

# A NOTE ON THE ARCHIVES OF THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM IN SPAIN

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The extensive collections of documents preserved in the archives of the Priors of the Order in Spain were amply described by J. Delaville le Roulx in 1893; this competent and adequate account was repeated in the introduction to his *Cartulaire* and remains the only general survey of the contents of these archives (1). Delaville le Roulx did make some use of these documents in his works on the earlier history of the Order, but most of the material, the records of prioral chapters and of the *encomiendas* or commanderies, is of a predominantly local nature and it is mainly from a Spanish point of view that it has been exploited. An excellent example of the worth of these archives is provided by the recent study, made by S. García Larragueta, of the earliest documents relating to the Priory of Navarre, which is not only of great value for the history of Navarre but throws light on that of the Order as a whole; his book contains a comprehensive bibliography of works on the history of the Order for the whole of Spain and it is unnecessary to repeat his lists here (2). Nor is there any reason to reproduce the details of Delaville le Roulx's work, available in many libraries. But since his description of them these documents have all been moved to more accessible quarters and partly reorganized, while the evolution of historical methods and interests seems to justify a note on these relatively unexplored collections which are of fundamental importance for the history of the Order.

It is not merely that documents, some of them originating from the convent of the Order, which have survived in the archives of its Priors in Spain and elsewhere (3) can be used to fill gaps, especially for the period up to 1450, in the Order's central records preserved in the Royal Malta Library. It is rather that it is impossible, without using these archives, to form a comprehensive vision of the history and significance of the Order. As the history of the Church is not just that of Rome, so that of the Knights is not that of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta; nor is it the sum of the biographies of its Masters. The development of the Order can only be understood and explained fully in terms of its institutions, of how its administration functioned, of why and how men left Europe to serve it in the East, and above all of where the

- (1) J. DELAVILLE LE ROULX, "Les archives de l'Ordre de l'Hôpital dans la Péninsule Ibérique", in *Nouvelles archives des Missions scientifiques et littéraires*, iv (Paris, 1893), pp. 1-123, and apart (Paris, 1893); and his *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem*, i (Paris, 1894), pp. cxxxv-clvii, cexii-cexxi.
- (2) S. GARCÍA LARRAGUETA, *El gran Priorado de Navarra de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, 2 vols. (Pamplona, 1957); there is a copy in the Royal Malta Library.
- (3) Especially important are those of the Priory of St. Gilles (Provence) preserved in the Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, Marseilles, and those of the Priors of Venice and Lombardy which are now reunited in the Priory of the Order at Venice; both archives are accessible and possess modern manuscript indexes. The archives of the Priory of Rome can be consulted at the Palazzo Malta, Rome, and those of the Priory of Pisa in the Archivio di Stato, Florence (*Corporazione religiose soppresse*, index no. 132); these contain little material for the pre-Malta period.

money, without which nothing could have been achieved, came from and went to. The answers to these vital questions lie in the apparently dull but immensely valuable provincial records of the Order.

The very isolation of the Spanish Priors during the early centuries of the Order's existence invests them with an especially significant part in its history. From the second half of the fourteenth century, a period in which the history of the Knights was dominated by their Aragonese Master, Juan Fernández de Heredia, Spain often played a decisive rôle in the affairs and development of the Order. Between 1377 and 1530 there were four Spanish Masters, and of the 28 who ruled at Malta from 1530 to 1798 no less than eleven came from the *langues* of Aragon or Castile, two being Portuguese. This predominance was partly the result of the intervention for political reasons of rulers such as Alfonso V of Aragon and the Emperor Charles V, who gave Malta to the Knights, but it was also an indication of the impressive resources in property and manpower which the Order possessed in Spain (4). Thanks to the Spaniards' zeal for the preservation of official records the extent of these resources is today reflected in the mass of parchments and papers, cartularies and indexes surviving in the Spanish archives of the Order.

By 1464 the Spanish Priors had become so influential that they were divided into two *langues*, that of Aragon which consisted of the Priors of Aragon (known as the Castellany of Amposta), Cataluña and Navarre, and that of Castile, which comprised the Priory of Castile and Leon and the Priory of Portugal. When the property of the Order in Spain was confiscated more than a century ago the archives of the Priory of Cataluña remained in Barcelona, while those of Aragon and Navarre, previously preserved in Zaragoza (5), together with those of Castile and Leon, kept till then at Zamora, were moved to Alcalá de Henares, where Delaville le Roulx used them; later they were transferred to Madrid. The records of the Portuguese Priory have apparently been lost (6), but the texts of a number of documents survive in copy in the Arquivo Histórico do Ministério das Finanças and some of these have been published (7). Other classes of documents connected with the Order, such as those of the Templars, of the *hospitalarias* or female members of the Order, and relevant documents in royal archives, are discussed by Delaville le Roulx.

The Castilian and Aragonese documents are now in the *Sección de Ordenes militares* of the Archivo Histórico Nacional at Madrid and have recently been

- (4) See J. SALVA, *La Orden de Malta y las acciones navales españolas contra turcos y berberiscos en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid, 1944); this account is not based on the archives of the Order.
- (5) For their history see A. L. JAVIERRE MUR, "El archivo de San Juan de los Panetes de Zaragoza", in *Estudios de la Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón*, iii (Zaragoza, 1947), pp. 157-192.
- (6) See Ruy de AZEVEDO, "Algumas achegas para o estudo das origens da Ordem de S. Joao do Hospital de Jerusalén, depois chamada de Malta, em Portugal", in *Revista Portuguesa de História*, iv (1949), pp. 317-327; c.f. *Cartulaire*, i, pp. ccvii-ccxxi.
- (7) *Subsidios para a História da Ordem da Malta*, ed J. M. DA CUNHA SARAIVA, i-iv (Lisbon, 1944-1948).

rehoused in the new buildings of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, where they are being rearranged and cared for. The published guide to them, while containing inaccuracies and lacking essential bibliographical references, does list the contents of the archives and the indexes which can be used in their consultation (8). Since these old indexes were made the parchments and papers have been partly reclassified but, although the references they give no longer correspond exactly, the indexes remain an invaluable aid to research, especially among the great mass of records relating to the *encomiendas*. Even so the problem of finding a particular document among hundreds of bundles of records can be very considerable indeed. The Castilian documents are of much the same type as the Aragonese but much less numerous, especially for the early period, since they have suffered serious losses in times past. The union of the Castilian and Aragonese documents in Madrid is in a sense unnatural; there is a strong case for the removal of the Aragonese documents, either to Zaragoza where they would be much more readily accessible to Aragonese scholars, or to Barcelona where they could be united to the Catalan records of the Order and studied in conjunction with the documents of the Aragonese crown.

The most valuable section of the Madrid records is that of the Aragonese Castellany of Amposta which is particularly rich in cartularies (9), while the registers of Prioral acts, the so-called *registros capitulares*, stretch back with interruptions to 1340, further even than their counterparts at Malta, the *libri bullarum*. There are rich collections of royal privileges and papal bulls, of records of law-suits and visitations, of accounts and titles to property, and of the proofs of noble birth, the *pruebas* which knights had to furnish on entering the Order and which are of great genealogical value (10). The numerous documents relating to the *encomiendas* are arranged in such a way that, in effect, a number of bundles of documents constitutes the archive of a particular *encomienda* which can be studied, together with its own index, as an individual unit.

Similar classes of documents are to be found in the archives of the Catalan Priory, which was founded in 1319 after the addition of the Templars' possessions to the Castellany of Amposta had made the Castellany too large. Incidentally, the documents relating to the possessions of the Order and of the Templars in the Kingdom of Valencia passed with those possessions to the Order of Montesa in 1317 and are preserved in the Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid. Until recently the Catalan records were in the convent of *hospitalarias* at San Gervasio de Cassolas, Barcelona, where they were *in clausura* and

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(8) A. L. JAVIERRE MUR and C. GUTIERREZ DEL ARROYO, *Guía de la Sección de Ordenes militares: Archivo Histórico Nacional* (Madrid, [1949]).

(9) For detailed descriptions of the cartularies see A. L. JAVIERRE MUR, *El archivo de San Juan . . . .* (*op. cit.*)

(10) See A. L. JAVIERRE MUR, *Pruebas de ingreso en la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén* (Madrid, 1948).

almost completely inaccessible. They were described (11), however, and one scholar, Miret i Sans, produced a rather unsatisfactory book out of them (12). During the recent civil war these documents were transferred to the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón at Barcelona, where they can be consulted. Unfortunately they seem to have been seriously disorganized in the move and it appears that a number of documents have been lost. A manuscript index to them does exist and when the process of reorganization, now under way, is completed the archive will be most valuable, though perhaps lacking the wider significance of the documents of the Castellany of Amposta.

The rich archives of the Priors in Italy, France and Spain contain material which is essential to any balanced, comprehensive picture of the activities of the Order. Ideally, scholars should work both in them and at Malta, for the central and provincial records complement one another and can most effectively be used in conjunction. Practical considerations will always make this difficult and so it is important to publish as much as possible of this material, or at least to provide detailed descriptions of it which will enable scholars to make the best use of a large quantity of documents in the shortest possible time or to obtain microfilms of those they need. The real history of the Order, as complex and international an undertaking as were its affairs, remains to be written; it cannot be done from the Maltese records alone.

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- (11) J. SASTACHS I COSTAS, *Memoria sobre el archivo prioral de Cataluña de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén* (Barcelona, 1885) and *Cartulaire*, i, pp. cxlviii-cliv; see also J.M. ALOS Y DE DOU, *Indice y extracto de las pruebas de los Caballeros y Señores del Hábito de San Juan en el Gran Priorato de Cataluña* (Barcelona, 1925).
- (12) J. MIRET I SANS, *Les cases de Templars y Hospitalers en Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1910); c.f. DELAVILLE, "Les archives..." (op. cit.).