For two centuries the Hospitallers on Rhodes were the closest Latin neighbours of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus. Moreover, the Hospitallers from Rhodes held rich estates on Cyprus and played a role in Cypriot politics. The archives from Rhodes survive, at least partially, because in 1522 Suleiman the Magnificent permitted the Hospitallers to leave Rhodes together with their documents. The Hospitaller archives are now in the National Library of Malta, Valletta, where they form the Archivum Ordinis Melitensis (AOM). Basically there survive three kinds of documents: (a) original documents, i.e. charters and letters which the Master and Convent on Rhodes received, issued by popes, kings, cities, etc.; (b) registers, i.e. copies of charters and letters which the Master and Convent issued to other Hospitallers or to foreign people; and (c) minutes or other records of decisions in the Order’s council, where the Master and senior officers decided political and administrative questions. Concerning Cyprus no original documents are extant, probably because the Hospitallers kept primarily papal bulls and similar charters from the West referring to perpetual rights, privileges, and possessions, but not political or administrative correspondence that had become obsolete by 1522. There are also losses from the two series of books which contain the registers of the Master and the minutes of the council. The extant registers of the Master start in 1346 and, up to 1798, there are 318 volumes, each of them with about 300 pages. The extant minutes of the council start in 1459 and, up to 1798, there are 179 volumes, each of them also with about 300 pages.¹

The following paper is about the form and contents of the documents in the thirty-one volumes of the register series between 1409 and 1459. For the period before 1409 the documents concerning Cyprus have been used, though not all of them published, by Anthony Luttrell in five articles. Now the Cyprus Research Centre has commissioned Anthony Luttrell, Ekhard Schöfler, and myself to edit the documents from 1409 to 1459. The project stops in 1459, when the extant minutes of the Hospitaller council start, because that series is arranged chronologically and, as a consequence, it is very time consuming to look for the few Cypriot entries. The registers, however, are arranged geographically, Cyprus being counted among the partes cismarine as opposed to the European priories of the Hospital. Therefore, it is fairly easy to find those documents that the scribes of the registers considered to be important for Cyprus or other partes cismarine. Yet it should be noted that sometimes documents for the Western priories also mention persons important for Cyprus such as the grand commander of Cyprus or other Hospitaller officers.

The language of the Hospitaller documents is usually Latin. Letters to the king of Cyprus, his queen, or other members of his court were sometimes in French. Italian texts also occur, as some of the personnel of the Hospitaller chancery and many merchants on Rhodes came from Italy. Usually the documents were issued by the Master and the Convent, and according to their final clauses they were usually sealed with the leaden Conventual bull of the Master and Convent. Other documents were issued by the Master only, using his own magistral seal. From time to time the Master was absent from Rhodes, especially Fr. Philibert de Naillac in the second decade of the fifteenth century, attending the councils of Pisa and Constance. There the Master was accompanied by a group of proctors of the Convent, with whom he issued charters with the Conventual bull. When the Master was absent

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