

The *Fratres Hospitalis S. Lazari in Regnum Siciliae*

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Introduction

The *Regnum Siciliae* or the Kingdom of Sicily was founded by Roger II of Sicily in 1130 with the approval of the Antipope Anacletus II (pontificate 1130-1154). The Kingdom encompassed the County of Sicily, the Duchy of Apulia, and the Maltese Archipelago. Through the marriage of Constance, daughter of Roger II (reign 1194-1198) and Henry VI, Holy Roman Emperor, the Kingdom in 1194 fell under the House of Hohenstaufen under Frederick II (reign 1198-1250) until 1266 when the conflict between the Hohenstaufen house and the Papacy led to Sicily's conquest by Charles I, Duke of Anjou (reign 1266-1282) after the battle of Taglicozzo. The subsequent insurrection in 1282 instigated by the Crown of Aragon and the Byzantine Empire against French officialdom and taxation in the Kingdom of Sicily resulted in the War of the Sicilian Vespers which divided the old Kingdom of Sicily in two following the Peace of Caltabellotta in 1302, the division becoming permanent in 1372 with the Treaty of Villeneuve. The island of Sicily and the Maltese Archipelago, called the Kingdom of Trinacria, went to Frederick III of the House of Aragon (reign 1355-1377); while the southern Italian peninsular territories, called the Kingdom of Sicily [or Naples], went to Joanna I of the House of Anjou (reign 1343-1382). The two thrones were re-united politically but not administratively as *Regnum Siciliae citra et ultra Farum* (Kingdom of Sicily on this side and beyond the Lighthouse) by Alfonso V of Aragon in 1443 (reign 1443-1458), following the successful siege of Naples. In 1503, Ferdinand II modified this to *Regnum utriusque Siciliae* (Kingdom of Both Sicilies), and this title continued to be used down to the demise of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1860 when the region was united with the Kingdom of Italy.¹

Lazarite presence in the *Regnum Siciliae*

A Lazarite presence in the *Regnum Siciliae* was established in the latter half of the 12th century particularly on the south-east coast of Italy along the shores of the Adriatic Sea linking the Crusader Orders in Europe to the Holy Land. In 1185, the Order is documented to have had a church “*Sancti Lazari de Leprosis*” in Barletta (Diocese of Trani). Barletta in southern Italy was a very important outpost for all the Crusader Orders.² In 1376, the church, the convent and the hospital in Barletta were managed by secular Clerics with a Prior at the head.³ The church “*Sancti Lazari de Leprosis*” was expanded in 1406 in Via Manfredi to incorporate a hospital and a monastery both adjacent to the rebuilt church. Following the death of the priest Don Colucio, the preceptor Frá Vincenzo de Tenco passed the management over to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre with the permission of the Diocesan Vicar Lello de Galera given on 20 December 1450.⁴ Subsequently, the management passed on to the *Università di Barletta*, and about 1547 was passed on to the Celestine Monks of the nearby Monastery of the Holy Trinity, thus changing its name to *Monastero e Ospedale della SS. Trinità*.⁵ The Hospital was destroyed by the French and rebuilt in 1550 when the management was passed on to the *Ordine dei Fatebenefratelli* who dedicated the edifice to San Giovanni di Dio. The Fatebenefratelli

¹ L. Mendola. *The Kingdom of Sicily 1130-1860*. Trinacria Editions, New York, 2015.

² F. Nitti di Vito (ed.). *Le Perdamene di Barletta – Archivio Capitolare*. In *Codice Diplomatico Barese*. Società di Storia Patria per la Puglia, Bari, 1914, vol.8, p.p187-188. As reported In G.A. Loud. *Latin Church in Norman Italy*. University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p.410.

³ Le pergamene della cattedrale di Barletta, dei monasteri e conventi e atti notarili. In *Codice Diplomatico Barlettano*. G. Dellisanti, Barletta, Vol.III, 1957, p.61, Doc. 94; vol. IV, 1962, p.24, Doc. 34.

⁴ L. Sabino. *Storia della città di Barletta*. Riediz A. Forni, Bolognese, 1978, Vol. II, pp.95,96.

⁵ F.S. Vista. *Note storiche sulla Città di Barletta*. Paganelli, Trani, 1903, vol.4, pp.23-41.

continued to administer the monastery until 1809.⁶ The Order of Saint Lazarus held further holdings along the shores of the Adriatic Sea.⁷

⁶ M. Grimaldi. Il difficile cammino di S. Lazzaro de' Leprosi. *Barletta News*, 18 June 2015. <http://www.barlettanews.it/il-difficile-cammina-di-s-lazzaro-de-leprosi/>.

The Church now serves as the Archivio Storico del Comune di Barletta while the area of the monastery and the hospital serves as a terminus for buses. D. Maglio. *Una sezione dell'Archivio di Stato di Bari nell'ex monastero lebbrosario dei Cavalieri di San Lazzaro a Barletta*. In 'Sviluppo di una Città'. *Barletta dalle Crociate alla via ferrata al futuro*. Rotas, Barletta, 2010, p.157.

⁷ The testament of Otto *naulerius* from Bari dated 1200 left a plantation of olives "*in pertinentiis Sanctae Agnetis*" and vines "*in pertinentiis Sancti Martini*", if family succession failed, to the "church of S. Lazzaro where, outside Bari, the lepers dwell". P. Oldfield. *Urban society and communal independence in Twelfth-Century Southern Italy*. PhD thesis, University of Leeds, U.K., 2006, pp.246 and 293.

The 1232 testament of Lamerius de Risa de Mele left the right of *usufrutto* of a house which belonged to the *dictum hospitale*. E. Filangeri di Candida. (ed.). *Le pergamene di Barletta del R. Archivio di Napoli (1075-1309)*. In *Codice Diplomatico Barese*. Società di Arch. de Storia Patria, Bari, 1928, vol. X, p.301, doc.240.

Later documentation suggests that in 1295 the inhabitants of this village were required to pay an annual rent to the church. In 1233, Gregory Bishop of Troia granted the Order the Church of S. Maria Madalena di S. Lorenzo in Carminiano and the Church of S. Lazarus in Foggia in the Apulia region because of his "*miséricorde envers ceux qui sont fappés du danger mortel de la lépre, ces hommes isolés a cause de l'abomonation de la contagion*". J.-M. Martin (ed.). *Les Chartes de Troia*. In *Codice Diplomatico Pugliese*. Società di Storia Patria per la Puglia, Bari, 1976, vol. 21, pp.409-411.

The area of S. Lorenzo in Carminiano in the 13th century was a small agglomeration of scattered houses with courtyards and gardens inside, silos for the storage of grain, small road running from the southwest to the northeast, and various churches like those dedicated to St Lazarus and St Lawrence. There had to be also a stately home because mention is made of a court in which the Bishop of Troia participated. It appears that the region might have been abandoned by 1336, definitely by 1363. G. Ruggiero. *Convegno: Adottiamo San Lorenzo in Carmignano*. Available at <http://www.stupormundi.it/SLorenzo.htm>.



Modern-day views of the church “*Sancti Lazari de Leprosis*” in Barletta

The *Fratres Hospitalis S. Lazari* were formally established as a jurisdiction in *Regnum Siciliae* on the 2 March 1228 in the city of Capua, the Capital of the Province Terra di Lavoro in southern Italy, by authority of Emperor Frederick II who accepted the proposal made by the Capuan Nobleman Lazaro di Raimo to set up a Priory of the Order composed of a Prior and three Knights of the *Croce Verde*. The Priory was endowed with the *Cappella di S. Labaro* and the *Spidale delli Poveri Lazzari*. The first Prior of the *Hospitalis S. Lazari in Regnum Siciliae* was Lazaro di Raimo. This act of donation defines the aims of the Order of St Lazarus with its knightly attributes, its investiture regulations, and its charitable duties. The Prior and Knights of the establishment were required to be in a

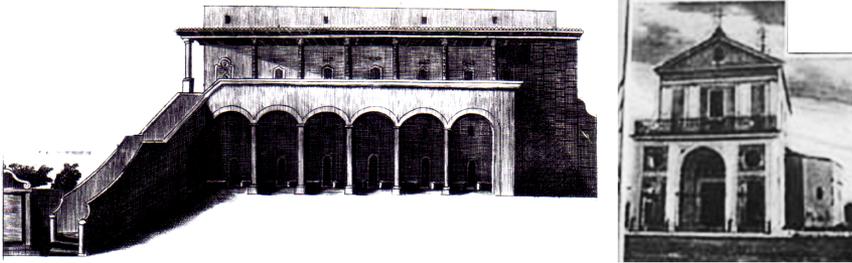
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rightful marriage, be *Milites Sancti Petri*, and were to serve the king. On being invested by the Archbishop of Capua, the Knights were to take the vows of chastity and obedience; and promised to support the poor, widows and lepers, besides fighting the infidels.⁸ Ancient documentation suggests that the hospital at Capua was situated about a third of a mile from the city along the road that led from the Casale of S. Maria Maggiore. The *Infirmorum Ecclesiae S. Lazari, quae est foris hanc Capuanam Civitatem* continued to serve as the regional centre for the Order in *Regnum Siciliae* well until the 16th century. By 1271, the establishment was augmented by another establishment in the region known as the Church of St Mary Magdalene of the lepers at Teano, sited seven kilometres from the gate of Capua where five lepers were being tended to by the Order.⁹ The holdings of the *Hospitalis S. Lazari in Regnum Siciliae* were markedly augmented four decades after its establishment when, in 1268-1272, Charles I of Anjou adopted Pope Clement IV's Bull of 1265 and ordered that all the leprosaria in his domains within the then united Kingdom of Sicily and Naples were to be placed under the protection and government of the Order of St Lazarus. He further proposed the confinement, by force if necessary, of all lepers within the Lazarite houses, and the donation of all their property to the Order.¹⁰

⁸ *Notarial Act registering donation establishing church and hospital of Saint Lazarus in Capua dated 2 March 1228*. Transcribed in D. Jannotta. *Notizie Storiche della Chiesa, e Spedale di San Lazzaro di Capua*. Giuseppe di Domenico, Napoli, 1762, pp.2-4 [Also C. Savona-Ventura. *The Order of Saint Lazarus Cartulary Volume 1: 12th – 14th centuries*. Office of the Grand Archivist & Historian – MHOSLJ, Malta, 2014, pp.72-73].

⁹ R. Hyacinthe. *L'Ordre de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem au Moyen Age*. Études & Communication Édition, Bez-et-Esparon, 2003, pp.79,115; M. Inguanez, L. Mattei-Cerasoli and P. Sella (editors). *Rationes Decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e XIV: Campania*. Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, 1942, pp.78, 182, 187, 210. In 1327, the preceptor at Teano was Herni who also was preceptor of Calvi and Maddaloni.

¹⁰ Clement IV. *Venerabilibus Fratribus nostris.... dated 5 August 1265*. In L. Cherubini and A.M. Cherubino. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum, a B. Leone Magno usque ad S.D.N.*



Hospital at Capua: 18th century depictions

The Order's holdings in the *regnum Siciliae* were, therefore, increased as a result of these edicts. The main establishments appear to have been centered in the Province of Terra di Lavoro and the Commune di Campania on the western Italian coast, the Region of Apulia/Puglia on the eastern coast, and the Island of Sicily. The Order of Saint Lazarus also had holdings in northern parts of the Italian peninsula.¹¹

Innocentium X. P. Borde, L. Arnaud & C.I. Rigaud, Lyon, 1655, vol.1, p. 165.

¹¹ A document dated 1163 records the ownership by the Order of vineyards located near Mairano on S. Lazarus hill where a rural church was also present. Mairano is a town and commune in the province of Brescia, in Lombardy in the North of Italy. E. Filangeri di Candida, *op. cit.*, vol. X, p.32, doc.20. As reported In G.D. Barlette. *Custode di Insigni Relique della Passione di Cristo*. Centro Regionale Servizi Educativi e culturali, Barletta, 2000, p.68.

Another Northern Italian holding is documented in Vercelli in the Piemonte region. A *domus infirmorum S. Lazari* was established during the Middle Ages. The *Statuti Antichi di Vercelli* (para 356) dated 1241 establish the time when the lepers could come out. The 1341 general statutes further make provisions guardianship of this hospice and for the restoration of its houses "*in quibus possint congruenter habitare dicti infirmi separate ab aliis personis*". The *domus* is also mentioned in the some donations made by pious donors and in the will of Cardinal Guala Bicchieri who mentions the *collegio leprosorum S. Lazari sol. V. L. Avonto. I Templari a Vercelli*. MHOSLJ, Malta, 1977, pp.28-31.

A Bull issued by Leo X in 1517 was addressed in favour of the Order of Saint Lazarus in Rome granting indulgences to the pilgrims visiting the Order's church there.

- *Abruzzo region*: Francavilla al Mare, l'Aquila
- *Apulia region*: Lecce, Tarente, Rutigliano, Bitonto, Ascoli
- *Basilicata region*: Muro Lucano
- *Campania region*: Capua, Carinola, Maddaloni, Aversa, Alife
- *Molise region*: Campobasso, Venafro, Ferrazano
- *Island of Sicilia*: Palermo, Messina



Listed establishments of the *Commanderia di Capua* in the mid-16th century¹²

Political machinations starting in the late 15th century led to significant shifts in management alliances. After the Battle of Lepanto, on the 13 November 1572, Gregory XIII's Bull *Pro Commissa Nobis* envisaged the union of the Order of St Lazarus with the recently founded Savoyan Order of St Maurice with the Dukes of Savoy holding the hereditary title of Grand Master of the Order of St Maurice and St Lazarus.¹³ The holdings of the Order of St Maurice and St Lazarus were subsequently augmented by benefices generally sited in northern Italy donated through a later 1604 Papal Bull. Further benefices were obtained during the 18th century; these falling under nine main Commanderies sited in the northern part of the Italian peninsula.¹⁴ The

¹² H.S. Tanner. *Kingdom of Naples or the Two Siciliaes (with) environs of Naples engraved by E.B. Dawson*. In *A New Universal Atlas Containing Maps of the various Empires, Kingdoms, States and Republics of the World*. H.S. Tanner, Philadelphia, 1836, p.51.

¹³ Gregory XIII. *Pro Commissa Nobis... dated 13 November 1572*. In L. Cherubini and A.M. Cherubino. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum, a Pio Quarto usque ad Innocentium IX*. P. Borde, L. Arnaud & C.I. Rigaud, Lyon, 1673, vol.2, pp.366-368.

¹⁴ *Regi Magisteriali provvedimenti relativi all' Ordine dei Santi Maurizio e Lazzaro preceduti da breve storia dello stesso Ordine pubblicati in seguito a facultà ottenutane*

16th century benefices of the *Fratres Sancti Lazari Hierosolymitani in Regnum Siciliae* appear to have been gradually all lost and assimilated with other ecclesiastical or civil holdings in the region.

Lazarite establishments in the Island of Sicily

A number of documents attest to a late 12th century presence in the island of Sicily. The first document refers to a list of benefices due to the Church of Agrigento in Sicily compiled in 1170-1176. The full relevant text reads: "*Ecclesia S. Catherinae, quae est in territorio Melesendini iuxta flumen Bellisii, quam tenet hospitale Ecclesiae S. Lazari de Hierusalem incensi libras ii.*"¹⁵ This short reference serves as a definite indication of ownership in circa 1176 of the Church of Saint Catherine next to the River Belici by the *hospitale Ecclesiae S. Lazari de Hierusalem*. This edifice is, therefore, the earliest known Lazarite holding in the *Regnum Siciliae*. The church of Santa Caterina del Belice is believed to have been originally built around 1150.¹⁶ In 1230, the Order expanded the holding by building a leprosarium annexed to the church. The region was devastated by a violent and massive earthquake on 15 January 1968.¹⁷

In the Bull *Inter Assidua Dominici* of 1565, Pius IV refers to the restoration by Leo X [pontificate 1513-1521] of the establishments in the

dal Grand Magistero. G. Marzorato, Turin, 1867, p.60.

¹⁵ List of benefices due to Church of Agrigento, Sicily compiled between 1170-1176. Copy in *MS Qq F 69 in Bib. Com. Palermo*. Transcribed in L. Townsend White. *Latin Monasticism in Sicily*. Medieval Academy of America, Massachusetts, 1938, pp.239-240, 273-274.

¹⁶ I. Sciara. *S. Margherita: la vera storia della Matrice*. L'Araldo: mensile di attualità, cultura e sport - Santa Margherita di Belice (Ag), 2012. Available at <http://www.laraldo.info/2015050615532209-S.+Margherita-+la+vera+storia+della+Matrice.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.esplorasicilia.com/guida-turistica/agrigento/menfi-agrigento.php>.

island of Sicily to the *Domus Sancti Lazari Capuae*. These included the *Ospedale di San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi di Panormitan* and the *Ospedale di Sant' Agata di Messina*.¹⁸

The Church of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi is an ancient church in Palermo, Sicily supposedly built at the site of Yahia castle in 1071 during the conquest of the island by the Normans led by Roger I of Sicily. The architecture has strong Arabic-Norman influences. The builders may have been Fatimid architects.¹⁹ In 1150, the church dedicated to St John the Baptist was attached to a leprosarium supposedly because Roger II's brother died of leprosy. Over the years, the hospital and church were under the control of various Religious Orders, including the Order of Saint Lazarus. In February 1219, Emperor Frederick II transferred ownership of the church and the hospital to the Order of the Teutonic Knights who kept it until the end of the fifteenth century. The edifice was passed over to the Order of Saint Lazarus after 1268-1272 when Charles I of Anjou adopted Pope Clement IV's Bull of 1265, and ordered that all the leprosaria in his domains within the then united Kingdom of Sicily and Naples were to be placed under the protection and government of the Order of St Lazarus. In 1495, the hospital of San Giovanni was incorporated with the *Ospedale Grande e Nuovo* founded by the Benedictine monk Giuliano Majali, based in Palazzo Sclafani. The hospital now caters for mental patients, and patients infected with scabies, leprosy or tuberculosis.²⁰

¹⁸ Pius IV. *Interassidua Dominici*.... dated 4 May 1565. In L. Cherubini and A.M. Cherubino. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum, a Pio Quarto usque ad Innocentium IX*. P. Borde, L. Arnaud & C.I. Rigaud, Lyon, 1673, vol.2, pp.136-150 – section 33.

¹⁹ G. Quatriglio. *A Thousand years in Sicily – from the Arabs to the Bourbons*. Legas, New York, 2005, pp.20-21.

²⁰ N. Stanzlone. *San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi*. Palermo viva – il portale di chi ama Palermo. <http://www.palermoviva.it/la-chiesa-di-san-giovanni-dei-lebbrosi/>.

The church was restored in the 20th century undergoing dramatic restoration from 1920 to 1934 under the direction of architect Francesco Valenti, Superintendent of Monuments. Centuries of accretions were removed, and the church is now considered a World Heritage Site. The adjacent hospital no longer exists, though its foundations can be viewed within the grounds of the modern church. The exterior of the building is bare, with no decorations, except the slightly arched windows. The entrance is quite simple and is preceded by a small portico, which consists of a single column, on which rests the bell tower. The interior has a basilica shape divided into three parts by pillars with wooden roof and domed sanctuary. Some of the columns are topped with carved capitals, some with Kufic script. The presbytery is raised by three steps, the central part is topped by a dome resting on eight arches. It is decorated by a beautiful 15th-century wooden crucifix painting.



Aerial view of the Church of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi with foundation remains of hospital and castle ©Goggle maps

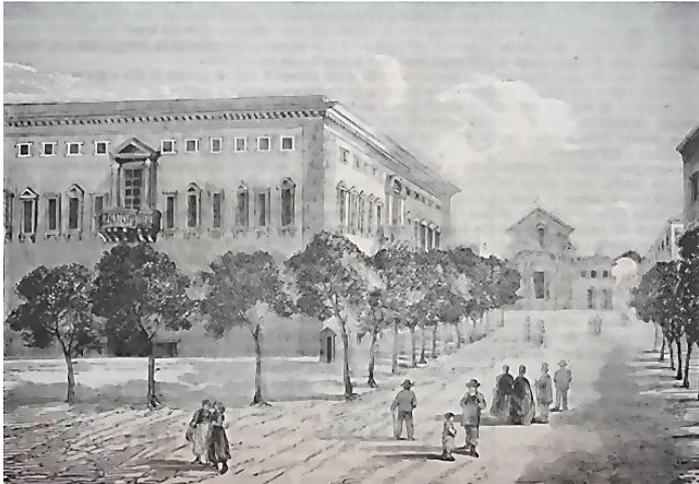


Modern day view of the Church of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi with carved capitals and part of hospital foundations

A Casa degli Infetti per gli uomini for the care of male lepers with an adjoining church of St Agatha sited outside the city gates of Messina managed by the Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus existed since the 12th century.²¹ This was to become known as the *Ospedale di Sant' Agata di*

²¹ Another edifice dedicated to St Agatha which is said to have been donated to the Order of Saint Lazarus in 1266 was the Church of Sant' Agata alla Guilla, located in

Messina. An Ospedale di San Lazzaro per le donne infette was established for the care of female lepers in the middle of the 15th century in a former leper colony under the management of the Benedictine monastery of San Placido Calonerò. On the 12 October 1542, all the hospitaller services were amalgamated into one establishment named *Ospedale Grande di Santa Maria della Pietà*. The building was completed in 1605. The old establishment of *Sant'Agata dei Lebbrosi* was destroyed in the 1908 earthquake. It was rebuilt in the 1920s.²²



Ospedale Grande di Santa Maria della Pietà: 19th-century Lithograph

Palermo. The church was restored in the 16th century and was transferred to the Guild of Masons in 1556. Vide G. Palermo. *Guida istruttiva per potersi conoscere ... tutte le magnificenze ... della Città di Palermo*. Reale Stamperia, Palermo, 1816, Vol.4, pp.193-198.

²² *Ospedalità antica in Sicilia – Messina*. Università di Catania, Catania. Available at <http://www3.unict.it/aos/Province/Messina/messina.htm>.

Conclusion

Initial relations relating to tolerance, trade and politics between the Muslim rulers occupying the Holy Land and the Christian States of Europe ebbed and flowed throughout the initial four centuries following the Muslim occupation. When the Fatimids lost control of the Holy Land to the rapidly-expanding Great Seljuk Empire in 1072, the situation changed drastically. Cultures and creeds continued to co-exist, but the conditions became inhospitable to Catholic pilgrims and merchants. The disruption of pilgrimages and returning reports of atrocities carried out on Christians by the conquering Seljuk Turks prompted the launch of the First Crusade by Urban II in 1096. In a bid to gather support for the Crusades, the Holy See made repeated pleas to the Christian world to encourage financial support linked to promises of indulgences and for soldiers to take up arms. These repeated pleas for support for the Crusades, ensured that the general populace in the Western Christian lands were fully aware and geared to provide their full support. This ensured that the various military Orders serving in the Kingdom of Jerusalem received regular support from the western Christian world in the form of benefices yielding monetary support for their endeavours. The *Fratres Hospitalis S. Lazari Jerusalem*, though a relatively small community, also received several donations in various European countries. The majority of these were made by the authority of the French Monarch with the earliest being made by Louis VI of France in 1112. Subsequent 12th-century French monarchs and members of the nobility made other significant donations. The first donation in England dates to about 1146; while in Scotland, the first donation dates to about 1153. In Switzerland, a donation was made in 1155; while in Hungary, a Charter was made in favour of the *Fratres S. Lazari* in 1162. In the *Regnum Siciliae*, a formal preceptory was only set up in 1228; however, significant donations had been made earlier to support the *Fratres S. Lazari* in the 12th century. Often such acts were made in the hope of

saving the soul of the donor or a loved one, thus building a link between charitable acts and pious endeavours.

<i>La Commenda di Capua, e Carinola, applicate al Magistrato; oltre molte cose, ch'vsurpano quelli d'Azzia Eredi del Gran Maestro morto; le quali il Gran Maestro presente non há potuto attendere acuperare, vale</i>	<i>Scudi 800</i>
<i>Barletta</i>	<i>Scudi 200</i>
<i>L'altre Commende del regno sono circa cento, e frá tutte arrivano alla somma di</i>	<i>Scudi 3000</i>
<i>Norcia vale</i>	<i>Scudi 400</i>
<i>Trioui</i>	<i>Scudi 500</i>
<i>Imola</i>	<i>Scudi 400</i>
<i>Oruieto</i>	<i>Scudi 100</i>
<i>Tortona</i>	<i>Scudi 400</i>
<i>Fano</i>	<i>Scudi 200</i>
<i>Parma</i>	<i>Scudi 400</i>
<i>Alatri</i>	<i>Scudi 150</i>
<i>Fabriano</i>	<i>Scudi 50</i>
<i>Sanseuerino</i>	<i>Scudi 20</i>
<i>Minaruino</i>	<i>Scudi 50</i>
<i>Pavia é in tassa 400; má arriva á mille</i>	<i>Scudi 1000</i>
<i>I Commendatori di Bologna, di Forlí, di Cremona, e del Borgo San Donino, sottoporranno le Commende loro alla Religione, sempre, che se ne faccia istanza; e vagliono l'una per l'altra</i>	<i>Scudi 1400</i>
<i>Le Commende fatte di nuovo di Iuspadronato, vagliono</i>	<i>Scudi 3000</i>
<i>I Beni de' Lebroosi del Regno, vagliono</i>	<i>Scudi 3000</i>
<i>Quattro Cavalieri di San Lazaro, c'hanno il modo, sono obligati á fare una Commenda vacabile per uno, per via del Papa, che frá tutte importaranno</i>	<i>Scudi 550</i>

1566 Holdings of Giannotto Castiglione as listed by I. Bosio ²³

²³ G. Bosio. *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Ill^{ma}. Militia di San Giovanni Gierosolimitano*. Vaticana, 1594, pp.810-812.