Sacred Precincts

*The Religious Architecture of Non-Muslim
Communities across the Islamic World*

Edited by

Mohammad Gharipour

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The Catholic Consecration of an Islamic House

The St John de Matha Trinitarian Hospital in Tunis

Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico*

In 1574 Tunisia became a province of the Ottoman Empire, namely a protectorate or *eyalet montaze* ruled by governors that were appointed by the Sublime Porte. Although historians have traditionally emphasized the Tunisian Regency's political and cultural autonomy, today it has become clear that the province was fully integrated in the Ottoman Empire, as is attested by its governmental structure, institutions, foreign policy, and cultural manifestations.¹ However, in addition to being part of the Ottoman Empire, the kingdom also maintained its Maghrebi identity, and kept its sights on the Mediterranean. As Tunisia was home to one of the Maghreb's most important trading ports, privateering was one of its chief economic activities until the end of the eighteenth century. As a result, the captive trade—in which prisoners captured by privateers were held until they could be ransomed²—left a significant mark on the layout and architecture of the Medina.

This chapter will discuss the history of the foundation and construction, from 1720–23, of the St John de Matha Hospital in Tunis, which was established by the Trinitarians³—one order founded to ransom Christians held captive by Muslims—under the protection of Philip V of Spain (1700–46), and with a license from the bey Husayn b. 'Ali (1705–35), for the purpose of caring for the sick and ransoming captives. At one time the hospital and chapel constituted the only freestanding Christian religious building within the walls of the city of Tunis, and for a whole century the tall bulk of the Trinitarian center stood out above the lower quarter of the Medina. Its location, design, and construction would give rise to lengthy negotiations over the course of two years between the beylical court,⁴ the Trinitarian Province of

Méditerranée, xv^e–xvii^e siècles (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2008), 15–24.

* The author would like to thank Nicholas Callaway for translating this chapter from the Spanish original.

1 For more on early eighteenth-century Tunisia, see Mohamed Hédi-Chérif, *Pouvoir et société dans la Tunisie de Husayn ben Ali: 1705–1740* (Tunis: Imprimerie Officielle, 1984). For more on the similarities between Ottoman and Beylical institutions, see Asma Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte, 1777–1814: Army and Government of a North African Ottoman Eyalet at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004).

2 The captives or *assir* were prisoners of privateering or piracy whose ransom was a source of profit for their captors. Slaves or *'abd*, on the other hand, could only be freed through the express will of their owners. See Michel Fontenay, "Esclaves et/ou captifs: préciser les concepts" in Wolfgang Kaiser, *Le commerce des captifs. Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en*

3 The *Ordo Sanctissimae Trinitatis redemptionis captivorum*, also known as Trinitarians, were a Catholic religious order founded at the end of the twelfth century in the area of Cerfroid (Paris). The founder was St John de Matha (Faucon-de-Barcelonnette, 1160–Rome, 1213). Trinitarian tradition considers St Felix of Valois (Valois, 1127–Brumetz, 1212) cofounder of the Order and companion of John of Matha at Cerfroid. From the outset, a special dedication to the mystery of the Holy Trinity has been a constitutive element of the Order's life. The Order and the Rule of St John de Matha were approved by Pope Innocent III in 1198. See Paul Deslandres, *L'ordre des Trinitaires pour le rachat des captives* (Toulouse: E. Privat, 1903). Bonifacio Porres Alonso, *Libertad a los cautivos: actividad redentora de la Orden Trinitaria* (Cordoba: Secretariado Trinitario, 1997–1998).

4 Following the capital's capture in 1574 by the Ottoman commander Sinan Pasha (1506–96), Tunisia once again

Castile,⁵ and the Holy See, and serve to illustrate the ideological and material complexity of this Christian center in an Islamic land.⁶

For a century the St John de Matha Hospital was an essential stopping point for foreign Christians who arrived in the European quarter. It represented a privileged post for physicians and pharmacists working in Tunis, and a place to seek shelter both for Christian captives and sick people of all faiths. The hospital hosted not just the missions of redeemers, but also travelers, naturalists, and antiquarians visiting Tunis. Although the material evidence is unfortunately lost, we do, however, have a wealth of documentation: the correspondence preserved in the 'Barbaria' collection of the Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide in Rome, documents from the institution itself (statutes, reports, and inventories), accounts by contemporary travelers and clergy, and, especially, the writings of the institution's founder. Though the St John de Matha Hospital in Tunis is no longer standing, we can nevertheless reconstruct its appearance based on written sources.

1 Christian Altars in Beylical Tunisia

At the outset of the eighteenth century, in the medina of Tunis, a Muslim and a Christian

(whether captive or free) walked the same streets but perceived different cities. Tradition would with the course of time establish a set of Christian place names to replace some of the Arabic names in the European quarter, as the small Christian community began to add its own references to the city's Islamic topography. This was of course an internal code, invisible to the outside, and yet it was a means for the Christian community to appropriate the urban space by superimposing a Catholic geography upon Ottoman Tunis (Figure 16.1). And I say Catholic on purpose, since Christians belonging to other branches of Christianity, whether free or captive, had no churches,⁷ missions or ransomers within the Regency. One by one, altars and chapels were built here and there, which was a great relief for the captives, and a victory for the apostolic mission. Although the free Christians professed their faith in private, all manifestations of their religion in public were forbidden and could put them in serious danger. For example, when the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception

Trinidad VII/10 (1968): 677–731, and "Los hospitales trinitarios de Argel y Túnez," *Hispania Sacra* 98 (1996): 639–717.

7 Actually, next to Bab Qartaganna there was a small chapel and adjacent cemetery in which reformed Christians of all nationalities were buried, called St George, or sometimes the 'English' chapel. While it is not known exactly when the cemetery was built, the oldest preserved headstone, marking the grave of an English merchant named Webbe, dates from 1648. The cemetery was closed in October of 1885, and in 1900 today's Protestant Church of St George was built. See P. Soumille, "Le cimetière européen de Babel-Khadra à Tunis, étude historique et sociale," *Les Cahiers de Tunisie* 75–76 (1971): 129–182. And more recently Denis Pringle, *An Expatriate Community in Tunis, 1648–1885: St George's Protestant Cemetery and its Inscriptions* (Oxford: Cardiff Studies in Archaeology, 2008). Likewise, the Greek Orthodox community had its own chapel in the European quarter, on the old Rue de la Verrerie, which was also dedicated to St George, and was closed in 1901. See Habib Kazdaghli, "Communautés méditerranéennes de Tunisie. Les Grecs de Tunisie: du Millet-i-rum à l'assimilation française (XVII^e–XX^e siècles)," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 95–98 (2002): 449–476.

became part of *dar al-Islam* and was made into an *eyalet mumtaze*, or province of the Ottoman Empire. In 1705, the bey Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, an official in the tax-collecting militia, took power, putting in place the beylical system and founding the Husaynid dynasty that bore his name. The beylical regime continued under the French Protectorate, signed in 1881, from which time seven beys would rule until the Republic was proclaimed in 1957.

5 In Spain the *Ordo Sancte Trinitatis et Redemptionis Captivorum* (*osst*) was made up of different 'provinces' or regional governments, namely those of Castille, Andalusia, and Aragon.

6 More information about the hospital can be found in Paul Sebag, "L'hôpital des trinitaires espagnols (1720–1818)," *Ibla* 57 (1994): 203–218, and a more in-depth study by Bonifacio Porres Alonso, "Los hospitales cristianos de Argel y Túnez desde 1759 hasta su fin," *Actas de la Orden de la Santísima*

FIGURE 16.1 Map of the medina of Tunis: a. St John de Matha Hospital; b. Baths of Santa Rosalia; c. Baths of St Leonard or Qara Ahmad; d. French market e. French consulate; f. Cemetery of St Anthony the Abbot; g. Mosque of Zaytuna; h. Diwan; i. Main synagogue

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was founded in the town of Bizerte in 1707 to serve the French agents of the *Compagnie Royale d'Afrique*,⁸ the treaty signed between the Regency of Tunis and the Kingdom of France expressly forbade “ringing bells and singing in such a way that it might be heard by passers-by.”⁹ The same article

was included in the treaty of 1781, which indicates the importance of restricting all manifestations of Christian worship. As a consequence, all of the chapels were built inside consulates, *bagnos*¹⁰ or prisons, and even so services were not regular, and were at most celebrated discreetly during peace-time.

8 French colonial trading company based in Marseilles, which was founded in 1560, was dissolved in 1710, was restored in 1741 and disappeared in the wake of the French Revolution.

9 R.P. Anselme des Arcs, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Mission des Capucins dans la Régence de Tunis, 1624–1865*, reviewed and published by the R.P. Apollinaire de Valence (Rome: Archives Générales de l'Ordre des Capucins, 1889), 23: “Mais il ne leur sera pas permis de sonner les

cloches, ni de chanter de façon à être entendus des passants.”

10 The Italian term *bagno* was originally used in Istanbul to refer to an old bath house that was turned into a prison. By extension, it came to be applied to prisons throughout the Ottoman Empire where the captives were held for the night, particularly in the North African regencies.

In 1720 Francisco Ximénez de Santa Catalina (1685–1758), a young Calced Trinitarian from the Spanish city of Toledo,¹¹ arrived in Tunis, after first being sent to Algiers by the Trinitarian Province of Castile, which requested authorization from the bey to settle in the Regency and found a hospital to care for and redeem captives. In effect, the Trinitarian's apostolic work had two purposes: on the one hand to provide spiritual support, and on the other to provide material assistance through the hospital. For two long years Ximénez would put all of his efforts into this venture. He left a detailed record of this enterprise in his diary, *Discurso de Túnez* (Discourse on Tunis).¹² In it we

can find a day-by-day account of the conditions and demands he had to give in to before the St John de Matha Hospital was finally up and running. After fifteen years in the Regency of Tunis, he returned to Castile where, in 1740, he would complete his book, *Colonia Trinitaria de Túnez* (Trinitarian Colony in Tunis),¹³ in which he recounts the details and circumstances of how the hospital was founded, and his own work thereafter.

At the time Ximénez arrived, there were already several altars where mass was held in Tunis. The Capuchin Order, whose apostolic mission in Tunisia had begun in 1624, had founded the parish church of the Holy Cross, which at that time was, in the words of Ximénez, "one of the best in Tunis today, and the best-equipped, enviable even in Christendom: it has three naves divided by very large marble columns; it has three altars and a sacristy, lamps, censers and silver things to be used in the church."¹⁴

Apart from this, the church at the Holy Trinity's baths was, in the words of Ximénez, "one of the nicest in Tunis after the Holy Cross."¹⁵ It was followed in importance by the Chapel of St Louis in the French parish, located within France's Tunisian consulate (Figures 16.2 and 16.3), and which was nicely equipped with all the essentials.¹⁶ There were also chapels or simple altars in the baths of

11 Fray Francisco Ximénez de Santa Catalina (1685–1758), born in Esquivias (Toledo, Spain), received the Trinitarian habit in 1700. He moved to Algiers in 1717, and arrived in Tunis in 1720. After working in the Regency for fifteen years as administrator of the St John de Matha Hospital he finally returned to Castile. In 1745 he was named minister of the Tejada Convent in Garaballa (Cuenca, Spain). He died in the town of Dos Barrios, in the province of Toledo. There is a short biographical note on Fr Ximénez in *Corpus Inscriptorum Latinarum*, vol. VIII, pars prior, 1881, xxiv, and another in Antonino de la Asunción, *Diccionario de los Escritores Trinitarios de España y Portugal* (Rome: Imprenta de Fernando Kleinbub, 1898), vol. 1, 442–433. See also: Bonifacio Porres Alonso, *Nuevo diccionario de escritores trinitarios* (Rome: Curia Generalizia dei Trinitari, 2006), 325–326. There is also a short biography by Porres Alonso in Quintín Vaquero, Tomás Marín Martínez and José Vives Gatell, *Diccionario de historia eclesiástica de España* (Madrid: CSIC, 1972–1982), 1237. Porres Alonso likewise provides more precise information in "Los hospitales trinitarios de Argel y Túnez," *Hispania Sacra* 98 (1996): 639–717, particularly 696–697; "Francisco Ximénez," *Nuevo diccionario de escritores trinitarios* (Cordoba: Secretariado Trinitario, 2006), 325–326; and more recently in the corresponding entry in volume XXVIII of the *Diccionario biográfico español* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2012).

12 *Discurso de Túnez*, Real Academia de la Historia de Madrid, ms. 9/6011–14. See Miguel Ángel de Bunes's overview of the diaries, "Una descripción de Túnez en el siglo XVIII: el diario de Francisco Ximénez," *Hesperia. Culturas del Mediterráneo* 10 (2008): 85–96.

13 Fray Francisco Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria de Túnez*, ed. Ignacio Bauer y Landauer (Tétouan: Imprenta Gomariz, 1934). Published based on the sole original manuscript, which has since been lost. I am currently preparing a new annotated edition of the text.

14 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. IV, book 1, fol. 21r, Saturday 21 September 1722.

15 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. IV, book 1, fol. 161r, Wednesday 17 February 1723.

16 In May of 1796 the possessions and ornaments of the French consulate's chapel were inventoried and then deposited with the chapel of the Trinitarian hospital. See the inventory in *Le citoyen Louis Guiraud, proconsul de la République Française à Tunis (12 avril–20 septembre 1796). Correspondance et documents inédits*, published by Pierre Grandchamp (Tunis: Société anonyme de l'Imprimerie Rapide, 1919), 19–22.

FIGURE 16.2 *French Consulate*
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St Lucy, St Rosalia, St Francis, and St Sebastian, as well as in the baths of St Leonard.¹⁷ In addition, there were altars in private homes and in the Genoese and Imperial consulates, and later on in the Tuscan consulate, among others. Outside the medina walls, the Christian cemetery housed a chapel dedicated to St Anthony the Abbot and St Margaret of Cortona. Outside the city of Tunis, the captives that served the beys in Bardo palace,¹⁸ and

all other Christians with business in the court, used a prayer room in the palace basement, referred to as the 'catacomb' because it was so narrow and dark.¹⁹ And as for other towns in the Regency, there were altars in each of the three baths at Porto Farina (today's Ghar el-Melh), and in earlier times the five baths in Bizerte had contained altars as well (the Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation, St Joseph, St Roch, and the Holy Trinity).

Nevertheless, Ximénez was aware that the small Christian community in Tunis ("three thousand souls, free and captive") was in need of assistance, in terms of both providing spiritual guidance and caring for the sick, particularly when it came to the poorest captives,²⁰ to whom no one administered the sacraments and who "died in their houses and stables [that is, those of their masters], forsaken by all,"²¹ which justified his presence and mission.

2 An Affair of State, and a Church Matter

Once Ximénez had applied for the license to build the hospital, the bey Husayn b. 'Ali consulted his ministers, judges, and religious authorities. The undertaking was in the interests of Tunisia: privateering, and particularly the captive trade, were an important source of income for the Regency, and the Trinitarian hospital would both guarantee the

et résidences d'été de la région de Tunis (XVI^e–XVII^e siècles) (Paris: CNRS, 1974).

19 Des Arcs, *Mémoires de la Mission des Capucins*, 79.

20 The captives came mostly from 'enemy' countries, especially Spain and its possessions in the Kingdom of Naples, Sicily, Sardinia and Pantelleria, but also from the Italian states and Malta. A smaller number of captives came from 'friendly' countries such as France and Holland, with whom the Regency had signed peace treaties and capitulations. See the figures on captives in Tunisia at the end of the seventeenth century offered by Paul Sebag in *Tunis au XVII^e siècle. Une cité barbaresque au temps de la course* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 144.

21 Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 169.

17 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. IV, book 1, fol. 103r, Wednesday 14 August 1720.

18 To the southwest of the capital, Bardo Palace was used as a princely residence starting in the fifteenth century. For more on the structure of eighteenth-century palaces, see M. Gandolphe, *Résidences beylicales: Le Bardo, La Mohammedia, Kassar-Saïd, La Manouba, Hammam-Lif, Tunis* (Paris: Sapi, 1942) and Jacques Revault, *Palais*

FIGURE 16.3 *Courtyard of the French Consulate*
© CLARA ILHAM ÁLVAREZ DOPICO

health of the captives, and constitute a cost-free way of ensuring the presence of ransomers, both from the Trinitarian provinces and from other orders. The bey was able to overcome the mufti's misgivings as well as his own, and granted Ximénez the license by decree on June 29, 1720. There was just one condition regarding the location and architecture of the future mission: by no means could it be built outside the baths. On the one hand, relegating the hospital to the inside of the prison made clear the Christians' subservience and submission to the bey. On the other, it meant that they would not have to permanently transfer a site within the city walls to the infidels. Furthermore, it would keep the captives from moving freely through the city and possibly escaping. Regardless of the license, the mission would still arouse fears and misgivings among the bey's subjects for the next two years. This affair of State would make it all the way to the metropolis, where

the Grand Vizier of Istanbul himself, Nevşehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha (1718–30), expressed his concern over the rumors arriving from Tunis. He asked for confirmation that the site on which the St John de Matha Hospital was to be built did not belong to the *waqf* or to the religious properties bequeathed to the mosque of Zaytuna.²²

22 For more on this issue, see *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, book 1, fol. 229v, Thursday 9 September 1723, and Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 183. For information on the Great Mosque built by the Aghlabids from 856–864, see Lucien Golvin, *Essai sur l'architecture religieuse musulmane* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1974), particularly pp. 150–162 and “Note sur les coupes de la Grande Mosquée Al-Zaytuna de Tunis,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 2 (1966): 95–109. Alexandre Lézine, *Architecture de l'Ifrîqiya. Recherches sur les monuments aghlabides* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1966). Mohamed El Aziz Ben Achour, *Djami al-Zaytuna, al-ma*

And yet, it is surprising how swiftly the bey gave his consent on the matter. The influence of the Khaznadar, or royal finance minister, clearly played an important part in the bey's decision. On several occasions he interceded before the bey on behalf of Father Ximénez, and went so far as to loan the Trinitarian the money he needed to buy the site and begin construction, namely some three thousand, five hundred and fifty pesos.²³ The reason behind this benevolence is to be found in the Khaznadar's Spanish background. As with other members of the court, the Khaznadar was a descendent of the *moriscos* (Spanish crypto-Muslims) expelled from Spain by King Philip III (1578–1621) between 1609 and 1614,²⁴ and the family of his elderly uncle was from Zaragoza. As such, it seems reasonable to infer that the Khaznadar's Spanish origins worked in favor of Ximénez's endeavor, so much so that the minister took a personal stake in the negotiations. Along the same lines, another descendent of *moriscos*, Cherif Castelli, descendent of the Contreras family from Alcalá de Henares, donated a fine Sicilian alabaster sculpture of Our Lady of Good Remedy to the hospital.²⁵ In addition, Ximénez had the support of Spanish renegades who had reached positions with a certain level of authority, such as Aly 'Guard Pasha,' the guard of the baths, who became a true friend to Ximénez. This convert, whose former name was Fernando Muñoz, was originally from Bárcena de los Nabos, in the province of Palencia. Lastly, we should mention the relevant members of the Sephardic Jewish community such as

Manuel Gabriel de Mendoza, the bey's physician, in whom Ximénez found a willing interlocutor who offered him his full support.²⁶ Faced with these facts, it is worth wondering whether a similar Italian or French enterprise would have had the same success. We cannot know for certain, but the evidence indicates that the issue of nationality was by no means irrelevant in Father Ximénez's mission in Tunis.

But founding the hospital was also a Church matter. Ximénez's assignment in Tunisia was authorized by the Vatican congregation *De Propaganda Fide*,²⁷ and in fact it was Rome, not the Regency, which was the most reticent to authorize the founding of the St John de Matha Hospital. Actually, the hospital project did indeed constitute competition for the apostolic mission of the Capuchins, who saw their privileges and exclusivity in the country being put into jeopardy.²⁸ In the end Rome's authorization was subject to a single condition: *dummodo sit omnino*

lamu wa-fidjaluhu (Tunis: Editions Cérès, 1991). Abdelaziz Daoulatli, *Al-Zaytuna* (Tunis: INAA, 1996).

23 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, book 1, fol. 40r, Wednesday 31 March 1723.

24 For more information about the Khaznadar and other descendents of the *moriscos* in eighteenth-century Tunis, see Mikel de Epalza, "Nuevos documentos sobre descendientes de moriscos en Túnez en el siglo XVIII" in *Studia Historica et Philologica in Honorem M. Batllori* (Rome, 1984), 195–228.

25 For more on this episode, see Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 190 and *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 143r.

26 Manuel Gabriel de Mendoza was a Jew of Spanish origin who worked as the bey's physician. There is a short biographical note about him in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, t. VIII, pars prior, 1881, p. xxiv. I have written about this interesting figure in C. Álvarez Dopico, "Semblanza de los doctores Mendoza y Carrillo. A propósito de las afinidades intelectuales en el Túnez dieciochista," in *Miscelánea Hispano-Tunecina* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo–Seminario de Estudios Árabo-Románicos, in press). The Jewish community was made up of two groups, the *twānsa* (sing. *tūnsī*) or Tunisians, and the *ghrāna* (sing. *ghurnī*) or Livornese, depending on the origin of their members. For more on the Jews of Tunisia, see Paul Sebag, *Histoire des juifs de Tunisie. Des origines à nos jours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991).

27 The *De Propaganda Fide* congregation was founded in 1622 by Pope Gregory xv to spread Catholicism and regulate ecclesiastical matters in non-Catholic countries. Today it is called the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

28 Only Capuchin friars belonging to the apostolic mission could celebrate mass and administer the sacraments, and in exchange they received the alms and gifts of the congregation.

separatum a balneis, that is, the hospital had to be built outside the baths and prisons,²⁹ and the Holy See's position was quite firm on this point. The goal of this stipulation was to keep the Trinitarians from bearing direct influence over the captives held in the baths, meaning that they could really only offer spiritual guidance to the sick. Faced with this situation, Ximénez was forced to look for alternative locations, though it seemed impossible to reconcile the bey's will with Rome's demands. Likewise, the Italian Capuchins, whose presence in Tunisia was protected by the French consul Joseph Bayle,³⁰ would do everything they could to foil the Trinitarians' mission. The correspondence preserved in the archives of *De Propaganda Fide*,³¹ as well as the contemporary notes taken by Ximénez in his diary, both go to show the depth of the controversy surrounding this affair, in which no shortage of accusations, lies, and slander were exchanged. Letters and copies of letters traveled in secret between Algiers, Tunis, Rome, and Castile, while defamatory writings (the Capuchin friars published long texts accusing Frenchmen who supported the Trinitarian mission of being Huguenots or Jansenists),³² rhymes, and limericks made their way around the medina.³³ The

Christians living in Tunis, from the consuls down to the most destitute of the captives, took sides in the matter, sometimes even coming to blows. This sharp divide in the Christian community was watched over by the patient, mocking gaze of the Tunisian ministers, who were forced to mediate on several occasions in order to keep the peace.

After two years of intense negotiations, the payment of a considerable sum ("three thousand pesos and the building of a new storehouse for the bey")³⁴ and a variety of gifts, the bey finally agreed to allow the hospital to be built as a separate building. To this end he sold the Trinitarians a site of his own property, which at the time was home to an old *hammam* and two storehouses that housed taverns. The site was located next to the baths of St Rosalia, also known as Usta Murad, not far from the baths of St Leonard or Qara Ahmed. The distance between the new site and the baths of St Rosalia was "a mere eight feet,"³⁵ but it was enough to satisfy the demands of *De Propaganda Fide*. Despite the difficulties at the outset, the final site could not have been better: it was in the middle of the European quarter, and yet at a safe distance from the taverns, which meant that it could be visited by women.³⁶ It was near Bab al-Bahr, making it easy to bring goods and supplies from the market there. Lastly, it was not far from the extramural cemetery of St Anthony the Abbot, making it possible to quickly and discreetly, under cover of night, bury the sick who died in the hospital.

29 The full text of the decree is reproduced in Des Arcs, *Mémoires de la Mission des Capucins*, 176–177, "Cardinal Jose Sacripantes, Prefect, *Decree of the Holy Congregation De Propaganda Fide*, Rome, 3 June 1720."

30 Joseph Bayle (Marseille, 1659–Thessaloniki, 1736), the French consul in Málaga and Alicante, was sent to Tunis in 1717, where he was to live until 1723, when he was sent to Thessaloniki for the rest of his career. See Anne Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières (1715–1792)* (Paris: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 1998).

31 Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, sc collection, first series, «Barbaria», vol. iv (1708–23), fols. 485–488, 500, 502 and 532; vol. v (1724–40), fols. 1–3.

32 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 175v, Thursday 17 March 1723.

33 Whereas Ximénez writes at length in his *Diario* about this controversy, there is just a paragraph on the opposition of the Capuchins in *Colonia Trinitaria* (172). Meanwhile, there is not a single mention in Des Arcs,

Mémoires de la Mission des Capucins, 34–35. For this reason, in his analysis of *Colonia Trinitaria*, Paul Sebag raises the question of whether the Capuchins might have taken their complaints all the way to the Roman Curia ("L'hôpital des trinitaires espagnols," 207).

34 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 67v, Thursday 14 May 1722.

35 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 112v, Wednesday 19 August 1722.

36 See C. Alvarez Dopico, "Vino y tabernas en el Túnez beylical (siglo XVIII) a través del relato de viajeros, diplomáticos y religiosos," *Cuadernos de Estudios del Siglo XVIII* 19 (2009): 203–241.

Ximénez was also able to secure the privilege of having a Christian design the future hospital, albeit with the oversight of the bey's architectural supervisors. The man chosen for the job was the Venetian master watchmaker Antonio de Ambrosio, a captive living in Bardo Palace, who had the instruments that were needed in order to take measurements and draw up the plan. He would receive four pesos in compensation for his work.³⁷ The project was then submitted for approval to the Khaznadar and the Chiaya, who expressed their approval and their belief that "the undertaking will be good for everyone." The documents were then translated into Arabic and delivered to the bey.³⁸ The reason behind all of these measures was that the hospital was much more than just a building; it was a Christian center that would enjoy statutes and privileges. Moreover, it went beyond an issue between religions to bring out rivalries, disagreements and vying based on religious orders, political affinities, and cultural ties.

3 The Hospital: Construction and Legend

Once the initial hurdles had been overcome, more than two years after Ximénez's arrival in Tunis, in May of 1722 work began: the storehouses were emptied and walls were knocked down, and in August of the same year the first stone was laid. And as the walls of the building were being erected, legends surrounding it began to arise as well. The hospital's inception was the subject of several accounts of miracles and supernatural events. Ximénez himself records these stories and dedicates a chapter to them in *Colonia Trinitaria*.³⁹

37 Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid, codex 190b, *Libro de gastos del Hospital de San Juan de Mata de Túnez*, fol. 27r.

38 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 34v, 21 April 1722.

39 Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 178–185, "Referense algunas cosas notables sucedidas en la fundación del Hospital de Túnez" ("Wherein several noteworthy vents taken place in the Hospital in Tunis are recounted").

He explains how during construction the protection of the Holy Trinity kept various accidents from happening, and saved people from getting hurt. He also tells how the well began to fill back up with water and how, when they were digging the foundation, they found a woman's head carved in marble. Ximénez expounds upon what he calls 'Gentile superstition,' and discusses similar traditions recorded by Titus Livius and Justin,⁴⁰ interpreting the find as an omen of prosperity.⁴¹ It is as though by linking the foundation of the hospital to the classical tradition, he were seeking to blunt the Islamic reality around him. In the same vein, he mentions a legend that attributes the construction of the baths to Muley Amida (Ximénez's spelling), a Tunisian king who converted to Christianity.⁴² Lastly, in 1724, once the construction work was complete, Ximénez writes that a star shone brightly at noon for several days in a row.⁴³

Meanwhile, a wide variety of rumors regarding the hospital were circulating in Tunis, some of them absolute clichés that can be found across cultures. For example, there were fears that it was a fortress being built within the city walls, that the cistern was in fact an arms depot full of gunpowder to be used to take the city, or that there were tunnels linking the St John de Matha Hospital and the mosque of Zaytuna. Others thought that it was the fulfillment of a Tunisian

40 Ximénez discusses an episode that Titus Livius mentions in his account of the foundation of Rome, in which King Tarquinius found an intact human head under the Capitoline Hill (*Ab urbe condita*, 1, 55, 6), and another about the discovery of an ox's head during the foundation of Carthage, recorded by Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Historiarum Philippicarum*, liber XVIII, v, "In primis fundamentis caput bubulum inventum est."

41 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 215r, Thursday 1 July 1723; Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 179.

42 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 115v, Thursday 27 August 1722.

43 Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 178. Ximénez writes in his *Diario* about various strange astronomical and meteorological phenomena.

legend that a woman would bring about the city's perdition, since women were aiding the construction of the hospital with their alms and donations. Yet beyond all of these rumors, one fact was clear: that it was indeed a church for the infidels.

4 Human Labor, Divine Work

To take part in building a temple devoted to a faith other than one's own posed a moral dilemma; it was a topic that gave rise to much doubt, and about which the religious authorities, both Islamic and Christian, felt obliged to state their position. We know, for example, that in the first half of the eighteenth century the vicar Apostolic of Algiers, who held jurisdiction over Tunisia as well, consulted with the Vatican authorities about whether Christian captives were falling into sin when they were forced to work on mosques—building their walls, white-washing their minarets, and carving the Islamic crescent in stone.⁴⁴ Likewise, the master builders of Tunis were wary of working on the hospital, as the supreme mufti declared that it was *haram* (illicit) to collaborate with the Trinitarians. Nevertheless the artisans would quarrel over who was to build the hospital, given the significant earnings it entailed. The rivalries between the different workshops took a tragic turn when, on the night of November 14, 1722, the brother of the stonemason who was carving the stones for the hospital was murdered, and the *amin*, or head of the guild, was suspected of having ordered the killing out of envy.⁴⁵ One month later the conflict had not died down, and the stonemasons' guild continued to hinder the

artisan's work for the hospital. When all else had failed, the workers locked themselves up in a *marabout*⁴⁶ and refused to work until they themselves were granted the task of building the hospital.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note how the figure of the holy man is used as a final resort in a matter that had previously been declared illicit by the religious authorities. As for the Christians, they could not work freely either: some masters would not allow their captives to go to work, since they considered that the money that they earned and were paid for each moon (that is, month of work) was *haram*.⁴⁸ The Capuchins, fervently opposed to the hospital, took matters a step further, and from the pulpit threatened to excommunicate all Christians who worked for the Trinitarians.⁴⁹ They were especially harsh and even unfair with the Spanish captives, whom they assumed were in favour of the hospital project.

These quarrels aside, we have the items that Ximénez, as administrator, meticulously recorded in the hospital's expenses ledger,⁵⁰ which tell us the trades and number of the workers involved in the project. During the initial months four foremen—of whom at least one, Mostafa, was the descendent of Catalan moriscos—and more than

44 Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, "Barbaria" collection, vol. VIII, fols. 117–120, "Dubbi proposti dal Vicario d'Algeri Pietro Francesco Viguier, Sacerdote della Missione," s. d.

45 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 135r, Friday 13 November 1722.

46 Term (*murabit* in Arabic, with dialectal variations) which refers in general terms to a building and place of worship housing the tomb of an ascetic or saint (object of folk worship in North Africa), also known as a *qubba* or *zawiya*, depending on its architecture. The *zawiya* is considered to be a sacred place and a shelter. Anyone who takes refuge within cannot be apprehended by the militia, and may stay there until brought to justice.

47 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 144v, Sunday 20 December 1722.

48 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 155v, Tuesday 26 January 1723, "the money that he got for each moon was *haram*, which is the same thing as sin, as if they feel like our making this Hospital is a forbidden thing for them."

49 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 73r, Wednesday 22 May 1722.

50 Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid, codex L. 190, *Libro de gastos del Hospital de San Juan de Mata de Túnez*.

forty laborers laid the foundations and dug the cistern, while three stonemasons carved the façade and main entrance.⁵¹ Later on other workers would join in, such as blacksmiths, painters, builders, and two carpenters: Soliman, a Spanish renegade, and a Neapolitan captive. Monsieur Ferro, a French master glassblower whose workshop was next to the Bab Qartaganna gate, was hired to make several items. And the Qallaline potters at the Bab Suwayqa gate supplied eight thousand tiles with black-and-white glaze⁵² for the floors and the bases of walls, and large tiles with green glaze to protect cornices. In addition, several skilled captives signed on as laborers, motivated both by their piety and by the salary they would receive for their work. We also have some information regarding their workdays and pay: “On the craftsmen and laborers working on the hospital since the twenty-eighth of May of 1722, when construction began, until the 31st of March of this year of 1723, two thousand and seventy-three common pesos, forty-nine aspers and nine burbes have been spent.”⁵³ Also, the hospital’s expenses ledger gives us other detailed information such as the materials used along with their quantities and costs. We also know that materials were often re-used, such as column shafts and quality ashlar from the old *hammam* itself or contiguous buildings.

While the project was indeed carried out following Master Ambrosio’s design, Ambrosio had, in effect, put Ximénez’s own vision of the building down on paper. It is worth asking what model the

Trinitarian from Toledo had in mind for this Tunisian building. While we can assume that he was following the general trends in early eighteenth-century Spanish hospital architecture,⁵⁴ which were based on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century styles, Ximénez also had some more direct experience. He was able to see first-hand the expansion and remodeling work that was done on the Hospital of the Holy Trinity in Algiers, between 1719 and 1720, which he likewise describes in his diary.⁵⁵ Thus he knew what was needed in order to build a hospital, but was also familiar with the difficulties that such an undertaking entailed, and the precautions that should be taken. As a result, when discussing the construction of the hospital, he says on numerous occasions that it “is acceptable for the lands of Barbary,” meaning he is aware of the limitations and vicissitudes involved in building a Christian center in an Islamic country.

The work was carried out continuously for two years, stopping only on obligatory holidays, both Christian and Muslim, or due to inclement weather and shortages of building material. On June 23, 1722 the construction was declared officially complete, and the building was blessed and dedicated to St John de Matha, founder of the Order of the Trinitarians.⁵⁶ On May 27 of the following year, King Philip V of Spain took the hospital into royal protection, at which point it began to receive the sick. Finally, on Tuesday February 8, 1724, the chapel itself was at last

51 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 124r, Thursday 1 October 1722.

52 AHN Madrid, codex L. 190, fol. 61r, “For eight thousand tiles nine pesos. For bringing the tiles forty-eight aspers (april 1724).” These tiles, which are commonly used in flooring, are known as *Ġneḥ khotīfa* or ‘swallow’s wing’ in Tunisia. See Clara Ilham Álvarez Dopico, “Qallaline. Les revêtements céramiques des fondations beylicales tunisoises du XVIII^e siècle.” PhD diss., University of Sorbonne–Paris IV, 2010, 512–515, cat. Q no. 33 “*Ġneḥ khotīfa*.”

53 AHNM, codex L. 190, fol. 140r-v.

54 See the recent work by Jean-Luc Liez, *L’art des trinitaires en Europe (xiii^e–xviii^e siècles)* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2011).

55 The Algerian section of Ximénez’s diary (RAH ms.9/6008–10, previously cited herein), is analyzed by Leïla Ould Cadi Montebourg in her study, *Argel: une cité turque au temps de l’esclavage à travers le Journal d’Alger du père Ximénez, 1718–1720* (Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de l’Université Paul-Valéry–Montpellier III, 2006), particularly pp. 149–173 concerning the construction of the hospital in Algiers.

56 St John de Matha (Faucon-de-Barcelonnette, 1160–Rome, 1213).

consecrated.⁵⁷ From then until 1735, the hospital's ledger provides us with information about the maintenance, repair, and improvement work that was carried out there, for example, the repairing of leaks in the roof in the fall of 1725⁵⁸ and spring of 1730,⁵⁹ or the whitewashing of the walls every two years, a task which took several weeks to complete.⁶⁰ Of particular interest is the reconstruction, in 1730, of the chapel of St John de Matha, which was on the verge of collapse. Although preparations began in February with the selection and purchase of the materials,⁶¹ and discussions with the foremen,⁶² work itself began in July⁶³ and went

on until mid-September.⁶⁴ Lastly, Father Ximénez took advantage of his trip to Spain in 1730 to buy "some cordovan, locks and other fine decorations for the Tunis hospital."⁶⁵

There is a wealth of references to the St John de Matha Hospital in travel narratives, among them the work of the French physician Jean-André Peyssonnel,⁶⁶ the memoirs of the French consul St-Gervais,⁶⁷ La Condamine's diary,⁶⁸ Venture de Paradis⁶⁹ and, at the end of the century, father Felice Caroni.⁷⁰ The hospital also played a role in the relations between the Regency of Tunis and the Spanish Monarchy, which did not have any diplomatic representation in the country until the

57 Bonifacio Porres Alonso, *Libertad a los cautivos. Actividad redentora de la Orden Trinitaria*, vol. 1: *Redenciones de cautivos (1798–1785)* (Córdoba-Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1998), 282.

58 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 209r and 210r, "Saturday 10 November. The rooftop of the two upper rooms is being repaired [...] because the old roof had very weak beams and had sunken in a bit, letting all the rain in." And, "Saturday 19 November 1725. The rooftops have been whitewashed and covered in concrete so that they will not leak."

59 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vii, fol. 257r, "Thursday 5 April 1731, we are making clay to fix one of the hospital's rooftops. [...] Wednesday 11 April, the roof above the upper cells has been done because it was letting a lot of water in."

60 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vii, fol. 378r-v, "Tuesday 23 March 1734, concrete has been brought in to whitewash the hospital [...] Wednesday 31 March, the hospital is still being whitewashed. Thursday 1 April, the hospital, cloisters and infirmaries are being whitewashed."

61 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vii, fol. 189v and 190r, "Friday 10 February 1730, Father Zorrilla and I went to La Goulette to see a beam or mast which had belonged to the ship of captain Simón Bergante, usually known as the Great Devil, to repair the chapel of Our Father St John de Matha, and we decided it would not do. Saturday 11 February 1730, ten pieces of wood were bought to repair the chapel of Our Father St John de Matha."

62 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vii, fol. 190r, "Tuesday 14 February 1730, the *lamine*s came to see the chapel and to examine the work that needs to be done in it."

63 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vii, fol. 211v, "Sunday 30 July 1730, work is being done to repair the chapel of Our Father St John de Matha, which was falling apart" and fol. 213r,

"Monday 28 August, lately they have been working on the chapel."

64 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vii, fol. 216, Friday 22 September 1730, "The rooftop of the chapel of Our Father St John de Matha has been marked."

65 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vi, fol. 163r, Tuesday 22 November 1729.

66 Jean-André Peyssonnel, *Relation d'un voyage sur les côtes de Barbarie, fait par ordre du Roi en 1724 et 1725*, ed. Adolphe Dureau de La Malle (Paris: Librairie De Gide, 1838), vol. 1, 166–167. Father Ximénez was a crucial source of information for Peyssonnel, who on many occasions copied the former's writing without citing him. See C. Álvarez Dopico, "La Colonia Trinitaria de F. Ximénez, source pour la *Relation* de Jean-André Peyssonnel," in *Empreintes espagnoles dans l'histoire tunisienne*, ed. Sadok Boubaker and Clara Álvarez Dopico (Gijón: Ediciones Trea–Colección Bibliotheca Arabo-Romanica et Islamica, 2011), 105–168.

67 Jacques Boyer de Saint-Gervais, *Mémoires historiques de l'ancien et de nouveau royaume de Tunis* (Paris, 1736), 89.

68 Charles Marie de La Condamine, *Tunis, Le Bardo, Carthage. Extraits inédits du Journal de mon Voyage au Levant (21 mai–6 octobre 1731)*, ed. Vicomte Bégouen (Tunis: Imprimerie Rapide–Louis Nicolas & Cie, 1898), 86.

69 Jean Michel Venture de Paradis, *Itinéraires de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1866), 70.

70 Felice Caroni, *Ragguaglio del viaggio compendioso di un diletante antiquario sorpreso da' corsari condotto in Barbaria e felicemente ripatriato* (Milano: Francesco Sonzogno di Gio. Batt., 1805), French translation published in *Revue Tunisienne* 120 (1917): 38.

signing of the peace treaty of 1791.⁷¹ In fact, the first Spanish consulate was eventually built on the site adjacent to the Trinitarian mission.

5 Tunisian Architecture, Christian Space

We can get an idea of how the hospital looked based on the more-or-less detailed descriptions that have come down to us. The basic architectural design of the St John de Matha Hospital was none other than the Tunisian *dar*, a large urban house organized around a central courtyard.⁷² It fulfilled the third article of the rule of the Order of Trinitarians of 1198, which calls for such buildings to be functional and simple, and to blend in with the pre-existing urban surroundings. The front of the building was perfectly in line with the adjacent buildings on the medina's main street, which connected Bab al-Bahr with the mosque of Zaytuna. Apart from its height, it hardly would have stood out save for the finely-carved limestone of the main entrance, which Ximénez described as "quite lovely." It most likely followed the common beylical architectural style of the early eighteenth century, with sculpted jambs and lintel surrounded by moldings and crowned with a round relieving arch.

The main entrance led to the *driba*,⁷³ and the *sqifa*,⁷⁴ two successive vestibules that led to a

square courtyard paved with tiles, described by Ximénez as "rather ample and beautiful." The courtyard held the cistern for collecting rainwater and a well with saline water, and was surrounded by four porticoes with marble columns. Large double-wing doors opened onto the courtyard, flanked by small grille-clad windows. The ground floor, with vaulted and whitewashed ceilings, held the wine cellar, the still, the pantry, the kitchen, the refectory, the bakery, offices, various storage spaces, and a few cells. Next to the entrance there was a large room used as a stable, where animals were raised (Ximénez mentions pigs on various occasions as well as donkeys, which the Trinitarians rode) and where the beasts of burden were kept. From this floor a wide staircase, whose first steps were made of stone with tiled risers, and the rest of wood, lead to the upper floors (Figure 16.4).

The gallery on the second floor was protected on its open side by lathed wooden railing, and the floors and base of the walls were tiled. This floor contained the pharmacy, the library, and, on either side of the patio, the two infirmaries. The first, dedicated to the patron, St John of Matha, was connected to a chapel by the same name, while the second, dedicated to Our Lady of Good Remedy,⁷⁵ had a more modest altar at its far end, hidden behind doors and curtains. Both were twenty feet wide, and were divided into three sections by two rows of five marble columns supporting a flat wooden ceiling. The floors and the bases of the walls were tiled, and the walls were whitewashed.

The third floor housed the cells of the administrator, his assistant, the surgeon, the pharmacist, the sick, and the servants, who typically consisted of fourteen to sixteen captives, four of whom were provided by the bey. There were also a few cells reserved for captive priests and gentlemen, who where usually granted the privilege of residing in

71 See Mikel de Epalza and Abdelhakim Gafsi-Slama, "Relaciones entre España y Túnez en el siglo XIX: nueva documentación y síntesis," *Anales de Historia Contemporánea* 23 (2007), 259–276.

72 See Jacques Revault's exhaustive study of domestic architecture during the beylical period, *Palais et demeures de Tunis (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles)* (Paris: CNRS, 1967).

73 Rectangular hall in a traditional Tunisian home with benches along its walls, used as a reception area in order to preserve the privacy of the home itself.

74 Small rectangular hall perpendicular to the *driba*, occasionally with benches along its walls, used as a transition space between the *driba* and the house's central courtyard.

75 The Trinitarians become known for their veneration of the Virgin under the title of Remedy or Good Remedy and confraternities, altars, and images were set up in her honor.

FIGURE 16.4 *Reconstruction of the elevation of the St John de Matha Hospital's courtyard, based on Jacques Revault's work on domestic Tunisian architecture*
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the hospital for the duration of their captivity. A smaller staircase than the main one lead to the terrace, a good place to take in the health-giving breeze. This was where the laundry was hung out to dry, where fruit was dried, and where one could cool off on summer nights. From the rooftop one could look out over the other terraces of the city, and see as far as the Lake of Tunis and the port of La Goulette to the north.

6 The Chapel of St John De Matha

The building's function as a hospital did not make its religious character any less evident. The nucleus of the hospital was clearly the chapel, dedicated to St John de Matha, the entrance to which, a double-wing door behind curtains, was located within the infirmary. It had the same width as the infirmary, eight feet, but was not as long. At the far end there

was a small sacristy, which was "large enough for the priest to dress, with drawers for storing the vestments."⁷⁶ The main altar, with a consecrated altar stone sent from Rome,⁷⁷ was big enough to hold "sixteen candles and two candelabra, one on either side."⁷⁸ Above the altar stood the retablo, made up of two pairs of coupled stucco columns painted to look like veined marble, which supported a gilt tablature, and framed a large painting, also in a gilt frame, depicting St John de Matha before the Virgin. To the right, "on the side of the Epistle," there was a figure of Christ on the cross made of painted stone. To the left, "on the side of the Epiphany," there was a (Sicilian) image of the Baby Jesus wearing a crown of gold-plated silver (Figure 16.5).⁷⁹ The retables on either side had marble columns and flowers painted on them. As for the ceiling, it was filled with a depiction of an open sky, in the midst of which was a blue and red cross, the symbol of the Order of the Trinitarians, held aloft by angels. This central motif was surrounded by depictions of St John Anglicus and Brother Simón de Rojas, who at the time were on the road to beatification.⁸⁰

The Trinitarian iconography behind the chapel's decoration can be traced to the order's Castilian architecture.⁸¹ Although this issue is beyond the

76 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vi, fol. 11v, Sunday 5 February 1724.

77 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vi, fol. 32v, Sunday 12 February 1724, letter from Brother Atilano Pérez de Arroyo announcing that "a large marble altar stone containing relics" had been sent from Rome.

78 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vi, fol. 11v, Sunday 5 February 1724.

79 Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 188.

80 Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 188. St Simon de Rojas (Valladolid, 1512–Madrid, 1624) was a theologian and a spiritual writer, known as the 'Apostle of the Ave Maria' for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

81 The same was true of the altar images in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Tunis, located in the baths of the same name, built in 1721, which, according to Ximénez, were the same as those in the Convent of Cuéllar, in Castile: *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 10v, Tuesday 10 March 1722, "bulky and very old [...] particularly

FIGURE 16.5 Reconstruction of the main altar in the chapel of St John de Matha

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scope of this chapter, it is interesting to note that upon this simple, functional, and domestic architecture, a rich decoration was superimposed, one which grew over time. Alms, gifts from Christian lands, and salvaged items that made their way to the Regency as part of privateers' booty all added, over time, to the 'treasure of the church' of St John de Matha in Tunis.⁸²

similar to the main altar of our Convent of Cuéllar in the Province of Castile." For more information about the decoration of the Convent of Cuéllar, see Fernando Collar de Cáceres, "El convento de la Trinidad de Cuéllar y su ciclo pictórico," *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* XII (2000): 39–59.

82 I hope to provide more information on the flow of artwork in and out of the St John de Matha Hospital in an article that I am currently preparing titled, *Liturgie et art entre deux rives. Le trésor d'église de l'hôpital trinitaire de Saint-Jean de Mathe à Tunis*, which has been

The chapel played an important role in the everyday life of the hospital, as each day began and ended with the religious services held before its altar. There was no such thing as being too careful when it came to protecting the place of prayer, and so the doors to the chapel were kept closed, and were hidden behind a double set of heavy curtains to avoid raising any suspicions among Muslims visiting the hospital.⁸³ The Khaznadar himself advised Ximénez that mass should not be offered until all the sick had been tended to, and even then that it should be offered "under the greatest possible secrecy."⁸⁴ However, on one occasion someone left "the door in the infirmary ajar; a Moor opened it and when he saw that Mass was being offered he left without saying a word."⁸⁵ Ximénez also recounts another incident in which, while the *Tenebrae* were being sung in the chapel, the nephew of the Khaznadar stopped by to visit the Trinitarian friars, whereupon "Father Juan Serrano had to rush out to receive the sick"⁸⁶ and pretend to be carrying out other similar tasks. This sort of cunning and subtlety illustrate the symbolic value of the hospital's chapel.

Indeed, beyond the functional, hospital side of the dar, the different spaces that made up the new building would take a special symbolic value for Christians, and in particular for the Trinitarians who ran it. Thus, after crossing through the main entrance, the *driba* and the *sqifa* acted as an entryway that safeguarded the central space, a transition between the medina and the Christian domestic space, in which the bustle of the medina was relegated to the outside, while inside the walls dwelled hospitality, prayer, and spirituality. Ximénez repeatedly refers to the courtyard as the "cloister,"

made possible with the help of a research fellowship from Villa Medici in Rome.

83 Ximénez, *Colonia Trinitaria*, 177.

84 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 213v, Wednesday 23 June 1723.

85 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. v, fol. 222v, Monday 23 August 1723.

86 *Discurso de Túnez*, vol. vi, fol. 46r, Wednesday 11 May 1724.

FIGURE 16.6

In 1896, the Church of St Rosalia was opened in Dār Rachid, a palace of the medina in Tunis. There is another example of a local domestic architecture made suitable for Catholic liturgical functions.

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as it would be called in a monastery. And, as if it were a true conventual cloister, the courtyard is actually the scene of processions and rites. In fact, the entire building is treated as a religious space: litanies and vespers are sung, images and relics are put on display for worship and veneration, vigils are held before the Holy Sacrament, images are borne under canopies, and so on (Figure 16.6).

During a procession, the space through which the sacred object passes is made holy, and is transformed into the framework for the expression of faith. The Corpus Christi procession was the most solemn, as well as the most theatrical procession that took place in the hospital. For it, the chapel, cloisters, and dormitories were decorated: the courtyard was covered with colored cloths, the floors were carpeted with aromatic plants, the walls were covered with tapestries and decorated with paintings, prints, and mirrors.⁸⁷ And in spite of the initial prohibition against ringing bells, a hand bell was used to announce daybreak and the beginning of the holiday.

7 Conclusion

In 1816, Mahmud b. Muhammad Bey (1813–24) signed a peace treaty with the major European powers putting an end to piracy and freeing all of the captives in the Regency. Since the center's original justification was thus lost, the St John de Matha Hospital closed its doors for good in 1818. The building itself, however, would live on. As the nineteenth century ran its course, the Capuchin mission left the old parish church of the Holy Cross and, in 1833, Husayn Basa Bey transferred the old Trinitarian hospital to the Capuchins, and allowed them to build a much bigger church, which they also named after the Holy Cross,⁸⁸ and which would be further expanded in 1839 (Figure 16.7). The new church would continue to hold services for the congregation until 1897 when Cardinal Lavigerie⁸⁹ ordered it to be deconsecrated after the Cathedral St Vincent de Paul of Tunis was built. Today, the old Capuchin church now houses municipal offices, and not a trace is

87 For more on the celebration of religious festivities in the hospital, see C. Álvarez Dopico, "La religiosité au quotidien: la captivité à Tunis à travers les écrits de fray Francisco Ximénez (1720–1735)," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée. Captifs et Captivité en Méditerranée à l'époque moderne* 87 (2013): 319–334.

88 Des Arcs, *Mémoires de la Mission des Capucins*, 29 and 121.

89 Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie (Bayonne, 1825–Algiers, 1892), Bishop of Algiers and Carthage, named cardinal in 1882, founder of the Society of Missionaries of Africa, also known as the White Fathers.

FIGURE 16.7 *Municipal offices in the old Church of the Holy Cross*

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left of the original Trinitarian St John de Matha Hospital.

This chapter rescues from oblivion what was one of the most important buildings in Tunis's European quarter, which was the headquarters of the most important Christian religious foundation in eighteenth-century Tunisia. It is without a doubt the best example of the beylic's permissive policy towards religious minorities, in line with Ottoman policy of the same period. Yet, beyond its religious functions or the provision of aid, the St John de Matha Hospital had another function in terms of representation and, to a certain extent, diplomacy. More than half-a-century before the peace treaty of 1791 was signed, the protection granted by the bey to the Trinitarian mission anticipated the normalization of relations between the Ottoman Regency and the Spanish Crown.

By interpreting the extant archival documents and contemporary reports, it is possible to reconstruct in detail not only the appearance and layout of the Spanish St John de Matha Hospital and its chapel, but also the process of how it was founded and built. From these documents, it is clear that the largest freestanding Christian religious building within the medina of Tunis was built so as to blend in with the local domestic architecture. Nevertheless, through the use of decoration, the internal space was made suitable for its liturgical functions, and acquired its sacred character through the rituals and ceremonies that were held within its walls. This symbiosis between Islamic forms and Catholic motifs can be interpreted as a manifestation of early eighteenth-century Tunisia's religious and cultural cosmopolitanism.