



NICHOLAS COUREAS (NICOSIA)

BETWEEN HOSPITALLER RHODES
AND LUSIGNAN CYPRUS:
THE CASE OF THE ZAPLANA FAMILY

KEYWORDS

Rhodes; Cyprus; Zaplana family; Hospitallers, Military Orders; Mediterranean

During the early to mid-fifteenth century members of the Catalan Zaplana family exercised high office in the kingdom of Aragon, on Rhodes and on Cyprus within the Hospitaller Order, a phenomenon discussed in the recently published article of Pierre Bonneaud utilizing extensively various archival collections in Barcelona and Malta.¹ This paper, based chiefly on documentary collections relevant to Rhodes and Cyprus from the Maltese archives published by Zacharias Tsirpanlis and subsequently by Karl Borchardt, Anthony Luttrell and Ekhard Schoeffler, on documents from the *secrète* or treasury of the Lusignan crown published by Jean Richard, the older documentary materials published by Louis de Mas Latrie and on two sixteenth century Cypriot chronicles, focuses on the careers and activities of the Hospitallers Raphael Zaplana on Rhodes and two of his nephews, Nicholas Zaplana on Cyprus and James Zaplana on Cyprus. The last was not a Hospitaller but was Nicholas' brother, and his family's association with the Order assisted his career in the service of King James II, a king, who having usurped the throne in the course of a civil war from the legitimate heir Queen Charlotte worked hard to ingratiate himself with the Hospitaller Order so as to secure papal recognition of his rule. The presence and activities of members of the Catalan family of Zaplana on Rhodes and Cyprus are to be placed, moreover, within the wider context of Catalan and Aragonese involvement in the central

¹ P. Bonneaud, *Les Saplana, histoire d'un "clan" familial Catalan et de ses liens avec l'Ordre de l'Hôpital (1412–1478)*, Société de l'histoire et du patrimoine de l'Ordre de Malte 29 (2013), pp. 37–49.

and eastern Mediterranean, especially under King Alfonso the Magnanimous (1416–1458), who conquered the Angevin kingdom of Naples in 1442, united Sicily, Sardinia and Southern Italy to his Aragonese dominions and was succeeded as king in Naples and Sicily by his illegitimate son Ferrante (1458–1494).

Catalans in general were prominent on Hospitaller Rhodes during the fifteenth century. Two Catalans, Anthony Fluvia and Pere Ramon Zacosta, became grand masters of the Hospitaller Order between the years 1421–1437 and 1461–1467 respectively, while Catalans held various high offices in the Order throughout the fifteenth century, even if their influence waned somewhat under the Auvergnac priors Jean the Lastic and Jacques de Milly (1437–1461).² Raphael Zaplana was a prominent member of the Order whose early career was spent on Rhodes. Following his reception into the Order sometime before 1412 he failed in two attempts of 1413 and 1418 to obtain a commandery in the kingdom of Aragon, despite enjoying the support of Prince Alfonso, heir to King Ferdinand I (1412–1416) and the future King Alfonso V (1416–1458). He was summoned to Rhodes by the Hospitaller Grand Master Philibert de Naillac to attend the general chapter to be held there in September 1420, a move opposed by King Alfonso who invoked his valuable military services in the royal army. He eventually did journey to Rhodes, but notwithstanding the succession of the Catalan Anthony Fluvia as Grand Master later in 1421 he obtained various Catalan commanderies with only modest incomes between the years 1428–1433. The Aragonese brothers on Rhodes disputed his claim to belong to their priory while the procurators of the priory of Catalonia maintained that he did not belong there either, although he finally joined the latter priory on the Grand Master's decree.³

From the year 1433 onwards, however, Raphael Zaplana's career advanced rapidly. He became *bailli* on Rhodes in December 1433, holding this office until November 1436, and preceptor of Sycamino or Negroponte early in 1434, when the incumbent Gisbert de Miraples was promoted to draper. The preceptory of Sycamino was considered a stepping stone to the office of draper. On Miraples's death in September 1434 Raphael Zaplana obtained and held this important office until September 1439, despite the protests of the castellan Juan de Villafranca, a rival and more senior candidate. The culmination of Raphael's career came in May 1439 when he was appointed prior of Catalonia by the Hospitaller Grand master Jean de Lastic and the convent of the Order. King Alfonso V, however, despite the earlier favour shown to Raphael Zaplana, now opposed his accession to the priory, maintaining that Pope Eugenius IV had nominated a certain Foncober-

² P. Bonneaud, *Els Hospitalers Catalans a la fi de l'Edat Mitjana*, Lleida 2008, pp. 179–184.

³ Bonneaud, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), pp. 40–41.

ta, and he impeded him from taking possession of it for two years. Zaplana finally obtained the priory by providing King Alfonso 4,000 ducats to finance his campaign in Italy and returned to Catalonia after a 20-year absence, celebrating two provincial chapters and two assemblies there in the year 1442–1443. He attended the Order's general chapter held in Rome in 1446 and then went to Rhodes, dying there in 1447. Meanwhile, the person elected to succeed Zaplana as draper, Pere Ramon Zacosta, was to become grand Master of the Order in 1461. It has been pointed out that of the 15 Spaniards becoming draper in the period 1396–1472, 13 of whom were Catalan and only two Aragonese, eight had originated from the priory of Catalonia and seven from the castellany of Amposta. Five of these 13 Catalan drapers became priors of Catalonia and two castellans of Amposta. The office of draper was also a stepping stone to higher posts and numerous Catalans held it in the fifteenth century.⁴

Turning to Raphael Zaplana's familial antecedents and environment, one sees that his father Anthony, a notary of the area around Barcelona, had been admitted to the Hospitaller Order as a knight in 1412. This notary had performed important services to King Ferrante I of Aragon (1412–1416) who by way of repaying him exerted his influence to have Raphael Zaplana admitted to the Hospitaller Order as a knight, despite his non-aristocratic background. In addition, the king's son and heir, the *infante* Alfonso who later became King Alfonso V, tried in vain with Pope Benedict XIII to have him and other royal protégés granted new commanderies between the years 1413–1418. Nonetheless, Raphael Zaplana showed his willingness to serve the Aragonese crown following his admission to the Order by taking part in Alfonso V's expedition against Sardinia in 1420 along with two other Catalan Hospitallers. Raphael also had a brother named John, who belonged to the royal entourage. John is recorded as having had nine sons and one daughter. Three of his sons, Anthony Peter, George and Nicholas became Hospitallers, holding a variety of offices in the priory of Catalonia, the castellany of Amposta and on Rhodes. In 1442 George is recorded as the adjutant of the chamber of Grand Master Jean de Lastic and obtained various commanderies in Catalonia under successive Grand Masters of the Order, although he was recalled to Rhodes to assist against the Ottoman threat in 1456, remaining there until his death in 1470. Like other Hospitaller brothers on Rhodes he possessed a ship, a *griparia*, used for commercial profit but also at the service of the Order in times of war. In

⁴ Bonneaud, *Els Hospitalers Catalans* (as n. 2), pp. 175–176, 183–184; idem, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), pp. 41–42; J. Sarnowsky, *Macht und Herrschaft im Johanniterorden des 15. Jahrhunderts: Verfassung und verwaltung de Johanniter auf Rhodos (1421–1522)*, Münster–Hamburg–London 2001, pp. 92, 99, 163 n. 86; 654, 664, 671, 679.

1463 the ship was among the items given as security for a loan of 3,000 Rhodian florins granted to George by his brothers James and Nicholas so that he could pay outstanding responsions he owed the Order. Two sons, Bernard and James, pursued naval careers in the eastern Mediterranean, including piracy, to be discussed below.⁵

There are a number of extant documents recording Raphael Zaplana's activities on Rhodes as draper and *bailli*. One of them dated 26 November 1437 records Raphael Zaplana as draper and other high officers of the Order giving their approval for the receipt of the sum of 1,152 florins in Rhodian currency, amounting to 720 gold Rhodian ducats, from Ezechiel Mauristiri, a Jew resident on Rhodes, since there was no other means available to raise the money. Ezechiel was willing to provide this money without charging any interest but nonetheless wanted securities for this sum. By way of providing it Raphael Zaplana and the other high officers, who included the priors of England and Limoges as well as the master shield-bearer, undertook with the consent of the lieutenant, convent and council of the Order to pledge the fixed and moveable properties belonging to the Grand Master and his magistrates in the East and West to Ezechiel and his relations so as to make good any possible shortfall in the repayment. Besides this general pledge, Ezechiel was also specifically assigned the incomes from the Rhodian soap factories, four per cent of the receipts from the market taxes, the head tax on the infidels and the incomes from agricultural crops coming on a daily basis. The order's officers also guaranteed Ezechiel's personal safety until repayment was completed and that all the above guarantees were valid even if the newly appointed grand Master were to die or be unwilling to accept the office offered him. A second contract with exactly the same terms, but this time for the sum of 2,000 Rhodian florins to be advanced by a creditor named Saffredo Calvo, an Italian nobleman resident on Rhodes, was signed by Raphael Zaplana as draper of the Order and the other officers mentioned above on 29 November 1437.⁶

Catalan merchants were prominent in the commercial life of fifteenth century Hospitaller Rhodes. One of them is recorded as advancing money to the Order in a document dated 11 August 1438. According to its terms, Brother Robert de Diana the prior of Rome and the Convent of the Order on Rhodes recognized the validity of the agreement whereby the draper Raphael Zaplana, the seneschal and preceptor of Caspi Peter de Lignano and other procurators of the Grand Master

⁵ Bonneaud, *Els Hospitalers Catalans* (as n. 2), pp. 92, 131, 177, 200, 221–224, 385; idem, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), pp. 40, 43–44.

⁶ *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo kai tes Noties Sporades apo to arkheio ton Ioanniton Hippoton 1421–1453*, ed. Z. Tsirpanlis, Rhodes 1995, nos 63–64; Sarnowsky (as n. 4), p. 516 and n. 22.

had received 1,000 gold Rhodian ducats from Ferrer Beltram, a citizen and merchant of Barcelona resident in Rhodes at the time, by way of a loan to be paid into the Order's treasury. This had been done because the Grand Master had himself taken out 12,000 florins from the treasury in order to prosecute some businesses of his in the West. He had been advanced this money by Brother Peter Lamandi, the Order's general treasurer, and this had been recorded in letter the Grand Master had directed to the religious brother Raymond Iou, the general receiver of the Order of the castellany of Amposta. The merchant Raymond Ferrer was to be repaid in October, the procurators having by way of security pledged their goods and the Grand Master's incomes wherever they might be but especially those on Rhodes. It was also additionally stipulated in a different hand that if Ferrer Beltram so required, repayment would be made on the arrival of the Catalan merchant galleys and merchandise in Rhodes, despite the above stated terms and conditions, if had had not been paid by the procurators in the meantime.⁷

It is noteworthy that members of the Catalan Ferrer family also had interests in Cyprus, where they were among the biggest owners of sugar plantations, their estates at Kolossi having been devastated during the naval raids conducted against Kolossi by the Mamluks of Egypt. Their interests in both Rhodes and Cyprus like those of the Zaplana family reflect the growing strength of the Catalan presence in the Eastern Mediterranean following the accession of Alfonso V to the Aragonese throne in 1416 and the election of a Catalan, Anthony Fluvia, as grand master of the Hospitaller Order in 1421.⁸ In his capacity as draper Raphael Zaplana signed two similar loan agreements with merchants of indeterminate European origin, one on 11 August 1438 with the merchant Gabriel Gual, who advanced 500 gold Rhodian ducats to the Order, and another on 27 August with the merchant Peter Saclosa for the same sum of money. It was around this time, shortly after 15 June 1438, that Bernard Zaplana made a visit to Cyprus. A document of this date records how the lieutenant and council of the Order, having assembled, decided that since the draper Raphael Zaplana was about to go to Cyprus to visit King John II 'for the greatest and most evident utility of the whole of our Order', the officers of the Order were not to make any provisions for filling the vacant priory of Catalonia until his return from Cyprus, something that the whole council promised him

⁷ *Anekdotia engrapha apo to arkeio ton Ioanniton Hippoton* (as n. 6), no 81; Sarnowsky (as n. 4), p. 523.

⁸ *Documents concerning Cyprus from the Hospitallers' Rhodian Archives 1409–1459*, ed. K. Borchardt, A Luttrell, E. Schöffler, Nicosia 2011, p. lii and n. 40; D. Coulon, *Barcelone et le grand commerce d'Orient à Moyen Âge: Un siècle des relations avec l'Égypte et la Syrie-Palestine (ca. 1330–ca. 1430)*, Madrid-Barcelona 2004, pp. 54–55; Bonneaud, *Els Hospitalers Catalans* (as n. 2), pp. 141–158, 191–201.

and which promise the chancellor registered in writing. The fact that Zaplana's mission is unspecified indicates its confidential nature, perhaps in connections with the Order's estates on Cyprus, given that there was a previous mission to Cyprus of May 1437 over the Order's purchase of royal estates and incomes and a subsequent one of January 1443 over the crown's assignation of incomes belonging to the Order to various ecclesiastical or lay persons.⁹

Raphael Zaplana's responsibilities as *bailli* on Rhodes as well as draper are recorded, although less extensively, and the document in question postdates his appointment as prior of Catalonia in May 1439. This document, dated 25 April 1440 and which the Grand Master and council addressed to Brother John Cavalliono alias Romei, the Grand Preceptor of the convent, instructed him to examine and confirm the accounting of property and incomes regarding the properties of deceased persons that were still not disposed, which Raphael Zaplana had undertaken in the countryside, *casalia* and other localities throughout the island, the present prior of Catalonia 'and *bailli* of the island at the time'. Zaplana had conducted his accounting of such properties and incomes under the late Grand master Anthony Fluvia, and on completing his examination John Cavalliono was to submit his report in the presence of Brother John Morelli, prior of the convent of Rhodes, and other officers of the Order. In addition, the treasury of the Order was to be informed of whatever it could acquire at some point in the future on the basis of his report. One observes that this office of *bailli* was given to members of the Order who subsequently arose high in its service, including the Catalans Albert Ermengol in 1428 and Brother Ramon Zacosta, future Grand Master of the Order, in 1436.¹⁰

The two members of the Zaplana family most active in Cyprus from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards were James, a pirate who subsequently entered the service of King James II of Cyprus, and his brother Nicholas, who pursued a career in the Hospitaller Order. Although James's first recorded activity in Cyprus was piracy he was not the first member of the family to engage in piracy off Cypriot waters. His paternal uncle Gabriel captained a pirate galley from 1441 onwards and at the request of Raphael Zaplana, then prior of Catalonia, was exempted by King Alfonso V from paying the tax of one fifth of spoils gained from piracy due to the crown. In a raid against the coastline of Cyprus Gabriel's galley inflicted considerable harm, even seizing vessels belonging to King John II

⁹ *Anekdotia engrapha apo to arkheio ton Ioanniton Hippoton* (as n. 6), no 81, p. 334; *Documents concerning Cyprus from the Hospitallers' Rhodian Archives* (as n. 8), p. li and no 138.

¹⁰ *Anekdotia engrapha apo to arkheio ton Ioanniton Hippoton* (as n. 6), no 119; Sarnowsky (as n. 4), p. 386; Bonneaud, *Els Hospitalers Catalans* (as n. 2), pp. 176–177.

of Cyprus, an ally of King Alfonso V and a Hospitaller protégée. Even if both King Alfonso and the Hospitaller grand Master Jean de Lastic were incensed by this particular raid, one must point out that in general the Order welcomed such piratical activity in the eastern Mediterranean because the booty was brought to the port of Rhodes and sold there. As pointed out above, fifteenth century Rhodes had two Catalan grand masters, while numerous Catalan merchants and mariners either visited the island or resided there in the pursuit of commerce.¹¹

In view of this it is not strange to find members of the Zaplana family as either Hospitallers or pirates in the eastern Mediterranean. Bernard Zaplana, one of John Zaplana's nine sons, began his career by assisting King Alfonso in his Italian campaigns but in 1462 was authorized to enter the port of Rhodes and take up residence in the city by the Catalan Grand Master of the Hospitaller Order Peter Ramon Zacosta, along with his own *balena* ship and another captured ship with its merchandise and crew on board. While on Rhodes he seems to have obtained the favour of the exiled Queen Charlotte of Cyprus, the rightful heir to the throne overthrown by her half-brother, the future King James II. Charlotte, resident in Rome from 1464 until her death in 1487, received full absolution and the right to choose a confessor for herself and her familiars in a bull of Pope Paul II dated 18 May 1467, in which Bernard Zaplana is mentioned as one of her familiars. In addition, Bernard advanced considerable sums to the Order by way of loans, but his death on Rhodes in 1470 provoked a conflict among his surviving brothers, a topic which will be discussed below.¹²

Despite his piratical background James distinguished himself in the service of King James II. His Catalan origins and King James's desire to cultivate good relations with the Hospitaller Order must have assisted his career, as will be argued below. James Zaplana is first mentioned in connection with Cyprus early in 1461, when his ship was wrecked while he was practising piracy on behalf of the Genoese in Famagusta, besieged by the forces of the future King James II, off the coast of the Karpass peninsula. Following his capture by Alessandro Tarantin, the *bailli* of the area, he was brought into the presence of the future king, at the time an illegitimate usurper fighting a civil war against his half-sister Charlotte, the lawful queen of Cyprus. According to the contemporary Cypriot chronicler George Boustronios and the later chronicler Florio Bustron, whose account is the more detailed in this respect, James Zaplana and the other pirates were sent under escort

¹¹ Bonneaud, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), pp. 39–40, 45–46.

¹² Bonneaud, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), p. 46; W. H. Rudt de Collenberg, *Études de prosopographie généalogique des Chypriotes mentionnés dans les registres du Vatican 1378–1471*, Meletai kai Hypomnemata 1 (1984), pp. 541–542, 547.

to Famagusta. James himself was brought into the presence of the future king, who after three days had the irons taken off him, had him clothed in a robe of crimson velvet and promised him great honours if he as a capable and brave soldier promised to change sides and serve him faithfully, for his present Genoese paymasters could offer him only peril, not profit.¹³

The future king was as good as his word. James Zaplana entered his service and following the future king's victory in 1464 over both his sister Queen Charlotte and the Genoese, who surrendered Famagusta to him, he was granted as fiefs the *casalia* of Agrinou, Tokhni, Vouda, Maroni and Ardana. By early 1468 he was the chief purveyor of the kingdom and head of the *secrète*, the office administering the royal estate and the king's finances, while by 3 December 1471 he had become the governor of the royal treasury. King James's death in July 1473, however, undermined his position. James Zaplana seems to have been aware of this, for George Boustronios records him as having sent his nephew Louis Alberic to Cyprus in September 1473 to see how things were turning out following the king's death. He happened to be on Rhodes at this time, over an issue concerning him and his eldest brother. The issue itself was the dispute that had arisen between William Ramon, the eldest son of John Zaplana, and the remaining brothers after the death of Bernard Zaplana, already mentioned in passing above. It concerned the payment of moneys owed by the Hospitaller Order to the deceased Bernard, and who was to acquire them following Bernard's death. Bernard had made a will in favour of his eldest brother William Ramon and King John II of Aragon (1458–1479) supported this brother. The other brothers, however, including James and probably Nicholas, had submitted another will, a forgery that promoted their interests. The Order, to which Nicholas belonged and which supported James, nonetheless upheld the forgery and guaranteed James payment of the sums owed to the deceased Bernard Zaplana. As early as 31 May 1471 the Hospitaller Grand Master Gianbattista Orsini granted James at his own request a safe-conduct as well as a guarantee for all his goods, namely those he had received as an inheritance from his deceased brother Bernard and for all other goods. This guarantee also covered all sums owed by the Hospitaller treasury on Rhodes to the late Bernard and to James. As it is unlikely that James sojourned on Rhodes for over two years, he must have visited the island again in late 1473 to collect any outstanding sums.¹⁴

¹³ George Boustronios, *A Narrative of the Chronicle of Cyprus 1456–1489*, trans. N. Coureas, Nicosia 2005, § 71; Florio Bustron, *Chronique de l'île de Chypre*, ed. R. de Mas Latrie, in: *Collection des documents inédits sur l'histoire de France: Mélanges historiques*, vol. 5, Paris 1886, pp. 403–404.

¹⁴ Boustronios (as n. 13), § 131; Bustron (as n. 13), p. 418; *Le Livre des remembrances de la secrète du royaume de Chypre (1468–1469)*, ed. J. Richard, Nicosia 1983, nos 69, 159–165, 168–169,

At this point James Zaplana's involvement in the conspiracy to overthrow Queen Catherine, the Venetian widow of King James II, and thereby prevent a Venetian de facto takeover of Cyprus, which unfolded in the second half of 1473, merits examination. Firstly, one observes in a general context that most leaders of the conspiracy were either Catalans or originated from Sicily and the kingdom of Naples, which King Alfonso V of Aragon had conquered by 1442 after a hard-fought campaign. Following his death the kingdom of Naples devolved on his illegitimate son Ferrante (1458–1494) who in Cyprus enjoyed the support of James Zaplana and Perez Fabrigues the archbishop of Nicosia, both Catalans, Rizzo de Marino, a Sicilian who was the chamberlain of Cyprus and Louis Alberic, a nephew of James Zaplana. Ferrante hoped to acquire Cyprus by having his illegitimate son Don Alonzo married to Charla, an illegitimate daughter of the late King James II. Archbishop Perez, away in Europe, returned to Cyprus on 5 November 1473, apparently bringing papal letters rebuking the nobility of Cyprus for having allowed Queen Catherine's Venetian advisers to take control of Cyprus. The nobility then gathered in James Zaplana's house in Famagusta, where James told them that the Venetians were planning to assassinate the royal councillors, including Rizzo. Rizzo and his followers confronted the queen's Venetian advisers in Famagusta and assassinated them. The plotters then tried to secure the kingdom's castles. James Zaplana on 17 November went to Kerynia to secure the castle there for his nephew Louis Alberic, which he achieved despite the reluctance of Nicholas Morabit, the viscount of Nicosia, to hand it over.¹⁵

With the arrival of Venetian galleys and troops from 23 November onwards, however, events began to turn against the conspirators. On 7 December Alberic was compelled to return the castle of Kyrenia to Morabit, having received new instructions from the queen in writing to this effect, and several days later James Zaplana, angered to hear that Venetian mercenaries had killed a man belonging to his party, next received written instructions from the queen placing him under house arrest in Famagusta. Enraged by this he allegedly rode out of the city with around 40 mounted followers, until persuaded to return by the archbishop, who had come out of Famagusta to persuade him to return in line with the queen's orders. This he did, and although two days afterwards he obtained her permission to ride to Nicosia with 25 men once he arrived there the populace, ardent supporters of Queen Catherine, refused him entry unless he brought the queen with him.

171, 191, 207, 226 and Appendix I, doc. II; L. de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, 3 vols, Paris 1852–1861, here vol. 2, p. 165.

¹⁵ Boustronios (as n. 13), §§ 153–155 and 158–159; Bustron (as n. 13), pp. 437–441; D. Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms 1200–1500*, London–New York 1997, pp. 205–206, 223–235.

James Zaplana, now forced to go back, apparently dared not re-enter Famagusta. Remaining outside the city in hiding he sent word for the archbishop and Rizzo to join him. Most probably they had learnt of the impending arrival in Famagusta of 700 soldiers from Venice, who landed there on 31 December 1473, forcing them to flee Cyprus along with Louis Alberic. One notes in passing that not all of King James's former councillors originating from outside Cyprus felt compelled to turn against Venice. Some of them, notably the Neapolitan Muzzio di Constanzo, admiral of Cyprus, and the abovementioned Sicilian Nicholas Morabit, viscount of Nicosia, successfully made the transition to Venetian rule, serving the kingdom of Cyprus under Queen Catherine.¹⁶

To escape arrest by the Venetians who now controlled Cyprus James Zaplana and his fellow conspirators fled to the West on board a galley sent from Naples by King Ferrante. Two Venetian galleys gave chase but failed to prevent the Neapolitan galley from reaching Rhodes. The Venetian captain-general Peter Mocenigo arrived in Rhodes on 25 January and demanded the surrender of the escapees but when the Hospitaller Grand Master Giovanni Battista Orsini refused he eventually climbed down, simply demanding that they should not remain on the island. On 14 February James Zaplana, discovered in hiding, was ordered to board a Genoese galley for the West. Following the departure of James and his associates from Cyprus their goods were confiscated and in October 1476 the Venetians deported their kinsmen still on Cyprus to Venice. Among them was James Zaplana's wife, who was the widow of James Kallergis and whose three children by her first husband had been deprived of their property in February 1474 on account of James Zaplana being their step-father. Zaplana's wife, however, was freed on arriving in Venice in January 1477 at the request of King John II of Aragon, who like his predecessors continued to favour and support members of the Zaplana family. One observes that at the time of King John's request James's brother Nicholas was draper of the Hospitaller Order on Rhodes, another brother, William Ramon, who had pursued a career as an officer in the royal guard of King Alfonso V, was designated 'head of the house and line of the Zaplana family' by King John and a third brother, Calceran Zaplana, possibly the youngest of them, is recorded in 1470 as a royal councillor and keeper of the royal patrimony.¹⁷

¹⁶ Boustronios (as n. 13), §§ 163, 166–170, 175–177; Bustron (as n. 13), pp. 442–446; *Documents nouveaux servant de preuves à l'histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie, in: *Collection des documents inédits: Mélanges historiques*, vol. 4, Paris 1882, pp. 439–440; *Livre des remembrances de la secrète du royaume de Chypre* (as n. 14), no 146, n. 1; no 159, n. 1.

¹⁷ Boustronios (as n. 13), §§ 176–177, 180, 182, 184–186, 224, 234, 243, 256; Bustron (as n. 13), pp. 445–446, 448–449; Mas Latrie (as n. 14), here vol. 3, pp. 408–410, 411–412; G. Hill,

James Zaplana's involvement with Cyprus did not cease with his forced departure from the island. On the contrary, he reverted to piracy, the activity that both he and other members of his family had previously engaged in, as discussed above. One year later, on 28 December 1474, the Venetian Senate wrote a letter to the captain-general of the Venetian fleet in the eastern Mediterranean. The letter began by explicitly naming James Zaplana, along with Peres Fabrigues the Latin archbishop of Nicosia, Rizzo de Marino, former chamberlain of Cyprus, Louis Alberic, James Zaplana's nephew and John Tafur the count of Tripoli as not ceasing to plot against the government of Queen Catherine. It went on to state that many persons of diverse national origins recently expelled from Cyprus had armed light galleys and were raiding the coasts of both Cyprus and the adjacent Mamluk lands of Syria and Egypt. This had provoked the Mamluk sultan's wrath, for he thought mistakenly that these raids were being conducted from Cyprus itself by subjects of Queen Catherine. On account of this the captain general was instructed that should his fleet come across any such persons on board whatever type of ship, he and his men were authorized to board such vessels, seize those on board and have them put in irons to prevent their escape and then place them in the queen's custody so that they could be put to torture. Although James Zaplana is not explicitly accused in this letter as being on board such ships in person his piratical antecedents strongly suggest that he was once more practising piracy against Cyprus.¹⁸

A short discussion on the policy of King James II towards the Hospitallers and how this may have influenced his favour towards James Zaplana is now in order. Firstly one observes that Pere Ramon Zacosta, the Catalan who had succeeded Raphael Zaplana as draper of the Order in July 1439, attained the office of Grand Master in late 1461, only a few months after James Zaplana had entered the service of the future King James II following his capture. In November 1462 the Aragonese Hospitaller Juan Ram, a close friend of Ramon Zacosta, was appointed Grand Preceptor of Cyprus, and this reinforcement of the Catalan element within the Order must have been known to the future King James. The favour he showed James Zaplana can arguably be placed solely within the overall context of his policy of recruiting experienced overseas mercenaries to fight for him against Charlotte, whom he rewarded handsomely following his victory.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Zaplana's Catalan origins and membership of a family with a record of service in the Hospitaller Order must have provided an added inducement in his particular

A History of Cyprus, 4 vols, Cambridge 1940–1952, here vol. 3, p. 674 and n. 1; pp. 687–688, 726; Sarnowsky (as n. 4), p. 655; Bonneaud, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), pp. 47–48.

¹⁸ Mas Latrie (as n. 14), here vol. 3, pp. 402–403; Bonneaud, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1) p. 47.

¹⁹ Sarnowsky (as n. 4), pp. 230, 672; Bonneaud, *Els Hospitalers Catalans* (as n. 2), pp. 313, 328–329, 335; Bustron (as n. 13), pp. 417–424.

case. As has been argued in detail elsewhere, the future King James cultivated relations with the Hospitallers on Cyprus during the civil war between him and his sister Charlotte, despite their official support for her on the international scene. This was because he knew well that good relations with a Roman Catholic order would be crucial in securing papal recognition of his rule, something that eventually materialized in 1466, two years after his victory.²⁰

In addition, Catalans and other Spaniards were included among those Hospitallers he rewarded or co-operated with after becoming king. Examples are Gomez d'Avila, to whom he granted incomes and estates in March and June 1468 while also relieving him from having to pay the royal tithes and other exactions. In March 1468 King James also acknowledged an outstanding debt to the value of 9,448 gold ducats owed to Juan Rames, the Grand Preceptor of the Order on Cyprus, undertaking to repay the outstanding balance, after the deduction of 5,000 ducats representing the value of a ship seized by the king's men and subsequently taken by the Hospitallers, out of the revenues obtained from the sale of sugar from various royal *casalia* and salt from the locality of Salines near Larnaca. A document dated 5 October 1468 alluding to a debt of 693 Venetian ducats or 1,040 Rhodian ducats that the king owed the Order's current Grand Master, Giovanni Battista degli Orsini, alludes to how the debt was contracted some years previously when at King James request Orsini's predecessor, the Catalan Grand Master Raymond Zacosta paid the ransom of seven Muslim slaves whom the king then had sent back to the Mamluk sultan of Egypt. Such close co-operation between King James and the Catalan and Aragonese Hospitallers reinforces the supposition that he valued James Zaplana not simply for his mercenary skills, but also for his familial and ethnic connections with highly placed members of the Order of St John.²¹

With the arrival of Nicholas Zaplana on Cyprus as Grand Preceptor of its estates there, an office he acquired on 26 November 1471, the position of the Zaplana family on the island was ostensibly reinforced, given that his brother James Zaplana became governor of the royal treasury at around the same time, and certainly by 3 December 1471, as pointed out above. Nicholas Zaplana had been in the Order of St John for over a decade by then, for he is recorded on 7 January 1460 as having lent the sum of 104 ducats to Gilbert de Loschis, the Hospitaller prior of Catalonia. He also served as the Grand Master's seneschal from 26 October 1470 until 5 May 1474, an important office with fiscal responsibilities. Hence he is recorded as being owed the sum of 1,950 florins by the

²⁰ N. Coureas, *King James II and the Hospitallers: Evidence from the "Livre des Remembrances"*, in: *The Military Orders*, vol. 5: *Politics and Power*, ed. P. W. Edbury, Farnham 2012, pp. 113–121.

²¹ *Livre des Remembrances de la secrète du royaume de Chypre* (as n. 14), nos 4, 63, 146, 164.

Hospitaller brother Robert de Franquelance in an entry of 26 November 1471, repayable in instalments until August 1474. On Cyprus itself Nicholas Zaplana is recorded as having engaged in a dispute with the Hospitaller brother Hisbert de Villeneuve over the *casale* of Templos near Kerynia. Nicholas maintained that it was subject to the grand preceptory of Cyprus while Hisbert stated that it formed a separate commandery. An agreement the two parties concluded on 6 November 1472, however, granted Hisbert lifetime possession of Templos which would be reunited to the grand preceptory after his death.²²

The economic decline of the Order's estates in general during the second half of the fifteenth century is reflected by the fact that following his appointment as Grand Preceptor of Cyprus Nicholas Zaplana was required to pay the Order only 4,500 florins a year by way of annual responsions, even if at first he was also obliged to furnish 1,000 *modia* of wheat, another 3,000 of barley and 20 butts of good quality wine. But the death of King James II in July 1473 followed by the escape from Cyprus of his kinsman James Zaplana in January 1474 completely undermined Nicholas' position on the island, now under Venetian control. In late January 1474 officers of Queen Catherine arrived at the Hospitaller fortress of Kolossi and told the brothers there to hand over any valuables the fugitive James Zaplana might have hidden with them. The Hospitaller brothers initially denied possessing any such effects, but on being replied to affirm this under oath they admitted to holding his valuables. The queen's officers found velvets, gold-threaded blue and crimson cloths, silver and great quantities of powdered sugar, all estimated to have a total value of 4,000 Venetian ducats. Following this discovery and Nicholas Zaplana's involvement in concealing his kinsman's valuables the queen deprived him of the grand preceptory on 24 March 1474, requesting the Grand Master on Rhodes to appoint a replacement. This was the Venetian Mark Crispo, himself an uncle of the queen, and from that point onwards the grand preceptory of Cyprus came under Venetian control. Nicholas Zaplana himself continued to attain high office in the Order on Rhodes. Following his return to Rhodes he was appointed draper on 4 November 1475 and held this office until 29 his death on October 1478, in conformity with the custom whereby the holder of this office was chosen from the tongue of Aragon. The Zaplana family, however, are no longer recorded as serving the Order on Rhodes or Cyprus from the final two decades of the fifteenth century onwards.²³

²² Sarnowsky (as n. 4), pp. 238, 259–262, 519, 560, 655, 672; Mas Latrie (as n. 14), here vol. 3, pp. 93–94.

²³ Mas Latrie (as n. 14), here vol. 3, p. 93; Boustronios (as n. 13), §§ 192, 256; Sarnowsky (as in n. 4), pp. 427, 661; Bonneaud, *Les Saplana* (as n. 1), p. 47; Hill (as n. 17), here vol. 3, p. 698 and n. 3; H. Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, Woodbridge 2001, p. 76; A. Luttrell, *Ta stratiotika*

SUMMARY

*Between Hospitaller Rhodes and Lusignan Cyprus:
The Case of the Zaplana Family*

In this paper the activities of three members of the Catalan Zaplana family in the eastern Mediterranean will be examined and discussed. The family had humble origins but was elevated due to the favour shown to its members by successive kings of Aragon. The first two of its members, Raphael and his nephew Nicholas, joined the Hospitaller order while the third, Nicholas' brother James, practised piracy and rose high in the service of King James II of Cyprus, only to be exiled after this king's death, whereupon he reverted to piracy. Their kinship with the remaining recorded members of this extended Catalan family will be examined. Above all, however, their activities, whether in the service of the Hospitaller Order based in Rhodes and King James II or as pirates, will be shown to be interconnected due to the great number of Catalan merchants on Rhodes, the obtaining of high offices within the Order by Catalans and the profits derived by the Hospitallers from accepting and selling the booty that Catalan pirates, often in collusion with Catalan members of the Order brought to the port of Rhodes

On Cyprus King James II who had usurped the throne from his sister and the legitimate heir to the throne, Queen Charlotte, was impelled to show favour to Catalan Hospitallers because he required Catalan mercenaries in the civil war with Charlotte's supporters and wanted to gain recognition from the Papacy and the Grand Master of the Hospitaller Order who was also a Catalan. The three members of the Zaplana family discussed here adroitly exploited the above circumstances to advance their careers, although following the death of King James in 1473 and the Venetian take-over of Cyprus, the forced departure of James and Nicholas Zaplana from the island was as swift as their previous rise to high offices.

tagmata, in: *Historia tes Kyprou*, vol. IV: *Mesaionikon Basileion, Henetokratia*, ed. Th. Papadopoulos, Nicosia 1995, p. 753.