

Anthony Luttrell and
Helen J. Nicholson, eds.
*Hospitaller Women in the
Middle Ages*. Ashgate, 2006.
Pp. xiv + 265.

H*ospitaller Women in the Middle Ages* is a welcome and long-overdue addition to the plethora of books on the Crusade, the Crusading orders, and women's monasticism. It is a collection of essays that approach Hospitaller women from a variety of perspectives across geographic and chronological boundaries. The individual articles are self-contained; some were, in fact, published previously in other places. The autonomous nature of the articles unfortunately leads to some repetition of material and analysis from article to article. Because some of the articles were previously published and are re-printed here without any notable revisions or additions, the scholarship also sometimes feels dated. Yet, the topic of the book is still so fresh and—given the relative scarcity of sources on Hospitaller women—one does not feel cheated by the reprints. It is merely a relief to have all the scholarship that has been done on the topic in one accessible source. That is ultimately the goal of the

text: to serve as a compendium of research on Hospitaller women.

Although there is some redundancy from article to article, each article is individually well written. Many also present unique archival evidence not readily available to the non-Hospitaller specialist and thus stand as a valuable resource for that alone. The book is a coherent whole that leaves the reader feeling that he or she has acquired a thorough overview of not just Hospitaller women, but of women's monastic life in the Middle Ages in general. One sub-theme that runs through the articles as a whole and which helps to hold the anthology together is the changes that took place within the military orders as their focus shifted from the Crusader states of the Middle East to their European houses.

The book begins with a survey by its more than capable editors. Anthony Luttrell and Helen J. Nicholson are established scholars of the military orders; that they have now turned their attention to women's participation in those orders is welcome. This chapter provides a framework for the rest of the book by briefly describing the chronological development of women Hospitallers, divided

into two geographic regions (the European west and the Middle East), that establish the aforementioned sub-theme of change within the orders. Luttrell and Nicholson note, as will be reiterated in several subsequent articles, "Hospitaller women have received little general study" (1) and many of the sources about them have yet to be explored, but nonetheless theirs is a story worth telling.

The next two articles are also summative in tone and do not limit themselves to the Hospitallers, but also consider women in the other military orders. Alan Forey's "Women and the Military Orders in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century" and Francesco Tommasi's "Men and Women of the Hospitaller, Templar and Teutonic Orders: Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries" are reprints. Both attempt to establish that women were an integral part of the military orders from their foundations following the successes of the First Crusade in the late eleventh century. Because these orders were designed to be military in function, the role of women within them was always problematic. Unable to fight, women in the Hospitallers, Templars, and Teutonic Knights focused on providing charitable

services or simply economic support by attaching themselves to the houses for protection, bringing with them money and, in some cases, royal or noble patronage which might lead to more support in the future. Forey offers a noteworthy argument that women's houses were more exclusively noble than male houses (59), perhaps in part because they required outside economic support. All three of these initial articles stress that, over time, women's houses within the military orders suffered the same fate as many other women's monastic houses after the thirteenth century: a lack of financial and ecclesiastical support.

The remainder of the book consists of five case studies of individual women's houses across Europe (Buckland and Aconbury in England, Sigena in Aragon, Frisia, Perugia in Italy) and a sixth article on the French Hospitaller saint, Fleur de Beaulieu. It is interesting that the articles are not organized in this fashion: overview, localities, and personal narrative. Instead, the article on Fleur de Beaulieu is the penultimate chapter in the book which closes with a second article by Francesco Tommasi on "The Female Hospitallers of San Bevignate at Perugia: 1325-ca. 1507." However this organization

makes sense; the Tommasi article on Perugia brings the book to the cusp of the Reformation and closes the age of the great military orders.

Of the case studies, the most intriguing is Johannes A. Mol's study of "The Hospitaller Sisters in Frisia." The house at Sigena is acknowledged by Luis Garcia-Guijarro Ramos to be one of the best documented and most thoroughly examined of all female Hospitaller houses; conversely, the Frisian houses are relatively unknown outside a small circle of specialists. Mol clearly establishes that the Hospitallers were an active and thriving monastic movement within Frisia and that women were an integral part of that story. He surveys the records of Frisian Hospitaller houses, and notes that at least fourteen of the twenty-one houses had been established by 1300 (p. 179), a remarkable achievement. He also compares their development with that of women in the Teutonic Knights in Frisia, further establishing that the experiences of the women Hospitallers are part of the larger picture of women's monasticism in the later Middle Ages.

All of the articles stress the necessity of royal or high noble patronage for the creation,

maintenance, and, sometimes, dissolution of women's Hospitaller houses. Furthermore, the articles emphasize the challenges faced by women who wanted to enter a male-dominated order. Men ran nearly all of the Hospitaller houses for women, and some were in fact double monasteries.

The book is modestly illustrated; the articles are supplemented with several black and white photographs, a few schematics of convent layouts, maps, and charts of expenses incurred by the Buckland house.

Candace Gregory-Abbott
California State University,
Sacramento



Charles Beem. *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Pp. viii + 271.

The *Lioness Roared* considers the particular challenges English queens faced because of their gender from the twelfth to nineteenth century. In a thoughtful and thorough book developed from his dissertation, Charles Beem explores the ways in which four "female kings" (a