qui se virent attribuer à leur arrivée à Damas des mansab-s convoités par les élites locales. M.C. ne prend pas la dimension de cet apport et n’évoque que brièvement ce problème à travers l’arrivée à Damas de hanbalites tels que les Banū Qudamā. Certes beaucoup de ces civils “étrangers” appartenaient à des madhab-s qui n’étaient pas majoritaires à Damas tel le madhab hanbalite comme le montre M.C. ou encore le madhab hanafite dominant chez les émirs turcs; cependant on rencontre parmi ces migrants nombre de shafites qui appartiennent donc au même rite que les élites civiles damascaines et qui vont entrer en concurrence avec elles pour le contrôle des charges. On peut ainsi estimer que le monde du savoir ne relevait pas du seul contrôle des élites damascaines et que ce monde était largement investi et contrôlé par les élites militaires. Il me semble qu’un des événements majeurs ayant touché la société damasaine aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles est cette mise en tutelle des élites damascaines par un pouvoir militaire turc et kurde. Non seulement ce pouvoir parvint à déposséder ces élites de tout pouvoir politique mais il parvint aussi à réduire considérablement son influence dans le champ du religieux et du culturel en favorisant la venue et l’implantation à Damas d’une élite arabe ou iranienne étrangère à la cité.

Ces quelques remarques n’enlèvent en rien le caractère original de cet ouvrage qui s’efforce d’apporter une réflexion nouvelle sur les rapports entre le social et le culturel et qui s’efforce d’échapper à une vision trop institutionnelle de ces deux champs. Il faut souligner aussi le souci constant de M.C. de confronter ses résultats avec des réalités occidentales en montrant bien les différences fondamentales entre ces deux mondes et le danger pour le chercheur d’imposer une grille de lecture occidentale au Proche-Orient médiéval.

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This book is a detailed and scholarly investigation of the relations between the Knights Hospitaller of Rhodes and the Ottomans in the period between the first, unsuccessful, siege of Rhodes by Bayezid II in 1480 and the fall of the island to Süleyman the Magnificent in 1522. Divided into two main parts, the book first discusses the geographical, political and economic position and then goes on to a detailed account of Hospitaller-Ottoman relations. There is a large appendix of Ottoman documents from the Topkapı Palace, given in transcription with a translation and commentary. There is also a useful bibliography, although one might wonder why the details of both the book and article by Palmira Brummett were not checked before going to press. The book also contains several maps.

One aspect of the early centuries of Ottoman history is the problem of sources. Certainly for the period before the fall of Constantinople to Mehmed II in 1453, and, even, to a certain extent, beyond, there is a depressing dearth of Turkish material. Even when Turkish data do exist, they can be surprisingly silent on such aspects as diplomatic or commercial exchanges with the west. Dr. Vatin found that while Ottoman material from the Topkapı Palace gave much information on affairs concerning Cem, it gave very little when it came to Ottoman relations with the Hospitallers [pp. 6-7]. At the same time, however, Ottoman sources are clearly essential to any study and Dr. Vatin has been able to use Ottoman material to extract new information on, for example, the size of the Ottoman fleet used against Rhodes in 1522 [p. 352]. The inclusion of a selection of documents from the Topkapı Palace makes this book particular useful.

Without western source material, however, such as that from the archives of the city states of Genoa and Venice or from those of the Knights of Rhodes, it would be very difficult indeed to produce any valuable research into such aspects of Ottoman history as external
commerce or diplomatic relations with the west in this early period. Dr. Vatin's book is in
this respect a most valuable contribution to the study of Ottoman-Hospitaller relations and
to an understanding of the eastern Mediterranean world in general, for he has combined
Ottoman data with that from the archives of the Hospitallers, removed by the Knights when
Rhodes fell to the forces of Suleyman, and now preserved in the Royal Library of Valetta.
Although there has perhaps been a tendency to see Ottoman-Latin relations somewhat in
the reflection of war, Dr. Vatin's book makes it clear that the relations between the Ottomans
and the Knights were very much fuelled by commerce. This was true also for the earlier
period, when the Hospitallers were active traders with their Turkish neighbours. Indeed,
according to Dr. Vatin, the population of Rhodes largely depended on trade with Turkey and
Egypt and the prosperity of the island rested principally on commerce with her Muslim
neighbours [pp. 159, 179, 238]. Thus, the re-establishment of commercial relations in 1481
was vital [pp. 159, 160] and, in general, regardless of political circumstances, trade tended
to continue. From a maritime point of view, commercial relations with the Ottomans were
concentrated, according to Dr. Vatin, in the Dodecanese zone, in which the Mamluks too
were often players [p. 66].
Dr. Vatin discusses at length the various commodities imported by the Hospitallers, in
particular grain and timber, as well as luxury items, cloth and carpets, and those exported by
them into Turkish territory. Rhodes was a slave market, a commodity of great importance in
the eastern Mediterranean and one which was a powerful factor in the development of piracy.
However, according to Dr. Vatin, Rhodes was not, by now, important for the re-export of
slaves [p. 108]. One aspect of the slave trade, and the taking of prisoners, was the market in
ransom[ing [pp. 61, 62] and Dr. Vatin argues that the aim of taking prisoners was, at least on
Rhodes, as much to extract a ransom as to obtain a slave [p. 113].
Rhodian merchants traded actively in Turkish lands while Ottoman traders travelled in Rhod-
dian ships [p. 68] and even established themselves on the island [p. 183]. Dr. Vatin has found
that Ottoman merchants came to the island more frequently from the beginning of the 16th
century, though this was not new [pp. 287-8]. Ottoman merchants in fact appear to have been
trading in Rhodes considerably earlier, for Bayezid I requested that the Hospitallers grant his
merchants freedom to trade there.
After the fall of Rhodes and the departure of the Hospitallers, trade did continue and the
island remained, to a certain extent, a point of contact between Ottoman and Latin merchants.
But 1522 marks the beginning of an economic decline. Dr. Vatin concludes that this was not
the result of Ottoman action, rather the inclusion of the island into the Ottoman network
meant that it no longer had any special significance for the commerce of the Dodecanese but
became merely another Ottoman sancak [pp. 372, 374].
Dr. Vatin's study clearly shows that the Hospitallers attempted throughout this period to
maintain good relations with the Ottoman state. This desire was presumably prompted in part
by the importance of commercial relations. The Knights therefore refrained from attempting
to extract any military or political advantage from the Ottoman-Mamluk war and instead
stayed strictly neutral [p. 201]. The policy of neutrality could of course have its dangers in
that it could leave the Hospitallers isolated [p. 254] and was one which they were not always
at liberty to follow [pp. 255-6]. On the whole, however, the Hospitallers did manage to main-
tain good relations with the Ottomans up to the arrival of Suleyman.
Dr. Vatin also considers the Ottoman angle of these relations, which were dominated ini-
tially by the Cem affair. Before Suleyman's accession to the throne, Ottoman rulers had been
cautious over attacking Rhodes. Once Suleyman became sultan however, this cautious policy
was reversed, although the conquest of the island was still not a matter of urgency. Dr. Vatin
ascribes this change in policy to the desire to clamp down on piracy, and to ensure safe mari-
time communications between Istanbul and Alexandria. [pp. 338, 339, 341, 342]. A further
factor was the internal political position which Dr. Vatin points out was by no means straight-
forward. The organs of diplomacy were many and informal and tended to work in contrary
directions. Apart from the sultan's various advisors, who could disagree among themselves,