



*Communicating the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Sophia Menache*. Edited by Iris Shagrir, Benjamin Z. Kedar, and Michel Balard. *Crusades – Subsidia* 11. London–New York: Routledge, 2018. XXX + 277 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-06819-3.

In 2018, the Routledge publishing house issued a multi-author work titled *Communicating the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Sophia Menache*, edited by Iris Shagrir, Benjamin Z. Kedar, and Michel Balard. This publication is the eleventh volume of the “Subsidia” series supplementing the “Crusades” journal. Both the series and the journal are published under supervision of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East. As the subtitle indicates, the volume under review is a commemorative publication and aims to honour the long academic career and scholarly achievements of the recently retired Professor, Sophia Menache (University of Haifa).

As might be expected of such a publication, the book opens with a short biographical note. It gives readers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with Prof. Menache’s academic career, her achievements, and her research interests. Following this biographical note, the preface outlines the structure of the entire publication, which is divided into three parts to suit the three main threads that Sophia Menache has dealt with during her research career. The first part is devoted to military orders, the second concerns the history of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the states of the Latin East. The third part consists of texts dealing with research issues regarding ideology, propaganda and communication. Many of these essays are not limited to the medieval period. For example, one of them touches upon the topic of crusading ideas which appeared in letters written during the First World War.

The decision to group the texts in this manner was certainly aimed at making it easier for readers to orientate themselves within the content of the volume, which otherwise might have been difficult due to the extensive variety of topics. This division does not mean, however, that the authors assigned to the first or second part did not pay attention to the problems of ideology or communication. As it was noted in the preface, written by Malcolm Barber, the three main threads often intertwined in the investigations conducted by Menache, and so they do in the volume written in her honour. Due to the subject of the journal in which this review appears, I would like to focus on the first part of the volume, particularly on the history of military orders.

The first part of the volume begins with a study by Jochen Burgtorf that concerns the alleged brotherhood of blood between Mamluk Sultan Baybars and Templar Matthew Sauvage. Analyzing the course of both certain (i.e. recorded in primary sources) and speculated meetings of the two, Burgtorf concludes that this unusual fraternal relationship between a Muslim and a member of the Templar order in the second half of the thirteenth century, could have actually existed. Their relationship might have been something more than, as it might seem at first glance, a false accusation that came about during the Trial of the Knights Templar in the early fourteenth century. As Burgtorf himself notes in his paper, this brotherhood of blood, which cannot be ruled out, would be even more surprising due to Baybars' hostility towards the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers, but would explain his favorable actions towards the particular Templar commander, that is, Matthew.

The next text, by Yvonne Friedman, draws the reader's attention to the peace mongering activities carried out by the Knights Templar in the Latin East in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The author considers this problem on three levels: the Knights Templar acting as negotiators in the service of the king, acting independently in the interest of the Order (e.g. forcing defeated enemies to pay a tribute or making a separate truce), in addition to the Templars struggling to save the weakened and fragmented Kingdom of Jerusalem through diplomatic efforts. The following essay, by Karl Borchardt, observes the actions undertaken by the Hospitallers, and to a lesser extent by the Templars, in the western Mediterranean. According to his findings, it seems that at least some members of both military orders treated the idea of making this region the center of their activity quite seriously. After the Fall of Acre (1291), such a decision would have allowed the Hospitallers and Knights Templar to engage more noticeably in the fight against the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula as well as northern Africa, however, the history of both military orders took a different turn.

In the only French text contained in the volume, Alain Demurger recalls the figure of Othon de Grandson, known mainly for his military and diplomatic career at the court of King Edward I of England. Othon undertook a journey to the Holy Land twice, first accompanying his lord in 1271, and later on his own in 1290, when he took part in the unsuccessful defense of Acre. During these journeys he made himself acquaintance with many representatives of military orders, including Jacques de Molay, the final Grand Master of the Templars. For his merits, Othon obtained an annual rent of 2,000 Tours pounds (*livre Tournois*) from the last Grand Master of the Templars. As a result of the Trial of the Knights Templar, in 1308 he turned to the Pope and the French king to restore the withheld income. He managed to regain annual rent from the property of the Templar commandery in d'Épailly for the remainder of his life. Demurger used the history of

Othon's relations with the Knights Templar to illustrate, on the one hand, the economic value of one of the properties belonging to the Order, and the problems caused by the seizure of the Knights Templar's wealth by the French monarch on the other.

The fifth essay in this volume also deals with the history of the Knights Templar. Helen J. Nicholson analyzes the inventories of 60 chapels located in England and Ireland which belonged to the Order. These documents were prepared in 1308, after the Templars had been arrested. Her investigation demonstrates that almost half of these chapels did not serve the spiritual needs of the Knights Templar, but the needs of various people from outside the Order, for example, the commemoration of the deceased benefactors of the Order.

The last two contributions included in the first part of the volume concern the history of another military order, namely the Teutonic Order and its state in Prussia. Roman Czaja investigated the trade carried out by officials of the Teutonic Order (*Großschäffer*) in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Although trade was not an important source of income for the Teutonic Order in Prussia, as Czaja points out, it became a vital instrument for acquiring political support from Prussian burghers, especially members of the governing groups in major towns. Favorable loans granted to Prussian, and sometimes also foreign, merchants, in addition to deferred repayments, provided the Order with supporters among the townspeople. When the economic situation of the Order deteriorated after the war with Poland and Lithuania (1409–1411) was lost, this change forced the Teutonic Order's officials to collect debts more ruthlessly, which in turn ruined the reputation of the Teutonic Order among many residents of Prussian towns.

In the final essay in the reviewed part of the volume, Jürgen Sarnowsky, using the preserved letter registers from the State of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, studied the forms and functions of written communication during the time of the office of the Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen (1410–1413) and immediately after his deposition. Sarnowsky pointed out that the letters sent by the officials of the Teutonic Order should be treated as part of a wider communication system, in which the oral communication through envoys played a very significant role. Moreover, Sarnowsky took into consideration the references to previous letters or other documents that can be found in the analyzed missives and various forms of salutations depending on the addressee. A particularly important part of this contribution is the review of diplomatic strategies employed by the Teutonic Order. These included, among other things, appeals to the quest for peace, or to justice, recalling the support received by the Order in the past from the ancestors of the recipients of the letters, presenting the Teutonic Knights as defenders of the Christendom, as well as gifts aimed to improve diplomatic relations.

The entire volume of *Communicating the Middle Ages* is without a doubt an interesting read. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the first part of the publication dedicated to military orders constitutes an extremely valuable contribution to the research into the history of these religious and knightly communities. The authors of these contributions successfully paid homage to Sophia Menache not only by referring to her precious research findings, but also by further developing the research topics to which she has devoted her scholarly career.

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