

ORDER OF CHRIST AND THE AGE OF DISCOVERY

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Abstract — Following the abolition of the Order of Templars, Portuguese king D. Dinis's envoys helped persuade Pope John XXII to re-establish the Order in Portugal in 1319 with the Papal bull under the new name Order of Christ, which continued nurturing Templar ideals and values. The Order played a vital role in solidification of Portugal statehood and exile of »Islam« from the Pyrenees, and with the danger over, dedicated its efforts, particularly with the support of Prince Henry the Navigator, to discoveries of new, previously unexplored worlds. Not only discoveries of new territories, but also new developments in science culture and knowledge of the human linked to them, which marked the tipping point from the medieval understanding into a modern, renaissance perception of a man and humanity in general. Order of Christ and with it, Templars were the carriers of not only spiritual progress, but also progress in technology, science, culture and made a significant contribution to the birth of the global mentality and modern perception of the world.

Keywords — Templars, Order of Christ, Age of discovery

I. O MITO É O NADA QUE É TUDO./ MYTH – NOTHING, EVERYTHING. (PESSOA, 1998: 100)

Templar Order, established in Jerusalem in 1118, in the time of crusades, was established with the purpose to protect pilgrims to the Holy land from the attacks of so-called heretics. In 1127, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux adopted the monastic rule of the Templar order. Templars were required to wear white coats, and be bound to sanctity, purity and obedience (to Pope only) and required to fight against the enemy of the Christian faith until death. Soon, however, Templars also started to play an important economic and diplomatic role in the Middle East as well as Europe. They developed the first organised banking system of loans and their collection leading them to strengthen their financial and political role on the international level. Their contact with the Arab world provided them with new knowledge in the field of warfare techniques, including in navigation, and knowledge of Gnosticism and esotericism.

Gualdim Pais, who was appointed Grandmaster in Portugal in 1157 was a great army leader and the commander of armies that re-conquered the cities of Santarém and Lisbon in the times of the first king of Portugal Afonso Henriques (1109-1185). In return, the king awarded the Templars by giving them the town of Tomar that gained more significance later, in the times of the

Order of Christ, along with the land between the towns of Santarém and Tomar, including the fortified castle of Almourol, which to this day reigns in the middle of Portugal, symbolically in the middle between the country's north and southern part.

After the Muslims conquered the holy city in 1291, Templars settled down in Europe and found themselves with strong and mighty opponents such as king of France Philip IV and Pope Clement V who orchestrated the prosecution and abolishment of the Templars. Besides being deeply indebted with the Templars, King Philip IV also wanted to come into possession of their mythic treasure that went on to disappear mysteriously. Another legend that added to the mystification and hatred of (European rulers) against Templars was, as narrated by Portuguese historian Miguel Real [1], linked to the Holy Grail whose guardians were the Templars.

II. TEMPLARS' HEIRS

Let us begin with the words of Papus (1865-1916), a martinist known as one of the greatest intellectuals of occultism and esotericism:

In Portugal Templars were not destroyed, but rather requested to change their name into *Ordem de Cristo*. They adopted the white cross representing atonement for their sins. *Ordem de Cristo* signifies a natural transition from the Templar Order without any significant cuts. [2]

Bernard Marillier (1957-2013), Italian historian, author of a book about Templars, writes:

»With the second bulla, *Ad providam Christi Vicarii*, of 2 May, the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (commonly known as the Knights Hospitaller; *Fraternitas Hospitalaria*) the property of Templars is transferred, except in Spain and in Portugal, where it is available to Vatican and must be used for fight against the Moors, establishment of new orders, such as Order of Christ, the true heir of the Templars.« [3]

Order of Templars was powerful in the financial and material sense, whereas its mystic, occult aspect should also be highlighted, being largely linked to the Templars' contacts with the Middle Eastern sects at the times of the Order's stay in these lands. Due to its sudden abolition, there are speculations that it was in fact certain Templars themselves that caused the Order's end, particularly those close to the initiation circles of the Order

[4], who had other intentions apart from the obvious ones. The Pope made the decision for their property to be transferred to the Knights Hospitaller (now the Sovereign Military Order of Malta), which the then king of Portugal D. Dinis refused to accept. In the majority of other countries, the crown seized the Templars' property, whereas Portuguese king D. Dinis decided to use it for general national benefit and to strengthen his country. Rulers of other countries used the Templars' property for themselves and misused the Order because of their own previous debts with the order, which they refused to pay, and consequently prosecuted the order.

With the Papal bulla of 1319, the Order of Templars in Portugal was reborn and renewed into the Order of Christ.



Fig. 1. Drawer 7, Bundle 8, no. 1.

Transcription of "Ad ea ex quibus cultus" bulla by Pope John XII, which established the Order of our Lord Jesus Christ, 14 March 1319, Avinhão.

Not to be misled by the new name, the Order continued to pursue its former ideals. The Templars' original cross was slightly modified in the Order's new symbol, while the wish and strong will to achieve something extraordinary not only for their country, but for the world at large was ever growing with the order and their ally, the king.

An additional cross was painted inside the Templar cross in white colour, symbolising purification and innocence of the Templars.

Members of the Order of Christ were all previous members of the mighty order of Templars and did not accept new member knights. In terms of our current global situation, it should be accentuated that Order of Templars had always accepted immigrants and the new order of Christ continued this practice and thus preserving the established and mighty ideals

of original Templars. At the time, Portugal was practically the only shelter for thousands of fleeing Templars. Having first settled in the south of Portugal in what is now the fortress in Castro Marim by the Spanish border, the core of the former new Order moved to the heart of Portugal, to the town of Tomar, where the magnificent architectural pearl of Convent of Christ, protected under the UNESCO heritage that bears witness to the exceptional history of the Templars, can still be admired today.



Fig. 2. Order of Christ and the Monastery in Tomar, volume 234.

The book of scriptures of the Order of Christ (1560-1568)

In Hoc Signo Vinces.

It was in Tomar that the knights of the order of Christ were planning new projects that reached ecumenical proportions. Templars dreamed of an Empire, a land that would allow them to rise against the fate, the evil fate that struck them elsewhere. Portugal was a safe haven, a land they helped to build and where they, hand in hand with the intelligent, knowledgeable, educated and clever king, on the one hand chased »Islam« out of Europe and were conceiving very ambitious plans for those times, plans perhaps only they saw as realistic.

New name, new cross and the new message arising from the addition of the white Latin cross with the red Templars' cross, signalled that the catastrophe linked to their abolition and the violence they suffered because of the greedy and unjust king of France and his supporters and the cowardice of the Pope who subdued to the king, had morphed into a new hope. After suffering its martyrdom, the new Order, the Order of Christ, thus symbolically rose like a Phoenix, innocent, cleared of any charges, ready for new projects founded on old ideals.

In legal terms, the property of Templars was entirely transferred to the Order of knights Hospitaller, whereas what

was actually happening in practice in other countries was different, as Michel Lamy described in his book about Templars, describing orders on the Iberian Peninsula:

Templars were absolved in Portugal and king D. Dinis sent an envoy to Pope John XXII., successor of Clement V., to negotiate the rebirth of the Order of Templars. He was heard and the Order was re-established, i.e., Templars were able to join the new Order, Order of knights of the Christ that was established for them exclusively. All their property was returned and from then on, they operated on the same monastic order as the Calatrava Order. They continued wearing white cloaks with a red cross. However, a thinner white cross was drawn into the cross on the Templars' coat of arms, which signified the order's rebirth in purity. Former of the Order's dignitaries preserved their positions in the new Order. The first grandmaster of the re-established Order Gil Martins (at the time master of the Order of Avis), was appointed on 15 March 1319. They continued fighting against Muslims and conquered territories in Africa. They soon conquered Portuguese seas and ventured even further. It should not be forgotten that Prince Henry the Navigator started discoveries under their flag, which would probably not have been possible without the broad knowledge of maritime affairs, navigation techniques and astronomy, which knights had acquired in the East and passed to their younger brothers. [5]

Henry the Navigator's school »Escola de Sagres« was a school of maritime studies and astronomy, and much more than that, a small court in its own right and a centre where intellectuals of the era met, where noblemen learnt geography, astronomy, cartography, maritime affairs, natural sciences which were broadening the horizons. It was where brave noblemen became brave educated noblemen. Despite the fact that discoveries of the new world or new worlds were a giant business project, they also contributed to development in other areas, not only, to put it that way, the thickening of the royal purse.

Starting with Ceuta and Morocco, the defeat of their expedition to Tangier in 1436 lead to correction course into alternative routes, explorations of African coast and search for Christians who allegedly lived beyond the Muslim world.

What started as a typically medieval campaign, a struggle against the Muslim world, slowly, from the coast of Africa towards the Atlantic, morphed into something brand new, something announcing the arrival of a new era on the global level.

In 1450s, the Pope granted exclusive access to new lands to Portugal. In 1460, with the death of Henry the Navigator, his nephew Ferdinand succeeded the leadership of the Order of Christ and his successors.

Kings of Portugal were the protectors and patrons of missionary activities and activities of the Catholic Church in the newly discovered and conquered territories and perpetual bailiffs of the Order of Christ.

In Spain, King James II of Aragon made a similar venture by establishing the Order of Montesa. Some of the Templars

however did not wait until its establishment, and in the meantime joined the orders of Calatrava, Alcântara and Santiago de Espada.

In Germany, Templars were predominantly united in the Teutonic Order. In Italy, Templars became secularised and joined the Fede Santa fraternities, whose members later apparently included Dante Alighieri, who was allegedly connected to the Templars (Saint Bernard Clairvaux is mentioned in the Divine comedy).

The Order of Christ and Order Montesa remain the most notable Orders, as significant entities that accepted Templars and their property, as well as considerable number of immigrants passing the Pyrenees. These men included dignitaries who must have known the majority of secrets of the Templars. Some of these secrets must be concealed in the mysterious architecture of the castle of Tomar in Portugal. It is however most impressive that these orders were reigning over the seas and that their emblem adorned the ships which sailed to conquer the new world. Could it be that the journey to America is part of the heritage of Templars?

III. ORDER OF CHRIST AND DISCOVERIES OF THE WORLD

As power of Templars in the Order of the Christ was growing in Portugal, they gained opportunities to develop their own projects. The fact that the situation in the country and the peninsula became stable undoubtedly cleared their path. Templars themselves, one of the reasons being that they had sufficient funding to build first caravels, the age that was in fact commence the age of discoveries. In the drive for the new, for ventures no one had attempted before, Templars took Portugal and with it Europe, beyond, to other seas and continents, to discover the new world. They took their ideals, represented by the Templar cross that graced the sails of caravels, to other parts of the world and it is safe to say that at the time »Portugal undoubtedly became the Order of Templars themselves, now under the wing of Knights of Christ.« [6] As a military order however, they also had military goals, while it should not be forgotten that Templars also had cultural goals, something king of Portugal Dinis strongly encouraged. Franclim mentions the anecdote on how Templars fought the enemy in daytime and played chess with them in the evenings. It should not be overlooked that their bailiff, Infante prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) surrounded himself with wise men, intellectuals and good navigators, predominantly from Genoa, Venice and Mallorca. Henry the Navigator introduced a series of changes in the ranks of Order of Christ. Templars and their bailiff, infant Henry the Navigator were very progressive and open for their time. This was most likely due to the experiences of the Holy land when they established a colourful pallet of relations with different peoples and nations. Their openness represented a freedom - freedom of spirit, which drove them forward and made them oblivious to physical obstacles. Openness of spirit also lead them into a treasury of knowledge, which inside the

Order certainly must have been of great vastness. It was not without reason that they were called Militia of Christ. Portuguese historians specialising in the mythic aspects of Portuguese history defend the claim that Templars of the Order of Christ were a spiritual continuity between the mythic and religious goals of purification in redemption of the world connected with the occult and esoteric goals of the Order's members. [7]

It was supposed to be through Templars and through the vision of king Afonso Henriques in the Battle of Ourique (1139) that a sacred territory would be established, a country, a nation whose destiny would be to establish the messiah mission in Europe, a Portugal as a territory, nation, people, country chosen by God, or a messiah state. [8]

Certain Portuguese intellectuals, among which Manuel J. Gandra (1953, Lisbon) particularly stands out due to boldness of his statements, have claimed that Portugal has a mythic nature and that its story is similar to the story of Christ (and Order of the Christ alike) in the New testament in phases: Annunciation, Incarnation, Expiation and Redemption/Salvation. Simultaneously a common thread could be linked between Jerusalem – Rome – Lisbon. Lisbon is a (town) symbol [9] of the new paradisiacal empire born from Portugal and the Portuguese, who travel, explore (active role of the Order of Christ!) and discover this new paradisiacal empire. According to the Portuguese intellectuals and historians sharing this conviction, Order of Christ, direct heir of the Order of Templars, took on the mythic destiny and took Portuguese navigators around the world where they were able to spread the new values of the Empire of the Holy Spirit. The idea of this empire is strongly linked to king D. Dinis' wife, queen Elizabeth of Portugal, also known as the Saint Elizabeth of Portugal who allegedly brought the cult to Portugal from her native kingdom of Aragon and spread it around Portugal and its islands (Azores and Madeira), whereas during the age of discoveries, worshiping of the holy spirit also spread across Brazil through the Order of Christ, known as the spiritual leader of the overseas campaigns. The defeat of Portuguese king Sebastian in Alcácer Quibir, Morocco, and subsequent loss of independence (1580-1640) and Spanish rule represent the phase of Portugal's expiation, whereas redemption has not yet occurred. It is the mythic character of the missing king Sebastian whose body was never recovered that represents the salvation. Portugal is Christ and Christ is Portugal. (Saramago, 2019: 341).

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF PORTUGUESE DISCOVERIES

First, the main endeavour of Templars was to morally improve humanity.

»L'Eglise est la maison du Christ, le Temple celle du Saint-Esprit«. (Michaud, 1828: 872). «

In late 15th and early 16th century, Portugal was the country that disclosed to the world how a man is a multitude of people, a number of races, colours, of multiple creeds and customs and

thus reached beyond the unitary vision of the Middle Ages and spread and deepened the renaissance understanding of a man. In the given historic period, the country, based on practically-empirical experience, proved what Central European intellectuals were expressing in their visions in the field of physics, mathematics and astronomy (Real, 2011: 77). It was since that Portugal and with it Order of Christ showed Europe that the world is much bigger and more varied, that there is human life on other continents, that there are no monsters dwelling in the oceans [10] (Camões, 1988: 213-221), that hell is not in the tropics and that new seas are a lot like their seas. To reiterate, Portugal and Templars presented to the world that entire Earth is of same substance/material and that there are rational explanations for any new physical and geographic phenomena and for the exotic, thus shaking the world that was now forced to set new foundations for previous dogmas and knowledge.

Age of discoveries with Portugal at the helm undoubtedly influenced 17th century European scientific revolution and the 18th century political revolution, since they were based on the very Portuguese scientific discoveries. Portugal positioned the intercontinental and cosmopolitan culture of multiplicity of human models against the Ancient Greek and Roman culture that focused on the then popular rational and technical man. Portugal positioned into the forefront the universal man who mirrors multiple, varied people with one thing in common, that they are a man.

In 1580, Portugal lost its independence for 60 years and Spanish king Phillip II, heir to the throne of Portugal, became the grandmaster of the Order of Christ, similar as the Spanish monarchs who succeeded him. With restitution of Portuguese independence in 1640, the new king of Portugal John IV re-established the Order of Christ with an original innovation: new knights became secular/profane brothers of the Order. They lived outside the monastery with their families and had special rules for their secular lives. Their biggest task was to fight in the Portuguese Restoration War [12], the war against Spanish rule.

Order of the Christ was abolished with the abolition of male religious orders of 1834, while Queen Maria II. nevertheless decided to preserve the Order of Christ as a Honorary order. The Order's current grandmaster is namely the current President of the Republic of Portugal.

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- [9] Reference to F. Pessoa, J. Saramagn.
- [10] Reference to Adamastor from Camões' epic *Os Lusíadas*, *The Luciads*.
- [11] PORTUGUESE WAR OF RESTORATION (1640–1668). In December 1640, a palace coup in support of the duke of Bragança and his

acclamation as King John IV restored the Portuguese monarchy and ended sixty years of rule by the Spanish Habsburgs. From 1641 to 1668 the two nations were at war, with Spain seeking to isolate Portugal militarily and diplomatically and Portugal hoping to find the resources to maintain its independence through political alliances and colonial income.