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# From Florence to Lyon and Geneva fairs: the Pazzi family, the King of France, and the shifting economic geography during the late 15th century

While Avignon records suggest that the Pazzi family's business was flourishing in the Comtat Venaissin and in Provence in the fifteenth century, their deposit bank went bankrupt in 1465.<sup>1</sup> The head of the family, Alamano, was imprisoned for some time. This bankruptcy is not very exceptional at a time when many of Europe's largest banks, notably Florentine ones, appear to have been entangled in risky financial operations for the benefit of the French and English monarchies, and more generally in a credit system where "public" and "private" interests were intertwined.<sup>2</sup> These events are part of a context of "crisis" in a rapidly changing world.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, the banking activities of the Pazzi family in Avignon seem to have moved to Lyon, right after the bankruptcy in Avignon. However, the conditions of this transfer need to be clarified because there are few records left. Even if this event is part of a more general process of territorial shifting in regional and European economic geography at the end of the fifteenth century, the reasons and mechanisms that led the Pazzi family to this bankruptcy and to the transfer of their activities from Avignon to Lyon in France—since Avignon

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1 Deliberations of 4 September 1467, Archives municipales d'Avignon, BB (1436–1471), fol. 187.

2 Several examples of this well-known phenomenon, including the emblematic case of the Medici family, can be found in Raymond De Roover. *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank: 1397–1494*. Washington, DC: Beard Books, 1999; Carlo M. Cipolla. *Storia economica dell'Europa pre-industriale*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1974; Franco Franceschi, Richard A. Goldthwaite, Reinhold C. Mueller. *Il Rinascimento italiano e l'Europa. Volume quarto. Commercio e cultura mercantile*. Treviso-Costabissara (Vicenza): Fondazione Cassamarca—Angelo Colla editore, 2007. On banking practices that mix private interests and "public finances," see the analyses of Giacomo Todeschini. *La banca e il ghetto. Una storia italiana*. Bari: Laterza, 2016. See also the recent synthesis devoted to the Florentine case by Lorenzo Tanzini. *1345. La bancarotta di Firenze. Una storia di banchieri, fallimenti e finanza*. Rome: Salerno, 2018.

3 See, in particular, Mathieu Arnoux. Croissance et crises dans le monde médiéval XI<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. *Cahiers du monde russe* 46:1–2 (2005). <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/8787> (30 April 2024); Mathieu Arnoux. L'Europe de la 'grande transformation.' In *Histoire du monde au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 2. Paris: Pluriel, 2017, 590–617; Luciano Palermo. *Sviluppo economico e società pre-industriali. Cicli, strutture e congiunture in Europa dal medioevo alla prima età moderna*. Rome: Viella, 1997.

in the fifteenth century was not part of the French Kingdom—remain obscure. I will try to shed some light on them by delving into the credit and trading activities of the Avignon branch of the Pazzis between Sicily, Marseille, Avignon, Lyon, and Geneva.

The settlement of Florentine merchant-bankers in Lyon at the end of the fifteenth century is poorly documented. However, several elements show that the Italian presence was significant at least from the years 1465–1470, when the Pazzis of Avignon transferred their activities.<sup>4</sup> This transfer took place at the time of the decline of the Geneva fairs and at the dawn of the rise of those in Lyon. It was precisely at this time that the kings of France tried to develop the Lyon market, its fairs under Charles VII, and the production of silk under Louis XI.<sup>5</sup>

The historiographical tradition inspired by economic theory tends to insist on the spontaneous, natural, or at best cyclical nature of the emergence of new markets. However, in the case study presented in this essay, we will see that there are several indications that Louis XI and his entourage may have been involved in the bankruptcy of the Pazzi's bank in Avignon. The simultaneous rise of the Lyon fairs and the success of Italian merchant-bankers on the local markets allow us to question the reasons for the emergence of new fairs and new businesses. This article is a first attempt at offering a modest contribution to the history of economic changes during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and, more particularly, to that of the transformations of European economic geography, which moved towards the north-west and of which the flourishing of the fairs in Geneva

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4 Hippolyte André Suzanne de Charpin-Feugerolles. *Les Florentins à Lyon*. Lyon: Louis Brun, 1893, 160–161; Michele Cassandro. I forestieri a Lione nel'400 e '500: la nazione fiorentina. In *Dentro la città. Stranieri e realtà urbane nell'Europa dei secoli XII–XVI*, Gabriella Rossetti (ed.). Naples: Liguori, 1989, 151–162; Jacqueline Boucher. *Présence italienne à Lyon à la Renaissance du milieu du XV<sup>e</sup> à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Lyon: Éditions LUGD, 1994; Agnès Pallini-Martin. L'installation d'une famille de marchands-banquiers florentins à Lyon au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: les Salviati. In *Lyon vu/e d'ailleurs (1245–1800). Échanges, compétitions et perceptions*, Jean-Louis Gaulin, Susanne Rau (eds.). Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2009, 71–90; Agnès Pallini-Martin. *Banque, négoce et politique. Les Florentins à Lyon au moment des guerres d'Italie*. Paris: Garnier, 2018; Heinrich Lang. *Wirtschaften als kulturelle Praxis. Die Florentiner Salviati und die Augsburger Welser auf den Märkten in Lyon (1507–1559)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2020, 131–132.

5 André Pelletier, Jacques Rossiaud, Françoise Bayard, Pierre Cayez. *Histoire de Lyon: des origines à nos jours*. Lyon: Éditions lyonnaises d'art et d'histoire, 2007, 265; Richard Gascon. *Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Lyon et ses marchands (circa 1520–circa 1580)*. Paris, the Hague: Mouton, 1971, 308; Vital de Valous. *Étienne Turquet et les origines de la Fabrique Lyonnaise. Recherches et documents sur l'institution de la manufacture des étoffes de soie (1466–1536). Notice historique accompagnée d'une généalogie de la famille Turquet*. Lyon: Auguste Brun, 1868, 8; Joseph Vaesen, Étienne Charavay. *Lettres de Louis XI, roi de France*, vol. III: 1465–1469. Paris: Renouard, 1887, 122, no. 1.

and Lyon are tangible elements, as well as that of the history of the “economic policy” of the kingdom of France.<sup>6</sup>

## From Florence to Avignon: the arrival of the Pazzi family

The local records do not allow, in the current state of our knowledge, to determine with precision the date of the arrival of these Florentine merchant-bankers in Avignon. Diving into the *mare magnum* of Avignon notaries' registers in search of a particular family is not easy, but local scholars and historians of Avignon have already found a good part of the information contained in this documentation.<sup>7</sup> These wealthy Florentine businessmen did set up a counter and a currency exchange bench in Avignon, but the date of this establishment remains unknown to this day. We can only imagine that they settled on the banks of the Rhône at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the papal court seems to have taken up residence there permanently. This is suggested by the first known mentions of their presence in the registers of the Avignon notaries at the end of the fourteenth century. Before that, the records are too few and we cannot find any information about their businesses. It is therefore impossible to know if Aghinolfo, the first member of the family mentioned in local records, was also the first to arrive. In 1376, Aghinolfo de' Pazzi had been authorised to remain in Avignon after the court's return to Rome, and he subsequently asked the Florentine government to enter the *popolani* group.<sup>8</sup> This tenuous evidence seems to indicate that the arrival of the Pazzi family and their activities in the Comtat Venaissin were related to the presence of the pope up until that point. However, Yves Renouard does not seem to have found them during his investigation into the relationship between the papacy in Avignon and the Florentine companies.<sup>9</sup> Above

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6 See (with caution) René Gandilhon. *Politique économique de Louis XI*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1941; Richard Gascon. Nationalisme économique et géographie des foires. La querelle des foires de Lyon (1484–1494). *Cahiers d'histoire* 1 (1956): 253–287.

7 Léon-Honoré Labande. *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Légation de Charles de Bourbon et du cardinal Julien de La Rovère*. Paris: A. Picard, 1920; Yves Renouard. *Les relations des papes d'Avignon et des compagnies commerciales et bancaires de 1316 à 1378*. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1941; Monique Cler. Un homme d'affaires avignonnais du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: Alaman de Passis. *Provence historique* 7:30 (1957): 305–336.

8 Pompeo Litta Biumi. *Famiglie celebri di Italia. Pazzi di Firenze*. Milan: Presso l'autore (Tipografia delle famiglie italiane), 1851, table 5.

9 Renouard, *Les relations*.

all, the fact that they chose to stay in Avignon reveals that their business there was sufficiently flourishing and that the geographical situation of Avignon was favourable enough for Aghinolfo de' Pazzi to wish to remain there, probably—but not only—as an intermediary for his family's international affairs in Provence and, as we shall see in a moment, beyond. This letter also suggests that these bankers quickly integrated into local society to the point of not wanting to return to Tuscany.

We have several clues of this rapid and profound integration, starting with the use of a Provençal version of their name—Passis—from the early fifteenth century. Local archives testify to a contemporary use of the two forms for a few decades, but after the middle of the fifteenth century, only the Provençal form can be found.<sup>10</sup> As can be observed in other cities for similar cases of wealthy immigrants, the most tangible pieces of evidence of their integration into the highest level of local society are the positions that the men of the Pazzi family regularly occupied in urban government. Leopoldo II de' Pazzi was successively treasurer of the wine *gabelle*, one of the city's ambassadors to Pope Martin V in 1418, and a “rector of the bridge” the following year. His descendants held various positions in the service of the city's government, starting with his son, Alamano, who was elected syndic and consul of Avignon on several occasions (1452 and 1461), “master of the streets” (1454), ambassador of the city, and King René's banker and supplier of luxury items.<sup>11</sup> His father-in-law, Giacomo de' Pazzi, was King René's *maître-rational* and *clavaire* of Marseille.<sup>12</sup> Michele and Alamano lent money to the city and, in return, they obtained a monopoly on the *gabelle*, a substance that they transported from the port of Marseille and whose production they were responsible for (since they had obtained the privilege of administering the Count of Provence's *salinas* at the Vernède and Arles), thus controlling the entire salt industry in the region. The Count also granted the other branch of the

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**10** For instance, see the accounts of the convent of the Friars Minors in Avignon, Archives départementales de Vaucluse, 24H32 et 24H33. See also Clément Lenoble. *L'exercice de la pauvreté. Économie et religion chez les franciscains d'Avignon (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013, 279.

**11** Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 550, 552; Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 307–308.

**12** Noël Coulet. La Chambre des comptes de Provence sous le règne du roi René. In *René d'Anjou (1409–1480)*, Jean-Michel Matz, Noël-Yves Tonnerre (eds.). Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011, 219; for “*clavaire*,” see Archives départementales des Bouches du Rhône, B 1950, fol. 196 and B 1952, fol. 133. See also Jean-Luc Bonnaud. *L'appareil administratif local en Provence sous le règne du roi René*. In *René d'Anjou*, Matz, Tonnerre (eds.), 223–246, notes 45 and 53.

Pazzi family, established in Avignon (the Pazzi Accorri), a monopoly on coral fishing in Provence, a luxury product that they traded over Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Their marriages are a second symptom and tool of their integration into the upper strata of local society, starting with the second generation established there.<sup>14</sup> These matrimonial alliances were made with other powerful families of Florentine origin who had been settled in the region for longer than them and who already belonged to the Avignon oligarchy, such as the Tornaquincis, the Brancas, and the Panisses, another branch of the Pazzis.<sup>15</sup> The third generation joined forces with the Altovitis, the Peruzzis, and the Salvatis, pursuing the same strategy. A more precise investigation in the archives may make it possible to determine when they became the ones sought for matrimonial alliances by other families.

Finally, their insertion into the religious life of the city is significant to their rootedness. They joined the Italian confraternity in the Church of the Augustinian Convent and founded and built a chapel in the Church of the Friars Minor where they were buried at least from 1410.<sup>16</sup> They appear in the Convent's records as one of the families closest to the Friars. They also seem to be linked to the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit, established in one of the chapels of the Convent, and several members of the family acted as procurators or spiritual friends of the religious community by helping them with the administration of conventual life matters—in particular, by making purchases on their behalf and by making regular donations and loans to the Convent.<sup>17</sup> Accursio, one of the sons of Leopoldo II de' Pazzi, was a canon and apostolic vice-camerlengo. Again, the elements presented here are only examples taken from an overview of the local archives. Only a more in-depth investigation will make it possible to identify and reconstruct the religious life of the Pazzis in Avignon more precisely, which is, of course, not the

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**13** Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 308, 318; Archives départementales de Vaucluse, Veran et Brieude 1420, fol. 47; Gustave Arnaud d'Agnel. *Les comptes du roi René*, vol. 1. Paris: Picard et Fils, 1908, 309–310; Édouard Baratier. Production et débouchés du sel de Provence au bas Moyen Âge. In *Le rôle du sel dans l'histoire*, Michel Mollat (ed.). Paris: Puf, 1969, 133–171. Giacomo de' Pazzi obtained this monopoly from King René together with Renato de'Pazzi. He was Alamano's father-in-law.

**14** Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*; Litta Biumi, *Famiglie*.

**15** This is a well-known and well-documented strategy more recently discussed by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. *La Maison et le nom: stratégies et rituels dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*. Paris: EHESS, 1990; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. *Mariages à la florentine. Femmes et vie de famille à Florence (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS-Gallimard-Seuil, 2020; Isabelle Chabot. *La dette des familles. Femmes, lignage et patrimoine à Florence aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Rome: École française de Rome, 2011.

**16** Lenoble, *L'exercice*, 320.

**17** Lenoble, *L'exercice*, 278–283, 320.

main objective in the context of this small study. The fact remains that their closeness to the Friars Minor is certainly one of the salient features.

At the end of the fifteenth century, they acquired land and seignery titles in the Comtat Venaissin, according to a strategy common to the families of rich merchants.<sup>18</sup> Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, this was precisely the moment at which their Avignon business seemed to be declining. We will focus on this moment without dwelling too much on their social and political life as well as on the constitution of their local heritage and the nature of their commercial affairs, which have already been reconstructed by Monique Cler.<sup>19</sup>

## Commerce, deposit banking, and credit in the major European markets: the classic activities of the great merchant-bankers of the fifteenth century

No accounting records have come down to us. If we limit our investigation to local sources, the reconstruction of the Pazzi family's activities is therefore particularly difficult and depends essentially on the state of the notarial documentation which, as we know, concerns only part of the operations of the large merchant and banking companies. We are reduced to putting together the scattered pieces of a much larger puzzle that is destined to remain full of gaps and, therefore, discontinuous. Traces of the Pazzis' activities in Avignon increase in this documentation from the 1410s onwards, when Michele de' Pazzi, son of Leopoldo II, took over the management of their commercial and banking activities. These traces are, for the most part, receipts and acknowledgements of debts, occasionally contracts, and a few bills of exchange registered by the city's notaries.

The archives of Marseille notaries also bear witness to their activity in the port of Marseille, in an interregional trade ranging from Naples to Geneva and widely diversified, including salt as well as alum, sheets, corals, and various luxury items with which they supplied the count's house in Aix-en-Provence.<sup>20</sup> They

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<sup>18</sup> Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 325.

<sup>19</sup> Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*.

<sup>20</sup> Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 317. See the entry for 3 April 1454, Archives départementales de Vaucluse, Pierre de Blengeriès, 3E8/177.

transported cloth from Geneva, where they bought them at fairs.<sup>21</sup> A bill of exchange dated 1465 informs us of one of the modalities of these transactions at the Geneva fair. According to this document, the Pazzi's bank provided the necessary credits of up to 2,700 florins to Bernard Anselme who went to the fair.<sup>22</sup> The commodities he bought there were then shipped to Sicily by a merchant from Montpellier. An Avignon contract from 1475 mentions them, this time as intermediaries in the transport of alum and saltpetre to Lyon, for the fair sales.<sup>23</sup>

These commercial operations were medium-sized, if we compare them with those of the Italian companies operating directly between Byzantium, Tyre or Tunis, Venice, Bruges, and London. The Pazzis of Avignon (let us now call them Passis) must undoubtedly be considered as intermediaries in larger operations on the Naples or Florence to Geneva segment via Marseille, Aix, Avignon, and Lyon. They operated both for the commercial activities of the Florentine Pazzis and for those of other major Tuscan companies, such as the Peruzzis, the Salviatis, the Albertis, and the Baroncellis, with whom they were associated.<sup>24</sup>

This documentation also reveals that the Passis' involvement in long-distance trade was traditionally coupled with a deposit, credit, and exchange banking activity which probably constituted, in terms of business volume, the bulk of their income, and which was deployed from the 1410s between Italy and London via Paris, where Michele de Passis had a house.<sup>25</sup> In addition to credit transactions in the context of commercial transactions with their associates and customers, the sums lent varied from a few florins for small loans for consumption or for small craftsmen's professional activities in the region to thousands of florins lent to urban communities (4,000 florins in Avignon, 6,000 florins in Hyères, and 1,000 florins divided among smaller Provençal communities such as Grimaud, Borme, Cogolin, and Valletta) and to their most powerful clientele—the kings of Sicily and their court, the Duke of Calabria, the entourage of the King of France, the Duke of Berry, the entourage of the Dukes of Burgundy, bishops, and cardinals (in particular, the Cardinal Legate Pierre de Foix).<sup>26</sup>

This banking activity allowed them to obtain privileges and monopolies such as those already mentioned on the salt *gabelles*, the administration of the salt

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21 Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 318–319; 13 April 1465, Archives départementales de Vaucluse, Pons 46. Antoine Agulhacié, fols. 43–44.

22 Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*.

23 Édouard Baratier, Félix Reynaud. *Histoire du commerce de Marseille*, vol. 2. Paris: Plon, 1952, 584.

24 Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*.

25 Jules Guiffrey. *Inventaires de Jean, Duc de Berry (1401–1416)*, vol. 1, Paris: Leroux, 1894.

26 Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 311–317.

works, or the coral fishery. With the acquisition of the farm from ecclesiastical revenues, the Passis family intertwined, again in a very classic way for Italian merchants, private interests and “public” finance, inserting their interest-bearing lending activities into a “public” circuit, whether it be that of financing cities, kingdoms and princes, the administration of saltworks, or ecclesiastical taxation.

From an ethical point of view, if we follow the texts of theologians and jurists on the subject, such as the English Franciscans John Peckham and John Duns Scotus, the Catalan friar Francesc Eiximenis, or Ramon Lull and, on the side of the jurists before them, Cardinal Henry of Susa and Sinibaldo Fieschi, Pope Innocent IV, it is precisely this articulation between private affairs, long-distance trade, and public finances that morally justifies the wealth of the great merchant-bankers.<sup>27</sup> This is even what made it possible to introduce the distinction between usury and investment, between interest and capital, until the use of the word “*capitale*” in contrast to “*sors*”, by the Narbonne Friar Minor, Peter of John Olivi at the end of the thirteenth century, in his famous *Treatise on Contracts*.<sup>28</sup> As far as the extant sources allow us to judge at this stage of the investigation, there is nothing surprising or abnormal about the activities of the Passis in the fifteenth century. These activities seem to be regularly linked to the fairs of Geneva and Lyon in the years 1465–1495. The only striking fact lies, as we shall see presently,

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27 Giacomo Todeschini. *Il Prezzo della salvezza. Lessici medievali del pensiero economico*. Rome: NIS, 1994, 204–205, 208–209; Giacomo Todeschini. *I mercanti e il tempio. La società cristiana e il circolo virtuoso della ricchezza fra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002, 311; Giacomo Todeschini. Finance and usury: The Languages of Public Economy as Rhetoric of Social Inequality. *Estados y mercados financieros en el occidente cristiano (siglos XIII–XVI)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2015, 83–103; Giacomo Todeschini. *La banca e il ghetto. Una storia italiana*. Bari: Laterza, 2016; Giacomo Todeschini. Gestione dei beni pubblici e amministrazione dei patrimoni privati. Il mercato cristiano come spazio di sacralizzazione della ricchezza familiare. *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome—Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* 127:1 (2015). <http://journals.openedition.org/mefrim/2028> (24 October 2024).

28 Pierre de Jean Olivi. *Traité des contrats*. Sylvain Piron (ed.). Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012, *Pars prima*, q. 6. 71–73, 140. See Giacomo Todeschini. *Un trattato di economia politica francescana: il De emptionibus et venditionibus, de usuris, de restitutionibus di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi*. Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 1980, 69; Odd I. Langholm. *Economics in the Medieval Schools: Wealth, Exchange, Value, Money and Usury According to the Paris Theological Tradition, 1200–1350*. Leiden: Brill, 1992, 345. The history of the word “capitalism” and of Olivi’s use of it has been analysed by Sylvain Piron. Prêts charitables et opérations capitalistes dans l’éthique franciscaine des contrats monétaires. In *Des personnes aux institutions. Réseaux et culture du crédit du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe*, Laurence Fontaine, Gilles Postel-Vinay, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, Paul Servais (eds.). Louvain-la-Neuve: Bruylant-Academia, 1997, 11–27; Sylvain Piron. *L’occupation du monde*. Brussels: Zones sensibles, 2018, 173–175; Sylvain Piron. *Généalogie de la morale économique*. Brussels: Zones sensibles, 2020, 271–292.

in the conditions of their bankruptcy and the transfer of their banking activities to Lyon between 1465 and 1468—a transfer probably linked to the rise of the Lyon fairs and which explains the relative but significant increase in the documentation (only four acts known to date) of their operations between Lyon and Geneva from these years.

## From Avignon to Lyon via Geneva: bankruptcy and resurrection of a bank to the rhythm of the fairs

In the current state of this investigation, traces of the presence of the Passis family in Lyon before the end of the fifteenth century are very rare and tenuous. The minutes of the consular deliberations of the city of Lyon mention, on 23 January 1425, a certain “Esnée de Passe [Aeneas of Passe], merchant of Avignon” as the holder of a debt of six hundred crowns.<sup>29</sup> On 4 January 1422, a claim for seven hundred and fifty *livres tournoi* in favour of “a merchant of Avignon, called Année,” also recorded in the minutes of the city’s deliberations, might possibly be referring to the same member of the Pazzi family, if he was indeed one of the members.<sup>30</sup> There is room for doubt because, for the moment, no trace of an Aeneas of Passe can be found in the archives. The name “Passe” may well correspond to the francisation of the Italian “Pace,” with which the Pazzis are sometimes named in the Avignon archives.<sup>31</sup> He could be one of the members of the other branch of the Pazzi family that settled in Avignon, known as the Pazzi-Accorri, whose activity has left less traces but which is obviously linked to the Avignon branch—in particular, through matrimonial alliances and commercial associations.<sup>32</sup> Another solution would be to consider that he is one of the Lyon postmen or a clerk of the Pazzi’s bank in Avignon, but the qualification of “Avignon merchant” makes this reading unlikely. If this Aeneas of Passe does indeed belong

<sup>29</sup> Georges Guigue (ed.), *Registres consulaires de la ville de Lyon ou recueil des délibérations de la commune publiés d’après les procès-verbaux originaux*, vol. II: 1422–1450. Lyon: Archives et bibliothèques de la ville, 1926, 169–170.

<sup>30</sup> Guigue (ed.), *Registres consulaires*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Archives départementales de Vaucluse, 24H32 and 33.

<sup>32</sup> Alamano de Passis’s wife, Alisetta, belonged to this family. She was born from a first alliance between these two branches. Her grandfather was Piero, Alamano’s uncle. She was therefore the second cousin of her husband, while already being the direct descendant of a branch of cousins in the seventh degree.

to the house of the Passis of Avignon, these references in the Lyon archives show that they were already present in the 1420s, at the time of the creation of the first fairs in Lyon.<sup>33</sup> However, we do not know of any archives that link them directly to the activity of the fairs from this date onwards; those that have come down to us are all contemporaneous or date from after the bankruptcy in 1465.

In 1466, Guglielmo de Passis from Avignon was associated with the Florentines Francesco Capponi and Francesco Nasi.<sup>34</sup> This mention of their company in a contract between the Florentine nation and the Convent of the Friars Preachers of Lyon (to which we will return in a moment) does not allow us to know how long this bank had existed. Once again, we have to deal with a Passis who does not seem to have left any traces in the Avignon archives. We therefore presently do not know the nature of his family ties with Alamano de Passis, who was at the head of the family business until that date. After 1466, he almost disappeared from the records. In 1479, two letters from the consuls to Louis XI indirectly inform us that the king had passed on to them the claims of Jean de Palence against Alamano de Passis, who owed him a debt.<sup>35</sup> Alamano de Passis died in 1481.<sup>36</sup> The Avignon business was managed in connection with this new Lyon bank by his sons, Piero and Carlo, and his sons-in-law, Piero Baroncelli, Luca Cambi, and Matteo Bongiani, all representatives of eminent Italian families well established in Avignon.<sup>37</sup> The association with the Capponi family of Lyon seems to have lasted for several decades, as evidenced by two recognitions of debts totalling 750 florins, dated 1457, for purchases of salt from Alamano de Passis.<sup>38</sup> We do not know how the Passis family encountered the Nasi, powerful Florentine merchant-bankers in Lyon.

The date of this association—1466—is synchronous both with the first boom in Lyon's fairs, the fourth of which was created by Louis XI on 8 March 1463, and with the first phase of the permanent establishment of the great families of Flor-

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33 The minutes of the city's deliberations mention the request made to the Dauphin to create two free fairs in 1418. See Baratier, Reynaud. *Histoire du commerce*, 143–144. These fairs were officially created by the Dauphin in 1420. See Marc Brésard. *Les foires de Lyon aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles*. Paris: Picard, 1914, 1–8.

34 Archives départementales du Rhône. *Inventaire des archives du couvent de Notre-Dame de Confort par le P. Ramette*, vol. II, f. 25v; Charpin-Feugerolles, *Les Florentins*, 160–161.

35 Archives municipales d'Avignon, AA 10, fols. 153v.–155v.; CC, pièces justificatives des comptes (1479–1480), no. 185. See Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 267, footnote 5.

36 Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 330.

37 Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 334.

38 Archives départementales de Vaucluse, Jacques Girardi, 3E5/767, fol. 214.

entire merchant-bankers in 1466 as well, to the detriment of Geneva:<sup>39</sup> the Medicis left Geneva and settled in Lyon precisely that year.<sup>40</sup> The arrival of the Florentines in Lyon in the early 1460s is further attested by the drafting of the statutes of 1487 which mention those of their nation in this city in 1466 and are based on the model of the statutes of the Florentine nation in Geneva dating from 1446.<sup>41</sup> On 13 December 1466, Guglielmo de Passis is represented along with Francesco Nasi by their associate Francesco Capponi, among the signatories of the contract by which the Friars Preachers conceded to the Florentine nation of Lyon the main chapel in their church of Notre-Dame-de-Confort.<sup>42</sup> In this deed, another famous Florentine from Avignon appears, also represented by his Florentine associates from Lyon—Pierre Baroncelli, who founded a company with the Da Panzano family, and who was the husband of Leonarda de Passis, Alamano's eldest daughter. In 1469, the Passis' bank in Lyon was able to loan the town 600 gold *ecus* so that it could fulfil its free loan obligations to the king.<sup>43</sup> The Passis/Pazzis were therefore probably among the first active Florentines well established in Lyon, alongside the Capponi and the Nasi families who certainly arrived before them, as well as the Sacchetti, the Da Panzano, the Della Luna, the Palmieri, and the Guadagni families. By way of comparison, the Salviatists do not seem to have arrived until the beginning of the sixteenth century, after the fairs' period of crisis

<sup>39</sup> Letters patent and mandates of 8 March 1462. In *Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race recueillies par ordre chronologique. Quinzième volume: Ordonnances rendues depuis le commencement du règne de Louis XI jusqu'au mois de juin 1463*, Emmanuel Pastoret (ed.). Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1811, 644–648.

<sup>40</sup> De Roover, *Medici Bank*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> Gino Masi. *Statuti delle colonie fiorentine all'estero (secoli XV–XVI)*. Milan: Giuffrè, 1941, 202: “di quelli di detta natione prima a Ginevra, ne l'anno MCCCCXLVI, a dì primo di gennaio, et di poi a Lione a dì IIII di gennaio MCCCCXLVI, fu dato forma et ordine al fine sopradetto.” See also Pallini-Martin, *L'installation d'une famille*, 74.

<sup>42</sup> Archives départementales du Rhône 3H40, *Inventaire manuscrit des archives du couvent des Dominicains de Lyon, rédigé par le P. Siméon André Ramette, archiviste dudit couvent*, vol. II, f. 25v; *Statuti delle colonie fiorentine all'estero (secoli XV–XVI)*, 202: “Di poi a Lione fu loro conceduta la chapelle maggiore et altri membri della chiesa de' frati di Sancto Domenico, detta di Nostro Dona di Conforto.” See Jacques Gadille, René Fédou, Henri Hours, Bernard de Vergile. *Le diocèse de Lyon*. Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1983, 86, 109; Haude Morvan. *Au Chœur des affaires. La nation florentine et les frères prêcheurs lyonnais. Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 3:2 (2018): 116–117.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Vaesen (ed.). *Lettres de Louis XI, roi de France*. Vol. IV: 1469–1472. Paris: Renouard, 1890, 62–63; entry for 19 December 1469, Archives municipales de Lyon, BB 15, fol. 70v. and CC 441, no. 5.

(1484–1494). And the most tangible signs of the rise of the Florentine nation in Lyon date only from the late 1480s.<sup>44</sup>

The transfer of the Florentines from Geneva to Lyon is well attested while that from Avignon is much harder to trace. The first occurred in the context of the competition between these two places at the end of the fifteenth century, Charles VII and especially Louis XI having actively worked on this migration of Italian financial forces to France. However, one may wonder if the people of Avignon were only attracted by the very recent dynamism of the Lyon market, given that the Passis (and with them the Baroncelli) family seem to have arrived perhaps even before the transfer of the Medicis, or at least at the same time as them. Were the people of Avignon sufficiently sensitive to what was happening in Lyon to anticipate it or move there very quickly, taking advantage of old relations with the Capponi family, for example? This cannot be ruled out, of course, together with the possibility that could have led them to turn to partners in Lyon at the right time. The conditions of the bankruptcy of the Passis in Avignon—which immediately preceded this association with the Nasis and Capponis in Lyon—may provide us with some elements of an answer.

The bankruptcy of Alamano de Passis is known, thanks to a letter from Louis XI dated 1465 in which he demanded that the Avignon banker reimburse his debt to Louis de Valperga.<sup>45</sup> In this letter, the king described Alamano de Passis as a “bankrupt.” In addition, the ledgers of the Friars Minor of Avignon mention the bankruptcy of the Passis’ bank, mentioning proceedings by their creditors against it. For its part, the convent demands that Alamano’s creditors pay the pension founded by his uncle Michele.<sup>46</sup> This pension was based on all the property that Michele bequeathed to Alamano when he made him universal heir. This explains why the convent of the Friars Minor made this request at a time when the creditors of the Passis were recovering part of these seized goods to pay themselves. A series of archives makes it possible to hypothesise what may have happened. During the eight years preceding Louis XI’s letter, the Passis bank had granted several very important loans: King René and Guillaume de Varye for the amounts of

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44 Pallini-Martin, L’installation d’une famille, 71–90; Pallini-Martin, *Banque, négoce et politique*, 60–65; Nadia Matringe. *La banque en Renaissance. Les Salviati et la place de Lyon au milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015; Lang, *Wirtschaften als Kulturelle Praxis*, 132.

45 This letter has not been edited by Vaesen and Charavay. See Archives municipales d’Avignon. Pintat2521; Raymond Rey. *Louis XI et les États pontificaux de France au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle d’après des documents inédits*. Grenoble: Imprimerie Allier Frères, 1899, 173; Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 152, footnote 2. See an approximate and incomplete transcription in Cler, *Un homme d’affaires*, 330–331.

46 Archives départementales de Vaucluse, 24H33, fol. 31; Lenoble, *L’exercice*, 359–363.

8,000 florins each. However, immediately after the loan granted to the latter, two other customers—namely, Guillaume du Chastel and Louis de Valperga—asked to recover their deposits and debts at the Passis' bank for amounts of 8,000 florins as well. Unable to satisfy their demand, Alamano de Passis went bankrupt.<sup>47</sup>

Several coincidences attract our attention. Firstly, the sums are the most obvious. Secondly, the actors of this bankruptcy stand out: Louis de Valperga and Guillaume de Varye were close advisors of Louis XI,<sup>48</sup> the former being one of his favourites, while the latter, a prior agent of Jacques Coeur, became treasurer general of finance in Languedoc. Guillaume du Chastel was “*maitre des ports de la sénéchaussée de Beaucaire*.” He was therefore also a man of the king. The closeness of these three men to Louis XI probably explains why he intervened directly in this affair, as we have mentioned, even though it took place in Avignon, and therefore outside his kingdom. Was the king really doing it to help them, thinking he could influence the local justice system? Did he see this as a pretext to intervene in Avignon's decisions; perhaps even as an opportunity to trouble or even eliminate one of the main bankers of the count, King René and the Duke of Calabria, while he was trying to claim Provence and integrate it into his own kingdom? The Passis' bankruptcy surely weakened Avignon too. Louis XI always tried to intervene in Avignon matters. He addressed letters to the consuls of the city, treating them as his subjects. However, he also acted to weaken the resources of Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin. He did so, for instance, by promoting the regional free trade fair of Briançon in 1462.<sup>49</sup> This had the effect of deflecting the flow of merchants and goods from the Comtat, especially cattle, coming from the Alps.<sup>50</sup> He also directly targeted the Florentine merchants established in the Comtat, whom he accused, in a letter to the Cardinal of Foix in 1463, of supplying his Catalan enemies.<sup>51</sup> In the same year, he prohibited his subjects and foreigners residing in the kingdom from importing spices through the port of Marseille. Foreign merchants not resident in the kingdom—such as the Florentine citizens of Avignon,

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47 See Cler, *Un homme d'affaires*, 331–333.

48 See Pierre-Roger Gaussin. *Les conseillers du roi Louis XI (1461–1483)*. In *La France de la fin du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: CNRS, 1985, 105–134; Jean-François Lassalmonie. *La boîte à l'enchanteur. Politique financière de Louis XI*. Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2002.

49 Archives municipales de Briançon, HH 1 (1462); Emmanuel Pilot de Thorey. *Catalogue des actes du dauphin, Louis II, devenu le roi de France Louis XI, relatifs à l'administration du Dauphiné*, vol. II. Grenoble: Imprimerie de Maisonville, 1899, no. 1343, 34; Gandillon, *Politique économique*, 218, 220; Jacques Heers. *Louis XI: le métier de roi*. Paris: Éditions Perrin, 1999, 287.

50 Thérèse Sclafert. *Les routes du Dauphiné et de la Provence sous l'influence du séjour des papes à Avignon*. *Annales d'histoire économique* 1 (1929): 192.

51 Joseph Vaesen and Bernard de Mandrot (eds.). *Lettres de Louis XI*, vol. X: 1482–1483. Paris: Renouard, 1908, no. 1952, 192–194.

for instance—were nevertheless allowed to travel by land to supply the Lyon fairs, and Guillaume de Varye countersigned the ordinance dated 1 November 1463.<sup>52</sup> There is little doubt that this measure affected the Passis' businesses in this sector, even if they were only collateral damage, with the king's decision primarily aimed at his Venetian enemies and, most likely, the Count of Provence. And finally, on 7 February 1478 or 1473 (Léon-Honoré Labande, who edited this letter, does not know if it was sent on either date), Louis XI addressed a letter to the consuls of Avignon, asking them not to lease the revenues from the salt tax to the "Passis of Florence" who had always been hostile to him, observing "qui ont toujours tenu party à nous contraire (they have always been against us)."<sup>53</sup> If it does date back to 1478, as Labande seems to think, this letter took place during the opposition of the salt farmer on the Empire side, whereby Francesco Capponi, an associate of the Passis in Lyon, refused to collect the toll on the salt that travelled up the Rhône.<sup>54</sup> We can therefore be almost certain that the sanction requested by the king was aimed at the Passis in the Comtat. Whether it dates from 1473 or early 1478, even before the outbreak of the Pazzi conspiracy in Florence which Louis XI disagreed with, this letter clearly indicates the king's hostility towards the Passis of Avignon, whom he now considered—albeit perhaps opportunistically—to be long-standing enemies.

In the light of these hypotheses and pieces of evidence of the king's hostility towards Avignon and its Florentine bankers, we can even envisage a frame-up. The fact that this misadventure had the effect of pushing the Passis to turn more towards Lyon and to associate themselves with the main Florentine bankers of the Lyon market at the precise moment when the King of France hoped to develop the fairs and attract Italian financiers, is a final troubling coincidence. In the end, all this is conjecture and speculation, but if we were to try to find out whether the bankruptcy of the Passis could have benefited anyone, then all eyes would be turned to Louis XI. If one thinks of the methods and taste for intrigue of the "universal spider" and his faithful Guillaume de Varye, one is hardly sur-

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52 BNF, français, nouvelles acquisitions, 7227, fols. 87–88, edited in Gandilhon, *Politique économique*, 423, 424. On the importance of Guillaume de Varye as economic counsellor of the king, see Gandilhon, *Politique économique*, 470; Amable Sablon du Corail, *Louis XI: Le joueur inquiet*. Paris: Belin, 2015, 114.

53 Archives municipales d'Avignon, AA 38, edited as "Lettre du roi Louis XI aux consuls [. . .]," 7 February 1478 or 1473, in Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 599–600 (pièce justificative no. XXIII).

54 Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 268; also see Labande's edition of the king's letter at 599–600. On the political dimension of salt conflicts along the Rhone River as early as the mid-thirteenth century, see Simone Balossino, *La force et le droit. Enquête sur la gabelle du sel dans la vallée du Rhône au temps de Louis IX*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2023.

prised.<sup>55</sup> Guillaume de Varye often intervened and was in charge in the king's decisions regarding the trade fairs, specifically for those in Lyon.<sup>56</sup> The bankruptcy of the Passis family could well be one of the little-known episodes of the king's maneuvers aimed at conquering Provence, weakening Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin, and promoting the development of the fairs of Lyon.<sup>57</sup> This could suggest, at least, the deployment by the King of France of a conscious and aggressive economic policy towards Provence and the Comtat Venaissin, to the benefit, of course, of his kingdom.

In the end, we cannot be certain. The sources are too rare, indirect, and incomplete. The activity of the Passis family in Lyon has left too few traces. Our understanding of the conditions of their association with the Nasis and Capponis is too dependent on hypotheses that are difficult to corroborate. The fact remains that their bankruptcy in Avignon pushed them towards Lyon at a time when the king of France was trying to expand the fairs and seeking to develop them by attracting Florentine investors. They were therefore among the very first to contribute to this movement, which led, a few decades later, to the transfer of commercial and financial activities from Geneva to Lyon. Whether it was a mere coincidence, opportunism, or the king's strategy, we do not have the means to decide. Aghinolfo de' Pazzi came to Avignon to serve the papacy and do business. Economic and political developments in the fifteenth century pushed their heirs, three generations after them, towards Geneva and Lyon. This very little-known and documented history is part of the political and economic processes that led to the transfer of Tuscan bankers from Geneva to Lyon.

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55 Paul Murray Kendall. *Louis XI: l'universelle araigne*. Paris: Pluriel, 2014; Jacques Heers. *Louis XI: le métier de roi*. Paris: Éditions Perrin, 1999; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *L'État royal: de Louis XI à Henri IV. La monarchie de la Renaissance, 1460–1610*. Paris: Hachette, 2000; Jean Favier. *Louis XI*. Paris: Fayard, 2001; Joël Blanchard. *Louis XI*. Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2015; Amable Sablon du Corail. *Louis XI*, 511–536.

56 Gandilhon, *Politique économique*, 226, footnote 7.

57 About the relationship between Louis XI and René of Anjou, see Gustave Arnaud d'Agnel. *La politique des rois de France en Provence. Louis XI et Charles VIII*. 2 vols. Marseille: Jouvène, Paris: Picard, 1914; Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*; Noël Coulet Alice Planche, Françoise Robin. *Le roi René. Le prince, le mécène, l'écrivain, le mythe*. Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1982; Henri de Forbin. L'action diplomatique de René d'Anjou. In *Le roi René. René, duc d'Anjou, de Bar et de Lorraine. Roi de Sicile et de Jérusalem. Roi d'Aragon. Comte de Provence (1409–1480)*. Actes du colloque international d'Avignon, 13–15 juin 1981. *Annales universitaires d'Avignon* 1 & 2 (1986), 63–69; Jean Favier. *Le roi René*. Paris: Fayard, 2008; Matz, Tonnerre (eds.), *René d'Anjou*; Yannick Frizet. *Louis XI, le roi René et la Provence*. Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2015. About his relationship to Avignon and Comtat venaissin, see Labande, *Avignon au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*; Rey, *Louis XI*.

## Appendix

### Letter from King Louis XI asking the consuls to urge Alamano de Passis to reimburse his chamberlain, Louis de Valperga (Orléans on 21 March 1466)

Archives municipales d'Avignon, Pintat2521. *Original on parchment.*

Les consulz et conseillers d'Avignon.

A noz tres chers et bons amys,

Les consulz et conseillers d'Avignon.

Loys par la grace de dieu Roy de France. Tres chers et bons amys, Nous avons entendu que Alemans de Pastz de la Ville d'Avignon a fait falicte au preiudice et dommage de ses crediteurs, combien qu'il ait et posside plusieurs biens et qu'il ait plusieurs crediteurs, et entre les autres notre amé et feal conseiller et chambellan, Loys de Vaulspergue sir de Roppol<sup>58</sup> auquel il est tenu en la somme de trois mil escuz dor comme plus a plain appert par une obligacion, de laquelle somme il ne luy veult faire paiement. Ains s'efforce le tenir en proces, comme il nous a dit. Et pour ce que nous desirons qu'il soit païé comme raison est, Nous vous prions bien acertes, que en faveur et contemplacion de nous, vous vueillez tenir la main, en bonne justice, a ce que notredit conseiller soit entierement païé de son dit debit sans figure de plait ne de proces, en luy donnant sur ce tout l'aide, conseil et confort que vous pourrez, et comme voudriez que feissions pour luy de vous, en cas semblable envers aucuns de noz subjetz, ce que ferons quant requis en serons de par vous, en quoy faisant nous ferez ung tres agreable et singuller plaisir. Et quant ainsi ne le ferez, nous y pourverions, comme pour notre especial serviteur.

Donné a Orleans le XXI<sup>e</sup> jour de mars.

Loys.

Meurin.

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<sup>58</sup> Roppolo, in Piedmont.

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