'How to live splendidly': Strategies towards Accumulation of Wealth in fifteenth-century Cyprus

Aysu Dincer (University of Warwick)
A.Dincer@warwick.ac.uk

Abstract: This article traces the strategies followed by two family groups towards wealth accumulation in fifteenth-century Cyprus, by examining their marriage alliances, wider kinship relations and shifting religious alignments. The fifteenth century was a testing time for the inhabitants of the island, as they experienced successive bouts of plague epidemics and foreign invasion (Mamluks 1424-26), as well as suffering the effects of civil war. There were shifts in both internal and external social, economic and political dynamics. While the fortunes of some Cypriot families declined, others successfully navigated the shifting power balances. Some families of Syrian and Greek Orthodox origins rose to prominence: their members indulged in tax-farming, held positions in government and local administration, engaged in trade and acted as ambassadors. Zooming out, they paper will re-assess the island's place within the business and trading networks, which stretched across the Mediterranean in the fifteenth century.

Keywords: family history, wills, personal piety, Mediterranean trade

Introduction

In the summer of 1480, the Milanese traveller Santo Brasca visited Cyprus twice on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, stopping on the island both on the way out and back.[1] On his second visit, he seems to have enjoyed a high-level reception in Cyprus: his contacts introduced him to Queen Caterina Cornaro, also offering him a tour of Nicosia and other places on the island. Despite all the hospitality that he was shown, Brasca's impressions of life on the island were mixed. He observed that the town of Nicosia was ruined in many places and had the worst air in all the Levant, but it was also full of lovely products such as sugar, cotton, carobs and all types of fruit. He summarised his impressions by saying 'people live splendidly, from the ornaments of their houses to their food'.[2]

If anything, Santo Brasca's observations of devastation were understated. Cyprus had been ravaged by successive Mamluk invasions in 1424, 1425, and most comprehensively in 1426, when King Janus was captured and taken to Cairo.[3] The king was allowed to leave in 1427, but only after he had agreed to pay a ransom of 100,000 dinars and signed a treaty stating that the kingdom would pay the Mamluks a yearly tribute of 8,000 ducats. Most importantly, Janus agreed that he would rule the island as a subject of the Mamluk sultan. This turned out to be a long-lasting arrangement, and Cyprus remained under Mamluk over-

[1] Santo Brasca, 101-4; Momigliano Lepschy, 'Santo Brasca', pp. 31-41
[2] 'Vivano splendidamente, sì de ornamenti de casa como de cibi', Santo Brasca, p.103.
[3] Hill, History of Cyprus, vol.III, 476-81; 488-9; Edbury, *Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus,* 7-26; Fuess, 'Was Cyprus a Mamluk Protectorate?', 11-28.

lordship until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517.[4] Mamluk sultans could have remained distant overlords to the Cypriots, but the political divisions within the island kept pulling the sultanate into the fray. When Charlotte de Lusignan's right to rule was challenged by her illegitimate half-brother James in 1460 and civil war broke out, both James and Charlotte sought support from the Mamluks. In the end, the sultanate opted to back James, and Mamluk troops ransacked the island once more in 1461. In the background, successive bouts of plague epidemics that hit Cyprus added an extra dimension of hardship.[5] To top it all, the island's main port Famagusta, remained in the hands of the Genoese between 1373 and 1464, disrupting the kingdom's revenues from trade.[6]

However, as Santo Brasca observed and as other sources also attest, some Cypriots did indeed live splendidly in the fifteenth century. Who were they and how did they achieve this lifestyle? This particular combination of events, disastrous as they were, brought some opportunities to the island in general, and to certain individuals in particular. There were shifts in both internal and external social, economic and political dynamics. The fortunes of some families declined, while others managed to navigate the shifting power balances successfully, relying on existing networks and forming new ones. In this respect, the study aims to contribute to the corpus of works on familial strategies in the broader Mediterranean.[7] In the context of Cyprus, examining families' responses to the crises and opportunities they encountered can inform our assessment of the general political events of the fifteenth century, especially regarding the perception of this phase as the start of a downward socio-economic trend on the island which continued into the Early Modern period. Colin Heywood highlights the way in which Ottoman Cyprus has been characterised by later historians as an 'east Mediterranean oubliette', a place where exiles were sent 'to die of malaria, or the plague, or boredom, or the combined effects of all three'.[8] His study applies Peter Musgrave's paradigm of 'economic uncertainty' versus 'growth economics' to the island's structures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and concludes that 'uncertainty, situational as well as economic, seems to have characterised life in an island of exile and unhappiness, *a fifteenth-century world*, which by all accounts persisted not only into the eighteenth, but down to the nineteenth century'.[9] Heywood emphasises the conflicting nature of evidence found in primary sources from the Ottoman centuries, which either depict the island as a paradise of

[4] For a comprehensive evaluation of this relationship and a full bibliography of related studies, see Coureas, 'Latin Cyprus and its Relations with the Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1517', 391-418. After the Mamluks were conquered by the Ottomans, the tribute was sent to Istanbul until Cyprus was also conquered in 1571.
[5] Dawkins, Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus, §707 (Hereafter *Makhairas*); Coureas, *George Boustronios*, § 92; *Pietro Casola*, 148-149; 156.
[6] It has been argued that the Genoese take-over may have helped Famagusta's economy in the short run, but after 1380s western ships stopped coming the Famagusta. Jacoby, 'Camlet Manufacture', 30.
[7] For examples to comparative studies on familial attitudes towards wealth, inheritance, political and marital alliances, land-holding, and religious affiliations, see: Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori and Rucellai*; focusing on the Siguro family in Zante, Kolyvà, 'Cittadin e mercadante de lì'; focusing on the maritime activities of the Verghis Family in Corfu, Pagratis, 'The Greeks in the Maritime Trade of Venice', 209-218; regarding comparative examples to religious choices and strategies, see Bezzina, 'The two wills of Manuele Zaccaria'.
[8] Heywood, 'The "Economics of Uncertainty"', 28.
[9] My italics. Ibid, 51.

cheap goods, or a disease-ridden inferno. Tracing some of these contradictory perceptions and economic insecurity to the fifteenth century is in some sense justified, as there was indeed a great level of uncertainty on the island in this earlier period. However, a more nuanced approach that pays attention to both broader dynamics and to individuals' responses to change is likely to be fruitful.

This article is particularly interested in the fates of families of Syrian and Greek origins. In the fifteenth century, a number of families of Syrian (Bibi, Urri, Audeth) and Greek (Singlitico, Podocataro) origins rose to prominence, and their members indulged in tax-farming, held positions in government and local administration, engaged in trade and acted as ambassadors.[10] The religious affiliations and political links of these families have already attracted interest from historians.[11] In order to broaden the existing models, I will focus on the Audeth and Podocataro families as comparative case studies and explore their attitudes towards wealth accumulation through an examination of their business and marriage strategies, wider kinship relations and networks.[12] The study aims to explore both how these two families amassed their wealth, and how they shaped their attitudes towards their material possessions and social advancement. Members of both families were mentioned at key moments of various political upheavals that the island experienced in the fifteenth century. A range of sources shed light on the Audeth family's involvement in political events, their business deals, links and affiliations.[13] Among the published documents, there are three wills from the married couple Antonio (d.1453) and Zacha Audeth (d.1468), and from their nephew Zuan Audeth (d.1451). Antonio and Zacha Audeth had no children other than an adopted daughter called Maria, who was married to Antonio's nephew Zuan and then to a man called Chadit Chadit.[14] Hugo Podocataro's 1452 will provides an interesting point of comparison. Composed by the testator himself, this is a very detailed and personal document. It extends beyond notarial conventions that normally dictated will-making in this period, and provides a detailed insight into Hugo's priorities and affiliations.[15] While these sources have been studied before, exploring the fates and fortunes of the two families by drawing direct comparisons between their attitudes offers us a multifaceted insight into the economic, social religious networks in fifteenth-century Cyprus. Broadly speaking, the strategies that the Podocataro and Audeth families adopted for survival and success are not extraordinary: elites all over the Mediterranean and Europe diversified their portfolios in a similar fashion to them, holding posts in government, engaging in trade and occupying high-ranking offices in the clergy. However, there are factors that made the Cypriot context different, such as the

[10] Arbel, 'The Cypriot Nobility: A New Interpretation', 175-197.

[11] Arbel, 'Greek magnates in Venetian Cyprus: The Case of the Synglitico Family', 325-337; Grivaud, 'Ordine della Secreta di Cipro'; Salzmann, '(Re)constructing Aristocratic Religious Identities', 337-351.

[12] Richard, 'Les Audeth', 89-129. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', 130-82; Rudt de Collenberg, 'Etudes de prosopographie généalogique', 650-653.

[13] Richard, 'Les Audeth', pp. 89-129.

[14] Very little is known on Zacha's family, other than two nephews who lived in Famagusta mentioned in her will of 1468. For Zuan's will see, Richard, 'Les Audeth', doc V; for Antonio's will, see Ibid, doc. VII

[15] Hugo's will can be found in two editions; for the main text I will use is: Baglioni, *La scripta italoromanza*, 184-198. For the first publication of the text with an introduction and additional documents, see Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', pp.130-82.

island's links to the Mamluk world, the ease with which its inhabitants crossed confessional boundaries, and their use of trading, investment and educational networks that stretched across the Mediterranean. I will discuss the dynamics that were common to the overall Mediterranean context by situating the experiences these two families within the broader economic and social changes of the fifteenth century, as well as drawing attention to characteristics that were unique to Cyprus. I will first examine the two families' political and economic backgrounds. The second section looks at their economic activities in detail. The final section explores their familial links and educational strategies.

Family Backgrounds, Political Contacts and Landed Interests

As we will see, at certain junctions (for instance, when confronted with the financial difficulties of the king), the two families appear to be adopting similar strategies: however, the impact of their actions differs quite drastically. In order to understand the reasons behind these differences, it is important to consider the social statuses of the two families. The evidence indicates that the Audeth and Podocataro families occupied different positions within the social and political spectrum of the kingdom. In his work on the island's nobility, Benjamin Arbel has drawn attention to the differences between true noblemen, who were fief-holders and enjoyed the multiple privileges and social prestige that came with knightly status, and others who did achieve elevated social status, but were not granted fiefs.[16] By the fifteenth century, the Podocataro were firmly in the former category, having already established a place for themselves within the higher nobility, where various members held knighthoods and fiefs. The Audeths, on the other hand, were in the latter: while they had done extremely well in economic terms, they never achieved acknowledged noble status.

At the time of Hugo's will, the family held a well-established place in the higher echelons of the nobility. The first Podocataro to make a mark on the political scene had been Hugo's grandfather Nicolas, who acted as royal counsellor to James I at the end of the fourteenth century: this indicates that this family of Orthodox origins were already of some eminence in the second half of the fourteenth century.[17] In the fifteenth century, Hugo's father Zuan appears as a merchant/envoy at the court of the Mamluk sultan, as well as being charged with supplying the king's troops with wine in 1426.[18] In his turn, Hugo Podocataro was educated in Padua, held various roles as ambassador for the Lusignan kingdom throughout his life and was a fief-holder.[19]

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[16] Benjamin Arbel, 'The Cypriot Nobility', pp.175-197. Arbel identifies only four families (Podocataro, Singlitico, Sozomenos and Kontostefanos) who were both noble and Greek. Ibid, p.187.

[17] Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', p.135.

[18] Dawkins, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus,* §661, §678 (Hereafter *Makhairas*). He is also reported to have sold his property in order to pay the King Janus's ransom and release him from Mamluk captivity. Etienne de Lusignan, *Description*, f155r &v. Also see Hill, *History of Cyprus*, vol.II, p.489. By 1436 her brother Jacomo had held the positions of judge, auditor, chamberlain and chancellor of the kingdom. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', p.138. The identity of Hugo's mother is unknown.

[19] These missions include accompanying the future queen Medea of Montferrat from Venice to Cyprus in 1440; acting as ambassador to Genoa in 1441, to Rome in 1443, 1447 and 1451, to various Italian cities in 1453 and 1454. Hugo died in 1457 and his will was opened on 11 August 1457. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', pp.139-41. He was described as '*magnifici et generosi militis et doctoris domini Ugonis*' by the

The Audeth family, on the other hand, were Jacobite Christians, who also came from a mercantile background, possibly originating from Famagusta. The first mention to the Audeth family is from the Mamluk invasion of 1426. After the Mamluk forces landed on the island and defeated the forces of King Janus at Khirokitia on 7 July 1426, they marched towards the capital, Nicosia. The main chronicler of the period Leontios Makhairas tell us that when the Mamluks reached the gates of the city they were met by a group of Arabic speaking residents of Nicosia, which included the four Audeth brothers Joseph, Behna, Abbud and Khamis.[20] According to Makhairas' account, the brothers conversed with the Mamluks in Arabic and tried to convince them not to sack the city, only to see their efforts fail: the city was sacked, and the brothers were taken into captivity. Their choice as mediators at this crucial point indicates that by the first decades of the fifteenth century the Audeths held an established place in the capital's hierarchy and were perceived as being reliable members of the community.

As indicated by Makhairas' reference, the main branch of the Audeth family was based in Nicosia, but they continued to have family and business contacts in Famagusta. They held White Venetian (*Veneti Albi*) status: in theory, this was a status granted by Venice to immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, from the Holy Land to Cyprus.[21] In practice, it was granted to other applicants at later stages. Holders of this status could enjoy Venetian protection, as well as other economic privileges, such as benefitting from tax exemptions granted to the Italian communes by the Lusignan kings. This model was also adopted by Genoa, which resulted in a high number of White Genoese citizens in the Eastern Mediterranean. For example, the above-mentioned Urri family, who intermarried with the Podocataro, were White Genoese.[22] In the context of Cyprus, the sources mention White Venetians of Syrian origins but also Greeks, Jews and Armenians. Why did the Italian communes want to share their privileges with others? David Jacoby has attributed this to Venice's desire to increase its volume of trade and fiscal revenues, at the same time expanding Venetian political bases and influence.[23] This protected status is thought to be one of the factors that contributed to the rise of Syrian families in general, and to the Audeths in particular, who, as we will see below, successfully utilised their White Venetian identity to defend their rights to landed property.

King Janus's captivity in Cairo was not only a political and personal humiliation, but it also brought the crown close to financial ruin. The king's ransom had to be covered in 1427, and a tribute had to be delivered to the sultanate yearly. These difficulties forced the king to sell parts of crown land and grant privileges in return for cash. Both families benefitted from this situation. The Podocataro family received extensive rights to the salt-lake

notary who approved his will, *Ibid*. p.152. In notarial documents from 1455, his titles appear as '*magnifici domini Ugonis Podochator, militis legumque doctoris et regni Cipri butalarii, procuratoris oratorisque et consiliarii serenissimi principis et excelentissimi domini'*, in *Gênes et L'Outre-Mer,* Balard, Balletto, and Otten-Froux, doc. 133, also see docs 124, 134.

[20] *Makhairas* §§692-694.

[21] Jacoby, `Citoyens, Sujets et Protégés', 159-188.

[22] Rudt de Collenberg, 'Etudes de prosopographie', p.630.

[23] Jacoby, 'The Venetians in Byzantine and Lusignan Cyprus', 69.

of Limassol after 1426. Angel Nicolau-Konnari and Chris Schabel argue that King Janus may have made this grant himself due to financial difficulties.[24] The Audeths also benefitted from the king's hardships: some of them may have accompanied the king into captivity, but the adversities suffered by the crown were not reflected in the overall fortunes of their family. In fact, their wealth appears to have flourished enough to enable them to lend money to the king in return for land. In 1431, King Janus leased the manor of Aglangia to Zuan and Antonio Audeth in return for a loan of 2,525 ducats.[25] This was a large and profitable manor, situated very close to the capital, Nicosia. In 1435, the king borrowed a further 8,000 ducats from the Audeths, which is incidentally the exact amount of the yearly tribute the kingdom owed to the Mamluks. The king never managed to pay this large amount back, allowing Zuan and Antonio Audeth to end up with more land in the Marathasa estate in the Troodos mountains. This was again a large and very profitable estate, which the two Audeths ended up holding along with another creditor to the king, a merchant called Tommaso Mansel.[26] This transaction was followed by a confirmation of the Audeths' rights to land in Knodhara and Aglangia in 1445, amounting to an average of 5,300 ducats. Antonio also took over tax farming rights in 1447, where taxes from oil and soap worth 950 ducats a year were passed to him. The sources indicate that, within a space of sixteen years, a total of 16.775 ducats were channelled from the coffers of the Audeths towards the king, in return for land and rights to tax farming. In other words, the family seem to be exploiting the weak financial state of the crown to take hold of royal lands and other revenues. On the other hand, it is important to note that in the case of land grants and sales the king refrained from turning these lands into fiefs, which indicates that the crown perceived this spate of borrowing as a temporary and reversible solution to their difficulties.

Indeed, King John II had already seized some of these lands by 1452. Throughout their struggle to gain their estates back, the Audeth family relied on their status as White Venetians. In 1452, the family involved the Venetian government in protecting their rights to Marathasa. The Venetian ambassador Bernardo Contareno duly recognised that the inheritance of Zuan and Antonio had been seized by the king, and that the Venetian commune should intervene to restore their rights.[27] At the time of his will, Antonio was aware of the precarious nature of his control over the lands he had gained from the king. In order to secure his rights, he opted to reinforce his links to the Venetian authorities by leaving a third of his holdings in Marathasa to the commune in his will, in return for which the commune would be supporting charitable causes in his name. This intelligent manoeuvre would prove invaluable in defending the family's entitlement to their landed property, as it meant that their rights

[24] Nicolaou-Konnari and Schabel, *Lemessos*, 293, 302.

[25] The transactions are listed in Richard, 'Les Audeth', p.92. On the value of besants in relation to ducats, Richard notes that 4 to 4,25 besants equalled 1 ducat in 1367, which changed to 6.75 besants per ducat in 1443-45, and with further devaluation the exchange rate was 8,5 to 9 besants per ducat in 1479-80. Richard, 'Les Audeth', p.93 n.16.

[26] On Tommaso Mansel, see Richard, 'La cour des Syriens de Famagouste', 393, 395.

[27] For the French summary translation of the text from 3 August 1452, see Louis de Mas Latrie, *Documents nouveaux,* 371-1 (Hereafter *DN*). The original text can be found in Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Senato Mar, Registri et Deliberazioni IV, folio 142v.

were permanently enmeshed with those of the commune. In a letter dated 16th August 1455, the senate ordered the Venetian authorities in Cyprus to help the Audeths, referring to the family as 'our Venetians' (*Venetis nostris*).[28]

The civil war years brought further challenges to the fortunes of the two families. Members of both the Audeth and the Podocataro families backed Charlotte, the legitimate heir to the throne. Considering their former engagements with the crown, it is possible that the Audeths had placed themselves in Charlotte's camp in order to maintain their links to the aristocracy and situate themselves as part of the established gentry. Despite the local support she enjoyed, the Mamluks were to cast the winning vote, which meant that Charlotte lost the crown to her bastard brother James. Both families ended up paying for their political 'misjudgement', albeit in different ways.

In the 1450s, Hugo's brother Peter Podocataro acted as ambassador to the Mamluks, delivering a letter that indicated that the new sultan al-Inal's accession had been celebrated in Cyprus.[29] Peter appeared in Egypt again in 1459, unsuccessfully supporting Charlotte's claim: after the failure of his efforts, he was chained and imprisoned by James's forces.[30] In time, King James seems to have decided that it was better to keep this powerful family on his side. Peter was once again taken into the new king's favour, and in 1464 he was granted the villages of *Chirstefano, Pano and Cato Chiedares, Farango,* Vouni, Ayios Therapon and the use of the lake Akrotiri; his brother Philip received the village of Doros (as well as 200 measures of wine) and Hugo's son Janus was granted 150 ducats.[31] Hugo's daughter Helena and her husband Tuccio de Costanzo were granted Agridi, Crini, Letrico and 1500 besants per year from Pelendria.[32]

While the Podocataros appear to have bounced back from their misfortunes, the Audeths experienced a harder time. Their house was raided and sacked by James's forces in 1461.[33] James's reign brought further challenges to the Audeths' fortunes. He refused to hand over the property that his father had appropriated from the family, prompting Zacha Audeth to request Venetian intervention to reclaim these lands in 1463. In her letter to the commune, Zacha defined herself as a 'poor widow and orphan and disconsolate woman', insisting that

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[28] '*…casalium de Maratassi emptorum per Audet Venetos nostros…*', *DN*, pp.371-1; ASV, Senato Mar, Registri et Deliberazioni V, folio 106v.

[29] Coureas, 'Envoys', 730; Hill, *History of Cyprus*, 522.

[30] Coureas shows that the Mamluks' decision to back James was the result of the Cypriot embassies' powers of persuasion, bribery and manipulation of the divisions within the Mamluk court. Coureas, 'Envoys', 733; Hill, *History of Cyprus*, 555-7.

[31] Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre* **hereafter** *ML*, vol III, p.162 n1; Nicolaou-Konnari and Schabel, *Lemessos*, p. 295; Bustron, *Historia,* 420.

[32] Bustron, *Historia*, 418. Tuccio's father Muzio was a supporter of James, who, in return granted him, various villages, as well as making him admiral and marryng him to the daughter of Sir Thomas Verni, from an established noble family. It is possible that this marital connection also played a part in the Podocataros' return to favour. On Tuccio/Tuzio de Costanzo, see Coureas, George Boustronios, § 158 and n300 On Tuccio's father Muzio de Costanzo see Coureas, George Boustronios, Historical Introduction', 50, 56; §§83-4, 102, 133, 148. 153, 156, 158, 171, 202, 268, nn.156, 181, 300. For the overall context of their rise to eminence as foreign soldiers, see Coureas, 'Chequered Fortunes', 59-74, esp.69-71.

[33] Bustron, *Historia*, 401.

her family were 'Venetians', and had been the commune's most loyal subjects (*che simo veneciani at v(ost)ri subditi fidelissimi*), adding that 500 ducats had been stolen from her house and that she had lost 2000 ducats in revenue.[34] The case dragged on through the 1460s, and the Senate had to write directly to the king asking him to offer restitution.[35] In 1467, the king responded to the requests of the Venetian commune regarding various complaints of their citizens. The Audeths' heir, Chadit Chadit, had asked for Aglangia and Knodhara to be returned to him, but the king claimed those were his lands, and he kept them; also denying that he had gained much if anything from Marathasa. [36] By 1468, when Zacha wrote her will, her circumstances were much diminished. Her household had only two slaves, both of whom she freed. She stated that she did not owe or lend anyone any money. Other than the landed estates she held, she had only some silver objects and household goods in her possession. While Zacha might have ended her life in reduced circumstances, her efforts to protect her family's estates were not in vain. The Venetians did support the Audeths' case and Marathasa was eventually returned to the family, and through Zacha's second son-in-law Chadit Chadit, the estate remained in the hands of the Chadit family until the Ottoman conquest.[37]

To sum up, while the Audeths were initially able to lend money to the crown and end up with landed estates in return, their hold on these lands was precarious as their economic power was not backed by political status. However, they were able to utilise their connections to the Venetian commune to protect their rights. The Podocataro family, on the other hand, already held an established place in the feudal hierarchy. This meant that supporting the wrong candidate only affected them negatively in the short run, and they managed to keep their place in the political hierarchy, even expanding their landed holdings. If a family occupied a high enough place in the social and political hierarchy and were perceived to be important allies to those in power (as various ambassadorships held by the Podocataro indicate), they could rely on their existing connections to recover from poor decisions and other misfortunes. Yet other strategies were available to those who were lower down the chain of authority: the above comparison highlights the importance of alternative socio-political networks, and the significance of forming links to external powers that could exert a level of influence over local authorities and affect power balances.

Money-lending, Investments and Trading Contacts

Hugo, Zuan and Antonio's wills shed some useful light on the ways they invested their wealth and diversified their risks. Some of their decisions (such as their investment in certain commodities) were shaped by the island's political engagement with the Mamluk Sultanate. Once more, their links with Venice and Genoa were crucial in providing these families with investment opportunities outside the island. Yet other decisions seem to be directed by the families' local business and financial engagements; for instance, the Audeths'

[34] Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, 199-200.
[35] ASV, Senato Mar, Registri et Deliberazioni VIII, folio 81r, where Antonio is referred to as '*prudens civis noster*'.
[36] *ML*, III, 178-9.
[37] In 1481, the senate wrote to Queen Caterina Cornaro to confirm that half the village was owned by the real. *DN*, p.499; ASV, Senato Mar, Registri et Deliberazioni XI, folio 98v.

role as money-lenders to the king and other members of the aristocracy was an outcome of their success as merchants, which enabled their access to ready cash.

Antonio Audeth's will of 1453 mentions a total of 12,438 ducats that he possessed in the shape of investments, loans and cash. At the time of his will, Hugo declared that he had 1,900 ducats with him, of which 300 were in the shape of camlets, plus 2,500 ducats that he was due from his share in Pathna, 1,500 ducats that was in the hands of Marco Corner, and 300 ducats in the hands of Jacomo di Valle in Rhodes.[38] Both Zuan and Antonio's wills indicate that the pair were involved in money-lending, often receiving high value items as pawn.[39] Antonio lent 212 ducats to the king, receiving two silver items in pawn Similarly, 476 ducats were lent to Marco Cornaro with no guarantees received in return:it is likely that the family wished to curry favour with this eminent and influential Venetian landholder. Finally, 750 ducats in cash were present in Antonio's house at the time of his will. Similarly, Zuan had lent 100 ducats to Janus de Montolif receiving silver objects as pawn.[40] 100 besants were lent to Loyse Zandeliero, who pawned a silver cup in return. Francesco Montolif received 30 ducats pawning his seal, and Maria Countess of Edessa was lent 50 ducats in return for a silver object. The king held 100 ducats from Zuan in return for various silver objects and Ser Istan Tancres pawned a black belt and a cup. These transactions show that the family had considerable dealings with some of the of the highest nobles of the kingdom, possible exerting some control over their financial needs.

Dealing with a high amount of liquidity in times of political turbulence was a risky business however, and both families sought safer alternatives for investment. It is hardly surprising that a number of Cypriot investors moved their capital out of the island and participated in European capital markets in the fifteenth century. Looking at Venice, Reinhard Mueller lists two main reasons that made foreign investment in the city attractive: the lack of similar investment opportunities in an investor's home country, and the wish to keep 'a safe distance between internecine struggles in their own courts and the hoards that could guarantee survival to themselves or their heirs in case of a change of political fortune'.[41] Both of these motives certainly held true for Cypriot investors in this period. Antonio's will outlined that he had 10,000 ducats at the bank of Venice and 1,000 ducats were with two Genoese merchants, to be deposited at the Genoese bank.[42]

Aside from Venice, evidence attests to the popularity the Genoese *luoghi,* which attracted investments from the Podocataro family, as well as the members of other leading

[38] A total of 6,200 ducats. Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, 198.
[39] For Zuan's and Antonio's transactions respectively, see Richard, 'Les Audeth', 114-5, 122
[40] For these transactions see Richard, 'Les Audeth', 114-5.
[41] He asserts that especially investments which brought fixed interest such, the Grain Office, were favoured by foreign investors who did not want to risk price fluctuations on the open market, but were interested in table long-term returns for safe capitals investments for their heirs or for charitable causes. Mueller, *The Venetian Money Market*, 545.
[42] The merchants were named in the will as Luchi Fachinat and Zuan Baptista Pinello, Richard, 'Les Audeth', p121. Antonio left the amount in Venice to his wife Zacha, who confirmed this in her own will. Ibid, 129.

Cypriot families such as Soudan, Urri and Boussat.[43] Hugo's testament states that he had bought shares for his eldest son, also investing 500 ducats for his stepmother Johanna Urri.[44] Hugo bought two other lots, both at a revenue of 4% per annum. The first one was worth around 2000 livres, intended to provide for his sister Maria's daughters' dowries. The second one was to provide for his brother Filipo's education, and amounted to 4,000 Genoese livres in 1454. In both of these cases, Hugo set the rules of accession to the capital and the proceeds. For instance, Filipo could not touch the capital until the completion of his studies, and in case of his death, the *luoghi* would pass to his brothers Lose and Carolus, respectively, again to be used for their education, finally passing to Hugo's sister Maria if all three brothers were dead. The rules that Hugo set for the dowry investments for Maria's daughters were both more specific and stricter, meaning that Maria could not sell, alienate or transfer the shares for purposes other than serving her daughters' dowries. If she were to die before the investments could be accessed, the order of succession would take the following order: her daughters, her sons, her brothers (Philip, Luis, Carolus) and her mother Johanna. If all those listed were dead, then three Orthodox institutions would take over the investments. The rules underline the tacit acknowledgement that this was a Podocataro family investment, and while Maria's husband could facilitate access to the funds in case of his daughters' marriage, he was not mentioned in the list of potential heirs.[45]

In making these investments, Hugo had assumed a high level of familial support and unity of purpose, which turned out to be an illusion. Documents from the Genoese archives indicate that by 1475, Hugo's wife and his eldest son Iohannes were dead, and his second son Ianus was trying to assert his rights as Hugo's sole and legitimate heir and recover his father's investments in the *luoghi*.[46] Janus's identity was verified by witnesses and he laid claim to the accumulated income from the 100 *luoghi* purchased by his father.[47] However, his claim was contested by Johanna Urri and her son and procurator Loise/Lodisio, claiming some money they had lent to Hugo had not been repaid.[48] Janus's rights were only recognised in 1484, after a nine-year long struggle.[49]

Beyond holding liquidity and foreign investments, yet other opportunities were available for investors on the island. Camlets had always been part of the island's exports, but this industry seems to have gained an extra impetus after the Mamluk invasion of 1426, as the tribute of 8,000 ducats that the Cypriots had to hand over to the Mamluks each year was to

[43] Catherine Otten-Froux has worked on a sample from the sources on the *luoghi* funds, focusing mainly on the year 1454: it is more than likely that a more extensive research project will expand these findings and show that other Cypriot families and individuals were also involved in this kind of investment. Otten-Froux 'Les investissements financiers', 107-124, and docs. 1 (Maria Podocataro) and 2 (Filipo Podocataro), 125-134.
[44] Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, 187, lines 110-111. For Hugo's relationship with Johanna, see below.
[45] Maria was married to Johannes Babin. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', p.156. While it is not explicitly stated in the text, the implication was that he could not inherit this capital in his own right.
[46] Bliznyuk, *Die Genuesen auf Zypern*, docs.84-91, 93-4. It was confirmed that Iohannes had died in 1460 aged around 10. Ibid, doc.87, p.334.
[47] Janus stated that he had been unable to assert his claim in the 18 years after his father's death, due to his own minority and the state of war in his kingdom. Ibid, Docs 84-86.
[48] He was part of the papal court, serving as doctor to the cardinals.
[49] Otten-Froux 'Les investissements financiers', pp.122-3.

include camlets and samites.[50] Converting the tribute to camlets supported the camlet and samite industries in Nicosia, also encouraging further demand in the Eastern Mediterranean. Among the island's merchants and producers, those who took part in this trade ended up reaping substantial rewards. Benjamin Arbel's research has shown that camlets were only part of the strong Mamluk demand for a range of European luxury goods, and Cypriot products.[51] However, engaging in trade during politically insecure times could be hazardous and there were risks to the island acting as a massive warehouse for high value items. The sack of the island in 1461 by James's supporters is examined in detail in various contemporary accounts, which reveal the type of goods that the inhabitants invested in and stocked in their houses or storehouses. Large quantities of soap, silk cocoons and silks, linens and cochineal are mentioned, along with iron, wool, animal hair and especially camlets.[52] Sources indicate that both families invested in this commodity: at the time of his death, Antonio was in possession of 30 pieces of camlets, which would have been worth around 300 ducats.[53] Similarly, Hugo's will mentions 600 ducats that were in the shape of camlets.[54]

Overall, the evidence indicates that both families tried to benefit from local and foreign ventures. The Audeths acted as money lenders to the nobility, possibly benefitting from the weakened financial state of some of the noble families. The volatile political state of island seems to have pushed both families to look for opportunities overseas for their investments, choosing institutions in Venice and Genoa to keep their cash assets safe. They both invested in local products such as camlets, whose production had experienced a boom in the fifteenth century due to Mamluk demand. Their strategies show the centrality of engaging with local production and foreign trade, at the same time, highlighting the importance of forming links with institutions outside the island.

Marriage, Households, Social and Religious Networks

Forming and maintaining strong social networks were important to both families in politically in challenging times. Objectives such as securing the transmission of familial wealth and ensuring the continuation of the family line were instrumental in their decision-making processes. Hugo's father Zuan had married at least twice: we have no information on the identity of his first wife, who was Hugo's mother, but we know that his second wife Johanna Urri came from a high status family with Syrian origins.[55] Hugo's will indicates that

[50] According to Mamluk sources, it was initially 2000 camlets. Ouerfelli, 'Les relations entre le royaume de Chypre et le sultanat mamelouk', 342. *DN*, pp.534-6, on the camlet and samite production and tribute payments in 1490, see Coureas, 'The Tribute', 363-380.
[51] Arbel, 'The Last Decades of Mamluk Trade', 37-86.
[52] Coureas, *George Boustronios*, §65 250 pieces of steel, 60 strips of iron?), §67 150 broad and narrow iron strips, another 60 strips, in another house 20 litres (48 kgs) of silk cocoons, 8 litres of muslins.
[53] Richard, 'Les Audeth', p.122.
[54] Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, p.198. This would amount to 60 pieces of camlets.
[55] Johanna's two brothers Jacomo and Thomas served the kingdom in key positions, and Jacomo and Hugo were sent together as ambassadors to Rome in 1451. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Etudes de prosopographie', pp. 630-3.

he had five brothers Filipo, Carolo, Loise, Zorzo and Piero, as well as a sister, Maria.[56] When he wrote his will in 1452, Hugo was married to a woman called 'Melissini'. The couple had three children, Johannes, Janus and Helena, and 'Melissini' was pregnant at the time of the will. Hugo also had an illegitimate daughter, Isabetta, who appears to have been of marriage age in 1452.

The identity of Hugo's wife 'Melissini' is in the dark. In his 1993 article on Hugo's will, Rudt de Collenberg has categorically refused that Hugo's wife was a member of the Byzantine Melissinis family, pointing out that in testamentary documents women are often referred to by their first names but their natal surnames are never used on their own.[57] However, evidence from Genoese documents from 1475 suggests otherwise. When Janus Podocataro attempted to recover his shares in the *luoghi*, an inquest was held to ascertain the identities of his parents, and various witnesses stated his mother's full name as 'Theodora Melissini'. [58] Contrasting the seriousness of the Genoese inquest with Hugo's predilection for nicknames suggests that it is likely that Hugo's second wife was from the famous Byzantine Orthodox Melissini/Melissenos family.[59] On the other hand, Hugo's will states that he had married her '*in francho*' and that he had to convert to the Latin rite. Therefore, it seems likely that she came from a branch of the Melissenos family who practiced Catholicism.[60]

While Hugo had a large family, which included various influential people, he chose his step-mother Johanna Urri and her brother to act as executors to his will. The way he addressed her in his will as his dearest mother and step-mother (*maxime la carrissima mia madre et maregna madama Johanna Urri*) suggests that they had a close relationship.[61] They also had financial involvements: Hugo acknowledged that he owed her money, specifying that the expenses that he had incurred on behalf his brothers and the 500 ducats he had invested in her name in Genoa should be deducted from this sum.[62] Hugo specified that his wife could be included among the executors depending on Johanna's wishes, effectively leaving her free to exclude Theodora. The ease with which Hugo's wife could be side-lined by the experienced and well-connected Johanna further supports the idea that Theodora originated from abroad, and had fewer connections on the island. Overall, Johanna's

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[56] Rudt de Collenberg argues that Piero and Maria were Hugo's full siblings, and Filipo, Carlo, Loise and Zorzo's mother was Johanna Urri; however, this assertion has no definitive proof. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', p. 156.

[57] Rudt de Collenberg, 'Les Premiers Podocataro', 155 n.1.

[58] Bliznyuk, *Die Genuesen auf Zypern,* doc.84.

[59] Hugo's will displays various idiosyncrasies, with peculiar approaches to the names and identities of his acquaintances. For example, he refers to his scribe alternatively as 'Perrin Farmaca' and 'Farmaca Perin'. Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, 187 line 107, 196 line 391.Two female servants are referred to as 'the big servant' (*garzona grande*) and 'the small servant' (*garzona picola*). Ibid, 194 lines 348 and 353.

[60] One possible origin is the Morea branch, members of which married into the Acciaiuoli family. See 'Melissenos' in Kazhdan, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.

[61] Also stating his expectation that she would continue to love him and his children after his death: 'como mi ha amato in vita, me amarà et in morte et haverà cara l'anema mia et fioli, como haveva in vita la persona mia'. Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, 187. As we saw above, Johanna did end up putting her own interests before the interests of Hugo's son.

[62] After Hugo's death, Joanna would argue that she was owed more. Otten-Froux 'Les investissements financiers', p.123.

treatment is a good example to the power and influence that an elite and well-connected woman and her natal family could gain from a high-level marriage alliance. At the time of Hugo's will, which was some decades into Johanna's married life, the Urri and Podocataro families' political and financial interests were enmeshed, and this link was further extended into the future through Johanna and her brother's control over Hugo's bequests.

It appears that Hugo wished the other unmarried women in his family to enter into secure and influential marital unions, as he left sizeable bequests to his daughter, his illegitimate daughter, as well as other females in his family. The ability to bring a large dowry could help a woman to find a well-connected husband, thus enabling a useful familial alliance which was important in a community where married women kept their connections to their natal families. A large dowry also ensured a comfortable widowhood with financial security. Hugo's daughter Elena would receive a dowry of 1,500 ducats, and if Theodora gave birth to a girl, a dowry of 1,300 besants would be set aside. His illegitimate daughter Isabeta would be given a dowry of 600 ducats, one third of which would be in cash, and the other parts in silver, gold, and clothing. If Isabeta were already married at the time of his death, a further 100 besants would be given to her and her husband for purchase of appropriate black clothing for mourning. Looking at both Antonio and Zuan's wills, there is a clear sense that securing the futures of young women from their kin group was a priority for them too. Zuan left a total of 400 ducats and 850 besants to 20 different women, which included daughters, wives and sisters of his relatives, as well as maidens in need.[63] Antonio mentioned fewer women (around eleven) and a smaller amount of money (150 ducats and 390 numisma), but he also left his whole income from an estate called Vafio to serve as dowry for his brother Domenico's daughters.

The choice of material objects as bequests also holds a mirror to family alliances, as wills often highlight the objects that held emotional and material value to the testator. Antonio bequeathed a high number of objects to his family members and associates in his will. The items that stand out are the pearl embroidered sleeves that he left to his adopted daughter Maria, and the various silver objects he left to Maria's two children.[64] The objects that stand out as bequests in Hugo Podocataro's will are the numerous books he left to his brothers. The pedigree of his library is interesting, as these books had first been given to Hugo's father by his brother-in-law Jacomo Urri, and they were then sent to Hugo during his studies. In his will, Hugo itemised a number of the books and divided them between his brothers Filippo and Carolo. Interestingly, although these two siblings did attend Padua University, it was their other brother Loise/Livio who ended up establishing an illustrious career in the Latin Church, becoming cardinal and serving as secretary to Alexander VI.[65] Hugo placed immense importance on education and wanted his brothers and sons to be

[63] I have excluded female slaves from the analysis at this point, as bequests to them often included other conditions. Richard, 'Les Audeth' doc. 5. 25 ducats and 700 besants out of Zuan's bequests were specifically designated to facilitate marriages.
[64] Richard, 'Les Audeth', p.119.
[65] Andretta, 'Livio Podocataro', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Filippo graduated in 1458, and Carolo in 1461. Betto, 'Studenti ciprioti', 56,58.

educated abroad, possibly at the University of Padua, just as he had done himself. Gaining an education in Italy was a family strategy that the Audeths also followed. One of Antonio's nephews Andrea Audeth attended the University of Padua, incidentally graduating a year before Hugo.[66] Andrea, who received bequests from both Zuan and Antonio, was a canon of Limassol in 1443 and he later became the bishop of Tortosa in 1451.[67] Another distant nephew Nicolas Audeth also studied in Italy and joined the Carmelites in 1495, becoming the Prior General of the Carmelite Order (1523-1562), attending the Council of Trent.[68] It is clear that education played a part in a family's social standing in fifteenth-century Cyprus, and that the two families were taking part in a broader trend of obtaining an education abroad.[69] In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the universities of Padua and Bologna attracted students from Cyprus, who received financial help from scholarships established by Cypriot noblemen.[70] After completing their education, some of these men proceeded to attain high positions in the Latin church. Miriam Salzmann's research has shown that converts to the Latin rite and newly educated members of the aristocracy were especially interested in these opportunities.[71]

Remembrance was important to both families. As mentioned above, the three Audeths Antonio, Zacha and Zuan, were Jacobite Christians, but they left religious bequests to an astonishing number of different foundations from other religions. Antonio left bequests to the Jacobite church of Nicosia (where he wanted to be buried), the Jacobite church of St Nicholas in Nicosia, the church of Mar Behna in Famagusta and the Jacobite monastery at Omorfita. He also left bequests to the four churches of the Copts, church of St John of the Maronites, various Greek churches, the small church of the Armenians and the Latin Cathedral of St Sophia. Zuan's wishes similarly included the Jacobite monastery of the Cross, the Jacobite monastery at Omorfita, the Jacobite church of St Nicholas in Nicosia, the church of Mar Behna in Famagusta, the four churches of the Copts, with money left for the dome of the Latin Cathedral of St Sophia. It is clear that these bequests were carefully thought out by the two men, and that these institutions and their communities were part of their social and religious network.

Hugo's religious bequests were equally complex. He was born into the Orthodox rite, but as mentioned above, he had converted to the Latin rite at the time of his marriage. Despite this, Hugo expressed a wish to be buried in his father's grave in the Orthodox nunnery of *le femene* in Nicosia, leaving this institution 50 besants.[72] He was aware that the Latin Church

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[66] Andrea was Ambut Audeth's son. Betto, 'Studenti ciprioti, p.55.
[67]Nicolaou-Konnari and Schabel, *Lemessos*, p.307; Richard, 'Les Audeth', p.90.
[68] Staring, *Der Karmelitengeneral Nikolaus Audet*.
[69] Sending young men to be educated in Padua or Venice was a common trend in various Mediterranean islands. See, Karapidakis, 'Latinitas or Romanitas Nostra', 105-124.
[70] Betto, 'Studenti ciprioti, pp. 40-80. The Cypriot admiral Petro de Cafrano left 200 ducats in his will for the education of four students originating from Cyprus. Between 1400 and 1550, Cypriot students in Padua were numerous enough to be noticeable. In 1556, the archbishop of Cyprus Livio Podocataro established another scholarship for the education of three Cypriot students. Grivaud, *Entrelacs Chyprois*, 40.
[71] Salzmann, '(Re)constructing Aristocratic Religious Identities', p.342.
[72] Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, p.185, For more information on this monastery, see Salzmann, '(Re)constructing Aristocratic Religious Identities', p. 343, n.62.

would be reluctant to grant permission for this, but he still tried to mobilise the influential members of his network to achieve this aim. His will asserts that he wanted all his relatives, his executors, as well as the king and the queen to do all that was in their power to obtain a permission from the archbishop, the vicar, or whoever was the superior power at the cathedral of St Sophia. He was willing to pay 200 besants or up to 30 ducats for this dispensation, but not more. If this request were to fail, his second preferred option was to be buried in the convent of St Augustine, above the stairs to the great altar, or at the feet of St Nicholas de Tolentino's altar. Hugo left bequests to both Latin and Orthodox institutions (50 besants each to the convent of St Augustine and the cathedral of St Sophia) for daily masses to be said for his soul in both rites. He also left 25 besants each to his aunt Chira Marina and her two companions Deramera and Magdelini, all three of whom were Orthodox nuns, asking the latter two to say 25 Pater Nosters and Ave Marias for him for eight days. For his sins and misdemeanours, Hugo wanted 400 ducats to be distributed in one year to the poor, prisoners, the sick, and for repair of churches. He also wished all of his servants to mark his passing by wearing black clothes, as well as leaving money to other associates, to make sure that they would also dress in black.[73]

To put the bequests of the two families in context, religious diversity and divergence were not unusual in the context of Cyprus.[74] The island has been described as a space for 'shared devotions and sacred spaces', where common processions were held between Greeks and Latins, local Greek cults were integrated into the Latin calendar, and Greeks and Latins occupied adjacent or shared religious spaces.[75] There were many intermarriages and crossovers. Comparing Hugo's will to those of the Audeths, it is striking that Antonio and Zuan's bequests reached a wider variety of institutions of various sizes and importance, whereas Hugo's support extended only to a few elite Orthodox and Catholic institutions and not to the churches of other rites. It is possible to read this as a reflection of the hierarchy of rites on the island, but this approach would disregard the communal links and affiliations of individuals, which extended across society. It is possible that the wide range of Antonio and Zuan's bequests reflected their identities as merchants, who were well-known to a lot of people, as well as their wish that all of their community and acquaintances, regardless of creed or rank, noted their passing.

Conclusions

Both of the families suffered from the tribulations of the fifteenth-century political scene, but on some occasions the consequences were harsher for the Audeth than they were for the Podocataro, who managed to bounce back from the consequences of backing the wrong candidate to the throne. Nonetheless, both families were able to benefit from certain aspects of the political turbulence. They expanded their landed possessions by exploiting the weaknesses of a crown in financial need. When it came to navigating the threats to their

[73] Mastro Glinum (who was a barber) and his wife received 30 besants each, Zane Botron received 25 besants, and Hugo's scribe Perrin Farmaca received 50 besants. Baglioni, *Scripta Italoromanza*, pp. 195-196.
[74] Salzmann, '(Re)constructing Aristocratic Religious Identities', p.339.
[75] For discussions on the intricate ways in which these spaces were shared and navigated, see Olympios, 'Shared devotions', 321-341; Mersch, 'Churches as 'Shared Spaces', 498-524.

rights, the Audeths' success in maintaining and utilising their links to the Venetian commune stood them in good stead. Both families invested and traded in commodities that were profitable with a secure demand, such as camlets and other luxury goods. Both had business relations with people in high places. Looking beyond local links, both families' bequests once more reveal the broader connections that extended beyond the island, as by the fifteenth century it had become a familial strategy to send children abroad to be educated. Through their religious bequests both supported not only people in need, but also a rich variety of institutions. Most of their strategies appear typical, but certain specific conditions experienced on the island, including religious diversity, links with Venice and Genoa, as well opportunities and limitations brought by Mamluk overlordship, render their experiences exceptional.

The fifteenth century presented the kingdom and its residents with tough challenges, but a multitude of opportunities for growth also presented themselves amongst the uncertainty. Some residents of the island did live splendidly, at least for a while.

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