

TREASURY RECORDS OF THE KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN IN RHODES

by

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When the fortress of Acre fell to the Muslims in the early summer of 1291, the power of the Christians in the Holy Land was at an end. Few of the Knights of St. John who took part in that last desperate struggle escaped alive, but somehow or other the most valuable relics of the Order were saved; among these were the deeds and charters which would enable the Knights to reclaim their property if and when the country was recaptured by the Christians. Through the many moves which later circumstances forced on the Convent of the Order, these deeds were carefully preserved. Unfortunately, the same value was not attached to the books of the Treasury, and few of these have survived, that is, until the arrival of the Knights in Malta when a regular series begins. For the Palestine period, there are no accounts of any sort. Pauli has published a short roll of the rents which the Order received every year, but this is very restricted and the total amount involved is a mere 220 bezants: (1)

For the Rhodes period also, there is no specific series of Treasury accounts, but here we are somewhat more fortunate. One volume which gives a detailed statement of the receipts and payments made by the General Receiver of the Order in Western Europe for the years 1378 to 1388 is available. (2) This volume is of inestimable value, and it is to be regretted that others like it have not survived as well. None the less, it has been possible to retrieve various other accounts of a similar nature from the volumes of the Archives of the Order in Malta. Although none of these are so detailed as Volume 48, they do cover the period from 1365 to 1400 almost completely. For the decades immediately following 1400, no further accounts appear (3) and the assumption must be that the death of some particularly zealous scribe or, perhaps, of an especially thorough Grand Master, brought a change in outlook, and it was no longer thought necessary to transcribe the accounts submitted by Receivers, except in the books of the Treasury, which have been lost. In actual fact, the majority of the accounts do fall under the Mastership of Ferdinand d'Heredia (1376-1396), but this may be a coincidence.

The Receivers who sent these statements to Rhodes were Arnaud Bernard Ebrard in the first years, and latterly Peter de Provins. Receipts are given by

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- (1) PAULI, S. — *Codice Diplomatico del Sacro Militare Ordine Gerosolimitano*. Vol. I, p. 235.
- (2) Volume 48 of the Archives of the Order of St. John, preserved in the Royal Malta Library, Valletta; hereafter, these will be cited simply as Archives.
- (3) One other account, covering the four years 1410-1414, is to be found in the *Libri Bullarum*, Archives Vol. 338, folios 47(b)-53(b). Total receipts: 54,102 florins; total payments: 53,351 florins; balance: 751 florins.

Priories, but every Priory is not included, and it must be emphasized that these accounts do not give a complete picture of the financial position of the Order at this time. No mention is made of the income from property in Cyprus and Rhodes itself, nor are the expenses of the Convent included — the upkeep of the household of the Grand Master, the Hospital, and the Auberges or Inns where the Knights lived, the building of fortifications, the maintenance of ships etc. The accounts do, however, give a good impression of the resources of the western Priories, from which the Order did draw its main financial support, and also of what the Receivers did with the funds which came into their hands. As such, they have great value.

The main items which made up the Receipts and Payments in those 14th century accounts were as follows:—

RECEIPTS

(a) Responsions

The revenue from the property of the Order was remitted annually through Receivers to the Convent. In the early days the Commanders were instructed to send the whole of their surplus revenue to the General Treasury, after deducting only what was absolutely necessary for the support of their establishment. This arrangement, however, made no allowance for human nature, and led to mismanagement. Some Commanders were clearly dishonest; and there could always be a difference of opinion as to what was "absolutely necessary". At a Chapter General held in 1262, in Caesarea under the Mastership of Hugh Revel, it was laid down that a certain fixed proportion of the revenue must be paid over annually. This was usually estimated at one third of the gross receipts of the Commandery, but the exact figure might be raised by decree of the Chapter General to meet the circumstances of the time. At the Chapter General held at Montpellier in 1330, annual Responsions amounting to 83,400 gold florins, 60,000 bezants of Cyprus, and 100 silver marks were imposed on the various Priories for the next ten years. (4)

(b) Vacancies and Mortuaries

When a Commander died, the entire net revenue of his Commandery from the date of his death, until the 1st May following was paid to the Common Treasury, and was termed the Mortuary. The net revenue of the following year was also paid to the Treasury, and was called the Vacancy. Whenever the finances of the Order required extraordinary assistance, a second year's vacancy was appropriated, and sometimes this additional tax became regular. Revenue from this source could be quite considerable. Thus the net Mortuary of the Prior of France — given in the account for the year 1386 — amounted to no less than 5,700 florins of Avignon. (5)

(c) Spoils

The effects of the dead, or Spoils, were the personal estates left by professed members of the Order at their death. When he entered the Order, a Knight

(4) Archives Vol. 280, fol. 6.

(5) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 130.

took the oath of poverty, and from that moment all his worldly possessions became the property of the Order. The Statutes, however, in order to enable him to make some provision for his relatives, permitted him to dispose of one fifth of his property; the remaining four fifths were carried to the credit of the Common Treasury. In the account for the years 1367 to 1369, the receipts from the Spoils of the English Turcoplier are stated to amount to 240 silver marks. (6)

(d) **Passages**

The Passage or entrance money consisted of the dues payable to the Order by members on being admitted into its ranks. The amount varied tremendously according to the degree claimed by the candidate as well as the circumstances of his admission — before or after majority. The charge was probably originally begun to cover the cost of transporting the Knight from the western Pories to the seat of the Convent e.g. two English Knights who in 1386 each paid 75 florins as their passage money; (7) but by the 17th century it had come to be recognized as a regular source of revenue, and a definite list of charges was drawn up.

(e) **Extraordinary Receipts**

These usually took the form of special subsidies imposed by the Chapter General for some definite purpose as, for example, when the Order was struggling to free itself from debt in the years following 1310; or as in 1382 when the sum of 10,833 florins was borrowed by the General Receiver in Avignon to meet the urgent needs of the Convent. (8)

From these main items of receipts it will be seen that the first and second directly, and the third indirectly were derived from the rents of estates of the Order. Without the landed property in Europe the Convent could not have existed as it did.

PAYMENTS

(a) **Transmitted to the Convent**

The principal concern of the Receiver was to transmit the money which he had collected to the seat of the Order. This he could accomplish by various methods. He could repay in the West the money which the Convent had borrowed in the East; he could send the money, or merchandise to its value, in coffers to the Convent; or he could send it by bill of exchange. All these methods were used, and there was a considerable traffic in bills of exchange between the Receiver's Offices and the Convent and vice versa. Shipments both of money and merchandise — usually cloth — were made regularly between the ports of the South of France and Rhodes. To the expenses of these dealings should be added many incidental ones; the cost of the storing and transportation of the goods, the provisioning of the ships and the wages of the sailors etc. These form by far the largest items of payment made by the Receivers during the 14th century.

(b) **Pensions**

The agents whom the Order maintained all over Europe received a yearly pension. These, of course, varied in amount. Cardinals, who acted on the Order's

(6) Archives Vol. 16, fol. no. 46.

(7) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 111(b).

(8) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 59(b)-60.

behalf in various matters, received the regular sum of 300 florins. Peter de Provins, the General Receiver himself, was allotted 500 florins every year. (9) In 1386 the Grand Master's barber received 14 florins to cover his services over a period of 18 months. (10)

(c) **Messengers' Remuneration**

Under this heading was included the payment of the couriers whom the Order sent on various errands to the different parts of Christendom. Sometimes messengers were used for the portage of money as well as letters; their expense would come under this item.

(d) **Outlay on Law-Suits**

Considerable legal expenses were often incurred by the Order. These were usually concerned with the recovery of money from some unwilling debtor, or with the appeal of the Order against an unjust claim made upon it. In November 1385, for example, the Order was engaged in a case in the court of Montpellier against the heirs of two merchants of Narbonne. The issue was the repayment of the remaining part of the sum of 22,000 gold florins which a previous Grand Master, Roger des Pins, (1355-65) had lent to them. The legal expenses incurred by the Order amounted to 30 florins. (11)

(e) **Expenses of Bulls and Privileges**

This item included the cost of the writing material and the registration of the Acts made on the Order's behalf by the Pope or Kings. In 1380 the Pope granted the Order the privilege of transporting merchandise without the payment of specific taxes. For this the Receiver paid 25 florins. In the same year 10 florins were paid to the officers of the King of France to allow certain goods, destined for Rhodes, to be exported without interference. (12)

(f) **Miscellaneous Minor Expenses**

These comprised gratuities to persons who had rendered the Order some service; travelling expenses; losses incurred in the exchange of money etc. (13)

When there was a deficit on these accounts — as there often seems to have been during this period — it was covered by borrowing from merchants in Avignon, and carried forward to the following year. The total of annual receipts seems to have varied between about 20,000 and 50,000 florins, but these figures must not be taken as complete. Priors were very slow in making their returns, as can be seen from the large sums of Arrears of Responsions which were collected. The total of annual Responsions imposed in 1330 — amounting to 83,400 florins, 60,000 bezants of Cyprus and 100 silver marks (14) — was considerably in excess of the annual receipts. It must be remembered that these were but a proportion of the total revenue from the property of the Order, but even so, the

(9) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 19.

(10) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 151(b).

(11) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 125(b).

(12) Archives Vol. 48, fol. 43.

(13) Archives Vol. 48, folios 23, 40(b).

(14) Archives Vol. 280, fol. 6.

receipts of the Order did not compare with those of contemporary Popes and Princes. Thus Pope John XXII (1316-1334) had an annual revenue of at least 228,000 florins; Edward II 546,000 florins; Charles IV 590,000 florins; Robert of Naples 600,000 florins; Philip IV 785,912 florins (in 1329) (15). However, the importance of the Order lay not so much in the size of its bank balance, but in the use to which it put its not inconsiderable resources, and in the part it played in the movement of funds — the most important of the financial dealings of Mediaeval times.

Account submitted by Arnaudus Bernardi Ebrardi, "procurator general in transmarinis partibus", for the period from 15th April 1364 to 26th May 1365. (Source: Archives, Vol. 319, folios 40-41).

Universis et singulis presentem quitanciam visuris et audituris. Nos frater Raymundus etc. Et nos Conventus domus eiusdem facimus tenore presentium manifestum. Quoniam sicut nobis innotuit per duo computa per religiosum in Christo nobis carissimum fratrem Arnaudum Bernardi Ebrardi, preceptorem de Burdegalis ac procuratorem nostrum in transmarinis partibus generalem nobis missa, a quintadecima die mensis Aprilis anni domini millesimi trecentesimi sexagesimi quarti usque ad vicesimam sextam mensis Maii anni domini millesimi trecentesimi sexagesimi quinti; procurator idem nostro nomine recepit infrascriptas pecunias nostro pertinentes thesauro:

Primo, videlicet, per manus fratris Raymundi Johannis de responsione et arreragiis responsionum prioratus Sancti Egidii, et plurium fratrum prioratus ipsius in prelibatis mensibus, florenos tria milia octingentos nonaginta duos et grossos quatuor.

Item, pro anno pertinenti thesauro de baiulia de Canaberiis, florenos quadraginta sex.

Item, a fratre Ugone de Gosono pro resta per eum debita de eo quod dare tenebatur pro confirmatione baiulie de Silva ad vitam, florenos tresdecim.

Item, de responsione, arreragiis responsionum prioratus Tholose anni finiti in Sancto Johanne anni domini millesimi CCC sexagesimi quarti, per manus fratris Johannis de Affariis, francos duo milia valentes florenos duo milia trescentos triginta sex et grosses quinque.

Item, de prioratu Alamanie pro parte responsionum prioratus ipsius anni finiti in Sancto Johanne anni domini millesimi CCC LXVIII, florenos quadringentos sexaginta tres.

Item, de responsione prioratus Alvernie pro parte responsionis prioratus ipsius anni finiti in Sancto Johanne anni domini millesimi trecentesimi sexagesimi tercii, per manus fratris Johannis Atardi, florenos duo milia sexaginta tres.

Item, de arreragiis debitis per fratrem Yterium de Perussa de baiulia quam habebat in prioratu Alvernie, francos octingentos valentes florenos novingentos quadraginta.

Item, a domino Davit de Mari pro parte arreragiorum per eum debitorum

(15) RENOARD, Yves: *Las Relations des Papes d'Avignon et des compagnies commerciales et bancaires de 1316 à 1378*, p. 36.

pro domibus nostris quas tenet in Scotia, florenos trescentos septuaginta octo.

Item, pro parte arreragiorum responsionum, debitorum per priorem Purtugalie, florenos mille.

Item, de responsione et arreragiis responsionum prioratus Aquitanie per manus fratris Helie de Precisac, florenos milli octingentos triginta novem et grossos undecim.

Item, a fratre Raymundo de Nantolio priore Aquitanie, florenos sexcentos.

Item, de responsione prioratus Cathalonie anni finiti in Sancto Johanne anni domini millesimi CCC LX quarti, florenos de Aragonia septingentos valentes florenos sexcentos triginta quinque et grossos undecim.

Item, a fratre Guillelmo de Guimatio pro debito quod debebat predecessori nostri prelibati magistri, et pro aliis per manus duorum mercatorum Montispessulani, florenos de Aragonia mille quingentos valentes florenos mille trescentos sexaginta tres grossos duos et medium.

Item, de responsione et arreragiis responsionum prioratus Navarre, florenos quadringentos triginta quinque et grossos quinque.

Item, de responsione prioratus Lombardie anni finiti in Sancto Johanne anni domini millesimi trecentesimi sexagesimi quarti, florenos trescentos sexaginta.

Item, a priore Conventus nostri Rodi quos sibi pro suis expensis dederat et eos sibi restituit, florenos septuaginta septem et grossos sex.

Item, procurator predictus per sua computa alia nobis missa restavit nobis et nostro thesauro debitor usque ad quintam decimam diem mensis Aprilis anni domini millesimi trecentesimi sexagesimi quarti in florenis duodecim milibus ponaginta sex, grossis sex et medium.

Summa omnium receptarum pecuniarum predictarum florenos viginti octo milia quingentos nonaginta trium et grossorum trium, de quarum quidem pecuniarum summa posuit dictus procurator se expendisse seu solvisse et dedisse pecunias infrascriptas:

Primo, videlicet quod dedit procuratori Johannis Adde pro cambio per eum facto cum nostro thesauro de quo habuit bullatam nostram litteram, florenos mille.

Item, fratri Gaufrido Rostagni per nostram bullatam litteram quam noster thesaurus illos habuerat, florenos centum.

Item, sociis societatis Guillelmorum de Montispessulano quos mandavit a factoribus suis per nos in Cipro recipi per totum mensem Aprilis anni domini millesimi trecentesimi sexagesimi quinti, florenos tria milia.

Item, per litteram nostram bullatam domino Petro Ratanelli pro servitiis Smirnarum, florenos mille quingentos.

Item, pro pensionibus quatuor dominorum Cardinalium, advocatorum, procuratorum ac ipsius procuratoris generalis et domini Bernardi de Martrinio, et aliorum hospitii domini nostri Pape ac etiam aliorum, florenos duo milia quadringentos unum et medium.

Item, quod procurator idem noster ultra suam annuam ordinariam spensionem propter caristiam magnam Avinione et expensas factas pro custodia sue persone quas oportuit facere propter lites et causas domus nostre quas dicebat, expendit florenos quingentos.

Item, quod dedit a dominis Cardinalibus de Canilhato et de Vabre duas

pecias pannorum que constiterunt florenos ducentos.

Item, quod solvit pro uno debito quondam fratris Pontii Rafaudi, florenos triginta.

Item, quod litigandum contra Castellatum Emposte et priores Portugalie, Catalonie et Aquitanie, et in litteris papalibus obtentis ratione predicta et domino nostro papa, et fratribus et corrieris missis pro petendis responsionibus, expendidit florenos sexcentos sex et grossos tres.

Item, quod occasione litis ducte contra Julianum pro debito magistri Petri Deyssoni, expendidit florenos ducentos viginti quinque et grossos decem et medium.

Item, quod dedit dicto priori Conventus pro expensis cum fuit nuntius et visitator ad ultramarinas partes destinatus, florenos sexcentos sexaginta duos et grossos sex.

Item, quod dedit fratri Guidoni de Turri domus nostre marescallo pro suis expensis usque per totum mensem Augusti anni sexagesimi quinti, florenos duo milia quadraginta unum.

Item, quod in litteris domini nostri pape directis prioribus ut venirent ad Assemblyam Avinione, et aliis litteris missis dominis, regibus et aliis dominis, regibus et aliis dominis, solvit florenos quinquaginta septem.

Item, quod solvit in expensis factis in pannis et celis missis per preceptorem de Cayalono ut miterentur ad Rodum, florenos quadraginta unum et medium.

Item, quod solvit in septuaginta quatuor peciis pannorum diversarum rationum mitendis ad Rodum, florenos duo milia septingentos et duos.

Item, quod solvit cuidam mercatori Tholose, et Galharo Corujere quos frater Bertrandus de Orfanis debebat dare thesauro, florenos duo milia.

Item, quod dedit de Nogareto alio dicto nepoti cum misit eum ad Rodum cum suis computis et aliis negotiis pro suis expensis, florenos centum.

Summa expensarum omnium predictorum florenorum, decem et septem milia, ducentos sexaginta septem, grossos novem et dimidium, prout predicta omnia in cartulariis nostri thesauri clarius continentur.

Et si deductis et defalcatis expensis omnibus supradictis restant in manibus nostri procuratoris predicti usque ad vicesimam sextam diem mensis Maii anni sexagesimi quinti, floreni undecim milia trescenti viginti quinque, grossi septem et medium; de quo quidem computo et ratione contenti plenarie tanquam de jure bonum et legale reputamus, de predictis omnibus et singulis supradictis prenominationum nostrum procuratorem eius ve bona et arnesia de certa nostra scientia auctoritate presentium liberamus, absolvimus perpetuo et quitamus, preter de predictis florenis undecim milibus trescentis viginti quinque et grossis septem et medium, qui per dictum procuratorem nostrum restitui nobis debent. In cuius rei testimonium bulla nostra communis plumbea presentibus est appensa. Data Rodi die vicesima secunda mensis febroarii anno sexagesimo quinto.

Summary of the Accounts submitted by the General Receivers in the West, 1364-1399 (the totals being given as they are recorded, although in several cases the arithmetic is not correct).

1364-65, From 15th April 1364 to 26th May 1365. Submitted by Arnaudus Bernardi Ebrardi, "procurator general in transmarinis partibus". Archives Vol. 319, folios 40-41.

Balance from previous account of 12,096 floreni 6½ grossi included in

Receipts	28,593	floreni	3	grossi
Payments	17,267	floreni	9½	grossi
Balance	11,325	floreni	7½	grossi

1367-69, From 26th March 1367 to 26th March 1369. Submitted by Arnaudus Bernardi Ebrardi, "procurator general etc". Archives Vol. 16, no. 46.

Balance from previous account of 2,687 floreni 5 grossi not included in

Receipts	50,412	floreni	6	grossi	4	denarii
Payments	35,229	floreni	5	grossi		
Balance	15,183	floreni	1	gross	4	denarii

1369-70, From 26th March 1369 to 26th March 1370. Submitted by Arnaudus Bernardi Ebrardi, "procurator general etc". Archives Vol. 16, no. 48.

Balance from previous account of 15,183 floreni 1 gros 4 denarii not included in

Receipts	23,044	floreni	3½	grossi
Payments	18,695	floreni		
Balance	4,349	floreni	3½	grossi

1371-73, No exact dates are given, but items range over this period. Submitted by Aymericus de Ripa, "receptor general in partibus transmarinis". Archives Vol. 16, no. 53.

Receipts	37,955	floreni	5½	grossi	6	denarii
Payments	37,660	floreni	1	gross	5	denarii
Balance	295	floreni	4	grossi	13	denarii

1374-75, Account submitted by Johannes Ferdinandi de Heredia, "locumtenens general in ultramarinis partibus". Archives Vol. 16, no. 52.

No totals given.

1378-80, Up to the feast of the birth of St. John the Baptist 1380. Submitted by Petrus de Provins, "receptor general". (24th June) Archives Vol. 48, folios 1-23.

Deficit from previous account of 141½ floreni included:

Receipts	66,920	floreni	2	grossi
Payments	68,359	floreni	9½	grossi
Deficit	1,439	floreni	7½	grossi

1380-81, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1381. Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 48, folios 24-46 (b)

Deficit from previous account of 1,439 floreni 7½ grossi included:

Receipts	32,632	floreni	6½	grossi
Payments	36,654	floreni	8½	grossi
Deficit	3,592	floreni	11	grossi

1381-82. Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1382. Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 48, folios 47-72.

Deficit from previous account of 3,592 floreni 11 grossi included:

Receipts	45,050	floreni	11	grossi
Payments	45,674	floreni	7	grossi
Deficit	623	floreni	8	grossi

1382-84, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1384. Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 48, folios 73-102 (b).

Deficit from previous account of 623 floreni 8 grossi included:

Receipts	78,777	floreni...		
Payments	82,218	floreni	11	grossi
Deficit	3,642	floreni		

1384-86, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1386 from 15th December 1384. Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 48, folios 110-126 (b).

Deficit from previous account of 3,642 floreni included:

Receipts	44,160	floreni	5	grossi
Payments	45,711	floreni	4	grossi
Deficit	1,551	floreni	11	grossi

1386-88, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1388.

Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 48, folios 128-157.

Deficit from previous account of 1,551 florins 11 grossi included:

Receipts	78,534	floreni	1	gros
Payments	93,767	floreni	4½	grossi
Deficit	15,233	floreni	2	grossi

1388-89, No exact dates. Probably submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 55, folios 1-4.

Deficit from previous account of 15,233 floreni 2 grossi included:

Receipts	30,468	floreni	11	grossi
Payments	43,475	floreni	½	gros
Deficit	13,006	floreni	1	gros

1389-90, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1390. Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 324, folios 163-164 (b).

Deficit from previous account of 13,006 floreni 1 gros included:

Receipts	50,607	floreni	5	grossi
Payments	50,493	floreni	4	grossi
Balance	114	floreni	1	gros

1390-91, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1391.

Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 326, folios 68 (b)-70.

Deficit of 36 floreni included:

Receipts	73,085	floreni	4	grossi
Payments	76,699	floreni	9	grossi
Deficit	3,614	floreni	5	grossi

1391-93, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1393.

Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 327, folios 59-62.

Deficit of 3,614 floreni 5 grossi included:

Receipts	86,964	floreni	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	grossi	
Payments	105,796	floreni	6	grossi	15 denarii
Deficit	18,831	floreni	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	grossi	

1393-94, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1394.

Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 328, folios 77 (b)-83.

Deficit of 18,831 floreni 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ grossi included:

Receipts	41,562 $\frac{1}{4}$	floreni		
Payments	51,563	floreni	10	grossi
Deficit	10,001	floreni	4	grossi

1394-95, Up to the feast of St. John the Baptist 1395.

Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Archives Vol. 329, folios 65-69, 73.

Deficit of 10,001 floreni 4 grossi included:

Receipts	37,390	floreni	8	grossi
Payments	41,835	floreni	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	grossi
Deficit	4,445	floreni	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	grossi

1396-99, From feast of St. John the Baptist 1396 to same feast 1399.

Submitted by Petrus de Provins.

Deficit of 3,990 floreni included:

Receipts	102,540	floreni	4	grossi	
Payments	108,104	floreni	4	grossi	3 denarii
Deficit	5,564	floreni			3 denarii