

Abstract

The paper attempts at surveying the use of seals of the Central European provinces and preceptories of the major military-religious orders (Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, and Poland). The survey provides an overall picture of the different legal and cultural environments in which the Hospitallers and Templars tried to meet the local requirements and, at the same time, to comply with the customs of their respective orders in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Despite some minor conflicts, the activity of the preceptories and the resident brethren of these orders proved to be flexible enough to meet the local legal institutional systems. Certainly, since the leadership of these orders gradually was recruited from the local elites, their use of seals could also be a mean of visual representation of their (ecclesiastical and/or lay) power.