INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the thirteenth century Bishop Peter of Lérida sent a letter to King James II of Aragon, in which he complained bitterly about the devastation that he, his Church and his people had to endure from the marauding troops of Templar men, who probably belonged to the nearby commandery of Monzón. He asked for intervention; but he was also adamant that he did not want Bernard of Fonollar, who was an important advisor to the infant king, to act as mediator in this affair. He was afraid that Bernard’s judgement would be biased in favour of the Templars because it was commonly known that Bernard held the castle of Selma from the Templars and that he had numerous relatives among them.¹

This book is concerned with Templar establishments in different regions of northern and southern France. The Iberian peninsula rarely features in it; and nothing further will be said about the bishopric of Lérida. But in a nutshell the incident from Aragon encapsulates one important aspect of what I want the book to be all about, and thus serves to show at this early stage that what I will discuss and suggest for the relationship between Templars and society in specific parts of France applies also to other parts of medieval Europe.

The letter was composed some time between 1299, when Peter became bishop of Lérida, and 1307, when the Templars in Spain and elsewhere were arrested on charges of heresy and blasphemy. It implies that through kindred the Order of the Temple maintained close ties with leaders of society and that these relationships were mutually influential. Concentrating on the duchy of Burgundy, the county of Champagne, and mainly the area that is now commonly referred to as Languedoc in southern France, this book investigates how commonplace these ties, contested as they may have been, were in regions where the Order of the Temple demonstrably flourished and what it was that brought about

these alliances, which could have very real political implications. The focus of the book is not so much on the Order and the influences of these alliances on its history, as on the families and the reasons which compelled them to gravitate towards this particular hybrid order and, as it turns out, to one another.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The Order of the Temple was founded in c. 1120 by a group of knights under the leadership of Hugh of Payns from Champagne as a religious community associated with the Augustinian chapter of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, whose members were actively engaged in the protection of pilgrims and the defence and recovery of the holy places in the Levant. In 1129 it received papal recognition and a Rule; ten years later it became an exempt order of the Church, meaning that henceforth its members were no longer subject to episcopal jurisdiction and that, as an institution, it was accountable only to the Pope for its actions. The Templars received their first possessions in France in the early 1120s and over the years brothers with roving commissions picked up endowments in most regions of western Europe. Until the dissolution of the Order of the Temple in 1312 (following the arrest of the Templars first in France and later in other parts of Europe on trumped-up charges including heresy, blasphemy and sodomy and the subsequent Templar trial), France remained the most important country in the growth and development of the Temple. Here the Order was particularly active in Champagne, Burgundy and the south; here, as elsewhere in Europe, landed families provided the brothers with the material and personal means to establish commanderies and granges, some of which developed into major agricultural enterprises. It was with the revenues from their estates and with the knights and non-nobles who flocked to their houses that the Templars were able to organise, finance and maintain a presence in the Latin East for almost two hundred years.

Scholarship on the military orders has produced a number of detailed case studies that illustrate the development of individual Templar houses and the Order’s history in individual dioceses and regions, and in them one can see that the interaction between armsbearing families and

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2 The exemption of the Order is discussed in *PTJ II*, pp. 75–95.
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Templar communities was often vigorous. In particular, what emerges from these studies is that from very early on the Order attracted followers, from different backgrounds and of both sexes, who associated themselves with local Templar communities. Many of these Templar communities developed into powerful landowners and, as Christina Doni has demonstrated, it was not uncommon for them to adapt their religious practices to local custom. If one also considers that by the end of the thirteenth century communication between remote western Templar communities and the Order’s convent in the East would have been infrequent and that the Order’s convent generally tended not to meddle in the internal affairs of Templar commanderies as long as they kept sending responatious (in theory one-third of their income), and if one also considers that until the demise of the Order Templar communities continued to attract recruits and a labour workforce, then it seems reasonable to assume, as Jonathan Riley-Smith has done, that in spite of the Order’s demographic and the Order’s local custom.


5 See C. Dondi, The liturgy of the canons regular of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem: a study and a catalogue of the manuscript sources (Turnhout, 2004).

Templar Families

But who were the individuals and families that provided the Order with the means to establish and maintain a strong presence in certain regions? And what motivated them to lend their support?

So far, historians seem to agree that the families of knights and petty noblemen constituted the backbone of the Order’s structure in the West and that members of these families, and non-nobles as well, were inspired to join, or otherwise associate with, the Temple for a number of motives. Piety was one obvious reason why laymen entered the Order, and underlying this piety was the same spirituality that caused many of the Templars’ contemporaries to take the cross. Some Templar postulants, however, may have regarded entry as a means of social advancement, and to others the Order may have offered ‘a more comfortable existence than the alternatives available in the secular world’. The need for physical protection could also have led to association with the Order, as may, in the individual case, a thirst for adventure and an eagerness to travel to the East for earthly glory.

As I will argue in Chapter 2, what seems to have predisposed some knights and nobles to embrace the Order of the Temple as a new religious institution worthy of association and patronage was the fact that they and their families were already heavily involved in the Order of Cîteaux and were able to reconcile the concept of military religion with reform monasticism. This is one strand of influence that so far has not been given much attention and that this book aims to follow up.

Marcus Bull has stated in a different context that it is impossible to frame a concise statement of the crusaders’ motivations that would apply:


9 These spiritual undercurrents have now become the object of scholarly research. See W. J. Purks, Crusading spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095–c. 1187 (Woodbridge, 2008). For the argument that piety was one reason for entry into the Order of the Temple see Forey, ‘Recruitment’, 167–8 and M. Barber, The new knighthood: a history of the Order of the Temple (Cambridge, 1994), p. 207.

10 Forey, ‘Recruitment’, 164.

11 D. Selwood, Knights of the cloister. Templars and Hospitallers in central-southern Occitania 1110–1388 (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 17. At least on the Iberian peninsula the Templars seem to have been expected to provide physical protection for the familiae of their communities. See Forey, ‘Recruitment’, 145.

12 Bulst-Thiele, Sacrae domus militar., p. 160.
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accurately to all periods, regions, and social classes. In the end, the same can be argued for Templar recruits and associates. The motives of laymen who joined or gave to the Order in the late thirteenth century would have been different from those of people in the early twelfth, when the Order was still new and unique. Bearing this in mind, however, it is all the more legitimate to ask why some families engaged with the Order continuously over many generations. Individual piety, the longing for security and social advancement or the adventurous spirit of individual knights do not sufficiently explain why large family groups supported particular Templar commanderies along with their friends, vassals and kinsmen sometimes for more than a century.

The Order’s local archives, of which more below, support the premise that extended families associating with Templar houses and family relationships between Templars were commonplace. At first sight this seems nothing out of the ordinary. Religious communities had always attracted the loyal support of noble and knightly families. Unlike traditional religious communities, however, the Order of the Temple demanded more of their knightly recruits than submission to the monastic lifestyle. As I will try to show in Chapter 5, the death of Templar brothers drafted to the Holy Land and their dedication to holy war were soon incorporated into the collective memory of medieval society, as were, of course, the deeds and deaths of crusaders. The distinction between ‘traditional’ religious orders and military orders would therefore have been clear to see. Certainly such a distinction would have informed the decision of laymen whether or not to include a Templar (or other military) community among the institutions worthy of spiritual attention.

As it turned out, alliances with Templar and other military communities were popular. They helped the Order of the Temple to grow. Historians have long testified to the existence of close ties between commanderies and families. Hans Prutz argued that ‘personal factors’ (persönliche Momente), by which he meant kinship and friendship ties between laymen and Templars, had played a part in the rapid development of the Order in France, notably in Champagne. Anthony Luttrell, like Prutz, pointed out that many of the early Templars had in fact been

'connected to one another by birth and other ties'.\textsuperscript{16} According to Alan Forey, parental and family pressure must have influenced the decisions of Templar postulants. He also believed that in individual cases the parental decision to let a son join the Order was often influenced by existing personal, family, or neighbourhood links with the Order. Very likely, therefore, some recruits did not enter the Order voluntarily or enthusiastically and ‘were perhaps only reluctantly persuaded by more determined kinsmen’.\textsuperscript{17} Marie Luise Bulst-Thiele has argued that members of the same families – fathers and sons, uncles and nephews – usually joined the same military order, thus implying that family tradition could determine recruitment to the Temple.\textsuperscript{18} And drawing on evidence from the Templar depositions, Alessandro Barbero has been able to piece together some of the family networks that existed within the Order at the beginning of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{19} The ‘family element’ of Templar communities to which these historians have testified is a barometer demonstrating how deeply particular kin-groups became involved in the Order. How they did so and what motivated their involvement are the two leading questions that I will try to answer in this book.

I have focused my study mainly on the duchy of Burgundy and the adjoining county of Champagne in northern France, and Languedoc in the south. The duchy of Burgundy and the county of Champagne can best be defined by the dioceses which they comprised (at least in part). These were Langres, Chalon-sur-Saône, Mâcon, Autun, Nevers and Auxerre for Burgundy (Map 1), and Sens, Troyes, Châlons-sur-Marne, Reims, Laon, Noyon, Soissons and Meaux for Champagne (Map 2). Languedoc describes the area of southern France in which the Romance language of Oc was spoken. Defined by linguistic rather than political or religious boundaries it thus stretched from the Pyrenees along the coast of the Mediterranean to the Alps. To the north it included much of the Dauphiné, Velay, Auvergne, Périgord and Limousin, to the east Aquitaine, Gascony, Bigorre and Comminges. In modern usage, however, Languedoc usually describes the area of south-central France between the Pyrenees in the south, Albi in the north, the Garonne in the west and the Rhône in the east. It is on this Languedoc that my research on southern France focuses predominantly, although extensive


\textsuperscript{18} Bulst-Thiele, Sacrae domus militiae, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{19} Barbero, ‘Motivazioni religiosi e motivazioni utilitarie’, 721–4.
sorties to adjoining regions, namely Provence, Velay, Auvergne, Gascony and Comminges, will also be made (see Map 3).

My decision to select these regions was guided on the one hand by the well-established fact that the mentalités of northern and southern Frenchmen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were distinctively different, to the point that they violently clashed in the thirteenth century: how the Order of the Temple grew in both societies is an interesting point of comparison. On the other hand it was guided by the fact that each region possesses rich archives, which have been the subject of intense scholarly scrutiny and which in recent years have formed the basis of a number of high-quality scholarly articles and monographs investigating, and to a large extent explaining, regional religious developments and social and political changes. These include Constance Brittain Bouchard’s seminal study of the symbiotic relationships between Church and secular society in Burgundy, Theodore Evergates’s prosopographical research into the society of medieval Champagne, which makes use of the county’s exceptionally rich comital archives, Laurent Macé’s analytical study of political rivalries, alliances and exercise of power in the medieval county of Toulouse, Hélène Débax’s examination of the legal implications and social and political consequences of feudal oaths and contracts in the Languedoc of the Tencavels, and Claudie Duhamel-Amado’s two-volume genealogical study of medieval Languedoc families. The military orders in general and the Templars in particular are subjected to scrutiny in Dominic Selwood, *Knights of the cloister*, which, despite a number of discrepancies and a few errors, provides valuable examples of how deeply the military orders of St John and the Temple connected with society in southern France and how firmly they placed themselves on the political and religious map of the region. A similar study for Champagne or Burgundy does not exist, but articles by Alain Demurger and a brief study of the Templars in the diocese of Langres by Delphine Marie provide some material on which I could draw in my research for this book.

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22 Selwood, *Knights of the cloister.*
As networks defined by kinship are necessarily amorphous and change shape with each generation, any attempt to put geographical restrictions on them or to confine them to political boundaries is bound to fail. In the duchy of Burgundy and the county of Champagne the families of knights and nobles extended north and south of what was in any case a porous

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border. In our modern understanding of counties and duchies we tend to gloss over the fact that in medieval times these were far from being unified political entities and that in reality the knights and noblemen living within them engaged in a wide range of complex feudal arrangements which left them and their lordships vulnerable to outside influences. The counts of Champagne, Auxerre–Nevers and Chalon-sur-Saône, for example,
were tied by bonds of vassalage to the dukes of Burgundy for at least a part of their principalities, whereas by the end of the eleventh century the counts of Champagne had successfully extended their influence into the diocese of Langres, which was traditionally considered Burgundian.²⁴