

Third Series Vol. IV part 1.

No. 215

Spring 2008

ISSN 0010-003X

Price £12.00

THE COAT OF ARMS

an heraldic journal published twice yearly by The Heraldry Society



THE COAT OF ARMS

The journal of the Heraldry Society



Third series

Volume IV

2008

Part 1

Number 215 in the original series started in 1952

The Coat of Arms is published twice a year by The Heraldry Society, whose registered office is 53 High Street, Burnham, Slough SL1 7JX. The Society was registered in England in 1956 as registered charity no. 241456.

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PLATE 1



Cressac-sur-Charente, France: wall painting from the Templar Chapel, c. 1200.
See page 10.

SOME EXTERNAL INSIGNIA OF OFFICE FOR DIGNITARIES OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM, CYPRUS, RHODES AND MALTA

John Joseph Fitzpatrick Kennedy

Among the surprises awaiting the student of Hospitaller heraldry is the discovery that certain dignitaries of the order were entitled to use maces and standards, that is to say, external insignia of their offices in their heraldic achievements. Three customs relating to the heraldic display of the officers of the order are well-known, if insufficiently studied. They may be delineated as (a) the ‘Grand Master’s Custom’, by which the Grand Master could quarter the arms of the Religion in the first and fourth quarters with his family arms in the second and third;¹ (b) the ‘Chief of Religion’, the custom which arose in 1470, by which a chief of the arms of the Religion could be added to the arms of Capitular Baillis and Grand Crosses of the order;² and (c) the ‘Grand Cross custom’, by which knights placing their arms over an eight pointed cross of Malta when they became Grand Crosses of the order.³ It is not however the intention of this study to examine these three customs.

This article examines instead the use of certain ceremonial maces by other dignitaries of the order, such as the Turcopolier, the Capitular Bailli of the Langue of England, who was the Pilier, or commanding officer of the English Knights of St John at the Convent at Rhodes from 1329/30. In the course of this study we shall need to question the applicability of modern British vexillographic terminology to the interpretation of early accounts of seals.

Gregory O’Malley has recently written that the custom of a mace for the Turcopolier began with a grant to Frà Hugh Middleton, Turcopolier (1442-1447) and its use continued among his successors.⁴ The mace in question appears to have been

¹ John J. F. Kennedy, ‘The emergence of some heraldic customs in the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Cyprus, Rhodes and Malta’, *CoA* 2nd ser. 11 (1995-6), no. 171, pp. 111-25.

² John J. F. Kennedy, ‘Development of the chief of religion in the Order of St. John of Jerusalem’, *The Double Tressure* 25 (2002), pp. 32-43; id., letter to the editor, *The Double Tressure* 28 (2005), p. 69; id., ‘The emergence of the chief of religion within the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, from the origins to 1500’, forthcoming.

³ This topic has yet to receive sufficient critical research to my knowledge, since E. J. King wrote about it in 1931 (note 10 below).

⁴ Gregory O’Malley, *The Knights Hospitaller of the English Langue 1460-1565* (Oxford 2005), p. 203, n. 254. It was pointed out in Canon A. Mifsud, *Knights Hospitaller of the Venerable Tongue of England in Malta* (Valetta 1914), that Clement West (Turcopolier 1531-3 and again 1535-9) had a mace borne before him in Malta. O’Malley clarifies when the mace was granted. Unfortunately, neither scholar mentions what may have become of the mace nor describes its dimensions.

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granted by Pope Eugene IV (Gabriele Condulmaro) in a letter of 1446. This grant appears to have been recognized by the chapter general of the order held in Rome in 1446. The order allowed for a mace-bearer of the Turcopolier's choice to carry the mace before him anywhere except in the Grand Master's council chamber.⁵

The order had drawn attention to itself throughout Christendom by its spirited counterattack on the fleet of Sultan Jakmak of Egypt's in its naval assault on Rhodes in 1440. Again, in 1444 under Grand Master Jean Bompar de Lastic, Frà Hugh Middleton, the Turcopolier, may have distinguished himself in the order's effective counterattack against the camp of the Egyptian Mamluk besiegers.⁶ There seems to be no published illustration of this ceremonial mace, though it may have borne the English royal arms of Henry VI; whether this distinction was granted or permitted by the King of England is not known to the present writer, though if so used it would no doubt have reflected to his honour and that of the order.

Such ceremonial maces were not restricted to the Langue of England, because we also find that the Marshal of the order (from the Langue of Auvergne) employed a ceremonial mace, as an external ornament in his heraldic achievement.

The Marshal was third in the hierarchy of command within the order following the Grand Master (henceforward GM), or commander-in-chief, and the Grand Commander (henceforward GCmd), who after 1304 was from the Grand Priory of St Gilles and second in command in the absence or death of the GM. The Marshal's primary duties were to prepare the Hospital for all aspects of war and combat. While he could be given command by the GM or GCmd on occasion, normally he was in charge of all preparations such as obtaining suitable armour, weapons, mounts, saddles and other equine equipment, ordnance, artillery, powder, and ammunitions.⁷ He also had a gonfannon-bearer, who rode before him, and whom he could chose with the approval of the GM.⁸ This term 'gonfannon' will need some further examination below.

Riley-Smith informs us that, by about 1262, the Marshal of the order is recorded along with other dignitaries of the order in both Outremer and in Europe as using certain seals.⁹ These seals do not survive; fortunately they are described in a thirteenth-century document translated by Delaville le Roulx and somewhat later

⁵ O'Malley, *ibid.*, p. 203, n. 254, and personal correspondence 15 May 2006. Mifsud seems to indicate the presence of the royal arms on the mace of the Turcopolier.

⁶ Desmond Seward, *The Monks of War* (London 1972), pp. 243-5; the revised edn. of 2000 mentions on p. 185 Turcopolier Frà Hugh Middleton's participation in the bold attack on the Mamluk besiegers. As Anthony Luttrell has pointed out, the knights were not monks, rather more like canons; their original, principal and ongoing purpose was and is 'Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum' not warfare. It was not until some sixty odd years after their foundation that we see the Hospitallers assuming a direct military role.

⁷ Joseph Marie Antoine Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et a Chypre (1100-1310)* (Paris 1904), pp. 337-9 and pp. 410f.

⁸ Delaville le Roulx, pp. 337f.

⁹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights Hospitaller in Jerusalem and Cyprus 1174-1277* (London 1967), p. 254.

by E. J. King.¹⁰ The seal of the Marshal was of green wax and showed a fully armed knight carrying a banner (it is not explicitly described as an equestrian seal, so I assume the knight is afoot).

To vexillographers and heraldists, the 'banner' is a square or rectangular flag bearing the personal arms of the knight; it indicated his personal presence in a battle or combat.¹¹ To attack the banner, according to chivalric lore, was to attack the person of the knight or lord, and this would be stoutly resisted by his retainers as the most dangerous threat. In the case of the Marshal's seal of 1262, however, we can probably assume that the banner on the seal bore the arms of the Hospital (*Gules a cross argent*) rather than the Marshal's personal arms and that such a high ranking dignitary was often in the immediate presence of the Grand Master. Indeed, whoever wrote this description in the thirteenth century originally may have been using the term 'banner' to mean merely some sort of flag and not in the specific sense of later writers.

In contrast to the banner, the 'standard' is described by Stephen Friar in his *Dictionary of Heraldry* as 'a long tapering flag, originally split or swallow-tailed [into two or more tails] ... the greatest of the medieval livery flags and served as a mustering point for feudal retainers during military campaigns ... Also known as an ancient, maintenance of the standard was the responsibility of an officer of that name. In battle, it was second only to the banner (also called a lieutenant) which, because it represented the physical presence of the owner, could never be relinquished without shame.'¹² Friar also informs us that 'standard' was a generic term for the livery flags. We shall argue that what was in the Holy Land called a 'banner', as found in a verbal description of the seal of the Marshal, gradually became a 'standard' of the order in later medieval stone carvings.

We must also examine the third flag mentioned above, the 'gonfannon', which is described by Stephen Friar as a 'personal flag, emblazoned with the arms, and supported by means of a horizontal pole suspended by cords from the top of a staff.' It was probably, he states, 'a descendant of the Roman vexillum, and usually with "tails" at the lower edge', and its name derives from the Norse *Gunn fane* meaning *war flag*.¹³

Friar's *Dictionary of Heraldry* necessarily supplies crisp definitions which may be too rigid, and ahistorical for this date and region; it does not, and perhaps cannot, supply analysis of how terms such as banner, standard and gonfannon may have changed or developed their meanings over time. Thirteenth-century descriptions of seals may use these terms differently; the definitions may also fail to capture the early and more general meanings used by modern sigillographical scholars, historians and non-armorists who describe early pre-heraldic and early heraldic seals and artifacts from a Continental vantage point. In French, for example, Gustave Schlumberger,

¹⁰ E. J. King, *The Seals of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem* (London 1932), pp. 127f., contains an English translation of J. Delaville le Roulx's 'Ci di des bulles que le Maistre et les autres Baillis del Hospital bullent', from the latter's *Notes sur les sceaux de l'Ordre de St. Jean de Jérusalem* (Paris 1881).

¹¹ Stephen Friar, *A Dictionary of Heraldry* (New York 1987), pp. 44f.

¹² Friar, *ibid.*, pp. 326f.

¹³ Friar, *ibid.*, p. 170.

the doyen of all who have studied the seals of the Latin Orient, and his later editors often use the term *gonfannon* to describe what most English, Scots and Irish armorists today would call a standard, especially when describing the equestrian seals of the lords of Outremer in the twelfth and thirteenth (i.e. early heraldic) centuries. I believe that Schlumberger is using the term *gonfannon* to mean 'war flag' rather than intending to refer to the type of flag used today for church processions and called a 'gonfannon' by Friar and other writers. This is not to deny that gonfannons such as Friar describes were also known and used, but simply to say that his definition is not as flexible enough to accommodate these French sigillographers. We can see this by attending to the set of illustrations below, which are just a small, but apt, sample.

The first (**Plate 1**), an image from Cressac-sur-Charente, shows us a Templar knight in a chain mail shirt, with a round helmet and a nasal (not unlike those shown for the Normans on the Bayeux Tapestries), bearing a long wrap-around triangular shield on his left arm charged in chief with a cross and possibly an eagle displayed) with a guige around his neck and with a couched lance, from which flies a flag with three long tails charged again with a cross.

Schlumberger states that this beautiful illustration from a twelfth-century mural in a Templar castle shows us a *gonfannon*.¹⁴ Schlumberger and others also use that term to describe the similar equestrian seals of Renaud, Seigneur of Sidon c. 1173-98;¹⁵ of Adhémar de Lairon et Julienne, Seigneur of Caesarea (**Figure 1a**);¹⁶ and of Bohemond III Prince of Antioch (1163-1201: **Figure 1b**),¹⁷ and his successor Raimond Rufen (1201-1222).¹⁸ It is also the term employed to describe the flag on seals of Jean de Monfort, Seigneur of Tyre and Loron, c. 1268 (**Figure 1c**),¹⁹ citing an earlier author for this usage; what is depicted bears more resemblance to three rounded tails than to either the modern 'ecclesiastical' gonfannon or the standard. Here again this usage will make sense if we understand 'gonfannon' to mean simply 'war flag'.

It is argued then that the terms 'gonfannon' and 'banner' may have earlier medieval general uses than those given by Friar's late medieval English, Scots and Irish definition. And it is contended that this position is supported by the use of these terms by Schlumberger and other French sigillographers and historians to denote any flag used in battle (a war flag). If this conclusion is correct, what one early authority describes as a banner or gonfannon, may in fact be interchangeable with what we would today describe as a standard.

The Marshal of the Hospital in 1262 used a green wax seal with a knight fully armed bearing a staff with a banner. In the fifteenth century further evidence for armorial display by the Marshal of the order can be found. Jean Cotet (or Coutet),

¹⁴ Monique Rey-Delqué (ed.), *Le Crociate. L'orient e l'occidente da Urbino II a San Luigi* (Milan 1997), p. 257. This illustration is from the Château of Cressac (Charente) dating from the twelfth century.

¹⁵ G. Schlumberger, F. Chalandon and A. Blanchet, *Sigillographie de l'Orient Latin* (Paris 1943), p. 55.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44, plate XVII, no.7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64, plate XVIII, no.7.

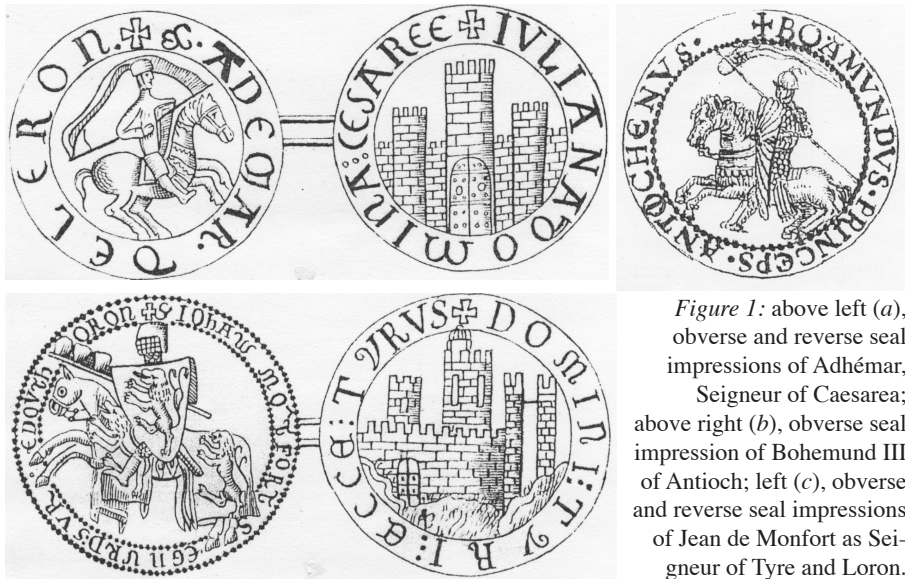


Figure 1: above left (a), obverse and reverse seal impressions of Adhémar, Seigneur of Caesarea; above right (b), obverse seal impression of Bohemund III of Antioch; left (c), obverse and reverse seal impressions of Jean de Monfort as Seigneur of Tyre and Loron.

Schlumberger et al., *Sigillographie de l'Orient Latin* (Paris 1943). Not to scale.

Marshal between 1457 and 1466, had two carved monuments erected at the Castle of Saint Peter at Bodrum, after completing his captaincy of the castle.²⁰ Fortunately, these monuments, dated 1462 and now seriously eroded or lost, were drawn and published by A. Maiuri.²¹ The more ornate of the two (**Figure 2a**, over) shows a rectangular recess, divided into two compartments. The upper rectangular compartment shows the standard (in the accepted sense) of the order on a staff flying to the sinister with two tails. The standard shows the cross of the order, blazoned *Gules a cross argent*. At the base of the staff is a roundel over the bottom of the staff and the lower part of the hoist of the standard, charged with the Agnus Dei or paschal lamb, nimbed and haloed with a cross patty and to its left is a carved inscription, the date and name, which I read as *m cccc l xii j cotet* (i.e. '1462, J. Cotet').

Below this compartment is another rectangular compartment, which displays three escutcheons. These are (from left to right): Grand Master Pedro Ramon de Zacosta (1461-7); a shield with *Two lions passant in pale* (which are likely the

²⁰ A. Maiuri, 'I castelli di Rodi a Cos e a Bodrum (Alicarnasso)', *Annuario della Regia Scuola Archeologia di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente* 4-5 (1921-2), pp. 334f. Maiuri does not comment on the mace, nor has any other armorist of whom I am aware. In the dating of Hospitaller Captains of St. Peter's Castle at Bodrum, I have followed the dating found in J. Sarnowsky, *Macht und Herrschaft in Johanniterorden des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Münster 2001), pp. 652, 662, 664, 672 and 678. These pages reveal that Jean Cotet had a varied career in the order as Bailli of the Island of Rhodes 1445, Castellan of Rhodes 1450, Marshal of the Order 1466, Captain of St. Peter's, Bodrum 1459-62, and finally Grand Prior of Auvergne (1469-75).

²¹ Maiuri, op. cit., p. 335, no. XCV and no. CVIII-a.

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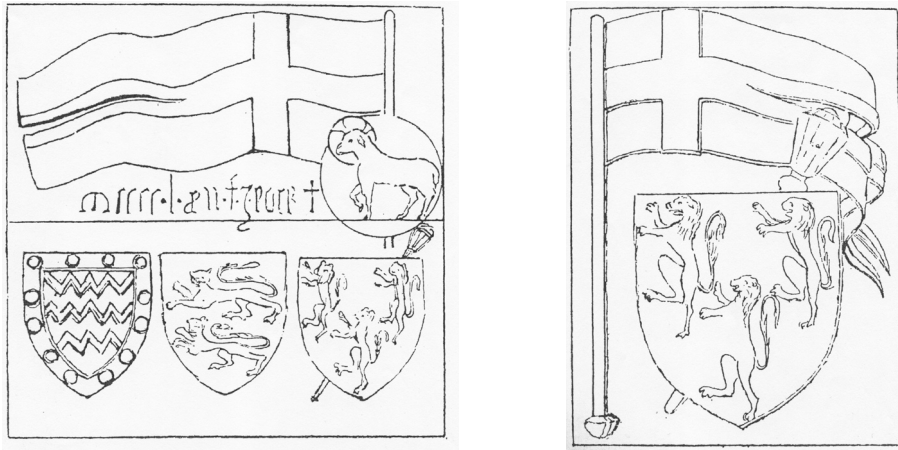


Figure 2: Bodrum, Castle of St Peter: stone monuments to Jean Cotet or Coutet, Marshal of the Order of St John 1457-66. Left (a), standard flying over three shields for Zacosta, Naillac and Cotet, latter with mace behind; right (b), standard flying over arms of Cotet with mace behind.

Maiuri, *Annuario della Regia Scuola Archeologia di Atene* 4-5 (1921-2), pp. 334f. Not to scale.

arms of Grand Master Philibert de Naillac (1396-1421), under whom according to Anthony Luttrell the castle at Bodrum was constructed c. 1407 to replace the order's loss of Smyrna to Tamerlane some years earlier); and finally a shield charged *Three lions rampant 2 and 1* which are those of the Marshal, Jean Cotet. Behind this last shield it is possible to discern a mace posed in bend sinister. The shaft of this mace is concealed behind the shield, but appears to be an undecorated simple elongated shaft with a polygonal, roughly cylindrical head, with a faceted and curved top visible above the upper surface of the Marshal's shield of arms.

The second drawing (**Figure 2b**) reveals greater detail within a rectangular carving. Again we see the arms of the Marshal as before and the mace in bend sinister behind the shield; it would seem to consist of a plain, elongated shaft, topped by an oval shaped knob, above which is a ten-sided conical section of a head of the mace with a faceted and rounded top. On the front of the five visible facets of the conic head appears some decoration, which may be the lower section of an escutcheon.²²

This second carved monument at Bodrum also shows to the left of the Marshal's arms a staff, from which flies the standard of the order plainly charged with a cross, with two forked tails above the Marshal's shield. The standard flies behind the head of the mace most attractively.

What can we conclude from this examination of seals and carvings, in the light of a re-consideration of use of some vexillographical terminology? The Marshal of

²² The later seal of the Grand Priory of Auvergne (from 1619) shows an impaled shield with *Azure a dolphin leaping or* in the dexter and *Gules a cross argent* in the sinister: see *La Sigillographie dans L'Ordre de Saint Jean de Jérusalem (Ordre de Malte)* (Société Héraldique Pictave, Niort 2000), pp. 88f.

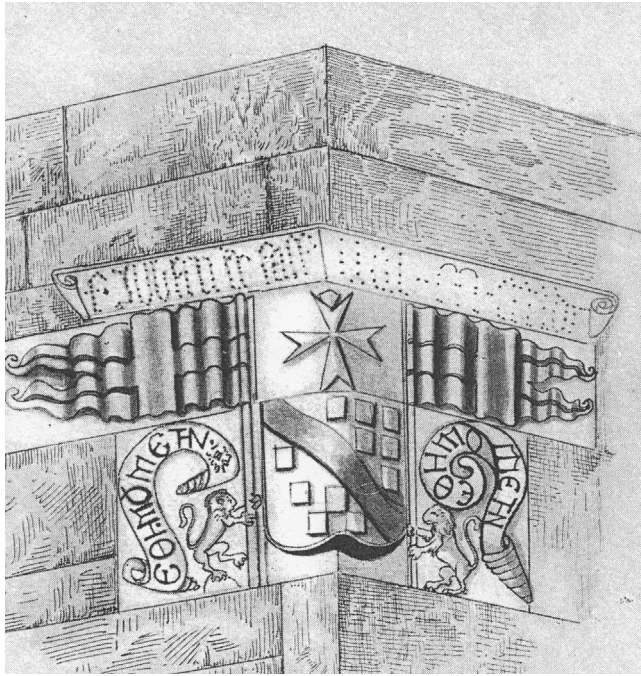


Figure 3: Bodrum, St Peter's Castle (French Tower): stone monument erected by Jean Saconnin, Marshal of the Order of St John 1475-6, showing the arms of Saconnin flanked by lions supporting standards. See over.

Maiuri, *Annuario della Regia Scuola Archeologia di Atene* 4-5 (1921-2), p. 289/

the Order of St John of Jerusalem had from the mid-thirteenth century the privilege of having a 'gonfannon' or 'war flag' carried before him by a gonfannon-bearer, a candidate of his choice but to be approved by the Grand Master;²³ it would seem possible that this officer continued to use a flag of the order's arms as his insignia of office.²⁴ It also would seem reasonable to conclude from the evidence of carved monuments presented above, that the Marshal, who had used a seal of green wax showing a fully armed knight carrying such a 'banner' or flag as early as 1262,²⁵ continued to use this privilege as late as the fifteenth century. Jean Cotet, Marshal 1457-66, erected carvings which not only show that he used the standard, but that he also used a distinctive innovation, a mace. By analogy with the Turcopolier of

²³ Delaville le Roulx, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

²⁴ This possibility is supported by the seal of Simon Le Rat (see E. J. King, *op. cit.*, plate XI, pp. 66f.) thrice Marshal of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (1299, 1303 and 1306-10); this shows his shield charged with three fusils (tinctures unknown). The shield has three standards or pennons issuant from its upper edge, which may indicate his three tenures as Marshal.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127

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the English Langue, who decorated his mace with the royal arms of England, Cotet may have decorated his mace with an escutcheon of Auvergne; at any rate it was displayed, disposed in bend sinister behind his personal arms at the Castle of Bodrum in 1462.

The evidence presented suggests that the Marshal retained his thirteenth-century privileges into the fifteenth century, and continued to have the gonfannon of the order carried as his badge of office. In this connection it is interesting to see that Maiuri also records the carving on the French Tower at St Peter's Castle, Bodrum, of the arms of Jean Sacconin, Marshal between 1475 and 1476, who had been earlier Captain of Bodrum 1450-1.²⁶ This carving (**Figure 3**, previous page), presumably erected after he became Marshal, shows Sacconin's arms²⁷ on a cornice between two lions combatant as supporters each grasping the staves of two standards of two tails, each charged with a cross of the order, flying away from either side of the shield, which is carved beneath an eight-pointed Maltese cross. We should note the absence of any mace here, and question whether Cotet's use was typical of the period or idiosyncratic. Was display of the mace by the 1470s considered ostentatious or unfashionable? Whatever the reason, Sacconin's shield is found beneath the Cross of Malta, no mace being carved on his achievement. The interpretation that the Marshal continued to use the standard of the order as his external symbol of office is nonetheless supported by this carving. Such a consideration also receives considerable support from an awareness of the regular occurrence of sieges, naval combats and other Hospitaller military affrays with neighboring Turks, Mamluks and other enemies after the conquest of Rhodes (1310). Moreover, not even the Convent's peaceful and commercial arrangements with its Turkish and Levantine neighbors shows that it forgot or gave up any of its military orientation or customs, upon which the Convent's very survival depended. To have peace, it believed it must prepare for war.

The order, while certainly conserving its statutory and historical form, was not a hidebound or rigid group of knights (though to be sure, they jealously guarded

²⁶ Maiuri, op. cit. p. 297. Anthony Luttrell, 'The building of the castle of the Hospitallers at Bodrum', in his *The Hospitaller State on Rhodes and its Western Provinces, 1306-1462* (Aldershot 1999), pp. 151f., reveals that while the French Tower is one of the oldest structures at Bodrum on its lower levels (*ante* 1412), in the upper levels it shows extensive rebuilding (p. 150). This fits nicely with the appearance of the shield for Jean Sacconin after he became Marshal c. 1475. He had been Captain of Bodrum already in 1450-1453. M. T. Amherst, *59 Plates for Notes upon the Castle of Bodrum (Halicarnassos)* (London c. 1921), plates 37 and 38, seems to attribute these arms to a knight named Claude Challandat, c. 1510, but I believe this name is a later addition and does not pertain to this cornice achievement, because plate 38 shows these arms carved along with those of GM de Lastic (1437-53) and match the time when Sacconin was Captain of St. Peter's Castle (1450-1).

²⁷ René d'Aubert, abbé de Vertot, *Histoire des chevaliers hospitaliers de Saint Jean de Jérusalem, appelez depuis Chevaliers de Rhodes, aujourd'hui Chevaliers de Malthe*, vol. V (Amsterdam 1735), p. 107, 108 and 110 gives the arms of this family as: *Gu. semy of billets and overall a bend ar. in the dexter canton a lion rampant sa*. While Vertot is not always correct, he is preferable in most cases to later attributions, unless supported by sigillographic or other evidence, since he had access to the proofs within the various Pories.

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their hard-won privileges), but rather a highly adaptive and innovative order in both their military accommodations and in their heraldry. This has permitted us to get a brief glimpse of the mace of the Marshal and its heraldic disposition (in bend sinister behind the arms of the Marshal) in the fifteenth century. Its rediscovery might also raise the question of what, if any, external insignia pertained to the other great dignitaries of the order.