

1513: The Hospitallers of Rhodes Appeal for Support against the Ottomans at the Fifth Lateran Council

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Abstract: This article describes an address made by Giovanni Battista de Gargiis, a member of the Knights Hospitaller, at the eighth session of the Fifth Lateran Council in December 1513. In it, he appealed to both the papacy and Europe's secular rulers to send aid to the Hospitallers on Rhodes to counter the threat of an imminent Ottoman invasion. Drawing on this source, this article discusses the emergence of the Hospitallers in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and their eventual transfer to the island fortress of Rhodes. In doing so, it considers the broader geopolitical consequences of the Hospitallers' presence in the eastern Mediterranean, with an eye to the order's interactions with Latin-Christian rulers in Europe, as well as Muslim rulers in the Levant and North Africa. The source is held to be unusual for the way it draws on a broader body of political and religious ideas and imperatives in an effort to rally European-Christian support for the defence of Rhodes and the conquest of Muslim-held territories, such as Constantinople and Jerusalem.

Source

Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio in octaua sessione Lateranensis Concilii: unacum obedientia magni magistri Rhodi*, Rome: Marcello Silber, 1514, fols 3r–7r, here: fols 5r–6r, transl. John Aspinwall.

Scis enim, pater beatissime: et tu Lateranensis synode, Rhodon insulam ab omnibus laudatam atque opportunissimam semper ad res gerendas esse iudicatam: nam Rhodos nostra adiacet Asiae, qua maxime Asia in mare nostrum excurrit: hinc in Syriam, et in Aegyptum commodissima est navigatio: hinc in mare Asiaticum, Hellespontum, Propontida, ac Pontum commodissime solvitur: et rebus navalibus, atque classicis ea civitas semper pollet. Quamobrem maximi Rhodiorum amicitiam semper Romani putaverunt: eorum quod ad multa bella usi sunt opera. Quare arcis, ac rei Christianae propugnaculi curam tibi, pontifex maxime

You know well, most blessed Father, and you, Lateran Synod, that the island of Rhodes has always been praised by all, and judged most suitable for the conduct of affairs. Our Rhodes lies adjacent to Asia, which projects far into our sea. From there, Syria and Egypt can be most conveniently reached; likewise, from there one sails easily to the Sea of Rhodes,¹ the Hellespont, the Sea of Marmara, and the Black Sea. And in naval matters and military fleets, that polity (*civitas*) has always excelled. Therefore, the Romans have always considered the friendship of the Rhodians to be of the greatest importance, and they made use of their assistance in many wars. It is for this reason, I believe, that the care of the

¹ A rare term which refers to the seas around Rhodes. See Hofmann, *Lexicon universale*, p. 57: "Mare Asiaticum proprie alluit Asiam minorem ad Meridiem, vulgo mer de Caramante et de Rhodes. Eius partes sunt mare Lycium, mare Pamphylium, mare Cilicium, et mare Carpathium."

non in postremis esse habendam arbitror (...).

Tu nos igitur favore et clementia protegas, quo alacrius ea pro republica Christiana contra infideles egredi valeat, qui rabido et truci animo semper contra Rhodiense praesidium inhiant, et usque sub divi Ioannis Baptistae auxilio copiae Hierosolymitanae militiae eorumque crudelibus ausis fortiter resistunt, et feroces animos innumeris proeliis compescunt. Nam nec principes nostri nec commilitones certa vitae discrimina subire unquam recusant, nec recusaverunt, ne illa Christianae reipublicae firma Rhodiorum propugnacula in Turcas redditionem redigerentur. Arx enim illa est expultrix saevissimorum hostium, qui semper vestras urbes et imperia invadere et religionem nostram funditus evertere student (...).

Et ut iam per litteras praeteritis mensibus, pater sanctissime tibi illinc a nostris significatum fuit. Sulthan Selyn sectae Mahumetanae immitem tyrannum classem ingentem paravisse: et innumeras copias contra Christi fideles et Rhodi insulae milites et incolas contraxisse: et tantam tormentum vim: quantam nullus unquam ad id bellum instituisse exploratum habuimus (...).

Expergiscimini ergo expergiscimini, tandem Christiani principes: et labanti ecclesiae auxilium afferte: et sub Leone felicissimo pastore invictoque duce, de bello Turcis inferendo in medium consulite: nec ulterius patiamini nostri redemptoris sepulcrum, et

citadel and the bulwark² of the Christian cause should not be regarded by you, great pontiff, as among the least of your concerns (...).

Therefore, may you protect us with your favour and mercy, so that this force may be able to go forth more eagerly for the Christian Commonwealth against the infidels, who with raging and savage hearts, are always thirsting to strike at the Rhodian hegemony. Yet, under the protection of Saint John the Baptist, the Knights of Jerusalem have continually stood firm against their ruthless assaults, and have checked their fierce hearts in countless battles. Neither our leaders nor their comrades have ever refused to face mortal danger, nor have they hesitated, lest that steadfast bulwark of the Christian Commonwealth—the fortresses of the Rhodians—be compelled to surrender to the Turks. That citadel is the expeller of the most barbarous enemies, who always strive to invade your cities and dominions, and to utterly destroy our religion (...).

And, as was communicated to you, Most Holy Father, through letters sent by our men from there in recent months, Sultan Selim, savage tyrant of the Mohammedan sect, had prepared a vast fleet and has drawn together countless forces against the faithful of Christ and the knights and inhabitants of the island of Rhodes. He had assembled such a great arsenal of siege engines (*tormentum*) that, as we have learned with certainty, no one had ever undertaken such preparations for any war of this kind (...).

Therefore, awake, awake at last, Christian princes, and bring aid to the tottering church! And under Leo, the most blessed shepherd and unconquered leader, consult together on bringing war against the Turks. No longer suffer the sepulchre of our Redeemer and also Constantinople, the New Rome, to be held under the rule of the Turks (...).

² The term *propugnaculum Christianitatis* has often been used to refer to regions which were perceived to have safeguarded the Latin West from Muslim enemies, e.g. the Kingdom of Hungary's role in preventing the western expansion of the Ottoman Empire. See Srodecki, *Antemurale Christianitatis*.

*Constantinopolim novam Romam sub
Turcarum imperio detineri (...).*

*Deponite nunc deponite Christiani
principes hanc tarditatem, atque
segnitiem, et ad vindicandam Christianam
republicam ab atrocissimorum hostium
servitute accuratis: et insulae Rhodo
opem afferte, quae (quod Deus avertat)
expugnaretur veh veh Christianis urbibus
et imperiis. Praestate igitur auxilium: nam
quid magis vos decet: quam non solum
pecunias atque vires omnes pro Christi
nomine: et gloria exponere: sed etiam vos
met devovere, ut vita frui aeternam
valeatis (...).*

Now, set aside, set aside, Christian princes,
this stupor and sloth, and hasten to free the
Christian Commonwealth from the slavery of
the most atrocious enemies, and bring aid to
the island of Rhodes. For if, God forbid, it
should be taken—woe, woe to Christian cities
and dominions. Therefore, provide aid. For
what could be more worthy of you than not
only to devote all your wealth and strength to
the name and glory of Christ, but even to
devote yourselves, so that you may be worthy
to enjoy eternal life? (...).

Authorship & Work

[§1] This source extract is taken from an address of 1513 made before Pope Leo X (sed. 1513–1521) at the eighth session of the Fifth Lateran Council, held between 1512 and 1517. The eighth session took place on 19 December 1513, whereas the source incorrectly dates it to 14 January 1513.³ It was delivered by Giovanni Battista de Gargiis, who published it a year later in his “Speech delivered at the Eighth Session of the Lateran Council, together with the Act of Obedience of the Grand Master of Rhodes” (*Oratio in octava sessione Lateranensis Concilii: unacum obedientia magni magistri Rhodi*). This volume contains a letter to Fabrizio del Carretto (r. 1513–1521), the newly-elected grandmaster of the Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (hereafter, the Hospitallers), two speeches made in the presence of Leo X, and a series of verses by a certain Laurentius Cathaneus—all of which will be touched upon in this article. The speech occupies five folios and represents an appeal to Christian leaders, particularly Leo X, to defend the church and the Christian faith through both spiritual and military means against the imminent threat of an Ottoman conquest of the island of Rhodes.

[§2] The speech itself can tell us little about de Gargiis other than his name, and almost all biographical information relating to him must be drawn from the single letter which he drafted in April 1514 to Fabrizio del Carretto.⁴ This text claims that de Gargiis hailed from Siena and identified himself as a knight of Jerusalem (*eques Hierosolymitani*), who had served the order from the time of his youth.⁵ In a further address to Leo X, de Gargiis refers to himself as an Italian,⁶ although he might have also possessed an ancestral connection to France. The toponym “de Gargiis” is associated with the commune of Garges-lès-Gonesse in north-eastern France which was a benefice of the diocese of Paris.⁷

³ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 3^r.

⁴ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 2^{r-v}.

⁵ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 2^{r-v}.

⁶ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 9^r: “Gaudendumque nobis non mediocriter est Italus, quis primus Rhodi ex nostro genere magnus magister sit delectus.”

⁷ *Collection des cartulaire*, ed. Guérard, vol. 1, p. 146; vol. 3, p. 211; vol. 7, p. 436.

[§3] It is unlikely that de Gargiis fulfilled a military function within the order. He made reference to his apparently well-known physical limitations,⁸ and he does not appear in the lists of men who defended Rhodes during the sieges of 1480 and 1522.⁹ As such, it is conceivable that he occupied a spiritual or administrative role, possibly as a chaplain. De Gargiis asserts that he spoke at the Lateran Council at the instruction of the grandmaster Fabrizio del Carretto, and was assisted in his efforts by the procurator of the Hospitallers, Philippus Provanus.¹⁰ Despite claiming that del Carretto had sent him to Rome “so that I would not appear utterly useless among my comrades,”¹¹ it is probable that he had been specially selected for this role due to his contacts in the papal curia.

[§4] De Gargiis was apparently acquainted with Leo X’s cousin, Giulio di Giuliano de Medici (sed. 1523–1534 as Pope Clement VII), who helped him draft his speech.¹² Moreover, an entry in the registers of Leo X might imply that de Gargiis possessed familial connections within the papal administration: in March 1513, a certain Franciscus Hieronymi de Garghis, a *scholaris* from Siena, was afforded right of access to a number of Hospitaller priories by the pope—a right that had also been granted to de Gargiis by Pope Julius II (sed. 1503–1513).¹³ After the conclusion of the council, de Gargiis disappears from the surviving record.

Content & Context

[§5] Convoked by Pope Julius II’s bull “Of the Holy and Sacred Roman Church” (*Sacrosanctae Romanae Ecclesiae*) in 1511, the Fifth Lateran Council constituted the first Lateran Council to have been assembled since 1215. Its aims were multifaceted. The council sought to advance long-delayed clerical and administrative reform (e.g. age limits for bishops, closer regulation of the Roman curia, the sale of indulgences, and the papal approval of the financial institutions known as the *monti di pietà*), while addressing a number of pressing theological questions (e.g. the immorality of the soul). Moreover, the council wished to reaffirm papal primacy against conciliarist claims in the wake of the *conciliabulum* of Pisa in 1511, and to coordinate a common defence against the Ottomans, who had confirmed their domination of the eastern Mediterranean with their conquest of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, in 1453.¹⁴

[§6] De Gargiis opened his speech with an invocation to God, the Virgin Mary, and the Hospitallers’ patron saint, John the Baptist, and used the metaphor of the “knighthood of Christ” (*Christi militia*) to allude to a shared spiritual and martial mission that was incumbent on both the faithful of Christian Europe and his own order.¹⁵ For de Gargiis, Leo X’s position as pope

⁸ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 2^r: “[Q]ui licet corpe aliquando servire nequiverim, at ingenii, atque animi opibus ac quantulocunque valui ingenio religioni nostrae non defui.”

⁹ Abbé de Vertot, *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers*, vol. 7, pp. 427–442.

¹⁰ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 2^r: “Nobilis item vir Philippus Prouanus, vices nunc in Urbe gerens, adhortatus vehementer est; ad idque ab ipso omne auxilium ac favor mihi praestitus est, ut onus orandi pro religionis nostrae decore Lateranensis synodi sessione octava aspirante Leone X Pontifex Maximus subirem.”

¹¹ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 2^r: “[N]e inter commilitones viderer prorsus inutilis.”

¹² Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 2^r: “In quo orandi munere ut in omnibus nostrae religionis negotiis Reverendus Cardinalis Iulius Medices nostri Ordinis ingens praesidium, mihi opem et favorem impendit: tamque is, qui de Religione nostra semper esse optime meritus censeretur.”

¹³ *Leonis X, Pontificis Maximi Regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 146, p. 10: “Francisco Ieronimi de Garghis, scholari Senensi, confirmat ius accedendi ad quasdam Praeceptorias Ordinis Sancti Johannis Ierosolymitani Aretinae, Clusinae ac Suanae dioecesis, a Julio Papa II iam recognitum.”

¹⁴ Minnich, *Fifth Lateran Council*; Minnich, Lateran V.

¹⁵ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 3^r: “Confisus igitur Omnipotentis Dei, et Intemeratae Virginis, divique Ioannis Baptistae nostri fautoris auxilio, tuaque, Pater beatissime, me hortante innata clementia, cum de Christi militia tum de sancta Synodo brevibus perstringam.”

represented his divine appointment as the leader of this order,¹⁶ while faithful Christians were among the knights of Christ (*militiae Christi*),¹⁷ whose home (*patria*) was not on earth, but rather in heaven.¹⁸ In view of this divine mission, de Gargiis identified two pressing concerns for the council: first, the growth of corruption and vice within the church and secular society.¹⁹ Second, the depredation of Christian lands by the “Turks” (*Turci*)²⁰ due to constant warfare perpetuated by the Christian rulers (*principes Christianos*) of Europe who had given themselves over to “luxury, quarrels, and idleness” (*luxui, simultatibus, ocio indulgent*).²¹ Towards the end of his speech, he called for a renewed military campaign to destroy the Muslims who had conquered lands which had previously belonged to the Roman church—an action which would ultimately bring about a broader spiritual renewal (*reformatio*) and a restoration of the church’s moral integrity.²²

[§7] In the chosen passages, de Gargiis attempted to channel the council’s reformist rhetoric into a concrete security agenda by stressing the relevance of Rhodes for countering the

¹⁶ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 4^r: “Huic Christi militiae Leo X Pontifex Maximus a summo Deo invictus Vexillifer praefectus fuisti. Tibique ille ligandi et solvendi potestatem dedit. Tu in specula domini pervigil fortiter astans, cuncta in rectum tramitem rediges.”

¹⁷ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 3^r: “De Christi militia imprimis dicere nostrum est institutum, cui ille operam dat: qui magnae et supernae militiae coelestis est cupidus, et Christiano semper haerere desiderat, quique; illius divinae vocis non ociosus auditor est.”

¹⁸ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 3^v: “Terra non nobis patria est, sed coelum nos cives, et incolas expectat.”

¹⁹ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 4^r: “Synodus haec erit veluti quoddam Mithridaticum antidotum. In Synodis quoniam solita plerumque est mater ecclesia salubria remedia providere, si quando nocendi cupiditas, ulciscendi crudelitas, implacabilis animus, et feritas rebellandi, suo in populo oriebatur. Nunc impius lucri furor, ac effrenis cupido, ira que; praeceps atque inmanis libido quae succensas agit mentes honestatis fines effregerat et omnis denique, scelerum labe in mundum irresperant. Mores vero et instituta maiorum pro lege tuenda sprete iacebant, Praevaricatores divinarum legum, et Ecclesiasticarum consuetudinum contemptores impune cervicibus elatis incedebant.” This theme had been addressed in a number of crusading appeals, particularly by popes. For example, Guillaume Fillastre, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Prietzel, p. 158. It was also used in Jacques de Bourbon, *de la noble cite de Rhodes*.

²⁰ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 6^v: “Iacet desolata Asia, iacet Aphrica, iacet Aegyptus, ac bona Europae pars deserta abiecta sine lege, sine moribus, sine ullo Christianae religionis consortio. Ubi tot civitates, tot populi, tot imperatores, reges, principes, cultu verae fidei, et armorum usque prestantissimi? Ubi tot celeberrima Christi et Sanctorum templa, in crudelissima iam Turcarum et Barbarorum ditionem devenerunt.”

²¹ The speech contains numerous references to this idea, e.g. Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 6^{r-v}: “Ne miremini igitur si tot infortunia Christianis rebus acciderunt, rara enim inter principes Christianos concordia hactenus fuit, qui cum debuissent unanimes salutiferae contra infideles expeditioni consulere, et opem ferre bella eis gerere magis placuit, quae nullos honestos meritoque triumphos habitura essent: et religionem conservare atque defendere contempserunt (...) Quid quod Tyrrhenum mare toties infestarunt, et quod pudet referre ad litora usque, Romani agri praedatum venerunt. Sed haec loca tam efferata barbara sine fide, sine Deo tam diu in potestate infidelium esse, ac non tam regi quam devastari passi sunt principes Christiani, dum quae sua sunt querunt, non quae Iesu Christi, dum quisque luxui, simultatibus, ocio indulget; dum Romanum Pontificem toties acclamantem, rabidos lupos gregem domini invasisse non audiunt.”

²² Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, ff. 5^v–6^r: “Huc pontifex maxime, Leo, animum te decet advertere, adversus horum rabiem, composita inter christianos pace, consurgere, exercitum in ea loca traicere, illatas ab hostibus iniurias ulcisci, ad tantum decus, tantam gloriam, ante alios evolare. Crux Christi in aciem pro vexillo prodibit, dux agminis sui praecedet omnipotens; insultabitur undique eorum capitibus, tamquam parieti inclinato et maceriae depulsae, persequeris, et comprehendes illos, et non converteris, donec deficiant. Sed sine te, Deus, miseri quid sumus? Aut quo recidunt conatus nostri? Cogitat iam bonus pastor, vicarius tuus, cogitat, inquam, in veram sanctamque sponsae tuae unionem eiusque reformationem incumbere, et populi tui in angulum redactas servare reliquias, amissa recuperare fines ecclesiae propogare... Tibi ergo regi regum, et Domino dominantium praeces soli fundendae sunt, ne memineris iniquitatumstrarum. Exurge, et dissipentur inimici tui, vindica sanguinem iustorum tuorum, qui effusus est. Erue de manu canum unicam sponsam tuam, labanti tuae religioni porrigito dexteram. Leoni Pontifici maximo, quem ad pascendas oves suas unum prae omnibus elegisti, mitte auxilium de sancto tuo, ut pacatis Christianorum animis in hoc tam sanctum, tam necessarium, tamque ecclesiae tuae utile et expediens opus toto (ut aiunt) pectore incumbere, illudque foeliciter absolvere te duce valeat, qui vivis et regnas in saecula. Dixi.”

Ottomans. Here, de Gargiis identified the strategic importance of the island within a broader Mediterranean Christian network: Rhodes' naval prowess allowed fleets to access the waters bordering the Sea of Rhodes (*mare Asiaticum*)—the Hellespont, the Sea of Marmara, the Black Sea—and the lands surrounding the eastern Mediterranean, notably Syria and Egypt. He stressed that it was precisely because of this unique geographical position that the Romans (*Romani*) had long relied on the military assistance of the Rhodians (*Rhodii*)—a claim which used the terms *Rhodii* and *Romani* to allude to the Hospitallers and the papacy respectively. In view of their longstanding history of shared strategic interests, de Gargiis identified the island's citadel, the fortress of the Hospitallers, and the stronghold of their master Fabrizio del Carretto, as a bulwark against “barbarous” enemies and invaders, a clear allusion to the continuing Ottoman expansions.

[§8] According to de Gargiis, the Hospitallers had warned the pope in previous communications that the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r. 918/1512–926/1520) was amassing a combined naval and land force equipped with an unprecedented array of siege engines. If this army were to successfully capture the island, de Gargiis predicted that the Ottomans, already raiding the coastal areas of the Tyrrhenian Sea with impunity, would advance by way of Italy. As such, he framed the impending siege as a struggle for the survival of Christian Europe, contending that the island's future should be among the new pope's foremost concerns. De Gargiis called for the formation of a military coalition against the Ottomans: Christian Europe's secular powers were to place themselves and their resources at the command of Pope Leo X to aid Rhodes and its defenders. Not only could the Christian rulers safeguard Rhodes, but they would be able to use the island as a bridgehead to invade Ottoman territory—an action which he hoped could lead to the “recovery” of Constantinople, and even Jerusalem itself. The author concludes with a moral exhortation, emphasising how the use of resources in combating the enemies of Christianity honoured God, and would ultimately secure eternal life.

Contextualization, Analysis & Interpretation

[§9] Although rarely consulted by scholars since the time of its publication, de Gargiis' speech to the Fifth Lateran Council represents a significant piece of evidence for how the Hospitallers conceptualised and communicated their transmediterranean presence in the centuries following the Christian loss of the Holy Land after 1291. The following paragraphs will contextualise his speech by reference to three main points of de Gargiis' calls. First, it will explain the important role of Rhodes and the Hospitallers in the Mediterranean with an eye to the Hospitallers' transition from a mainly land-based force in the Crusader states of the East to a naval power on Rhodes, responsible for embargo enforcement, convoying, and league warfare [§§10–16]. Second, it will consider how the Hospitallers, here represented by de Gargiis, attempted to influence papal policy in the eastern Mediterranean, in part via a deliberate re-centring of Rhodes and Jerusalem [§§17–23]. Third, it will highlight the gap between rhetoric and reality by situating the speech within a broader landscape of European-Christian disunity and limited capacity [§§24–31]—conditions that thwarted the broad coalition that de Gargiis envisioned and which, ultimately, were responsible for Rhodes' fall to the Ottomans in 1522.

[§10] De Gargiis' address clearly alludes to the Hospitallers' origins in the city of Jerusalem, where it was founded to care for sick and injured pilgrims in the aftermath of the city's conquest in July 1099 during the First Crusade (1096–1099). The order received papal confirmation in 1113,²³ and soon developed an extensive network of properties and incomes across the Latin East and Christian Europe, where several hospitals and hospices in important port cities such as Messina were placed under Hospitaller governance. This early transregional presence

²³ Camilleri, *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis*.

influenced the development of the order's military arm, and around the time of Grand Master Raymond du Puy (r. 1120/1123–1158/1160) the order began offering armed escorts for pilgrims journeying between Europe and Outremer.²⁴ This military expertise would later make the rulers of the Latin East increasingly dependent on the Hospitallers' support for both offensive and defensive operations on and across its frontiers. This historic role is referenced in Gargiis' address to emphasise that the Hospitallers possessed a legitimate military function in both the Holy Land and the eastern Mediterranean.

[§11] It is notable that de Gargiis made no mention of how the Hospitallers lost their position in the Holy Land. As is well known, the catastrophic Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn in 583/1187 not only shattered the military strength of the Crusader States, but also led to the fall of Jerusalem later that same year.²⁵ This loss forced the surviving Hospitallers to abandon many of their fortresses and ultimately relocate their principal base of operations to Acre, which became the *de facto* capital of the Latin East. Despite considerable Hospitaller investment in upgrading the city's defences, it came under sustained pressure from the expanding Mamlūk Sultanate, and fell to Sultan al-Aṣraf Ḥalīl (r. 689–693/1290–1293) in 690/1291. This marked the effective end of Latin-Christian rule in the Holy Land, and the surviving Hospitallers—together with fellow religious and military orders, clergy, and Latin elites—fled by sea to Cyprus.²⁶

[§12] On the island, and from a network of strategic bases, the Hospitallers established a number of hospitals, fortresses, and estates where they revived the liturgical and communal life which they had first established in Jerusalem.²⁷ However, as de Gargiis' speech stressed, their new island base, encircled by Muslim fleets, compelled the Hospitallers to transition from a primarily land-based military order to a naval power. Under pressure from Pope Nicholas IV (sed. 1288–1292) to enforce the papal embargo on trade with Egypt,²⁸ the Hospitallers invested in naval fortifications and fleet-building, and between 1300 and 1305 they were twice called upon to support the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia against Mamlūk incursions.²⁹

[§13] The Hospitallers' burgeoning naval capacity laid the foundation for their eventual relocation to the island of Rhodes. In 1306, under the direction of Grand Master Foulques de Villaret (r. 1305–1316), a coalition of Hospitaller galleys and Genoese vessels launched an expedition to seize the island from the Byzantine Empire, which had found it increasingly difficult to exert authority over Rhodes following their defeat against Ottoman forces at the Battle of Bapheus in 701/1302. The Hospitallers' naval superiority proved decisive in this protracted campaign, which culminated in the capture of Rhodes from the Byzantines, along with several neighbouring islands such as Kastellórizo and Bodrum, between 1309 and 1310.³⁰

[§14] As de Gargiis made clear, Rhodes occupied a key position at the intersection of major transmediterranean maritime routes. Among the largest islands in the eastern Mediterranean, its location afforded control over the east–west maritime corridor and, more critically, the sea lanes which connected the Black Sea and Anatolia with Egypt and the Levant. As such, Hospitaller control of fourteenth-century Rhodes necessarily brought them into contact with the fragmented Muslim and Christian polities of the Aegean. However, despite de Gargiis' claim that “infidels (...) are always thirsting to strike at the Rhodian hegemony,”³¹ conflict

²⁴ Hiestand, *Papsturkunden*, pp. 143–144, 151.

²⁵ *De Expugnatione Terra Sanctae per Saladinum*, in: *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. Stevenson (*Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores* 66), p. 228.

²⁶ Burgtorf, *Central Convent*, pp. 83–128 (Acre), pp. 129–176 (Cyprus).

²⁷ Dondi, *Liturgical Manuscripts*.

²⁸ Coureas, *Controlled Contacts*.

²⁹ Luttrell, *Interventions*.

³⁰ Sarnowsky, *Macht und Herrschaft*.

³¹ *Ioannes Baptista Gargha, Oratio*, f. 5^v.

between the Hospitallers and regional powers was not necessarily determined by religious affiliation: the enforcement of the papal embargo on Egypt saw the Hospitallers clash with Christian powers;³² the order concluded trade agreements with neighbouring Muslim rulers;³³ and the Hospitallers habitually conducted political negotiations with both the Mamlūk Sultanate and the Ottomans. For example, in 1267 the Hospitallers reached an agreement with the Mamlūk sultan al-Zāhir Baybars (r. 658–676/1260–1277) in which they agreed to shared lordship over Hims, Šayzar, and Ḥamāh.³⁴ Or, in 1481, the death of Mehmed II (r. 847–849/1444–1446, and 855–886/1451–1481) brought about a conflict for the throne between Bāyezīd II (r. 886–918/1481–1512) and his younger brother, Cem (d. 900/1495). Defeated by Bāyezīd, Cem sought refuge with the Hospitallers on Rhodes and asked them to ferry him to Rumelia. However, grandmaster Pierre d'Aubusson (r. 1476–1503) reached an agreement with Bāyezīd II which was maintained until 1484: in return for 40,000 gold ducats per year, the Hospitallers would keep Cem as their prisoner on the island.³⁵ As part of this diplomatic exchange, Bāyezīd gifted the order a reliquary which contained the right hand of John the Baptist.³⁶

[§15] Despite such examples of interreligious communication, the island's physical position placed the Hospitallers at the symbolic forefront of the crusading movement, or at least of its remnants. This was underscored by de Gargiis, who stressed that the island had been a target for hostile powers since the Hospitallers' conquest. This claim was not merely rhetoric. In 712/1312, the Hospitallers had defeated a fleet dispatched by Mas'ūd Beg, the beylik of Menteşe (r. 681–719/1281–1319), at the Battle of Amorgos, and won an engagement against the ships of Mehmed Beg, the bey of Aydın (r. 708–734/1308–1334), which led to the conquest of Leros in 719/1319. These early victories saw the capture of the string of islands between Rhodes and Crete (e.g. Carpathos, Kos, and Megiste), and were probably followed by the occupation of fortresses and the extraction of tribute from a number of coastal cities on the Anatolian mainland.³⁷ It was perhaps for this reason that the Turks of Menteşe, under Orkhan b. Mas'ūd (r. ca. 719/1319), attempted to seize the island—a decision which likely prompted the knights to target Turkish shipping in collaboration with the lord of Chios, Martino Zaccaria (r. 1314–1329).³⁸ Such allied military action would characterise the years between 1332 and 1351, when the Hospitallers participated in Christian naval leagues which not only curtailed Turkish raiding activity,³⁹ but brought about the conquest of the harbour city of Smyrna (İzmir) in 1344.⁴⁰

[§16] Such examples show how the Hospitallers came to be perceived as a key threat to the Muslim polities of the eastern Mediterranean, and in 1440 and 1444 the Mamlūks attacked the island.⁴¹ However, the knights' island stronghold gained particular significance in the years following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman sultan, Mehmed II in 857/1453. The fall of the city precipitated a series of conquests which expanded Ottoman rule deep into the Balkans, Asia Minor, and the Aegean. In this context, Rhodes emerged as one of the last viable (Latin-)Christian bastions capable of challenging Ottoman naval and military dominance. The Ottomans were well aware of the strategic significance of Rhodes. The Hospitaller outposts of

³² Edbury, Cyprus and Genoa, pp. 107, 119–120.

³³ Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, p. 11. On truces, see: Luttrell, Hospitallers, pp. 91, 97, 105; Sarnowsky, *Macht und Herrschaft*, pp. 395–397; Coureas, Commerce.

³⁴ Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, p. 34.

³⁵ İnalçık, A Case Study in Renaissance Diplomacy, pp. 346–348; Ari, Early Ottoman Diplomacy, pp. 56–57.

³⁶ Zoitou, *Staging Holiness*, p. 45, FN 137–138; Katsioti, The Arm of St. John the Baptist, pp. 151–153.

³⁷ Heslop, Defensive System.

³⁸ Carr, Trade or Crusade.

³⁹ Luttrell, Venice.

⁴⁰ Geanakoplos, Byzantium and the Crusades, pp. 59–65.

⁴¹ Bosworth, Arab Attacks, pp. 162–164.

Leros, Kos, and Kalymnos were sacked in 1455 and 1457,⁴² with raids recorded in 1458, 1460, and 1477.⁴³ On a diplomatic level, in 1476, a Greek-Christian noble from Euboea, Demetrios Sophianos, was dispatched from Ottoman Constantinople as an emissary to negotiate a peace settlement in return for tribute payments and assurances that the knights would refrain from attacking Ottoman shipping. These overtures came to nothing. On the contrary, between the mid-fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, the island emerged as a crucial hub of Christian naval opposition during the Venetian-Ottoman wars—a role that had prompted Mehmed II to make an ill-fated attempt at its capture in 1480.⁴⁴

[§17] By reference to these developments, de Gargiis' speech of 1513 can be temporally located in the context of the loss of crusader-held territories in the eastern Mediterranean, set against an increasingly expansionist Ottoman Empire. As much scholarship has shown, European-Christian concern herein had gradually transformed the idea of crusade from a campaign to reclaim the Holy Land into a defensive enterprise aimed at preventing the Ottomans' advance.⁴⁵ This can be clearly discerned in the crusading policy of Pope Leo X's predecessor, Pope Julius II. Buoyed by the recent memory of the Christian conquest of Muslim Granada in 1492, and with Spain's conquest of Tripoli in North Africa in 1510, Julius II was enthusiastic about directing a new crusade to halt the advance of the *Turci*,⁴⁶ and even appointed a number of the order's members to leading positions in the Roman curia.⁴⁷

[§18] Pope Julius II's enthusiasm was influenced by a diverse body of written material, much of which had been produced or patronised by the Hospitallers themselves in the years after the Ottoman siege of 1480—an event that was formative for the way in which the Hospitallers came to define and assert themselves. For example, in 1483, Guillaume Caoursin (d. 1501) emphasised that the knights possessed a special relationship with the divine in describing how they had defended Rhodes with the support of heavenly legions led by the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist.⁴⁸ Or, in the first decade of the sixteenth century, François de Bourdon penned the "Treatise on the expedition to be made against the Turk" (*Tractatus expeditionis faciende contra Turcum*),⁴⁹ which challenged Julius II to revive Christian piety by leading an army of crusaders and mercenaries against the Ottomans. The text equates the defence of Rhodes with the defence of Christendom, and stresses that it was only by holding the island that Christian Europe could logistically support a crusading army.

[§19] Such texts were disseminated widely thanks to the Hospitallers' determined promotion, which combined the use of the printing press and extensive diplomatic correspondence⁵⁰ with the commissioning of a substantial body of artistic works.⁵¹ This influence is apparent in

⁴² Losse, *Gunpowder Defences*, p. 194.

⁴³ Heslop, *Defensive System*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Brockman, *Sieges*, pp. 58–92.

⁴⁵ Luttrell, *Crusade in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 122–154; Housley, *Ottoman Threat*; Srodecki, *Crusading on the Periphery*, pp. 33–64.

⁴⁶ Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, p. 141.

⁴⁷ Giovanni B. Bovio, *La pietà trionfante*, p. 285, cols 1–2.

⁴⁸ Guillaume Caoursin, *Obsidionis Rhodiae Urbis Descriptio*, ff. 8^v–9: "Magnisque incommoditatibus exercitum affectum affirmant fama satis constans est, et palam a perfugis vulgatur Thurcos visionis miraculo erterritos tanta trepidatione loco cecidisse ac pedem retulisse. Aiunt enim, cum vexilla domini nostri Ihesu Christi ac virginis Mariae et sancti Ioannis baptistae religionisque Hierosolimorum in conflictu (iussu principis) erecta sunt, crucem auream in aere splendidissimam hostes vidisse, apparuisse insuper candidissimam virginem clipeum et hastam gestantem ac hominem usti veste obsitum splendidissimo comitatu stipatum, praesidio adesse. Que visio tantum terrorem eis incussit, ut nullo pacto progredi ausi sint."

⁴⁹ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. lat. 2939, ff. 87^r–98^v; Sarnowsky, *Military Orders*, p. 136.

⁵⁰ For example, Jacques de Bourbon, *Oppugnation de la noble cite de Rhodes*; Thoma Guichardo, *Oratio*; Jacques Fontanus, *De Bello Rhodio*.

⁵¹ Cavaceppi, *Hospitaller Aesthetics*, pp. 8–12.

swathes of surviving source material from the pontificate of Leo X. In March 1513, the Camaldolese monks Tommaso Giustiniani (d. 1528) and Vincenzo Querini (d. 1514) published the “Pamphlet to Leo X” (*Libellus ad Leonem X*). This text was circulated among the members of the curia to call for a European-Christian coalition under papal control and explicitly highlighted the strategic importance of Rhodes as a base for sustaining a campaign against the *Turci*.⁵² In the council’s sixth session, in the presence of Hospitallers knights, Bishop Šimun Kožičić Benja of Modruš (sed. 1509–1536) made explicit reference to the role of Rhodes in defending Rome’s sphere of influence, asking the assembled clergy: “Are you waiting until, fully equipped and already launched, a vast fleet seizes Rhodes or lays waste to Italy?”⁵³ In the council’s tenth session, the archbishop of Bar, Stephen Teglatus, (sed. 1445–1515), repeated a number of warnings which he had previously made to popes Sixtus IV (sed. 1471–1482), Innocent VIII (sed. 1484–1492), and Alexander IV (sed. 1492–1503)—to whom he had written three tracts which offered a number of proposals for a new crusading expedition, the last of which he had resubmitted to Leo X in 1513. He criticised the leaders of Christian Europe (*regibus Christianis*) for their failure to halt Muslim expansion, and urged the pope (*gubernacula Christianorum*) to assume personal command of Christendom’s defence by enforcing peace.⁵⁴ The conviction that only the pope was capable of enforcing such a peace had already formed a central part of the opening address of the eighth session. It was stated that rulers had a duty to contribute forces for an expedition against the infidels, and stressed that—should conflict among them endanger the unity of this army—clerics had a duty to enforce secular compliance through the threat of excommunication.⁵⁵

[§20] In addressing the council, de Gargiis was therefore engaging with a broader discourse prevalent among influential factions in the papal curia. This context likely shaped his decision to emphasise several key themes—the potential role of Leo X in leading a crusading army, the historic role of Rhodes in resisting the *Turci*, its significance for the defence of Christendom, and its potential function as a basis for any future campaign against the Ottomans. As has been seen, de Gargiis possessed contacts within this milieu. This included the future Pope Clement VII, whose agitation for a crusade against the Ottomans may be contextualised, at least in part, by his role as the dedicatee of a number of pro-crusade Hospitaller texts,⁵⁶ but who died a year before Charles V’s (r. 1519–1556 as Holy Roman emperor) capture of Tunis in 1535.⁵⁷ However, what is striking about de Gargiis’ speech is his invocation of the recovery of Jerusalem—a theme that, by the early sixteenth century, had largely receded from the forefront of crusading rhetoric. By emphasising his status as an *eques Hierosolymitanus*, he argued that

⁵² *Libellus ad Leonem X* di P. Giustiniani e P. Querini, in: Johanne B. Mittarelli and Anselmo Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses Ordinis sancti Benedicti*, cols. 612–719, at cols. 648–652: “Ex omnibus regionibus, per quas exercitum aut classem ducere decreveris, multa undique auxilia, et ut reliqua omnia taceamus, ex solum Graeciae pars, quae Christianis adhuc reservatur, maxima certe Tibi et terra et mari auxilia subministrare poterit, et pro religionis zelo, et pro gentis illius odio, id minime dissimulabit. Reliquas praeterire insulas possumus; Rhodum vero praetermittere non possumus, quae, quamquam minime numero virorum aut divitiis contra eam gentem sufficere posse, animorum tamen virtute bellicae exercitatione tantum valet, ut ceteris omnibus Christianis aut otio languentibus aut impiis odiis sese invicem lacerantibus atque dilacerantibus, ipsa sola adversus totum Turcarum imperium continuis bellis pugnare audeat, et nunquam sine victoria pugnare consueverit. Si enim ceteri omnes Christiani principes, singuli pro viribus suis, sic Turcis indefessi hostes sese praebeissent, ut ea una insula semper praebeuit, nequaquam tantum impia illa gens crevisset, sed et omnis huiusmodi pestis multo jam tempore de medio ablata esset; quae non satis ampla neque multum hominibus aut divitiis abundat, una insula contra Turcas bellandi provinciam sustinere audet.”

⁵³ Benja Šimun Kožičić, Simonis Begnii episcopi Modrusiensis oratio, p. 8: “An expectatis dum parata et deducta iam ingens classis Rhodum occupet aut Italiam depopuletur?”

⁵⁴ *Sacrorum conciliorum*, ed. Mansi, vol. 32, pp. 916–929.

⁵⁵ *Sacrorum conciliorum*, ed. Mansi, vol. 32, pp. 843–845.

⁵⁶ For example, Thoma Guichardo, *Oratio*; Jacques Fontanus, *De Bello Rhodio*.

⁵⁷ Sorgia, *La politica nord-africana*; Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, pp. 288–291.

Leo X should not merely seek to halt the enemy advance, but rather aspire to reclaim Constantinople, the Holy Land, and even Jerusalem. His address is, therefore, remarkable for the way it seeks to promote a fundamental new vision of the aims and scope of crusading under Leo X.

[§21] It is possible that de Gargiis' call for a renewed effort to reclaim the Holy Land influenced Camilio Porti, a canon of the Basilica of San Pietro in Vaticano, to compose an oration to the pope in the name of the viceroy of Portuguese India, Afonso de Albuquerque (r. 1509–1515). A few months after de Gargiis' address, he also offered an innovative vision of crusading by claiming that the Portuguese conquests in the Indian Ocean offered a new opportunity for Christian armies to retake the Holy Sepulchre (*Casa Sancta de Jerusálem*) by way of the Kingdom of Hormuz.⁵⁸ If there is indeed a relation between de Gargiis' call and Porti's oration, then the latter could be regarded as evidence for how the Hospitallers sought to use the forum of the Fifth Lateran Council to champion alternative forms of crusading.

[§22] All this underscores the broader influence of the order with regard to papal policy in the Mediterranean. In the centuries following the loss of Jerusalem, the order had actively sought to maintain and reassert their claims to influence in this region through the fashioning of an institutional memory which they strengthened by invoking their foundation and functions in Jerusalem and the Latin East. This shaped their approach to relations with Christian Europe. Particularly in the decades after the Hospitallers' re-establishment on Rhodes, the order was chronically short of manpower and riven by debt.⁵⁹ As such, it sought to solicit support from the faithful of Christendom by anchoring statutes, chronicles, and diplomatic communication within a framework which recalled their origin in Jerusalem and stressed how their roles as defenders of pilgrims and guardians of the Christian frontier seamlessly continued after the physical loss of the Holy Land.⁶⁰

[§23] With this institutional context in mind, de Gargiis proposed that Rhodes could serve as a platform for reviving an older form of crusading. Any successful advance against the Ottomans, he suggested, would have to be launched from the island—precisely because of the continuity and military-religious structure of the Hospitallers, whose identity and institutional purpose remained inextricably tied to Jerusalem itself. To reinforce this claim, de Gargiis highlighted a connection between Florence—which he refers to as the *patria* of Leo X—and St John the Baptist, the Hospitallers' patron saint. In doing so, he alluded to the fact that relics of the saint were venerated both in the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence and—thanks to the gift of Bāyezīd II—in the Hospitallers' church of St John of the Collachium at Rhodes. By foregrounding these relics, he fashioned a shared sacred geography which evoked a common bond which physically linked the eastern and central Mediterranean, ultimately rooting their connection to the physical locus of the Holy Land in biblical times.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Commentarios do grande Afonso d'Albuquerque capitão geral que foi das Indias Orientais*, vol. 3, p. 194: “Abrio-se-nos polo Reyno de Ormuz caminho pera a Casa Sancta de Jerusálem, (terra, em que o Salvador nas-ceo,) poder ser tornada a ganhar, e tira-da das mãos de aquelles infieis, que ty-rannica, e indevidamente a possuem, em cujos corações tem entrado temor, que lhes faz arreçar o perigo de seus seme-lhantes.” This idea had roots in fourteenth-century debates, for example the proposals of William Adam (d. 1341) or Fidenzio of Padua (d. before 1291): William of Adam, *How to Defeat the Saracens*, ed./trans. Constable, particularly pp. 96–117; Fidence de Padoue, *Liber recuperationis Terre Sancte*, ed. Paviot, pp. 140–141. See: Leopold, *How to Recover the Holy Land*, pp. 39–44; Mauntel, *Seas and Lands*.

⁵⁹ Vann; Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety*, pp. 11–42.

⁶⁰ Bonet Donato, *Memories*.

⁶¹ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 5^r: “Accensurum te etiam ad hanc tam pulchram: tam sanctam: tamque tuo magno excelsoque animo dignam expeditionem ducum divum Ioannem domini nostri praecursorem: cuius tutela tam patria tua beata est: quo Rhodos: ac Hierosolymitanus ordo; quemque olim quod cognomine ei effes: praecipue colere consuevisti, atque adhuc colis.”

[§24] De Gargiis concluded his address by describing how, if Rhodes fell, the Ottomans would inevitably shift their focus to Italy. To underscore the urgency of the threat, he pointed to the repeated incursions into the Tyrrhenian Sea and, more alarmingly, to the plundering of papal lands.⁶² This claim is striking. For although the Ottomans consolidated their hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean after 1480, they made no direct attempt on Rhodes until 1522. Nonetheless, a body of evidence suggests that both the papacy and the Hospitallers believed that they were facing an immediate threat.

[§25] In a letter dated to March 1512, Leo X told the viceroy of Naples, Ramón de Cardona (r. 1509–1522), that “we have been informed about Selim” (*certiores facti sumus Selimum*),⁶³ while asking him to allow the knights to purchase provisions and arms. In the same month, he exhorted “with great urgency” (*magnopere*) that the doge and councillors of Genoa provide every assistance to the Hospitallers as they attempted to purchase two war galleys.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, in Rome, Camilio Porti warned of the dangers of an imminent Ottoman invasion of Italy,⁶⁵ and in March 1514, the Venetian ambassador pointed to Leo X’s conviction that the sultan was amassing troops in Bosnia for an invasion of Friuli.⁶⁶ Indeed, Leo X’s fears of the Ottomans’ ambitions in Italy could not be easily dismissed.⁶⁷ Ottoman raids had become common in Sicily,⁶⁸ and in 1480 they had even succeeded in briefly capturing Otranto.⁶⁹ Ottoman fleets were active off the Italian coast in 1513,⁷⁰ and in April 1516 a raiding party attacked Civitavecchia with the pope narrowly avoiding capture.⁷¹ Two years later, another force had raided up the Tiber and seized ships laden with wine.⁷² In the subsequent months a papal galley was captured.⁷³

[§26] The papacy’s apparent fear of an imminent Ottoman advance would not only explain the rapid deployment of armed galleys to Rhodes, but also the urgency with which Leo X sought to rally European-Christian support for a new crusade. Between May and June 1513, Leo X established and restructured three commissions which were tasked with establishing peace in Europe.⁷⁴ This was followed by a period of intense diplomatic activity, the scale of which is worthy of comment. In September 1513, Leo X addressed a letter to the kings and peoples of Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, Prussia, and Russia which entreated them to fight against the *Turci*. He instructed Cardinal Tamás Bakócz (d. 1521) to prepare Hungary for a crusade which would be paid for by a tithe to be levied on all ecclesiastical income.⁷⁵ A month later, he dispatched a letter to King Henry VIII of England (r. 1509–1547) urging him to cease fighting France and Scotland so that he might turn his attention to the *Turci*.⁷⁶ This was followed in December by a letter addressed to the Holy Roman emperor, Maximilian I (r. 1486–1519 as king of the Romans, 1508–1519 as Holy Roman emperor),⁷⁷ and—in copy—to the seven imperial

⁶² Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 6^v: “Quid quod Tyrrhenum mare toties infestarunt: et quod pudet referre, ad litora usque Romani agri praedatum venerunt?”

⁶³ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 1928, p. 109.

⁶⁴ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 1921, p. 108.

⁶⁵ See *Commentarios do grande Afonso dAlbuquerque*, p. 205.

⁶⁶ *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 18, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, p. 32.

⁶⁷ Guasti, *manoscritti*, pp. 391–392.

⁶⁸ For Turkish piracy around Sicily: *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 16, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, pp. 19, 38.

⁶⁹ For concerns that this event would precede the capture of Rome, Setton, *Turkish Doom*, pp. 35–36.

⁷⁰ *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 17, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, pp. 398, 426.

⁷¹ *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 17, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, p. 183.

⁷² *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 25, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, p. 366.

⁷³ *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 26, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, pp. 93, 142, 165, 212, 213.

⁷⁴ Setton, *Papacy*, p. 145.

⁷⁵ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 4347, pp. 264–265.

⁷⁶ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 4924, p. 303.

⁷⁷ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 5971, p. 379.

electors.⁷⁸ Similar pleas were also received by Ferdinand II of Aragón (r. 1479–1516) and King Ladislav II of Bohemia (r. 1471–1516 as king of Bohemia, 1490–1516 as king of Hungary and Croatia).⁷⁹

[§27] In August 1514, Leo X sought to apply new political pressure on Europe's rulers in the aftermath of Sultan Selim's victory over the Şafavid Shāh, Ismā'īl I (r. 907–930/1501–1524), at the Battle of Chaldiran, which brought the Ottomans control over eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq.⁸⁰ In response, Maximilian I declared his support for a Christian coalition in March 1515.⁸¹ By December, Francis I of France (r. 1515–1547) was contemplating the recovery of the Holy Land itself.⁸² In this year, the English king, Henry VIII, was not only supportive of an alliance,⁸³ but also spoke of his desire to conquer Jerusalem.⁸⁴ Thus, in November 1517, at the final session of the council, Leo X tasked a commission of cardinals to make practical plans for a crusade, while papal legates were tasked with securing a five-year truce among European rulers.⁸⁵ This was to be tied to a broader reform of the church: as de Gargiis had stressed, it was widely believed that a church freed of internal corruption could unite secular rulers and ensure that Muslim enemies would be unable to overrun Christian lands.

[§28] Perhaps in view of such efforts, Leo X had already felt able to assure Fabrizio del Carretto in a letter of February 1514 that Rhodes would be defended, asking him to send regular intelligence reports to Rome which reported on Ottoman galley and troop movements.⁸⁶ De Gargiis was apparently aware of this momentum. In a final address, which was delivered as the Hospitallers offered their formal declaration of allegiance to Leo X in March 1514, he praised the pope's preparations, and repeated his conviction that this could not only free the Aegean, but also all regions that had succumbed to Muslim domination.⁸⁷ Shortly afterwards, de Gargiis collected his addresses and compiled them within a single volume, the "Speech delivered at the Eighth Session of the Lateran Council, together with the Act of Obedience of the Grand Master of Rhodes" (*Oratio in octava sessione Lateranensis Concilii: unacum obedientia magni magistri Rhodi*) which is prefaced by a remarkable woodcut depicting the address.⁸⁸ To this, a certain Laurentius Cathaneus contributed a series of verses which praised de Gargiis' oratory and compared Fabrizio del Carretto to a new Jupiter who was ready to conquer his enemies.⁸⁹ The printed text was then copied by the papal scribe Ludovico degli Arrighi (d. 1527), who

⁷⁸ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 5972, p. 380.

⁷⁹ *Leonis X regesta*, ed. Hergenröther, no. 5984, p. 380.

⁸⁰ For papal efforts to raise a crusade following this event, Setton, *Papacy*, pp. 172–197.

⁸¹ Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Miscellanea, Arm. VI, Reg. 39, ff. 159^r–169^r. A partial transcription of this document is given in: Setton, *Papacy*, p. 153, FN 50.

⁸² *Négociations de la France dans le Levant*, ed. Charrière, pp. CXXIX–CXXXI. For Leo X's optimism, Pietro Bembo, *Opere*, vol. 4, pp. 93–94. For his practical preparations for crusade: Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Reg. Vat. 1197, ff. 110–119.

⁸³ *Calendar of state papers and manuscripts*, ed. Brown, no. 754, p. 313.

⁸⁴ *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 17, ed. Stefani, Bechet, and Barozzi, p. 174. The Hospitallers had actively courted English support. In 1506, Henry VII (r. 1485–1509), had been made "protector of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem at Rhodes," and this was then conferred on Henry VIII in 1511. For this and the Tudor dynasty's crusading policy, see: Tyerman, *England*, pp. 351–354.

⁸⁵ Setton, *Turkish Doom*, pp. 367–424.

⁸⁶ *Opere del cardinale Pietro Bembo*, vol. 4, p. 53: "[P]roque ea insulaque ipsa ab Turcarum cupiditate et bellicisque apparatibus, de quibus scribis, tuenda et defendenda, si erit opus, nihil sum neque studii neque diligentiae neque omnino laboris praetermissurus. Certe non, si vitam ipsam profundere me oporteat ea in re, tuam unquam societatem, curam, tutelam, procuracionem negligam."

⁸⁷ Ioannes Baptista Gargha, *Oratio*, f. 8^{r-v}: "Te Pontifice Leo Maxime tantus de hostibus triumphus reportetur: te auctore tot celeberrimae regiones Graeciae: tam duro saevissimorum hostium iugo liberentur. Serviant Christo loca: quae per tot iam annos Mahumeti serviverunt: Christum iterum colant provinciae: quae Christum execrantes spurcissimum Mahumetem colunt."

⁸⁸ Minnich and Pfeiffer, De Grassi's "conciliabulum."

⁸⁹ *Ioannes Baptista Gargha, Oratio*, ff. 10^v–11^v, at f. 11^r.

produced a finely illuminated manuscript of de Gargiis' speech, complete with a contemporary depiction of Fabrizio del Carretto.⁹⁰ It is unclear if Leo X patronised the production of the manuscript. That it was produced within the papal workshops indicates that it can be considered alongside another indication of Leo X's determination to defend Rhodes: his commission of Raphael (d. 1520) to paint the so-called "Battle of Ostia" (*Battaglia di Ostia*) in the Apostolic Palace between 1514 and 1515. In this fresco, Pope Leo IV (sed. 847–855), portrayed as Leo X, offers his thanks to God after the defeat of a Muslim fleet by an allied armada of papal, Neapolitan, Amalfitan, and Gaetan ships.⁹¹

[§29] However, by 1516, fundamental shifts in the political and religious landscape of Europe and the Mediterranean were already increasingly apparent. In this year, Sultan Selim won a decisive victory over the Mamlūks at the Battle of Marḡ Dābiq in Syria. In 1517, he toppled the Mamlūk Sultanate, and seized Cairo along with Damascus and Jerusalem. The Ottomans' consolidation of power in the east not only secured their control of the Mediterranean's major metropolises, but allowed them to redirect their focus westward towards the Balkans. In August 1519, Henry VIII began a feverish correspondence with the papacy in which he announced that he would direct England's resources against the *Turci*.⁹² However, European-Christian rulers were powerless to prevent Sultan Süleymān's (r. 932–974/1520–1566) campaign into Hungary and his capture of Belgrade in August 1521. At the same time, Christian Europe was increasingly riven by internal divisions. In 1517, Martin Luther (d. 1546) had posted his "Ninety-Five Theses," and his excommunication in 1521 confirmed the break between him and his followers, and the Roman Church, giving impetus to rulers who sought to defy the authority of Rome. War between France and the Republic of Venice against the Holy Roman Empire, England, and the Papal States, not only augmented divisions between Europe's major powers, but would ultimately see the formation of a Franco-Ottoman alliance.⁹³ By 1518, Fabrizio del Carretto had grown exasperated by the lack of European-Christian support and—in stark contrast to de Gargiis' speech of 1513—stressed how the order had become so weak that it could scarcely maintain the island's garrison, let alone mount an external assault:

We have before our eyes the imminent danger of the ruin that the most powerful infidel threatens us with. Our forces are so weak that they cannot withstand so great a struggle, given that we are daily becoming more debilitated by those who should be supporting us. We do not cease to recount our misfortunes to your Holiness and to declare the poverty in which we have been placed, since we are daily deprived of our revenues, with the result that, in a sense, we remain entirely alone.⁹⁴

[§30] Less than a decade after de Gargiis had triumphantly predicted that a new crusade would drive the *Turci* from Constantinople and carry a papal army to the gates of Jerusalem, the very notion of assembling a viable crusading force—let alone one capable of defending Rhodes—had become increasingly unrealistic. When an Ottoman force landed on the island, European-Christian aid was minimal. The island of Rhodes surrendered in December 1522. Nonetheless, by successfully defending the island's fortress for six months against numerically superior

⁹⁰ London, British Library, Add MS 89542.

⁹¹ Such paintings conflated crusading with the defence of Rome and *patria*, see: Meserve, *Papacy*, pp. 223–224.

⁹² *Letters and Papers*, ed. Brewer et al., p. 537.

⁹³ Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies*.

⁹⁴ Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Lettere di principi, vol. II, ff. 54–55, at f. 55^r: "[Quia] ante oculos habemus imminens periculum instantis ruinae quam nobis potentissimus infidelis minatur et vires nostrae sunt tenues ut tante moli resistere possint et quotidie undique magis debilitamur a quibus incrementum suscipere deberemus: non cessamus nostras calamitates vestre beatitudini recensere et paupertatem in qua sumus constituti declarare cum quotidie nostris proventibus frustrerem quo fit ut quodammodo soli remaneamus." Partial transcription in: Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*. p. 181, FN 41.

forces, the Hospitallers secured favourable terms and were permitted to depart—eventually establishing a new base on Malta with the support of Charles V. As de Gargiis had predicted, the fall of Rhodes catalysed further Ottoman conquests. By 1529, Süleymān’s armies had reached the gates of Buda and Vienna; the former was annexed in 1541, with Ottoman control over Hungary formally recognised by the Holy Roman Empire in 1547. Indeed, their seemingly relentless advance would only begin to be checked following their ill-fated siege of Hospitaller Malta in 1565, and the success of an allied Catholic fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

[§31] Since the time of its publication in 1514, Giovanni Battista de Gargiis’ speech has received relatively little scholarly attention. Nonetheless, a close examination suggests that it represents significant evidence for how the Hospitallers sought to forestall the imminent fall of Rhodes to the Ottomans at a time of structural disunity and fiscal-logistical limitations in Christian Europe. Under direct instruction from the Hospitallers’ grand master, de Gargiis used the forum of the Fifth Lateran Council to position Rhodes, not as a distant outpost, but rather as the central node of a transmediterranean network which linked Rome and the courts of Christian Europe to the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. Herein, the source is remarkable for the way in which it seeks to mobilise this network in defence of the island, particularly through an appeal to older crusading ideals—a strategy that not only underscores the legitimising power of the order’s origins in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, but also the continuing political and religious significance of these ties amid the collapse of Christian rule in the eastern Mediterranean.

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