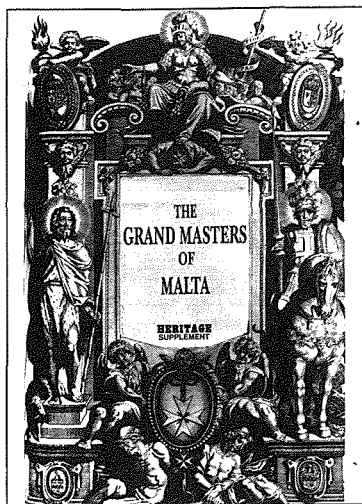




THE
GRAND MASTERS
OF
MALTA

**HERITAGE
SUPPLEMENT**



THE
GRAND
MASTERS
OF
MALTA

A Supplement of
HERITAGE

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Cover:

The frontispiece to Book III of *L'Ordre de Saint Jean de Hierusalem* which includes a summary of the privileges enjoyed by the various members of the Sovereign Military Order of St John of Jerusalem. The middle text has been deleted to fit the title of this Supplement.

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PHILIPPE VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM

1521-1534

At the time of the cession of our islands to the Order of St John of Jerusalem, the Grand Master was Philippe Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, a Frenchman and perhaps the most remarkable head the Hospitallers ever had.

Leaving Syracuse with his knights, he arrived at Malta on the morning of 26 October 1530 and soon set his residence and the seat of the Convent at Birgu. On 13 November he was put in possession of the island by the Jurats after having renewed the oath 'to observe and command the observance of all the privileges and all the graces granted to the island by the Invincible Kings of Aragon and Sicily'.

His first care was to fortify Birgu which he enclosed within a wall, flanked by a small bastion to secure it against any assault. He also built a palace which continued to be the residence of his successors until the time of La Valette.

Another important task was that of setting up a sound administration. He divided the island of Malta into two cantons: one comprising the city of Notabile and the parishes of Naxxar, Birkirkara, Siggiewi, and Żebbuġ, which he placed under the administration of the Captain of the City, then also called Capitano della Verga; and the other, including Birgu, the parishes of Żejtun, Żurrieq, Qormi, Gudja and the adjoining districts, which were placed under the civil jurisdiction of a magistrate chosen by the Grand Master. The creation of this new official, who shared the administration of the island with the Captain of the City, was the first assault upon the rights of the people.

The Grand Master also appropriated himself of the custom duties which the *Universit * had been authorized to impose by the King of Sicily and increased them.

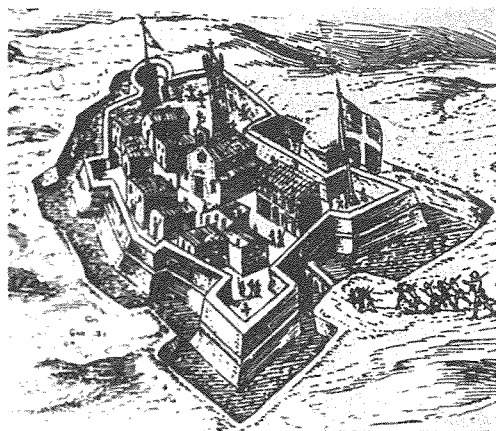
The *universitas* of Malta and Gozo deeply resented this usurpation of their rights and privileges, and made remonstrances before the Council of the Order. But their complaints were all to no purpose.

On 5 September 1533 L'Isle-Adam promulgated a body of laws which dealt, chiefly with criminal matters



under the title Statues and Ordinances.

He died at Rabat on 22 August 1534, and was buried in the chapel of Fort St Angelo.



PIETRO DEL PONTE

1534–1536



L'Isle-Adam was succeeded on 26 August 1534 by Pietro del Ponte, a Piedmontese, a man of austere manners and a zealous observer of discipline. He assumed the government of the island on 10 November. Under his magistracy, perhaps also urged on by him, Charles V undertook an expedition against Tunis, which the formidable Corsair, Ariadeno Barbarossa (Hair-ed-din), on dethroning Muley Hassan, had placed under the suzerainty of the Porte. The Order furnished galleys and soldiers for the expedition, and showed that it had not get lost the military valour for which it was so greatly renowned. The victory of the Christians was complete. Muley Hassan, on being restored, acknowledged himself the vassal of Spain and delivered his ports up to the Emperor, the possessions of the Hospitallers in Barbary were again secured to them, and the

commerce of the island was extended.

In 1535 a dearth specially due to the increase of the population, compelled the Grand Master and the *Università* to solicit the importation of a greater quantity of corn than ordinary from Sicily. The request was granted, but not so fully as to satisfy the needs of the island. In the following year, in fact, it was felt necessary to decree the forced sale of grain upon the Sicilian vessels in port; a step which gave rise to a very serious dispute between the *Università* of Messina and that of Malta.

His short period of rule did not permit Del Ponte to introduce any changes in the administration of the island.

The Grand Master died on 18 November 1535 and was buried in the chapel of St Angelo by the side of L'Isle Adam.

Below: Pope Clement VII and Charles V.



DIDIER DE SAINT JAILLE

1535-1536

On 22 November 1535 a Frenchman, Didier de Saint Jaille, held in esteem for his great prudence, was raised to the office of Grand Master. His valour during the siege of Rhodes brought him to the forefront in the Order's top hierarchy. His name had for a long time been synonymous with gallantry. He received news of his election while he was in France. He soon made preparation for his return but on the way back he fell ill at Montpellier and died on 26 September 1536 before reaching the island.

During Saint Jaille's brief grandmastership, the knight Jacques Pelliquen, who acted as Lieutenant of the Order, had to take the important decision of attacking and destroying El Haid Tower near Tripoli. The Muslim corsair who commanded it was a daredevil who was equal in courage to Barbarossa but a hundred times more cruel. The attack was carried out with complete success by 700 Maltese and Calabrian soldiers and 150 knights led by the knight Bottigella. In the fierce battle which ensued *Chasse-Diable*, as the corsair was also called, was mortally wounded and his troops routed.

During his reign de Bourbon, Grand Prior of France, ordered a hanging of tapestry on silk embossed with gold bearing the effigies of the grand masters as they appeared on originals brought from Rhodes.



Below: The knighting of a nobleman.



JUAN D'OMEDES

1536-1553



On 20 October 1536 an Aragonese, Juan D'Omedes, was elected Grand Master. His election was due more to the protection of Charles V and to intrigue on the part of the langues of Spain than to any merit of his own; for he was grasping and ambitious and, like ambitious people generally, of a cruel disposition.

He made it his constant aim to diminish the powers of the *Università*. Using the distance of Notabile as a pretext, he instituted a second Comune at Birgu which, wholly subject to his will, administered the affairs of the southern canton of the island. He took the command of the coast guards from the Captain of the City and handed it over to the Seneschal, a dignitary of the Order. He also imposed new taxes and reduced salaries.

The leaders of the people again appealed to the Emperor against the bad government of the Grand Master, but it was all in vain for Charles V, finding in D'Omedes a man after his own heart, encouraged his

hateful innovations according to the statutes of the Order.

Charles V allowed D'Omedes to coin money, a privilege previously denied to Saint Jaille but, what was worse, he forced him in disastrous enterprises in Africa.

In retaliation the famous Admiral Dragut (Rais Torghud), the terror of navigation, landed unexpectedly in Gozo twice during the rule of this Grand Master. He carried off fifty prisoners without encountering any resistance; in 1551 he carried away almost the entire population. He also invaded the casal of Santa Caterina in Malta and carried off three hundred prisoners. In 1551 the Turks, landing in Marsamuscetto, scattered themselves over the country destroying whatever they could lay their hands upon. They were finally halted by the Maltese cavalry commanded by Nicholas Upton, an English Knight. The enemy then broke up their camp and directed their course to Gozo. The Gozitans, finding resistance useless, were compelled to surrender. Sinam, contrary to his pledges, sacked the island. Then he proceeded to Tripoli, which he reconquered for Solyman.

With Gozo devastated and Tripoli lost, D'Omedes decided to strengthen the fortifications of Malta. He decreed the erection of two forts, one upon Saint Elmo point and the other upon Monte San Giuliano. In 1552 the work of construction began; the first was called Fort St Elmo, and the second Fort St Michael.

In the matter of legislation D'Omedes promulgated six ordinances of little or no importance.

After seventeen years of miscalculation and misconduct, Grand Master D'Omedes died on 6 September 1553. Even his last act was one of fraud for, contrary to the monastic rule, he bequeathed his possessions to his family. For this reason it was proposed to deny him funeral honours, but milder counsels prevailing among the knights, his obsequies were celebrated as a sovereign prince in the church of St Lawrence.

He was buried in the chapel of St Angelo.

CLAUDE DE LA SENGLE

1553-1557

The long and unfortunate rule of D'Omedes led to the election, on 11 September 1553, of Claude de la Sengle, a Knight of the langue of France, renowned for his great judgement, virtue, and bravery. At the time of his election La Sengle was ambassador of the Order at the court of Pope Julius III, so that the new Grand Master did not arrive in Malta till the following January.

In dealing with the rights and prerogatives of the *Università*, he followed in the footsteps of his predecessors: he deprived the natives of the command of the militia to bestow it upon his Knights, he imposed new burdens, and he attempted to tax landed property. But so weighty was the opposition he encountered that he had to abandon his design. On the other hand, he provided for the defence of the island and made it much stronger to resist the attacks of the ever-dreaded Turk. He made Fort St Michael a new city to which was given his own name, Senglea. He also extended the fortifications of Birgu, deepened the moats around it, and increased the number of its dwellings so that it was called Città Nuova, a name which it preserved for a few years. He also added to and completed other works of public utility which had been begun by his predecessors. In 1555 he published some criminal laws which bear the stamp of his time.



He died at Notabile on 18 August 1557, leaving the Order a rich patrimony. He was buried in the chapel in St Angelo. His heart was buried in the church of the Annunciation, outside Rabat.



JEAN DE LA VALETTE

1557–1568



Jean de la Valette, a Knight of the langue of Provence, was proclaimed Grand Master on 21 August 1557. He was a strong man, full of valour and enthusiasm.

This great man, especially in the earlier years of his reign, usurped the rights and prerogatives still remaining to the *università* of Notabile and burdened it with certain expenses previously borne by the Order. He allowed the *Consiglio Popolare* to assemble rarely and only on those occasions when it served his purpose. He did not tolerate opposition in any form whatsoever.

One of his first acts was to obtain from Philip II of Spain a rescript in virtue of which the cognisance of feudal disputes was declared, contrary to the pretensions of the royal exchequer of Sicily, to belong to the tribunals of the Order. The Grand Masters were exempted from the obligation of requesting investiture from the Viceroy, and the Order was thus freed from much vexatious interference on the part of the royal ministers of Sicily (1558).

La Valette, however, had other more threatening problems to attend to. Tripoli was one of these: it had been reconquered by the Turks and was governed by Dragut. In order to remove such a dangerous neighbour, La Valette induced Philip to attempt its reconquest (1559). The enterprise was entrusted to the Duke of Medina Celi, Viceroy of Sicily. But, owing to the delays and inexperience of the commander as well as to the ravages of a fearful epidemic among the soldiers and sailors, the Christian armada was defeated near Djerba (1560).

Another problem was the thorny relationship between State and Church on religious matters. Twice during the rule of La Valette, the Congregation of the Holy Office unsuccessfully tried to establish the tribunals of the Inquisition in Malta.

Meanwhile, the Knights having seized the 'Galleon of the Sultans' which was carrying the riches of the East to Venice, Solyman resolved to declare war to get rid of the Order for good.

On 18 May 1565 some 138 galleys under the command of Piali Pasha and carrying a landing force of 40,000 men commanded by Mustapha Pasha appeared off Malta's coasts. Almost four months later, on 6 September, the defeated Turkish armada left these shores.

From the first establishment of the Order in Malta, it had been proposed to build a fortified city on Mount Sceberras and plans of such a city had long been meditated and discussed. The plan of the engineer Francesco Laparelli of Cortona was finally adopted. On 28 March 1566 it fell to the lot of the bold La Valette – who received assistance from Pope Pius V, from Philip of Spain, from Charles of France, from Sebastian of Portugal, and from the Knights and the people in a time of great financial difficulty – to lay the first stone of the new city, which was to be called after its founder, Valletta.

The heroic Grand Master died on 21 August 1568. He was buried in the church of Our Lady of Victories.

PIETRO DEL MONTE

1568–1572

Pietro del Monte, an Italian, succeeded La Valette on 23 August 1568. He made it his chief duty to continue and advance as far as possible the building of the newly-founded city. For this purpose he raised a loan at Palermo on the commanderies of Italy and Spain; with the assent of the *Consiglio Popolare*, he imposed a new duty upon corn. He also appointed a commission to draw up regulations relative to public buildings, which regulations provided fairly well for the public health, considering the times in which they were drawn up. The commission also suggested the division of the new city into two parts; that is, the *collacchio* and the *fuori di collacchio*. The suggestion was not adopted – either because it was deemed desirable to leave the choice of sites free so that the city should be built up more quickly or because the people regarded the division unfavourably as an odious distinction between the Knights and the Maltese.

During the magistracy of Del Monte, Selim, the successor of Solyman the Great, attacked Cyprus and took Nicosia, Paphos, and Limassol. In retaliation the major Christian powers resolved to unite in common defence. Marc' Antonio Colonna commanded the papal galleys while Andrea Doria the Sicilian led the Venetian galleys as well as those of Malta and of all the Italian republics; Don John of Austria was Commander-in-Chief. A great battle was fought in the Gulf of Lepanto. At that precise time, on the invitation of the Pope, all Christendom was reciting the rosary. The Maltese, led by Chev. Carafa, were the first to go into this attack. The struggle was tough but it ended in a complete victory for the Christian powers, who for the first time were united in a common enterprise (1571).

That same year Del Monte moved the seat of the Convent from Birgu to Valletta and, a year later, under the direction of the engineer Girolamo Cassar, he began the building of the Grand Masters' Palace.

He confirmed the *Regolamenti sulle case* promulgated by his predecessor and enjoined their observance. He also instituted laws of a penal character.

He died on 26 January 1572 and was buried in the church of Our Lady of Victories.



JEAN L'EVESQUE DE LA CASSIÈRE

1572–1581



On 30 January 1572, Jean de la Cassière, a Frenchman and a man of austere religious disposition, was proclaimed as Del Monte's successor.

The exhausted Treasury and the double necessity of pushing on with the building of the city and providing for the defence of the island still actively threatened by the Turks, obliged the new Grand Master to raise loans by mortgages on the property of the Order and to impose fresh taxes. He also tried to compel the Bishop to pay the royal tribute which formerly used to be paid to the kings of Sicily, but without success, as immunity from such payment had been granted to the Bishop by Ferdinand the Catholic and confirmed by Rome.

Under the direction of the Maltese engineer Girolamo Cassar, the Conventual Church of St John's was built at La Cassière's expense. It was consecrated by the Archbishop of Palermo on 20 February 1578.

La Cassière reformed the tribunals and issued laws

of a penal and administrative character.

During this period, by a Brief of 20 March 1574, the Bishop was granted the power to hold an inquiry in cases of heresy and other matters within the competence of the Holy Office against any person whatsoever. No proceedings, however, could be taken against persons under the jurisdiction to the Order, unless these were carried along with Fr. Tommaso Gargallo, a clerical member of the Order itself, or with another jurist or theologian freely chosen by the latter. This was a restriction on the authority of the Order and that of the Grand Master who exerted himself to have the Brief revoked. The revocation was granted, but soon after, the Holy Office of the Inquisition was established in the island. The brief was published in Malta on 8 August 1574 and the Inquisitor began to exercise his jurisdiction.

In 1581 a lamentable scarcity of food became the cause of rifts between Church and State and was taken as an excuse to attack the Grand Master for want of foresight. The Knights, who in their majority were opposed to austere measures, availed themselves of this opportunity. On 6 July they declared La Cassière unfit to govern and went as far as to slander him in his life and character. They appointed a lieutenant in his stead, and imprisoned La Cassière in Fort St Angelo. The Maltese took the side of the Grand Master. They sent the Captain of the City and the jurats to inform the deposed ruler that they had 2,000 armed men ready to assist him as soon as he should give the word. For, if La Cassière had alienated the affections and esteem of his Knights, he had won the good-will of the Maltese. He prudently declined the assistance, saying that he looked for justice from the supreme Head of the Order. In fact, Gregory XIII, who had a very great regard for La Cassière, sent Mgr Venosti to Malta to recall both the Grand Master and his lieutenant to Rome. La Cassière was honourably received at Rome, and his innocence was fully vindicated. He died there on 21 December 1581 but his remains were buried in the Conventual Church of St John's.

HUGUES LOUBENX DE VERDALLE

1582–1595

Because of dissension among the Knights, fears were entertained that the Council might make a bad choice. Requests were therefore made to Pope Gregory XIII to appoint the successor to La Cassière. This the pontiff declined to do, but he proposed three candidates to the Council: Penisses, Moreton, and Verdalle. Of these the Council elected Verdalle on 12 January 1582.

At that time the islands were still threatened by the Turks, and although these once-formidable enemies were no longer in a position to undertake great enterprises, the Grand Master insisted on stronger fortifications stocked with sufficient munitions of war and provisions. In 1584, following the sacking of Gozo by four galleys of Bizerta during which 60 persons were carried off, Verdalle decided to build a fort which had been contemplated for some time. For this purpose he proposed a tax upon articles of food in that island to which the Gozitans willingly agreed.

The plans for better fortifications did not, however, help to relieve the awkward social conditions on the island. In 1591 the increase of the population and the scarcity of food led to famine and the year after the island was ravaged by a pestilence. In depriving the Commune of its rights and prerogatives, Verdalle did not allow himself to be outdone by his predecessors; but at least his despotism was of an enlightened kind. He framed laws for the public safety, protected agriculture, and showed his interest in education by establishing a college in Valletta under the direction of the Jesuits.

Even then there were those who regarded the introduction of the Jesuits as a mistake, alleging that they were an ambitious body of men who by the influence they exercised over their pupils in their studies turned the minds of young men away from the profitable pursuit of seamanship.

In the last years of Verdalle's rule the dissensions and rivalries in the Convent greatly increased and he – formerly created a Cardinal of the Church by Pope Sixtus V – was accused in front of Pope Clement VIII,



who was not very friendly to him, of malpractices, of injustice in the conferment of dignities and offices, and of unseemly behaviour.

Weighed down by disease and the mortifications to which he had been subjected, he breathed his last on 4 May 1595.



MARTIN GARZES

1595–1601



Martin Garzes of the langue of Aragon succeeded to the office of Grand Master on 8 May 1595. Sicily, then belonging to Spain, naturally favoured a Grand Master of Spanish nationality. To compliment the Order's choice, Philip II decreed an increased supply of grain for our population thus easing the scarcity of food which had been so keenly felt under Verdalle. The King also presented the Order with a sum of 40,000 crowns, the proceeds of two commanderies belonging to him, aimed to help in fortifying Gozo.

Garzes was reputed to have been very sympathetic with the Maltese. He understood their plight and many of their worries but after he became Grand Master he lifted no finger restore to their Commune the rights and prerogatives taken by his predecessors. However, it goes to his credit that nothing was done to permeate

the tyranny of a continued usurpation. He devoted a great deal of his time and money to the development of Valletta, which he knew offered a wider field to industry and commerce than any other city. He was conscious at the same time of the threat that Notabile could consequently suffer at the expense of further urbanization. To guard against the depopulation of this old city, the Grand Master granted its inhabitants a number of privileges. Chief among these was the right to have recourse to no other tribunals in civil and criminal matters except their own. They were also allowed to appeal to their own magistrate in criminal cases, and to be exempted from obligatory military service.

Garzes also showed great consideration for the safety of the Maltese. He built coastal towers to increase their security and set up institutions to care for the poor and the needy. On the initiative of Commandant Emmanuele Quiros, a Portuguese, he instituted the *Monte di Pietà*. In the General Chapter held on 4 January 1598 to consider how to save the poor from the exaction of Turkish and Jewish usurers, he also offered 2,000 crowns of his own money for this purpose and demanded that the Common Treasury should contribute at least another thousand.

Garzes' grandmastership was, however, to be marked with continuous dissent between the various classes of society. As soon as the members of the Convent ceased to quarrel among themselves, the situation was bedevilled with jurisdictional conflicts. Serious differences arose between the Order's Court and the Tribunal of the Inquisition and also sometimes that of the Bishop. Appeals to Rome went on uninterruptedly, thus alienating the people from the real social and economic problems.

After nearly six years of just rule, Garzes died on 7 February 1601.

ALOF DE WIGNACOURT

1601-1622

At the Council meeting held on 10 February 1601 Alof de Wignacourt of the French langue was elected Grand Master.

The population continued to increase notwithstanding early deaths from pestilence and famine and the continuous enslavement of whole families during the frequent raids by Barbary corsairs. This problem was further increased by shortages of food supplies from Sicily which could be hardly compensated with the booty captured by the Order and other privateers in the Mediterranean.

To put a check upon the abuses resulting from the great number of armed privateers in the island, the Grand Master appointed a commission to inquire into this state of affairs and suggest the necessary remedies. On receiving the report of the commissioners, he appointed, on 17 June 1605, the *Magistrato degli Armamenti* to take cognisance of disputes between privateers. He also forbade privateering under foreign flags and privateering under the flag of the Order except under certain conditions and with a caution not to molest the vessels of Christian princes. He finally demanded a tenth of all the booty taken by foreign vessels and conveyed to Malta to be sold or divided.

Wignacourt also established the *Monte della Redenzione*. Although only poorly managed at first, this institution acquired much greater means in course of time through the legacies of private persons. Every Easter it was able to ransom a good number of Christian slaves.

Among the various works carried out during the time of this Grand Master the most important certainly was the aqueduct from outside Rabat to Valletta. This was began in 1610 under the direction of the Jesuit Tomasucci and was completed in 1615 under the direction of Bontadini, a Bolognese engineer.

Like his immediate predecessor, Alof de Wignacourt left the *Università* in the state to which it had been reduced under Verdalle. However, if he did not restore its ancient privileges, he merited the affection and esteem of the Maltese by his justice and munificence.



He also came into conflict with the Inquisitor who claimed to extend his jurisdiction over temporal matters and wished to proceed against members of the Order without the intervention of the Grand Master.

Out of regard for Wignacourt, Ferdinand II conferred the title of Most Serene Highness upon the Grand Masters. This conferment was the cause of great antagonism between Grand Master and Inquisitor, who wished to be styled Most Illustrious, a title which the Council granted to him and to all the Grand Crosses of the Order.

Alof de Wignacourt died, sincerely lamented by all, on 14 September 1622.

LUIS MENDES DE VASCONCELLOS

1622-1623



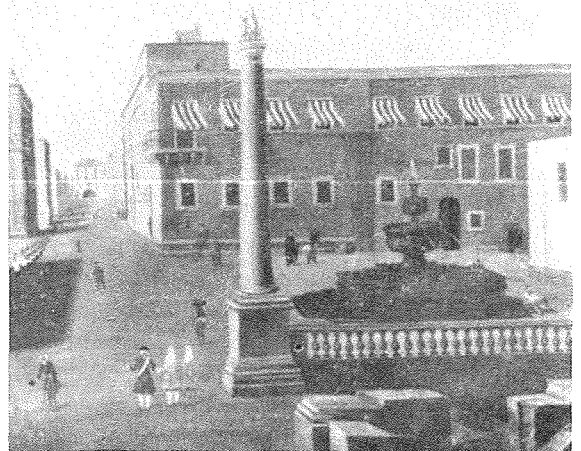
Luis Mendes de Vasconcellos, of the langue of Castille, on succeeding to Wignacourt on 17 September 1622, showed that he wanted to restore the rights and prerogatives to the *Università* which his predecessors had long deprived it of. He would probably have succeeded had he not been so advanced in age.

Although Vasconcellos announced his intention to carry out the projects of his predecessor, the Council did not always share his opinion. The island of Comino, according to the Councillors, belonged to the Order and not to the Grand Master. Consequently they annulled the provision in Wignacourt's will by which an annual impost of 800 crowns was to be levied upon that island for the maintenance of the aqueduct, the fortifications, and other works of public utility.

Vasconcellos' short grandmastership would have ended almost uneventfully had he not come to

loggerheads with Bishop Cagliares over the building of an Episcopal Palace in Valletta. Versions about the causes of the differences between Vasconcellos and Cagliares differ. Some hold that they were product of senility arising from baseless doubts that a Bishop's court in Valletta could be a threat to the civil administration of the Order. Others blame Cagliares's ambition and tenacity in his vision of a Church that was not inferior to the State, either spiritually or temporally. The Palace was, in fact, a symbol of status and its absence in administrative cities could not be tolerated by Ecclesiastic authorities. The issue could have also been deliberately exaggerated by the Order's dignitaries close to the Grand Master who were antagonistic to Cagliares because of his Maltese descent. Baldassare Cagliares was, in fact, the only Maltese ecclesiastic to be appointed bishop during the Order's rule in Malta. In spite of all opposition, however, Cagliares proceeded with his plan of building his palace in Valletta. Vasconcellos asked and obtained an inhibitory order from Rome, but Cagliares soon brought its revocation on the excuse that the palace would only serve as an ordinary residence of the bishop and, in case of siege, as a place of refuge for his canons.

Vasconcellos died on 7 March 1623.



ANTOINE DE PAULE

1623-1636

On the accession of Antoine de Paule, a knight of French nationality who became Grand Master on 10 March 1623, the Maltese hoped for a reform of government. But their ardent expectations were doomed to disappointment.

The new Grand Master succeeded in maintaining the high standard which the navy of the island had attained under his predecessor. With the assistance of the engineer Floriani da Macerata, he began the extension of the outer fortifications of Floriana. Lack of funds, however, did not permit him to complete them.

The same year that de Paule was elected head of the Order, Pope Urban VIII succeeded to the pontificate. Whether with sufficient grounds or not, the new Pontiff was far from well-disposed towards the new Grand Master, and instituted at Rome a permanent congregation presided over by a cardinal to control the affairs of Malta. This body, acting as if invested with absolute authority, began to dispose of the Italian commandaries without regard to the prerogatives of the Grand Master. Pope Urban changed the title of Most Serene Highness to that of Eminence and, to add insult to injury, he relieved knights of the right to dispose of their possessions by will.

The King of Spain tried to intervene with the Pope in order to induce him to dissolve the above-mentioned congregation. The Grand Master and the Council also sent Monsignor Imbroll, Prior of the Conventual Church, a man of great ability and long-trying prudence, to argue their case. Through his efforts, the powers of the congregation were considerably restricted and a complete reconciliation was affected between the Order and the Pope.

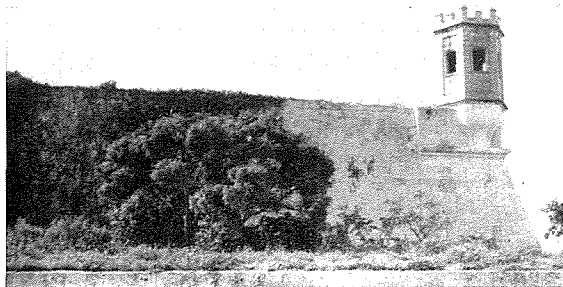
In 1625 another ecclesiastical tribunal was established in the island: that of the *Fabbrica di San Pietro* to take cognisance of pious bequests. The Bishop fruitlessly resisted this encroachment upon his jurisdiction, but at length the unbecoming conflicts of authority between the tribunal and the episcopal court induced Pope Alexander VII to suppress the tribunal



and grant its powers to the Inquisition.

In 1632 the Grand Master ordered a census of the islands to be taken. At least three figures were taken showing a population numbering 54,463 inhabitants; another, 51,750; and a third, 41,750.

No events of striking importance occurred during the last years of de Paule's life which ended on 9 June 1636.



JEAN-PAUL LASCARIS CASTELLAR

1636-1657



On 13 June 1636 Jean-Paul Lascaris Castellar, a knight of Provençe, became Grand Master.

At the time of the election of Lascaris, the Viceroy of Sicily refused to allow the export of more than the ordinary quantity of grain, and the Grand Master was obliged – not unsuccessfully – to have recourse to the Viceroy of Naples. When war broke out between Spain and France, some French Knights accepted the command of armed vessels from their Sovereign. The court of Spain, taking umbrage at this, suspected that Lascaris connived at this action and, in addition to the refusal of food supplies, it now proceeded to sequester sums of money in Sicily belonging to French knights.

But notwithstanding these clamorous times, the work of Floriani, which had been suspended under the preceding Grand Master, was again taken at hand. Under the direction of Father Vincenzo Maculano of the Dominican Order, Santa Margherita hill was fortified, the mole of Valletta was enlarged, the

Lazzaretto was constructed, the Public Library was established, and other works of public utility were undertaken. All this entailed the necessity of imposing new taxes.

The army was also reorganized, but this led to new difficulties, for the Bishop, ordaining an excessive number of persons as clerics — including even married men — claimed that these should be exempted from military service. Lascaris, after vainly appealing to the King of Spain against the conduct of the Bishop, made direct remonstrances to Pope Urban VIII who declared married clerics to be subject to military service.

The useful institutions of Lascaris would have endeared him to the people if he had not also, like some of his predecessors, laid hands upon the rights and prerogatives of the Commune. The division of Malta into two constitutional municipalities as projected by D'Omedes continued up to 1638. Lascaris, however, reunited the two *Universitas* but established that meetings should be held alternately in Valletta and at Notabile under the presidency of the Seneschal.

The restored *Università*, however, dealt with no other problems except that of the corn supply. It lost, in fact, every vestige of power, the Grand Master deciding every question for himself, independently of everyone.

In 1640 Lascaris promulgated a body of laws which, according to the confused method of that time, dealt indiscriminately with matters pertaining to domestic public law, civil law, criminal law, procedure, and police. He issued other particular laws by one of which, that of 25 May 1644, he introduced printing and gave a licence for the first printing press to Pompeo del Fiore. He also prohibited for ten years the importation of certain books under a pecuniary penalty together with the confiscation of the books themselves.

He died after a rule of twenty-one years on 14 August 1657.

MARTIN DE REDIN

1657-1660

Three days after the death of de Lascaris, Martin de Redin, an Aragonese, then Viceroy of Sicily, was proclaimed Grand Master. He assumed the government of the island on 10 September. His brief term of office passed by without any notable military or naval operations, without any alarms of hostile invasion, and without any dearth of provisions; so abundant in fact was the supply of corn that it was found necessary to construct new granaries.

One of the first thoughts of de Redin was to provide for the defence of the coast, where guard at night, chiefly for the purpose of hindering the landing of the enemy, was only indifferently kept by countrymen already worn out with the fatigue of the day. To remedy this very serious inconvenience, he caused thirteen towers to be built along the coast in less than a year, arming each with two guns and maintaining in each a small garrison of paid guards.

At the beginning of 1660, the war between Spain and France ended; its termination relieved the Order of the great difficulty experienced in observing the strict neutrality it had declared. But the worthy de Redin was not destined to enjoy the benefits of peace for long.

He died on 6 February of the same year.



Below: An old map of Malta.



ANNET DE CLERMONT DE CHATTES GESSAN 1660-1660



Annet de Clermont de Chattes Gessan was Bailiff of Lyon when he was elected Grand Master on 6 February 1660. Two days after he was acknowledged Sovereign Prince of the Islands of Malta and Gozo.

The title of Sovereign was enjoyed by the Clermont family since the time the lands of Dauphiny and Savoy were the Clermont's possession before 1340. The viscounts of Clermont family had then levied troops and made alliances and treaties with other aristocratic families. Their castles of Chavacert and Saussin upon the river Guè were garrisoned by the best men and thus made impregnable.

Annet de Clermont was a man of great courage and this, together with his piety and zeal for religion, made him humane and popular both with the knights and the populace. He would probably have become a successful and popular Grand Master. However, he received a serious wound during the siege of Mahometa.

He died, as a result of severe bleeding, on 2 June 1660, aged 73.



RAPHAEL COTONER

1660-1663

Raphael Cotoner, Bailiff of Majorca, was elected Grand Master on 5 June 1660.

At that time the war with the Turks over Candia was at its peak. The Venetians were continually asking for help from all Christian Princes of Europe. Malta responded generously and, with the blessings of Pope Alexander VII, Grand Master Raphael Cotoner sent a large number of ships from his fleet to help in the reconquest of lost islands. The enterprise would have ended more rapidly and with better success had the Venetians accepted the Genoese offer and exploited the strength and experience of their forces at sea and on land. The Maltese put up a good show. They succeeded in routing the enemy at several strategic points and in capturing the towns of Calogero and Calami.

The fleet of the Order during the first three months of 1662 made several encounters with the enemy. On 24 January the General of the Galleys attacked a Tunisian vessel off Capo Passero and carried away some 130 slaves amongst whom were the son of the Bey of Tunis and a *choaux* of the Sultan of Turkey.

In spite of the huge expenses incurred by the Order's commitments in the War of Candia, Raphael Cotoner felt that he could not sacrifice the more important projects at home. His good administration, in fact, managed to cope both with his generosity as an ally of the Venetians in war and his magnificence in his role as Prince of the Maltese Islands.

It may be said that Malta had rarely had a better time. Disputes with Bishop and Inquisitor were kept to the minimum and relationship with the Maltese in general was excellent. He is best remembered for the improvement of the infirmary. The new ward, measuring 520 ft long with a width which could take 'some dozen men walking abreast in it', was believed to be the largest ward in Europe. Improvements in hygienic conditions at the infirmary were also made. These included the introduction of single beds to replace the traditional treble-patient ones then still in use all over the continent.

Raphael Cotoner was also a great patron of the arts.



In this role, he gave Malta one of its priceless treasures: the frescoed vault and altarpieces of St John's Conventual Church. He was responsible for bringing to the island the Calabrian painter, Mattia Preti, and by making him a Knight of Grace he secured that the works he entrusted into his masterly hands would come to a successful end.

Unfortunately, however, the Grand Master did not live long enough to see his projects bear fruit. He contacted the fever which at the time was ravaging the island and he died on 20 October 1663.

Opposite page: Cannon in front of the Auberge de Castille.

NICHOLAS COTONER

1663-1680



Nicholas Cottoner, brother of the preceding Grand Master and a man of rigid and austere temper, was wanted by none and was elected by all, as he himself said. During his term of office, which began on 23 October, he pleased few, disgusted many, and enjoyed the flattery rather than the love of those around him. But he was bold in his designs. The semi-circular fortifications around the Three Cities are named Cottonera after him. Besides this great and arduous work, which was carried out under the direction of the engineer Valperga sent to him by the Duke of Savoy, he added considerably to the works begun by Floriani and Maculano. He levelled the quay of the Grand Harbour and he instituted the School of Anatomy and Surgery.

To meet the expenses entailed by these undertakings he levied, with the consent of Clement X, a tax upon landed property, including also ecclesiastical property.

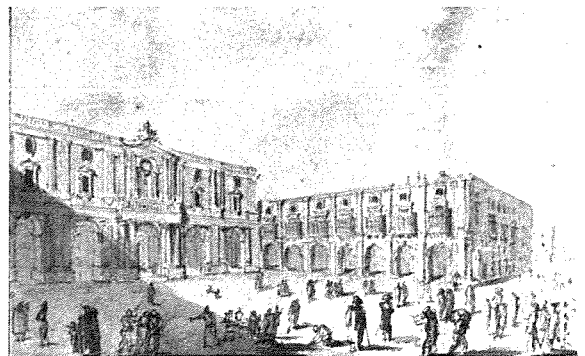
Although consequently suspended, this tax was replaced by duties upon coffee, brandy, soap, coral, tobacco, and playing cards.

During this period Fort Ricasoli was constructed, also from plans by Valperga. The new fort received its name from the Bailiff Francesco Ricasoli, who donated 30,000 crowns for the work, and devoted a further 3,000 out of his annual income to the same purpose.

The islands were not disturbed by wars or by fighting under Cottoner, but the galleys of the Order, together with five hundred Maltese soldiers and eighty Knights, assisted the enterprise of Louis XIV of France, challenging the Barbary pirates who were trying to establish a colony upon the coast of Algeria. He also helped construct a fort and harbour for the protection of French vessels. The Grand Master also assisted the Venetians with four hundred Maltese soldiers and sixty-two Knights in their war with the Turks in Candia (Crete); and he afforded English war-vessels the use and protection of the Malta harbour in their operations against Tripoli.

A pestilence which broke out towards the end of 1675 caused a loss of 11,000 lives in six months.

Nicholas Cottoner felt the necessity of a radical reform in legislation, and appointed a commission for this purpose; but he died on 29 April 1680 before the work was completed.



GREGORIO CARAFA DE ROCCELLA

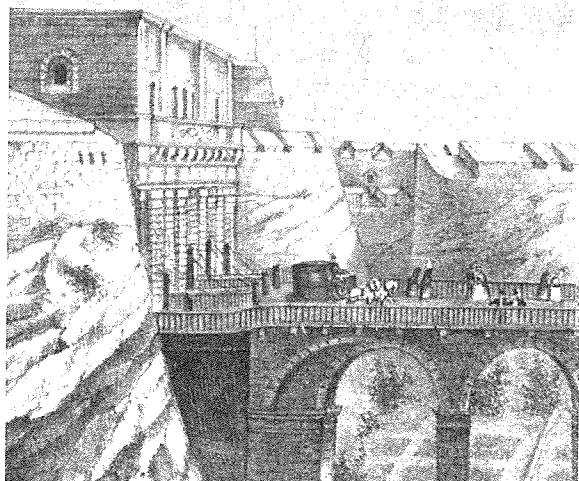
1680-1690

Gregorio Carafa, Prior of La Roccella, was elected as Head of the Order on 2 May 1680. Carafa's accession came in the course of a fierce war between the Turks and the Austrians. Although Malta was not directly involved, the great assistance given by Maltese ships in their frequent skirmishes with Muslim shipping in the Levant was greatly appreciated by Emperor Leopold. Their actions indeed proved that the Order's fleet still ranked high among the maritime powers of the world.

The statutes of Carafa, promulgated on 12 September 1680, with a want of method attributable more to the period of their compilation than to their compiler, dealt with the rights and the duties of public officials, contracts, the commoner forms of crime, the forms of judicial proceedings, and some matters relating to police.

In 1684 the Order joined the alliance that had been formed between Austria, Poland, and Venice against the Turks, furnishing galleys, nine hundred soldiers, and one hundred Knights for the capture of the Morea. Three years afterwards the Maltese fought bravely at Castelnovo. A year later a British squadron, consisting of seven ships, commanded by the Duke of Groftin, the son of Charles II, was given a warm welcome when it entered the Grand Harbour. A misunderstanding in protocol between the Prince Duke and the Grand Master spoilt what would otherwise have been the resumption of an excellent relationship and might have led to the reopening of the English Language. This unfortunate incident was further increased by the sad news that the confederate fleets attempting the blockade of Negroponte had been defeated after losing the better part of their forces, including four hundred Maltese and twenty-six Knights who fell victims of plague.

Seized with a violent fever, Carafa ended his days on 21 July 1690, lamented by the people to whom he had particularly endeared himself by his affable manners.



ADRIEN DE WIGNACOURT

1690-1697



Adrien de Wignacourt, Grand Treasurer of the Order and nephew of the Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622) was elected Grand Master on 24 July 1690. He celebrated the beginning of his rule with an act of munificence; by giving a pension to the widows and orphans of the Maltese who fell in the service of the Order during his predecessor's term of office. He also ordered the maintenance of a galliot to police the sea around Malta and to clear them of Barbary corsairs.

On 12 January 1693 a series of earthquakes hit the south-eastern part of Sicily. Catania and Augusta were almost totally razed to the ground leaving tens of thousands of dead beneath the rubble. Some parts of Malta and Gozo were also slightly affected. The bastions of Mdina incurred severe cracks while the steeple of the Romanesque Cathedral was also destroyed. In Gozo both the *Matrice* in the *Castello* and the Parish of St George in Rabat suffered some

damage. The Grand Master immediately sent relief teams with provisions and medicines to help the distressed inhabitants. He ordered Chev. Ferrao to look after the reconstruction of the Order's oven in Augusta and at the same time entrusted the French military engineer, Chev. Vendôme, to assess the extent of the damage in Malta.

Adrien de Wignacourt refitted the ships of the Order's fleet with the necessary masts and sails in order to make every craft sea-worthy and also built an arsenal for the construction of galleys. He also built new magazines for the storage of munitions of war.

The state of the treasury at this time was such as to permit the expenditure of considerable sums upon works of public utility and in acts of beneficence. This was made particularly possible through the personal intervention of Pope Innocent XII who, as a former Inquisitor of Malta, was well acquainted with the islands' needs. Besides exempting the possessions of the Order from a tax to which his Monarchs wished to subject them, the Pope further induced the King of France and the Duke of Savoy to refrain from levying any contribution whatsoever upon the same possession. To make good the lack of hands at the galleys, he also sent the Grand Master a large number of convicts who offered to serve as rowers upon the galleys. Finally, by reconciling the Order with Genoa, he procured new sources of refilling the Order's coffers and thus provided the Knights with the much-needed finances.

Adrien de Wignacourt died on 4 February 1697.



RAMON PERELLOS Y ROCCAFUL

1697-1720

Ramon Perellos, an Aragonese, on becoming Grand Master on 7 February 1697, also attacked the rights and prerogatives of the *Universit *. In addition to the Seneschal, who was already president of the *Consiglio Popolare*, he also appointed one of the *Uditori* as a member of that body; the *Uditori* were the Grand Master's chief ministers in all that related to the maintenance of his jurisdiction and the administration of justice.

Perellos, however, is credited with having assisted the development and growth of culture and commerce. He built large stone warehouses and introduced the mercantile laws which he promulgated on 4 September 1697 as the *Consolato del Mare*. He obtained permission to start the ship-of-the-line squadron from Pope Innocent XII, who was always well disposed towards the Order. The Pope restituted the commanderies which other Pontiffs had always disposed of and, like the other Grand Masters having the same nationality, he secured an abundance of corn for the island.

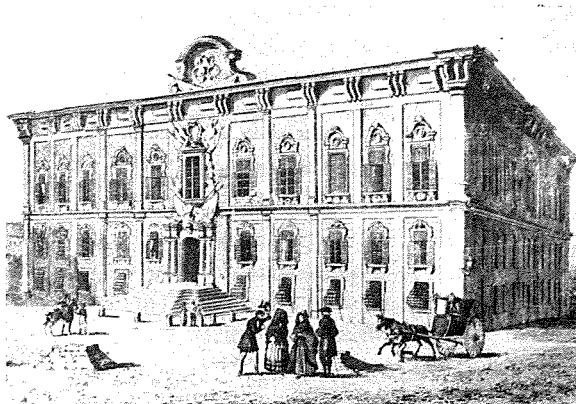
The jurisdictional conflicts between Bishop, Inquisitor, and Grand Master became still more lively under his rule, if not at times more noisy and disorderly in character. However, Pope Innocent, again exercising his friendly offices, managed to contain all differences which divided them, giving fair consideration to the rights of one and all.

Perellos is, perhaps, best remembered for his generosity towards the embellishment of the Conventual Church of St John's. As part of his *gioia* he secured from the famous Gobelin factory in France a set of 12 artistic tapestries by the Flemish master Judocus de Vos representing episodes from the life of Christ and the missionary call of the Church. They were woven to the designs of world-famous artists such as Peter Paul Rubens. He also paid for the monumental statue of the Baptism of Christ by Giuseppe Mazzuoli in St John's at Valletta. Another set of 10 tapestries representing beasts and exotic plants, also paid from his own pocket, were woven for



the Magistral Palace in Valletta. He also built Porte des Bombes.

Infirm of mind during the last three years of his life, Ramon Perellos breathed his last on 10 January 1720.



MARC'ANTONIO ZONDADARI

1720-1722



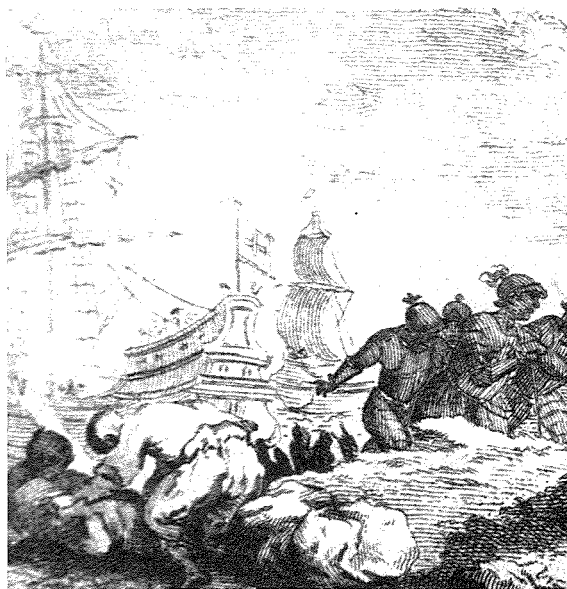
Marc'Antonio Zondadari, a noble from Siena belonging to the langue of Italy, became Grand Master on 13 January 1720. Unlike his predecessor he was not very much in favour of Spain which still claimed its rights on Malta. However, he kept the Order's good relationship with Spanish leaders. As was customary, on his installation ceremony, he sent the falcon to the Viceroy of Sicily which had then just passed into Habsburg hands, thus ensuring an excellent politico-economic climate in which commerce between Malta and Sicily could prosper.

The correctness of Zondadari was almost religious, even towards the Maltese. It is said that, because of the ambiguous relations of the Order with the Maltese, Zondadari refused to take the oath to observe the rights and privileges of the Commune. The story is described by the Order's chroniclers as unfounded. But other historians believed that Zondadari's behaviour originated from his knowledge that at the time of his succession the Maltese were left

with no rights and privileges.

Consequently, soon after patching his political quarrels with Spain and the new Habsburg rulers in Sicily, he turned his attention to domestic problems. He showed his trust in the Maltese Commune by giving them a seat of office in Valletta, where the prices of bread and other commodities were fixed every day; invested the jurats with ceremonial privileges; and entrusted them with the administration of the *Monte delle Fortificazioni* and allowed the Commune to raise taxes on wine, meat, and consumables and to administer their proceeds according to their needs. He also reorganized the fleet of the Order, created mercantile in lieu of corsairing activity, and declared Malta's harbour a free port (*scala franca*) to all Christian shipping. In Gozo he reinforced the fortifications and increased the provisions.

Zondadari proved his worth by maintaining a balanced economy which left the Order's treasury in a healthy state when he died on 16 June 1722.



ANTONIO MANOEL DE VILHENA

1722-1736

Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, a Portuguese of the language of Castille, succeeded Zondadari on 19 June 1722. His noble birth and personal qualities were coupled to his wisdom and knowledge of the Order's regulations. He gradually rose to prominence through diligence and hard work. He rapidly climbed the Order's hierarchical ladder and had hardly finished his caravans when he was made Captain of the admiral's galley. Twice he was wounded in engagements with Muslim ships. He was later made Major and then Colonel of the Militia, Cross of Grace in 1696, Commissioner of the Navy in 1698, Commissioner of War in 1701, and Great Chancellor in 1713.

On his rise to the grandmastership the political horizon became for a time overcast. A newly-ransomed slave, Ali by name, informed the Grand Vizier that the number of slaves in Malta equalled the number of freemen, and that the mere appearance of a Turkish squadron off the island would be enough to bring about successful revolt. The Grand Master, warned in time, put his defences in order and preserved the island from attack; although the squadron duly appeared, the admiral Abdi, who commanded it, contented himself with firing a few shots, and threatening Vilhena with the most terrible consequences if he did not set free all his Muslim slaves. Vilhena replied to the Sultan that he was ready to treat with a view to the exchange or ransom of slaves. The Porte not only accepted the proposal but wished to conclude a treaty of peace with the Order. The Grand Master instead proposed a truce upon certain conditions, which truce the Sultan would have accepted if it had not been for the opposition of the chief officers of his navy.

Upon the little island in Marsamuscetto harbour, Vilhena constructed Fort Manoel under the direction of Chev. Mondion. Between Valletta and the fortifications of Floriani, he also founded the suburb Floriana. There he instituted a home for poor unmarried women and another for incurables. He also had a theatre built in Valletta.



The codification of Malta's laws formed one of his priorities. No sooner had he settled in his new office that he ordered that the statutes of his predecessors should be reformed, that those which were superfluous and useless should be abrogated, and that new ones should be added according to the requirements of the times. The whole code was published in 1723.

The laws of Vilhena, which reveal similar deficiencies to those of Caraffa, are mainly concerned on matters of internal public law, civil law, mercantile law, criminal law, judicial law, and police.

To assist further in his relief programme, Vilhena reduced the customs duties. The people were not without their burdens under his rule, but these were compensated for their hardship with works of public utility and with an abundance of provisions and low prices.

Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena breathed his last on 12 December 1736, having gained the affections and the esteem of the Maltese.

RAIMONDO DESPUIG

1736–1741

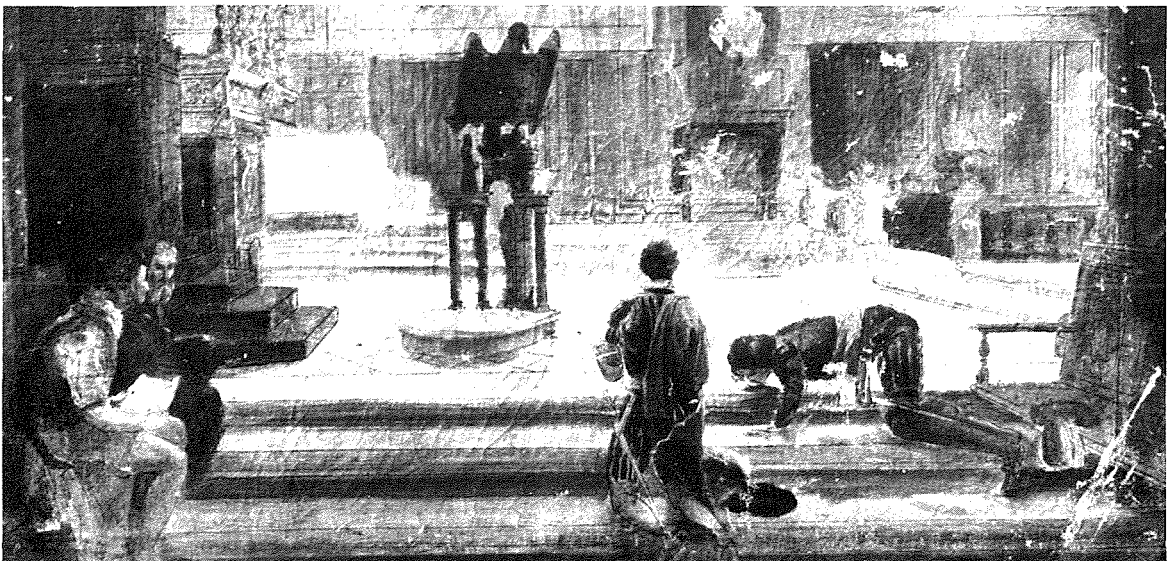


On 16 December 1736 Raimondo Despuig, Bailiff of Majorca and a man of conspicuous probity, was elected Grand Master.

Weighed down with years, sickly, and not long destined to enjoy his position, he made no administrative or legislative reform; but he was able to rid the seas of the Levant of the pirates that infested them; he regulated the precedence between families according to the title of each; he withdrew the silver coinage of his predecessors to make a new issue of inferior weight – a species of fraud attributable more to the avidity of one of his ministers than to him.

He died on 15 January 1741.

A knight of Malta paying homage in St John's Conventual Church in Valletta.



EMANUEL PINTO DE FONSECA

1741-1773

Despuig was succeeded on 18 January 1741 by Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca, a Portuguese who had lived in Malta from his childhood and who was considered by the Maltese more as a compatriot than as an alien. He could, in fact, also speak their own language.

Combining the title of Highness conferred on the Grand Masters by Ferdinand II with that of Eminence substituted by Pope Urban VIII, Pinto assumed the title of Most Eminent Highness and called himself Prince of Malta. No sovereign objected to these titles. But during Pinto's rule Charles Bourbon, King of Naples, wished to reaffirm his rights of sovereignty over Malta and Gozo according to the Act of Cession of 24 March 1530 and those of the Apostolic Legacy granted to Count Roger by Pope Urban II. Pinto disputed the claims of the Neapolitan King and in the ensuing quarrel commerce between the island and the Kingdom of Naples was disrupted. Besides the commanderies of the Order in the Two Sicilies were also sequestered. The timely intervention of Pope Benedict XIV brought relations back to normal but the conclusion of peace found Pinto and his successors the legitimate holders of the ancient rights which the kings of Sicily and the Church had upon Malta.

This situation added further to the prestige of Pinto among the monarchs of Europe. He, in turn, reciprocated the respect and was even ready to accept the international rules of good relationship among nations. As a consequence the influence of France over the Order grew and prospects of an opening towards the Levant seemed brighter. In fact Pinto prevented the fleet of Malta from engaging in any piratical enterprises against Muslim shipping.

Pinto's grandmastership was not without internal incidents. In Pinto is credited with the setting up of various institutions, but perhaps he will be more strongly remembered than for his variety of sins both of omission and of commission. Top among these is his enlightened despotism which was the cause of his senseless waste of the funds of the *Università*.



In 1749 Mustapha Pasha of Rhodes fell into the hands of the Knights who treated him with much humanity and consideration. In Malta, however, he put himself at the head of a plot to kill the Grand Master and seize Malta on behalf of the Sultan of Turkey. Fortunately the plot was discovered and thirty-eight of the conspirators were put to death; Mustapha, strong in the protection of France, escaped the fury of the people and was allowed to go free.

Many defensive and useful public works are due to Pinto; among which are to be reckoned the institution of the University, endowed for the most part with the property assigned by Verdalle to the Jesuits who were expelled by Pinto, and the construction of a Court of Justice.

Pinto rendered himself so hated that neither the Knights nor the people lamented his death which took place on 23 January 1773.

FRANCISCO XIMENES DE TEXADA

1773-1775



The most popular candidate for the grandmastership was Francisco Ximenes of the Languedoc of Spain from whom a liberal reform in the State administration was expected. He was elected on 28 January 1773, but all illusions and expectations of progress were very soon dispelled by his autocratic and tyrannical policies. He suppressed many offices, reduced salaries, imposed limitations upon the pursuit of game, increased the price of corn thus occasioning much misery, governed with extreme rigour, and treated those who had served him well with haughtiness and ingratitude.

Already during the time of his detested predecessor, dissension among the Maltese was rife. A movement had been formed to obtain a reform of government by force and to secure the observance of the rights and prerogatives of the *Università*. But in 1772 dissension was somewhat eased following interventions by Dun Gejt Mannarino, who had built high hopes that Ximenes could in time bring about the much-needed

reform. But, as month after month passed, Mannarino's hopes proved illusory.

In an effort to play a decisive blow at the Government, Mannarino persuaded other leaders of the people that only an armed intervention could bring Ximenes to his senses. A small group of Maltese, both secular and clerical, him and thus broke out the most ill-considered of rebellions, known as 'the rising of the priests'.

On the night of 8 September 1775 he took by surprise St James Cavalier and Fort St Elmo. The following morning at daybreak, for the first time in Malta's history, the Maltese colours flew on the walls of Malta's strongest fortifications. For several days Mannarino kept St Elmo's captain and guards as hostages until finally it was agreed that the privileges granted to the island by the Kings of Aragon and Sicily would be observed, that the price of corn would be reduced, and that all those who took part in the venture would be unconditionally pardoned.

But no sooner were the hostages released than the Grand Master and his Council broke their sworn promise. They treated Mannarino and his followers with ruthless cruelty. Three were beheaded and others were banished or thrown into prison. Mannarino was sentenced for life in the dungeons in St Elmo but was eventually released 25 years later by Napoleon Bonaparte who acclaimed him as 'the greatest of the Maltese'.

A decree issued the same day granted the required pardon and promised the observance of privileges, 'which' it added, 'the Grand Master and Council of the Order do not believe they had ever violated.' With regard to the reduction of the price of corn, it was said that no reduction could be sanctioned before consulting the jurats of the *università* which, however, should be done as soon as possible. The rebels were satisfied by these assurances, and the fort was surrendered.

Further legal proceedings were suspended owing to the sudden illness of Ximenes, who died on 9 November 1775.

EMANUEL DE ROHAN POLDUC

1775-1797

The Bailiff Emmanuel de Rohan, a Frenchman, was elected Grand Master on 12 November 1775.

De Rohan initiated his rule by acts of clemency and kindness, setting free political prisoners and treasury debtors, recalling galley deserters and condoning their offences, and giving considerable sums of money in charity. He endeavoured at the same time to lessen the great divide between the Knights and the Maltese, a state of affairs which had always been a source of very grave annoyance. He obtained from Pope Pius VI the limitation of ecclesiastical asylum and the personal immunity of clerics, and he confirmed the institution of the University, established by Pinto, also increasing the number of its chairs and endowments.

De Rohan owes his place in history chiefly to the code of laws which bears his name. If, in respect of political rights, it degraded rather than improved the conditions of his subjects, in that of civil rights, it marks a real milestone in our legislation. In fact it took into consideration local customs and traditions and included improvements made in Italy and France in legal enactments and procedures. It was published on 17 July and came into effect on 1 September 1784.

The last years of de Rohan's long term of office were very different from the first. The suppression of the Order in France in September 1792 and the outbreak of war in nearly all the countries where it had possessions almost bankrupted the Treasury.

The Order was obliged to look for heavy loans in Malta and abroad. In 1796, unable to borrow further, it was compelled to melt for minting purposes the silver plates from its ships and galleys, a part of the personal dinner service of the Grand Master, and a part of its silverware including the Hospital utensils. Lack of food began to be felt in the island, commerce declined, and new industrial projects ended in failure.

The Order felt it necessary to cultivate friendship with other nations. In 1793 and 1794, by public acts under the seal of the Castellan, the Grand Master favoured the enrolment of Maltese for service on



English warships. He threatened to punish deserters with three years' enforced service on the galleys and also gave judges summary powers to condemn them.

The fear of losing its Polish possessions, then yielding 120,000 florins annually, induced the Order to make friendly overtures to Russia. Catherine II assured the Grand Master that the Order would not be deprived of its possessions, and Czar Paul I who succeeded her confirmed his mother's dispositions and promised 180,000 florins, a sum which he afterwards increased for the setting up of the grand priory of Russia.

These dealings with schismatic Russia gave umbrage to France and Spain, and far from saving the Order tended to hasten its fall. de Rohan, foreseeing the Order's end rapidly approaching, said on his death bed that 'I, at any rate, am the last Grand Master, at least of an Order illustrious and independent.' With these words he passed away on 13 July 1797.

FERDINAND VON HOMPESCH

1797-1798



In the midst of impending calamity, on 17 July 1797, Ferdinand von Hompesch became Grand Master, the last of the feudatories of Charles V.

Hompesch had come to Malta when young as page to Grand Master Pinto. Rapidly attaining the dignity of Grand Cross, he was for twenty-five years the representative of the Order at the Court of Vienna and he returned to the island as head of the Langue of Bavaria. Upright, frank, and affable in manner, he was beloved by the people who rejoiced at his accession; but he had neither the capability nor the firmness which the times required.

Hompesch published a number of laws, most of them relating to police matters. So long as he was well-counselled, he appointed men of repute to positions of trust and he was applauded, but when he suspected the good faith of his trusty advisers and

acted for himself, the weakness of his character became fully apparent.

Meantime, things went from bad to worse: on the one hand commerce and industry were steadily declining, salaries in arrears, vacant situations left unfilled, and the scarcity of food, all increased the misery and discontent of the country. On the other hand, Napoleon Bonaparte, wishing to make the Mediterranean a French lake, had proposed to lay hands on the island, but Hompesch, having concluded a treaty with Russia, intensified the jealousy and alarm of France.

Setting out from Toulon upon his proposed Egyptian expedition, Bonaparte appeared off Malta on 9 June 1798 and demanded permission to enter the harbour with his ships to water. Suspecting treachery, the Council of the Order decided to refuse the demand of the French leader, consenting to only four vessels at a time. The proposed conditions were regarded as a refusal, and next day French troops landed at Gozo and at various points of Malta.

The island was not prepared for war and the resistance offered could only be feeble and brief. Notabile and Gozo surrendering in turn, the enemy advanced towards Valetta. There a deputation of the principal citizens, terrified at the idea of a bombardment and convinced of the uselessness of any defence, induced the Grand Master to ask for a suspension of hostilities. On 11 June, a truce of twenty-four hours having been agreed upon, it was decided to send a deputation to arrange a capitulation.

The surrender of the island excited feelings of consternation and rage among the country people, but not among the inhabitants of the cities, who recognized that the Order could not continue its useless existence much longer, and who were glad to find themselves rid of the despotism of the Knights.

After ratifying the capitulation and losing the island without a struggle and without honour, Hompesch, on 18 June, set out for Trieste, and he died at Montpellier 12 May 1805.

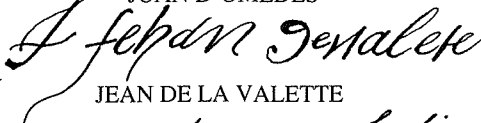
SIGNATURES
OF SOME OF THE
GRAND MASTERS




PHILIPPE VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM



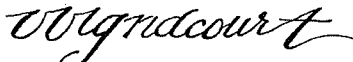
JUAN D'OMEDES



JEAN DE LA VALETTE



HUGUES LOUBENX DE VERDALLE



ALOP DE WIGNACOURT



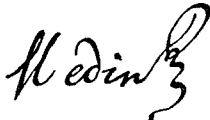
LUIS MENDES DE VASCONCELLOS



ANTOINÉ DE PAULE



JEAN-PAUL LASCARIS CASTELLAR



MARTIN DE REDIN



ANNET DE CLERMONT
DE CHATTES GESSAN



RAPHAËL COTONER



NICHOLAS COTONER



GREGORIO CARAFA DE ROCCELLA



ADRIEN DE WIGNACOURT



RAMON PERELLOS Y ROCCAFUL



MARC'ANTONIO ZONDADARI



ANTONIO MANOEL DE VILHENA



RAIMONDO DESPUIG



EMANUEL PINTO DE FONSECA



FRANCISCO XIMENES DE TEXADA

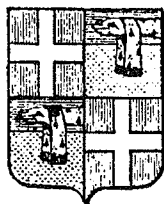


EMANUEL DE ROHAN-POLDUC

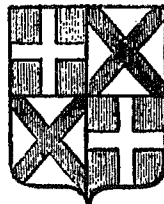


FERDINAND VON HOMPESCH

THE
COAT-OF-ARMS
OF THE
GRAND MASTERS
OF MALTA



PHILIPPE VILLIERS
DE L'ISLE-ADAM
1521-1534



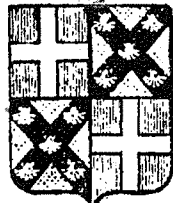
PIETRO DEL PONTE
1534-1536



DIDIER DE SAINT
JAILLE
1535-1536



JUAN D'OMEDES
1536-1553



CLAUDE DE LA
SENGLE
1553-1557



JEAN DE LA VALETTE
1557-1568



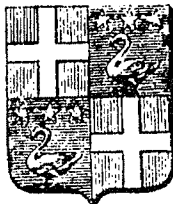
PIETRO DEL MONTE
1568-1572



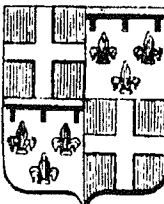
JEAN L'EVESQUE
DE LA CASSIERE
1572-1581



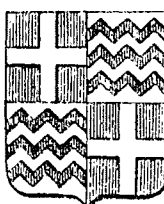
HUGUES LOUBENX
DE VERDALLE
1582-1595



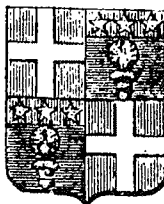
MARTIN GARZES
1595-1601



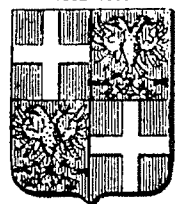
ALOF DE WIGNACOURT
1601-1622



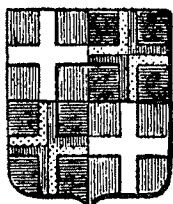
LUIS MENDES DE
VASCONCELLOS
1622-1623



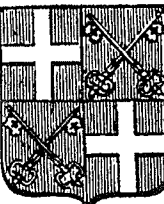
ANTOINE DE PAULE
1623-1636



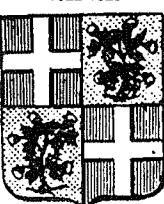
JEAN-PAUL
LASCARIS CASTELLAR
1636-1657



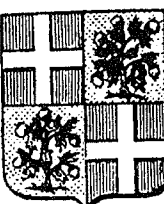
MARTIN DE REDIN
1657-1660



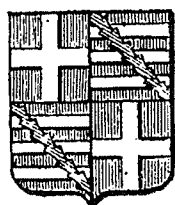
ANNET DE CLERMONT
DE CHATTES GESSAN
1660-1660



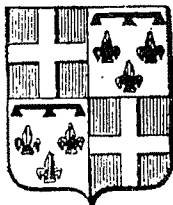
RAPHAEL COTONER
1660-1663



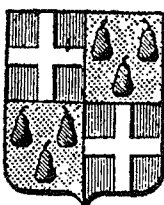
NICHOLAS COTONER
1663-1680



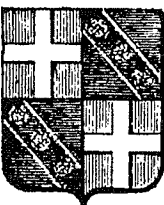
GREGORIO CARAFA
DE ROCELLA
1680-1690



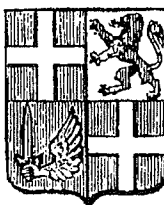
ADRIEN DE
WIGNACOURT
1690-1697



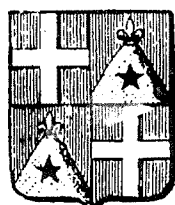
RAMON PERELLOS
Y ROCCAFUL
1697-1720



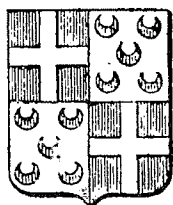
MARC'ANTONIO
ZONDADARI
1720-1722



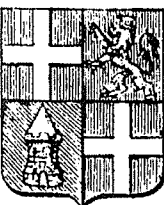
ANTONIO MANOEL DE
VILHENA
1722-1736



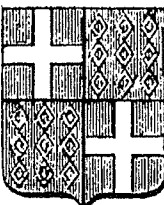
RAIMONDO DESPUIG
1736-1741



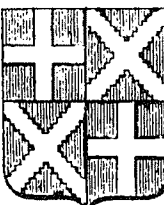
EMANUEL PINTO
DE FONSECA
1741-1773



FRANCISCO XIMENES
DE TEXADA
1773-1775



EMANUEL DE ROHAN
POLDUC
1775-1797



FERDINAND VON
HOMPESCH
1797-1798