

THE COAT OF ARMS

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BOOK REVIEWS

Katie Stevenson and Barbara Gribling (edd.), *Chivalry and the Medieval Past*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016. xi + 225 pp., including 7 colour and 37 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 978-1-84383-923-1. £60.

'Medievalism' – the study of the ways in which the Middle Ages have been seen and interpreted in every subsequent age – has become a fashionable scholarly topic in recent years. The present book of essays is the seventh in its publisher's series of this name; but there are other series, too, that are devoted to the subject, one being the same publisher's *Studies in Medievalism* (28 volumes to date). One price that is paid for this scholarly cornucopia is that it has become highly specialised, and the present book is no exception. Its chapters cover a very wide and, it might seem, disparate assortment of topics.

This is not to denigrate the eight chapters' scholarly value; it is simply that civic chivalry as exemplified in the Albert Memorial in 1860s Manchester, Victorian schoolchildren's books on heroes from the golden age of chivalry, mid-nineteenth-century attitudes to duelling in Italy, the German monument on the site of the battle of Tannenberg and its adaptation as the tomb of President Hindenburg, and twentieth-century re-enactments of medieval jousting and tourneying – fine pieces of work as these are and with much useful bibliographic apparatus – may be thought less likely to appeal to readers of this journal than the eighteenth-century focus of the first three contributions, on which I will comment.

The opening chapter, by David Allen, looks at the Scottish scholar Gilbert Stuart (1743–86), whom we might see as the very personification of an enlightened legal historian, given the way in which his *View of Society in Europe, in its Progress from Rudeness to Refinement* (1778) actually urged an appreciation of feudalism and, in a broader way, chivalry. Stuart sought to show that the social bonds of honour and dependence were a vital link between feudal tenure and the chivalric world.

The need to find a medieval past for any newly created European chivalric order or order of knighthood is in itself unsurprising, but the mid-eighteenth-century Swedish wish to find medieval links for the Orders of the Seraphim, the Sword and the Polar Star (established in 1748) is put in a pan-European context by Antti Matikkala. The historical search for the antecedents of such orders is traced back through such books as Frans Mennens's *Deliciae equestrum sive militarium ordinum* (1638) and André Favyn's *Le théâtre d'honneur et de chevalerie* (1620; English translation 1623), and there are considered looks across Europe to the Scottish Order of the Thistle (1687) and England's Order of the Bath (1725) as well as the Danish Orders of the Elephant (1693) and of the Dannebrog (1671). Like the same author's book on *Orders of Knighthood and the Formation of the British Honours System*, this is a richly rewarding study.

The eighteenth century's association of chivalry and the Gothic style is thoroughly explored by Peter Lindfield. Neither subject could be taken for granted as fashionable or even approved, until far into the eighteenth century, when the literary and artistic output of two or more generations of writers and painters finally had effect. The Gothic had had to shake off association with all that was rude and primitive. Horace Walpole made the further leap, of associating heraldry with the visual aspects of chivalry and thus of its meriting lavish display in his country house, Strawberry Hill. Other shapers of taste then followed Walpole, and Lindfield concentrates on William Beckford and

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his rural creation, Fonthill Abbey. Here, armorial stained glass abounded, while King Edward's Room recalled the memory of England's central chivalric figure, Edward III, with a painting of him that was copied from one at Windsor. This too is a substantial and enjoyable chapter, and, like Mattikala's, well repays careful reading.

Nigel Ramsay

Anna-Maria Kasdagli, *Stone carving of the Hospitaller period in Rhodes: Displaced pieces and fragments*. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2016. 213 pp 4 figures 31 plates. ISBN 978-1-78491-478-3. Paperback £35.00. E-book £35.00.

This nicely produced volume arises from an MA dissertation submitted to the University of Athens in 2010. It comprises a catalogue of c. 230 fragments and displaced pieces of carved stone, much of it armorial, in the care of the Ephorate of Antiquities in Rhodes, and discusses the historical, topographical and cultural backgrounds to the carvings, and their architectural and funerary contexts.

The majority of this carved stone was employed in buildings and monuments belonging to the Knights of the Order during their occupation of the island (as reflected in the title of the volume). The Order was formed in 1050, initially to provide help for poor, sick and injured pilgrims in the Holy Land. It became a Military Order following the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. Ejected from the Holy Land after the fall of Acre, the Order first moved to Cyprus in 1291, and then to Rhodes in 1309, remaining there until its expulsion by the Ottoman Empire in 1522.

Many of the pieces in the catalogue are the result of Italian restorations after Rhodes was taken from the Turks in 1912 and later destruction caused by Allied raids during World War II. Much stonework was recovered from debris cleared from the town at the end of the war and therefore lacks secure provenance. This material is now stored in a variety of locations on Rhodes, listed here in one of three appendices.¹³ Kasdagli sets this catalogued stonework in its broader context in her discussion.

Extant carvings belonging to the Hospitaller period show clear influence from Italian Renaissance sculpture. Much of the earlier, Gothic stonework, on buildings at least, was lost in the earthquake of 1481. Armorial decoration on buildings would have been especially vulnerable, as it is likely to have been placed in the upper stories. Public buildings, for example, would have displayed the arms of the ruling master in a prominent position. Nevertheless, there are occasional armorial survivals which antedate both the earthquake and the arrival of the Order of St John. One such remnant comprises half of the tomb slab of Ioannes Pitzos¹⁴ (d. 1306), who was probably an Italian soldier of fortune, and carries arms comprising *Per pale to dexter a fleur-de-lis [or an estoile]*. The earliest Hospitaller period armorial tomb slab recorded herein is incomplete and unidentified. It bears a shield *Per saltire a cross moline* and is dated by its fragmentary inscription to 1348. Another fragment represents the earliest slab of a known Hospitaller, Pierre Plantier, prior of the convent, c. 1330–1350, although the arms are missing.

¹³ The two other appendices comprise a list the masters of Rhodes and statistical tables of magisterial arms.

¹⁴ Who bears a Hellenized Italian family name.