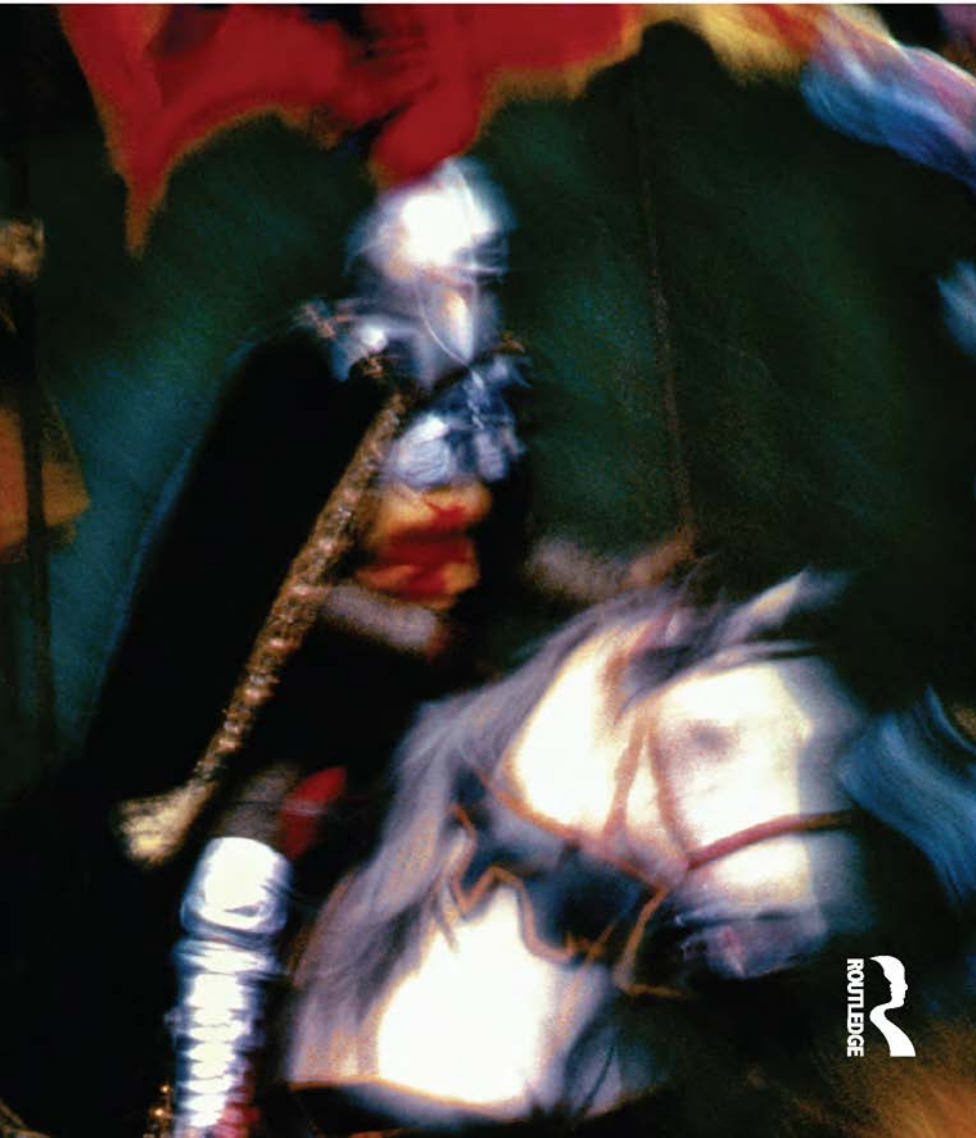
THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR IN BRITAIN

EVELYN LORD



ROUTLEDGE

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR IN BRITAIN

This book is dedicated to the memory of
Madeline and Rodney Howick, with love

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR IN BRITAIN

EVELYN LORD

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
HMSO	Her/His Majesty's Stationery Office
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NMR	National Monuments Record
RCHAMS	Royal Commission on Historical and Ancient Monuments for Scotland
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England
RS	Rolls Series
SNL	Scottish National Library
TNA	The National Archives (formerly known as the Public Records Office)
VCH	Victoria County History

NAME EVIDENCE AND ITS USES

Often the only evidence the historian has about the tenants living on the medieval manor is their names. An analysis of these can help to build up a picture of life on the manor and the people who farmed it. The surnames can be divided into locative names, those that refer to either a location outside the manor or a geographical feature within it, names that refer to a trade, names that show whose son the tenant was, tenants who are referred to only by their first names, and names that refer to some distinguishing feature of the individual such as Redhead or Whiteleg. The *1185 Inquest* provides the names of a great number of Templar tenants, and in some cases these can be compared with later lists of tenants such as those found in *The Hundred Rolls* or the *1308 inventories*.

Locative names can tell the historian whether the tenant has originated from elsewhere providing indirect evidence of spatial mobility. Trade names give information about the character of the manor or holding, such as whether there was a textile industry as well as farming carried on there, and can also give information on the type of trade and industry found in towns. Although in the preface to the *1185 Inquest* Lees suggests that a tenant with a trade name did not necessarily follow that trade, McKinley's

work in the 1980s and 90s shows that as surnames were still developing in the 12th century it would be likely that tenants with occupational names at that time were practising that trade.[1]

[1] Lees, B.A., (1935), *Records of the Templars in the Twelfth Century*, London: British Academy, xxviii, lxxxii; McKinley, R. (1990), *A History of British Surnames*, London: Longman, 131–150.

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PREFACE

The Knights Templar arrived in the British Isles in 1128 when Hugh de Payens, the first Grand Master, came to recruit crusaders. As well as acquiring manpower he was also given estates and manors. Eventually the Templars were to become major landholders in the British Isles. It is with them this book is concerned; with their churches, preceptories, farms and buildings, and their relationship with kings, princes, prelates and peasants.

Interwoven with the account of the Templars in the British Isles is their life as soldiers of the cross in the east. There have been many books describing their heroic exploits in the struggle to keep the Holy Land in Christian hands, but few have addressed their more mundane, but albeit necessary, role in the west of supplying money and resources for the fight in the east. This book aims to redress this by a comparative study of their lives as knights, monks, farmers, financiers and royal advisers in the British Isles. Using primary sources and excavation reports, it reconstructs the world of the British Templars. The result is an account of two hundred years of endeavour set against the background of political events and civil wars.

Central to the book are issues of concern to the historian of the Middle Ages, on the standard of living and diet, agriculture and the treatment of women. These are discussed within the context of

the Templars' activities on land and sea, and the Templars are set firmly within the context of medieval society and their place in the local community. The book shows how the Order's influence on town and countryside has persisted in place-names, folklore and legends, and it discusses the colourful theories about the Order that these have produced.

The central section of the book is arranged geographically by region. Starting with London and its suburbs, the reader is then taken on a circular tour of the Templar properties in England, travelling eastwards to Essex and completing the circle in Kent, before moving on to Ireland and Scotland. During the tour, the Templars' property and buildings are discussed, along with their farming methods, their relationship with their neighbours and place in society, and the provenance of their tenants. Comparative material is drawn from nearby manors, and personalities such as William Marshal and Hubert de Burgh play their part in the narrative.

From the Templars in the countryside the book moves to the role of the Templars in public life as royal councillors, treasurers and tax collectors, roles that helped to bring about their downfall when secular lords clashed with the Pope in a power struggle, with the Templars caught in the middle. The trial of the Templars and events leading up to it are discussed in detail, and contemporary opinions on their guilt and the verdict of history are considered. Finally, the way in which the Templars have been portrayed in fact and fiction, and some of the colourful theories about them and their treasure, are examined.

To encourage readers to undertake in-depth local studies that a general work such as this cannot hope to do, there is an appendix on the Templar sources in the PRO and a gazetteer is included so that the reader can visit some of the sites mentioned in the text. Overall, this book will engage anyone who is interested in medieval history, as well as the local historian and the undergraduate working on medieval society.

GLOSSARY

Advowson The right to appoint a priest to a benefice, for example to a parish church.

Assart A clearing of woodland. The trees were felled and pulled up by the roots and the land dug and cultivated. If five tree stumps were allowed to remain, this 'was a waste, and an outrage' (Dialogue of the exchequer). A licence was needed to assart.

Ballistas A military engine made of wood with cords or thongs stretched tight to form a catapult that will hurl missiles.

Boon work Labour service with food supplied.

Busses 2–3 masted medieval ships.

Carucate 120 acres of land in the Danelaw.

Close Rolls Registered copies of letters and documents of the court of Chancery.

Common land Land on which communal grazing was allowed and permission given to collect brushwood, furze or turf. *Commoning* was the act of grazing animals on communal land.

Corrodian A pensioner of a religious house.

Cottar A tenant holding a cottage.

Crenellate To fortify.

Croft Enclosed land attached to, or close to, a house.

Custumal A record of the customs of a manor.

Demesne Land put aside for the lord's own use.

Distrain To take goods in satisfaction of a debt.
Escheat A property reverting to the Treasury.
Extent A survey and valuation of a manor.
Fee A lordship.
Feet of Fines A judgement on title to land.
Hide 120 acres of land. A term used outside the Danelaw.
Interdict The official withdrawal of religious offices and privileges.
Jointure The estate settled on a wife in the event of a husband dying first.
Justiciar A royal official, premier justice of England.
Librate A piece of land worth £1 a year.
Mark A unit of currency worth 13s 4d.
Messuage A house.
Oyer and *Terminer* A writ or summons.
Pannage The right to let swine grub for food in a wood or forest.
Patent Rolls Registered copies of Letters Patent.
Paternoster Our father, that is the Lord's Prayer in Latin.
Perches Land measure of 5½ yards.
Purgatory The place where souls departing this life went to be cleansed by temporary suffering. The suffering could be shortened by masses and gifts to the church.
Purpestre Encroachment by seizing land.
Scutage Money collected when the army was needed.
Socage A type of tenure that included obligatory attendance at the lord's court.
Soke The right of jurisdiction over a specified free area.
Tallage A tax, toll or customs levy.
Toft A plot of land attached to the house.
Township A settlement and taxable unit, mostly used in the north and midlands.
Vill A settlement and taxable unit.
Villein An unfree tenant who held land by rendering service to the landlord.

Virgate A measurement of arable land, usually of 30 acres.

Warren An enclosed piece of land appropriated to the breeding of rabbits or game. Right of warren was permission to enclose and construct a warren, and to keep beasts and hawks to catch the rabbits or game.

Waste An uncultivated piece of land. An assart with tree stumps remaining in it was difficult to cultivate and so became waste.

EVENTS IN THE HOLY LAND

1099	First Crusade and the capture of Jerusalem
c. 1118	Foundation of the Templars
1148–9	Second Crusade
1149	Gaza granted to the Templars
1153	Ascalon in Christian hands
1173	Murder of the Assassin envoy by the Templars
1187	Battle of Hattin, Christian defeat; Fall of Jerusalem
1188	Third Crusade
1191	Templars move headquarters to Acre
1202	Fourth Crusade
1218–19	Fifth Crusade, Siege of Damietta
1228–9	Frederick II's Crusade
1240	Richard of Cornwall's Crusade
1244	Battle of La Forbie, Christian defeat
1247–54	St Louis's Crusade
1251	Battle of Mansurah, Christian defeat
1271–2	The Lord Edward's Crusade
1291	Fall of Acre; Templars withdraw from the Holy Land

Templar Castles in the Holy Land

Date completed	
1139	Baghras, Darbask, Destroit, La Roche Guillaume, La Roche de Roussel, Port Bonnet
1152	Castle Arnold, Castle Blanc, Tortosa
1160	Amman, Quarantere, The Red Cistern, Safad, Saffron, Toron
1178	Chastellet
1218	Atlit
1260	Beaufort

CHAPTER ONE

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR: KNIGHTLY MONKS OR MONKISH KNIGHTS?

In the year 1128 'Hugh of the Knights Templar came from Jerusalem to the king in Normandy; and the king received him with great ceremony and gave him great treasures of gold and silver, and sent him thereafter to England, where he was welcomed by all good men. He was given treasures by all, and in Scotland too; and by him much wealth entirely in gold and silver was sent to Jerusalem. He called for people to go to Jerusalem. As a result more people went, either with him, or after him, than ever before since the time of the first crusade, which was in the day of pope Urban: yet little was achieved by it. He declared that a decisive battle was imminent between Christians and the heathen, but, when all the multitudes got there, they were pitiably duped to find it was nothing but lies.'[1] This is the first mention of the Knights Templar in the British Isles.

In order to trace the origins of the Order we must cross the sea to the Holy Land and go back in time to 1099 when Jerusalem was 'liberated' from the infidels by the First Crusade, and placed under the Christian rule of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The liberation of Jerusalem had a parallel spiritual liberating effect on Western Christendom that became focused on visiting the holy sites associated with the life of Christ. Pilgrims flocked to the Holy Land. They went to satisfy a spiritual hunger, they went as

sightseers and tourists, they went to bring home holy relics, but above all they went to gain absolution from their sins through visiting the holy shrines. Alas, the enthusiastic but ill-prepared pilgrims were a prey for robbers, Saracens and wild animals. Many never returned to tell of their adventures. They died of exhaustion and privation or were slaughtered as they travelled the recognised pilgrim routes. At Eastertide 1119, 300 pilgrims were killed and 60 taken prisoner by the Saracens as they took the road from Jerusalem to the River Jordan.[2] Such tragic loss of life could not be allowed to continue. William, Archbishop of Tyre, wrote that a group of nine 'holy and pious knights dedicated themselves to the protection of pilgrims. Since they had neither a church nor a fixed place of abode, the king [Baldwin II of Jerusalem] granted them a dwelling place in his own palace on the north side of the Temple of the Lord'. The holy and pious knights who were given a dwelling in the Temple precincts became the Knights Templar.[3]

Walter Map, Archdeacon of Oxford and a clerk in the English royal household, writing in the 1170s, embroidered this account, adding dramatic details:

There was a certain knight called Paganus after a village in Burgundy of the same name, who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. There he was told that pagans were in the habit of attacking Christians who went to the horse-pool for water and that the Christians were often slain. He tried as far as he could to defend them, hiding then darting out in the nick of time . . .

The Saracens were amazed, and encamped on the spot in such numbers that no one could dream of facing them, and the reservoir was abandoned. But Paganus was no coward and procured a means of help for God and himself. He obtained from the regular canons of the Temple a large hall within the precincts of the Temple of the Lord, and there sufficing himself with humble attire and spare diet devoted all his expenditure to arming and horsing a band of companions.[4]

The third major source on the origins of the Templars, Matthew Paris, the monk of St Albans, writing *c.* 1236–59, suggests that the nine knights took up monastic vows to gain remission for their sins and then roamed the country hunting infidels.[5] A fourth source is Michael the Syrian, considered to be unreliable.

All three reliable sources above were written after the event and relied on oral and hearsay evidence to reconstruct the early years of the Templars. William of Tyre, who died in 1186, was the closest in time and place to the beginnings of the Order. Paris is the furthest removed, whilst Map wrote to entertain. He is probably the least reliable, especially as he had a cavalier attitude towards chronology, starting his work with a quotation from St Augustine: 'In time I exist, and of time I speak. What time is I know not.'[6]

Both William of Tyre and Matthew Paris disliked the Templars, seeing them as rivals for ecclesiastical power and resenting their special relationship with the Pope. Entries in their chronicles reflect these attitudes, showing the Templars as proud, arrogant and unreasonably wealthy. Christian defeats in the Holy Land were blamed on this pride. The bias in Paris's account must be seen within the context in which he lived. He was a Benedictine who wished to maintain his Order's status, and he had a personal animosity towards the Pope. Sophie Menache and Helen Nicholson suggest that part of Paris's handling of the Templars was due to a hardening of attitudes towards the military orders in the thirteenth century when he was writing, and interpreting his chronicles depends on an understanding of how he viewed history and his perception of events. Nicholson likens Paris's accounts of the Templars to 'tabloid journalism'. Menache suggests that we take the accounts as evidence of thirteenth-century attitudes rather than historical accuracy. C.G. Addison, writing in the nineteenth century, also bids the reader beware of Paris's version of the Templars, and accuses him of prejudicing subsequent generations against the Order.[7]

Nicholson suggests that there is some doubt about the date that the Order was founded, whilst Barber notes that although most sources give this as 1118, it was more likely to have been 1119, after the massacre of the pilgrims at the pool.[8]

HUGH DE PAYENS

Little is known about Hugh de Payens, the first Grand Master of the Templars. He came from Payens, a village in Champagne on the left bank of the Seine, and was a vassal of the Count of Champagne. It is possible that he was in the Holy Land, having joined the First Crusade after the death of his wife. According to Scottish and Freemason tradition, his wife was Katherine St Clair, who came from the French branch of the Scottish Sinclair family. As the Sinclair family were to become the Grand Masters of Scottish Freemasonry, this would be a convenient link with the past.

Founder knights

The founder knights were:

Godfrey of St Omer (Picardy)
Geoffrey Bisot or Bisol
Payen Montdidier (Picardy)
Archimbaud de St Armand (possibly Picardy)
Andre de Montbard (he *may* have been related to Bernard of Clairvaux and came from either Burgundy or Champagne)
Rossol or Roland
Gondamar

It is probable that they had travelled to the Holy Land as a group. Hugh died in *c.* 1136 and was succeeded as Grand Master by Robert of Craon.

THE TEMPLARS' AIMS

Was the original intent of the Templars to protect pilgrims, or was their prime aim to lead a monastic life? William of Tyre writes that they dedicated themselves to God, taking vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, and then the Patriarch and other bishops enjoined them for the remission of their sins 'that as far as their strength permitted, they should keep the roads and highways safe from the menace of robbers and highwaymen, with especial regard for the protection of pilgrims'.[9] As the founder members came from a warrior class and were trained in arms they may have suggested this role for themselves, but the Patriarch could have seen this as a way of harnessing their warlike energies. Bernard of Clairvaux described them as 'superbly trained to war', but Peter Partner, in his book *The Murdered Magicians*, quotes an early letter from Hugh de Payens in which he declares that the knights wanted to work for God rather than others.[10]

How did outsiders perceive the Templars in their early years? Was it as knights or as brothers of a religious order? One way of answering these questions is to look at the way in which the Order is described in the charters granting them lands and rents. Although there are problems with this method, as the descriptions may show how the scribe rather than donor perceived the Order, it does give some background on contemporary perceptions. The charters that have been used are those in the Marquis D'Albon's *Cartulaire General de l'Ordre du Temple*. The Marquis collected evidence from across Europe and printed it in 1913. For the earliest period there are 21 relevant charters (Charters IV–XXIX). One is a grant to 'God and the Brothers of the Temple' and another to 'Master Hugh and the Poor Knights of the Temple, present and future . . .'. The rest have no mention of the members of the Order as brothers or members of a religious order. The number of grants increased dramatically in 1130 to 127 (Charters XXX–CCII). Of

these, 20 refer to the Order as 'brothers and knights'. One makes a distinction between knights and brothers, giving land to 'Lord God, the Holy Knights of the Temple of Solomon and the Brothers of the same', adding another dimension to the problem. It is noticeable that English grants invariably refer to the 'Knight Brothers of the Temple'. In the 1120s one charter refers to the Order's poverty, and two in the 1130s (Charters CXIV, CCXILX–CCLVI, CCCCL–CCCCLXXXVI). A grant from the Templars dated 30 August 1140 shows how they referred to themselves. It starts 'In the Name of God, we, Brothers of Jerusalem, Knights of the Temple of Solomon', indicating perhaps that the members of the Order saw themselves first as monks and second as knights.

The charters also enable us to understand some of the reasons for making grants to the Order. In the 1120s five grants were made for the sake of the soul of the donor and his or her family, past, present and future, and two were made in memory of a son. The other charters did not state the reason behind the grant. In the 1130s, in 24 cases it was for the soul of the donor and the donor's family, and in eight cases the grants were for the redemption of the donor's sins and absolution. Only two grants were specifically made in order to help the defence of the Holy Land.

What conclusions can we draw from this sample? It would seem that to those granting land and rents to the Templars they were recognised mainly as knights rather than monks. The image of a knight would have been one the donors could relate to and understand from their own experience. The idea of poverty in relation to the Order was not uppermost in the minds of the donors, and the promotion of the Order's poverty may have been for the purpose of acquiring property. The legendary poverty of the Order has been assumed from them calling themselves poor knights, and from their seal, which represents two knights on one horse (Plate 1.1). Of course this may represent fellowship rather than poverty.

Plate 1.1 Two Templars on one horse with the banner of Beausant, as illustrated by Matthew Paris
The British Library. BL Royal Ms 14, fol. 42v

The reasons for making grants to the Order were primarily personal and concerned with the spiritual health of the donor and the donor's family, ancestors and successors, rather than with the defence of the Holy Land and the protection of pilgrims. The indirect result of the grants were resources that could help in this, but the direct aim of many of the donors was self-preservation and deliverance from the pain of Purgatory. Although it has been argued that feudal society was not based solely on obligations to family and kin, but depended on the wider obligation of overlord and vassal, charters such as these examples show that within the private sphere obligation to the family and its spiritual well being was of great importance.[11]

The idea of a military order of monks was a totally new concept that went against the precepts of monastic life that forbade the spilling of blood. The foundation of the Templars created a body of men who saw fighting the infidel as an act of devotion. Whilst the monk spent his life in the monastery in continual prayer and praise to God, the monkish knight spent his day fighting for the glory of God. The Knights Templar were permanently at war, and war became a version of prayer for them.

The image of knighthood was transformed by this, from one which fought for personal vengeance and material gain to one which fought for Christian ideals. We should not forget that the original founders of the Order came from the knightly class. War was their business and defined their self-image. The Knights Templar and the other military orders added piety to a knight's code, and began the modification of war for gain to a just war that defended the Holy Church, the weak and the helpless, and the pursuit of justice. Professor Riley-Smith suggests the foundation of the Templars transformed the crusading ideal to a different plane.[12]

THE KNIGHTS AND THE TEMPLE

One fact that chroniclers and their interpreters agree on is that the original knights took up residence in the Temple of Solomon. Theoderic, a German monk visiting the Holy Land between 1169 and 1174, described their residence as being like a church, supported by pillars rising to a circular roof. Inside this, stacks of arms, clothing and food were kept. Below the hall were the stables built by King Solomon: 'They are next to the Palace, and their structure is remarkably complex. They are erected with vaults, arches, curved roofs, and according to our estimation we should bear witness that they will hold 10,000 horses with their grooms. A single shot from a cross-bow would hardly reach from one end of the building to the other, either in length or breadth.'[13]

Events in the Holy Land were to draw the knights from their seclusion. The First Crusade had taken Jerusalem and the Holy Land; the problem was how to prevent it being overrun by the infidel again. Manpower and resources were desperately needed. In 1127, to boost recruitment and gain recognition for their Order, the Templars came west.

THE TEMPLARS IN THE WEST

Hugh de Payens and five of his colleagues left the Holy Land for France and the Council of Troyes in 1127, where Hugh was to plead for papal recognition of the Order. He had a powerful advocate in the Cistercian St Bernard of Clairvaux, and was to gain the support of European princes. Although a new foundation, the Order was following a precedent put forward by Gregory VII (1073–85) that violence was valid if used to defend the Church, and developed by Urban II (1088–99) that fighting for God justified violence. St Bernard went further. He wrote 'when the knight of Christ kills a malefactor the act is not homicide, but if I may say so, malicide'.[14] Hugh put his case to the Council on 13 January 1129. He outlined the way in which the Order conducted itself in the cloister but emphasised that, unlike traditional orders, they spent their time outside the cloister fighting for God.

The simple precepts by which the Order lived in Jerusalem became the basis for the Order's Rule, given to them at the Council of Troyes. Although the Rule followed the standard monastic Rule of St Benedict, the organisation of the Templars mirrored that of the Cistercians. It exists in four French and six Latin texts. The French texts include lists of fairs and feasts and a number of individual statutes. Over the years it was added to and the composite Rule starts with the statutes drawn up in 1129. These are followed by the Hierarchical Statutes written in about 1165, penances, rules covering day-to-day life, the administration of the

Order and additional penances which Judi Upton-Ward dates to between 1257 and 1267. Finally there is an account of the initiation ceremony.[15]

The Rule starts with an introduction from the Council of Troyes, describing how Hugh came to them and told them about the Order. Those who heard Hugh are listed, and then it states that the Rule is given to the Poor Knights of Christ of the Temple, with the consent of the Pope and the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Although the Rule included the standard monastic statutes, provisions had to be made for when the Templar was on active service and could not attend divine office. It also had to take into account the fighting man's need to possess arms, equipment and horses.

The religious side of the Templar's life in the cloister was divided into attending the offices of night and day, fasting, and observing silence. On campaign, if it was not possible to hear the divine office, the Templar had to say 13 paternosters for matins, seven for each hour and nine for vespers.[16]

The monastic side of the Templar's life followed standard procedure. The knights slept fully clothed in dormitories with the lights on, they had to maintain silence and observe prayers. Whilst in the house they should not quarrel with other brothers, gossip or spread rumours. Absolute obedience to the Grand Master was required at all times.

Discipline was carried out, as in other monastic foundations, through the ordinary chapter, at which all brothers who had sinned or infringed the Order's rules were required to confess and do penance. Brothers could accuse each other of infringements, but only in the privacy of the chapter house, and a brother could be expelled from the Order for revealing its secrets, and for joining through simony (buying or selling entrance to the order), killing a Christian, theft, desertion in the time of battle, or desertion to the Saracen, and for sodomy.[17] Lesser crimes included disobedience, striking another brother, having contact with a woman, charging

into battle without permission and giving away the Order's possessions. For these crimes the brother lost his habit, was put in irons, and worked with the slaves until his penance was over, or kept his habit, was given corporal punishment and required to eat off the floor like a dog.[18]

The Rule shows who could join the Order and how reception should take place. Unlike other orders there was no novitiate term, and no children were allowed to join. This reflected the Order's purpose. It needed trained fighting men and, in order to facilitate this, excommunicated knights were allowed to join provided they had been absolved by a bishop. Associate members were also encouraged to join, serving for a specified term, and usually making a donation for the privilege.

The initiate to the Order underwent a rigorous examination as to his background. He had to declare that he was in good health and had no secret illness, that he was free from debts, and if he was married that his wife was dead or in a convent. He had to prove that he was a freeman, as the Rule forbade accepting serfs or slaves into the Order. These provisions reflect the nature of the Order. A fighting man had to be unencumbered and in good health, and the emphasis on being free added to the exclusivity of the Order, and its relationship to the social structure of the time. The hierarchical section of the Rule explains this, and indicates that the knights were in a minority, with other ranks of sergeants, squires and servants providing the back-up services, whilst the body of the Templars' army was formed by Turcopoles, a light cavalry of Arabic extraction who were accustomed to the Saracens' fighting methods. Arab interpreters may have been employed by the Templars. This was to lead to accusations of fraternising with the enemy.

Once accepted, the Rule stated that the initiate knelt with both hands on the Gospels and took vows that promised his life to God and Lady St Mary. The Templar mantle was placed round his neck 'And the one who makes him a brother should raise him up and

kiss him on the mouth; and it is customary for the chaplain to kiss him also'.[19] These kisses were to be misinterpreted and used as ammunition with other accusations by those who wanted to destroy the Order in the fourteenth century.

A number of *retrais* or individual statutes give us information about the Templars on campaign. These detail how many horses and servants each rank of the Order should have, what equipment they could use, and where their tents were to be pitched. For example, Clause 169 states: 'The turcopolier brother should have four horses . . . he should have a small tent and the same rations as he receives in the convent; and pack animals to carry the rations, and the tent, and his cauldron . . .'[20]

The Templar Rule is an excellent illustration of feudal society in practice, but with a religious gloss. It reflects the world picture of their mentor, St Bernard of Clairvaux, who thought that every man had his own place in society. The knight was bound to preserve this orderly *status quo* or confusion would follow. But the knight was a member of a military aristocracy with a code of aggression. The military orders helped to harness this aggressive energy for good by focusing it on a common external enemy, the infidel.

Although the Patriarch of Jerusalem had been instrumental in the foundation of the Order, at the Council of Troyes the overall commander of the knights became the Pope, and the Templars owed allegiance only to him. This created an international organisation crossing national frontiers, and negating any obligation to secular lords. It was a dangerous political precedent, and it was compounded by the privileges that successive popes gave to the Templars. Two papal bulls, *Omne datum optimum, Milites Templi*, issued by Innocent II and confirmed by subsequent popes, set out the Order's privileges.

The privileges included freedom from paying tithes to the Church, licence to receive priests into the Order who could celebrate

mass and give absolution, licence to have their own consecrated graveyards and to be able to bury anyone who asked in these. They were promised financial support from papal taxes. Permission was given to build towns, churches and cemeteries in deserted places. No bishop could excommunicate a Templar and when a country was under an interdict the Templars were allowed to open a church once a year so that their priests could celebrate mass and give absolution to the parishioners.[21] Most secular lords with Templar preceptories in their domains exempted the Order from local or national taxes. As a result, the Templars became unpopular as the local population struggled to pay papal taxes, church tithes and demands from their overlords, whilst the Templars grew rich at what seemed like their expense. In the early 1180s William of Tyre wrote that their possessions were the equal of kings, and they were neglecting humility, and carrying off booty from the Holy Land.[22]

Some idea of the extent of papal taxation and the hardship this caused to the general population in the British Isles can be judged from the tax levied by Gregory X in 1275, which was assessed as a tenth of the value of all lay and clerical property except that of the military orders. In 1276 petitions were sent to the Pope claiming that the tax was crushing the people of England. The Pope retaliated by threatening to excommunicate any who failed to pay and to exercise the right to distrain on their goods. To make matters worse, the tax collectors took an oath of honesty at the Temple church, and the final collections were delivered there for safe-keeping.[23]

THE STANDARD AND THE HABIT

Prior to receiving official papal recognition the Templars had no distinctive habit. Clause 17 commanded that the knights should wear white mantles and cloaks to show that they had come from

the darkness of evil to the light of purity. Their robes were to be plain, with no decoration, but in summer 'we mercifully rule that, because of the great intensity of the heat which exists in the east, from Easter to All Saints, through compassion and no way as a right, a linen shirt shall be given to any brother who wishes to wear it'.[24]

The addition of the red cross to the robes came later. William of Tyre reports that 'It was in the time of Pope Eugenius III (1145–53), it is said that they began to sew on their mantles crosses of red cloth so that they might be distinguished from others. Not only the knights, but also inferior brethren called sergeants, wore the sign.'[25] The sergeants wore black surcoats with brown or black mantles over these. The red cross was an eight-pointed straight cross.

The knights and sergeants were told to keep themselves neat with short hair, but not to shave their beards. There were practical reasons for this on campaign, and they were described as having visages bronzed by the sun and the wind.

The Templars' arms and armour changed as technology and fashions in armaments changed. The early knights wore a hauberk or coat of mail with a white surcoat over this, and a padded leather jerkin underneath, chain mail hose covering the legs and iron shoes, and a conical helmet. They carried a shield, lance, and a Turkish mace, and were equipped for the campaign with three knives – a dagger, a bread knife and a pocket knife.

The Rule describes the distinctive black and white Templar banner, the Beausant or Piebald banner (Plate 1.2). This was a pennant divided into two horizontally with the black above and the white below, sometimes with the red cross emblazoned on the white area.[26] The interpretation of the banner is open to debate. Does it represent the triumph of good over evil, or the two classes within the Templars, the white of the knights and the black of the sergeants? No matter what it represented, the banner was the rallying

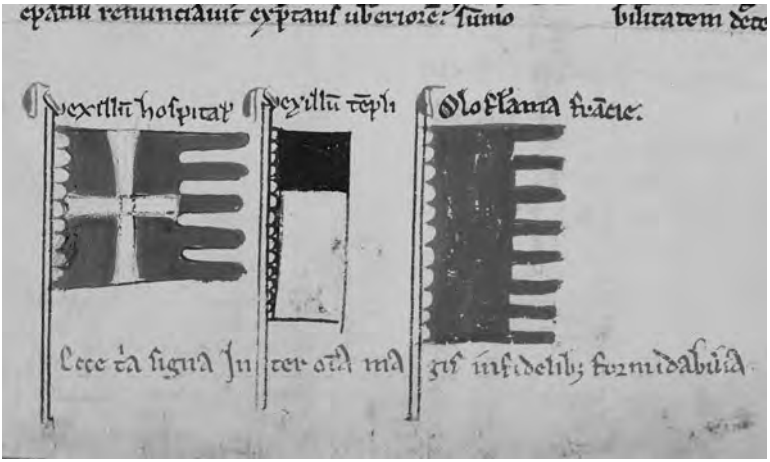

Plate 1.2 Templar banners
Corpus Christi, Cambridge Ms 16f 142e
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point for the Templars on campaign. It was so important to them that a duplicate was carried furled on a lance should the first fall in battle.

DE LAUDE NOVAE MILITIAE
('IN PRAISE OF THE NEW KNIGHTHOOD')

Despite papal approval of the Order there were still those who questioned the relevance of a religious order that shed blood as a matter of course. In order to silence detractors, salve the consciences of his knights, and boost recruitment, Hugh de Payens asked St Bernard to write an exhortation for the Order. The treatise begins with an exhortation that Malcolm Barber suggests had a profound influence on contemporaries and on later generations as it created an image of knighthood harnessed to fight against

infidels and evil.[27] The exhortation shows the Templars as blessed martyrs justified in slaying the infidel. Safe in the knowledge that they fought the battle of the Lord, they could strike with confidence. Their lifestyle was shown to be joyful, sober and obedient. It included an itinerary of the Holy Land and its sites that the Templars would guard for pilgrims, thus whetting the appetite of pilgrims who wished to go there, and adding to the Templars' role of protectors of the Holy Places.[28]

Thanks to St Bernard's promotion of the Order, by the time Hugh de Payens died in *c.* 1136 the Order was well established. In 1149 they had been consigned the city of Gaza and its surrounding district in perpetuity. 'This charge the brothers, brave men and valiant warriors have faithfully and wisely guarded.'[29] Theoderic, recording his observations in the 1170s, saw Judaean villages revived by the Templars, and notes the strong castles and fortresses they had built.[30] Their deeds in the Holy Land were recorded by contemporaries, both Christian and Arab. They remarked on their courage in battle and siege, but also noted their arrogance towards others.[31]

THE HOLY LAND AND THE BRITISH ISLES

It could be argued that this book is about the Templars in the British Isles so that a discussion on their exploits in the Holy Land is superfluous. This would be to underestimate the grip that the struggle to keep the Holy Land in Christian hands had on western minds, and it would fail to take into account the vast drain of resources that the crusades had on the western economy, sucking in men and money. The Templars took great care to keep the west informed on what was happening in the Holy Land so that it could see what was happening to the men and material being shipped out there. Letters describing victories and defeats, and pleas for aid, were sent to the British Isles, copied by scribes and distributed

around religious houses. Thus we find a letter in the annals of Burton on Trent abbey written by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1219 giving details of the Siege of Damietta. In 1259–60 the Grand Master of the Templars sent a letter to the west about the incursion of the Tartars, which was copied and circulated. This describes the Tartars as terrible and fearful (Plate 1.3). It tells that Damascus was taken, and it asked for urgent aid.[32]

Accounts of the disastrous Battle of Hattin in 1187, which decimated the Christian army and resulted in the death in battle and execution of Templar prisoners by Saladin, appears in Ralph of Coggeshall's *Chronicon Anglicorum*. News from the Holy Land helped to keep the struggle with the infidel in public minds, and papal taxation hit their purses. An example of this was *The Ordinance of the Saladin Tithe, 1188*, which levied a tax on one-tenth of the revenue and movables except arms, and the horses and arms of a knight or a cleric. The money was collected in each parish in the presence of the parish priest, the rural dean, a Knight Templar and a Knight Hospitaller, a servant of the king, and a clerk, a servant of the baron and a clerk of the bishop. A jury of six men attested that the right amount had been collected. Excommunication was the punishment for those not paying.

Appeals to go on crusades were preached from pulpits and market crosses. In 1188 Gerald of Wales accompanied Archbishop Baldwin on a journey through Wales to persuade men to take up the cross. About 3,000 men responded, all of them, according to Gerald, 'highly skilled in the use of spear and arrow, most experienced in military affairs and only too keen to attack the enemies of our faith. They were all sincerely and warmly committed to Christ's service.'[33]

The removal of manpower to the Holy Land was a direct effect of the involvement of the west. These men went to gain salvation, responding to a rhetoric that promised absolution and redemption to them. Redemption and salvation from their sins

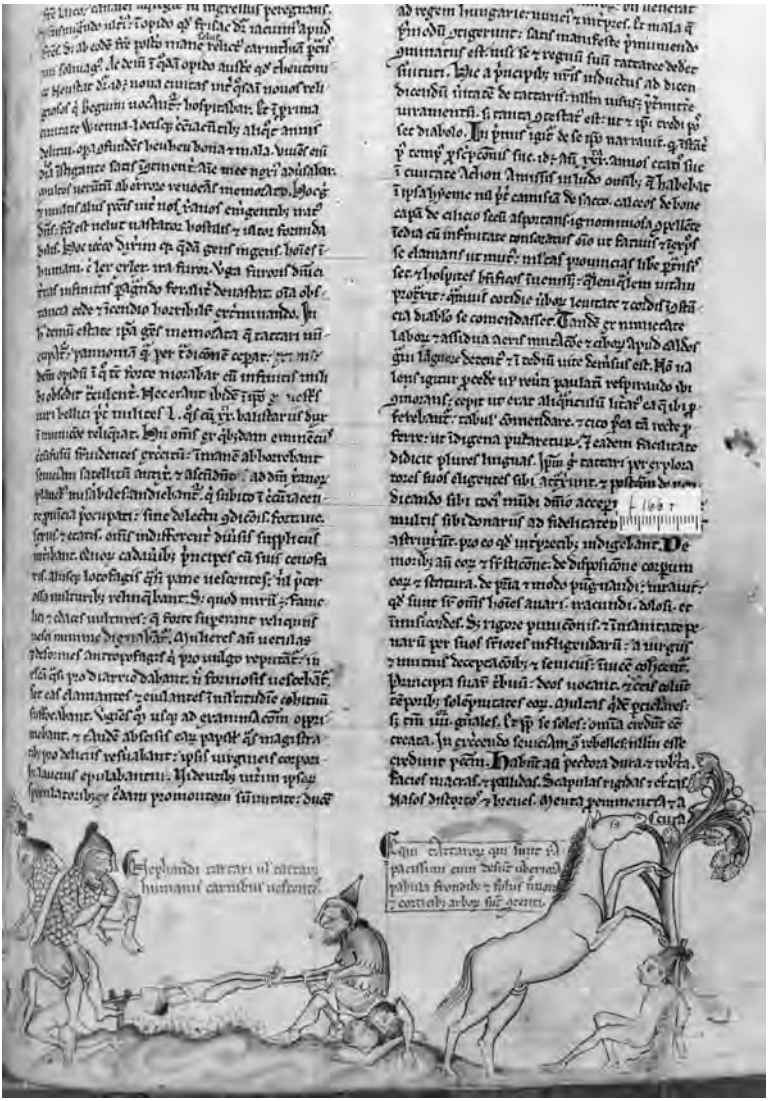

Plate 1.3 The Terrible Deeds of the Tartars, as illustrated by Matthew Paris Corpus Christi, Cambridge Ms 16f 166r. Reproduced by permission of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art and Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge