

The Medieval Review

Carraz, Damien, and Esther Dehoux, eds. *Images et ornements autour des orders militaires au Moyen Âge. Culture visuelle et culte des saints (France, Espagne du Nord, Italie)*. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2016. Pp. 284. €25.00. ISBN: 978-2-8107-0447-7.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Lapina

The cover image of the collection of articles announces the intention of the editors, Damien Carraz and Esther Dehoux, to break new ground. It does not depict, as one could expect given the subject, a scene of combat, but an apostle holding a square with a cross in the middle. The image comes from a Hospitaller church in La Croix-au-Bost in France, a monument that is unlikely to be familiar to the vast majority of crusader historians. Among the many achievements of the volume, the introduction of new sources--in fact, to a large extent, an entirely new type of source--to the discussion of military orders and especially of their spirituality is one of the greatest.

The volume traces its origins to the two workshops held at the University of Paris-Ouest-Nanterre-La Défense in the Spring 2014 and at the University Blaise-Pascal in Clermont-Ferrand in the Fall of the same year. As Catherine Vincent explains in the preface, the editors' original question had to do with the role that military saints played in military orders' spirituality as reflected in images. Although the inquiry later expanded to all types of images associated with the military orders, representations and cult of saints remain the prime preoccupation of a number of contributors.

The volume features twelve articles, one each in Italian, Spanish and English and the rest in French, not counting a preface, an introduction and two conclusions. Although there are articles on seals and liturgical objects, as well as some references to sculpture, the main focus is on mural paintings. Similarly, although, as the title makes clear, the volume includes studies of Spain and Italy, France receives the lion's share of attention. The main focus is on the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, although some articles demonstrate that the topic of military orders' imagery remains relevant into the late Middle Ages. In fact, one article, by Virginie Czerniak, focuses on the paintings executed in a Hospitaller commandery as late as the sixteenth century. One of the findings of the volume is that the Templars and the Hospitallers were investing heavily in decorating their churches in the second half of the thirteenth century, which casts doubt on the widely accepted narrative that the orders went into precipitous decline during this period. Although several articles mention other military orders, such as Teutonic Knights, the volume's emphasis is primarily on Templars and Hospitallers. There have been earlier studies dedicated to images produced in the West and having to do with the Templars and the Hospitallers, notably by three of the contributors to the volume, Gaetano Curzi, Cécile Voyer and Claude Andrault-Schmitt, but this is the first time that a significant number of scholars came together to discuss the subject.

The articles are divided into three sections, each made up of four articles. The first section, "Image-Object in the Commanderies: Preliminary Conclusions," provides a useful overview of what we know about images associated with the Templars and the Hospitallers. The

second section, "Devotions and Social Practices as Reflected by Images: Case Studies," includes in-depth analyses of three programs of mural painting as well as an article on seals. The third section, "Military Sainthood, Holy War and Holy Land in Images," ventures outside France, with an article on Italy and two on Aragon-Catalonia. As mentioned above, there are two conclusions: one by an art historian (Claude Andraut-Schmitt) and another by a historian (Philippe Josserand). The dialogue between historians and art historians, ongoing throughout the volume, is one of its greatest strengths.

The volume is very effective in demonstrating how much remains to be done. The editors make it clear that their goal was not to say the last word, but to inspire further research in the same direction. One hopes, for example, for a detailed survey or a series of surveys of surviving monuments that belonged to the military orders and that still preserve mural paintings (both in France and elsewhere in Europe). As some contributors to the volume have emphasized, the task is an urgent one, given that some sites face a real danger of disappearing. One also wishes that historians of military orders and of crusades in general will make wider use of images. Publications by Helen Nicholson especially have demonstrated the fruitfulness of incorporating literary sources into the study of military orders. In contrast, so far, historians have not accorded images the attention that they deserve.

In short, the volume is original, inspiring and necessary. Despite this (and despite its affordable price) this is a kind of a collection is likely to pass under the radar outside France. This would be a pity: a wide variety of scholars--of military orders, crusades, monasticism, mural paintings, seals, etc.--would great benefit both from individual articles found in the volume and, perhaps even more so, from the dialogue between them. Last but not least, the editors and publisher have done a thorough job preparing the volume: there are no fewer than 54 color images, a general bibliography and an index, all of which increase its usefulness.