The essays of this collective volume edited by Mathias Piana (Augsburg) and Christer Carlsson (Stockholm) are based on the papers that were presented during the fifth Military Orders Conference at Cardiff in 2009 – altogether ten papers with an introduction. After the well-written “Introduction: History and Archaeology” (pp. 1–6) from Anthony Luttrell, the volume contains four contributions to “Part I: The Hospitaler Order/The Order of Malta” (pp. 7–82), three articles in “Part II: The Templar Order” (pp. 83–174) and three papers in “Part III: The Teutonic Order” (pp. 175–250). The volume is complemented by 77 black-and-white illustrations and an useful index to names and places (pp. 251–262).

In the first text “The Cabrei of the Order of Malta as an Archaeological Source: Some Notes on Piedmont” (pp. 7–18) Elena Bellomo describes the wealth of information that can be drawn from the registers of the Order of Malta called cabrei. The administrative, judicial and land-registers offer material about the landscape and its changes, the introduction of new crops, variations in canals, drainage works, the road network etc. The cabrai had to be updated and rewritten every twenty-five years and can be found in many italian governmental archives. The oldest dates from 1566 and the cabrei figurati (old maps) start in 1616.

In “Varne Hospitaller Commandery: An Archaeological Field Project” (pp. 19–28) Christer Carlsson describes the fieldwork undertaken in 2008 in the commandery Varne situated in Southern Norway that was established in 1180. Owing to a georadar survey, the position and expansion of an east-west oriented 50 x 10 meters building was identified. The archaeological fieldwork proved that the southern wall of the 17th-Century manor house built on top of it, uses the northern wall of the medieval structure. The whole complex is comparable to the still existing Hospitaler commandery in Odense (Denmark).

In “The Search for the Defensive System of the Knights in the Dodecanese (Part II: Leros, Kalymnos, Kos and Bodrum)” (pp. 29–68) Michael Heslop analyses the four northern Dodecanese islands. The Hospitalers seem to have captured Leros, Kalymnos and Kos from the Greeks. Leros, the northern most territory with numerous harbours, seemed easy to invade, but all the Ottoman attacks in 1457, 1458, 1460, 1477, 1502, 1506 and 1508 were warded off. Even the castle of Andimachia in Kos could not be conquered in 1457 by 156 Ottoman ships with 16.000 men, and has repelled even nine further raids. Moreover in 1347 Kos was prosperous enough to supply the island of Rhodes when it was struck by a famine. Despite a rebellion in 1317/18, the relationship between Greeks and Hospitalers was usually harmonious. In 1522 the islands surrendered to Sultan Süleyman I.

In “Fall and Rise of the Hospitaler and Templar Castles in Syria at the End of the Thirteenth Century” (pp. 69–82) Benjamin Michaudel states that none of the Templar and Hospitaler castles was dismantled by the Mamluks. All in all, the "sieges of the Mamluks acted as a parade of the Mamluk armed forces, displaying the last improvements in medieval siege techniques and warfare before the spread of powder artillery during the 14th Cent." (p. 73). This is exemplified by the fall of Crac des Chevaliers (1271) and of Margat Castle (1285) in detail. The es-
say states that the castles hosted a "large garrison of 1,000 soldiers", but in fact the increasingly specialized defence buildings were a precaution to be able to hold the walls with a decreasing number of soldiers. Especially the Crac des Chevaliers was enhanced after every earthquake to make it indestructible to human and natural forces. Sarah Kate Raphael, Climate and Political Climate. Environmental Disasters in the Medieval Levante, Leiden 2013, pp. 152–153. On the whole, the text correctly exhorts that "the so called 'scratched earth' policy attributed to the Mamluks [...] should be put into a proper perspective" (p. 79).

In the article "I Templari nella Tuscia Viterbese: Vecchie Considerazioni e Nuove Prospettive di Ricerca. Storia ed Architettura" (pp. 83–106) Nadia Bagnarini tries to analyse the characteristics of the Templar architecture based on archival documents and a detailed wall analysis. The article describes a continuous use of the great aula and semicircular apsides, but hardly any defensive elements of the Pre-Templar period. The Templars adopted local styles of architecture and did not develop a special Templar style as supposed by former researchers. The Templar foundations – exemplified by Viterbo – were usually established next to interurban and pilgrimage routes.

The essay "Templar and Hospitaller Establishments in Southern France: The State of Research and New Perspectives" (pp. 107–132) from Damien Carraz takes a close look at the general situation of the Military Orders in southern France. In rural areas, most of the fortifications date from the troubled time of the Hundred Years’ War (p. 120) and the current state of the monumental ensembles often reflects a later situation. The text gives notable information on the funerary practices and the welfare activities of the commanderies, which is interesting as Templars and Hospitallers were accused of burying bodies in unconsecrated ground and of welcoming excommunicates and even heretics (p. 128), and this accusation did not disappear throughout the middle ages.

In “A Bulwark Never Conquered: The Fortifications of the Templar Citadel of Tortosa on the Syrian Coast” (pp. 133–174) Mathias Piana gives a detailed analysis of the complex of Tortosa that was refortified in 1152. The largest tower ever built by Crusaders in the East was never conquered until it had to be abandoned in 1291. Three phases of impressive enlargements of the Great Keep which are analysed in detail, led to a very spectacular seaside which was 50 meters wide. The conformity of the construction of the Templar citadel with the nearby Crac des Chevaliers suggests the same architect and the same building team (p. 166). Because of this and other examples (Belvoir) Piana states “that the military orders were the true promoters of the concentric fortification concept” (p. 171).

In "Renewed Research at Montfort Castle" (pp. 175–192) Adrian J. Boas gives a brief description of the latest research at the centre of the Teutonic Order in northern Galilee. He examines the former expeditions especially of the Metropolitan Museum in 1926, and presents first results of the "Montfort Castle Project", which could be and should be a model for further crusader Castle projects. Due to the descriptions of the ditches, the keep, the domestic wing, the western wing and great hall and the fortifications we are looking forward to the plans and section drawings which will be published in the forthcoming volume of the same series.

In her article "Originality and Adaption: The Architecture of the Teutonic Order in Italy" (pp. 193–218) Giulia Rossi Vairo asks whether there are buildings of the Military Orders that do not reveal specific influences originating from a local context. The buildings were supposed to advertise the prestige and noble origins of the Orders. “This function in Provence was mainly expressed through the construction of towers attached to convent buildings” (p. 217), as the example of the tower at Monterazzano shows.

The article “The Architecture of the Castles in the Prussian State of the Teutonic Order” (pp. 219–250) from Tomasz Torbus gives a brief overview of the typology of the Castles in the Order State of Prussia, using the castles of Torún (Thorn), Elbąg (Elbing), Zamek Bierzgowski (Birgelau), Radżyń Chełmiński (Rehden), Świecie (Schwetz), Nidzica (Neidenburg), Neman (Ragnit), Lidzbark Warminski (Heilsberg), Cēsis (Wenden) and the special case of Marienburg as examples. The text concludes that “the black-fired brick patterns are a genuine Prussian invention” (p. 246).

Conclusion: Only one (“Montfort Castle Project”) out of the ten essays provides a rather prospective view of the topic because it refers to further expected (and financed) research. Three articles are concerned with individual castles (Varne, Tortosa, Montfort), seven texts give a review of certain regions (Piedmont, Dodecanese, Syria, Tuscia, Southern France, Italy and Prussian state). All articles agree on the important fact that the Orders did not develop a special type of architecture but made use of the regional styles, only few details (tower next to Templar-convents, black-fired bricks for Prussian cas-
tles) are typical of the Military Orders. Finally, it is obvious that “[i]n the field of the Military orders, [...] much further research is still needed” (p. 4).

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