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## THE GRANT OF HOSPITALLER SAFE-CONDUCTS IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY TO RECIPIENTS ON RHODES AND CYPRUS: THEIR FUNCTION AND EFFECTIVENESS

### KEYWORDS

*history; the Middle Ages; military orders; Hospitallers; safe conducts; Papacy; Cyprus; Rhodes*

### ABSTRACT

In this paper the tradition the Roman Catholic Church practised of granting safe conducts to various parties so as to assist them in implementing business of the Church or their own affairs will be examined and discussed with special reference to Rhodes and Cyprus. Hospitaller safe conducts granted on fifteenth century Cyprus and Rhodes were given to laymen as well as to Hospitaller brothers and the reasons varied. Most of the Hospitaller safe conducts issued on Rhodes and Cyprus to be discussed cover the years 1413–1459 and originate from published documents found in the Order's Rhodian archives. As one would expect, a considerable number of them concern diplomatic missions undertaken by Hospitaller brothers. The Hospitallers also granted safe conducts to Latin clergy who were not members of the Order. Requests to afford safe passage to persons undertaking diplomatic missions for the Order were at times addressed to the captains and owners of ships, and the persons concerned were likewise not always members of the order.

**F**or the Hospitallers of Rhodes, located on an island astride the routes from Western Europe to Syria and the Holy Land as well as from Constantinople, the Aegean and the Black Sea regions to Egypt, seaborne communications

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were indispensable. Their safety had to be assured as far as possible, especially given the frequency of travel on diplomatic and other business of the Order undertaken by Hospitaller brethren. Furthermore, the provisioning of foodstuffs for Rhodes, an island lacking sufficient agricultural resources that could feed its considerable population was vital. The rise in population over time exacerbated the shortages of grain and other foodstuffs, increasing the need for imports. Therefore, safe-conducts were issued to merchants and seamen of various nationalities, including non-Christians, engaged in bringing foodstuffs to Rhodes. Such foodstuffs were brought from Cyprus, the Greek mainland, Sicily, Turkey, Syria and Egypt. The Order issued safe-conducts on several occasions to assist Christian soldiers who had been fighting in the eastern Mediterranean return home. In addition, a number of safe-conducts were granted to eastern Christians wishing to settle permanently on Rhodes. Indeed, two Hospitaller safe-conducts were granted in the 1450s to Sidi Galip Ripolli, a Muslim merchant originating from Spain and resident in Alexandria where he concluded commercial transactions on behalf of the Mamluk sultan of Egypt. In general, they appear to have been effective, hence their solicitation and grant over a considerable period of time to a variety of parties and for various reasons.

The safe-conducts discussed in this paper originate mainly from the extant Hospitaller documents now in the National Library of Malta in Valetta, that constitute the *Archivum Ordinis Melitensis* (AOM). Two collections of fifteenth century Hospitaller documents originating from this archive were published, firstly in 1995 by Zacharias Tsirpanlis and then in 2011 by Karl Borchardt, Anthony Luttrell and Ekhard Schöffler. The 342 documents Tsirpanlis published originate from the *Libri Bullarum* also known as the *Registri delle bolle di cancelleria*, that record the official decisions of the Hospitaller Grand Masters issued in the form of bulls. The 346 documents Borchardt, Luttrell and Schöffler published in 2011 originate from the same source, more precisely from the thirty-six *Libri Bullarum* covering the years 1409–1459. Not all the safe-conducts issued by the Grand Masters of the Order and found in the National Library of Malta have been published. In addition to the safe-conducts found in the published collections mentioned above, others are referred to and discussed in the specialised works of historians of the Hospitaller Order such as Jürgen Sarnowsky and Nicholas Vatin.

The Roman Catholic Church had a tradition of granting safe-conducts to various parties before, during and after the fifteenth century, with the aim of assisting these parties in the transaction of ecclesiastical business. As early as 1 December 1262 Pope Urban IV wrote to a group of Florentines, probably merchants, regarding their letters sent to the Latin archbishop of Nicosia declaring their intent to travel to the Apostolic See in Rome over money they intended to receive from or give to the Church. At the archbishop's request he granted them security for their

persons and goods for periods of 15 days prior to their arrival in and following their departure from the city of Rome, as well as for one and a half months while remaining in Rome on their business.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to Hospitallers obtaining safe-conducts for travel, in 1398 Peter Holt, prior of Ireland and turcopolier, was granted a safe-conduct to travel to Rhodes with up to 20 companions and in 1401 Walter Grendon the prior of England was allowed up to 30. In 1436 and 1448 turcopoliers who headed the English langue on Rhodes were granted safe conducts for their persons and for parties of 12 or 15 persons accompanying them while travelling within the territories of Latin Christendom. John Weston as prior of England journeyed to Rhodes via Rome and Naples in 1481 and on leaving Rome to return to England in 1485 was granted a safe-conduct for up to 25 persons. Sometimes the number of companions permitted was less. In 1434 Andrew Meldrum the Hospitaller preceptor of Torphichen was granted a safe-conduct to depart from England with six companions while in the mid-1530s preceptors travelling from England to Malta were permitted up to three servants. Unbeneficed conventual brothers were allowed only one. The safe conducts mentioned above were granted to the applicants by the kings of England, especially during the mid-1530s when Hospitallers other than priors had to seek such licences to leave England as a matter of routine.<sup>2</sup> But Hospitaller safe conducts granted on fifteenth century Cyprus and Rhodes were given to laymen as well as to Hospitaller brothers and the reasons varied, as will be discussed below. One group of letters not to be included in the discussion are the licences to travel that preceptors and other senior officers of the Order granted so that Hospitallers could travel between Rhodes and Cyprus, given that such licences did not request any external parties to assist those travelling and desist from hindering them.<sup>3</sup> Most of the Hospitaller safe conducts issued on Rhodes and Cyprus to be discussed cover the years 1413–1459 and originate from published documents found in the Order's Rhodian archives.

<sup>1</sup> *Bullarium Cyprum: Papal Letters Concerning Cyprus 1196–1314*, vol. 2, ed. Christopher Schabel (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 2010), 7–8, no. 8–5.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory O'Malley, "British and Irish Visitors to and Residents in Rhodes, 1409–1522," in *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe, Festschrift for Anthony Luttrell*, ed. Karl Borchardt, Nicholas Jaspert, and Helen J. Nicholson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007), 164–165.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus from the Hospitallers' Rhodian Archives 1409–1459*, ed. Karl Borchardt, Anthony Luttrell, and Ekhardt Schöffler (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 2011), nos. 12, 15–16, 23, 31, 38, 51, 56–57, 162–163, 168, 172–173, 175–176, 211.

## SAFE CONDUCTS FOR DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

As one would expect, a considerable number of them concern diplomatic missions undertaken by Hospitaller brothers. On 22 May 1440 Grand Master Jean de Lastic addressed a letter to all Western princes asking them to assist William Castello, a subject of the Order, who was journeying to Western Europe and to Auvergne in particular on the Order's business by not burdening him with any imposts or taxes. The Hospitallers also granted safe conducts to Latin clergy who were not members of the Order. On 17 April 1445 Jean de Lastic issued a safe conduct to Giovanni da Monteleone the bishop of Famagusta, who was being sent to the Eastern Mediterranean by Pope Eugenius IV on "issues of high importance concerning [...] the Holy See", although these are unspecified, presumably being confidential.<sup>4</sup> Hospitaller brothers were sent to Rome on the Order's business, as when on 23 December 1446 Brother Galceran de Toroella was directed to go there from Cyprus on business concerning Brother Filip d'Hortal, the preceptor of Cyprus and of the Cases Antiques in the priory of Catalonia. Likewise, on 3 June 1450 Jean de Lastic and the Order's Convent dispatched the Hospitaller priors of Saint-Gilles and of Pisa, the chancellor and secretary of the Grand Master and the preceptor of Mugnano, Camerino and Nursia to the pope, the sacred college in Rome and to other Christian rulers regarding pressing matters of the Order. The rulers through whose lands they would pass were asked to facilitate their journey, not to impose taxation on them and to afford them protection.<sup>5</sup> Not all Hospitallers sent on diplomatic missions were knights. On 25 August 1452 Jean de Lastic sent the sergeant-at-arms Claude de Pellison of the priory of Saint-Gilles along with three companions to the dauphin of the French royal house on business of the Order, asking addressees in general to assist and facilitate his journey.<sup>6</sup>

Requests to afford safe passage to persons undertaking diplomatic missions for the Order were at times addressed to the captains and owners of ships, and the persons concerned were not always members of the order. On 31 March 1452 Jean de Lastic asked such persons in general to assist and favour the Byzantine noble Isaac Lascaris Metochites who was travelling to the West with his companions to visit the pope and the king of Aragon "over some pressing matters". The letter stresses that Lascaris was in the service of the Byzantine emperor with whom the

<sup>4</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo kai tes noties Sporades apo to archeio ton Ioanniton Hippoton 1421-1453*, ed. Zacharias Tsirpanlis (Rhodes: Ekdose Grapheiou Mesaionikes Polis Rhodou, 1995), no. 122; *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 199.

<sup>5</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 222; *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 212.

<sup>6</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 276.

Order had good relations for a long time. Shortly after this, on 4 May 1452, Jean de Lastic addressed a letter to prelates as well as to secular rulers, requesting them to assist Andreas, a doctor of laws, the titular bishop of Tortosa and a citizen of Venice in his mission to negotiate certain matters on behalf of the king of Cyprus as well as his own affairs, together with his companions, their animals and their goods, and not to impose any taxes or other exactions on his party.<sup>7</sup> But members of the Order were usually sent on such missions. The intensity of Ottoman preparations for war on the eve of the Ottoman capture of Constantinople as well as those of the Mamluk sultan impelled Jean de Lastic and the convent of the Order to dispatch on 22 December 1452 John Langstrother, the preceptor of Balshall in the priory of England and castellan of the town of Rhodes, to various lands ruled by Christian rulers. The Grand Master and the Convent requested the various rulers and the captains or owners of ships to assist John in the course of his outward and return journeys, as well as the party of up to twelve persons accompanying him, clerics and lay persons, while also affording unimpeded passage to their luggage, valuables and transport animals. On 13 May 1453 Jean de Lastic dispatched Michael de Castellacio, an appeal judge in the town of Rhodes and preceptor of the Holy Sepulchre in the town of Florence, to various Christian lands for certain pressing matters of the order. He asked the recipients of the letter in general to assist him, the ten persons accompanying him along with the luggage, valuables and transport animals of the party and requested them not to impose any taxes on this envoy and his companions.<sup>8</sup>

Two later examples of safe-conducts for travel by the Order for persons not belonging to it concern Cyprus. On 27 March 1455 Jacques de Milly, who became Grand Master of the Hospitaller Order in 1454, issued a safe conduct for Giovanni Andrea da Siena, a doctor of laws who was also a familiar of his, addressed to the various captains and owners of ships sailing under the banner of various princes or communes, so that the latter could journey to Famagusta and negotiate the release of the knight Angelo da Siena, who must have originated from the same city as the envoy. Angelo da Siena had been detained by the Genoese captain of Famagusta, although the reasons for this are not stated. Giovanni Andrea da Siena was sailing to the eastern Mediterranean with two galleys containing his goods and effects on the orders of the pope and the letter's addressees were requested to assist him and ensure that no harm befell him. On August 1 1458 Jacques de Milly issued another safe conduct, likewise addressed to the various captains and owners of ships sailing under the banner of various princes, for John Kantakouzenos,

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., nos. 254, 258.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., nos. 283, 305.

the envoy of Thomas Palaiologos the Despot of the Morea. The latter was journeying to Cyprus to have an audience with King John II of Cyprus over various difficult issues, unfortunately not specified, concerning the wellbeing and honour of the Orthodox faith as well as the position of the Despot of the Morea. The king had in fact died on 26 July 1458 but the news of his death had clearly not reached Rhodes. The ship's captains were enjoined to assist and not to impede John Kantakouzenos, his companions and his goods in his mission during his outward and return journeys. It is possible that this mission was connected in some way to the presence in Cyprus of Thomas of Morea, the chamberlain of the kingdom of Cyprus and foster-brother of Queen Helena Palaiologina, the wife of King John II.<sup>9</sup>

#### SAFE CONDUCTS FOR SECURING PROVISIONS

The provisioning of foodstuffs for Rhodes, an island lacking agricultural resources that could feed its considerable population, that grew from perhaps less than 10,000 in 1310 to more than double by 1522 to over 20,000, was vital.<sup>10</sup> This rise in population exacerbated the shortages of grain and other foodstuffs, increasing the need to import them. Therefore, safe-conducts were issued to merchants and seamen of various nationalities, including non-Christians, engaged in bringing foodstuffs to Rhodes. On 27 June 1450 Jean de Lastic and the Convent of the Order issued an encyclical written in Italian to all seafarers sailing under the banners of Christian princes, signed by Melchior Bandini, chancellor of the Order, requesting these seafarers to assist and not to impede two Greeks living in Turkey, the priest George and Basil Sebastos and two Turks, Ali and Mustafa, all engaged in bringing victuals to Rhodes on board a *griparia*, that is a small sailing ship, belonging to subjects of the Order on the island of Castellorizo.<sup>11</sup> Several similar safe conducts were issued in 1452. On 22 February 1452 safe-conducts addressed to Christian seamen in general were issued to Marco de Ritjis so that he could bring wheat to Rhodes and to George Mathas, the owner of a *griparia*, so that he could sail to the Morea and bring wheat thence to Rhodes. A similar safe conduct was issued on 4 March 1452 to Nicholas Zornatzes, another owner of a *griparia*, so

<sup>9</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, nos. 318, 327; George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, vol. 3 (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1948), 527 nos. 2, 529–530, 546.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Luttrell, "The Greeks of Rhodes under Hospitaller Rule," in id., *The Hospitaller State on Rhodes and its Western Provinces, 1306–1462* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999), part III, 196.

<sup>11</sup> *Anekdota engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 214.

that he could sail to the Morea and the Gulf of Patras and bring wheat and other victuals back to Rhodes. On 8 March 1452 Jean de Lastic issued a safe conduct in Italian addressed to the captains and owners of ships sailing under the flag of any Christian prince, ruler or commune for a Turk named Ibrahim who customarily sailed between Turkey and Rhodes transporting "things needed for our country".<sup>12</sup> The issuance of safe-conducts in Italian as opposed to Latin to the captains and owners of ships reflects the fact that it was the nautical lingua franca of the Mediterranean and therefore could be understood by them more easily.

Subsequent safe-conducts regarding the transportation of foodstuffs to Rhodes were similarly written in Italian. Jean de Lastic and the Convent of the Order on 14 October 1453 dispatched a Catalan ship captained by Vincent Villa Bella and with the merchant Gaspar Momag on board to Sicily and other areas of Italy on account of the need for victuals for the Convent and the town of Rhodes "awaiting from day to day the armada of the Grand Turk, enemy of all Christians". The captains and owners of the ships were requested to assist them in their mission to buy wheat, victuals and other things necessary for human sustenance, as well as war artillery for the defence of Rhodes, and not to harm or hinder them in any way considering that the enemy was very near, very powerful and bore malice towards the Order and the Christian faith. On occasion victuals were obtained by means of commercial exchanges. On 17 October 1453 Jean de Lastic and the Convent of the Order asked the owners and captains of ships flying the flags of Christian princes, communes or rulers to assist and not to impede in any way the brothers Angelo and Benedetto, children of Prospero de Ca' Suriano, a Venetian resident of the town of Rhodes, who were journeying on board their ship to the regions of Egypt, to Damietta and elsewhere with their goods and merchandise so as to bring back victuals, wares and other necessities that the town of Rhodes had need of at that time. The letter asks the addressees to assist and desist from harming them for either one or several voyages and with regard to both this and other ships they might be sailing on, thereby indicating that the brothers were performing such journeys between Rhodes and Egypt on a regular basis.<sup>13</sup> In a third letter likewise addressed to the owners and captains of ships sailing under the banners of Christian princes, rulers and communes, written on 12 December 1453, Jean de Lastic likewise urged them to assist and not to impede Pellegrino de Griminio, a citizen of Rhodes who was married and who was travelling on board his *grippo*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., nos. 246–248.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., nos. 326–327.

or galliot to Chios and elsewhere to bring goods, victuals and other necessities to Rhodes, a journey that needed to be completed urgently.<sup>14</sup>

Cyprus, an island on which the Order had extensive estates, also supplied Rhodes with wheat and barley. On 8 August 1459 Jacques de Milly issued a safe-conduct for Theodore Calomeri who was bringing wheat, barley and other supplies needed for the Convent from Cyprus to Rhodes on board the *griparia* that he owned, requesting all captains and owners of various types of ship to assist and not to hinder him in this task.<sup>15</sup> It is important to stress that Cyprus at this time was on the eve of a civil war between Queen Charlotte, the rightful heir to the throne following the death of King John II in August 1458, and her half-brother James, who with Mamluk support was planning to seize the throne. The fears of the Order that it would lose much needed grain following the arrival of the usurper James with a Mamluk fleet off Famagusta in September 1460 are expressed in the letter Grand Master Jacques de Milly addressed to the Hospitaller castellan of Amposta in November 1460. First recounting the tragedy of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks it then turned to Cyprus, describing the seizure of the island by James, the illegitimate son of King John II, who with Mamluk assistance and popular support had gained control of the whole island except for the fortress of Kerynia, where Queen Charlotte and her supporters were holding out with Hospitaller help. With Cyprus passing completely under Mamluk control the grain imports which Rhodes regularly received from the island would be imperilled, while the Mamluks, recent friends of the Hospitallers, might now turn against them and threaten Rhodes with the fleet they had prepared. In the event, however, Hospitaller estates on Cyprus and the supply of foodstuffs were not harmed, given that James was anxious to secure the Order's goodwill in order to obtain papal recognition of his rule once he won the civil war in 1464.<sup>16</sup>

But the Order also sought provisions from other areas. In 1460 it granted a safe conduct to Visceriti de Musco, a Greek merchant living under Turkish rule, so that he could bring provisions and goods to Rhodes, although he had to pay taxes on essential provisions at the customs house. The Greek merchant and resident of Rhodes Vassilli Romanos who habitually journeyed on board his caravel to Syria

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., no. 338.

<sup>15</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 333.

<sup>16</sup> Peter W. Edbury, "The Last Lusignans (1432–1489): A Political History," *Epeterida Kentrou Epistemonikon Ereunon* 36 (2013): 180–185; Louis de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, vol. 3 (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1852–1861), 108–113; Hill, *A History*, 3: 569–570; Nicholas Coureas, "King James II and the Hospitallers: Evidence from the 'Livre des Remembrances'," in *The Military Orders*, vol. 5, *Politics and Power*, ed. Peter W. Edbury (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012), 113–121.

and Egypt and especially to Alexandria and Damietta to sell timber was granted a safe conduct so as to purchase grain and other victuals for the Order in these places. Given that timber was a strategic material, the Order obtained papal licences to justify its export and these were often placed within the safe-conducts granted to Vassilli Romanos. The need for importing grain and other foodstuffs to Rhodes is reflected in a general safe-conduct that the Order issued on 28 March 1482 to all merchants transporting wine, grain, oil and other provisions to Rhodes. Safe conducts were also given to the skippers transporting goods. The Order granted a safe-conduct of six months' duration on 12 October 1480 to the ship's captain Marino Cardan, valid for several visits and expressly providing that he could carry out the maintenance works on board his ship.<sup>17</sup>

Nicolas Vatin has prepared statistics on safe-conducts that the Grand Masters of the Order awarded for commercial purposes in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, recorded in the Order's Maltese archives. The majority, 29 in total, were granted to Latins whose nationality is unrecorded. The Genoese who enjoyed good relations with Rhodes were granted 13, nine were granted to Basques, seven to Sicilians and four apiece to Venetians and French nationals. Between one and three are recorded as being granted to Neapolitans, Cretans, Cypriots and Florentines. Five were granted to Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, a reflection of the provisions the Order obtained from the nearby regions of south-west Anatolia. Given that the Order's need for foodstuffs and other supplies continued into the sixteenth century, it continued to issue such safe conducts for merchants obtaining them. Safe conducts granted to Ottoman subjects increased at the start of this century, when Rhodians felt insecure about journeying to Ottoman territories. Hence a safe-conduct lasting four years was granted on 20 November 1504 to the Turkish brothers Mustafa and Hizir Bazarbasioglu, licensing them to travel along with their goods on board Rhodian ships, including those belonging to the Order. Subjects of the Order continued to journey in person to Christian destinations. The Rhodian burgesses Giorgio and Antonio Cepe obtained cereals from Sicily armed with Hospitaller letters of safe-conduct in June 1511, Michael Xistos obtained iron and other wares from Venice and the Athenian John Megalos obtained provisions from the Greek mainland. In January 1512 Grand Master Aimery d' Amboise granted a safe conduct to a resident of the town of Rhodes, Janotto del Milo, so that the latter could secure beams, rudders and other supplies

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<sup>17</sup> Jürgen Sarnowsky, *Macht und Herrschaft im Johanniterorden des 15. Jahrhunderts, Verfassung und Verwaltung der Johanniter auf Rhodos (1421–1522)* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2001), 395–397; Nicolas Vatin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem, l'Empire ottoman et la Méditerranée orientale entre les deux sièges de Rhodes 1480–1522* (Louvain–Paris: Éditions Peeters, rok?), 45, 55.

for the Order. On 24 April 1516 Grand Master Fabrizio del Carretto granted a safe-conduct to the Ottomans Muhammad and Chenega from Marmaris, an Anatolian port just north of Rhodes, who manufactured incense near the port with six compatriots. This product was produced for the Rhodian market where Western merchants sought it. Furthermore, numerous safe-conducts were granted to pirates as well as to merchants, who brought contraband goods such as grain, oil, livestock and slaves as well as the ships captured to Rhodes. These were sold in the market of Rhodes Town, and slaves could not only be sold there but also ransomed.<sup>18</sup>

The Order encouraged merchants of all nationalities to use Rhodian ships in the transport of goods, aware of how this would increase the island's naval power and utility to traders from elsewhere. It placed its own ships at the disposal of merchants of all nationalities, as is shown by a general safe-conduct granted on 9 March 1490 to Christians, Moors, Syrians, Turks, Egyptians, Alexandrians, Ethiopians, Africans, Maghrebins, Muslims, Slavs, Armenians, Jews and others embarking, from wherever they happened to be, on board the large Hospitaller ship named the *St Peter*. When in 1514 Grand Master Fabrizio del Carretto granted a safe-conduct to whoever wished to conduct trade using the ship belonging to a certain Ortugno, travelling between Rhodes and Alexandria on a regular basis, he stated by way of justification the Order's love of peace, tranquillity and commerce so useful to humanity. He also pointed out that this ship would carry Muslim and Christian merchants and goods.<sup>19</sup>

#### SAFE CONDUCTS FOR ASSISTING CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

The Order issued safe-conducts to assist Christian soldiers on several occasions. On 17 May 1450 Jean de Lastic issued a safe-conduct addressed to all Christians in favour of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Periz and his five companions who had managed to escape from Turkish captivity, urging them to assist this group in their journey back to their homeland. Some of the soldiers obtaining such safe-conducts had seen service on Cyprus. On 9 March 1452 Jean de Lastic and the Convent of the order issued a safe conduct addressed to princes, ecclesiastical and secular rulers, commanders on land and sea and the owners and captains of all types of ships

<sup>18</sup> Vatin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Jean*, 56–57, 59–61, 68 no. 21; Jürgen Sarnowsky, "Handel und Geldwirtschaft der Johanniter auf Rhodos," *Ordines Militares. Colloquia Torunensia Historica. Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders* 12 (2003): 21.

<sup>19</sup> Vatin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Jean*, 67–68.

sailing under the banner of any Christian prince, ruler or commune. He requested them to assist and to desist from impeding John Picenino from Milan, who had offered good service as a soldier in the pay of King John II of Cyprus, whose virtues and customs, commended to the pope, had pleased him, and who was now returning to Italy.<sup>20</sup> On 5 May 1452 Jean de Lastic issued a safe conduct for Henry Bothcote from the county of Herefordshire in England, a soldier who had acquitted himself well in the service of King John II of Cyprus and especially during the siege of Anamur, a coastal town in southern Turkey belonging to the Grand Emir of Karaman, and in helping the emir of Scandelore who had been oppressed by the emir of Karaman at the time. Furthermore, Henry Bothcote had served with distinction on board the Catalan galleys harassing Turkish and Saracen shipping in the eastern Mediterranean and had then paid a visit to the Holy Places. These things were attested in letters from the king of Cyprus and from Bernard Villamarin, captain general of the fleet of the king of Aragon, that Henry was bearing on his person. Following these numerous exertions and peregrinations he was returning to England and the addressees of the Grand Master's letter were urged to afford him every assistance possible in view of his courageous combat for the Christian faith against the infidels. The letter ends by mentioning how Henry had served in the Hospitaller fleet sent to assist the king of Cyprus against the grand emir of Karaman under the captaincy of William Dawney, the turcopolier of the Order.<sup>21</sup>

One German and several Hungarians received safe-conducts for travel from the Order in 1451. On 7 May 1451 Jean de Lastic issued a safe-conduct in favour of the German Sigismund Toller, pointing out that he had learnt from a letter that the king of Cyprus had written to him about how Sigismund had been captured by the Turks while fighting against them. The Turks had kept him captive for a long time, but as Jean de Lastic had learnt he had escaped from them, making his way to Cyprus, whereupon he requested all ecclesiastical and secular lords to grant him and his goods safe conduct through their lands. On the same date he issued a similar safe conduct for John Ardello from Hungary, addressed to the same parties. On 3 July 1451 Jean de Lastic issued another safe-conduct, addressed to all ecclesiastical and secular rulers. It stated how the Hungarians John de Noranay and Peter de Mesu, held captive by the Turks for a long time in miserable servitude, had returned to Rhodes on board the Hospitaller galleys that had been sailing in the regions of Cyprus, Armenia and Cilicia. The recipients of the letter were request-

<sup>20</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 208; *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 292.

<sup>21</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 259; *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 297.

ed to assist these two Hungarians to return safely to their country along with their goods.<sup>22</sup>

#### SAFE CONDUCTS FOR LATIN MERCHANTS AND OTHER PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Merchants and other private individuals requested safe-conducts from the Order and there are various recorded instances of these being granted. On 25 August 1413 Brother Luce de Vallins the lieutenant of the Grand Master granted a safe conduct to a burgess of Rhodes named Antonio Ruffin. The latter had made known that the Hospitaller brother Richard de Pontailier, the preceptor of Ensigné of the French langue, had recently seized on the high seas off Cyprus the merchandise he had been transporting on board his *griparia*, allegedly without just cause. Antonio had requested permission to come to the town of Rhodes under safe-conduct, which was duly granted. On 25 July 1439 Grand Master Jean de Lastic granted a safe-conduct to a merchant from Barcelona named Gabriel Pujol who had requested leave to come to Rhodes with his goods and take up residence there. The safe-conduct makes reference to how the master had ascertained Pujol's honesty and reliability through reliable testimony and to how Pujol had reached an agreement with his creditors who were outside the Order's jurisdiction. Therefore, he was granted a safe-conduct protecting him from such creditors for a biennium. It was addressed to the Order's officers, both ecclesiastical and secular, who were requested not to cause any harm to Pujol or his goods for the next two years.<sup>23</sup> One observes that two out of three grand masters of the Order of St John were Catalans between the years 1377–1437. Therefore, in the late fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century Catalan merchants were prominent in the commerce of fifteenth century Hospitaller Rhodes, advancing money to the Order, using Rhodes, Cyprus and the Sicilian ports as their principal bases in trade with the eastern Mediterranean, purchasing goods in Alexandria for the order and requesting Hospitaller intercession when their merchants were arrested on Mamluk territory. When relations between the Mamluks and the Catalans were strained Catalan produce changed hands on Rhodes before its export to Egypt and Syria.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, nos. 276, 282.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 41, 157.

<sup>24</sup> Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 234–235, 293, 309–310, 337, 340–341, 364–365; Damien Coulon, *Barcelone et le Grand Commerce d'Orient au Moyen Âge, un siècle des relations avec l'Égypte et la Syrie-Palestine (ca. 1330 – ca. 1430)* (Madrid–Barcelona: Casa de Velásquez, 2004), 594; Nicholas Coureas,

Two days later, on 27 July 1439, Jean de Lastic granted a safe-conduct to Salomon of Ancona, a Jew resident in Cyprus who had lived previously on Rhodes, where his wife was still resident. The letter states that as he had outlined in his request certain parties had damaged his goods and that he wished to repatriate himself to Rhodes to avoid a similar occurrence. The grand master acceded to his request, stating that he could come and resettle on Rhodes whenever he wished, and had permission to transport his goods to the island. Furthermore, on arriving there he would live under the laws and regulations applicable to all Jews on Rhodes, and not in any other manner. The addressees of the letter, the officers and brothers of the order, were requested to desist from violating the terms of the safe-conduct. It is clear that Salomon originated from Ancona, a town on the Adriatic seaboard of Italy. The registers of the fifteenth century Genoese chancery of Famagusta, under Genoese occupation in the years 1374–1464, record no less than six Jews originating from Ancona. Sometimes private individuals requested safe-conducts to come to Rhodes to settle their debts.<sup>25</sup> On 7 December 1439 Jean de Lastic granted a safe-conduct to Philippos Ledrioti, a Greek judging by his name, so that he could do this. Jean de Lastic had granted it at the request of the king of Cyprus who had written to him on this matter. Ledrioti is referred to in the document as a “iotlerius”, perhaps a scribal error for the term “bottellerius” meaning butler. The Grand Master, having referred to the debts Ledrioti owed, contracted outside the areas under the Order’s jurisdiction, and acknowledging the risks of incarceration he ran if he did not settle them, granted him a safe-conduct enabling him to come to Rhodes and reside there with his goods without undergoing vexation or harm at the hands of the Order’s officials. The latter were instructed not to presume to act in violation of this safe-conduct, on the contrary, they had to observe its terms faithfully.<sup>26</sup>

Merchants from Ancona had played an active role in the transit trade between the West and the eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus, from the thirteenth century onwards and had been present on Cyprus from 1272 if not earlier. Their involvement continued into the fifteenth century, with Italians settling in Famagusta, including Jews as stated above. Therefore, it is not surprising that among the Hospitaller safe-conducts relating to Cyprus was one dated 3 May 1445, in favour

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“Between Hospitaller Rhodes and Lusignan Cyprus: The Case of the Zaplana Family,” *Ordines Militares. Colloquia Torunensia Historica. Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders* 19 (2014): 144, 146–147.

<sup>25</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 159; Michel Balard, “Les Génois dans le royaume médiévale de Chypre de Chypre,” in id., *La Méditerranée médiévale* (Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard, 2006), 156.

<sup>26</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 161.

of Filippo de Donato, journeying from Ancona to Cyprus to conduct certain affairs of his. This safe-conduct, written in Italian and addressed to all captains and owners of various ships under the banner of various lords, communes and princes, requested them to grant Filippo and his goods safe passage on his outward and return journeys and to favour him as though favouring the Hospitallers themselves.<sup>27</sup> Another merchant travelling to Cyprus, to whom the Hospitaller Grand Master Jacques de Milly granted a safe conduct on 20 March 1455, was Jothinus Fermaqua. He was a Cypriot merchant travelling from Rhodes back to Cyprus. Described as being in the service of the Grand Master and as one of his familiars, his safe conduct was addressed to the captains of shipping, like the one mentioned above. Safe-conducts were also granted to merchants bound for Western Europe as well. On 17 May 1450 Jean de Lastic granted a safe-conduct, written in Italian and addressed to all Christian faithful, to Antony Kalothetos, owner and captain of a ship sailing to Western Europe. Kalothetos, a native of Rhodes, ethnically Greek and a burgess and subject of the Order, was journeying to the West with various kinds of merchandise, partly his own and partly belonging to other burgesses and associates of his. This safe-conduct, addressed to the owners and captains of ships of whatever nation, requested them to assist Kalothetos and to harm neither the persons nor the goods on board his ship.<sup>28</sup> On 16 August 1453 Jean de Lastic granted another safe-conduct, likewise written in Italian and addressed to the owners and captains of various vessels under the banner of whomsoever, prince, lord or commune to John de Grisel, who was married and resident on Rhodes and was journeying to different parts of the world for various tasks, requesting the addressees to assist and not to harm him or his goods on the outward and return journeys.<sup>29</sup>

Latin parish churches on Lusignan Cyprus were few and far between. The diocese of Limassol, which had the greatest concentration of Hospitaller estates, especially after the abolition of the Templars in 1312 and the transfer of their estates to the Order of St John, had only three parish churches, those of Silikou, Alaminos and of St George in the town of Limassol. These parish churches had the distinguishing feature of being considered priories united to the domain of the Latin cathedral church of Limassol, and were served by priors paid by the cathe-

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., no. 201; David Abulafia, "The Anconitan Privileges in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Levant Trade of Ancona," in id., *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean 1100–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1993), part XIII, 545–559; Nicholas Coureas, "Commerce between Cyprus and Ancona in the First Half of the Fourteenth Century," *Mesogeios* 6 (1999): 48–63; Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 39, 241, 358–361; Balard, "Les Génois," 152.

<sup>28</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 317; *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 207.

<sup>29</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 312.

dral.<sup>30</sup> One of them was Martin Rubeus of Cyprus, prior of the church of St Mary of the Latins in the mountain village of Silikou in the hinterland of Limassol. He was a member of the Order of the Hermits of St Augustine and also the chaplain of Jacques de Milly, Grand Master of the Order of St John, who on 7 April 1457 granted him a safe-conduct for a journey to Cyprus. This document, addressed to the owners and captains of various types of ship, stated that Martin Rubeus was travelling to Cyprus on difficult matters pertaining to the Order and requested them to assist and not to hinder him on both his outward and return journeys.<sup>31</sup> The Hospitallers traditionally maintained good relations with the Genoese, who had assisted them in the conquest of Rhodes in around 1309. Therefore, it is no surprise that on 24 April 1457 Jacques de Milly granted a safe-conduct to the citizen of Genoa Oberto Squarcafigo, patron of a ship off Rhodian waters, so that its captain, the Genoese Napoleone Lomellini of Famagusta, whose ship contained merchandise as well as Christians, Turks and Moors on board, could make port at Rhodes, staying there and departing thence whenever he saw fit. Those on board could also enter the town of Rhodes to buy and sell goods in accordance with the regulations of the customs house, loading and unloading goods from the ship. The Turks and Moors on board, however, were expressly prohibited from landing on Rhodes under the terms of this safe-conduct.<sup>32</sup>

#### SAFE CONDUCTS FOR EASTERN CHRISTIANS AND THE MUSLIM MERCHANT SIDI GALIP RIPOLLI

Most recorded safe-conducts were granted to Latin Christians and some were granted to Greeks. A number of safe conducts, however, were also granted to eastern Christians and in one instance to a Muslim merchant based in Egypt. On 22 April 1440 the Hospitaller chancery on Rhodes granted a safe-conduct to Anthony Masota from Syria, certifying that he was a citizen of Rhodes and was commended by virtue of this to all, especially those sailing the seas, who were requested to conduct themselves kindly to him and his goods. Another merchant from Syria receiving a safe-conduct from Jean de Lastic on 12 April 1450 was Marco Salvatore, whose name suggests that he was descended from Latins settling in the Holy

<sup>30</sup> *Chypre sous les Lusignans: Documents chypriotes des archives du Vatican (XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, ed. Jean Richard (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1962), 73.

<sup>31</sup> *Documents Concerning Cyprus*, ed. Borchardt, Luttrell, and Schöffler, no. 321.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 322; Anthony Luttrell, "The Genoese at Rhodes, 1306–1312," in *id.*, *The Hospitaller State on Rhodes and its Western Provinces* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999), part I, 744–761.

Land after the First Crusade. The safe-conduct, addressed to all Christian faithful and to the patrons and captains of ships at sea, stated that Marco was travelling between Rhodes, Syria and Egypt, transporting goods of his own as well as those belonging to others. It requested them to treat him well and safeguard him from harm, despite his Syrian background, given that he was a subject and servant of the Order born on Rhodes who had always been faithful and willing to provide for the needs of the Order in the course of his commercial ventures. Syrians had settled on Rhodes following the fall of Acre and Tyre in the Holy Land to the Muslims in 1291 and were mainly merchants or sergeants serving in the Hospitaller forces.<sup>33</sup>

Of particular interest here is the safe conduct Jean de Lastic granted on 18 May 1453 to George Suriano, a doctor and apothecary from Cairo, albeit with a surname denoting Syrian extraction. Suriano wished to settle on Rhodes along with his wife and children, his slaves, his moveable goods and his money. The safe-conduct addressed to all owners and captains of ships sailing under the banner of any Christian prince, lord or commune, and in particular to Bernardo de Villamarin, the captain-general of the fleet of King Alfonso V of Aragon, requested them to assist and not molest him, whether he happened to be on land at sea, in any port or coastal area and on any type of ship, so that he, his goods and his household, up to the number of 40 persons, could leave infidel territory and settle on Rhodes. The migration of George Suriano together with his household and goods from Cairo to Rhodes indeed came to pass. A document dated 4 July 1453 records that he was made a citizen, a burgess and a subject of Hospitaller Rhodes, where he had been received along with his household and his goods. In return, he had to take an oath of fealty towards the Order, the Grand Master and his successors, promising to serve and to uphold them wherever in the world he might be. Furthermore, should it come to his notice that any party was plotting against the Order, he was duty-bound to inform the Grand Master or his successors as speedily as possible.<sup>34</sup> It is noteworthy that this safe-conduct was specifically addressed to Bernardo de Villamarin. The presence of the Aragonese fleet in the waters of Rhodes and Cyprus from 1450 onwards reinforced the Western presence in these waters, even though his planned reconstruction of the fortifications of Castellorizo in 1451, that the Mamluks had destroyed seven years previously, was not approved by the Order. This notwithstanding, on 21 May 1451 the Order granted a safe conduct to pilgrims from various countries travelling to the Holy Land on board a Venetian

<sup>33</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, nos. 118, 203; Nicholas Coureas, "The Migration of Syrians and Cypriots to Hospitaller Rhodes in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe*, ed. Borchardt, Jaspert, and Nicholson, 101–107.

<sup>34</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 306.

ship, addressed specifically to Bernardo de Villamarin and in general to the owners and captains of other ships. The Order's grant of safe conducts addressed to him shows that they recognized the power of the Aragonese fleet.<sup>35</sup>

Two Hospitaller safe-conducts granted in the 1450s involved the Muslim merchant Sidi Galip Ripolli, who originated from Valencia in Spain, was resident in Alexandria and concluded commercial transactions on behalf of the Mamluk sultan of Egypt.<sup>36</sup> On 27 May 1450 Jean de Lastic granted a safe conduct written in Italian and ordering all brothers of the Orders regardless of their office and condition not to act against but instead to observe the safe conduct. In his address to Sidi Galip Ripolli forming the main part of the safe-conduct Jean de Lastic states that it had been granted at Ripolli's own request. Under its terms he and his agents could visit the island and town of Rhodes with their merchandise, safely and without fear, to load and unload goods and to come and go at will, to buy and sell and conclude agreements according to the customs of merchants. The safe conduct was valid for as long as the Grand Master wished. Yet one striking omission from this document is the fact that it is not addressed to owners and captains of ships sailing under the banner of various Christian rulers and communes. Indeed, towards the end of it the Grand Master states that many pirate vessels and other ships of various nations not coming under the Order's jurisdiction are to be found at sea causing harm to friends and foes, with the Order not protecting Ripolli nor able to protect him from their attacks. Clearly this particular safe-conduct was of limited efficacy.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps for this very reason Sidi Galib Ripolli subsequently transported goods to Rhodes on board Christian ships. A safe conduct Jean de Lastic granted on 6 March 1453 in favour of the Catalan Emmanuel de Biago stated that the Order had purchased 100 quintals of pepper to be loaded on board his ship, docked in Alexandria. Payment had been made on Rhodes to Ripolli's agent Ibrahim, a Muslim also originating from Valencia and the consignment was to be transported from Alexandria to Rhodes at the buyer's own risk. Therefore, the Order requested all owners and captains of various kinds of ship sailing under the banner of various princes, communes, lords and nations to assist and not to hinder the ship's passage to Rhodes.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., no. 236; Hill, *A History*, 3: 521, 523.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Coureas, "Commerce between Mamluk Egypt and Hospitaller Rhodes in the mid-Fifteenth Century: The Case of Sidi Galip Ripolli," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. VI, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Kristof D'Hulster (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010), 207–217.

<sup>37</sup> *Anekdotia engrapha gia te Rhodo*, ed. Tsirpanlis, no. 210.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., no. 293.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SAFE CONDUCTS

The function of the various safe conducts discussed above was clearly to assist those granted them to travel in greater safety and without fear of being attacked on the high seas or being impeded from completing their journey, and now one addresses the question of their effectiveness. Safe conducts issued by a Roman Catholic military order directly subject to the papacy would have been heeded by Christian and especially Roman Catholic powers and their subjects. The fact that such safe-conducts are recorded from the thirteenth through to the sixteenth century is itself a testimony to their effectiveness, otherwise they would not have been granted over several centuries. There is no record concerning how effective they were with regard to Muslim shipping, and one doubts if Turkish or Moorish pirates would have respected them. By the fifteenth century, however, the period under discussion, Latin Christian shipping had come to dominate the Mediterranean, a dominance established as far back as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This does not mean that there were no Muslim pirates. Turkish and North African pirates as well as Christian ones preyed regularly on merchant shipping, but the piracy that existed did not negate the overall naval predominance enjoyed by Latin Christian shipping. The Muslim philosopher Ibn Khaldun lamented the superiority of Christian over Muslim seamanship at the end of the fourteenth century. Even allowing for some exaggeration on his part, it is clear that from the thirteenth century onwards the Mediterranean had become a Latin lake dominated by Venice, Genoa, the Catalans and other Latin powers with fleets.<sup>39</sup> The Hospitallers began to develop their own naval arm after the fall of Acre in 1291. Until the development of an Ottoman fleet in the early sixteenth century, moreover, naval rivalries and conflicts in the Mediterranean were between competing Latin Christian powers and did not involve the Hospitallers as a religious Order directly subject to the pope. The developments outlined above explain the effectiveness of the safe-conducts the Hospitallers granted for persons sailing across the Mediterranean on business of the Order or for other reasons.

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<sup>39</sup> John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean 649–1571* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 142, 152, 158–164; Michel Balard and Christophe Picard, *La Méditerranée au Moyen Âge, les hommes et la mer* (Paris: Hachette Livre, 2014), 143–146.

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