meal. Hänselmann 1874–1875, 134.

305 Moranvillé 1905, 103.

306 Catellacci 1881, 165; Pirillo 1991, 124. Concerning the creation of the Grail legend in the 11th and 12th centuries and its history, see Barber 2004.

307 Bach 1964, 432; Geisheim 1858, 214; Seelbach 1993, 48; Kohl 1868, 96; Bernoulli 1882, 350; Huschenbett 1998, 117; Hartmann 2004, 108.

308 Jacobs 1868, 203.

widespread from the 4th century.³⁰⁹ The body of the St. Euphemia was reported to have been buried by her mother and father near the city.³¹⁰ Already by the end of the 4th century there was a church dedicated to her next to her tomb, and an annual popular feast took place for her veneration.³¹¹ During the Persian attacks of the 7th century, Heraclius transferred the relic to Constantinople, where it was placed in a church next to the Hippodrome—the site had formerly been the palace of Antiochus, a *praepositus* under Theodosius II.³¹² During iconoclasm, the martyrion was destroyed, and Emperor Leo III or Constantine V despoiled the relics and cast them into the sea, from where they ended up at the island of Limnos, only to be restored by the Empress Irene in Constantinople a few years later, in 796.³¹³

The account of throwing the relics into the sea is possibly connected with a legend according to which a Late Antique marble sarcophagus containing the body or relics of the body of Euphemia floated to the coast of Rovinj, Croatia, after a big storm, arriving at the dawn of July 13th, 800. The relics, still extant, were placed in the former church of St. George, which was subsequently dedicated to the female saint (Fig. 36).³¹⁴ Nevertheless, the body was also preserved in Constantinople and it is presently kept at the Patriarchal Church of St. George at Phanar (Fig. 37).

According to a third version, the body relic seems to have taken a completely different path: it was miraculously translated to Palestine and was to be found

309 Concerning the saint's life, see Halkin 1965; *Acta S. Euphemiae* 266–274; *BHG* 619–624.

310 As reported in the *Μαρτύριον τῆς ἁγίας μάρτυρος τοῦ Χριστοῦ Εὐφημίας* in Halkin 1965, 33; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium sanctae Euphemiae*, col. 732.

311 See the *Ἐκφρασις εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Εὐφημίαν τὴν πανεύφημον* in Halkin 1965, 5. This is where the Council of Chalcedon was held in 451, during which the miraculous intercession of Euphemia was said to have had determined the outcome; *BHG* 622.

312 The church has been identified and was excavated in 1942 and 1951–1952. It consists of a hexagonal martyrion that, however, shows stylistic features that point to the 6th century; see Naumann and Belting 1966, 54–70. Concerning the sources on the translation of the relics, see the late 8th-century narrative of Constantine of Tios and the 14th-century panegyric of Macarius Macres; Constantine of Tios, *Historia corporis saepius translati*, 274–283; Macarius Macres, *Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς μερικά θαύματα καὶ εἰς τὴν εὐρεσιν καὶ ἀνακομιδὴν τοῦ λειψάνου τῆς ἁγίας καὶ πανευφήμου μεγαλομάρτυρος Εὐφημίας* in Halkin 1965, 169–183; also, Berger 1988, 311–322. For Antiochus, see Bardill and Greatrex 1997, 171–197.

313 The sacrilege against Euphemia by Leo III is documented only in the earlier version of the story, that of Constantine of Tios; all later sources mention Constantine V. For a discussion on the historicity of the accounts, see Wortley 1982, 274–279.

314 Scepanovic 2019.

at the chapel of the Templars' Castle Pilgrim at Atlit.³¹⁵ The Templars showed deep devotion to the saint, and the possession of her relics was expressed with pride and adoration; her head was particularly celebrated in the Order, and her body was known to be miraculous.³¹⁶ After the fall of Acre in 1291, they were taken to Cyprus, perhaps placed in the Temple church in Nicosia.³¹⁷ If one is to rely on the claims of the Hospitallers, who acquired the relics along with the rest of the Templars' possessions, both were in their hands.

The first evidence of Euphemia's relics on Rhodes concerns the head relic and occurs in the middle of the 14th century from an anonymous Rhenish pilgrim; this is followed by Nicola de Martoni in 1394, who enumerates it among the relics kept in the Conventual church.³¹⁸ The head is mentioned continually as being at St. John, especially from 1461 on and until 1520, but with no details concerning its material aspects, apart that it was kept in the church's sacristy.³¹⁹

Five pilgrims refer to St. Euphemia's body: Ulrich Brunner in 1470, Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini in 1474, Pierre Barbatre in 1480, Paul Walther Guglingen in 1483, and Botho of Stolberg in 1493. Brunner writes about it in a simple manner, saying that the saint lies in the church;³²⁰ likewise, Guglingen mentions that the body of the virgin reposes there;³²¹ and according to Botho, the head of Euphemia and her whole body are among the holy relics.³²² Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini delivers more detailed, valuable information while enumerating the Rhodian relics. Based on his testimony, it seems that in 1474 the

315 Tommasi 1989, 208–209. According to Philip of Savona's *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*, the relic had been miraculously transferred from Chalcedonia; Neumann 1872, 76. The text has been dated ca. 1280–1289; see Pringle 2012, 51–54, with a translation of the Latin text in 321–360. The relic of St. Euphemia is also documented in three 13th-century anonymous texts; Michelant and Raynaud 1882, 91, 180, 229. Sources in Tommasi, op. cit.; Barber 1994, 199; Nicholson 2001b, 146.

316 Michelet 1841, 143–144; Nicholson 2001b, 146–148; Nicholson 2002, 108–120.

317 Nicholson 2001b, 147; Nicholson 2016, 50–52; Barber 1994, 199–200; Tommasi 1989, 209.

318 Conrady 1882a, 47; Piccirillo 2003, 124.

319 See the testimonies of William III of Thuringia, Gaudenz von Kirchberg, Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini, Wilhelm Tzewers, Felix Fabri, Joos van Ghistele, Bernhard von Breydenbach, Georges Lengherand, Antonio da Crema, Conrad Grünenberg, Nicholas le Huen, Arnold von Harff, Noè Bianco, Heinrich Stültz, and Ludwig Tschudi; Kohl 1868, 96; Röhricht 1905, 147; Calamai 1993, 79, 132; Hartmann 2004, 90; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 288; Gaspar 1998, 367; Mozer 2010, 102; Godefroy-Ménilglaise 1861, 106; Nori 1996, 140; Denke 2011, 349; le Huen 1488, n.n.; von Groote 1860, 73; Bianco 1742, 21; Schmid 1957a, 233; Tschudi 1606, 86.

320 “[...] item im solsz zu Rodis in der pfarkirchen leyt sant Eufemia;” Röhricht 1906, 25.

321 “In parochia in castro requiescit corpus Eufemie virginis;” Sollweck 1892, 87.

322 “Item dasz houbit sancte Eufemie der lichenam auch gans dar ist;” Jacobs 1868, 203.



FIGURE 36 The sarcophagus of St. Euphemia, church of St. Euphemia, Rovinj

body of the saint was inside a tomb reliquary placed on top of the sacristy's entrance.³²³ This description seems to imply perhaps the existence of some

323 "La testa di sancta Euphemia vergine et martyre, il cui corpo è soppellito suso alto nel muro a la mano dextra dell'uscio della sagrestia della chiesa di Sancto Giovanni di Rody,



FIGURE 37 The reliquary of St. Euphemia, Patriarchal Church of St. George, Phanar

sort of niche in which the reliquary casket would be set behind iron railings, with a lamp hanging from above. In 1480 Pierre Barbatre confirmed the location of this setting, to the left of the chancel.³²⁴ This specific location of the body in the Conventual church seems to signal spatially the sacristy and to guide the pilgrims' attention toward the place where the numerous relics were kept, thus establishing a link between the saint and their most sought-after Christological treasures. The holy attributes of the saint would subsequently be accented by this setting, explaining the multitude of references to the relic of her head in the sacristy.³²⁵

The cult of Euphemia was especially popular within the Order. Her body was involved in a solemn procession around the castle in her honor, held on her feast day from at least 1449. According to a statute of the chapter general of September 21st, 1449, in the years of the Master Jean de Lastic (1437–1454), it was defined that her feast would be celebrated as a double one and that the

serrato dinanzi con una craticula di ferro et chon una lampana pendente a honore della sancta;" Calamai 1993, 79, 132.

324 "Le merquedi XIII^e du moys de septembre, apres les vespres dictes, nous furent monstres les dignités et reliques de l'eglise de monseigneur saint Jehan de Roddez. Et premierement, a senestre, pres du cuer, est une chapelle hault. La est le corps de sainte Eufemie en char et en os. Item auprès de la en une autre chapelle sont les reliques de l'eglise en grant nombre;" Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 158.

325 See note 319 above.

procession would be carried out with the utmost veneration, so that the saint would intercede with God and Christ for the pious, in favor of liberation from the enemy, and for deliverance to eternal life.³²⁶

The relics, along with their reliquaries, reached Malta with the Knights. The casket housing the body was already too worn due to old age by 1560, when the Master Jean Parisot de Valette (1557–1568) refurbished it, a fact rather hinting to an early dating of the reliquary on Rhodes.³²⁷ The new casket was silver-gilt, bearing a carved figure of the saint on the lid, while the sides were decorated with low-relief depictions of scenes from her martyrdom.³²⁸ The presence of the entire head of the saint is also attested in 1579, again in a silver casket with depictions of scenes of her life;³²⁹ this information leaves room for doubt as to whether the body and the head were deposited in the same casket.

The relics were kept under the altar of the chapel of the *langue* of Italy dedicated to St. Catherine, in St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, until 1753, when the Prior of Lombardy examined them, only to find them reduced to dust. Consequently, the remains were placed on the altar in a new reliquary.³³⁰ On the other hand, there is evidence that after Napoleon's invasion, when the reliquaries must have been plundered, the relic survived. This is evidenced by the inquiry of the Bishop of Nicastro in Calabria, Domenico Valensise (1888–1902), to the Bishop of Malta, Pietro Pace, concerning the relics of the head of

326 "De sancta Euphemia, cuius sacrum corpus inter reliquias ecclesie sancti Ioannis Rhodi positum est, festum duplex decimo octavo calendas Octobris celebrari iubemus, ipsumque sacrum corpus summa cum veneratione processionaliter castellum Rhodi lustrando deferatur, suppliciter exorantes, ut beatissima virgo apud deum et dominum nostrum Iesum Christum pro nobis intercedere dignetur, quatenus in presenti vita ab hostium tyrannide nos liberet et demum ad vite eterne beatitudinem per infinitam suam clementiam nos perducatur;" *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 30; Legras and Lemaître 1991, 92; Nicholson 2016, 50.

327 "Era il Gran Maestro Valletta, non men deuoto, e pió verso le cose sacre, che diligente, e sollecito nel fatto dell'arme si fosse. Perilche, essendo egli asceto in Persona in questi medesimi giorni, al Castello Sant'Angelo; & hauendo fatto aprir il Tolo, nel quale le sante Reliquie della Religione si conseruauano; le volle deuotamente visitar tutte ad vna ad vna; & hauendo trouato, che la Cassa, nella quale si rinchiudeua il Corpo di Santa Eufemia, era per la vecchiezza à si mal termine ridotta, che quella sacra Reliquia non si poteua più portar in processione; come ogn'anno, nel giorno della Festa sua, portar si suole; glie ne fece far vn'altra nuoua d'argento dorato; nella quale di basso rileuo, da dotta, & eccelente mano, scolpite furono l'Istorie del Martirio di quella gloriosa Santa. E fu la detta Cassa fatta in modo, che due Diaconi con maestá, e con degna cerimonia sopra le spalle hoggidi portar la sogliono;" Bosio 1602, 442.

328 Jean de la Vallette's reliquary is described in the 18th-century manuscript in Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 100r–v.

329 Nicholson 2016, 51.

330 Ibid.

St. Euphemia that were kept in Sant'Eufemia Vetere, where the order kept a bailiwick.³³¹ Valensise reproduced exact copies of the relics and sent them to Malta, so that it would be ascertained whether they could have been part of the large piece of the skull kept in Valletta; the response, sent in 1899, was positive, and certainly stood as a clear confirmation of the relics' authenticity.³³² The Maltese relics—whatever they may consist of—are now kept on the altar of the chapel of the *langue* of Italy at St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta (Fig. 38).

1.2.7 Other Relics of the Collection

Relics of a large number of saints are documented in the sacred collection of St. John of the *Collachium*. Since the references to them are only nominal without providing additional information, they seem to constitute a broader group of relics of saints in the eyes of the pilgrims and will be treated as such, with respect to their tangible historical context.

During the 14th century, the right arm of St. George, the arm of St. Stephen, and that of St. Anthony are the relics first documented around 1350.³³³ By 1394–1395 the collection appears richer, with the additional relics of the arms of St. Leo and St. Blaise, the right arm of St. Bartholomew, and the hands of St. Clare and St. Anne.³³⁴ By 1440 a relic of St. Margaret's arm and St. Andrew's head had been added, supplemented by 1449 with St. Anastasia's head, and by 1474 with the head of one of the 11,000 virgin companions of St. Ursula and the head and body of St. Philonilla.³³⁵ After the Ottoman siege of 1480 the collection is reported to have also included relics of the arm of the Apostle Thomas and of St. Leodegar, St. Polycarp's head, and later on St. Theodoric's head, St. Lupus' head, St. Aegidius' and St. Sebastian' arms, the right hand of St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Eulogius' arm, and St. John the Merciful's right arm.³³⁶ Moreover, a piece of bone of St. Magdalene is documented in 1506 and her finger in 1519.³³⁷

331 Salerno 2001, 110–113; Salerno 2012, 263–272.

332 The historical investigation of Valensise has been reprinted in Vilella 2011.

333 Conrady 1882a, 47. These relics, along with the head of St. Euphemia, may have arrived at Rhodes with the Knights.

334 Piccirillo 2003, 124; Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 9–10.

335 Huschenbett 1998, 117; Bernoulli 1882, 350–351; Seelbach 1993, 48; Calamai 1993, 79. In the pilgrims' texts, the saint is mentioned as Phylomene by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini and Bernhard von Breydenbach. Since Philomena/Filumena is a saint whose discovery and veneration were set in the 19th century, it seems only logical that they are referring to Philonilla, especially if her saintly qualities are taken under consideration.

336 Mozer 2010, 102; Karbach 1997, 62; Röhrich 1888, 187; Röhrich and Meisner 1878, 122.

337 Röhrich 1888, 187; Hoogeweg 1889, 193; van Beurden 1896, 174.



FIGURE 38 Altar in the chapel of the *langue* of Italy containing the relics of St. Euphemia, St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

As is evident, the collection included relics of Byzantine and Latin saints, with the former in the majority. Noteworthy are the saints that were associated with healing, such as St. Blaise, the physician and bishop of Sebaste who

has traditionally been connected with the cure of throat conditions³³⁸ and whose relic was among the ones taken from Rhodes to Malta. It consisted of the entire bone of his arm inside a silver arm reliquary with gild decoration, which protruded from the upper part so that pious believers could lean in and touch it with their throats.³³⁹ Likewise, there are St. Philonilla, who attended to the sick with her sister,³⁴⁰ St. Anastasia Pharmakolytria, protectress from poison and harmful substances,³⁴¹ St. Margaret, patron of pregnant women and childbirth,³⁴² and St. Thomas, whose shrine at Canterbury was famous for the miraculous healing of a variety of infirmities.³⁴³

In the case of the relics of the 11,000 virgins, their role as patrons of navigation and as models of pilgrimage, due to their maritime peregrinations, could easily justify their presence in one of the main ports of call on the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem.³⁴⁴ Moreover, their chastity, a vow they defended with their lives as a single Christian group against the barbarians who finally executed them, was a factor that surely promoted their cult among the military orders.³⁴⁵ The Order perhaps owned a bust reliquary of a virgin, which was the most commonly distributed reliquary of these saints in the 14th century,³⁴⁶ in 1579 the Archbishop of Monreale, Ludovico I de Torres, saw a head of one of the virgins among the other relics at Malta.³⁴⁷ This may have been the reliquary mentioned in the 18th-century inventory at Valletta as “un Capo formato di pasta delle Reliquie degl’ 11m Vergini,” perhaps alluding to a wooden bust with impasto decoration, which was to be found inside the silver coffer of All

338 *Acta SS. Blasii*, 336–353; *BHG* 276–277.

339 Buhagiar 2009b, 38; Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 95v.

340 *Acta S. Zenaidis*, 507–510. St. Philonilla and her sister, St. Zenais, from Tarsus of Cilicia, the first unmercenary physicians, studied and practiced medicine and tended to the sick; they became famous as miracle-working doctors.

341 *BHG* 81–83. St. Anastasia’s relics were also to be found at the church of St. Catherine’s hospice, see pp. 151–154 below.

342 *Acta S. Margaritae seu Marinae*, 33–39; *BHG* 1165–1169.

343 According to the testimony of John of Salisbury, Thomas Becket’s secretary and later the bishop of Chartres, his shrine was a place of miraculous healing; see Scott 2010, xvi–xvii.

344 *AASS*, Oct. vol. 9, 239–240; *BHL* 8445; Montgomery 2009, 17. On their lives and cult, see *AASS*, Oct. vol. 9, 73–303; *BHL* 8426–8451. Concerning the distribution of their relics after the excavations of their graves in the mid-12th century, see Montgomery 2009, 25–28.

345 Nicholson 2016, 41–59, esp. 46–50. It seems that the Templars also had in their possession, in Paris, a relic of one of Ursula’s companions that remained there after their dissolution; *idem*, 43–44.

346 Montgomery 2009, 15–26, figs. 10–15, 17–23; Holladay 1997, 67–118, esp. 88–85.

347 Collura 1936–1937, 41.

Saints.³⁴⁸ Another silver and partly gilt reliquary of St. Ursula and the virgins is described in the inventory, in the shape of a sphere and bearing a depiction of the saint in low relief at the center; it is noted that it was commissioned in 1731 and that it replaced the former crystal reliquary that had been brought from Rhodes.³⁴⁹ This information was repeated in an 18th-century calendar of feast days, where it was added that the Rhodian crystal reliquary had the shape of a chalice surrounded with silver.³⁵⁰ It cannot be confirmed whether there actually was a relic of St. Ursula at Rhodes or if the Order acquired it in Malta, but the details concerning the form of the reliquary in the shape of a chalice is rather unusual and ambiguous.

Concerning the relic of St. Anthony, it was also seen in the chapel of the Grand Master.³⁵¹ In the Valletta inventory it is described as being housed in a Gothic reliquary with the saint's figure in relief and the arms of the Master Jean de Lastic (1437–1454).³⁵² The presence of other reliquaries of the aforementioned saints that had found their way from Rhodes to Malta is attested by the 18th-century manuscript in Malta. Among them are the reliquary of the arm of St. George, which also included the hand and was renewed by the Master Jean Parisot de Valette (1557–1568); a part of the arm of St. Bartholomew, which was originally inside the reliquary boxes with saintly relics that were put in the All Saints' reliquary and which was placed in 1680 in a silver arm reliquary bearing the arms of the Master Villeneuve (1319–1346); the whole right hand of St. Anne, the Virgin's mother, in a gold arm reliquary commissioned by the Master Amboise (1503–1512), whose arms were on its base, along with depictions of the saint's life in relief; a relic from the head of St. Pantaleon, which also bore the arms of the Master Amboise, but was reworked in 1733; the whole right arm of St. Clare of Assisi, in a silver-gilt four-sided tabernacle set with rock crystal and commissioned by the Aragonese Knight Fra Iame Ingo; the relic of a bone from the arm of St. Thomas of Canterbury in a reliquary that was commissioned in 1600; an elaborate reliquary that included a bone of St. Andrew's knee and bones of St. Philonilla, one of the 11,000 virgins, St. Andrew of Crete, St. Theodora, St. Procopius, St. Stephen the Protomartyr, and St. Bernard of

348 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 101r.

349 Ibid.

350 Nicholson 2016, 49. The text reads: "quae olim in Reliquiae Ex Chrystalio ad formiam Calicij argento circumnato inclusae erant et ex Rhodo adducti."

351 Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 122.

352 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 95r.

Clairvaux.³⁵³ This reliquary casket, bearing the arms of Aubusson on its four sides, is described as silver with gold bands and figures, executed in the shape of an antique temple; it was surmounted by several spires and supported by four busts, and there were niches in three of the spires, inside which three gold statuettes of saints were placed. In the middle, the Crucifixion was depicted with the Virgin on the right and St. John the Evangelist on the left, all silver gilt.³⁵⁴

Regarding St. Polycarp, there was a substantial part of his cranium transferred from Rhodes to Malta, but there is no information concerning its reliquary, except that a silver one was commissioned.³⁵⁵ It is possible that this was the much venerated Templar relic that seems to have been taken to Cyprus after 1291 and passed on to the Hospitallers.³⁵⁶ Lastly, the finger of St. Magdalene is documented in the Maltese inventory as being in a reliquary with the arms of the Master Fabrizio del Carretto (1513–1521). It is depicted in watercolor, but with no evidence of the Master's arms. The cylindrical container of the relic is of the late 12th century and the pedestal of the early 16th, of Italian provenance.³⁵⁷ It seems that it was made in the Frankish East and then partly reworked in the years of the Master.

There is no additional information about the rest of the saintly relics and their receptacles. What seems to be the case is that both Eastern and Western relics coexisted, sometimes even in the same reliquary, as in the case of St. Andrew's casket. This is also evident from the description of a silver coffer of All Saints that still survives at St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta (Figs. 39a, 39b). The present work does not correspond to the original, as it was remodeled twice, in 1597 and in 1747.³⁵⁸ It bears an inscription that attests that the relics it contains were acquired from Palestine, Cyprus, Rhodes, and Malta; in total, relics of 21 saints are enumerated, most of them Eastern, some "obscure"

353 *Idem*, ff. 95r–104v. However, all of these relics had not necessarily come from Rhodes; see Buhagiar 2009b, 39.

354 The description of this obviously Gothic reliquary cannot but bring to mind the famous mid-14th-century reliquary in Aachen Cathedral that contains Charlemagne's thigh bone and is surmounted by three spires containing one gold statuette each; see Lepie and Minkenberg 2010, 33.

355 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 95r.

356 Tommasi 1989, 197–198, 207. An indication of the importance of the relic to the Templars is connected with their testimonies, during the course of their trials, that the relic of St. Polycarp was among the holy objects they touched their cord to, in order to partake of its saintly power; see Nicholson 2017, 64.

357 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 98r; Mdina, ACM 150, ff. 21v, 23r; Oman 1970, 104.

358 Buhagiar 2009b, 40; Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 101r–102r.



FIGURES 39A, 39B Reliquary of All Saints, chapel of the Anglo-Bavarian *langue*, St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

and some popular saints of the Crusader era.³⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the saints that were particularly venerated or their most revered body parts, as in the case of St. Ursula and her companions, were housed in their own reliquary.

The sources for what seems to have been a particularly rich collection of the Order's saintly relics is partial, and unfortunately its material aspects elude us due to their reworking after 1530. The basic testimonies from pilgrims' reports do not provide much information, apart from the presence of the relics in the sacristy. They cannot be relied upon for chronological data, as is evident in the case of St. Polycarp's cranium, which may have been acquired around 1313, but is mentioned only in 1483. However, it is more than apparent that the collection spanned from the East to the West and from popular to lesser-known saints, some with clear ties with the Hospitallers, their Rhodian setting, and the concept of pilgrimage, and some more obscure, all cared for with precious containers.

The cultic character of the Conventual church was complemented with some particular objects for which very few or unique references exist. These provide such minimal information that, combined with the absence of other evidence, further investigation is unachievable.

Two Marian relics are mentioned: Luchino da Campo (1413) reports seeing a garment of the Virgin, and Greffin Affagart (1519) gives an indirect reference to one of the Virgin's shoes.³⁶⁰ Their presence in the Conventual church would be in keeping with Hospitaller Marian piety,³⁶¹ and it is in this context that another object, inseparably linked with the veneration of Mary, also appears: the rosary.³⁶² This item had not only become indispensable for the faithful pilgrims, but had even served as a means for them to understand their itinerary in a spiritual dimension, as a sequence corresponding to apposite prayers.³⁶³ Rhodes was the selling point of famous rosaries, said to have been made of agarwood, mentioned by pilgrims as "lignum aloes" or "holts/holtz van aloes."³⁶⁴ Their profitable trade must have particularly satisfied the Hospitallers.³⁶⁵

359 Ibid.

360 "[...] della veste di Nostra Donna;" Brandoli 2011, 77. Greffin Affagart relates: "[...] j'ay veu les soulliers que portoyt la Vierge Marie, l'un à Rhodes et l'autre au Puiz en Auvergne;" Chavanon 1902, 172.

361 See pp. 211–219 below.

362 For the history and evolution of the rosary in the Middle Ages, see Winston-Allen 1998.

363 Chareyron 2005, 25, 107.

364 Conrady 1882b, 106; Röhrich 1891b, 127; Röhrich and Meisner 1883, 48; Schefer 1884, 136; Lang 2008, 42.

365 See for example the information from Ludwig von Hanau-Lichtenberg (1484–1485) and Hans Hundt (1494–1494); Röhrich 1891b, 127; Röhrich and Meisner 1883, 48. The former

In 1440 and 1477 relics of the Holy Innocents are attested by three pilgrims. They also refer to Old Testament relics of Abraham and to a piece of the stone where St. John the Evangelist celebrated the first mass.³⁶⁶ A few years later, in 1480, 1485, and 1486, another legendary object is mentioned among the treasures of the Conventual church: the horn of a unicorn, of large dimensions.³⁶⁷

The above information is fragmentary. An observation that can be made, concerning the Marian relics, the relics of the Holy Innocents, and the stone of the Evangelist, is that they all pertain to the New Testament years. As such, they must have served, in their own measure, in the contemplation of the corresponding context, which was soon to be experienced in Jerusalem.

2 The Chapel of the Grand Master

2.1 *Historical and Archaeological Investigation*

The chapel of the Grand Master was founded in the imposing palace—the main administrative seat of the Order and residence of the Grand Master. Its history is intertwined with that of the palace and its functions.³⁶⁸ Construction must have begun in the years of the Master Héliion de Villeneuve (1319–1346), since his coat of arms, along with the arms of the Holy See, was found above the entrance (Figs. 40a, 40b);³⁶⁹ already by the middle of the 14th century, the edifice must have reached its overall completed form, to judge by the testimony of an anonymous English pilgrim (1344–1345), who refers to the palace as “one of the most beautiful under heaven.”³⁷⁰ By the end of the century, Nicola de Martoni (1394–1395) describes a big castle with many rich rooms and

paid two and the latter eleven *marzellen*, referring to the Venetian marcello in use at the time.

366 Huschenbett 1998, 117; Bernoulli 1882, 351; Hartmann 2004, 108.

367 Pinzuti and Tucuo-Chala 1972–1973, 158; Godefroy-Ménilglaise 1861, 106; Nori 1996, 140.

368 Concerning the palace, see Rottiers 1830, 149–154; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 75–80; Gabriel 1923, 5–12; Lojacono 1936a, 289–365; Luttrell 2003b, 90–94; Kollias 2005, 143–164.

369 Rottiers 1830, 286; Rottiers 1828, pl. 73.16; Flandin 1858, pl. 23; Lojacono 1936a, 304; Luttrell 2003b, 30. The construction of the palace by Villeneuve is further attested in *The Chronicle of the Deceased Masters*; see Luttrell 2003b, 188, 190.

370 “The Island of Rhodes is large enough, having many hamlets and castles, besides that of which I speak, which is one of the most beautiful under heaven, in which resides one of the Lords of the world, the Master of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem: he has there in his company four hundred soldiers, brothers of the Hospital;” Hoade 1970, 56.

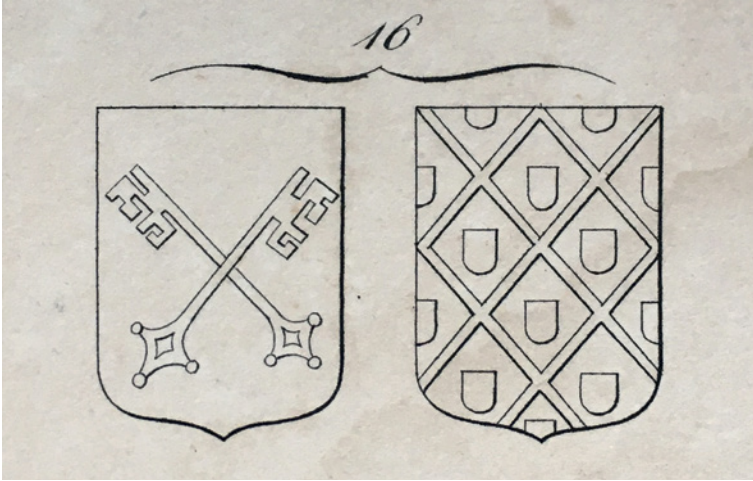


FIGURE 40A The arms of the Master Villeneuve and the Papacy, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck



FIGURE 40B The entrance of the Grand Master's palace with the arms of the Papacy and the Master Villeneuve quartered with those of the Order, 1858, engraving

chambers, finely decorated; he is the first to mention a chapel, in reference to the relics kept there.³⁷¹

The chapel seems to have been dedicated to St. Catherine;³⁷² formerly, it was thought to have had two denominations, since there was evidence for a dedication to St. Mary Magdalene as well,³⁷³ based on the scarce and extremely limited information available.³⁷⁴ A recent publication, with a description of the town written at some point after the Ottoman siege of 1480, sheds new light on the former speculations by revealing that the palace had two chapels, each dedicated to the above female saints.³⁷⁵ From the numerous pilgrims' accounts, Coppart de Velaines (1432) explicitly refers to the patron saint, naming St. Catherine.³⁷⁶ The association of the chapel with the popular female saint is further highlighted by the fact that on her feast day the relic of her right arm, which was housed there, was exhibited for veneration, as reported by Hans Tucher and Sebald Rieter the Younger in 1479, Conrad Grünenberg in 1486, and Noè Bianco ca. 1500.³⁷⁷

Despite the lack of historical evidence, it can be deduced that both chapels were connected with official ceremonies, constituting a link between the palace and the Conventual church—the political/administrative and the ecclesiastical rule. Although both institutions were interdependent, the notional distance between them called for a formal type of practical mediation, effected through the chapels. A case in point is the Grand Master's funeral ceremonies, in which one palace chapel was involved at least since the 1470s. The description of the burial of the Master Orsini by Bosio informs us that, after the death of the Master (June 8th, 1476), his body was carried to the chapel and remained there for the day, before being taken to the Conventual church for burial.³⁷⁸

371 Piccirillo 2003, 124. The denomination by Nicola de Martoni is somewhat particular. He refers to the relics of the Order as "De reliquiis Sancti Johannis" and makes the distinction between the ones found "in ecclesia Sancti Johannis," i.e. the Conventual church, and "in quadam pulcra cappella Sancti Johannis," i.e. in the Grand Master's chapel.

372 Caoursin 1496, n.p.; Bosio 1630, 485.

373 Bosio 1630, 363.

374 Gabriel 1923, 8; Lojacono 1936a, 297–298.

375 "Devers le my jour est le palays ou mengent les sgrs frères de son hospital et hostel. [...] Et devers ponant a deux belles chappelles, l'une de Marie Magdalena et l'autre de Sainte Katherine;" de Vaivre 2009a, 57. The text is thought to have been perhaps written by a soldier, recruited for the defense of the town, or a member of the reinforcements that arrived from France with Aubusson's brother, Antoine.

376 Paviot 2007, 292.

377 Herz 2002, 365; Röhrich and Meisner 1884, 50; Denke 2011, 350; Bianco 1742, 21.

378 "E dopo questo, andando tutti i Priori, e Bagliui alla camera del Gran Maestro, doue era il suo Cadauero; e leuando sopra le spalle loro il cataletto, in cui giaceua; lo portarono nella Cappella del Palagio, doue per tutto quel giorno se ne stette; E nella dimane, che

Moreover, the chapel was involved in the election of the Grand Master: in the informative account of the election of Pierre d'Aubusson (June 17th, 1476), again by Bosio, it is reported that, after his election in St. John, the Grand Master went to the palace and entered the chapel of Mary Magdalene, where he venerated the holy relics, and firstly the Holy Thorn, before retiring to the inner chambers.³⁷⁹ Lastly, with the arrival of the hand of St. John the Baptist from Constantinople in 1484, when the relic reached the palace with the sultan's envoy, it was first placed on the altar of St. Magdalene's chapel, from where the Grand Prior had to receive it in order to take it to the Conventual church, its ultimate location.³⁸⁰ In any case, many pilgrims mention both the chapel and the church together, since both—conveniently situated opposite one another—constituted the core of the Convent, as clearly reflected in their sacred treasures. A case in point is the description by Nicholas de Huen (ca. 1487), in which the two sites are interwoven in his narrative, as it becomes obvious that the ultimate focus lay on the relics and not on the sites themselves.³⁸¹

If the aforementioned anonymous report is to be trusted and two chapels existed, the lack of precise information renders our understanding more and more perplexed. It would be logical to assume that, perhaps, one of the chapels

fu Domenica à nove; con diuota, e religiosa, e splendida pompa, quale à tanto Principe conueniua; fu portato alla Sepoltura, nella Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista;" Bosio 1630, 360.

379 "[...] doue entrò nella Cappella di Santa Maria Madalena; & adorata hauendo la Santa Spina, e venerate l'altre Sante Reliquie; si ritirò nelle stanze interiori; licentiando il Popolo;" idem, 363.

380 Idem, 485.

381 "Durant le temps que nous fusmes a Rhodes visitasmes le lieu des chevaliers, le fort chasteau, lesglise bien servie moult bien ornee et de grant devotion. Les tresnobles reliques nous furent demonstrees tant a lesglise come ala chappelle du grand maistre de Rhodes qui tient estat royal fort magnifique et tout imperial. En la grande esglise y a une crois darain, que premier estoit le bassin auquel nostre seigneur lava les pies a ses apostres, et dit on que limpression dicelle faicte en cire reprime les tempestes de la mer. Item deux espines de la couronne nostre seigneur ihesus, lune est en ladicte esglise, et laultre est au palais du grand maistre. Et nous fust dit que celle espine du palais sans nulle faulte tous les ans le vendredi saint evidament fleurit. Item lung des deniers dargent est demonstre dont notre seigneur fust vendu. Item le chief de sainte Philomene, et de la vraye croix une grant piece, avec le bras de saint blaise martire. Aussi le bras de saint estienne premier martir. Item lung des bras de saint iehan baptiste. Item le chief de sainte eufemie vierge et martyre. Item le chief sainte Policarpe disciple de saint Jehan. Et ung chief des xi mille vierge. Item la main de sainte Clere vierge et de sainte Anne la main. Item de la glorieuse vierge katherine le bras senestre, lequel est ala chappelle du grant maistre;" le Huen 1488, n.p.

was destined to house the palace's relics or that there was a distinction among their ceremonial functions; but all this would be speculative. What could be a valid hypothesis is that both chapels housed relics: according to Bosio,³⁸² the Holy Thorn and other relics were to be found in the chapel of Mary Magdalene, but it would also be reasonable to assume that pilgrims probably visited the chapel of St. Catherine as well, since the saint's arm is among the relics they list.

Detailed and material evidence is unfortunately lacking; the chapels collapsed due to the destructive earthquake of 1851 and the explosion in the Conventual church in 1856,³⁸³ when the upper part of the palace was destroyed, with only some of the lower parts and the substructures remaining—these were further transformed by their subsequent use and the Italian restorations of the edifice.³⁸⁴ From 1933 to 1935, the Italians removed all the later additions and excavated its ruins; Pietro Lojacono, who attended the works, tried to distinguish the phases of the building's construction and attempted graphic reconstructions of its original form. The present-day chapel is part of the dramatically altered result of the edifice's Italian reconstruction, which took place under the architect Vittorio Mesturino from 1937 to 1940, under the Governor of the Dodecanese, Cesare Maria de Vecchi (Fig. 41).³⁸⁵

The palace, built at the northwest corner of the *collachium*, seems to have been erected on the site of a former Byzantine fortress.³⁸⁶ It was reminiscent of both Western and Eastern buildings, namely the Papal Palace in Avignon and the Hospitaller complex in Acre, as well as the Eastern caravanserais.³⁸⁷ The arms of Hélión de Villeneuve, originally on the south gate, attest to its construction in the first half of the 14th century, and it seems that up to the end of the 15th century additional modifications were complementary and limited. The building must have suffered some limited damage during the siege of 1480, but in 1481 an earthquake, which shook the town, caused heavy damage and led to construction works by the Master Aubusson, though without resulting in profound changes that would alter the building's plan (Fig. 42).³⁸⁸

382 Bosio 1630, 363.

383 Gabriel 1923, 5; Biliotti and Cottret 1881, 509–510.

384 For an overview of the building history of the palace, see Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2004, 237–264.

385 Mesturino 1978.

386 Kollias 2005, 144–148; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2004, 238.

387 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2004, 240; Manoussou-Ntella 2012a, 324–325. On the Hospitallers' quarter at Acre, see Boas 1999, 37–41; Pringle 2009, 101–114.

388 In *De Terremotus labe qua Rhodii affecti sunt* Caoursin reports: “dirupta, fracta, lapsa, vel ruinam minantia, palacia vero magistratus;” Caoursin 1496, n.p.; Gabriel 1923, 12.



FIGURE 41 The chapel, palace of the Grand Master, Rhodes

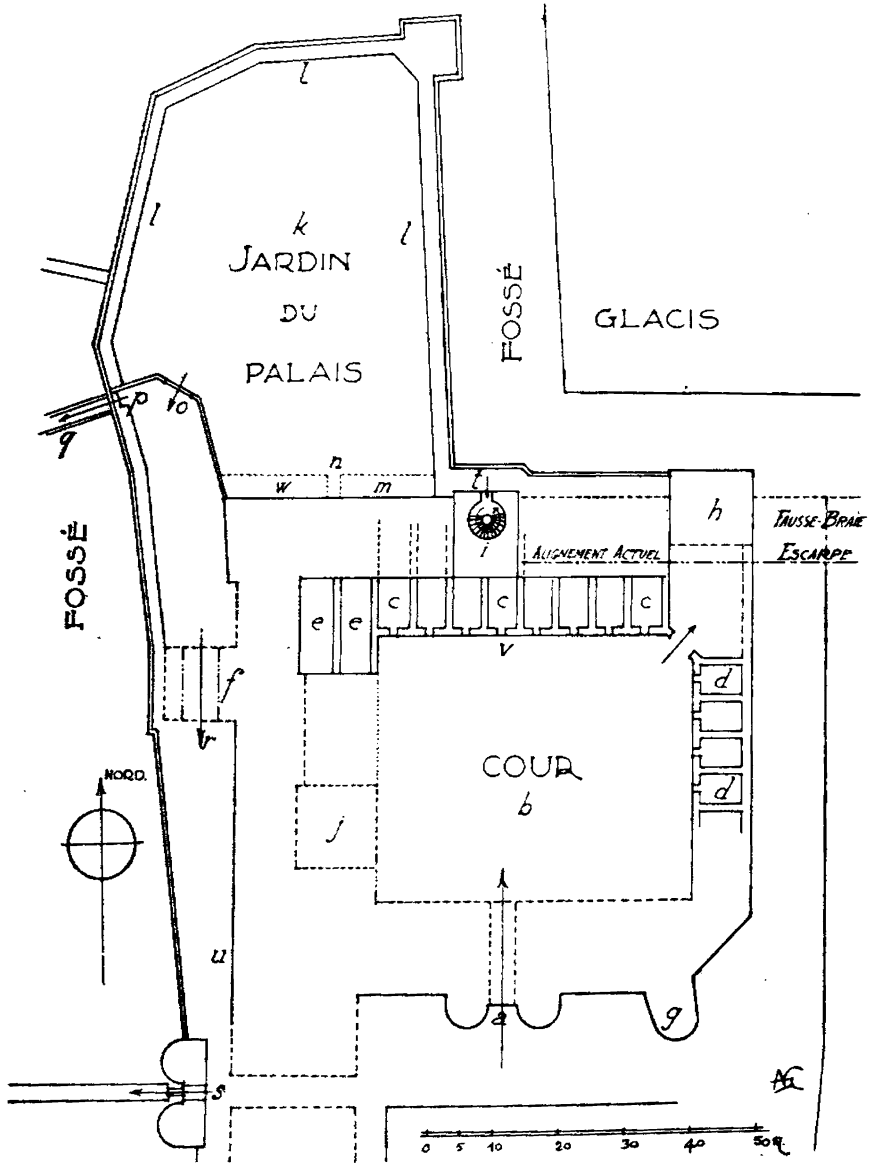


FIGURE 42 The complex of the Grand Master's palace, Rhodes, plan



FIGURE 43 The interior of the palace, view from the west, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

According to Rottiers, who witnessed the state of the palace before the explosion of 1856, the chapel was situated on the ground floor, west of the south gate and near the room he refers to as the “Council Chamber;” when he saw it, it was used as a barn. It was accessed via a staircase and had an entrance on its south side. There was a mullioned window with a pointed arch behind the east-facing altar that overlooked the courtyard; on the exterior, the wall vertical to the east wall of the chapel, which probably collapsed after the explosion, bore the arms of the Master Aubusson (Fig. 43).³⁸⁹ It seems that at least part of the chapel survived the earthquake of 1481, since there was a stained glass fragment with the arms of the Master Piero Raimondo Zacosta (1461–1467).³⁹⁰ Nevertheless, there is no concrete evidence to confirm that this construction was indeed a chapel.³⁹¹

Edouard Biliotti, having also visited the palace before the 1856 explosion, situates the chapel on the opposite side, on the ground floor at the right of the

389 Rottiers 1830, 150–151; Rottiers 1828, pl. 18.

390 Rottiers 1830, 151.

391 Lojacono 1936a, 308–309; Kollias 2005, 160.

courtyard.³⁹² However, this description was questioned by Lojacono. He reported at this spot the presence of a recently built barrel-vaulted construction oriented from north to south, divided into four large chambers for the detainment of prisoners³⁹³ and could not deliver any evidence for the existence of a chapel.³⁹⁴ Lojacono instead accepted Rottiers' description, seeing that it corresponded to his depictions, and hypothesized that the chapel could have consisted of a small square or rectangular cross-vaulted construction.³⁹⁵ However, he admitted that the extant evidence rendered the identification of the chapel's walls impossible. According to Gabriel though, the chapel must have definitely been situated on the upper floor.³⁹⁶ Ultimately, the Italian reconstruction followed, more or less, Rottiers' description, in a somewhat misunderstood manner. More recent investigations into the building's architecture by Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas have resulted in the suggestion that the chapel should perhaps be more correctly allocated to the middle of the west wing's intermediate level (Figs. 44a, 44b).³⁹⁷

Unfortunately, there is no information concerning the interior architectural decoration. Apart from the reference to the stained glass arms of the Master Zacosta—and it would be natural to assume that there was extensive decoration in the chapel's glass windows—the extant evidence is connected with movable works that adorned it. These included the silk and wool tapestries depicting scenes of the lives of Sts. Catherine and Mary Magdalene, commissioned by the Master Aubusson from Flanders.³⁹⁸ Moreover, in 1495, when Alexander, Count Palatine of Zweibrücken, visited the palace chapel, he was asked by the Grand Master to sit on one of the two beautifully ornate chairs,

392 Biliotti and Cottret 1881, 510.

393 After the explosion of 1856, the Ottomans used the palace as a women's prison.

394 Lojacono 1936a, 312.

395 Idem, 327–328.

396 Gabriel 1923, 8; based on Caoursin's account in *De translatione*: "Magister aedes introivit, gradusque conscendens, oratorium Sanctae Katherinae dicatum adiit;" Caoursin 1496, n.p.

397 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2004, 254–255, figs. 2–3.

398 Bosio 1630, 513. The tapestries were taken to Malta and were put in the church of San Lorenzo a Mare, on the waterfront of Birgu, where they were destroyed during a fire in 1532: "Onde tutta la Chiesa, con quanto in essa si trouaua, arsa ne rimase; restandoui fra l'altre cose pretiose, abbruciata, e ridotta in cenere, gran parte delle Tapezzarie dell'Istoria di S. Maria Madalena, e di S. Caterina, ch'erano di seta, e di lana belissime, già fatte fare dal Cardinale Gran m. d'Aubussone; delle quali la Chiesa parata si trouaua;" Bosio 1602, 111. See also Buhagiar 2000, 53. The report of Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg (1507), who speaks about some "Niederländischen tüchern" in the chapel, must be referring to these works; Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 122.

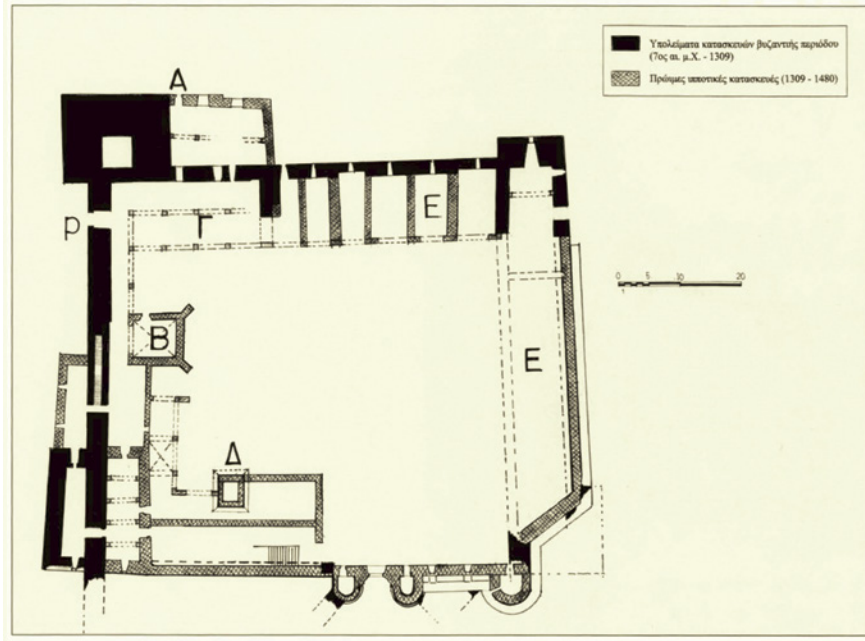


FIGURE 44A The palace of the Grand Master. First construction phase of the ground floor (14th century–1480), chapel at position B

one covered with red and the other with green velvet.³⁹⁹ Nicola de Martoni (1394–1395) refers to a silk and gold textile woven by the hand of St. Helena that depicted Christ in Passion with angels and decorated with crosses and other ornaments.⁴⁰⁰ This item was surely stored safely and not permanently exhibited, as it was ranked among the holy relics and was most probably considered an utmost symbol of sacred devotion.

2.2 *Cultic Phenomena*

2.2.1 The Miraculous Thorn from the Holy Crown

The thorn from Christ's Crown is a Christological relic by contact. It derives from the Crown of Thorns, perhaps the most characteristic among Christ's mock regalia and a most revered Passion relic. The history of the Crown has been dealt with thoroughly; after being first mentioned in Jerusalem in the 4th century, it probably arrived in Constantinople in the second half of the

³⁹⁹ Karbach 1997, 93.

⁴⁰⁰ The same work is mentioned at the Conventual church by Ogier VIII d'Anglure (1395–1396); Piccirillo 2003, 124; Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 9.

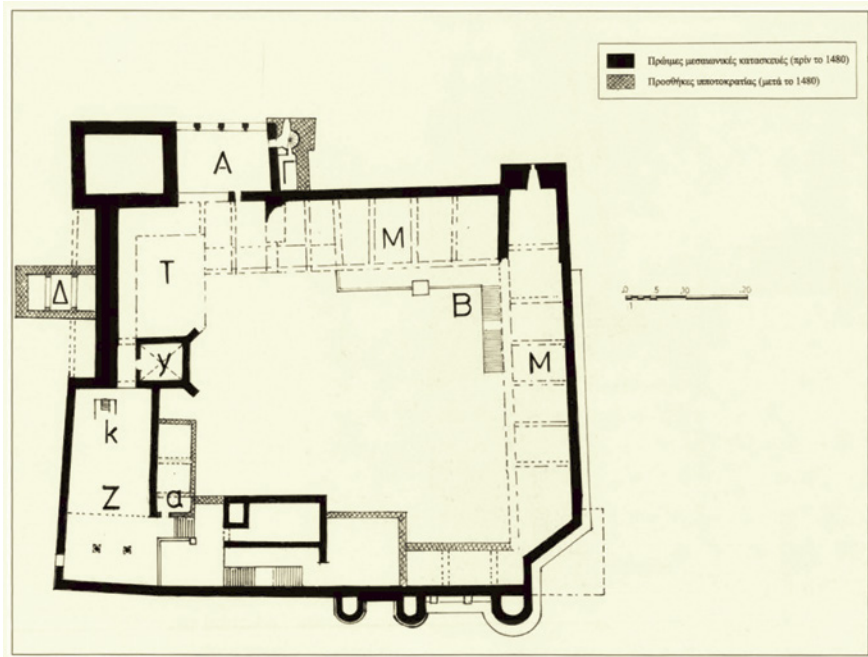


FIGURE 44B The palace of the Grand Master. First floor (late 15th–early 16th century), chapel at position Y

10th century and was kept in the imperial Pharos chapel.⁴⁰¹ In the 11th century, many collections of relics in the West began to acquire thorns, a fact connected to crusader gifts and donations of Passion relics.⁴⁰² The Crown came into prominence, and its cult became particularly popular, after the French King Louis IX redeemed it from Venice in 1238 (Emperor Baldwin II had pawned it to the Venetian Podestà) and subsequently translated it to France. He completed the construction of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris in 1248, where he placed the Crown and all the other Passion relics he had acquired in the meantime, in what has been described as a “Gothic replica” of the Pharos chapel.⁴⁰³

401 On the history of the Crown of Thorns and its presence in the Byzantine capital, see Bacci 2003, 234–248; Wortley and Zuckerman 2004, 68–70; Hahn 2015, 193–214; Klein 2015, 201–212. These works provide up-to-date bibliography and sources concerning the relic.

402 Thorns had already been sent to Byzantine emperors from Jerusalem, before the translation of the Crown to Constantinople, and some of them found their way to the West as royal gifts; see de Mély 1927, 15–16.

403 Lidov 2012, 83. Concerning the relic’s presence and aspects of appropriation in the West, see Hahn, 2015, 193–214. The thorns in Europe have been exhaustively discussed by de

The plethora of thorns from the Crown in the medieval Christian world attests to its popularity; the thorn was a symbol of both death and victory, directly associating its viewer with Christ's torture, as the crown came to be "the most conspicuous of relics."⁴⁰⁴ The Hospitallers at Rhodes possessed two or three thorns, but one of them was indeed one of their most famous and often-mentioned holy relics.⁴⁰⁵ It was miraculous, as it bloomed annually on Good Friday. It is possible that it had formerly belonged to the Templars, since it is attested that they owned a thorn with the same qualities,⁴⁰⁶ a possibility further supported by the fact that the relic is mentioned very early on by pilgrims, the first reference being from the Rhenish pilgrim who traveled in 1350–1360. According to his testimony, the cult of the relic had already been established by that time: he is well-informed about the occurrence of the annual miracle.⁴⁰⁷

Detailed historical information concerning the specific thorn is lacking. The miracle of its blooming was authenticated by the chapter general that took place in Rome in 1446; and in 1457 the Master Jacques de Milly issued a testimony of the miracle, after it had flourished in the presence of many Knights and officials of the Order.⁴⁰⁸ During de Milly's rule, it had already been decided, in 1454, to celebrate the feast in honor of the Holy Crown on August 11th as a semidouble one.⁴⁰⁹

Mély 1904, 165–440; de Mély 1927. On the relics of the Sainte-Chapelle, see Durand and Laffitte 2001, 18–95; Billot 2004, 239–248.

404 Hahn 2015, 193–194.

405 It is continuously mentioned by the pilgrims from ca. 1350 until 1522, with more than 60 references in the travelogues. The distinction among the thorns was always very clear in the narrations of the pilgrims, who seem to be very well-informed about the miracle; see indicatively Hartmann 2004, 108; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 288; Denke 2011, 348; Tschudi 1606, 85. Dietrich von Kettler and Jan Want, both traveling in 1519, speak about three thorns; Hoogeweg 1889, 193; van Beurden 1896, 174.

406 "Item, propositent que la spina de la corona que fu de Nostre Senior in cele meisme guise ne florria au jor de Venres sanz entre les mans des freres capellans deu Temple, si il fosse tiels que om lor met dessus [...] e ceit e manifest pour toute maniere de gens de siegle;" Michelet 1841, 143. Cited by Tommasi 1989, 210.

407 "Item vna spina de corona domini et dixit magister ordinis, quod eadem spina singulis annis in die parasceues a mane usque ad meridiem floreret ac albos flores produceret uisibiliter, sicut spine faciunt nobiscum in tempore floris, sed post meridiem tale non uidetur; dixerunt eciam plures ignobiles se hoc uidisse;" Conrady 1882a, 46–47.

408 Ferris 1881, 66; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 80; Bosio 1630, 254; Paciaudi 1755, 404.

409 "Il est chose decente reuerir les saintes reliques qui monstrent continuelle remembrance de sainte passion de Jhesucrist, mediateur de Dieu et des hommes, nostre saulueur et redempteur. Pourtant nous establissons que feste demy-double chascun an soit celebrée le huitiesme jour d'aoust en reuerance de la sainte couronne d'espine de laquelle nostre saulueur Jhesucrist a esté en sa passion, laquelle pour nous a souffert, doloirement affligy et d'icelle tenons une espine qui poindy le precieux chief de Crist dont sa face de

Apart from this testimony, which specifically situates the thorn in the palace chapel, a large number of pilgrims confirm the same location.⁴¹⁰ The relics in the chapel were kept safe in an armoire at least as early as the last quarter of the 15th century,⁴¹¹ but it cannot be certain that the thorn also lay there: the above statute of 1446 implies a particularly attentive safekeeping. Indeed, the Augsburg canon Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495–1496), who never saw the thorn, was however informed that it was safeguarded with three keys, one held by the Grand Master and the other two by members of the Convent.⁴¹²

Nevertheless, the relic also appears in the Conventual church, with which the chapel was interconnected. The evidence seems to point to the conclusion that it was transferred there on Good Friday—and perhaps on other occasions as well—so that people could venerate it and admire its bloom.⁴¹³ As a matter of fact, on this day, the faithful worshippers could obtain an indulgence and receive absolution from punishment and guilt, according to Ulrich Leman. In 1396, when Ogier d'Anglure visited Rhodes for the second time, on his way back from the Holy Land, he was lucky enough to be present at the Conventual church on Good Friday and actually to see the thorn abloom along with his group. As usual in pilgrims' texts, even the eyewitness testimonies are often

son precieux sang fut perfusé. Laquelle espine est recluse es arches et secretz lieux de l'oratoire magistral en Rhodes, que chascun an le vendredy saint auquel est remembrée la passion au point du jour commence à florir, et à sexte en laquelle nostre saulveur expira se voit defflorie, et de puis peu à peu seche, et est memoire à tout feal cristien de la sainte passion de Jhesucrist;" *Stabilimenta*, De l'église 32; Paciaudi 1755, 404–405.

410 See indicatively the reports by Nicola de Martoni, Nompars de Caumont, Copart de Velaines, Girnand von Schwalbach, Hans Rot, Gabriele Capodilista, Roberto da Sanseverino, Hans Bernhard von Eptingen, Ulrich Brunner, Martin Ketzler, Wilhelm Tzewers, Pierre Barbatre, Felix Fabri, Bernhard von Breydenbach, Conrad Grünenberg, Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic, Herzog Alexander, Peter Rindfleisch, Noè Bianco, Pietro Paolo de' Rucellai, Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg, Pierre Mesenge, and Ludwig Tschudi; Piccirillo 2003, 124; La Grange 1858, 83; Paviot 2007, 292; Huschenbett 1998, 116; Bernoulli 1882, 350; Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 176; Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 121; Christ 1992, 228; Röhricht 1906, 25; Rhenanus 1832, 42; Hartmann 2004, 108; Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 158; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 288; Mozer 2010, 102; Denke 2011, 348; de Vaire and Vissière 2014, 812; Karbach 1997, 92–93; Röhricht and Meisner, 1880c, 339; Bianco 1742, 21; da Civezza 1879, 507; Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 122; Muller 2016, 32; Tschudi 1606, 85.

411 As noted by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474); Calamai 1993, 131.

412 Gebele 1932–1933, 114.

413 See the reports by Luchino da Campo (1413), Louis de Rochechouart (1461), Anselmo Adorno (1470–1471), Ulrich Leman (1472–1480), Anonymous (1480), Dietrich von Kettler (1519), and Anonymous (1521); Brandoli 2011, 76–77; Couderc 1893, 235; Heers and de Groer 1978, 364; Reininger 2007, 25–26; Schefer 1892, 114; Hoogeweg 1889, 193; Röhricht 1893, 173.

mediated: the pilgrims could see the result of the miraculous action and not the action itself.⁴¹⁴

The miraculous thorn was housed in a reliquary monstrance, probably in silver,⁴¹⁵ which is initially reported to have had a rock crystal display.⁴¹⁶ In 1418 it appears enclosed in a beautiful golden case,⁴¹⁷ and in 1507 the monstrance is described as made of pure gold, but this could also refer to the appearance of the object.⁴¹⁸ Hans Rot (1440) speaks not of rock crystal but of beryl, though this is an exception;⁴¹⁹ rock crystal is repeatedly mentioned as one of the main materials of the work, together with silver.⁴²⁰ In any case, it cannot be determined whether the relic was housed in a single reliquary during its stay at Rhodes or whether more reliquaries were commissioned over the course of time. The only clue, apart from the materials, is the shape of the crystal, either pointed or a round, spherical, or cylindrical form.⁴²¹ Moreover, the miraculous powers of its contents were reinforced all year long by the flowers that had

414 “Le jour du Grant Vendredi que nous estiens en l’eglise monseigneur Saint Jehan de Rodes, veismes nous plusieurs belles et saintes reliques, entre lesquelles nous fut monstrée une espine de la digne Couronne dont Notre Seigneur Jhesu Crist fut couronné a sa Passion. Sachiés que illec veismes nous appertement bel miracle, car environ midi quant le service fut fait, nous veismes icelle digne espine toute florie de petites florettes blanches, et nous fut juré et certifié, par gens dignes et de foy, que autresfois avoient veue icelle espine en ung autre jour, laquelle n’estoit point florie, mais estoit noire; et nous affermerent les seigneurs Freres ainsi que ainsi florist elle chascun an au jour du Grant Vendredi;” Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 93–94. Ogier had already mentioned the thorn during his first visit in 1395: “Item, une espine de la digne couronne de Nostre Seigneur Jhesus Crist, dont il fut couronnés, laquelle digne espine est moult noblement envaissellée en argent; et sachiés qu’elle florist chascun an, au jour du Grant Vendredi, a heure de midi, et ainsi la veismes nous toute florie le jour du Grant Vendredi, au retourner à Rodes;” *idem*, 9.

415 *Ibid.*

416 Conrady 1882a, 47. Rock crystal was commonly used in the Middle Ages for reliquaries, due to its durability and the fact that it provided visibility to see the contents; moreover, it was particularly invested with symbolic meanings related to water, purity, and incorruptibility, as well as theological ones, based on the references made to it in the Bible; see Gerevini 2014, 92–99.

417 La Grange 1858, 84.

418 Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 122.

419 Bernoulli 1882, 350.

420 “[...] è in uno christallo riposto in uno tabernaculo de argento;” Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 176. “[...] due channegli di cristallo guerniti d’argento dorato;” Calamai 1993, 79, 131. “[...] cette épine est sertie dans une monstrance de cristal ronde, pour pouvoir être admirée;” de Vaivre and Vissière 2014, 812. “[...] ist eingefaßt in ein schonen Chrystall in einer Silbernen Monstrantzen;” Tschudi 1606, 85.

421 The thorn reliquaries did not follow a certain typology, as did, for example, the *staurothecae* containing relics of the True Cross, as discussed by Hahn 2015, 194.

fallen off the thorn right after the miracle, which were also placed for display inside the reliquary.⁴²²

The thorn reached Malta with the Knights and was seen by the Archbishop of Monreale, Ludovico I de Torres, in 1579.⁴²³ He most probably saw the Rhodian monstrance, but, unfortunately, provided no description whatsoever. In 1597 a new silver reliquary was commissioned by Stefano Claramonte, Bailiff of Caspe;⁴²⁴ this is described in the 18th-century inventory and reproduced in the work of Paciaudi in 1755 (Fig. 45).⁴²⁵ In the late 19th century it was reported to have been located in St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, in the Shrine of the Holy Relics, but its subsequent fate is unknown.⁴²⁶

The thorn flourished on Good Friday from the sixth until the ninth hour, that is, from 12 noon until 3 in the afternoon, the three-hour period during which the sky was darkened, according to the Synoptic Gospels, before Jesus' death; afterward it reverted to its previous state. When blooming, it produced white flowers⁴²⁷ or two white and one red.⁴²⁸ The way in which the miraculous attribute of the blooming thorn is confirmed by the pilgrims is often highlighted in their narration; an anonymous pilgrim (ca. 1419–1425) notes, "certainment et de vray [...] sans jamais faillir;" and the French canon from Rouen, Pierre Mesenge, says "comme il nous feut tesmoigné par mondict seigneur le grand maistre et plusieurs des chevalliers, fleurit tous les ans le jour du Vendredy saint, et disoient l'avoir veue."⁴²⁹ The Knights must have been extremely zealous to affirm the act to the pious, and pilgrims were very eager to listen to such narrations. The miraculous blooming of the thorn was attributed to its exceptional ranking among the relics that had touched and penetrated the skin on Christ's head.⁴³⁰ This was also one of the pieces of information

422 Rhenanus 1832, 42.

423 Collura 1936–1937, 41. De Torres mentions one thorn, but it seems that two found their way to Malta; see Maurolico 1576, 125v, cited by Tommasi 1989, 210.

424 Paciaudi 1755, 405.

425 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 96v; Paciaudi 1755, 406.

426 Ferris 1881, 66; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 80.

427 Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 93–94; Christ 1992, 228; Kohl 1868, 96; Calamai 1993, 79; Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 158; Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 273; da Civezza 1879, 507–508.

428 Huschenbett 1998, 116; Bernoulli 1882, 350–351; Hartmann 2004, 108.

429 Moranvillé 1905, 103; Muller 2016, 32.

430 Brandoli 2011, 77; Huschenbett 1998, 116–117; Bernoulli 1882, 350–351; Seelbach 1993, 48; Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 176; Couderc 1893, 235; Heers and de Groer 1978, 364; Rhenanus 1832, 42; Schefer 1882, 114; da Civezza 1879, 508. The attribute of flourishing had been connected with the Crown of Thorns—according to the *Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavum et coronam Domini a Constatinopoli*, when Charlemagne passed through

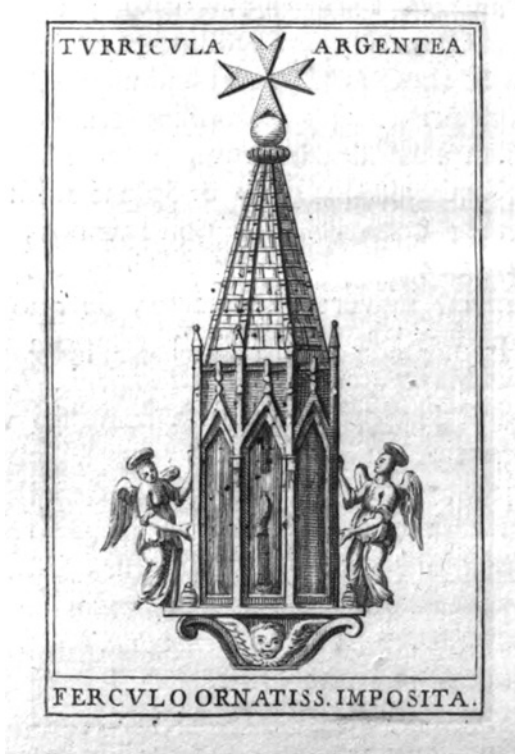


FIGURE 45
Reliquary of the miraculous thorn,
1755, engraving

disseminated by the Knights, along with another detail related by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini: the tip of the thorn was covered in Christ's blood, although the small size of the relic made it impossible to discern such a detail.⁴³¹

Apart from Good Friday, the thorn seems to have been kept securely away from the public; Nompar de Caumont (1418–1419) narrates that he managed to venerate it secretly in what was an exception to the Order's customs, which had never before been granted to any other visitor, as the Knights confessed to him.⁴³² In reality, most of the pilgrims reached Rhodes and venerated the relics in the chapel during the summer, long after Easter, thus it seems that the

Constantinople on his return from Jerusalem, he received a relic of the Crown that flowered; Rauschen 1890, 103–125.

431 Calamai 1993, 79.

432 Dansette 1997a, 1098.

brethren might have exaggerated as to the uniqueness of the opportunity they offered them. In their turn, the Hospitallers paid deep and constant veneration to the thorn, which was first on the list of relics mentioned in the custom concerning the veneration of the Order's sacred collection.⁴³³

The popularity of the relic's cult and the veneration with which it was treated by the Hospitallers and visitors is evident, and, on this point, it is worth mentioning the Italian Marco di Bartolommeo Rustici, who traveled in the years 1441–1442. While his galley was sailing from Cyprus to Egypt, it passed a ship coming from Rhodes; they asked the patron of the other ship if there was something precious to see on the island, and his answer surely excited them: he informed them that a thorn from Christ's crown, which miraculously blossoms on Good Friday, is kept at Rhodes, giving details of the miracle.⁴³⁴

This excerpt, a clear indication of a means in which information was disseminated—in this case, by word of mouth from one ship to another while at sea, allows a direct consideration of the value of its content in an instance where, during a brief communication, the most important piece of information is given: the fame of the thorn at Rhodes traveled along with the ships sailing in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its fame justifies the report by the Anonymous of Rennes (1486), who, on his way back to Cairo from Sinai, stumbled upon some trees called locally *szaemaic* (possibly the ziziphus tree), from which it was said that the Crown of Thorns had been made.⁴³⁵ In his eyes, this information seemed to correspond to the truth, as the thorns he saw on these trees where

433 “Ne aussi ne doit on postposer la cure des saintes reliques. Et pourtant devons honorer l'espine en memoire de sainte Passion, prinse de la couronne d'espine, laquelle nostre saulveur Ihesucrist en son chief doloirement toucha et par ferme renommée aigrement poigny. En remembrance de laquelle chose icelle espine chascun an le jour du vendredi de la Passion de Ihesucrist florist et ce jour mesme seche, qui est reclusé ou saint oratoire du magistral palais en Rhodes;” *Stabilimenta*, De l'eglise 1.

434 “[...] navicando per andare inverso Egitto, il di dinanzi, per grande fortuna, molti uccegli di pasagio anegarono e molti si posarono in su la nostra galea, e pigliandone un numero di dugentocinquanta e cavalcando per lo mare troviamo una barca che veniva da l'isola di Rodi e da Terra Santa peto(r)nare in Italia e no'domandamo il padrone se in quel'isola v'era alcuna cosa preziosa, ed e'risposse che v'era un miracolo molto maraviglioso e pareva una cosa impossibile a credere, ma l'a(l)tisimo Idio puo fare e disfare ciò ch'a lu'piace. I qual miracolo è in que luogo evedente, che v'e una spina de la corona che Iesù Cristo portòe in su la croce e questo è cirto per la divina provedenzia, il quale si mostra il venardi santo con grande divozione. E in quel punto viene un fiore naturale in su la punta de la spina e istàvi fermo insin'a l'ora de la nona, e questo Idio mostra a que'de l'isola e confermagli a la catolica e santa fede;” Gurrieri, Olive, and Newbigin 2015, 217.

435 Dansette 1979, 415; Dansette 1997b, 1219.

the same as he had seen at Rhodes. The genuineness of the Rhodian thorn had by then been well-established among pilgrims.

2.2.2 The Arm of St. Catherine

The relic of the arm of St. Catherine of Alexandria is a saintly relic. St. Catherine, an educated princess of Alexandria who was, according to tradition, martyred ca. 305, became extremely popular in medieval Europe, especially during the 14th and 15th centuries.⁴³⁶ Her *Passio* was originally written in Greek and translated into Latin by the 9th century; the lack of sources before that led to many and various reworkings of her legend.⁴³⁷

In the Middle Ages, the relic of the saint, said to have been miraculously transported and buried by angels on a mountain peak on Sinai, was venerated and constituted a main pilgrimage destination for Latins.⁴³⁸ It seems that by the early 13th century the monks of the Sinai Monastery had taken the remains of the saint from the mountain peak and put them in a marble sarcophagus near the altar of the monastery's basilica, mostly due to the growing wishes of the pilgrims.⁴³⁹ Subsequently, the monastery's original dedication to the Virgin gradually changed and was referred to as the Monastery of St. Catherine.

Since the angels had taken the saint's body to Sinai, it can be supposed that the Monastery should have all of it in its possession. Over the course of time, though, many parts were removed, a most notable example being the relics found in the abbey of the Holy Trinity in Rouen in the 11th century, which were accompanied by Latin texts confirming their authenticity and which contributed to the spread of her cult in the West.⁴⁴⁰

At Rhodes, the relic of St. Catherine's left arm is first attested by Nicola de Martoni in the late 14th century.⁴⁴¹ After that, it is often and continuously mentioned by pilgrims up until 1521, but the evidence serves more as an indication of the relic's popularity than to provide substantial information concerning its material aspects; the references are mostly nominal.

The arm was kept in the chapel of the Grand Master dedicated to the saint and was exhibited for veneration annually on the her feast day, November 15th,

436 See recently and with further bibliography Bacci 2016, 325–338; Coursault 1984; Waters 2008; Walsh 2007.

437 For the *Passion*, see Chronopoulos 2012, 40–88, with further bibliography.

438 Drandaki 2006, 491–503; Ševčenko 2006, 129–143.

439 Ševčenko 2006, 140–143.

440 Idem, 132–136; Walsh 2007, 63–96.

441 Piccirillo 2003, 124.

at least since 1483;⁴⁴² it was shown to the faithful only on that day.⁴⁴³ This would explain why Joos van Ghistele (1481–1485) and Arnold von Harff (1496–1498) mention not having seen it, as they visited before autumn.⁴⁴⁴ However, Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini saw the arm in the chapel on October 28th, 1474; perhaps the custom of the annual display was not yet established, or he and his fellow pilgrims were allowed as an exception to venerate it—a common practice of the Hospitallers.⁴⁴⁵

The relic seems to have carried the same attributes that had already been associated with the relics at Sinai: they produced some sort of oil that the pilgrims could take with them.⁴⁴⁶ This was a famous element of Catherine's cult. Likewise, the arm at Rhodes is described as being very humid and secreting a liquor with a fragrant scent, a quality that added to its authenticity.⁴⁴⁷

The only substantial evidence about the reliquary comes again from the Maltese inventories. The 18th-century description refers to a hand with three fingers and a bone in a silver arm, partly gilt and decorated with pearls and precious stones, bearing enamelled plaques with saintly figures and the arms of the Master Héliion de Villeneuve (1319–1346).⁴⁴⁸ This reliquary is depicted in watercolor in the inventory at the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina, and has been linked with arm reliquaries in Dalmatia, with a probable provenance from Venice (Fig. 46). However, the applied ornaments seem to have had a different provenance; apart from the arms of the Master, one of them has been interpreted as depicting the Visitation, and another shows a half-figure of a saint, perhaps of Byzantine origin.⁴⁴⁹ As the reliquary bore a thin rectangular opening just below the wrist for viewing the relic, it could very well correspond to what Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini saw: "This is a beautiful relic, and you can still see the dried sinews on the bone, together with the flesh of this arm."⁴⁵⁰ A ring like the one on the reliquary's finger must have been the

442 Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 288; Mozer 2010, 102.

443 Bianco 1742, 21.

444 Brall-Tuchel and Reichert 2007, 100; Gaspar 1998, 367.

445 Calamai 1993, 132.

446 Ševčenko 2006, 141–143; Bacci 2016, 326. See also the testimony of Sebald Rieter the Younger (1479) at Sinai, where he refers to the Rhodian relic as well; Röhricht and Meisner 1884, 96–97.

447 As the Italian Antonio da Crema (1486) writes, "ossa dil brazo di quella virgine, martyre et sponsa di Christo sancta Katerina, qual è humidissimo e pare che lassi liquore cum fragrante odore;" Nori 1996, 141.

448 Valletta, AOM 1953, f. 102r.

449 Oman 1970, 105; Buhagiar 2009b, 36–37; Buhagiar et al. 1989, 73.

450 "Questa è bellissima reliquia et si vede anchora in sullo osso i nerbi secchi insieme chon la charne d'esso braccio;" Calamai 1993, 132.



FIGURE 46
The reliquary of the arm of
St. Catherine, 1756, watercolor
drawing

one mentioned by Frederick, Duke of Legnica and Brieg (1507), as the ring of the Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine.⁴⁵¹

After the fall of Rhodes to the Ottomans, the relic reached Malta with the Knights and was eventually kept on the altar of the chapel of the *langue* of

451 Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 122. On the legend of the Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine with Christ, which became widespread in the 14th century, see Walsh 2007, 4–5.

Italy, St. Catherine being its patron saint.⁴⁵² Some decades later, one of the fingers was sent as a gift to Catherine of Austria. The relic and reliquary were looted in 1798.⁴⁵³

3 The Hospital

3.1 *Archaeological and Historical Investigation*

When discussing the hospital of the Order at Rhodes as an institution, it should be noted that three edifices are concerned: a building that was used as an “interim hospital” as soon as the Hospitallers occupied the island, the earlier hospital built between ca. 1314 and 1356, and the new hospital, the construction of which was completed in the late 15th century.⁴⁵⁴

Based on a document of 1440, the first hospital on Rhodes was housed in an extant building located near the south-east tower of the *collachium*, approximately 20 meters east of the Villeneuve Gate.⁴⁵⁵ This must have served the Convent for only a few years, as the Master Villaret decided to erect a new hospital in 1314, and its construction must have been completed by the mid-14th century.⁴⁵⁶ The building has been identified as the one presently housing the Archaeological Institute, reconstructed by the Italians in the 1920s.⁴⁵⁷ The coats of arms of Masters Villeneuve, Gozon, and Corneillan were discovered under the Ottoman staircase at the entrance and point to a dating of 1319–1355;⁴⁵⁸ the arms of the Master Pins (1355–1365) were found on the north building of the complex, and one of his statutes, of 1357, referred to the hospital serving the pilgrims, the poor, and the sick poor,⁴⁵⁹ as also described by Nicola

452 See p. 140 below.

453 Buhagiar 2009b, 37.

454 Luttrell 2003b, 267.

455 The document contains a license for an *apoteca* and makes reference to a tower of the *infirmarie veteris*; for the text, see Tsirpanlis 1995, 389–390. For an analysis concerning the mention of this “old infirmary,” see Luttrell 2003b, 269–271. Further topographical analysis with a schematic plan of the area is in Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 95–96, plans 27, 126–127. The identification (Karassava-Tsilingiri 1997, 69–82) of the *vetera infirmaria* with the first newly built hospital, whose construction began in the years of Villaret, is now unfounded.

456 Text of the document in Gabriel 1923, 221. Luttrell 2003b, 271–272.

457 Gerola 1914b, 333–360; Gabriel 1923, 73; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1997, 69–82; Luttrell 2003b, 267–278; Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 127–130. Karassava-Tsilingiri seems very reluctant concerning the identification of the edifice.

458 Jacopi and Maiuri 1928, 161.

459 Text in Gabriel 1923, 14; Luttrell 2003b, 271.



FIGURE 47A The earlier hospital, first half of the 14th century, Rhodes. East facade before the restoration

de Martoni in 1395.⁴⁶⁰ This hospital's functions were fully replaced by a new hospital in 1483.⁴⁶¹

The state of the building before the Italian restoration is not entirely clear; many clues are provided by images before and after⁴⁶² and some drawings⁴⁶³ (Figs. 47a, 47b, 47c), but records are lacking for a substantial part of its original condition.

The main entrance was on the east facade at ground level to the central part of the edifice, which had rooms with vaulted ceilings. Between 1355 and 1365 a building with two halls was added to the north; and at some point, perhaps in the 15th century, a three-aisled hall was added to the south.⁴⁶⁴ On the upper floor of the central, oldest part, directly above the main entrance, there was an apsidal construction flanked by two pointed, arched windows (Fig. 48). This must have been the hospital's chapel, situated above the entrance in a manner similar to the later hospital;⁴⁶⁵ the rest of this story served as a large ward.⁴⁶⁶

460 “[...] est hospitale lectorum magnum pro peregrinis et infirmis;” Piccirillo 2003, 26.

461 Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994b, 92.

462 By Belabre, Gerola, and Gabriel, all cited in Luttrell 2003b, 275.

463 Santoro 1996, 230, figs. 37–41.

464 Luttrell 2003b, 270–278.

465 See pp. 129–130 below.

466 Luttrell 2003b, 276.

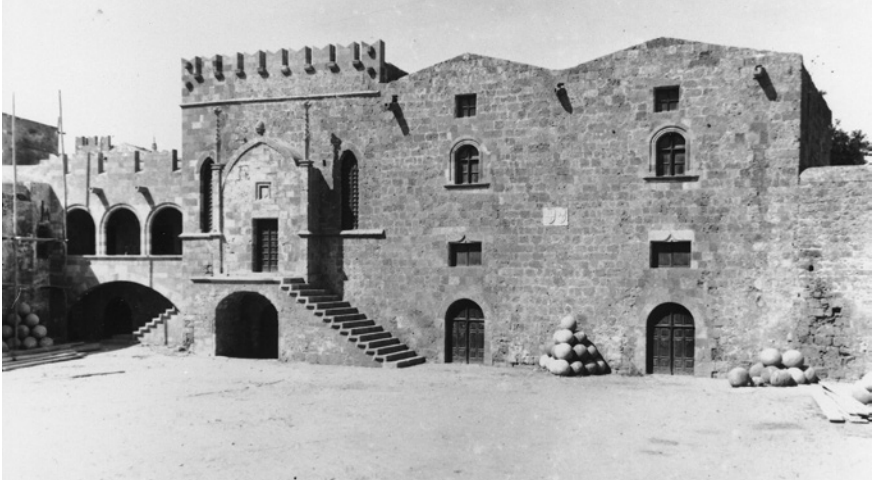


FIGURE 47B The earlier hospital, first half of the 14th century, Rhodes. East facade after the restoration



FIGURE 47C The earlier hospital, first half of the 14th century, Rhodes. East facade currently



FIGURE 48 The earlier hospital, main ward of the upper floor, view to the east, first half of the 14th century, Rhodes

The additions to the north and west of the building are not extant, but it seems that an indoor atrium may have existed. The hospital's garden, essential for the cultivation of medicinal plants and herbs, lay to the west; it possibly expanded up to the chapel of St. Demetrius and was incorporated into the garden of Auvergne after 1480.⁴⁶⁷

When the Master Antoni Fluvià died in 1437, he bequeathed 10,000 florins for the construction of a new Conventual hospital. By June 1439 the land of a *domina* Perina, widow of a certain German, had been purchased, and in 1440, under the Master Lastic, construction began.⁴⁶⁸ The works were completed in 1489, with additional funding from the Master Aubusson. The long duration of the hospital's construction was partly justified by the growing needs to reinforce the town's fortifications due to the imminent Ottoman threat and was further dictated by several difficulties related to the organization of the construction works.⁴⁶⁹

467 Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 128, 130.

468 Gabriel 1923, 14; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 78, 153–154. The land already had a two-storied building; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 196. The *capitula* issued in 1441 for the building of the new hospital have been published by Tsirpanlis 1995, 403–404.

469 Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 133.

The building, one of the town's best preserved medieval edifices, is situated at the east end of Ippoton St. on its south side, with its east facade facing the square of the *collachium* with the church of Our Lady of the Castle, on the axis of the Marine Gate toward the port.⁴⁷⁰ The late 15th-century palace of the Catalan Knight Villaragut lay to the west; a strip of unbuilt land to the south between the *collachium* wall and the hospital served for the expansion of its botanical garden.⁴⁷¹

After 1522 the complex remained in use by the Ottomans, but it seems that it was abandoned for a long period during their rule; in the mid-19th century, when it was used as barracks for Ottoman soldiers, it suffered many alterations.⁴⁷² The Italians began to restore it in 1913, with Giuseppe Gerola taking over the supervision of the works in 1914. His basic concern was the successful restitution of the hospital based on the extant evidence.⁴⁷³ Apart from a secondary aisle to the northeast of the first floor, the present edifice still preserves its original form. Since its restoration, it has housed the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes.

The hospital had a square plan and two stories arranged around a main courtyard, surrounded by vaulted porticoes at ground level and with a timber-roofed walkway on the first floor (Figs. 49a, 49b).⁴⁷⁴ There were two entrances, one on the east side and one on the north. The first led through a vaulted passage to the courtyard, while the second led directly to the first floor. A second smaller courtyard on the southern side communicated directly with the main one through a narrow, vaulted corridor. The vaulted rooms around the main courtyard served as warehouses, stores, and auxiliary spaces and offices.⁴⁷⁵

A staircase at the east end of the south side of the main courtyard gives access to the upper floor; its entire east wing is occupied by the great hall, which served as the patients' ward and is accessed by a gateway at its center (Fig. 50). This oblong hall is divided into two aisles by an arcade on the long axis, with eight arches carried by octagonal columns and wall consoles on the south and north walls; on the sides of the columns' capitals, the coats of arms of the Order

470 Idem, 131, plan 36.

471 Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 43–45; Roger 2007, 129–132.

472 Karanasos 2009, 24, note 16.

473 Gerola 1941b, 333–360; Maiuri 1921, 49–92; Jacopi 1932; Santoro 1996, 228–232; Karanasos 2009, 24–45.

474 The monument has been described in detail by Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 46–60.

475 Concerning the architecture of the building, see also Karassava-Tsilingiri 1997, 69–82; Luttrell 2003b, 270–278, with a hypothetical plan; Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 129–131.

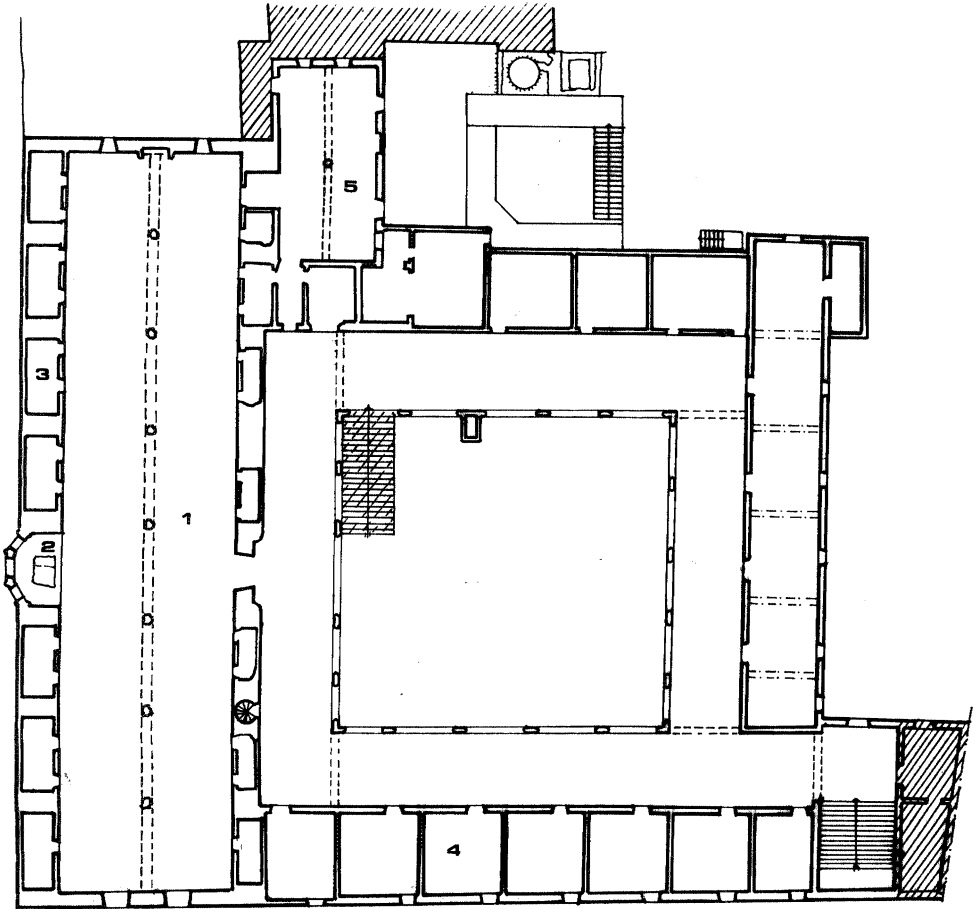


FIGURE 49A The later hospital. Ground floor

alternate with that of Aubusson. The long sides of the grand hall are occupied by barrel-vaulted blind cells, which might have served as latrines; lighting is provided through small high-placed windows. Single rooms, probably for the care of patients, are situated in the north and west wings,⁴⁷⁶ while the refectory was on the south side, communicating with the patients' ward.⁴⁷⁷

476 Indicatively, Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic (1493) reports about the patients that "If he is a person of importance, he will have a private room, and for every man of lesser status, there is a beautiful hall, very large, with a double row of beds, where several patients are lying." (freely translated here); Strejček 1902, 39; de Vaivre and Vissière 2014, 803. Additionally, Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486) states that the separate rooms of the new hospital were used according to the state and condition of the patients; Godefroy-Ménilglaise 1861, 102.

477 Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 187–189, fig. 113.

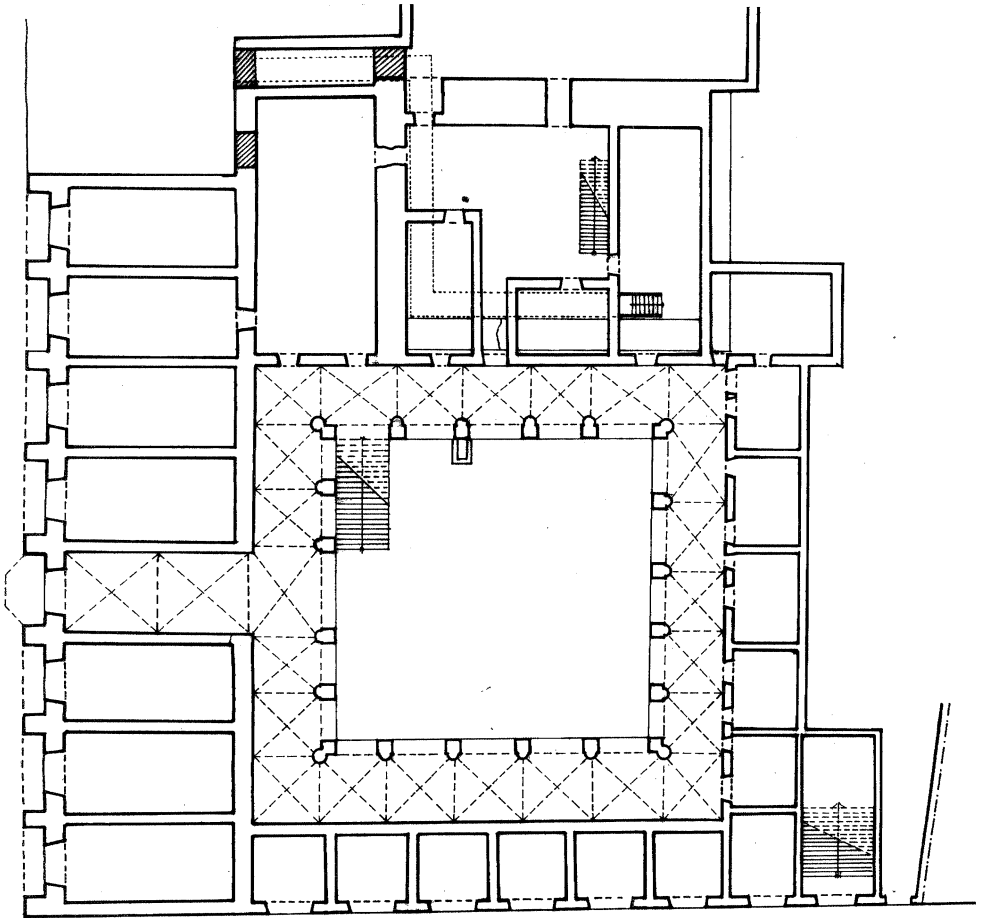


FIGURE 49B The later hospital. Upper floor

An apse opens out of the main hall opposite its entrance; the arch containing it is decorated with trefoils, its south consoles have a floral ornament, and the north one is left uncarved (Figs. 51a, 51b, 51c, 51d). This was the space of the chapel, and parts of a base of an altar still remain; Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486), Antonio da Crema (1486), and Nicholas le Huen (1487) attest the chapel's setting in the middle of the hall.⁴⁷⁸ Three semi-circular windows open onto the three sides of the apse, and a sexpartite vault covers the chapel. It should be noted that it is part of the great hall's design and not an independent construction.⁴⁷⁹ On the exterior, the apse projects over the main eastern entrance and constitutes the dominant feature of the facade. The dedicatory

478 Godefroy-Méniglaize 1861, 102–103; Nori 1996, 80; le Huen 1488, n.p.

479 Karassava-Tsiligiri 1994a, 186.



FIGURE 50 The later hospital, great hall, 15th century, Rhodes

inscription in white marble is located at the center, depicting two angels holding Fluvia's arms with the flag of the Order on top (Figs. 52a, 52b).⁴⁸⁰

The architectural type of a centrally planned, two-story building with an atrium was associated with the Hospitallers' building tradition, as well as with the Eastern caravanserais, as evolved from the Byzantine *xenodocheion*, suitable for large numbers of people; this architectural character was also the result of the particular functional requirements of the hospital, as well as of the long process of its construction.⁴⁸¹

480 Idem, 218–220. For the text of the inscription that commemorates the donation by Fluvia and the commencement of the construction works in 1440, see idem, 58–59; Gabriel 1923, 24–25.

481 Gabriel 1923, 32–33, 184–200, with a thorough examination of the possible origins of the architectural form of the building, taking into consideration the Hospitaller tradition, the monastic and religious character of the building, and the Eastern and Byzantine influences, as well as the factors related to its patronage and to the pre-existing building on the site. Similar aspects related to the compound in Acre have been mentioned above concerning the palace of the Grand Master.



FIGURE 51A The later hospital, chapel, 15th century, Rhodes. The apse

All three hospitals were situated in the eastern part of the castle, the place where other administrative and Conventual activities took place: the Latin cathedral of Our Lady of the Castle, the Arsenal, and the *Castellania* were located there, and there was direct access to the port.⁴⁸² This was in line with the needs of the sick and the pilgrims who found shelter in the hospital, but also of the working population of the area.

⁴⁸² Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 126, and 133–135 concerning the identification of the *Castellania*.





FIGURES 51B, 51C, 51D The later hospital, chapel, 15th century, Rhodes. Architectural details



FIGURE 52A The later hospital, 15th century, Rhodes. East entrance



FIGURE 52B The later hospital, 15th century, Rhodes. The dedicatory inscription

The equipment of the hospital impressed the pilgrims. The English Anonymous of 1345, the first to mention the 14th-century hospital inside the castle, describes that it was equipped:

[...] with nurses, medical assistants, lady-guardians and servants for all the infirm. There men are intent rather in honest games than in frauds and rape. Every offence there receives its complement of justice. There the pauper does not whimper, or does anybody leave it emptyhanded. There the supply of fruit and delicious things abounds.⁴⁸³

Rich and poor were indiscriminately treated for their illnesses, and all patients were treated as lords.⁴⁸⁴ The doctors were always on duty for the care of pilgrims, the sick, and the poor,⁴⁸⁵ and there was important charitable work, providing bread to many.⁴⁸⁶ Moreover, the hospital could supply accommodation for people who may have found themselves in poverty at an advanced age, as was the case of some Rhodian merchants ca. 1420.⁴⁸⁷ According to the Order's rule, the hospital would receive Christians from all nations,⁴⁸⁸ but there has been no positive evidence to date of the presence of Greek or non-Latin patients.⁴⁸⁹ Moreover, there is a documented distinction in 1311 between the hospital for the sick and the infirmary for the brethren.⁴⁹⁰ Statutes of 1440,

483 Hoade 1970, 56–57.

484 This was an integral part of the ideology connected with the hospital of the Order since its origins. See the testimony by Ogier d'Anglure; Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 9. The patients were served with silver plates and cutlery, a fact noted by pilgrims; Brefeld 1985, 152; Nori 1996, 80; le Huen 1488, n.p.; Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 180; Röhrich and Meisner 1880b, 185–186; Strejček 1902, 38–39; Duthilloeu 1851, 89.

485 Concerning the doctors, the personnel of the hospital, and their services, see Luttrell 1994, 72–73; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 166–177; Kollias 2005, 40–41. Detailed accounts of the hospital's function are provided by Dietrich von Schachten (1491) and Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic (1493); Röhrich and Meisner 1880b, 185–186; Strejček 1902, 38–39. The former speaks about four doctors and the latter about two, while Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478) wrote about the presence of three doctors, one of them a great scholar who was brought to Rhodes from Rome, attesting to the quality of the medical services offered at the hospital—the same number of doctors is also confirmed by Jacques Le Saige in 1520; Hartmann 2004, 110; Duthilloeu 1851, 89.

486 According to Nicola de Martoni; food was also provided by the Grand Master and his 12 companions to 12 or 13 paupers every day at the castle; Piccirillo 2003, 122; Pérez Priego 2006, 243; Röhrich 1906, 25.

487 Dopp 1958, 156–157.

488 Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906, vol. 1, 70, no. 3.

489 Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 145–146; Luttrell 1994, 69.

490 Luttrell 1994, 69. The distinction was not new: in Cyprus after 1300 the *palais de maladies* was distinguished from the brethren's *infirmaria*; see Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 98, 106.

when the first major revisions of the Order's medical regulations since 1182 took place, made provisions for the sick brethren who were nursed in the hospital, attesting to the fact that by then the *infirmaria* had been integrated into the hospital.⁴⁹¹ Apart from the sick, pilgrims were sheltered in the hospital regardless of their health condition.⁴⁹² Indeed, on his return from the Holy Land, the pilgrim Jan Hasištejnsky z Lobkovic (1493) lodged at the hospital, because, as he reports, the inns of the town were in an awful condition, providing nothing but the floor for sleeping.⁴⁹³ Even though the pilgrims had the option to stay at St. Catherine's hospice from the early 15th century on, there was possible accommodation in the Conventual hospital as well, probably according to availability.

3.2 *Cultic Phenomena*

Even though the hospital did not bear the purely religious character of the other institutions that form the core of the present study, it came to be included in the same category in the context of the synecdochical evocation of the Hospitallers' ultimate goal and, subsequently, of the godly actions to which it pertained. It was the place where the Order's basic objective was put into action and represented the essence of Christian charitable activity. The original functions of the hospital never ceased to be served ever since the Order's early years in Jerusalem before 1099;⁴⁹⁴ and the practices in the Conventual hospital in Jerusalem that continued in Acre after 1187 and in Cyprus after 1291 formed a tradition that further evolved at Rhodes.⁴⁹⁵

The charitable work, which led to many donations to the Hospitallers, was also the justification of their vast possessions and privileges in Europe. Therefore, in Rhodes, especially because of the huge flow of Western pilgrims

491 Karassava-Tsiligiri 1994a, 106; Luttrell 1994, 71. This fact is further emphasized by the use of both terms (*infirmaria* and *hospitale*) for the two hospitals at Rhodes.

492 Nicola de Martoni (1394–1395) reports: “et est hospitale lectorum magnum pro peregrinis et infirmis, in quo fit magna helemosina, cum medicis semper paratis et aliis rebus pro infirmis necessariis;” Piccirillo 2003, 26. According to Cristoforo Buondelmonti (1417–1420): “tertia demque pars munitionem cum hospitali dicti conventus resedit (sic) ad quod peregrini et transeuntes per rodum habent refugium;” Gabriel 1923, 14.

493 De Vaivre and Vissière 2014, 812.

494 Concerning the Hospitaller origin and character of the Order, see Riley-Smith 2012, 22, 69–80, and passim; Riley-Smith 1967, 32–45; Delaville Le Roulx 1904, 11–33; Miller 1978, 709–733.

495 Luttrell 1975, 278–313; Luttrell 1987, 191–193. For a discussion and bibliography concerning the Order's medical tradition, see Luttrell 1994, 64–81.

who would propagate their experiences in the West, “the Conventual hospital was to some extent a public relations exercise,” a view also corroborated by the inestimable amounts of money spent in construction works and operating costs of the 15th-century hospital.⁴⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the hospital always constituted “a religious place in which the inmates were associated with the liturgy.”⁴⁹⁷ Until the statutes of 1440, the focus was on spiritual healing and not on its medical aspects.⁴⁹⁸ The hospital’s chapel lay at the core of the institution; in Jerusalem, Acre, and Cyprus it seems that chapels opened onto the wards.⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, at Rhodes, the wards were directly linked to the chapel in both of the two newly built hospitals: it was integrated into the main open ward where the sick were accommodated, thus direct visual and aural communication was established, as the sick and poor also had their own religious obligations concerning prayer and confession.⁵⁰⁰

There were resident clergy assigned to the hospital, first mentioned in 1263.⁵⁰¹ The decrees of 1440 specified the presence at Rhodes of a resident prior selected among the brethren, assisted by a chaplain and a clerk. They were responsible for the celebration of mass, funerals, and any other religious needs.⁵⁰² Special prayers were read for them,⁵⁰³ and particular care was shown: the Grand Master ritually washed the feet of the poor annually on Maundy Thursday, and the Hospitallers served the patients.⁵⁰⁴

496 Luttrell 1994, 69, 73–74; Balard 1995, 31.

497 Luttrell 2003b, 76. In 1166 the pope granted to the hospital the privilege of immunity, thereby asserting the religious character of the building; see Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906, vol. 1, 247, no. 357; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 144.

498 Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 106–107.

499 See Riley-Smith 2012, 71; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 100, 82–84 on the hospital in Jerusalem, 92–95 on the hospital in Acre, 98–99 on the hospital in Cyprus, with further bibliography.

500 Confession at the 15th-century hospital at Rhodes took place in two rooms called *confessiones*, where the wills of the patients were also prepared; Karassava-Tsilingiri 1994a, 107; Luttrell 2003b, 79–80.

501 Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906, vol. 3, 75–77, no. 3075.

502 Pappalardo 1958, 134, 135, 137–138.

503 Le Grand 1896, 325–338; Sinclair 1978, 484–488.

504 Luttrell 1993, 85. Jehan de Tournai (1488) offers a vivid image: “En entrant dans le palais, à droite est l’église Notre-Dame où est le siège de l’évêque. A gauche est l’hôpital où les pauvres sont bien reçus et entretenus. Ils sont tous servis dans des plats d’argent et ils sont servis par monseigneur le grand hospitalier lui-même. Si des chevaliers passent par là à l’heure où on sert les malades, si l’un d’eux est plus vieux en religion que le grand hospitalier, c’est lui qui servira les pauvres du déjeuner au souper. Il en serait de

The main aspect connected with the exceptional religious character of the institution, which also contributed to its attractiveness, is the indulgences that had first been granted to the Jerusalem hospital.⁵⁰⁵ Everyone that died in it or that visited the sick on certain days could benefit from absolution, making the hospital a much desired destination for many Christians who became ill, a fact also later affirmed by the medieval pilgrims visiting Rhodes. According to Nompars de Caumont (1418):

All those who end their lives there are absolved from pain and guilt after confession and penance. This pardon was granted and confirmed by the Holy Fathers of Rome: and for this reason, many great lords and others are transported there when they are sick, and they have mass services, are well cared for by the doctors, they have good beds and good meat, at the expense of the hospital of Rhodes. And this hostel is called the infirmary, and all those who enter to visit the sick also receive certain days of indulgences.⁵⁰⁶

This information is repeated by Pero Tafur (1436–1437) and the Anonymous from Donaueschingen (1441–1442).⁵⁰⁷

Consequently, it is evident that the hospital attracted the interest of the pilgrims. This was due not only to its sophisticated organization, which rendered it one of the highlights of the town, especially after the construction of the monumental 15th-century edifice,⁵⁰⁸ but also because it constituted a major

même si monseigneur le grand maître y venait à cette heure;” Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 180.

505 On December 13th, 1226, Pope Honorius III granted an indulgence of 20 days to the visitors of the hospital on the feast day of St. John the Baptist; see Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906, vol. 2, 357, no. 1849. Indulgences had also been granted at the hospital of the Order in Acre; see Michelant and Raynaud 1882, 235; Pringle 2012, 16, 229–236.

506 “Et tout ceulx qui dedens fenicent, sont absolus de peyne et de coupe, comiffes et pénitans; et ceste grace ha esté ottroyée et comfermée pour les Sains Pères de Rome: et pour cause d’icelle, pluseurs grans seigneurs et autres, quant sont mellades, s’i font porter, et là sont servitz de messes et bien pensés de myres et d’autres bonnes viandes et de bons lis, à le despense del espital de Roddes; et cet houstel appelle-l’on le enfermerie, et toux ceulx qui dedens entrent visiter les mellades, guaynent aussi certains jours de indulgence;” La Grange 1858, 83.

507 “[...] quien allí muere va asuelto a culpa e pena, e aun los que lo visitan cada día ganan cierta indulgencia;” Pérez Priego 2006, 243. “[...] so hat er abloss und genad von pin und schulden aller syner synde;” Herz 1998, 152.

508 Jacques Le Saige (1520) characteristically writes that he and his company visited the hospital to pass their time; Duthilloeul 1851, 89: “Pour passer le temps allasmes veoir l’ospital de Rodhe.”

religious foundation. Although not connected with a specific cultic practice, it was nevertheless involved in cultic activities, such as the celebration of mass and funerary rites, and was furthermore and foremost imbued with the virtue of charity and the extraordinary qualities that resulted from its inclusion in the sites where indulgences could be obtained.

The *Borgo* and the Area outside the Walls

1 The Chapel of St. Catherine's Hospice

1.1 *Historical and Archaeological Investigation*

The chapel of St. Catherine's hospice is not extant; in fact, its location, as well as that of the hospice, has been a matter of debate and research to date. According to a document dated April 20th, 1391, the Italian Hospitaller Domenico de Alamania founded in Rhodes a hospice with a chapel dedicated to St. Catherine,¹ patron of the *langue* of Italy since its origins, when the Italian Hospitallers in the Holy Land had undertaken the task of escorting Latin pilgrims to the Sinai Monastery.² He endowed it with three mills, specifically the 9th, 10th, and 14th mills on the Mole of the Mills, two neighboring houses, two neighboring storerooms, two other storerooms, and other possessions.³ Moreover, he designated that the Order's admiral would serve as procurator of both the hospice and its chapel and would be in charge of appointing a person to manage the property of both; the admiral would also designate two chaplains, who would ensure that a daily service was held in the chapel and carried out properly. The donations were confirmed in July 1391 by the Master Juan Fernandez de Heredia.⁴ A few years later, in 1394, the pilgrim Nicola de Martoni confirmed the existence of the *ecclesia Sancte Catherine* in the town, with many relics in its possession.⁵

The chapel that Nicola de Martoni visited is mentioned again in 1458 in the travel account of the Italian pilgrim Roberto da Sanseverino (1458–1459). He is reported to have attended mass there three times, stating that all pilgrims lodged at this hospice.⁶ Roberto da Sanseverino did not ultimately stay there, but in the *auberge* of Italy, invited by the admiral. Likewise, Nicolò III d'Este,

1 The Neapolitan Domenico de Alamania was a leading Hospitaller; concerning the duties he was assigned with—Commander of Monopoli, Naples, Avignon, and Cyprus, Governor of Achaia, Lieutenant of the Grand Master in Italy and Rhodes—see Delaville Le Roulx 1913, 190–191.

2 Bacci 2016, 328.

3 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 24; Gabriel 1923, 227–228.

4 Gabriel 1923, 227–228. The document has been published; see Luttrell and O'Malley 2019, 210–213.

5 Piccirillo 2003, 124–126.

6 Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 118–122.

whose trip to the Holy Land in 1413 was narrated by Luchino da Campo, stayed with some of his companions at a house with a beautiful garden belonging to Dragonetto Clavelli (mentioned in the source as “Dracone,” he was a rich and powerful financier at Rhodes, who served as procurator to the Master and became lord of Nisyros [1401] and Lardos [1402]),⁷ while the rest of the group lodged at the hospice of St. Catherine, also described as very beautiful.⁸ This information differs from Nicola de Martoni’s report, which suggests that the hospice was destined to accommodate noble pilgrims.⁹ Indeed, in 1403, when Ruy González de Clavijo arrived at Rhodes with his Spanish embassy to Timur, he stayed at the hospice:

The said lieutenant, and the friars who were with him, when they knew that the ambassadors were approaching, came out to meet them, and told them that the grand master was absent, but that, for the sake of the king of Castille, all their desires should be willingly complied with. The said ambassadors replied that they wished to go on shore, to obtain news respecting Timour Beg, and to collect information. The lieutenant, therefore, ordered them to be lodged in an inn belonging to a knight of the order, in which there was a church dedicated to the blessed St Catherine. The ambassadors went to this lodging on Sunday, August 5th, and remained there until Thursday the 30th [...]¹⁰

Additionally, the Castilian traveler Pero Tafur, who passed by Rhodes in 1436–1437, writes about a hospital other than the Conventual one that was reserved for the pilgrims, where they were provided with everything necessary apart from food.¹¹

It seems, then, that the state of the hospice had already been altered by the early 15th century, freely receiving pilgrims of all statuses. This development may have been connected with the effort of Domenico de Alamania around 1411 to transfer the hospice to the jurisdiction of the Franciscans; he received the permission of Antipope John XXIII and of the Franciscan General, but,

7 Delaville Le Roulx 1913, 224, note 1; Tsirpanlis 1991, 331–334; Luttrell 1992b, 218, note 143.

8 Ghinassi 1861, 115, 142–143. Ghinassi read the manuscript in Florence, while Brandoli followed the one in Modena; as a result or perhaps due to erroneous transcription, Brandoli writes *diagono* (a term she interprets as *diaconus* deacon), which seems most unlikely) instead of the name of Dragonetto; Brandoli 2011, 47–48, 76.

9 “[...] in quo hospitali hospitantur omnes peregrini euntes et venientes de Jerusalem et aliis sacris locis ultra mare in quantumcumque sint nobiles;” Piccirillo 2003, 124.

10 Markham 1859, 17.

11 Pérez Priego 2006, 243; Luttrell 1994, 69–70.

upon his death between March and June of 1411 the Knights decided not to implement such an action.¹² It could be that the same reasons that dictated Domenico de Alamania's actions led to the changed management of the hospice by the Order from the early 15th century on.¹³ The importance of this evolution reflects on the church's status as formulated by the few pilgrims' references; in fact, only Nicola de Martoni reports its rich and impressive collection of relics. It would seem, then, that the church also followed the 15th-century developments; the relics were removed, and the chapel served as the customary place for sojourning pilgrims to attend the liturgy, as in the cases of Roberto da Sanseverino and William III, Landgrave of Thuringia (1461), resulting in a very limited number of references to the site.¹⁴

The church of St. Catherine, as described in 1522 by the pilgrim Barthélemy de Salignac, had a cemetery with a copy of the Holy Sepulchre. If this was indeed the hospice's church, it seems that at some point it provided burial, most probably for pilgrims who passed away during their stay in the town.¹⁵

The location of the church has been a matter of research since the early 20th century. Gabriel identified the hospice of St. Catherine¹⁶ and was the first to investigate the unidentified monument on Thiseos St. at the southeast of the hospice, which at the time was inhabited by Jewish families, a fact that made it difficult for him to work out a precise plan (Fig. 53). It was a cruciform church with a dome bearing four windows, with an orientation that diverged about 30° from the east–west axis.¹⁷ He could not estimate its date, but expressed his certainty that this monument could not in any case be the hospice's chapel, as it definitely seemed to be a Greek church of humble dimensions.

The edifice collapsed during World War II bombardments and was first excavated during the 1960s,¹⁸ in the years 1997–2000 excavation works were conducted by the 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities. These, along with

12 Luttrell 1970, 370; Luttrell 1987, 199–200.

13 According to the pilgrims' texts, the hospice would accommodate pilgrims, and it seems that it was sometimes preferred to private lodging: Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini was offered bed and board by the Italian Knight Marco di Lignano, but he decided to accept only the latter and to sleep at the hospice; Calamai 1993, 76.

14 Including the ones that refer to the hospice alone; Piccirillo 2003, 124–126; Brandoli 2011, 48–76; Pérez Priego 2006, 243; Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 118–122; Kohl 1868, 95–96; Calamai 1993, 76; Jacobs 1868, 202–203; von Minckwitz 1856, 89; de Salignac 1593, 148.

15 Although there is no extant evidence in the written sources and the information in the travelogues designates St. Anthony and Our Lady of Victory as burial places for pilgrims; see pp. 165–166 and 186–189 below.

16 Gabriel 1923, 102–106.

17 Idem, 196–197.

18 Kontis 1952, 584–587; Kontis 1953, 275.

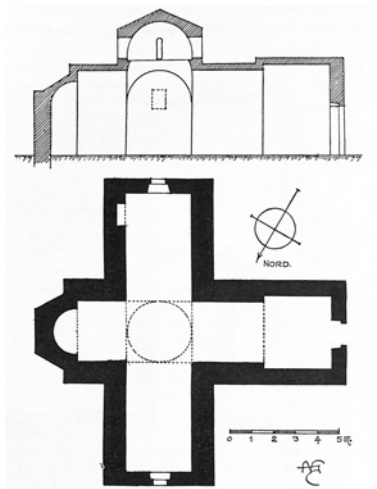


FIGURE 53
Unidentified church on Thiseos St.,
Rhodes, plan

some consolidation works in 2000–2001, resulted in the present state of the monument and the configuration of the surrounding area (Fig. 54).¹⁹ According to the archaeological research, the first phase of the building corresponds to an Early Christian three-aisled basilica. At some point it was replaced with a church with a cross plan, from which period evidence for burials within and around the monument survives, dating the use of this adjacent cemetery between the 11th century and the early 14th. The cruciform church stayed in use until the early 16th century, as attested by the discovery of 15th-century coins within its premises.²⁰

Only fragments of the pictorial decoration survive, namely in the sanctuary apse, at the intersection of the cross, and in the lower parts of the arms of the cross: on the western and eastern walls of the north arm, and on the northern wall of the west arm.²¹ These have been dated to the 14th–15th centuries. During the 1950s works, in 1952, a dedicatory inscription was discovered on the lower part of the western wall of the north arm, bearing the Greek female name *Εἰρήνη Βάρενα* [Eirini Varena], a testimony supporting Gabriel's hypothesis on the Orthodox rite of the church.²²

There is no evidence backing the identification of this anonymous church with the church of St. Catherine's hospice. Even Gabriel's identification of the hospice is now also in question, as the coat of arms he presented as belonging

19 Psarre 2007, 467–473.

20 Idem, 467–469.

21 Idem, 470–471.

22 Kontis 1952, 586–587.



FIGURE 54 Unidentified church on Thiseos St., view from the southeast

to Domenico de Alamania are perhaps dated after 1470 and belong to a different member of the Alamania family, and it is evident that they were placed on the north wall of the building after its reconstruction in 1516.²³ The edifice has recently been identified with the almshouse of St. Catherine, which was built before 1442 and was administrated by Hector de Alamania, a member of Domenico's family.²⁴

In 1856 the French amateur archaeologist Victor Guérin situated the church of Our Lady of Victory at the northeastern end of the walls, an identification that remained prevalent over the following years (Fig. 55).²⁵ Some decades later, Gabriel appeared certain; he identified the three-sided apse of the sanctuary and supposed that the indications of rib vaults on the north wall must have belonged to the north aisle; to the south there were traces of a barrel vault and remains of a staircase. Still, the material evidence was limited, and he worked out a hypothetical plan (Fig. 56).²⁶

23 Kasdagli 1994–1995, 224; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 144; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2019, 154, 156.

24 Tsirpanlis 1997, 737–740; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2019, 153–156.

25 Guérin 1856, 141; Kollias 2007, 291–292.

26 Gabriel 1923, 180–182.



FIGURE 55 Remains of the church formerly identified with Our Lady of Victory, Rhodes

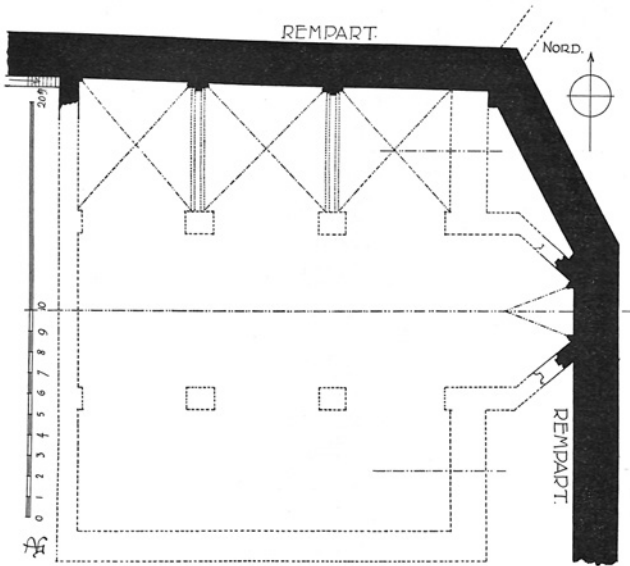


FIGURE 56 The church formerly identified with Our Lady of Victory, Rhodes, plan

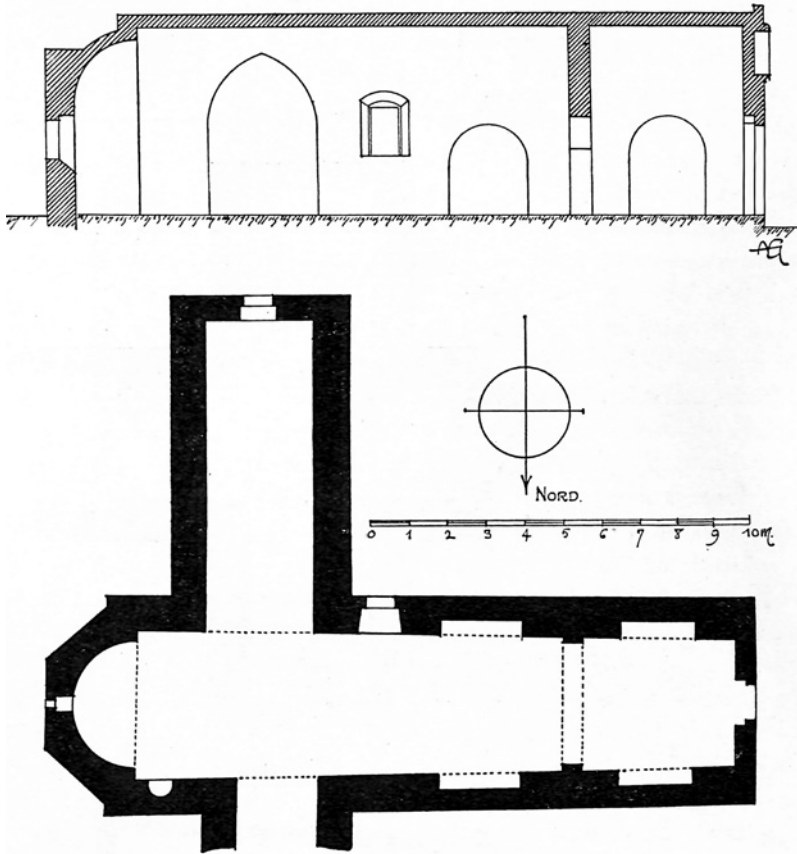


FIGURE 57 The church formerly identified with St. Pantaleon, Rhodes, plan

At the southeastern part, Gabriel identified the Greek church of St. Pantaleon with a nave with a semi-circular apse, which appeared three-sided on the exterior, and a broken barrel vault.²⁷ There was a vault at the southern part and traces of another one on the north side, slightly narrower, that indicated a plan with the form of a Latin cross (Fig. 57). The church had a narthex with niches on its lateral sides and similar niches on the nave's walls, while the entrance had been reworked (Fig. 58). The current building, an Orthodox church dedicated to the saint, was renovated in 1948 (Fig. 59).

27 Idem, 197–198.



FIGURE 58
The church formerly identified with
St. Pantaleon, west entrance

Excavations at the site, from the 1980s onward, uncovered ruins of a single-aisled Gothic church (7.2 × 6.1 meters) with a Gothic ribbed cross-vault and a two-story building adjacent to its western side, with traces of ribbed cross-vaults remaining on the north wall.²⁸ On the northeastern side, next to the latter building, a series of cells was uncovered, as well as what seems to be a courtyard paved with ancient luxurious marble stones. A recent investigation has produced a more detailed understanding of the site: a monumental building complex existed to the northeast of the Gate of the Mole, on whose east side the church's hexagonal niche was added before the mid-15th century, when the new walls were built, with Gothic style ribs and pointed arched windows on its lateral sides (Fig. 60).²⁹ This became obvious when investigation of the exterior of the eastern part, at the wall's perimeter, revealed a section of the south side of the apse stuck inside the fortifications (Fig. 61); this—combined with evidence connected with possible coats of arms on the exterior side of this part of the walls that place their dating to the mid-15th century—led to the conclusion that the church in question is earlier than the walls and thus cannot be Our Lady of Victory.³⁰

28 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2008, 115–119; Kollias 2007, 292–293, with bibliography.

29 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 143–144.

30 Kollias 2007, 292–293, with a detailed examination; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2019, 145–153.



FIGURE 59 St. Pantaleon, west entrance currently

A ceramic tile with Domenico de Alamania's coat of arms found at the site, along with fragments of a tombstone dated 1420–1422, as well as their association with a relief depiction of the Virgin and Child with the arms of Domenico that was discovered next to the walls, reinforced the hypothesis that this may actually have been the location of the hospice and church of St. Catherine; current archaeological research firmly points to this identification.³¹ In that case, this would be the monument referred to as the church of St. Catherine by the Gate of the Mole in 1445,³² which from 1465 on was referred to as the

31 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 143–144; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2019, 145–153.

32 Luttrell 2003b, 289; Maglio 2016a, 156.

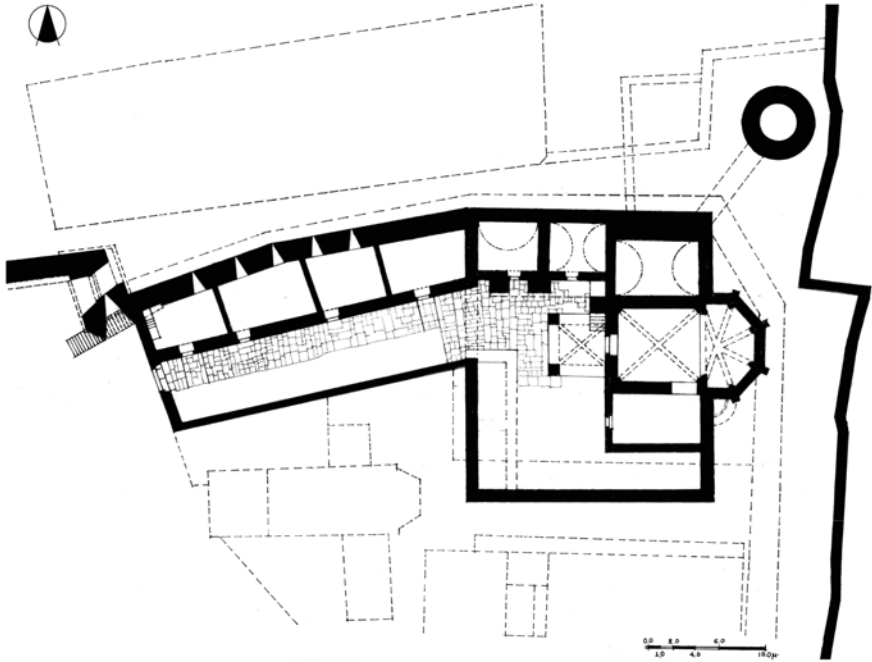


FIGURE 60 Plan of the Hospitaller complex formerly identified with Our Lady of Victory



FIGURE 61 Remains of the Gothic apse in contact with the mid-15th-century walls, church formerly identified with Our Lady of Victory, Rhodes

Gate of St. Catherine, making the identification of the monument even more plausible.³³ It is certain that future archaeological investigation of the complex, as well as of the southeastern part of the “upper Jewish” quarter, along with the conservation and study of the excavated material of the unidentified church on Thiseos St., will deliver more evidence and bolster further conclusions.

1.2 *Cultic Phenomena*

The information concerning the cultic collection kept at St. Catherine derives largely from the travel report of Nicola de Martoni. Apart from enumerating the relics, which takes up most of his text, he gives little, but precise, information about some aspects of the treasures. The collection consisted of Christological, Marian, and saintly relics.³⁴

It should be noted that no other pilgrim mentions these relics. Nicola de Martoni asserts that they had been brought to Rhodes by the hospice's donor, Domenico de Alamania, who had received them from the emperor in Constantinople, “qui est suus carus durabilis amicus,” taken from the Constantinopolitan churches, where many of them had been placed during Constantine the Great's reign.³⁵ This statement sums up the provenance of the relics, and it is known that Emperor Manuel II, in his attempts to recover the Constantinopolitan throne from his nephew, John VII, went to Rhodes for help and was supported in 1390 by two Hospitaller galleys and brethren.³⁶ The Knights appear to have aided Manuel financially, as evidenced by a document of 1398 found in the magistral bulls, which lists a series of valuable religious objects that seem to have been pledged as collateral at Rhodes in 1390 and that were returned to the emperor by the prior of France, Renaud de Giresme.³⁷

33 Gabriel 1921, 21–22, 62.

34 Piccirillo 2003, 124–126.

35 “Omnes supradictas reliquias dictus dominus noster frater Dominicus habuit in Costantinopoli ab imperatore Costantinopolitano, qui est suus carus durabilis amicus, qui accepit de ecclesiis Constantinopolitanis in quibus multe et pulcre dicuntur esse reliquie et corpora sanctorum et sanctarum a tempore Costantini imperatoris, qui ipsam civitatem Costantinopolis hedificavit et construi fecit in formam et similitudinem civitatis Rome;” *ibid.*

36 Luttrell 1988, 98–99. Ignatius of Smolensk describes Manuel's attempt to take Constantinople; see Majeska 1984, 102–103. For an overview of Manuel's actions, see Barker 1969, 76–77, with further bibliography. On Manuel's offers of relics in exchange of aid, see Shepard 2012, 82–86.

37 Loenertz 1958, 226, 231–232, where he publishes the archival source.

The list enumerates a number of church treasures, with only one of them, a silver coffer with gold bands, containing a relic, one of the True Cross.³⁸

Concerning the donation to Domenico de Alamania, as attested by Nicola de Martoni, three groups of sacred objects can be distinguished. Firstly, a group of Christological and Marian relics consisted of a piece of the Holy Sponge, a piece of the reed the sponge had been attached to, a piece of Christ's Purple Robe, and pieces of two of the Virgin's dresses, a red and a purple one. The second group of relics was enclosed in a large jasper reliquary and included a piece of the Seamless Robe of Jesus, a piece of the True Cross, a piece of a finger of the Baptist, and bones of St. Bartholomew, St. Christopher, St. Theodore, and St. Anastasia. Lastly, there was a beautiful icon (*cona*) with 25 relics embedded in it, bearing inscriptions, of which the traveler was able to identify only some, namely the bones of St. Thomas, St. Prosper, St. Elias, St. Theodore, and St. Marcellinus, some of St. Helena's and St. Agnes' hair, and a piece of the Virgin's veil.

Thus, the Christological relics constituted the core of the collection. The Holy Sponge, the reed on which the sponge had been attached,³⁹ relics of the True Cross, the Purple and the Seamless Robes, as well as the Virgin's clothing (her maphorion, robe, and girdle), were relics famously cherished in Constantinople.⁴⁰ Relics of the Baptist's hand were also variously connected with the Byzantine capital, as well as a multitude of relics of saints. St. Theodore's remains had been kept there before being transferred to Venice in the 1260s; likewise, St. Anastasia's as well as St. Christopher's relics were present in Constantinople from the late 5th century.⁴¹

38 "[...] primo uidelicet bussolan unam argenti habentem intus crucem ligni (s)a(nc)ti ueracis et preciosi cum ligamentis aureis;" *ibid.* Among the pawned objects there were seven icons, an indication that could further support the hypothesis of Acheimastou-Potamianou that connects two bilateral Constantinopolitan icons from Rhodes with the donations of Manuel II to Domenico de Alamania; see Acheimastou-Potamianou 2009, 199–214.

39 The identity of the cane used to affix the sponge is debatable: the Evangelists wrote about a reed or hyssop, according to the Gospel of John, who was an eyewitness of the Crucifixion; see de Fleury 1870, 270–272.

40 The presence of the relics in Constantinople is attested to: the scribe Alexandre reported seeing the Purple Robe, the Sponge, and the Reed in 1393, a year before pieces of these Passion relics were seen by Nicola de Martoni at St. Catherine at Rhodes; see Ebersolt 1921, 115–116. On the Christological and Marian relics at Constantinople, see *idem*, 5–30, 105–140; Bacci 2003, 234–248; Klein 2006, 79–99; Magdalino 2004, 15–30; Majeska 2004, 183–190; Lidov 2012, 63–91. Various aspects that focus on the relics of Constantinople are discussed in the collection of articles by Wortley 2009a.

41 Concerning the relics' adventures, see Agathangelos, Maltezou, and Morini 2005, 177–190; Riant 1876–1878, vol. 1, 156–159. For St. Theodore, see AASS, Feb. vol. 2, 22–27; Delehay

It could be possible to assume that the first group of relics was also included in a single reliquary, like the other two.⁴² Concerning the second group, placed in a jasper reliquary, no further information is given.⁴³ However, the third group, placed in a *cona*, is considered to have survived, although its identification is rather problematic, as will be examined.

In the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum in Mdina, there is a box-like diptych reliquary with 25 Byzantine steatite reliefs that has been linked with Nicola de Martoni's description (Fig. 62).⁴⁴ This work was described in 1755 by Paciaudi, who also offered an engraving of it (Fig. 63), and it is listed in the 18th-century inventory in Valletta; in both sources it is mentioned as an *agiothecium*,⁴⁵ while in the 1756 inventory now in Mdina it must correspond to the item mentioned as "una Cassetta fatta a Libro con alcune piancette d'argento entrovi reliquie, e figure alla Greca di diversi Santi."⁴⁶ The diptych is covered with red velvet bearing five enamel shields, four with the arms of the hospital and one with the arms of the Master Héliion de Villeneuve (1319–1346). The interior consists of 25 steatite reliefs of the following subjects: a homogenous group of 19 plaques with small busts of the Virgin, St. Nicholas, Christ, St. John the Baptist, the Archangel Michael, the Archangel Gabriel, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory, St. Paul, St. Basil, St. George, St. Theodore, St. John the Theologian, St. Peter, St. Nicodemus, St. Joseph, St. Anastasia Pharmakolytria, St. Bartholomew, and St. Sabbas; a smaller group consisting of five plaques with St. Onuphrius, St. James

1909, 12–43; Walter 2003. For St. Anastasia, Delehay 1936, 161; Majeska 1984, 289, with further sources. For St. Christopher, Majeska 1984, 387.

42 The structure of Nicola de Martoni's text suggests this possibility; it was common practice to house different relics in a single reliquary, especially ones that shared some type of link among them, typological or other. See, for example, the aforementioned cross with the relics that the Master Emery d'Amboise received as gifts from the French King Louis XI, see p. 69 above. Other notable cases are the famous Limburg Staurothek, which bears six Passion relics, a relic of the Virgin, and one of the Baptist, and the Stavelot Triptych, with relics of the True Cross, the Holy Sepulchre, and the Virgin; see Hostetler 2012, 7–13; Ševčenko 1994, 289–294; Voelkle 1980; Baert 2004, 80–97.

43 Jasper was a much-valued precious stone: it is mentioned in the Old Testament, but was especially highlighted in the Book of Revelation, with regard to Christ Enthroned and the Heavenly Jerusalem, cf. Apoc. 4.3, 21.11–19. For some hints concerning its perceived qualities and use in the Middle Ages, see Hahn 2012, 41.

44 For the diptych, see Paciaudi 1755, 384–399; Hetherington 2000, 39–55; Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1985, 180–184; Luttrell, Buhagiar, and Azzopardi 1989, 45, no. 17; Buhagiar 2009b, 40–41.

45 Paciaudi 1755, 384–399; Valletta, AOM 1953, ff. 104r–v.

46 Mdina, ACM 150A, f. 35r. This information is also given, but with no specific citation, by Oman 1970, 106.



FIGURE 62 Reliquary diptych, Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina

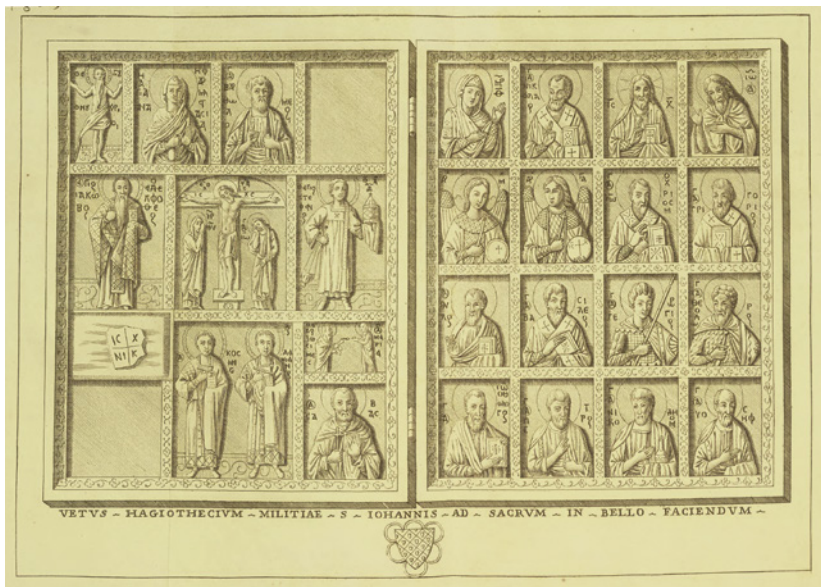


FIGURE 63 Reliquary diptych, 1755, engraving

Adelphotheos, St. Stephen the Protomartyr, Sts. Cosmas and Damian, and St. Mary of Egypt receiving the sacrament from St. Zosimas; and a plaque depicting the Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John.⁴⁷ There is also a small rectangular case containing relics, and two empty spaces were probably occupied with other relics or steatite plaques.

The diptych has been linked with Byzantine workmanship of the mid-Palaeologan era. Its subject matter was deemed to have strong connections with Jerusalem and the Holy Land, due to the presence of St. James Adelphotheos (the first bishop of Jerusalem), St. Mary of Egypt (who converted on the threshold of the Holy Sepulchre),⁴⁸ St. Stephen (who was martyred outside the walls of Jerusalem), and Sts. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (both protagonists in Christ's Deposition and Entombment); moreover the depictions of St. Anastasia Pharmakolytria and Sts. Cosmas and Damian were interpreted as being related with healing, the core of Hospitaller activity.⁴⁹ As a result, in combination with the stylistic appreciation, it was assumed that the diptych may have been produced in Jerusalem, Acre, or Cyprus before 1346, the date of death of the Master Héliion de Villeneuve.⁵⁰

It has subsequently been discussed that the three groups of steatites, as well as the covering of the diptych, are spoils of earlier works, and the possibility of their assemblage, even in Malta, cannot be ruled out.⁵¹ This idea was based on the mobility of the plaques, evident in the disruption of the obvious Deesis composition, which must have been formed by the first group of plaques, and on the fact that the nails holding the enamels to the covering do not seem suited to the work. Moreover, the diptych was linked with the second group of

47 The distinction into three groups that is followed here is supported, based on the stylistic appreciation of the work, by Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1985, 181–184. Hetherington maintains that there are two groups, assuming that the depiction of the Crucifixion belongs to the larger group; Hetherington 2000, 42–43. The interpretation of Kalavrezou-Maxeiner seems more plausible.

48 The depiction of St. Mary receiving the sacrament from St. Zosimas is usually connected with Byzantine sanctuary decoration in relation to the service of the Eucharist; see Gerstel 2006, 152–154, esp. note 76, where five Middle and Late Byzantine examples of the above setting are cited.

49 Hetherington 2000, 44–49. In his hypothesis concerning the connection with Jerusalem, the assumption of Paciaudi—that the relic still preserved in the diptych was one or more stone splinters of the Holy Sepulchre—was further highlighted; nevertheless, the Christological relics were deemed the most sacred of all, and their presence in reliquaries served in any case the intrinsic nature of these objects and cannot necessarily be interpreted as implying a more direct relation with Jerusalem, in terms of production or donorship.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1985, 183–184.

relics reported by Nicola de Martoni, assuming that the steatite was mistakenly thought to be jasper.⁵² Indeed, the five saintly relics he mentioned correspond to saints depicted in the steatites, apart from St. Christopher.⁵³

Finally, based on a third hypothesis, the diptych has been identified with the *cona* described by Nicola de Martoni.⁵⁴ This identification also presents problems, because the seven saintly relics he mentions in the *cona* do not correspond to any saints depicted in the steatites, apart from St. Theodore. On the other hand, the number of steatite plaques corresponds exactly to the number of the *cona*'s relics, and, moreover, the fact that Nicola de Martoni could not decipher most of the inscriptions is well-justified when seeing the diptych, which bears only Greek lettering;⁵⁵ of course, his inability could have been caused by the small dimensions of the work, by inadequate lighting, or even by the limited time he might have spent in front of the reliquary. Besides, he actually writes, "quedam cona multum devota et pulcra, in qua sunt xxv reliquie incluse cum litteris in circuytu;"⁵⁶ concerning this beautiful and most devotional icon, he refers only to enclosed relics and not to depictions of the saints, which would point to a work similar to the miraculous reliquary icon at the Monastery of St. John of Rila, Bulgaria, which depicts the Virgin *Hodegetria* surrounded by small rectangular niches containing relics of 32 saints (all honored by the Church of Constantinople), separated by metallic bands on which their names are engraved (Fig. 64).⁵⁷ His description points to types of work connected with royal and rich donations linked with Constantinople.

52 Ibid.

53 Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, *op. cit.*, proposes that perhaps Nicola de Martoni mistook St. Chrysostom for St. Christopher. In any case, the original composition of saints is unknown, since two compartments are empty. Hetherington dismisses the association with the jasper reliquary, as it would imply that the work has a dating later than Villeneuve's time; Hetherington 2000, 48.

54 Luttrell, Buhagiar, and Azzopardi 1989, 45, no. 17.

55 Luttrell 2003b, 33, esp. note 165.

56 Piccirillo 2003, 126.

57 The icon at Rila was probably donated to the monastery by the Serbian Princess Mara Branković in the 15th century, although a 12th-century date linked with Manuel I Komnenos is still supported; see Bakalova 2001, 267–270; Bakalova 2005, 193–228. Two known examples of icons with relics, both dated 1367–1384, are the icon with the Virgin and Child at Meteora and the reliquary diptych in the cathedral of Cuenca, which follows the model of the Meteora icon—both works share the same donor, Maria Angelina Doukaina Palaiologina; see Talbot 2004, 51–54, nos. 24B and 24C, respectively. Another relevant example is the early 14th-century Constantinopolitan icon with Sts. John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Nicholas, and Gregory the Theologian, now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg; see Effenberger 2004, 225–227, no. 134. In these three works,

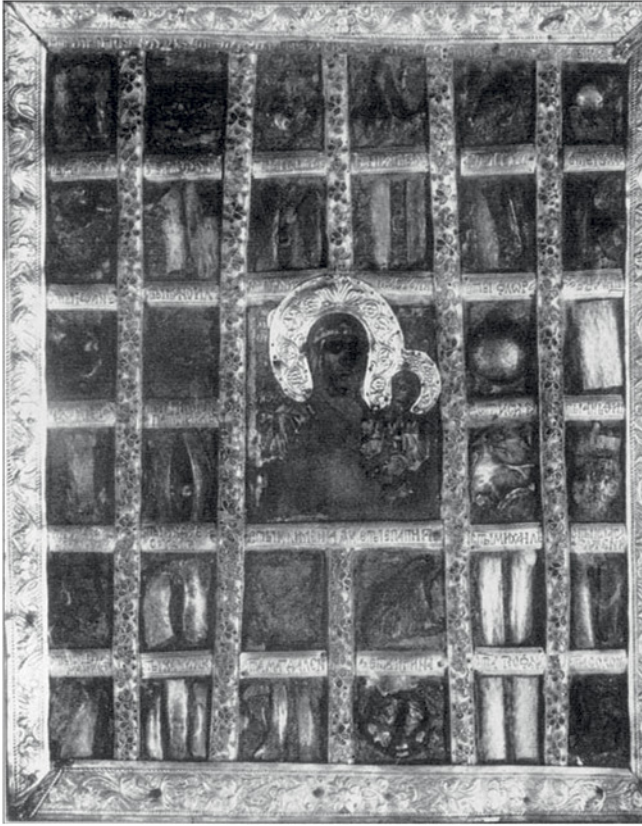


FIGURE 64 Reliquary icon, Monastery of St. John of Rila, Bulgaria

Nevertheless, the present appearance of the Mdina diptych, which has remained the same at least since the 18th century, cannot allow for identification with any of the works mentioned by Nicola de Martoni. Such a present from a Byzantine ruler, bearing this unbalanced and atypical layout, seems highly improbable.⁵⁸

Concerning the three groups of steatites, it seems that the first one, of nineteen 13th-century plaques, seems fit for a reliquary, but does not show

the relics of the saints have been placed around the central icon, as in the case of the icon at Rila, but along with small bust portraits of the saints themselves.

58 Most noteworthy is the disruption of the Deesis scheme on the right wing, where St. Nicholas has been placed between the Virgin and Christ; Hetherington 2000, 42; Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1985, 181.

the characteristic traits of Palaeologan art so as to be convincingly connected with the donation from Manuel II.⁵⁹ The second group consists of five late 13th-century plaques, which are worn down in a similar way, use the same decorative background, and present strong stylistic uniformity; it shows a particular choice of saints—St. Onuphrius, Sts. Cosmas and Damien, St. James Adelphotheos, and St. Stephen the Protomartyr (the latter two connected with the Holy Land)—and a smaller plaque with Sts. Mary and Zosimas: the lack of cohesion among these saints points to the possibility that they had been part of a much larger whole.⁶⁰ The Crucifixion, of Palaeologan style, does not seem to be connected with the aforementioned plaques. Bearing in mind the above, there cannot be a convincing argument concerning the identity of the reliquaries found in St. Catherine's church, and it seems, as already mentioned, that these Byzantine treasures were soon to follow a different fate, since no other references are extant; a fact that could imply a private use of the Mdina reliquary, provided it was ever assembled in Rhodes.

Apart from the sacred relics of the church, there is another cultic dimension connected with this space, based on the report of Barthélemy de Salignac (1522). In his narration, he refers to St. Catherine and provides the detail that there was a copy of the Holy Sepulchre in its cemetery.⁶¹ The presence of such a setting, which would have served as a mimetic evocation of Jerusalem, may have worked on two levels. On the one hand, it would promote the concept of a "surrogate" Sepulchre, extending the properties of the actual one to the travelers who passed away on Rhodes: it could have appeased their anxiety for the salvation of their soul, by "enabling those unlucky travelers who died there without reaching their final goal to be symbolically buried close to the Son of God's life-giving tomb."⁶² On the other hand, it perhaps served as the final stop of a Rhodian Way of the Cross that imitated the one in Jerusalem and, subsequently, established a direct association with the way to Calvary—the pilgrims' ultimate destination—worked out by the Hospitallers.⁶³

59 Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1985, 181.

60 Idem, 182; Hetherington 2000, 47.

61 De Salignac 1593, Dd2. This evidence was discovered and discussed by Bacci 2012, 192. esp. note 41; Bacci 2014, 70–71; Bacci 2017a, 143–144.

62 Bacci 2017a, 143–144.

63 This evidence has been presented and further developed by Bacci; see Bacci 2012, 192; Bacci 2014, 71; Bacci 2016, 327; Bacci 2017a, 143. Concerning the development of the meditation practices connected with the mental evocation of the holy sites, the locative memory, and the kinetic devotion associated with them, see Bacci 2009, 101–110; Bacci 2014, 67–76. Both these articles summarize the current bibliography. Bacci highlights that, apart from the influence of the Franciscan devotional meditation and the Sacri Monti

According to an official document of the Municipality of Fribourg, the *chemin de croix* of Fribourg was modelled on the measurements that had been established at Rhodes and that were thought to be genuine. Seven Passion pillars were built in 1516 on the initiative of the Hospitaller Commander Pierre d'Englisberg, who had brought with him from Rhodes the exact distances, and were subsequently copied and transferred to Romans-sur-Isère.⁶⁴ Apart from a possible written record with the exact measurements kept by the Order at Rhodes, Pierre d'Englisberg probably copied the existing setting and thus contributed to its dissemination in Western Europe, although the possibility that the accurate distances copied in Fribourg may have originated from a Rhodian written record and not from an actual, exact measuring cannot be ruled out with certainty.

There is some additional evidence in the depictions of Rhodes town from the work of Guillaume Caoursin. In three of the illuminations with a bird's-eye view of the town, two Calvary crosses may clearly be seen, one situated near the church of St. Sebastian at the east end of the town's *platea*⁶⁵ and one at the west end (Figs. 65a, 65b, 65c).⁶⁶ The crosses are also depicted in an *ex-voto* painting that was offered to Notre-Dame in Paris, now at the Hotel de Ville in Épernay (Fig. 66); it was commissioned by Antoine d'Aubusson and Louis XI of France after the victory against the Ottomans in 1480 and essentially propagandized the feats of the Order.⁶⁷ Moreover, a cross is clearly shown in Pinturicchio's portrait of Alberto Aringhieri of 1504 in the Chapel of the Baptist in Siena Cathedral (Fig. 67).⁶⁸

The present locations of where the crosses were placed must be more or less Ippokratous Square for the former and the hill of the Suleiman Mosque for the latter.⁶⁹ The square was the commercial center of the town, as well as the place of public feasts, celebrations, and events. The execution of the traitor

established in Italy in the late 15th century, the emergence of the Via Crucis, which reproduced the Via Dolorosa, seems to accord with devotional practices in Germany and the Netherlands that integrated the meditation of the Passion with movement analogous to walking along the holy sites of Jerusalem. See also Thurston 1914, 62–75.

64 Text in Kneller 1908, 202–204. See Bacci 2012, 192, note 41; Bacci 2014, 71, note 13, with further bibliography.

65 The square (*platea*) or market (*macellus*), like the *platea lata* to the west, was an unoccupied open space; see Tsirpanlis 1995, 88–89.

66 Gabriel 1921, 12, note 4.

67 Antoine was the brother of the Master Aubusson and had fought with his men at Rhodes during the siege. On the painting, see Hamon 2009, 331–336; Vissière 2009, 337–338.

68 The crosses have been detected by Bacci (forthcoming).

69 Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 118.



FIGURE 65A Bird's-eye view of the town of Rhodes, ca. 1483. Paris, Ms. Lat. 6067, f. 18r

and Grand Chancellor of the Order, Andrea d'Amaral, accused of sending information to the enemy during the siege in 1522, took place next to the cross in the square, mentioned as the *croix de la padelle*;⁷⁰ the event was depicted in a woodcut on the cover of a rare pamphlet printed in Florence in 1523 (Fig. 68).⁷¹ Until now, the *terminus post quem* for the erection of this cross has been ca. 1435, when a chapel dedicated to the Virgin and St. Sebastian is reported to have been erected next to the cross (“in Platea civitatis Colocencis juxta crucem”). It is noteworthy that the chapel of St. Sebastian, next to the *croix de la padelle*, was built in order for the patron saint to protect the town against the plague, a role that perhaps played some part in the choice of location of the church between the main, Middle Byzantine, city gate and the

70 Ibid. Manoussou Della cites de Bourbon 1527, n.p.; de Vertot 1726, 665. Vatin mistakes the cross at the western part with the *croix de la padelle*; Vatin 1994, 87.

71 Tsirpanlis 1991, 362–363.



FIGURE 65B Bird's-eye view of the town of Rhodes, ca. 1483. Paris, Ms. Lat. 6067, f. 32r

commercial area, which was vulnerable to the pestilence.⁷² What is more, in 1446 Pope Eugene IV granted indulgences to everyone who visited and supported this church with a document referring only to Sebastian as the patron saint.⁷³ The chapel is clearly visible in the aforementioned illuminations in Caoursin's manuscript.⁷⁴

The hypothesis that the two crosses of the *platea* may have functioned as stations on a Rhodian Way of the Cross⁷⁵ combines this evidence with the presence of a copy of the Holy Sepulchre and the document from Fribourg. The Calvary, or stepped, crosses have been closely associated with Golgotha and

72 Tsirpanlis 1995, 88–89; Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 138–140.

73 Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 138–140.

74 The location of St. Sebastian seems to have been the one occupied by the Chadrevan Mosque; Gabriel 1921, 12; Gabriel 1923, 116, 211, 231; Tsirpanlis 1995, 92.

75 As pointed out by Bacci (forthcoming).



FIGURE 65C Bird's-eye view of the town of Rhodes, ca. 1483. Paris, Ms. Lat. 6067, f. 37v

the imagery of *loca sancta* since the late 6th century.⁷⁶ The fact that Caoursin's illuminations depict only two crosses must be related to the visual conventions following the specific medium, given the fact that the open space of the *platea* easily allowed, in practice, their depiction. This would mean that five more stations should have existed, including the starting point, denominating the praetorium where Jesus was brought before Pilate and condemned to death, and the finishing point, corresponding to the copy of the Holy Sepulchre.⁷⁷ However,

76 The stepped cross seems to be referring to the cross that was erected on Golgotha by Emperor Theodosius, which could be reached by climbing some steps; see Wilkinson 1977, 177, with primary sources mentioning the steps on pp. 65, 83, 117. They were often depicted on objects associated with the Holy Sepulchre; see, for example, a 7th-century jug in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Monza ampulla no. 4 in Monza Cathedral; Ratliff 2012, 92–93, no. 60; Grabar 1958, 22, pl. 10.

77 The history of the Way of the Cross is rich and evolved considerably, as indicated by the variety in the number of stations through time and space; see indicatively Thurston



FIGURE 66 The Siege of Rhodes in 1480, late 15th century, oil on panel, Hotel de Ville, Épernay

the evolution of the town's topography after 1522 renders any identification unfeasible; an architectural and technical topographical study would be necessary in order to assess the distances and, in any case, an actual Rhodian Way of the Cross would have conformed to the medieval topography of the town.

With this view in mind, it seems that the church of St. Catherine's hospice, tending to the liturgical and devotional needs of the visiting pilgrims, could be perceived as an extension or, even better, the counterpart of the Order's main

1914; Storme 1973; Kirkland-Ives 2009, 249–270; Lenzi 2016. In present-day Jerusalem, the stations of the *Via Dolorosa* are fifteen in total, six of them located inside the church of the Holy Sepulchre.



FIGURE 67 Pinturicchio, *Alberto Aringhieri*, 1504, fresco, Chapel of the Baptist, Siena Cathedral

collection of relics (and, in a way, of the Latin rite at the far east of the *borgo*), since—as far as is known—St. John of the *Collachium*, the Grand Master's chapel, and St. Catherine were the only churches housing Christological relics. This conjunction could prove useful when examining whether the copy of the Holy Sepulchre at St. Catherine served as the final station of a Way of the Cross. Nevertheless, information provided by two other pilgrims, the German nobleman Dietrich von Schachten (1491), that a copy of the Holy Sepulchre was found at the church of Our Lady of Victory, which had been granted to the Franciscans, and the wealthy merchant from Valenciennes Jehan de Tournai (1488–1489), who situates it at the Augustinian cloister, opens new possibilities, which will be investigated below. Whatever the case, the function of the church as the eastern topographical counterpart of the Order's cultic collection is evident.



FIGURE 68 The town of Rhodes, 1523, woodcut

2 St. Anthony

2.1 *Historical and Archaeological Investigation*

The church of St. Anthony was situated outside the walls of Rhodes town, in the western part of the port of Mandraki, opposite St. Nicholas' tower. Around the church lay the cemetery of the Knights, where many of the tomb slabs now in the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes were discovered.⁷⁸ It occupied approximately the present-day area of the Mosque of Murad Reis and its cemetery.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Gabriel 1921, 14–15; Gabriel 1923, 211, 214; Luttrell 2003b, 47.

⁷⁹ Manoussou-Ntella 2012b, 26.

According to a version of *The Chronicle of the Deceased Masters* elaborated in 1367–1383, the church was built by the Master Villeneuve (1319–1346);⁸⁰ it is attested, though, that it already existed in 1314, when it was designated that it should belong, along with its income, to the Prior of the Convent.⁸¹ Villeneuve's contribution was perhaps restricted to the erection of a chapel at the already existing church, as in a later version of the *Chronicle*, dated 1467–1476, he appears to have chosen the cemetery of St. Anthony as his burial place and to have endowed it with a chapel; this decision was connected with an attested miracle there, though he later decided to build his funerary chapel in the Conventual church.⁸²

In May 1480, when it was certain that there would be an Ottoman assault on Rhodes, it was decided to destroy the church for defense reasons.⁸³ The site was used during the siege by the Ottomans, who launched from its environs cannon attacks against St. Nicholas' tower.⁸⁴ After the siege, it was quickly deliberated, on September 11th, 1480, that St. Anthony should be completely destroyed, so as to protect the tower of St. Nicholas in a future attack, apart from a side chapel that would be used for the mass for the dead; if an imminent threat were to arise, the chapel would also be demolished, and the masses would be celebrated in other churches. The Order was to rebuild the edifice when peaceful days would come, so that the memory of the departed should not perish.⁸⁵ It seems that it was soon decided to destroy the chapel as well.⁸⁶ These deliberations do not appear to have been implemented immediately; according to the decision of February 3rd, 1481, 19 Greek and Latin churches around the town, among which was St. Anthony, would be demolished, so as not to provide the enemy with shelter for impending military attacks. In the case of St. Anthony, the mill that was nearby was also destroyed.⁸⁷ Why would there be different deliberations before and after the siege? Bearing in mind the arrival

80 Text in Luttrell 2003b, 187–191.

81 Idem, 174–175.

82 Idem, 183.

83 Bosio 1630, 399. Gabriel publishes a deliberation in the *Libri Conciliorum*, dated May 21st, 1480, to demolish “ecclesia S. Anthonij et beate Marie lemonitre et alia loca que impediunt;” Gabriel 1923, 211.

84 Gabriel 1923, 63, based on the information given by Caoursin in *Obsidionis Rhodie Urbis descriptio*. Bernhard von Breydenbach provides the information that the Ottomans installed three cannons in the garden of St. Anthony, where they also cut the trees, as well as describing their artillery in the western part of the garden; Mozer 2010, 694–695. See also Bosio 1630, 399ff; Setton 1978, 351–353.

85 Setton 1978, 361, esp. note 45.

86 Bosio 1630, 429.

87 Idem, 431–432.

of the Ottoman troops on May 23rd, 1480, it seems doubtful that there would have been time to implement the decree of 1480, which would explain why it was put into action afterward.⁸⁸ It was some months later, in October 1481, that the Master Aubusson decided to reconstruct St. Anthony and to build a more sumptuous building than the previous one, as well as a larger cemetery, since it was supposed that, after the death of Mehmed the Conqueror and the following conflicts over the throne between his sons, Bayezid II and Djem, the island would enjoy a time of peace.⁸⁹

As reported by Nicola de Martoni, the cemetery was used for the burials of the brothers of the Order in the 14th century.⁹⁰ He explains that the most noble brethren were usually buried in the Conventual church, but also at St. Anthony, according to each person's will; at some point the choice of the latter cemetery was more desirable, because of the absolution *a pena et a culpa* that was granted to it. Pilgrims would also find their ultimate resting place at St. Anthony. Hermann von Wartensleben, one of the pilgrims in the group traveling with Dietrich von Schachten, died on the return trip from the Holy Land on October 9th, 1491, and was buried at St. Anthony; this was also the case for Christoph von Bayern, who died on August 15th, 1493, as reported by Heinrich von Zedlitz (1493), Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495)—who adds that many other pilgrims lie there, Alexander, Count Palatine of Zweibrücken (1495), Peter Rindfleisch (1496), Arnold von Harff (1497), and Bernhard von Hirschfeld (1517).⁹¹

The information that can be deduced concerning the material aspects of the church derives from a few pilgrims' reports and some depictions of the town, mainly from the 15th and 16th centuries. Nicola de Martoni is again the one who provides the most detailed report on the site, describing a vaulted church and a large courtyard with 51 arched tombs along its perimeter, which

88 To support this hypothesis, it would be interesting to note the differences among the manuscript illuminations of Caoursin ca. 1483, Paris, Ms. Lat. 6067, ff. 18r, 30v, 32r, 37v, 48v. These depictions of the town and of the port of Mandraki, chronologically sequenced in different stages of the siege, provide two versions of the building: one where it appears standing fully (in the first three illuminations), and one where it is ruined (in the latter two).

89 The decision was taken on October 25th, 1481; see Gabriel 1923, 211; Bosio 1630, 435. The pilgrim Dietrich von Schachten (1491) also attests the reconstruction by Aubusson, and Arnold von Harff (1497) adds that the church was small (*kleyn*); Röhricht and Meisner 1880b, 217; von Groote 1860, 71.

90 "[...] in quibus non sePELLIuntur nisi fratres dicti ordinis," Piccirillo 2003, 26.

91 Röhricht and Meisner 1880a, 297–298; Röhricht and Meisner 1880b, 216–217; Reinhold Röhricht 1894, 289–290; Gebele 1932–1933, 114; Karbach 1997, 91; Röhricht and Meisner 1880c, 340; von Groote 1860, 71; von Minckwitz 1856, 101–102.



FIGURE 69 Salerno Cathedral, view from the west

he compares to the church of San Matteo in his native Carinola.⁹² It is possible that he was hinting at the Romanesque cathedral of Salerno dedicated to St. Matthew and specifically to its characteristic, vast atrium surrounded by a gallery with semicircular arches resting on 28 granite columns and four corner pillars (Fig. 69).⁹³ Concerning the dimensions of the church before 1481, it must have been small, since it would be rather contradictory to think that

92 “Extra civitatem, est ecclesia Sancti Antonii subdita dicto ordini Sancti Johannis, constructa ad lamiam, cum magno cortilio, quasi unius modii, clauso ad portam. Et in circuytu muri dicti cortilii, sunt LI sepulture ad arcus et lamias sicut sunt ille de Sancto Matheo de Caleno, in quibus non seppelliuntur nisi fratres dicti ordinis;” Piccirillo 2003, 26. Luttrell estimates that the courtyard would have measured approximately 35 × 35 meters; Luttrell 2001, 142.

93 De Onofrio and Pace 1981, 269–289.

the lavish building by Aubusson would have been smaller than the previously existing one.⁹⁴

The surviving depictions in late medieval maps are generally not reliable in their schematic depictions; in some cases, though, they prove to be quite useful in the quest for clues concerning the materiality of the edifice. In one of the manuscripts of Cristoforo Buondelmonti's *Liber Insularum Archipelagi* (1420), St. Anthony is depicted in the abstract way used for the other monuments as well—except for St. Stephen, which is the only church depicted with a dome (Fig. 70). However, in the numerous illuminations of the city of Rhodes during the siege of 1480 from Guillaume Caoursin's manuscript in Paris, namely in the ones depicting a bird's-eye view of the town and the port of Mandraki in different stages of the siege, the church is shown as a domed construction with a tripartite division, as seen from the east (Figs. 65a, 65b). If this were the main church building, it would in reality have been a rotunda. On the other hand, in the woodcut from the first German edition (1486) of Bernhard von Breydenbach's work, in which the panoramic view of Rhodes depicts the town after the siege and the destructive earthquake that followed in 1481 (the tower of St. Nicholas, the fortifications, and the palace of the Grand Master show visible signs of damage), the site of St. Anthony's church and its cemetery is depicted in a fragmentary manner (Fig. 71). It is as if only parts of the complex have been portrayed: some tomb slabs and a gable-roofed building on the east side are visible, possibly the church. In the west and north parts of the cemetery, there is a series of, respectively, three and seven constructions with gabled arches, perhaps the remnants of the 51 tombs seen by Nicola de Martoni. The same type of building, only enlarged with two annexes, appears in the illuminated manuscript of Conrad Grünenberg (Fig. 72).

It should be noted that the extent to which one can rely, even at a basic level, on this type of depiction is rather problematic, as can clearly be demonstrated in the case of Henricus Martellus Germanus' *Insularium illustratum*. In the first map, in which the entire island of Rhodes is illustrated, St. Anthony is essentially shown as a single-nave domed basilica (Fig. 73a), while in the second, close-up depiction of the town it is shown as a rotunda (Fig. 73b). In conclusion, no positive affirmation can be expressed concerning the plan, appearance, or other material aspects of the church.

94 See note 89 above.



FIGURE 70 Map of Rhodes, 15th century, manuscript illumination

2.2 *Cultic Phenomena*

The church had a miraculous image or figure of St. Anthony, *quedam figura sancti Antonii*, but it cannot be certain whether this was an icon or a statue.⁹⁵ It bore miraculous properties, attested to by Nicola de Martoni (1394), who narrates that a man, driven by a diabolical spirit, had attacked the image of the saint with a lance, leaving a mark on its face that was still visible in his

95 Bacci 1998, 201.

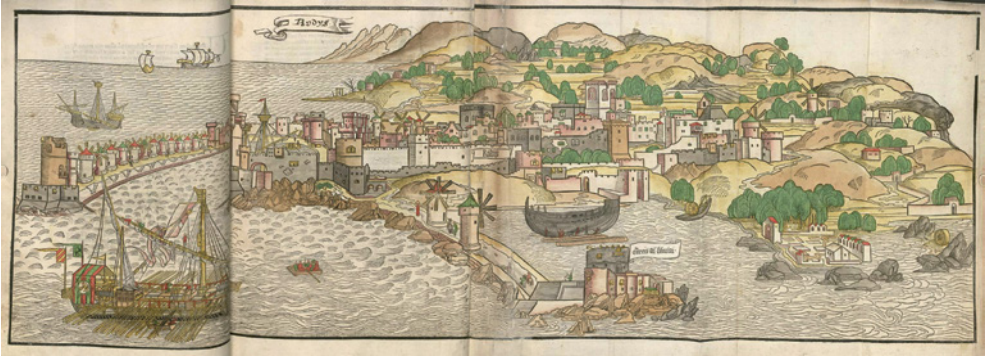


FIGURE 71 Erhard Reuwich, Rhodes, 1486, woodcut



FIGURE 72 Map of Rhodes, ca. 1487, manuscript illumination. Karlsruhe, Cod. St. Peter pap. 32



FIGURE 73A Map of Rhodes, ca. 1470, manuscript illumination. London, Add MS 15760, f. 12v



FIGURE 73B Map of Rhodes, ca. 1470, manuscript illumination. London, Add MS 15760, f. 13r

day. Immediately after this blasphemous act, the attacker was struck with “St. Anthony’s fire,” and, his body burning like a piece of wood, he rushed into the sea only to suffer even more.⁹⁶ In remembrance of the miracle, the image of the saint, apart from the mark on its face, had the iron part of the lance hanging in front of it. The description reveals that its miraculous powers were well-known, evidenced by the presence of many silver and ship-shaped *ex votos* and candles.⁹⁷

It is of interest that a miraculous image of St. Anthony was transported to Malta with the Knights, as is testified by a 17th-century document mentioning “la santa e miracolosa imagine di Santo Antonio, che fu portata da Rodi.” More specifically, it was decided in 1603 to transfer the miraculous image of St. Anthony, which had arrived in Malta from Rhodes, from the *borgo* to the *collachium*, to the church in the vicinity of the *auberge* of Provence.⁹⁸ Perhaps this was the Baroque church of Our Lady of Victory, the first building erected in the newly founded city of Valletta in 1566 (the city’s foundation stone is purported to be located within it), commemorating victory during the Ottoman “Great Siege” of 1565. In 1617 it was made a parish of the Order and was dedicated to St. Anthony the Abbot; thus the presence of the miraculous image

96 St. Anthony had been associated with the disease ergotism—erysipelas, regarded as the same in the Middle Ages; his patronage, and especially contact with his relics, would provide a cure. The disease was known as *ignis sacer*, or St. Anthony’s fire, and its symptoms were also interpreted as demonic possession. When the relics of the saint were taken to La-Motte-Saint-Didier in France, their powers over the disease were so great that a hospital was set up for the benefit of the people afflicted with the illness by the Hospital Brothers of St. Anthony, or Order of St. Anthony, founded in 1095 by a nobleman of the Dauphiné whose son had been miraculously cured. Pope Urban 11 designated Anthony as the saint against the disease. See Butler 1886, 175–176, esp. note †; Sebastian 1999, “Ergotism,” “St Anthony’s Fire;” Farmer 2011. On the late medieval worship and iconography of the saint, see Fenelli 2011.

97 “De sancto Antonio et ejus miraculo Est in dicta ecclesia Sancti Antonii quedam figura sancti Antonii de qua magnum recitatur miraculum: quod quidam spiritu diabolico instigatus dedit cum quadam lancea et percussit dictam figuram in faciem, cujus ictus vulnus adhuc apparet in facie dicte figure. Et statim, dato dicto ictu, accensus fuit ingne beati Antonii, ita quod ardebat corpus suum sicut si fuisset lignum, et ille infelix peccator videns se sic accensus projecit se in mare, quod erat prope, ut ignis extingueretur, quo projecto tanto plus ardebat corpus suum in mare, et statim totum suum corpus fuit mirabiliter combustum. Ferrum dicte lancee stat suspensum ancte (ante) dictam beatam figuram, et multe ymagines argentee et multa alia vota navium et cerei sunt in dicta ecclesia;” Piccirillo 2003, 28.

98 Mdina, ACM Misc. 611, f. 59r. The manuscript is dated 1690, under the Master Adrien de Wignacourt (1690–1697) and provides a copy of the original deliberation of the chapter general of the year 1609.

there would be fitting.⁹⁹ Currently, in the apse that was enlarged in 1699 there are two icons flanking the titular painting of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin behind the main altar: one with St. Anthony the Abbot and the other with St. Anthony of Padua (Figs. 74a, 74b).¹⁰⁰ These two works are said to have come from Rhodes and were taken to the church on July 16th, 1617, previously having been kept at St. Anthony in the *borgio*.¹⁰¹ It would be rather unfounded to suppose that this icon of St. Anthony the Abbot could be the one mentioned in the document of 1603, since its treatment does not fit with the established practices associated with miraculous icons, especially as far as its location in the church and, thus, its accessibility are concerned.

The Master Villeneuve's initial decision to be buried in St. Anthony's cemetery seems to have been linked with another miracle, one concerning a drowning chaplain.¹⁰² In 1346, invoking the many miracles in the church, Pope Clement VI granted indulgences for visitors "in the cemetery in which deceased *fratres* and *pauperes* of the hospital are buried."¹⁰³ As a result, the pilgrims visiting Rhodes made use of this opportunity: in 1418 Nompar de Caumont reported that absolution à *peyne et coupe* [from punishment and guilt] was granted to pious visitors every week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, which is why, he admits, he went many times to hear the mass.¹⁰⁴ Later on, this would also serve as an opportunity for some pilgrims to visit the tombs of friends or relatives, fellow pilgrims of the past years.

The miracles at the church seem to have been connected not only to the aforementioned image, but also to the site itself. The indulgences granted had surely added to the sanctity of the church's space and must have been gradually further transposed to the buried themselves. When the pilgrim Georges Lengherand visited the town in 1485, he was informed of many miracles and referred to a wondrous event concerning a Knight who had been killed during the Ottoman siege of 1480. Because of the presence of the Ottomans around St. Anthony, the Knight was entombed in one of the Greek churches of the town; but a year after his passing, when he was exhumed so as to be transported to

99 Ferris 1866, 185–190; Thake 1995; webpage of the National Trust of Malta: www.ourladyofvictory.org.mt/page01.html; National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands: culture.gov.mt/en/culturalheritage/NICPMI_Database/00035.pdf, both accessed October 21st, 2019.

100 Close examination of the icons was not possible, as access to the altar was limited when the author visited Valletta in autumn 2016.

101 Ferris 1866, 186–187.

102 Luttrell 2003b, 183.

103 Idem, 182.

104 La Grange 1858, 83.



FIGURE 74A St. Anthony the Abbot, church of Our Lady of Victory, Valletta



FIGURE 74B St. Anthony of Padua, church of Our Lady of Victory, Valletta

St. Anthony, his corpse was found unchanged, with no signs of decomposition and with the marks of his wounds the same as the day he had died.¹⁰⁵ The incorruptibility of bodies as a strong indicator of sanctity was a widespread notion in the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁶ However, this legendary tale could hint at a possible popular belief in Rhodes concerning the cemetery's role in the brethren's afterlife: it would have served as their sole, proper, and ultimate resting place; and as the dead Knight's body could not undergo the stage of physical decomposition, his soul would have remained in suspense as well, unless he was transferred to St. Anthony.¹⁰⁷

The non-decomposition of the body cannot but bring to mind—by contrast—the quality of the Jerusalem Akeldama, which consumed corpses in just a few days,¹⁰⁸ even more so because Akeldama was the burial ground of pilgrims from the late 6th century and had been granted to the Hospitallers in 1143 by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, William of Malines.¹⁰⁹ Until 1187, when Saladin took Jerusalem, the Order was responsible for the burial of the sick and the pilgrims at the site's charnel pit, which continued to serve as the burial site for the Christians of Jerusalem after the fall of the city. The site was included as a station in the pilgrim itineraries, and in the 14th century indulgences were granted to its visitors, who recited prayers for the people buried there.¹¹⁰ It could be that the burial site's miraculous power was still echoing in the Rhodian setting of the Order's cemetery, St. Anthony, and resulting in the abovementioned—and probably other—stories. Besides, by the 15th century, the concept of earth being transferred from Akeldama to other burial sites, which were subsequently imbued with its properties, seems to have been well-established.¹¹¹ There are no clues of such a practice at Rhodes, but it cannot be excluded that the role of the Hospitallers as former custodians of Akeldama could by then have been deemed sufficient for such a connection.

105 Godefroy-Méniglaise 1861, 106.

106 Angenendt 1991, 320–348.

107 It is worth mentioning that this notion, concerning the tie between the body not being properly decomposed and the soul being imprisoned in an intermediate state, would later be found in the popular beliefs concerning revenants or vampires. See, for example, the cases of the Balkans and Greece during the modern period; Danforth 1982, 36–37; Barber 1988; Čajkanović 1998, 72–84; du Boulay 1998, 85–108.

108 Bodner 2015, 74–93; Bacci 2017a, 135.

109 Riley-Smith 2012, 76–77.

110 Donkin 2017, 112.

111 For example in the Campo Santo Teutonico in Rome, in the Camposanto in Pisa, and in Nicosia; idem, 109–126.

In conclusion, it seems that the church of St. Anthony was invested with particular cultic meaning during the Hospitaller period at least from the late 14th century, a result directly related with the image it held, the indulgences granted, its use as the brethren's and pilgrims' cemetery, and the interconnection of these factors with the miracles performed. From this point of view, it cannot be excluded that the aforementioned Gothic silver-gilt reliquary with relics of the saint and the arms of the Master Jean de Lastic (1437–1454), which was taken from Rhodes to Malta and was still present there in the 18th century, could at some time have been kept in this church.

3 St. John the Baptist *de Fonte*

The church of St. John the Baptist *de Fonte* (*Sanctus Johannes Baptiste de Fonte, Saint-Jehan-de-la-Fontaine, Άγιος Ιωάννης της Πηγής*) is possibly located at the site of an underground crypt in Venetokleon St., in the southeastern part of the town outside the walls, around 450 meters south of the Acandia Gate and 800 meters southeast of the Gate of St. John, which perhaps took its name from this church.¹¹² Its location is stated in Hospitaller documents of 1427 as outside the walls, *extra menia civitatis nostre Rhodi situata*.¹¹³ The area comprised the quarter of St. George, and the specific neighborhood was called in modern times “Panogiannia” (from *Πανωγιαννιά*, a word meaning more or less “upper St. John”).¹¹⁴

According to an anonymous German pilgrim traveling in 1444, the church was located in the middle of a garden, the most beautiful he had ever seen.¹¹⁵ Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478) and Jacob Kreyneck (1479) are more specific, stating that it lies near the garden of the Grand Master, known as “paradise.”¹¹⁶

112 Manoussou-Ntella 2014, 301–332; Manoussou-Ntella 2013, 62.

113 Tsirpanlis 1995, 106, 240; Hattersley-Smith 2000, 495.

114 Papachristodoulou 1972, 300. Papachristodoulou does not identify St. John *de Fonte* with the underground chapel; instead he thinks that the former had been a large church that was not extant and that the latter had been called Panogiannia (upper St. John) as compared to the bigger church. It seems, though, that the crypt could have been part of the larger edifice.

115 “Item Rodis hat die aller schonsten garten, die ich al mein tag nie gesechen hab, von allerlai frucht, der man sich getengen mag; daz sprich zo warhait. vnd leid ain kirch bei miten in den gerten, die hoset sant Johans kirch, des tefers, vnd ist ain prun jn der kirchen, da ist sant Johanes haubt jn funden worden;” Birlinger 1867, 302–303.

116 “Est prope ortus magnus dominorum, qui dicitur paradisus;” Hartmann 2004, 110. “Niet ver vandaar ligt een boomgaard, die eigendom is van de Heren van Rodys, en die heet ‘het



FIGURE 75A St. John the Baptist *de Fonte*, Rhodes. View to the east

This must not have been the garden that lay on the north side, on top of the palace's bastion,¹¹⁷ to the northwest of the city, since the underground chapel perhaps identified with the church is at the southeast; but the reference could point to other properties of the Master. The scarcity of material and textual evidence does not allow further hypotheses, and the indication *FONDO* in one of Cristoforo Buondelmonti's maps (Fig. 70) points to the castle of Afandou.¹¹⁸

The present-day crypt in Venetokleon St. is covered with a barrel vault, and the spring with holy water is at its north wall (Figs. 75a, 75b, 75c, 75d). At the beginning of the 20th century it was recorded that there were remains of wall paintings depicting St. John the Baptist holding a banner with the inscription, in Gothic script, *Ecce agnus dei ecce qui tollis peccata mundi*;¹¹⁹ the walls are currently covered with white paint. The crypt had perhaps been part of a large Early Christian basilica¹²⁰ and has been thought to have been linked to a tradition already existing before the Knights arrived on Rhodes.¹²¹

Paradijs';" Gaspar 2013, 8–9.

117 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2004, 239, 247, 250.

118 Heslop 2017, 177–198.

119 De Belabre 1908, 80; Gabriel 1923, 211.

120 Manoussou-Ntella 2014, 62.

121 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 161–162.



FIGURE 75B St. John the Baptist *de Fonte*, Rhodes. View to the west



FIGURE 75C St. John the Baptist *de Fonte*, Rhodes. Spring with holy water



FIGURE 75D St. John the Baptist *de Fonte*, Rhodes. Western entrance

It is not listed in the group of 19 churches outside the walls that were demolished in 1481 so as not to be used by the enemy in a possible upcoming attack, as had happened in the siege of 1480.¹²² Perhaps this indicates that the edifice had already been destroyed during the siege and that the small crypt that remained was not considered worthy of further attention, since the chapel was still in use in 1495, according to Wolfgang Zillenhart.¹²³

A late 15th-century register found in the Archives of the Order in Malta, which lists the establishment of chapels and perpetual masses by various masters and other people at Rhodes, indicates that St. John *de Fonte* was founded and endowed by Dragonetto Clavelli: “Cappella Sancti Joannis de fonte fundata per dominum dragonono clavelli prout retulit frater.”¹²⁴ The source of this information is an unknown brother of the Order with a note that the foundation document was not found—“fundatio non est inventa”—which may lead to doubts concerning the credibility of the report.¹²⁵ There is no clear evidence as to whether Clavelli was a Latin or a Greek; both have been supported, but, bearing in mind his position as procurator of the Master and vassal of the Order, it seems clear that the former or even a mixed identity seems more likely. It is evident that he was not Orthodox—he was married to Agnese Crispo, daughter of Francesco I, Duke of the Archipelago, and was buried at the Augustinian church in the town, where he commissioned his funerary chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas; he died in 1415.¹²⁶

The issue of Clavelli’s identity proves to be of importance, since it would enable an understanding of the cultic character of the monument. If the frescoes in St. John *de Fonte* had been executed under his patronage, this would explain the inscriptions in Latin. From the pilgrim’s point of view, the church belonged to the Greek rite, but Latins could also celebrate mass there, as reported in 1418¹²⁷ and 1479,¹²⁸ this would most probably mean that in their eyes the church seemed Greek. This corroborates the hypothesis that, if Clavelli did found the

122 Bosio 1630, 431–432.

123 “Item an dem anderen ortt der statt ligt ain cappell haist zu sant Johans, da ist ain prun, jn sol für das fieber sein;” Gebele, “Die Pilgerreise,” 114.

124 Valletta, AOM 53, 32v (11v).

125 Luttrell and O’Malley 2019, 60, note 68.

126 Luttrell 1989, 11, with bibliography; Luttrell 1992b, 218, note 143. Tsirpanlis seems certain that Clavelli was Greek; Tsirpanlis 1991, 331–335; Tsirpanlis 1995, 81–83, 248–249. Concerning his funerary chapel, see Ntellas 2000a, 50–53.

127 “[...] en laquelle chapelle ha de grans pardons, he je y estoie le reste de saint Jehan décollacé et là fis chanter messe et si ay-je esté depuis; et celle chapelle tiennent les Grexs;” La Grange 1858, 82.

128 “[...] een Grieks-orthodoxe kerk;” Gaspar 2013, 8–9.

chapel at some point before his death, it must have been part of or replaced an Orthodox edifice. As a Latin he could have endowed a chaplaincy in a Greek church to attract pilgrims and revenues.

The affairs of the church were regulated by the Hospitallers, as was the case with the Orthodox institutions on the island. In 1427 it was granted to the Greek priest (*papa*) Georgios Chiona, along with its houses and gardens, with the obligation on his part to care for and repair the church and its houses, to cultivate its gardens, and to pay 12 Rhodian florins per annum to the Prior of the Conventual church.¹²⁹ The priest was said to have belonged to the family that was traditionally in charge of this church. It was decided that the Prior would appoint a chaplain of the Order to offer mass three times per week, that the candles would be bought at Chiona's expense, and that he would own the contributions of the faithful unless they were silver or jewels, in which case they were to be handed over to the Prior. Nevertheless, in 1430 this decision was annulled, because Chiona left the church; the houses were deserted, the gardens were uncultivated, and, moreover, it was discovered that he had lied when he made his request to the Order. Surely the cultic status of the church was intertwined with the economic aspects resulting from its devotional use. Its popularity must have generated a considerable income from donations, thus attracting the Hospitallers' interest in securing the most valuable ones. At the same time, perhaps Chiona's aspirations were in part opportunistic as well, which would explain why he went so far as to deliver false statements in his effort to obtain the control of the church.

St. John remained under the Order's command. In the years of the Master Giovanni Battista degli Orsini (1467–1476), it was decided to compile an inventory of the properties of the chapels of St. John of the *Collachium*, of St. Anthony, of Our Lady of Phileremos, of St. John *de Fonte*, and of other churches in the jurisdiction of the Convent.¹³⁰ The statute determined that two commissioners would have the task of visiting the sites and all their possessions, of composing inventories, and of investigating whether divine worship was regulated according to the proper and righteous institutions. The specific mention of only these four churches could be interpreted as indicative of their cultic importance, which would be reflected in the properties and the religious practices associated with them; this may be why they appear to be considered as a distinct group in the Hospitallers' record. The Master's care is documented

129 Tsirpanlis 1995, 106, 239–241.

130 “[...] pertinentia capellis ecclesie sancti Ioannis collaci Rhodi et ecclesiis sancti Antonii, nostre domine de Philermo, sancti Ioannis de fonte et omnium aliarum in Rhodo constitutarum iurisdictioni religionis nostre;” *Stabilimenta*, De ecclesia 36.

by two of the objects belonging to the chapel's treasures: a missal bearing the arms of Orsini and a silver chalice with a crucifix on the foot and a paten, donated by an unnamed Grand Master.¹³¹

St. John *de Fonte* was invested with exceptional meaning as, according to legend, when some men dug up a well at the site, they discovered the head of St. John the Baptist, and a spring of water miraculously appeared.¹³² This legend may have been established before the arrival of the Knights on the island; in the 12th century it was thought that Herod had actually built the city of Rhodes and that he went there—apart from Nineveh—after the Baptist's decapitation.¹³³ The discovery of the head of the Baptist at Rhodes was merely a local legend; traditionally, three inventions of the head have been recorded. The first finding had taken place in Jerusalem, where two monks found the head in a pot, after John appeared to them in a vision and instructed them accordingly. The monks met a potter, who left with the head and took it to Emesa. The second encounter was by the monk Markellos at Emesa in the mid-5th century; a church was subsequently built by the bishop of the city, Uranius, to house the relic. Finally, the third discovery took place at Comana in Cappadocia in the mid-9th century, when the head was taken to Constantinople, where it was placed at the Monastery of Stoudios, dedicated to the Baptist.¹³⁴

The existence of the church before 1309 would be, then, connected with the ancient tradition. The sanctuary is not mentioned during the 14th century, but by its end or the beginning of the 15th century it must have become popular among the Latins, as demonstrated by Clavelli's patronage and the pilgrims' reports. Specifically, by 1418 indulgences were granted to its visitors: Nompard de Caumont reports that one could obtain considerable pardons there and that he celebrated mass on the Feast of the Beheading of the Baptist.¹³⁵ Moreover, the water of the spring was holy and thus miraculous: according to Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495–1496) it had the power to cure fever.¹³⁶

131 "Primo calix unus argenti cum patena et crucifix in pede quem dedit prefate capelle reverendissimus dominus cardinalis et magnus magister Rhodi dignissimus [...] Missale unum in pergameno cum armis quondam reverendissimi domini magistri Ursinis;" Valletta, AOM 53, 32v (11v).

132 La Grange 1858, 82; Geisheim 1858, 213; Kamann 1880, 126–127; Birlinger 1867, 302–303; Hartmann 2004, 110; Gaspar 2013, 8–9; Gebele 1932–1933, 114; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 161.

133 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 161, where he sites Benedict of Peterborough; see Stubbs 1867, 198; Torr 1887, 70.

134 For a detailed discussion of the sources, see Du Cange 1665; Maraval 1985, 23–60.

135 La Grange 1858, 82.

136 Gebele 1932–1933, 114.

The church's joint use by Greeks and Latins seems to have emerged from its cultic importance, as evidenced by the testimonies of pilgrims in the 15th century. Shared devotional practices in the Eastern Mediterranean have been recorded, especially concerning places of pilgrimage in rural areas, as well as in urban centers, notably in Cyprus, Euboea, Achaia, and Crete.¹³⁷ Even though there is little documentation for St. John *de Fonte*, it appears that it belonged to an older Orthodox complex and was taken under the care of the Order in the late 14th century or the early 15th. The sources reveal that the Hospitallers did not interfere with the material setting of the church; it was thus recognized as a Greek sanctuary, although there probably was a Latin patron around the beginning of the 15th century. How exactly this convergence was facilitated at this small Rhodian monument cannot be clarified due to the lack of evidence. The dedication to John the Baptist, the patron of the Order, a pre-existing legendary background, and the site's promotion by one of the most powerful men on the island seem to have elevated its potential as another spot in the town's cultic network; the Knights subsequently promoted it successfully to the Western pilgrims who passed by, also taking advantage of its revenues.

4 Our Lady of Victory and St. Pantaleon

4.1 *Historical and Archaeological Investigation*

The Latin church of Our Lady of Victory and the Greek church of St. Pantaleon shared a common history and as such they are treated together. Their story commenced during the important final battle of the Ottoman siege of 1480, when on the morning of July 27th—the feast day of St. Pantaleon—the Ottomans assaulted the town from the already bombarded and mostly collapsed walls of the Italian sector, at the east end of the *borgo*, known as the Jewish quarter. The besieged were caught by surprise, and their response was delayed; but the Master Aubusson and his troops hastened to the walls, where the Ottomans ultimately found themselves confined between the already destroyed fortifications and some new ones that Aubusson had insightfully started building behind the former. The Hospitallers, the natives, and the merchants who participated in the battle fought strongly, and Aubusson was heroically wounded five times. When the banner of the Order with Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. John the Baptist was raised in battle, the Ottomans saw a golden cross in

137 See recently Mersch 2015, 461–484, with bibliography.

the air, along with a shining maiden holding a shield and a spear and a man in peasant garb; they were terrified and fled the battle scene.¹³⁸

To commemorate the event and in gratefulness toward the Virgin, Aubusson commissioned the construction of Our Lady of Victory and St. Pantaleon at the location of the breach.¹³⁹ The miraculous apparition of the Virgin in arms became famous through the account of Guillaume Caoursin, written just after the siege. In 1484 a delegation, in which he himself participated, was sent by the Grand Master to the pope to report the incidents of the siege and the prodigious event. The following year, Innocent VIII issued the *Redemptor Noster* bull, approving the erection of the churches of Our Lady of Victory and St. Pantaleon in memory of the event, as well as of other churches and chapels.¹⁴⁰

For the construction of the churches, Aubusson bought at his own expense many of the Jewish houses in the area that had been destroyed during the attacks, and many other Knights who had taken part in the fight made their own contributions.¹⁴¹ The Grand Master also endowed the churches with properties, ornaments, sacred vessels, and supplies.¹⁴² Moreover, he had an inscription sculpted on top of the entrance door of Our Lady of Victory that related the events and his battle wounds.¹⁴³ This was probably the inscription documented in the Franciscan archives of Neochori in 1743, which read *Ob insignem victoriam de Turcis a coelo Rhodiis demissam ecclesiam Sanctae Mariae de Victoria Petrus Daubusson Magister erexit MCCCCLXXX ab Inc. XII Augusti*.¹⁴⁴ On one of the altars of the church, there was a panel depicting the battle and the miraculous events, probably like the one at Épernay (Fig. 66).¹⁴⁵

The duration of the works is not certain. According to Jehan de Tournai, the construction of the church of the Virgin had just started in 1488, but it was not yet finished in 1491, when Dietrich von Schachten visited the town.¹⁴⁶ When

138 Concerning the siege, see recently and with further bibliography de Vaire and Vissière 2014; Vann and Kagay 2015.

139 Bosio 1630, 506; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 111. This was also mentioned by many pilgrims, as the miracle and Aubusson's commission had become commonly known.

140 Ferraris di Celle 1988, 31–32.

141 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 111–112; Gabriel 1923, 180. According to Jewish sources, it was thanks to the God of Israel that the Ottomans were defeated and d'Audusson built the churches on either side of the synagogue that stood there or in its place; see Kollias 2007, 290–291.

142 Kollias 2007, 290–291.

143 Reported by the English Anonymous (1480–1526) and Jan Hasištejnsky z Lobkovic (1493); Brefeld 1985, 152; Strejček 1902, 45.

144 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 112; Gabriel 1923, 181.

145 Reichert 2005, 164–165.

146 Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 181–182; Röhricht and Meisner 1880b, 184.

the Ottomans attacked Rhodes again, it was deemed necessary to demolish a part of the churches in order to reinforce the inner part of the fortifications, as the Italian sector was the weakest, and the Ottomans launched persistent attacks.¹⁴⁷ In 1743, based on the aforementioned document in the Franciscan archives, the church was more or less standing, with its doors walled.

Aubusson granted the church of Our Lady of Victory to the Franciscans in 1497, along with its chapels and annexes.¹⁴⁸ Paul Walther Guglingen (1481), a German Franciscan, provides insightful information concerning this action; during his stay at Rhodes, he was hosted by the Franciscans, who were installed inside the town in a very small church, St. Mark, which used to be Greek,¹⁴⁹ since their convent outside the walls had been destroyed during the siege. They explained to him that if the Grand Master did not grant them an appropriate space, they would leave for Candia.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the decision of Aubusson ensured their stay in the town.

The Franciscans occupied the church of St. Mark in the *borgo* sometime before 1457 and until 1490;¹⁵¹ as mentioned, until the destructive siege of 1480 they also held a convent outside the walls, dedicated to the Virgin.¹⁵² They were the second missionary order to be installed at Rhodes, as the Augustinians held a convent dedicated to St. Augustine at least since ca. 1317–1320, possibly the one known as dedicated to St. Bernard or St. Bernardin of the Franciscans to the southwest of the *borgo*;¹⁵³ it was mentioned in 1339 and must have become an important Latin church in the town.¹⁵⁴ Burials of Latin pilgrims linked to the mendicants took place at both.¹⁵⁵ In 1494 a fellow traveler of Pietro Casola, the Franciscan Francesco Trivulzio, died during the journey and was buried in front of the altar of Our Lady of Victory.¹⁵⁶ In 1519 the famous humanist Peter

147 Bosio 1630, 691.

148 Tsirpanlis 2012, 233; pilgrims refer to the Franciscans; see Brefeld 1985, 152; Röhricht and Meisner 1880b, 184; Strejček 1902, 45; Muller 2016, 33; de Salignac 1593, 148.

149 The church occupied 17 m²; see Maglio 2016a, 162; Maglio 2016b, 58–59.

150 Sollweck 1892, 87.

151 Luttrell 1992b, 210; Maglio 2016a, 162.

152 See the testimonies of Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) and Jehan de Tournai (1488–1489). According to the former, one of his fellow travelers (a Frenchman who had died on board of the ship) was buried there; Calamai 1993, 75–76; Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 181–182. See also Maglio 2016a, 156.

153 On the dating, see Tsougkarakis 2012, 250–251. Concerning the identification of the Augustinian convent, see Ntellas 2000a, 43–54; Maglio 2016a, 153.

154 Luttrell 2003b, 145, 179.

155 Concerning the Augustinians, see Weller 1586, n.p.; von Minckwitz 1856, 101.

156 Paoletti 2001, 244–245.



FIGURE 76 Unidentified church on Kisthiniou St., Rhodes, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

Falk from Fribourg and the Knight Melchior zur Gilgen from Lucerne were also buried at the site.¹⁵⁷

As far as the identification of the church of Our Lady of Victory is concerned, it was Rottiers who first located it, with the help of a Franciscan friar, at the site of the present anonymous church in Kisthiniou St. (Fig. 76).¹⁵⁸ However, in 1856 Guérin situated it at the northeastern end of the walls, an identification that remained prevalent in the following years (Fig. 55); in the meantime, the anonymous church in Kisthiniou St. had been covered by buildings.¹⁵⁹

In 2004 an archaeological investigation brought to light the remains of the anonymous Greek church on Kisthiniou St. (Fig. 77a).¹⁶⁰ It is a single aisled construction (16.5 × 8 meters) with a pointed vault and an apse on the east side that appears semicircular on the interior and three-sided on the exterior, with

157 Schmid 1957c, 52–53; Bloesch 1929, 39.

158 Rottiers 1830, 35; Rottiers 1828, pl. 52.

159 Guérin 1856, 141; Kollias 2007, 291–292.

160 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2008, 125–127.



FIGURE 77A Unidentified complex in Kisthiniou St., Rhodes. Remains of the Greek church, view from the west



FIGURE 77B Unidentified complex in Kisthiniou St., Rhodes. Remains of the Greek church and the Gothic chapel, view from the northwest

a quadrilateral dome.¹⁶¹ There were two entrances, one at the west and one at the south, and traces of wall paintings of the late 15th century to the early 16th were found. At the sanctuary, a marble slab that had been used as a base for the altar bore on its rear side the arms of the Order and of the Master Fluvia (1421–1437); it seemed clear that it must have been reused years after Fluvia's death.¹⁶² On the northern part there are traces of a medieval staircase leading to the walls; this may have been the one depicted in Caoursin's miniatures, which, however, do not depict the church.¹⁶³

To the north of this building, a funerary chapel (9.5 × 7.5 meters) was revealed and excavated (Fig. 77b). It has a three-sided apse, and the floor is paved with terracotta tiles. Two marble tomb slabs were found: one belonging to Martino de Rossca, a Basque who died in 1505; and the second belonging to Johanna de Perier, a noblewoman from Brittany, who died on her way back from her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1493.¹⁶⁴ Further burials were found in the area between the chapel and the Orthodox church, nine in total.¹⁶⁵

The Gothic church to which this chapel belonged should lie to its north, but the pending expropriation of the site has delayed the excavation works. The aforementioned evidence, though, has led to the conclusion that this complex most possibly corresponds to Our Lady of Victory and St. Pantaleon (Figs. 78a, 78b).¹⁶⁶ Many issues exist that cannot be resolved without extensive excavations. Archival evidence documents two chapels on the south side of the church, one dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin and the other to St. Pantaleon, a setting that would be in line with the plan that has been worked out if not for their size, since St. Pantaleon is mentioned as the smaller one; moreover, there was a third chapel in another part of the building.¹⁶⁷ Should the excavations also reveal the burial of Francesco Trivulzio, the identification would become certain.

4.2 *Cultic Phenomena*

The churches of Our Lady of Victory and St. Pantaleon are both mentioned by pilgrims in reference to the miraculous intervention of the Virgin that secured victory over the Ottomans. These sanctuaries ultimately served as the memorial site of the prodigious event and, consequently, of the Virgin's powers. In

161 Ibid.; Kollias 2007, 293–294.

162 Kollias 2007, 293–294.

163 Ibid.; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 146.

164 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2008, 126; Kasdagli and Katsou 2007, 90–100.

165 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2008, 126–127.

166 Kollias 2007, 295; de Vaire 2009b, 377–380; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 143–148; Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2019, 157–159.

167 Tsirpanlis 2012, 233.

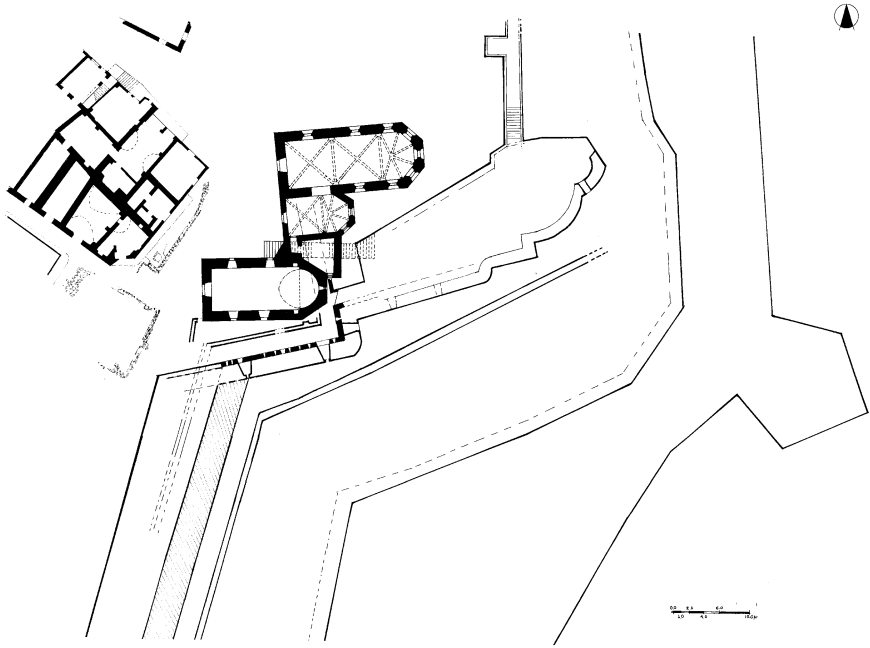


FIGURE 78A Unidentified complex on Kisthiniou St, Rhodes. Plan

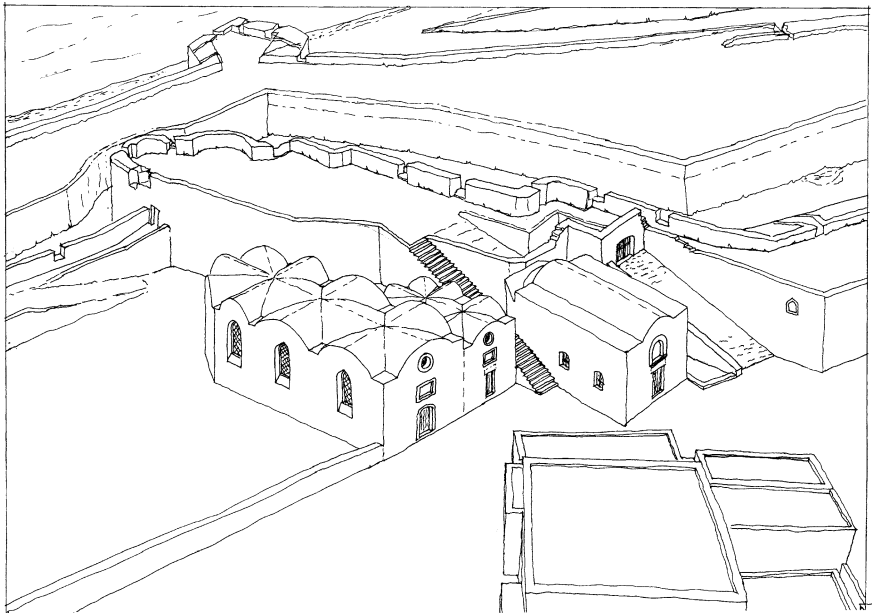


FIGURE 78B Unidentified complex on Kisthiniou St, Rhodes. Graphic reconstruction

this way, the church of Our Lady of Victory constituted a material expression of Marian devotion that was foremost centered on the Virgin of Phileremos, an expression that, on this occasion, celebrated the Madonna as the shield of the city and the guarantor of victory. The church's donor, Master Aubusson, demonstrated his fervent devotion to the Virgin on numerous occasions, this being one of the most memorable ones.¹⁶⁸

According to the German pilgrim Dietrich von Schachten (1491), there was a copy of the Holy Sepulchre at this church and not at the church of St. Catherine's hospice, as mentioned by Barthélemy de Salignac.¹⁶⁹ As if two different testimonies were not enough, Jehan de Tournai (1488–1489) situates the copy at the Augustinian cloister.¹⁷⁰ It is difficult to reach a conclusion. In the case of Jehan de Tournai, he admits not having seen the copy. Could it then be supposed that he was misinformed? Since no other evidence concerning such a construction is available, the only concrete information that arises is that such a setting existed at least in 1488. Again, it cannot be taken for granted that the pilgrims are referring to the same structure.

Hypothetically, the construction of a copy of the Holy Sepulchre at a Franciscan church would seem very befitting, due to the role of the friars as Custodians of the Holy Land and their part in the establishment of the Way of the Cross.¹⁷¹ Moreover, in 1497, the year that Master Aubusson granted Our Lady of Victory to the Franciscans, he also made a tribute to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: he began to subsidize the friars at the Holy Sepulchre annually, so that they would celebrate a service every week in favour of his longevity and his memory, after his death, as well as for the salvation of the Order.¹⁷² This fact, along with the prominent position of Our Lady of Victory on the axis of the eastern end of the central road coming from the port, which passed along

168 Enduring indications of his piety are found at Phileremos and Lindos, where his coats of arms are preserved in the churches dedicated to the Virgin. Apart from his commissions at Phileremos, he also secured the incomes for the priests of the Virgin of Lindos and the Virgin of Apollona, with the obligation, on their part, to perform a funeral service on the day of his death, to celebrate the mass every year on the anniversary of his death, and to pray for his soul on their feast days; see *idem*, 235. The church of the Holy Cross at Apollona has a silver revetment bearing the arms of Aubusson that is now covering a 17th-century icon of the Virgin with Child; Phillips 2013, 16–17.

169 Röhrich and Meisner 188ob, 184. The question of the existence of a copy of the Sepulchre and its connection with a possible Rhodian Way of the Cross has already been investigated above. The aim here is to deal with the contradictory sources concerning its location.

170 Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 182.

171 See note 63, p. 157, and note 77, p. 161, above.

172 Tsirpanlis 2012, 233–234.

the complex of St. Catherine's hospice, supports Dietrich von Schachten's version.¹⁷³

Another possible clue relating to a Rhodian copy of the Holy Sepulchre is the information that in 1493 Emery d'Amboise, while serving as the Prior of France, built an oratory at the Paris Temple in imitation of the Jerusalem Sepulchre.¹⁷⁴ This information was delivered by Bosio, who adds that the royal family, the court, and the people of Paris frequented it, "being a curious and most devout thing."¹⁷⁵ Could Emery d'Amboise have been inspired by the Rhodian copy or perhaps commissioned one at Rhodes too? Whatever the case, the Rhodian copy of the Holy Sepulchre would have been erected on the outskirts of the *borgo*, and its possible connection with a Way of the Cross would have transformed its site into a basic element of a topographical and evocative mimesis of Jerusalem. Its noteworthiness is attested by the distinct, although scant, references delivered by pilgrims.

A final piece of information concerning the cultic phenomena connected with Our Lady of Victory is the report from Ottheinrich, Pfalzgraf bei Rhein (1521), concerning the German captain Betz von Lichtenberg. He died during the decisive battle of 1480 at the breach in the Italian sector and was consequently buried in an unknown location. However, his body did not show signs of putrefaction; it was only when his corpse was transferred to his place of death, obviously at the recently built church, that it decomposed, a fact that inspired the attribution of saintly qualities to the captain.¹⁷⁶

173 Manoussou-Ntella and Ntellas 2018, 146.

174 Bosio 1630, 512. See also Viollet-Le-Duc 1868, 14; Richard Krautheimer 1942, 10. It existed until the 18th century.

175 Bosio 1630, 512: "come cosa curiosa, e molto divota."

176 Reichert 2005, 166–167. This story cannot but bring to mind the one concerning the soldier whose corpse finally decomposed when buried at St. Anthony; see p. 176 above.

Our Lady of Phileremos

1 Historical and Archaeological Investigation

The shrine of the Virgin on the mountain of Phileremos lies around ten kilometers southwest of the town of Rhodes, on the top of a hill overlooking the northwestern shore and the present-day village of Ialyssos/Trianda. At an altitude of 267 meters, the area served as an ideal observatory for the maritime traffic of ships (Fig. 79). From the town of Rhodes, the main road accessing Phileremos passed inland, although a coastal road was in use as well: in 1488 Jehan de Tournai followed a path along the coast that turned toward the mountain at some point.¹



FIGURE 79 View toward the sea from Mt. Phileremos

1 Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 271. The inland road is attested in 1409; see Luttrell 2020, 125; Ferraris di Celle 1988, 79–80.

The Hospitaller sanctuary is located at the site of the acropolis of the ancient city of Ialysos, the oldest city on the island, which had been inhabited continually at least since the Geometric era. Excavations and restorations of some of the monuments were conducted by the Italian Archaeological School between the years 1914–1936.² The sanctuary stands on a layer of constructions all invested with religious purposes: a 10th-century single-aisled Byzantine church, a three-aisled Early Christian basilica, and the Hellenistic temple of Athena Polias and Zeus Polieus, an earlier classical temple and a sanctuary from the Geometric age.

After the establishment of Rhodes town in the 5th century BCE, the city of Ialysos declined and was reduced to a town. During the Byzantine era, its history evolved along with that of the island; in theory it belonged to the Byzantine Empire, but in reality its control fell into the hands of various rulers: Greeks, Venetians, Genoese, Ottomans.³ In the 13th century the site of the Phileremos still had a castle, a church, and a monastery.⁴

On November 11th, 1306, the Hospitallers occupied the castle after prevailing over 300 Ottomans who were garrisoned there, with the help of a Greek traitor.⁵ Subsequently, the area stayed uninhabited; in 1342 Manuel Angelos describes that only remnants of the ancient site remained. Nevertheless, there must have been a cultic focus on the site before ca. 1367, when, possibly, the small underground church known in modern times as St. George Chostos, which lies at the northwest of the Latin Phileremos church, was decorated with frescoes, as the existence of a cultic milieu would partly justify the choice of a donor to commission these works there.⁶ This conclusion is corroborated by the first pilgrim account about the site by Ogier d'Anglure (1396), who attests the presence of a

2 Livadiotti and Rocco 1996, 40–46, 261–270.

3 Papachristodoulou 1972, 241–265.

4 Livadiotti and Rocco 1996, 269–270; Gallas 1985, 230–231.

5 Luttrell 1997a, 748; Luttrell 2003b, 193–195.

6 Even though the heraldic evidence is clear, the dating has been debated. Apart from the stylistic considerations that are hindered by the poor state of preservation of the murals, the identification of the coat of arms of the group of kneeling knights depicted on the south wall has been a matter of disagreement. The arms belong to the Nantouillet family; the patron of the murals was Regnault Nantouillet, who stayed for a while on Rhodes while traveling to Cyprus in order to participate in the military campaigns of Peter of Cyprus against Alexandria in 1367; see Gallas 1985, 232; Kasdagli 1988, 20; de Vaivre 2004, 919–943; Bacci 2017b, 112–115. This dating is supported iconographically as well, especially concerning the paintings of the side walls. On the other hand, the arms have been identified with those of Pierre d'Aubusson, thus shifting the date to the late 15th–early 16th century, which perhaps better fits stylistic elements that ascribe some of the depicted scenes in the church to this period; see Sommi Picenardi 1900, 212; Kollias 2005, fig. 68; Christoforaki 2000, 455.

small church with two hermits, probably alluding to Greeks, and an icon that is revered by all the inhabitants of the island, “Hospitallers, Greeks, and other merchants,” evidence revealing that the cult of the Virgin, as well as of the icon, was already well-rooted at Phileremos.⁷ Moreover, Ogier d’Anglure adds that the place was not inhabited, as also attested in 1418 by Nompars de Caumont, who describes the area in ruins, with only a chapel of the Virgin and the castle on site.⁸

There was a castellany in 1314, a castellan mentioned in 1329, and a castle in 1347.⁹ Information concerning the church edifice is lacking, but it is certain that it remained active during the 14th century. The Order gradually established its presence at the sanctuary. In 1404 the Hospitaller priest Johannes Tensac served a chaplaincy,¹⁰ and another chaplaincy in the church of St. Mary of Phileremos was founded by the Master Philibert de Naillac (1396–1421) in 1421.¹¹ In 1476, apart from the church, there was only a *hosteria* for the visiting pilgrims, which is described in 1488 as very beautiful and with very good Malvasia wine.¹² In 1494 it was run by the German Hospitaller Hans Wägner.¹³ Almost a century after Ogier d’Anglure’s visit, in 1495, there appear to have been four priests serving the church,¹⁴ and in 1497 the Master Aubusson set up a choir of four chaplains, who would offer their services exclusively in honor of the icon.¹⁵

The archaeological evidence points to three construction phases during the Hospitaller period, which may reflect the progression of the Order’s actions toward the appropriation of the sanctuary (Figs. 80a, 80b). The first phase has been dated to the first or second half of the 14th century: it consists of a single-aisled chapel with four ribbed cross-vaults and a five-sided sanctuary apse with a rib vault.¹⁶ This was situated on top of the pre-existing north aisle of the Early Christian church. In the second phase, around 1450–1480, two six-sided chapels were added outside of two of the apse’s sides, also roofed with rib vaults.¹⁷ One of these may have been the chapel that Fr. Antonio Morosini,

7 Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 91–93.

8 La Grange 1858, 82.

9 Luttrell 2020, 120.

10 Luttrell 1992b, 211; Luttrell and O’Malley 2019, 253.

11 Buhagiar 2017 2017, 66–67; Luttrell and O’Malley 2019, 276–278.

12 “une très belle taverne où je bus de la très bonne malvoisie;” Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 272; Calamai 1993, 76–77, 129–130.

13 Fouquet, Delfs, and Henopp 2007, 236.

14 Gebele 1932–1933, 83.

15 Tsirpanlis 2012, 221, 224.

16 Balducci 1931, 38, 45–47; Rocco 1996, 261.

17 Balducci 1931, 43–45.

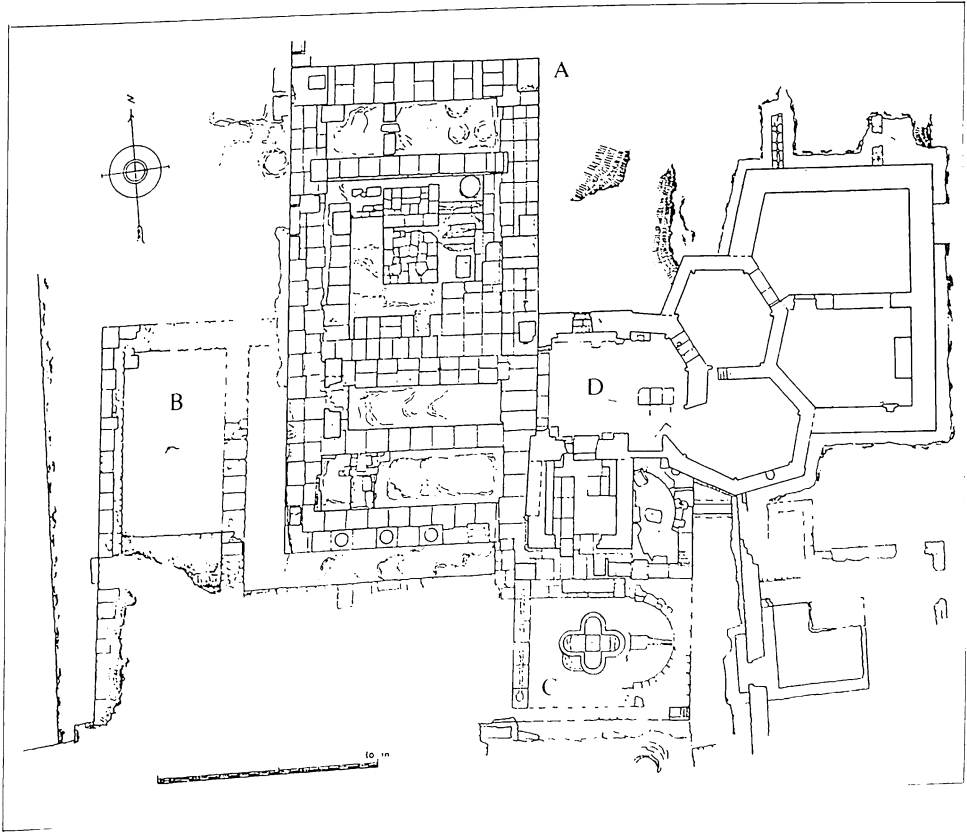


FIGURE 80A Plan depicting the construction phases at the site of the Phileremos' sanctuary, as drawn by Balducci, 1931

commander of Treviso and lieutenant of the Admiral, was licensed to build in 1439.¹⁸ All of the above were fallen when the restoration by the Italian architect Rodolfo Petracco took place in 1931–1935.¹⁹

After the Ottoman siege of 1480 and an earthquake in 1481, the Master Pierre d'Aubusson restored and enlarged the church edifice, in 1489.²⁰ This third phase mainly consisted of the addition of two parallel chapels with ribbed cross-vaults, on the east side of the previously built hexagonal ones (Figs. 81a, 81b). The depictions by Rottiers attest that in the mid-19th century there was a much larger part of the sanctuary standing, including parts of the

18 Luttrell 2020, 122.

19 Rocco 1996, 261–264.

20 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 211, 216.

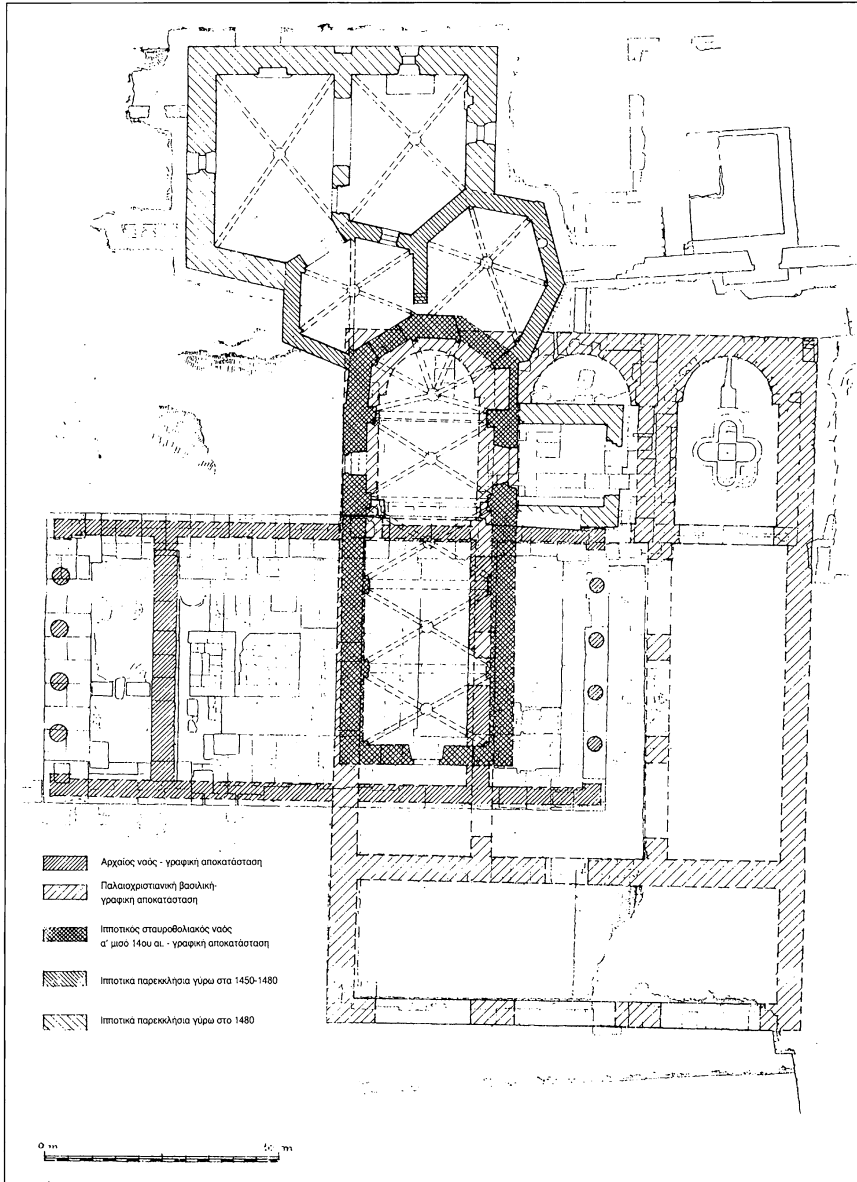


FIGURE 80B Plan depicting the construction phases at the site of the Phileremos' sanctuary, as drawn by Ntellas, 2000



FIGURE 81A The church of Our Lady of Phileremos, with Aubusson's coats of arms visible on the corbels, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

two first phases as well.²¹ Aubusson's chapels, still standing in the early 20th century, were consolidated in 1919 by the Italian army under the supervision of Amedeo Maiuri, an effort that respected the medieval monument (Figs. 82a, 82b).²² Later on, in 1931–1936, as part of extended interventions at the site, the eastern cross vault of the main church, the five-sided apse, and the four chapels were reconstructed, and a bell tower was added at its southeastern side (Figs. 83a, 83b, 83c, 83d). However, these monumental reconstructions were based on inexistent clues, as nothing had remained of the masonry. The result does not seem to have taken into account the material past of the edifice: the works rather followed the style of Fascist architecture of the period.²³ During this restoration, a Franciscan monastery was also erected to the east of the church.

The chapel of St. George Chostos, situated approximately 100 meters to the northwest of the church, is subterranean with a rectangular plan. It does not

21 Rottiers 1828, pls. 58, 60, 67.

22 Rocco 1996, 261–264.

23 Ntellas 2000b, 358–360; Rocco 1996, 263–264.



FIGURE 81B The interior of the church of Phileremos to the east, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck



FIGURE 82A The restoration of Aubusson's chapels in 1919. South side before restoration



FIGURE 82B The restoration of Aubusson's chapels in 1919. South side during restoration



FIGURE 83A The church of the Phileremos, view from the northwest



FIGURE 83B The church of the Phileremos, west entrance



FIGURE 83C The church of the Philereimos, Aubusson's north chapel



FIGURE 83D The church of the Philereimos, Aubusson's south chapel



FIGURE 84A The church known as St. George Chostos, Mt. Phileremos. West entrance

have an apse and is surmounted by a barrel vault (Figs. 84a, 84b). The modern dedication to St. George relied on the identification of the saint in the lower register of the eastern wall and does not seem to correspond to the actual patron saint of the chapel.²⁴ Its iconographical programme is extant on the side walls, the east wall, and the vault. On the south wall it consists of scenes with Knights and supplicants with their patron saints (Fig. 85). On the north wall, a Deesis is depicted at the eastern end, followed by the Archangel Michael stabbing the devil and two supplicants kneeling. Behind them, groups of laymen are shown under the protective mantle of patron figures, some of them female, in the type of the *Mater misericordiae* (Fig. 86). Seven scenes of the life of the Virgin are seen on the south part of the vault and seven episodes of the Passion on the north part. Christ Enthroned with Sts. Peter and Paul, two other saints, and at least one donor are depicted in the lunette of the eastern wall; one is bearded, wears a black robe with the hospital's cross, and kneels in front of the first saint on Christ's left. A second layer of painting that was identified in the

24 Luttrell supports an attribution to the Virgin; Luttrell and O'Malley 2019, 68. Ferraris di Celle writes that according to local legends the cult of the Phileremos emerged in this subterranean church; Ferraris di Celle 1988, 87.



FIGURE 84B The church known as St. George Chostos, Mt. Phileremos. Interior view to the east



FIGURE 85 The church known as St. George Chostos, south wall, detail with knights and their patrons



FIGURE 86 The church known as St. George Chostos, north wall, detail with supplicants and their patrons in the type of the *Mater misericordiae*

lunette was deemed to be contemporary with the overlying one and most likely the result of corrections or alterations made by the painter while working.²⁵ In the lower zone there are: St. George on horseback killing the dragon at the right; a red cross on a white background in the middle; and an unidentifiable scene to the left (Figs. 87a, 87b).²⁶

The paintings, which bear many signs of overpainting, were restored in 1939 by Ricardo de Bacci Venuti, a Florentine painter and restorer.²⁷ Their characteristic mixed, eclectic style, combining Western and Byzantine elements, could be attributed to either a Greek or a Latin master, but the poor state of preservation, due to humidity as well as their retouching, has impeded further analysis.²⁸ The dating of the frescoes has been a matter of discussion.

25 Livadiotti 1996, 266.

26 For an extended treatment of the frescoes, see Ferraris di Celle 1988, 115–147. See also Rottiers 1830, 361–374; Rottiers 1828, pls. 61–66; Schlumberger 1911, 211–216, where he publishes the watercolour drawings of 1860–1870 by the architect Auguste Salzmann; de Vaire 2004, 919–943; Bacci 2017b, 112–115.

27 Livadiotti 1996, 265–266; Ferraris di Celle 1988, 100; de Vaire 2004, 927–928, 934.

28 On the eclectic style in Rhodian painting, see Kollias 2000; Kollias 2005, 123–129; Archontopoulos 2010, 233–238. The available 19th-century depictions by the painter P. J. Witdoeck, published in Rottiers' work, are problematic, because some do not



FIGURE 87A The church known as St. George Chostos, east wall



FIGURE 87B The frescoes on the east wall, 1828, lithograph after P. J. Witdoeck

Iconographical elements on the side walls, in particular the type of Our Lady of Mercy protecting the faithful under her outspread cloak, and the type of armor of one of the figures, agree with the identification of the coats of arms as those of the Nantouillet family and a dating ca. 1367, when Regnault Nantouillet passed by Rhodes and possibly commissioned the works as a sort of *ex voto* on behalf of himself and members of his family.²⁹ This is also backed up by the date 1447 that appears among the numerous 15th- and early 16th-century graffiti, in Western script, on the paintings of the vault and serves as a *terminus*

correspond to the present state of the paintings, a fact evident even when comparing these sketches with the watercolours by Salzmann, which are more reliable (see note 26 above).

29 Bacci 2017b, 113; de Vaire 2004, 931–943. See note 6 above.

ante quem.³⁰ On the other hand, the presence of the arms of Aubusson next to the first kneeling knight on the south wall, as well as stylistic and iconographical details in the episodes of the life of the Virgin and of the Passion, hint at a date in the late 15th century or the early 16th;³¹ these elements, and especially the arms of Aubusson,³² may have resulted from overpainting or a second layer of decoration. The overall present appearance of the chapel points to a funerary use, which would certainly be associated with the indiscernible donor/s depicted in the lunette.

The presence of Mariological scenes and the Western graffiti are in keeping with the popularity of the Phileremos' cult, but the dating, use, and connection of this underground chapel with the Hospitaller church and, subsequently, the miraculous icon is not clear.³³ There had been a Byzantine church on top of it, traces of which were discovered by Maiuri during the excavations; it was revealed then that the floor of the chapel was lower than the frescoes and that there must have been a cistern collecting spring water from the underlying rock at the east, serving as an *αγίασμα* [a source of holy water], access to which would have been provided by the still extant opening in the ceiling.³⁴ It is unknown when the overlying church was destroyed, but certainly after its destruction the character of the crypt changed, perhaps at some point after 1350,³⁵ and its decoration was commissioned subsequently. This would mean that works on the chapel were more or less contemporary with the first Hospitaller single-aisled church, built in the first or second half of the 14th century, and, having in mind the private character of the chapel, it is logical to assume that the references to the Phileremos church after the 14th-century concern these constructions erected by the Hospitallers.

2 Cultic Phenomena

The miraculous icon of the Phileremos Virgin was allegedly a work by the hand of St. Luke,³⁶ falling in an extremely popular category of cultic icons of the

30 De Belabre 1908, fig. 186; Ferraris di Celle 1988, 126–127, 132; Takoumi 2017, 95.

31 See note 6 above.

32 Vaivre 2004, 934.

33 Ferraris di Celle 1988, 33, 92; Takoumi 2017, 94–97.

34 Livadiotti 1996, 265–266.

35 Luttrell 2020, 118.

36 Buhagiar 2009a, 14.

period.³⁷ The Evangelist, a doctor and a painter, had been established as the executor of the true portrait of the Virgin, during her lifetime.³⁸ The pilgrims at Rhodes were aware of the Lucan attribution: Pierre Barbatre (1480) attests that the icon was one of the images that St. Luke had painted,³⁹ and Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495) repeats that, “there is an image of Our Lady, painted by St. Luke, which performs great signs.”⁴⁰ As usual, pilgrims’ narrations include inconsistencies. Strangely enough, during his trip in 1462 William Wey reports that the icon of the *beatissime Marie* was executed by John the Evangelist at Patmos and that it was later painted by others, but the icon of Phileremos was the first one made to honour the Virgin.⁴¹ The link with John is somewhat puzzling, as Wey’s text incorporated the information concerning the first-ever execution of the Virgin’s portrait. Could this be a misunderstanding on his part concerning the specific identity of the Evangelist, or could it be supposed that the legend of the evangelical icon was—to an extent—further localised, since it was well-known that John had resided and written the Apocalypse on the nearby island of Patmos, thus ascribing the work to him? It is evident from the sources, though, that the Lucan attribution, should it have been known to the pilgrims, is a clue that they do not seem to consider important or necessary enough to mention.

The advent of the icon at Mt. Phileremos was shrouded in the mist of legend. According to a magistral bull of 1497, it had miraculously traveled to Rhodes during the rule of an Emperor Leo the “Heresiarch,” probably Leo III the Iconoclast (717–741).⁴² It was also said that it had been worshiped in the Holy Land as the Madonna of Bethlehem.⁴³ Another story relates that a nobleman from Rhodes who wanted to end his life reached the site with the aim of falling from the mountain, but the apparition of the Virgin stopped him; after that, he decided to live as a hermit, built a small chapel, and, wanting to endow

37 On Lucan icons, see Bacci 1998; Bacci 2004a, 423–452. On miraculous icons, see Cormack 1988, 55–60; Belting 1994; Oikonomides 1991, 35–44; Ševčenko 1991, 45–57; Lidov 2000, 47–57; Pentcheva 2006.

38 On the legend of Luke as an icon painter, see Bacci 1998, 33–96.

39 “[...] une des ymages que monseigneur saint Luc paingnist;” Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 158–159.

40 “[...] ist unser frawen bild, hat sant Lucas gemalt, tut grosse zaichen;” Gebele 1932–1933, 114.

41 “[...] ibi est ymago picta beatissime Marie, quam pertraxit sanctus Johannes Evangelista quando erat in Patmos insula cl. miliaria a Rodys, que postea erat ab aliis picta; et est prima ymago que facta erat ad honorem beatissime Marie, et facta sunt ibi multa miracula;” Williams 1857, 99.

42 Luttrell 1989, 13. The document has been published; see Tsirpanlis 2012, 220–229.

43 Buhagiar 2009a, 14.

it with an image that bore the features of the blessed Virgin, he brought an icon from Jerusalem that he knew was thought to have been a work of Luke. He led a long and pious life on the mountain, and his hermitage attracted many pilgrims and fame to the sanctuary.⁴⁴ Conforming to a popular topos in legends concerning miraculous icons was another version, according to which, during many days of fog and darkness in the area, the inhabitants saw a bright light on the mountain; when they searched for its prodigious source, they found the icon and erected a sanctuary on the very spot.⁴⁵

The Hospitallers had worshipped the Virgin as their perpetual supporter and protectress⁴⁶ ever since their founding at St. Mary of the Latins in Jerusalem. It is no surprise that soon after they established their rule on Rhodes they became actively involved with the sanctuary housing the miraculous icon of Our Lady of Phileremos. This choice must have also been connected with the history of their occupation of the island: it was at Phileremos that they had achieved one of their first, big victories. Indeed, pilgrims often narrate how the Knights fought the infidels or the schismatic Greeks at the site—and these events often highlighted the Order's desired messages and symbolism.⁴⁷

From the beginning of Hospitaller rule on the island, the situation concerning the aspects of the veneration at the church by Greeks and/or Latins is unclear. The legends connected with the icon suggest that the cult was already established in 1309, but no Greek sources documenting this have been discovered. The Order's actions toward exercising some control very early on attest to the above, as is evidenced by the Nantouillet frescoes, which would presuppose an active Latin religious presence. Ogier d'Anglure's testimony shows that the Hospitallers had already established a pilgrimage to the icon and testifies to the shared devotion toward it;⁴⁸ the addition of the two chapels in the mid-15th century was, perhaps, an answer to the increasing flow of pilgrims and the need to meet the cultic and liturgical demands of larger groups. Although the icon did not belong to the Common Treasury, it seems that the cult was controlled by the Knights from the 14th century.⁴⁹

44 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 215.

45 Calamai 1993, 77.

46 Luttrell 1993, 80–83; Zammit Gabarretta 1983, 249–266.

47 In pilgrims' narratives, the castle at Phileremos is connected with the painstaking and long struggle of the Order to occupy the island. See indicatively Ogier VIII d'Anglure (1395–1396), Dietrich von Schachten (1491), and Melchior zur Gilgen (1519); Bonnardot and Longnon 1878, 91–93; Röhrich and Meisner 1880b, 217; Gilgen, "Pilgerfart," 48.

48 Since, after 1309, the Greeks of Rhodes technically became Uniates, there would be "no canonical problem of conflicting communions;" Luttrell 2020, 117.

49 See pp. 194–195 above. See also Buhagiar 2017, 68.

The pilgrims' visits to Phileremos and their mentions of the site increase dramatically after 1460, and it is often the place first remarked upon about the island; its location on the mountain made it visible from the sea and recognizable to the sailing groups,⁵⁰ making its inclusion in the seafarer's prayer known as the *Sante Parole* only reasonable.⁵¹ Indicative of Our Lady of Phileremos' special association to the seafarers are the words by which it is described by the German Ulrich Leman (1472–1480): "There is a church, named Our Lady of Phileremos, on a mountain, where lies our dear Lady of Mercy, who works great miracles and is a big help in times of need for the traveling ships at sea, and they pay great reverence to her during their navigation."⁵²

By 1480, the Madonna seems to have been well-established as a protectress of navigation. On his way back from the Holy Land, an anonymous pilgrim reports that all the passengers and crew of the ship took an oath to visit the Phileremos, because her help at the time was necessary against the contrary wind that had kept the ship off course for four days and four nights.⁵³ Likewise, while trying to escape from 44 battleships off the coast of Turkey, Jehan de Tournai (1488–1489) and the rest of his group promised a candle to the Virgin of Phileremos, and immediately a strong wind arose; when they reached Rhodes they made good on their pledge, pilgrims and mariners alike.⁵⁴

The association of the hopeful and pious visitors with the Phileremos Madonna proved to be more than just a swift stop in their itinerary to the Holy Land: it would become incorporated into their belief system and eventually even perceived as a crucial moment in their devotional experience associated with pilgrimage. In the stream of his detailed narrative, Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474) gives an unparalleled example. While visiting Mt. Quarantania, near Jericho, an English pilgrim was brutally attacked by three men. In this dramatic instance, it was the Phileremos Madonna whom he addressed for help and "managed to escape, making a vow to *Santa Maria di Filermo*;" when in Rhodes, they found themselves together at the shrine to venerate the icon.⁵⁵

50 Louis de Rochechouart (1461), Bishop of Saintes, spotted it while sailing: "Circa horam octavam, die vicesima junii, et ad manum dextram, vidimus ecclesiam Beate Marie de Palerma, alias Philerma;" Couderc 1893, 234. The same for Jan Hasištejský z Lobkovic (1493); Strejček 1902, 37.

51 Bacci 2004b, 243.

52 "[...] da ist ain kilch, die haist vnser frow von Vilerem, litt vff ain berg, da ist vnser liebi frow genedig, die tut fast grossi wonderzaichen, ist ain grossi nothelfferin im mer vnd die schiff, die im mer da fúrfarent, die tund ir grossi reuerentz alwäg am fúrfaren;" Reinger 2007, 30.

53 Schefer 1882, 110–111.

54 Blanchet-Broekaert and Péricard-Méa 2012, 270–272.

55 "Costui iscampò facendo boto a sancta Maria di Filermo;" Calamai 1993, 69.

Concerning the practical issues of veneration, evidence pointing to the location of the icon in the church appears in the late 15th century. In 1471 Anselmo Adorno mentions that the small church where the icon of the Virgin worked many miracles stood on top of a small cave, perhaps alluding to the crypt of St. George Chostos nearby.⁵⁶ After delivering the aforementioned legend of the icon emitting bright light, Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini reports that the inhabitants:

[...] built the church to honour the glorious Virgin Mary and placed the said image in a small arched chapel, at the side of the chapel where lies the altar of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and where the mass is celebrated in reverence of the Virgin, on the left side of the said church. [...] Next to the main chapel of this church, on the left hand, there is another chapel decently decorated.⁵⁷

This would mean that the icon was placed for veneration in the recently built north chapel. The setting changed when Aubusson constructed his two chapels, where there was a semi-circular niche still standing in 1900, which Sommi Picenardi saw as the setting for the icon.⁵⁸

The site-specific experience of the icon's veneration was in keeping with late medieval patterns of image worship; visitors would offer candles, celebrate mass, and marvel at the icon and its votive offerings: "Her image, which is painted on a panel and then adorned with golden cloth and many images and ships made of silver and lights and various images of wax."⁵⁹ Additionally, material indicators of the many miracles performed in the holy shrine were exhibited. One of them was a rope with which an Ottoman tried to hang a Greek merchant; he had used three ropes, but all of them broke after the intercession of the Virgin of Phileremos, to whom the merchant addressed his prayers. The Ottoman, amazed by the miracle, let the Greek free, and the latter made a pilgrimage to the Virgin and dedicated one of the ropes, which was hung as a

56 "Juxta, quem locum super uno parvo cavo stat ecclesia parva, in qua ymago Nostre Domine multa miracula fecit;" Heers and de Groer 1978, 366.

57 "[...] hedificorono la chiesa in honore della gloriosa Vergine Maria, collocando detta ymagine in una picciola chappella archuata, al lato alla chappella dove è l'altare della assumptione della Vergine Maria et dove si celebrano le messe a sua reverentia nella parte sinistra di detta chiesa. [...] Al lato alla chappella maggiore di questa chiesa, in sulla mano sinistra, è constructa e murata un'altra picciola chappella decentemente ornate;" Calamai 1993, 77.

58 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 211.

59 "La sua imagine, che in essa si truova dipinta in una tavola et poi addorna di drappo d'oro et molte ymagini et navi d'argento et torchi et diverse ymagini di cera;" Calamai 1993, 77.

token of the prodigious event.⁶⁰ The collection also included three frogs that had been emitted from a possessed man, shown to Greffin Affagart in 1519.⁶¹ This miracle may have been typical of the Virgin's powers or may have become famous, as the wife of a Greek priest had also been cured from an evil spirit, which she vomited in the form of a live frog.⁶² Connected with these objects, occasions when the icon had miraculously interceded with its visitors were propagated, such as the story of a young couple whose parents were opposed to their marriage—they found the opportunity to meet in the church and at the moment of their sacrilege were blasted on the very altar.⁶³

For the Hospitallers, the icon of the Madonna of Phileremos became—along with the Baptist's hand—their most prized possession: they found in her a symbol for their struggles and ideals, as well the emblematic manifestation of their perpetual protectress.⁶⁴ The Virgin's powerful intercession in the Ottoman siege of 1480, when the miraculous apparition of the Cross, the Virgin, and the Baptist in the decisive battle secured victory for the Order, became famous through the work of Guillaume Caoursin, *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descripti*, in which the event was also illustrated (Fig. 88). During the siege, the icon had been transferred to the Conventual church inside the city, so as to be protected from the attack and to enable its veneration by the people.⁶⁵ There it served as the palladium of the besieged, a fact evidenced by the penitential procession to its temporary setting led by the Master Pierre d'Aubusson, in order to express his gratitude for the Virgin's succor after a harsh battle at St. Nicholas' tower.⁶⁶ In commemoration and gratitude of her powerful intercession, Aubusson built the church of Our Lady of Victory at the east end of the *borgo*, near the sector of the *langue* of Italy, where the siege's decisive battle had taken place.⁶⁷

The same practice of relocation was repeated in 1513, again under Ottoman threat. During the siege of 1522, the icon was deposited in the church of St. Mark (it is not certain whether St. Mark had passed again to the Greeks by then or was still serviced by the Franciscans). After a fire attack, from which it miraculously escaped damage, it was transferred to the church of St. Catherine in the *borgo*, a more secluded location. It is not clear which of the churches

60 English Anonymous (1480–1526); Brefeld 1985, 152.

61 Chavanon 1902, 39. See also Gumpfenberg 1672, 890.

62 Buhagiar 2009a, 14.

63 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 215.

64 Buhagiar 2009a, 13–14.

65 Bosio 1630, 398.

66 Ferraris di Celle 1988, 27–29.

67 See pp. 184–185 above.



FIGURE 88 The decisive battle of 1480 at Rhodes with the miraculous apparition of the Cross, the Virgin, and the Baptist, ca. 1483, manuscript illumination. Paris Ms. Lat. 6067

dedicated to the female saint this was; at that time the church subsequently known as *Ilk Mihrab*—after its conversion into a Muslim place of worship—was dedicated to St. Catherine.⁶⁸ After the capitulation to the Ottomans, the Greek Nicolaus Metaxi saved it and took it on board the carrack *Sant'Anna*, the main ship on which the brethren left Rhodes on January 1st, 1523, where it was placed in a chest along with other major Hospitaller relics. From now on, the Order certainly had complete control over it.⁶⁹

For the Hospitallers, expressions of Marian piety at Rhodes were manifold.⁷⁰ In the town, apart from Our Lady of the Castle (the Latin cathedral in the *col-lachium*), Our Lady of the Burgh, and Our Lady of Victory, there is evidence of at least six other, no longer extant churches dedicated to the Mother of God. However, only the panel of the Phileremos seems to have been appropriated by the Knights as a miraculous Marian icon. There cannot be certainty about how and by whom the icon was handled: the testimonies that place it in St. Mark and in St. Catherine in 1522, as well as the above information concerning Nicolaus Metaxi, which is based on his own testimony and cannot be substantiated, reveal that the Greeks were also involved.

This idea is further connected with the handling and fate of two miraculous Byzantine icons that, although kept in the town, were never mentioned by the pilgrims, possibly due to a lack of information from the brethren.⁷¹ These were the icons of the Virgin *Damaskini* and *Eleimontria* now kept in the Greek Catholic Church of the Virgin *Damaskini* in Valletta (Figs. 89, 90). At Rhodes, they were owned by Greeks and housed in two homonymous churches, the first one on the south side of the *borgo*, in the Aragonese sector, and the second one just outside the walls, near the English sector.⁷² Archival documents from Malta that were published in 1988 attest to the traditional Greek ownership of the icons and their churches based on the *jus patronatus*; specifically, for many

68 Ferraris di Celle 1988, 33–34; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 216; Archontopoulos 1986, 85–100.

69 Buhagiar 2009a, 15–16.

70 Bacci et al. 2017, 97–101.

71 Moreover, in the countryside, an icon of the Madonna bearing Aubusson's coat of arms in the church of the Holy Cross at the village of Apollona reveals a connection with a miraculous icon there, documented by Cristoforo Buondelmonti (1417–1420); Bayer 2007, 20. The miraculous icon of Apollona was transported, along with the Phileremos, to the Order's castle at Pheraklos in 1513 for safe-keeping, due to imminent threat; see Phillips 2013, 15–16.

72 Tsirpanlis 1988, 199–200. Concerning the icon of the Virgin *Damaskini*, see Mitsani 2007, 433–444. Mitsani's proposed connection of the icon with a Latin chapel in Damascus and the Hospitallers inevitably comes into conflict with Calamias' claim of *jus patronatus* and raises the question of why the work would then pass on to the Greeks and not stay in the Order's hands.



FIGURE 89 The Virgin *Damaskini*, 12th century (?), Greek Catholic church of the Virgin Damaskini, Valletta



FIGURE 90 The Virgin *Eleimonitria*, 12th century (?), Greek Catholic church of the Virgin Damaskini, Valletta

years before 1522 they had been owned by the Greek Calamias family.⁷³ From the information inferred concerning their handling, it appears that their transportation to Malta was arranged by the Calamias family; that by order of the Master L'Isle Adam at Birgu, Malta, the *Damaskini* was given to a Greek Rhodian priest and was put in a church that eventually passed to the Greeks and bore the icon's name; and that the *Eleimonitria* ended up in St. Anthony's church, held by the Order. How and why the icons were removed from their rightful owners is not sure. However, the Order approved Ioannis Calamias' request for their return and recognized his ownership.⁷⁴ Concerning Rhodes, there are no clues hinting that the Hospitallers interfered with the traditional cult of these Greek icons, in contrast with the miraculous Phileremos Madonna.

The Knights continued to promote the renowned cult of the Phileremos after leaving Rhodes. While they stayed in Viterbo, between 1523 and 1527, the exhibition of the icon in the collegiate church of Sts. Faustinus and Jovita, which was used as their provisional Conventual church, attracted crowds of worshippers, and the Hospitallers, upon leaving the city, left to the church the chest used for the transportation of the icon, as well an icon with the Virgin and Child, of the *Hodegetria* type, known as the *Madonna di Costantinopoli*.⁷⁵ This was erroneously believed, according to tradition, to represent the Phileremos Madonna; its Creto-Venetian style may hint at a provenance from Crete, where the Hospitallers stopped on their way to Italy.⁷⁶ However, it is also very possible that it came from Rhodes. According to two early 17th-century testimonies, by Johannes Habermacher and Wolfgang Stockman, a Lucan icon of the Virgin that was kept at the Monastery of the Saviour or at St. Titus in Candia had been given (or was sold) by L'Isle Adam, when the Order passed by the island before reaching Italy.⁷⁷ Since there is no evidence of a Lucan icon other than the Phileremos having been in the possession of the Knights, could it be possible that the Knights had copies of the Phileremos icon produced for distribution? This would have been a highly profitable move, along with the advantages

73 Tsirpanlis 1988, 197–236. Tsirpanlis published the documents (dated 1558–1559) concerning the request of Ioannis Calamias to the Order, in which he asked for the two icons to be returned to him.

74 Ibid. For the subsequent history of these two icons, see Chetta-Schirò, 1930; Chetta-Schirò 1932; Porsella Flores 1987, 12–23; Borgia 1999; Cutajar 1978b; Cutajar 1978a; Cutajar 1979b; Cutajar 1979a. Cutajar estimated that the two icons should be dated to the 12th century, an evaluation with which Buhagiar agrees; Buhagiar, 2018.

75 Ferraris di Celle 1988, 35; Ferraris di Celle 2009, 50.

76 Ferraris di Celle 2009, 50.

77 Schmid 1957d, 341; Schmid 1957b 176; Hemmerdinger-Iliadou 1967, 596–597.

of amplifying the cultic competence of their revered image; the practice was well-established in the Middle Ages and reflected the belief that the replicas of the original image extended its power.⁷⁸ The existence of a local workshop for the production of high-quality icons at Rhodes has been shown at least since the second half of the 14th century.⁷⁹

When the Order reached Malta, the icon was placed in the church of San Lorenzo at Birgu, which served as the Convent's church. After the "Great Siege" of 1565, the victory of the Knights against the Ottomans was again interpreted as a result of the Virgin's intercession, and October 8th, when the siege was terminated, was added to the liturgical calendar of the Hospitallers as the Feast of the Madonna of Victories, celebrating the same quality of the Phileremos as in 1480.⁸⁰ Consequently, the first building of the new city of Valletta in 1566 was the church of Our Lady of Victories, an expression of gratitude to the Virgin, and the miraculous icon was transferred there. With the erection of the Conventual church in 1578, it was moved to the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament there, where it remained until Napoleon's invasion in 1798.⁸¹

It was then that the Master Ferdinand von Hompesch escaped from Malta, taking with him the hand of the Baptist, the relic of the True Cross, and the Phileremos icon, all stripped down from their precious furnishings by the French. The relics were transported to Russia; in 1799 the icon was located in the Voronovskiy palace chapel in St. Petersburg.⁸² On November 12th, an impressive procession was organized for the transportation of the three treasures to the imperial palace in Gatchina, and a feast for their translation was subsequently established.⁸³ Paul I commissioned a precious frame and *riza* for the icon, still extant, made of gold, diamonds, and sapphires, while its visible part, showing the face of the Virgin, was covered with polished glass (Fig. 91). The icon remained at the Winter Palace and was moved annually from 1852 to 1916 to Gatchina for the celebration of the feast of the translation. After the Bolshevik revolution, it was sent along with the other relics to Denmark, where the Tsarina Maria Feodorovna kept it and bequeathed it to Patriarch Antoniye of Kiev and Galizia, President of the Synod of Russian Orthodox Bishops in

78 See Belting 1994, 6, 14, 320, 342–348 and passim; Bacci 2004a, 423–452.

79 Acheimastou-Potamianou 2009, 199–214; Katsioti 2010, 143–145.

80 Buhagiar 2009a, 17–18.

81 Concerning the icon's setting in St. John's Co-Cathedral, see Scicluna 1995, 130–137; Buhagiar 2009a, 22–24; de Giorgio 2011, 58–63.

82 Piatnitsky 2000, 475. Concerning the icon's history in Russia, see Pjatnickij 1998, 14–25.

83 Piatnitsky 2000, 475. For information about the relic of the Baptist's hand, see pp. 58–61 above.



FIGURE 91 The Madonna of Philereimos with the *riza*, National Museum of Montenegro, Cetinje

exile;⁸⁴ subsequently, it was placed in the Russian Orthodox Church in Berlin and removed from there to the church of the royal palace in Belgrade.⁸⁵ During World War II, it was secretly transferred to Ostrog Monastery in Montenegro, and in 1953 it was discovered there, along with the two other relics.⁸⁶ Subsequently, it was kept secure by the government and deposited in the National Museum of Montenegro, Cetinje, in 1978. The identity of the work was unknown though; it was only in 1996 that it was identified by Giovannella Ferraris di Celle. Up until 2002 it remained in the institution's warehouse, and since then it has been exhibited in the museum's "Blue Chapel."⁸⁷

The icon of the Phileremos is considered to be a Byzantine work; in its present state, it is of small dimensions (44 × 36 cm), but it consists of only a fragment of the original (Fig. 92).⁸⁸ Its condition does not permit a safe conclusion concerning the iconographical type or dating. It is clear that the painted surface consists of two parts: the face and neck of the Virgin, which is painted on canvas, and part of her garments, which are painted on wood and develop around the face. This latter part bears many holes—especially in its lower section—which surpass 130 in number and must have been created by the attachment of numerous votive offerings over the years.⁸⁹ The primary investigator of the work, Ferraris di Celle, examined the icon and proposed some hypotheses to deal with the possible interconnection of these two parts.⁹⁰ According to her conclusions, the face could perhaps be dated to the 10th–11th century, as part of a larger work of a *Hodegetria* of the type found at the church

84 Buhagiar 2017, 70.

85 Piatnitsky 2000, 475; Ferraris di Celle 1988, 38–41.

86 The discovery of the relics in 1953 seems to have been captured on film; Gagović 2012, 21.

87 For the history of the icon, see also Sbutega 2016.

88 Buhagiar gives the following dimensions for the icon at Rhodes and Malta, respectively: 141 × 118 centimeters, 100 × 74 centimeters; Buhagiar 2017, 61, 64. The measurements at Rhodes are given based on "the aedicule that contained it in the shrine, which the Master of the Hospital, Pierre d'Aubusson (1476–1503), rebuilt on the plateau of Mount Filérimos after the siege of 1480." For this information Buhagiar cites the article by Ferraris di Celle 2002, 29. Sommi Picenardi saw the niche that must have contained the icon and describes it as having a semicircular arch and a simple cornice, measuring 186 × 118 centimeters; Sommi Picenardi 1900, 211. The diminution of the icon at Malta is suggested by the dimensions of its marble tabernacle (100 × 74 centimeters) commissioned by the Master Jean Paul Lascaris (1636–1657) at the Conventual church of St. John at Valletta.

89 Ferraris di Celle 2009, 79.

90 Idem, 103–105. This work is the main in-depth analysis of the icon at Cetinje after detailed examination of all of its layers.



FIGURE 92 The icon of the Madonna of Phileremos uncovered, National Museum of Montenegro, Cetinje

of the Dormition at Nicaea, and the surrounding painting to the late 15th–early 16th century.⁹¹

How or when this icon reached Rhodes is unknown. Luttrell has investigated and summarized possible theories concerning the presence of an icon of the Virgin on Mt. Phileremos, but it cannot be sure when the specific work, now at Cetinje, came to be at Phileremos and as a miraculous icon.⁹² Connections with the presence of Constantinopolitan icons on the island, linked with Domenico de Alamania, Giovanni Corsini, and Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus, as well as with an active icon workshop, can only but remain speculative.

In its original form, the icon at Cetinje has also been thought to have been of the type of the *Hagiosoritissa*, in which the Virgin is depicted with both her hands extended out from her chest, similar to the pose she assumes in Deesis compositions. This hypothesis has been based on the interpretation of the account of Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who described the Virgin with raised arms, *paratis brachis*.⁹³ This reading is in accordance with a drawing made for the Apostolic Delegate and Inquisitor to Malta, Fabio Chigi, found in the portfolio of aquarelles that was produced for his office during his stay at Malta in the years 1634–1639, with the handwritten inscription *La Madonna di Filermo portata da Rodi. Vedi il Bosio* (Fig. 93). The work shows the Virgin *Hagiosoritissa* in a three-quarter pose, wearing a voluminous maphorion, with her hands raised in prayer toward the miniature figure of a Blessing Christ in the upper-right corner of the composition. The icon is masked by a *riza* or silver plaque embossed with foliated scrolls inside a gilt frame with the symbols of the four Evangelists in the corners. The Virgin bears a gilt crown decorated with precious stones, and her nimbus is gilt as well; only her face has been sketched uncovered.⁹⁴

91 Idem, 125–126. One of the observations that led her to this conclusion concerning the proposed typology is that the right part of the Virgin's face has been overpainted and initially must have extended further, thus acquiring a more frontal position.

92 Luttrell and O'Malley 2019, 69; Luttrell 2020, 123–124.

93 "Ibique hodie Domina nostra in ecclesia quondam, paratis brachis, visitans adiuvat;" Gerola 1914c, 464; Luttrell 2020, 121. It should be noted that at least 59 manuscripts of Buondelmonti's work exist, with varying text, and that the aforementioned description does not necessarily refer to an icon; one cannot exclude the possibility of a fresco decoration or that the text hints symbolically at prayer or entreaty. Buhagiar has also hypothesized that the Virgin could be part of a Deesis; Buhagiar 2009a, 20. This idea is shared by Ganter, who sees a possible Cypriot provenance and proposes a parallel with the 12th-century depiction of the Virgin in a Deesis scene from the Monastery of St. Neophytos in Cyprus; Ganter 1968, 107–111.

94 Ferraris di Celle 1988, 69–72; Buhagiar 2009a, 21–22.



FIGURE 93 *La Madonna di Filermo portata da Rodi*, 1634–1639, Fabio Chigi's aquarelle portfolio

It is only natural that the decoration of the icon changed over time according to current trends or needs. Its covering is attested by Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474), who describes “la sua imagine, che in essa si truova dipinta in una tavola et poi addorna di drappo d’oro.”⁹⁵ The golden drapes described by him possibly refer to an icon veil, the precious cloth that was traditionally associated with miraculous icons, as known from the *encheirion*, or *peplos*, used

95 Calamai 1993, 77.

with the miraculous icons in Constantinople.⁹⁶ In the illustrated inventory in the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina, there are two depictions of later coverings—*vestiti*—for the Madonna of Phileremos, both made of crimson velvet set with pearls, precious stones, and gold. The first one has been dated ca. 1600 and the second to the 17th century, although it bears the arms of Philippe Villiers de L'Isle Adam (1521–1534); perhaps it was reworked (Fig. 94).⁹⁷ These coverings attest to the presentation of the icon at Malta, but do not hint at all to the type of icon underneath. The “dress” carrying the arms of L'Isle Adam was quite possibly commissioned in order to conceal the damage that the icon must have undergone when a fire broke out in 1523 at San Lorenzo in Birgu, where it was held at the time, and its form probably reflects this effort—even though the work was thought to have miraculously escaped damage.⁹⁸

Before the rediscovery of the icon, some light had been shed by copies and old photographs. The first known copy was executed by the painter Semion Basin in Russia in 1850, but its fate is not known.⁹⁹ In 1852 a second Russian copy was executed by Vladimir Bovin;¹⁰⁰ this is currently in the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli at Assisi (Fig. 95). When the Italian government rebuilt the church at Phileremos, it asked for the icon to be returned, but, due to its unknown whereabouts at the time, this Russian copy was sent instead and kept until the Italians left the Dodecanese in 1947. However, during this icon's stay on the island, a Turkish restoration intervened exceedingly with its appearance, as is evident from pictures taken before (Fig. 96). Around 1930, the Italian painter Carlo Cane executed another copy, on the request of the Italian government, which is currently in the church of the Phileremos at Rhodes (Fig. 97).¹⁰¹

In 1866 the icon was photographed for the English members of the Order, and the photographs were given to Sir George Bowyer;¹⁰² and another photograph, of 1894, was published by Sommi Picenardi (Fig. 98).¹⁰³ It seems, though, that this picture was also taken from the copy and not from the original, when

96 Concerning the tradition of the icon veils and their imperial patronage, see Nunn 1986, 73–102.

97 Oman 1970, 246–247; Buhagiar et al. 1989, 78. Two more *vestiti* have been described in the manuscript, dated 1687; see Buhagiar 2009a, 21.

98 Ferris 1866, 274; Buhagiar 2017, 68–69.

99 Piatnitsky 2000, 477.

100 Ibid.

101 On the Russian copy, see Buhagiar 1989c, 20–23; Ferraris di Celle 1988, 41–43; Ferraris di Celle 2009, 56–60.

102 Piatnitsky 2000, 477.

103 Sommi Picenardi 1900, 216–217.



FIGURE 94 A “dress” of the Madonna of Philereos, 1756, watercolour drawing



FIGURE 95 Vladimir Bovin, copy of the icon of the Madonna of Philereos, 1852, Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi



FIGURE 96 Vladimir Bovin, copy of the icon of the Madonna of Philereimos, photograph before the restoration at Rhodes



FIGURE 97 Carlo Cane, copy of the icon of the Madonna of Phileremos, ca. 1930, church of Our Lady of Phileremos



FIGURE 98 The icon of the Madonna of Philereos, 1894, photograph



FIGURE 99 The icon of the Madonna of Phileremos, 1932, photograph

compared with the only certain original photograph taken in Yugoslavia in 1932 (Fig. 99).¹⁰⁴ Modern comparison with the icon at Cetinje has confirmed these speculations.

In its present home, the “Blue Chapel” in the National Museum of Montenegro, Cetinje, the icon was examined in 2012 by a conservation team from Belgrade, under Jovan Pantić, together with Veljko Ilić, who recorded the process. The panel and all its elements were photographed in diffuse light, infrared with filters and UV light, and X-rays were taken. The conservators recommended that no further treatment be done, due to the age and fragility of the icon.¹⁰⁵

104 Buhagiar 1989c, 20–23; Ferraris di Celle 2009, 60–61.

105 Information kindly provided by Mirjana Dabović Pejović from the National Museum of Montenegro. Unfortunately, the results and reports can be consulted only on site, and a visit was not possible. Gagović was a member of the team from Belgrade and has written a personal estimation of the examination; he states that the icon must have been over-painted during its stay at Russia and that the radiography and the UV shots can lead to a more reliable stylistic and chronological analysis; Gagović 2012, 32.

Conclusions

Through this study, it has been shown how the status of Hospitaller Rhodes as a pilgrimage stop on the route to the Holy Land was realized. Yet this observation does not say much concerning the interaction of the various expressions of pilgrimage with the local actors, in relation to the religious sphere and the cultic practices and experiences that arose to suit this multifaceted reality.

The analysis of the textual information from pilgrims, combined with the extant historical, artistic, and archaeological data, sheds light on the new cultic physiognomy of Rhodes that was gradually shaped from the early 14th century and reached its complete formation after the Ottoman siege of 1480. As has been shown, the Knights brought several cultic objects with them when they settled on Rhodes, mostly Christological and saintly relics. As the flow of pilgrims grew and the town was increasingly visited by pious Christians, who took the presence of relics for granted, the Order made use of its continuously enriched cultic collection. At the same time, by capitalizing on its sacred treasures, it was highlighting its connections with the Holy Land and its continuous role as protector of Christians in the East, which lay at the core of its initial and foremost mission. The Hospitallers' motives, connected with propaganda and financial benefit, are evidently expressed in their unsuccessful efforts to secure the pilgrim trade in 1402/3 and in their unwillingness to let St. Catherine's hospice pass to the Franciscans in 1411.

The sources exude the feeling that the approach of pilgrims toward Rhodes was pervaded by the notion that the island was the recipient of one of the Apostle Paul's epistles, the ancient city of Ialysos having been identified with the Phrygian city of Colossae since Byzantine times, a misinterpretation accentuated by the title of the Latin prelate on the island, *Archiepiscopus Colossensis*. Thus, the island functioned as a memorial site evoking the apostolic tradition, a connection that functioned as the consolidating element in the establishment of the island's sacral identity. On a textual level, this was projected by the continuous citation of Paul's letters in the pilgrims' travelogues, a literary construction that contributed to the signaling and enhancement of the site's sacred sphere. The idea was stated generally, in a manner typical to pilgrims' narrations, and served as the basis and starting point of the topographical connection of Rhodes with apostolic times and, subsequently, to the Holy Land and Christ himself.

On a second level, Rhodes was transformed into a pilgrimage site that served its visitors with anticipated rewards, by means of the development of a specific cultic milieu. The factors that determined this process and its results

have emerged in the present study. First of all, the foremost agent was the pilgrim: it was his movement *per se*—his physical transposition in a defined geographical area—that triggered the phenomenon; he carried along his desires, habits, and beliefs, as well as his conceptual background of what a pilgrimage involved. What can be inferred from the travelogues is that the majority of pilgrims relied on some already determined practical instructions, aesthetic choices, cultic habits, and cultural views. In the case of Rhodes, this is clearly reflected in the generic way most of them described the relics of the town. It is evident that the popular pilgrim guides provided all the necessary information, and, at the same time, there were more or less specific cultic objects scattered along the sea route to Palestine, which echoed the pilgrims' deepest longings: Christological relics, relics of saints variously connected to the Holy Land, miraculous icons of the Virgin, memorial sites. The Rhodian setting was marked by the Baptist's relics, the miraculous thorn from the Holy Crown, the cross made from the basin used in the Washing of the Feet, the Judas coin, the relics of St. Catherine, St. Euphemia and numerous others, and the Phileremos icon.

In line with these general categories, the context of the specific objects and structures found in each place was distinctively shaped by the local actors according to current social, political, economic, and cultural realities. In this sense, the general point that emerges is that the Order, still actively involved in its mission as protectress of pilgrims and Christians in the Holy Land, extended its Jerusalem tradition to the town of Rhodes, where it continued to receive and care for pious travelers. The notions linked to the religious character of the Hospitaller activities developed in Palestine found a renewed expression in the sites of the new hospital and the cemetery of St. Anthony, marked by the indulgences granted to visitors and the miraculous attributes connected with the cemetery. It is notable that this was not an extension of previously held qualities, but that the Order established them by fruitfully investing in its tradition, in the accentuation of the transposition of Palestinian site-worship associations, and in the exploitation of the new realities of pilgrimage. As a result, these Rhodian settings acquired a novel cultic character that was entirely in line with contemporary developments.

This is also evident in the treatment of the cultic objects kept at St. John of the *Collachium* and at the chapel of the Grand Master. Relics of the Baptist, patron saint of the Hospitallers, were to be found in popular cultic centers of the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Ragusa; their connection with Christ's saving mission, as well as with the details of his passing from earth, eliciting well-known incidents that had taken place in defined geographical spaces that the pilgrims could visit, amplified the pilgrims' and clergy's interest in them. In the

case of Rhodes, the cultic importance of the hand relic also lay in its symbolism as a victory against the infidels; its acquisition from Bayezid in 1484 was proof of Christian prevalence, and the Knights stood out as its rightful keepers. The Rhodian hand acquired fame, visible in its troubled history up to the present day, as a foremost treasure and a symbol of Hospitaller tradition, history, and piety; and its cult spread to Malta and subsequently to Russia.

The most prestigious Christological relic of the Order's collection, the miraculous thorn, on the other hand, was handled in a way that, apart from the obvious link with Jerusalem, established a connection with the West as well. Its setting in the palace of the Grand Master would, in a way, call to mind the Crown of Thorns that was famously kept in the royal chapel in Paris. The link must have been stronger in the eyes of the Knights, conscious of the long tradition of prestigious palace chapels; even though the island Order state on Rhodes constituted a particular type of institution,¹ its cosmopolitan ruling elite reproduced traditional European structures. A visit to the private chapel of the palace was in line with such famous exemplars as the Pharos chapel in Constantinople, the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, or the Palatine chapel in Aachen. Thus, although the main relic collection was to be found in the Conventual church, the Knights' most famous and miraculous relic was kept in the palace. In a way, it is as if the safekeeping of the relics in the Convent reflected a progression toward the core of the Hospitallers' sovereignty, marked also by the movement of the pious visitors, the thorn being the most highly mentioned relic in their texts.

In parallel, cultic practices connected with the *peregrinatio maritima* proved to become extremely successful at Rhodes. The belief in the protective interference of the holy in times of peril at sea found its greatest expression in Rhodes among the pilgrims in the legends and beliefs that gradually became connected with the cross made from the basin of the Washing of the Feet and, foremost, with the miraculous Phileremos icon. An ancient work with established legends, belonging to the widely recognizable group of miraculous Byzantine icons of the Mother of God, the Phileremos Madonna became a palladium for the Knights and a landmark for sailors. It ideally combined qualities that could not but elevate its cult to international fame—its origin and seniority, miraculous properties, the location of its shrine in an ideal topographical context recognizable by seamen: all were factors that jointly led to its cultic popularity, shared by Greeks and Latins alike. The Knights' management of the mountain shrine promoted its cult among the visitors, and the reconstruction works by Aubusson at the site after the siege of 1480 reflected and manifested

1 Luttrell 2013, 19–28.

the Order's gratefulness toward the Virgin, who was thought to have been the main factor in military success against the Ottomans.

Again connected with sailing, the cult of the cross from the basin of the Washing of the Feet was rooted in the tradition connecting St. Helena and the Holy Nails with the famously turbulent Gulf of Attaleia. The locals, in combination with the pilgrims' creative imaginations, created an innovation by including this specific cross in Helena's tradition. Consequently, apart from its potency in various aspects of everyday life that marked this relic ever since it was held by the Templars in Palestine, its miraculous work extended to the sea, an attribute that catapulted its popularity among pilgrims, especially through the production of wax impressions, which were distributed at St. John and would protect their carriers against storms.

A similar result was achieved even more successfully in the case of the Rhodian Judas coin. The Grand Master and the Grand Prior were actively involved in a process to resignify the ancient Rhodian coin, which acquired the high cultic status of a Christological relic and was further imbued with miraculous properties. The successful establishment of the cult was strongly based on its practical handling by its Rhodian owners, with the yearly custom of creating and distributing copies being its basic agent; subsequently, numerous pilgrims carried them all over Europe and propagated the coin's attributes, which were connected with the need for and practicality of succour at sea, but also touched on their mediation concerning various health conditions.

It seems that a well-tuned machine came into action at Rhodes. The flow of pilgrims started increasing at the time when the Order of the Hospitallers became sovereign; and the travelers' desire to see shrines and relics invested with extraordinary and holy properties went hand in hand with the Order's acquisition of the properties of the Templars. Gradually, the Knights could promote the site-specific experience in the town, focused on the recently built Conventual church and the palace, where they directed the pilgrims toward what were perceived as most holy relics. This interaction nurtured the diffusion of specific objects and experiences among the visitors. The pilgrims seem to have been aware of what there was to see, partly through previous travelogues that circulated widely and partly through information that traveled by word of mouth. In this respect, the role of the seafarers also proved important; for example, the identification of the shrine of Phileremos from the sea and the popularity of the wax impressions of the cross that helped in bad weather conditions must have been a result of the input of these people.

The topographical setting of the town was extended to its immediate surroundings. Just outside the walls was St. Anthony's cemetery, where indulgences were granted to the visitors. Moreover, St. John the Baptist *de Fonte* provided

a case of site-specific worship connected with the discovery of the Baptist's head, confirmed by the miraculous properties of the site. A few kilometers away, the idyllic setting of Mt. Phileremos offered the pilgrims and all devout visitors a complete experience of a traditional cultic shrine: the ancient miraculous icon, the hermits, the unique natural landscape.

These aforementioned cases illuminate the pilgrims' cultic experience and are illuminated by it. They trace a network of diverse cultic activities, which included the veneration of Christological and saintly relics that synecdochically evoked Jerusalem and of a Marian shrine with a miraculous icon, as well as of a memorial site recalling and evidencing a prodigious incident. The collections of relics seem to have had a stronger appeal to the religious sentiments of the travelers, mostly since the Christological mementoes hinted at their final goal or reminded them of the already achieved pious deed, in the cases when they paid their visit on their way back home. In this light, the possible existence of a Way of the Cross imitating the one at Jerusalem would further strengthen the link with the Holy City and provide a framework that would shape a direct topographical transposition in the town of Rhodes, resulting in an "analogical or mimetic evocation of Jerusalem."²

The practical way in which the above cultic phenomena came to materialize was diverse and analogous to each particular context. Here, the foremost shaping factor was the brethren. Familiar with the religious and artistic diversity in the Holy Land, they seem to have demonstrated notable balance. What has emerged firstly is that their collections of relics were housed in newly constructed Latin churches or chapels: the Conventual church, the chapel of the Grand Master, the church of St. Catherine's hospice. Information concerning the specific framing of the treasures is lacking; the few known features available that composed the setting in St. John create a shimmering image adorned with abundant gold and lavish lamps, at least from Aubusson's time on. It would be logical to assume that the approach had been similar before him as well, even though it is evident that it was Aubusson who largely invested in and cared for the religious and cultic institutions on the island. This kind of attention did not arise late at Rhodes; already in the 1390s Domenico de Alamania commissioned the richly endowed chapel at St. Catherine's hospice, for which evidence about the interior is unfortunately absent. The setting of the Grand Master's chapel could probably have been analogous to St. John, due to its status as the palace chapel; and concerning the Latin churches of St. Anthony and Our Lady of Victory, only vague assumptions can be made.

2 Bacci 2017a, 143.

Outside the town, the shrine of the Phileremos Madonna, erected on a location whose historical topography encapsulated the century-long religious experience of the site, followed, in a way, the rhythm of the flow of pilgrims on site. At the same time, the use of Gothic architecture served as a clear sign of the Knights' control and appropriation of the icon and its cult. Their activity is not surprising considering the symbolic importance that, somehow, they came to see in the Virgin of Phileremos; thus, the material annexation of the sanctuary was connected with the cultic and institutional assimilation of its symbol. This process cannot be disconnected from the pilgrims' dynamics concerning Phileremos, as well as from the potential of its cultic success, which surely did not escape the Knights. On the other hand, the Order did not intervene much with the Greek church of St. John *de Fonte*. Essentially a memorial site, it could not provide such a diverse and adaptable experience as the one connected with a moveable object; moreover, the Hospitallers had in any case the major relic of the Baptist's hand in its possession.

The reliquaries housing the treasures combined various artistic traditions: Byzantine, Constantinopolitan, crusader, Western. The motif of the specific choices is difficult to assess. Newly made Western-style reliquaries were used for highly esteemed relics, such as the hand of the Baptist or the arm of St. Catherine. Given the turbulent history of the Knights, most of the evidence has been eliminated, not to mention that the restoration and renovation of reliquaries is a rather common practice, due to the nature of the relics and their frequent association with powerful elites. On the other hand, the reliquary diptych at Mdina attests to the presence of Byzantine reliquaries, and it can be supposed that there were many more, but Byzantine art was not connected with the famous worshipped Rhodian relics. The essentially Byzantine tradition, though, found its expression in the Phileremos image; its treatment was in accordance with traditional cultic practices for miraculous icons, with the use of veils and the attachment of numerous *ex votos*. Unfortunately, details that could provide necessary information about the aesthetic choices of the icon's presentation are missing; later evidence does not provide clues for the Rhodian period. Nevertheless, this is the only case of a Byzantine icon as the focal center of a Hospitaller church on Rhodes.

The Rhodian setting emerges as the interaction between the initiative of the Hospitallers in the local Rhodian context and the numerous pious pilgrims; both were actors in a process during which formerly unknown or little-known cultic phenomena and objects acquired new meaning and became internationally recognized, due to the diffusion of specific objects and experiences, successfully appropriated by Western travelers. The success of this process was largely based around the newly acquired symbolical meaning of the urban

structure that was signalled by monumental frames with constant references to the Holy Land; and, in a way, the most direct indicators of the specific Rhodian *mise-en-scène* remain the pilgrims' texts themselves. Thus, from the late 14th century on, the town of Rhodes appears as an organic part of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem: through symbolism or synecdoche, it conjured up the site-bound holiness of the Holy Land and came to be—with the granting of indulgences—a rewarding stage on the pilgrims' journey. The few, but important, occasions of felicitous mentions of Rhodes by pilgrims already in Palestine or on their way to Sinai, when discussing various issues concerning holy relics, as in the case of the thorn, or divine help, as in the case of Phileremos, echo a rooted conception of Rhodes as an integral part of the Jerusalem pilgrimage and of the wider context of maritime sacral topography of the Eastern Mediterranean.

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Abbreviations

- AASS *Acta sanctorum*, Antwerp—Paris—Rome—Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1643–
- AB *Analecta Bollandiana*
- ACM Archives of the Metropolitan Cathedral, Mdina
- ΑΔ *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον*
- AFrH *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*
- AOM Archives of the Order of Malta, National Library of Malta, Valletta
- AOSMM *Annales de l'Ordre souverain militaire de Malte*
- ArtB *The Art Bulletin*
- ArteCr *Arte Cristiana*
- ASAtene *Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene*
- AStIt *Archivio storico italiano*
- BEC *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*
- BHG F. Halkin (ed.), *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca* (Subsidia hagiographica 8a), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1957 (repr. 1985)
- BHL *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis* (Subsidia hagiographica 6), Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1898–1901 (repr. 1992)
- BMGS *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
- BSPOM *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire et du Patrimoine de l'Ordre de Malte*
- BullMon *Bulletin Monumental*
- ByzF *Byzantinische Forschungen*
- BZ *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
- CRAI *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*
- ΔΧΑΕ *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*
- DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
- JEH *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
- JSav *Journal des savants*
- JWarb *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
- MonPiot *Monuments et mémoires*, Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Fondation Eugène Piot
- OC *Oriens christianus*
- ΠΑΕ *Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας*
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- PL* J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina*, Paris, 1844–1880
- PPSb* *Pravoslavnii palestinskii sbornik*
- REB* *Revue des études byzantines*
- ROSMM* *Revue de l'Ordre souverain militaire de Malte*
- RN* *Revue numismatique*
- ROL* *Revue de l'Orient latin*
- RSBN* *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*
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- VizVrem* *Vizantiiskii vremennik*
- ZDPV* *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
- ZfdPh* *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*
- ZKircheng* *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*

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