

The Vaaz: the rise and fall of a family of Portuguese bankers in Spanish Naples*

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The analysis of the integration dynamics represents, as it is widely accepted, an important part of the studies on the affirmation strategies of bankers in early modern age. A large historiography has recognized that the capacity of bankers to establish in new territories or in new financial markets depends on the degree of their assimilation to local elites – aristocratic or mercantile – as well as on their ability to perform financial operations and to connect with the existing credit networks. The Vaaz family case, new Christian bankers (i.e., recently converted Hebrews) natives of Lisbon that moved to Naples at the end of the sixteenth century, is representative of those assimilation strategies in the context of the Catholic Monarchy. Retracing the parabola of Miguel Vaaz and his offspring – beginning with a fast social rise followed by a dramatic decline – it becomes evident that, in Spanish Naples, a strong position in the world of finance, without the equivalent social status, was not enough to avoid the social collapse of a powerful family of bankers.

1. Introduction

The importance and weight of international finance in the history of the Spanish monarchy at the time of Charles V and Philip II has been widely recognized by multiple studies, starting in the second half of the last century with the publication of the fundamental works by Karl Brandt, Fernand Braudel and Ramón Carande, but the attention of economic historians has been concentrated, above all, on the sixteenth

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century, and almost exclusively on the role of the German and Genoese bankers.¹ Only in more recent studies has interest begun to be shown in the seventeenth century, too², for example, in the importance that, during the early modern age, Portuguese bankers had for the finances of the Spanish monarchy, as J. C. Boyajian's studies³ demonstrate. Much, however, is still missing for a full understanding of the role that the communities of these bankers played in the Spanish monarchy's multiple territories, at least from 1580 onwards, and during the whole of the seventeenth century, not only as locally active power centres – and in continuous negotiation with other local political, economic and religious powers – but also as supporting elements of the imperial system, directly related to the sovereign and the central councils of the Crown.⁴

In fact, as part of the political strategy of the Count-Duke of Olivares, in particular during the first decade of his power, we see the substitution of the hated Genoese by the Portuguese as the Crown bankers, mainly after the 1627 suspension of payments. As we know, this design of Olivares was only partially successful, but at the end of the 1620s, the power of the Lusitanian bankers and businessmen, although still shared with the Genoese, increased considerably.⁵

Outside the process of integration with imperial finances, the Portuguese bankers' path was marked by frequent local episodes of harsh confrontation with other powers, and by violent conflict, frequently of a religious nature, due to the fact that the vast majority of them were New Christians.⁶ In all these aspects, the history of the Vaaz family in Naples is highly representative of the forms of integration and conflict, that characterized the presence of the communities of Portuguese bankers in the Spanish monarchy during the seventeenth century.

¹ See especially Le Carande, 1943-1949.

² Of great importance, in this context, is the study of Ruiz Martín, 1990; see also Sanz Ayán, 1989, and Álvarez Nogal, 1997.

³ Boyajian, 1983 and 1993.

⁴ As Studnicki-Gizbert 2007 shows.

⁵ Ruiz Martín, 1970, pp. 1-196; Valladares, 2002; Herrero Sánchez, 2005, pp. 115-151.

⁶ The case of Lima in the first half of the 1630s is exemplary: Millar Carvacho, 1998, pp. 129-169, which deals with the confiscations of Lima's Inquisition from the converted Jews of the "*gran complicidad*" of 1635.

2. The Vaaz in Naples

The presence in Naples of the three brothers Bento, Eduardo and Miguel Vaaz, New Christian merchants from Lisbon, is documented from the late 1580s, when their names are frequently mentioned in connection with the wheat trade, an activity in which the Vaaz had already been engaged in the Iberian Peninsula.⁷

In those years, both the Neapolitan plebeian classes and the elite rulers of the city, still remembered vividly the popular revolt of 1585, caused by the lack of bread and culminating in the lynching of a major figure in local government, the *Eletto del Popolo*, Gian Vincenzo Starace, considered responsible for having consented to the export of wheat from the kingdom, in spite of the famine which the city was suffering.⁸ After this violence, the Spanish government in Naples dedicated maximum attention to the city's provisioning, to avoid a repetition of similar situations that could very easily be transformed into dangerous disruptions of public order. On some occasions, the *anona*, the municipal organization that looked after the supplying of Naples, did not hesitate to accept the onerous conditions imposed by the groups of merchants, buying wheat at exorbitant prices and subsequently introducing it onto the city markets with a more accessible price for the people.⁹

After their arrival in Naples, the Vaaz occupied a prominent role in the important wheat trade and, in partnership with bankers and merchants traditionally present on this market, they participated in the more profitable contracts for the city's wheat supply, drawn up between the late 1580s and the early 1590s. However, throughout the last decade

⁷ The most complete biographical notes on the Vaaz in the kingdom of Naples are in Belli, 1990, pp. 7-42; see also, not without many inaccuracies, Sirago, 1987, pp. 119-158, which briefly traces the history of the presence of the Jews in the Kingdom of Naples. On this last subject, also previous bibliography, Scaramella, 2003, pp. 357-373. Among the old sources on the Vaaz the most important is Confuorto, 1693.

⁸ Regarding this event see Colapictra, 1972, pp. 69-173; Villari, 1976, pp. 42-52.

⁹ In this respect, also for the previous bibliography on the Neapolitan *anona*, Sabatini, 1998a. A synthesis of the *anona's* political practices in Naples is in the work dated 1638 of Carlo Tapia, *Il trattato dell'abondanza*, (Sabatini, 1998b), on which see Dubuloz, Sabatini, 2003.

of the century, the figure of Miguel Vaaz stands out clearly from all the other members of the family.

Miguel Vaaz arrived in Naples around 1590, when he was approximately 35 years old. After having already gained some experience in the wheat trade in the Iberian Peninsula, his ability to become part of the Neapolitan market was astonishing.¹⁰ With great rapidity he managed to participate in all the largest contracts for supplying Naples with wheat. His skill consisted, in the first place, of associating himself with other foreign merchants – Flemings, Dalmatians, Genoese – who succeeded in importing wheat from areas further afield than usual, until they had stocked larger quantities than the other groups of local businessmen could offer.¹¹ However, the ability of Miguel Vaaz to provide large quantities of wheat was also due to conduct that his contemporaries readily condemned as unscrupulous: alone, or in company with other merchants, in this case Dalmatians and Flemings, he fitted out and armed privateers that sailed the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic seas in search of ships carrying merchandise. The rapid and enormous success that he obtained in the wheat trade opened up to Miguel Vaaz the path to participation in all the financial issues that were negotiated in Naples, until he was considered, at the turn of the century, the true master of the kingdom's credit market.

It is easy to understand that a large hostile front formed rapidly against Miguel Vaaz, and this included the most powerful local bankers and the families of the Neapolitan aristocracy, that constituted the municipal power and negotiated daily with him, and under his conditions, the contracts for the city's wheat supply. These groups of the kingdom of Naples' ruling elite, by no means second-class citizens, accused Vaaz publicly of practising usury and denounced him to the

¹⁰ Confuorto, 1693; the local chronicles of the community of which Miguel Vaaz was the founder, S. Michele in the province of Terra di Bari (see below), recount how Philip II, having known Vaaz in Portugal, sent him to Naples from 1580 as his emissary (D'Addabbo, 1936); although no documentation exists that directly confirms this report, it should be noted that the name of a Miguel Vaaz appears in two lists of *mercedes y recomendaciones* relating to Naples, along with equally numerous Spaniards who fought against the Portuguese resistance in Philip II's army (AGS, Estado, Naples, 1. 1088, years 1585-1586).

¹¹ Coniglio, 1955, pp. 34-39, 47, 175, 199-201, 207-213; Colapietra, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196.

Neapolitan plebeian classes as a speculator who, for personal gain, deliberately provoked scarcity and a high price for bread.¹²

Basing themselves on the documentation existing in Naples, various historians in the last century have referred to Miguel Vaaz's activities and to the not very benevolent judgment that his contemporaries passed on him.¹³ However, the most detailed reconstruction of Miguel Vaaz's activities, in and outside Naples, is in a source that, until now, has not received the attention that it deserves: the correspondence that the *residente di Venezia*, the Venetian Ambassador in Naples, kept with the Senate of the Repubblica Serenissima.¹⁴

The dispatches that Giovan Carlo Scaramelli, and subsequently Antón Maria Vincenti, sent to Venice until the end of 1601 record in great detail the central role that Miguel Vaaz played in the financial life of the kingdom of Naples, and his multiple activities connected with supply contracts for the city of Naples. But the ambassadors' dispatches emphasize, in particular, the subject of the privateers armed by Vaaz that frequently set upon Venetian ships.

For example, between June and November 1601, the reports of the Venetian *residente* in Naples enable us to reconstruct the events surrounding the capture of the Venetian ship *Pigna* by a privateer, fitted out by Miguel Vaaz and captained by his partner, the Fleming Petrus Orange de Bruxelles. We can also reconstruct the complicity that existed between the Portuguese merchant and the Vicereine and, above all, between Miguel Vaaz and the Count of Castro, son of the Viceroy, the Count of Lemos, whom he was to succeed in the office of lieutenant-general of the kingdom of Naples – a *de facto* interim Viceroy – after the death of his father in October 1601 until the arrival of the new Viceroy, the Count of Benavente, in April 1603.¹⁵

¹² Confuorto, 1693; Colapictra, 1972, pp. 191 and 260-261.

¹³ In addition to the already cited Coniglio and Colapictra, see Galasso, 1959, pp. 3-106, now partially in Galasso, 1994, pp. 157-184.

¹⁴ Barzazi, 1991.

¹⁵ G. C. Scaramelli to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 5 June 1601 (Barzazi, 1991, pp. 381-382): the Venetian ship *Pigna* was attacked by a fast boat of Miguel Vaaz and his Fleming partner, Petrus Orange de Bruxelles (Vaaz is described as *persona ricca e molto intima di*

The complicit relationship that Miguel Vaaz succeeded in bringing about between the political power and the companies was revealed very clearly when, in February-March 1602, the Venetian Ambassador, Anton Maria Vincenti, called the attention of the Lieutenant of the kingdom to the fact that the Portuguese merchant was equipping four privateers with rigging and crew from the kingdom's arsenal; to the continual protests of the diplomat, the Count of Castro replied merely that Vaaz had orders not to attack Venetian ships, but only English and Ottoman ones, and always in the service of the King of Spain. In the successive dispatches sent on this matter, between 1602 and 1603, the Ambassador Scaramelli communicated with undisguised satisfaction that Vaaz's privateers had been obliged, several times, to seek shelter in the port of Messina in a bad state of repair, and that part of the crew, because of the scant amount of plunder, had abandoned them to try to better their fortunes in Malta.¹⁶ After these episodes, mention of Vaaz

tutti i signori viceré che vengono a questo governo [of Naples]); the *residente* denounces the conniving with the Viceroy who promises, however, to return the vessel, then in Palermo, and arrest Orange; G. C. Scaramelli to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 12 June 1601 (383) and 19 June 1601 (385): still on the seizure of the ship *Pigna*, Vaaz makes an offer to the Ambassador to find an agreement; G. C. Scaramelli to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 9 October 1601 (405): restitution of the ship *Pigna* to the Venetians, but confirms that the privateer vessel had been fitted out by Vaaz in complicity with the Vicereine. In the same period, there is news of other cargos of wheat that arrived through Miguel Vaaz to Naples from Apulia (ASN, Camera della Sommaria, Partium, v. 1570, f. 17, 10 de mayo de 1601).¹⁶ A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 26 February 1602 (Barzani, 1991, 518): Vaaz fits out three privateers in partnership with the captain, Petrus Orange, and also, it seems, with the Vicereine, and the *residente* speaks to the Lieutenant about it but obtains only vague promises of action; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 2 March 1602 (435): without being molested, Vaaz continues to fit out the ships, that are now four and whose rigging is provided by the arsenal, a clear sign of the complicity of the Lieutenant and the Vicereine; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 12 March 1602 (437): to the protests of the diplomat, the Lieutenant replies that Vaaz has orders not to attack Venetian ships, but only English and Ottoman ones and that he is to do so in the service of His Majesty; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples 19 March 1602 (439): Vaaz's ships left Naples and sailed towards the Levant; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 19 November 1602 (472): after the period of piracy, the ships are in Messina to undergo repairs, but the spoils are disappointing and part of the crew goes to Malta in search of better fortune; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 31 December 1602 (478-79) and 28 January 1603 (484): Vaaz's ships return to Messina; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 27 May 1603 (505): Vaaz's ships returned to Messina in very bad condition.

in the fitting-out of privateers becomes less frequent¹⁷; nevertheless, he always continued to encourage this practice by buying merchandise captured through acts of piracy.¹⁸

Still more emblematic of the integration into the circles of Neapolitan political power that Miguel Vaaz had achieved in very few years, are the events that occurred from July 1602, when the Venetians rescued a French ship assaulted by privateers while it was transporting a cargo of wheat, the property of Miguel Vaaz, to Naples. The Portuguese merchant asked for its immediate return to Venice, arguing that the privateers had not become the legitimate owners of the ship, because they had had it in their possession for less than one day and, consequently, the ship and its cargo should be restored to him. The commander of the Venetian squadron claimed, on the contrary, that he could demonstrate that the ship had been in the possession of the privateers for four days, and that it was, therefore, legitimate for it to be freed and appropriated with its whole cargo. The Ambassador Vincenti, scandalized by what seemed an overreaction by the Lieutenant of the kingdom, wrote to the Senate. Since Vaaz was involved in this question, the Count of Castro considered the episode an affair of state, to the point of threatening to confiscate the goods and merchandise of all the Venetian residents in Naples until he obtained the return of the goods to the Portuguese merchant.

The quarrel dragged on until the spring of 1603, with the Repubblica Serenissima claiming jurisdiction in the lawsuit that was to take place in Venice and the Lieutenant, applying all the pressure he could to obtain the liberation of the ship. In fact, a solution was only found when, with the imminent departure from Naples of the Count of Castro and the

¹⁷ A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 21 October 1603 (Barzazi, 1991, pp. 524-525): after the last campaign Vaaz seems convinced that to it is no longer worthwhile fitting out privateers.

¹⁸ A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 24 August 1604 (Barzazi, 1991, p. 572): Vaaz is among the buyers of the merchandise of the Venetian ships, rescued from Turkish pirates and afterwards captured by the commander-general of the Neapolitan galleons, the Marquis of Santa Cruz, who did not want to recognize the provenance of the ships, refusing to return them to Venice.

arrival of a new Viceroy, the Count of Benavente, Vaaz considered it more politic to arrive at a settlement.¹⁹

Although no documents exist that confirm with certainty the accusation on the part of the Venetian ambassadors that the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom himself was associated with Vaaz in the activity of preparing privateers, it is evident that only a very close relationship with the Spanish government in Naples can explain the fact that, at least until 1616, Miguel

¹⁹ A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 2 July 1602 (Barzani, 1991, p. 452): the Venetians made off with a ship loaded with wheat that the pirates had captured; it is a French ship and is transporting a cargo of wheat belonging to Miguel Vaaz; as Vaaz is involved, the Lieutenant immediately transforms the occurrence into an affair of state: the Lieutenant wants to proceed with the seizure of all goods and property belonging to Venetians resident in Naples; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 20 and 23 July 1602 (455): Vaaz defends the view that the pirates had detained the ship in their possession less than one day, so would not have become owners of the same, and the Venetians should return it, but the Venetians argue that the pirates had held the captured ship for four days; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 30 July, 6 and 13 August 1602 (456-9): Vaaz demonstrates all the protection that he enjoys on the part of the Spanish government; the Venetian Senate to A. M. Vincenti, Venice, 27 August 1602 (461): the Senate has decided that the ship and its cargo should set off for Venice where the lawsuit will take place; the decision enrages the Lieutenant of the kingdom; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 22 October 1602 (461): the question is still unresolved; the Venetian Senate to A. M. Vincenti, Venice, 2 November 1602 (469): the *residente* tells Vaaz to send one of his agents to Venice for the suit; however, the money resulting from the sale of some merchandise from the ship was deposited in a bank; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 12 November 1602 (470): the *residente* refers to a meeting with the Lieutenant to communicate the decision of Venice, having convinced him with some difficulty not to start the trial in Naples, and after having received from Vaaz confirmation that he would send an agent; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 19 November 1602 (472): last confirmation that Vaaz and his partners will send proxies to the trial in Venice; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 3 and 10 December 1602 (473-5): Vaaz communicates that he aims to prosecute the action in Naples as the decision of the Senate relating to the deposit of the money never produced any effect, the Lieutenant continues to support Vaaz and, from this moment, intends the question to be dealt with not only in the courts of the kingdom but also by its highest political body, the Collateral Council. A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 7 and 14 January 1603 (479-81): the *residente's* attempt to convince the Lieutenant to discuss the case in Venice failed, the Lieutenant tries to persuade the *residente* to deal directly with Vaaz; the Venetian Senate to A. M. Vincenti, Venice, 21 February 1603 (488): the Senate invited everyone involved, including the provider of the Venetian armada, to present the documents for the case; A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 11 March 1603 (490): the Ambassador had a meeting with Vaaz, who remained opposed to the Venice trial but was disposed to arrive at an agreement.

Vaaz had succeeded in remaining immune from the attacks of the many enemies that his activities had made for him.

This link with the Spanish government proved particularly strong from 1599, that is from the arrival in Naples of the Viceroy Fernando Ruiz de Castro Andrade y Portugal, the first of the line of the Counts of Lemos that were to occupy this position, and it was probably through the intermediary of some Portuguese in the Viceroy's entourage that Miguel Vaaz made contact with Francisco Fernández, Count of Castro.²⁰ As mentioned above, Vaaz certainly had a very close relationship with the Count of Castro, continuing to manage his property in Naples when he left the kingdom in 1603 to become Ambassador to Venice and then in Rome until 1616, when he was appointed Viceroy of Sicily from 1616 to 1622²¹. However, it was with the elder brother of the Count of Castro, Pedro Fernández de Castro – heir to the title of Count of Lemos after the death of his father in 1601, Viceroy of Naples between 1610 and 1616 – that Miguel Vaaz reached the peak of his power.

3. The Peak of Power: the Years of the Viceroys, Counts of Benavente and Lemos

On his arrival in Naples in 1603, the Count of Benavente had tried to reassert vice-regal authority over the local economic powers, but the terrible shortages, which marked the central years of his government and which lasted until 1610, obliged him to make pacts with influential local figures in finance to resolve the very serious problems of the city's and the kingdom's supplies²². The shortage started in 1604 and reached its peak in 1606, and it was such a disaster that, after the very poor harvest

²⁰ On the lineage of the counts of Castro, in particular in the Neapolitan stage, see Enciso Alonso-Muñumer, 2007.

²¹ The functions of banker and administrator that Miguel Vaaz carried out for the Count of Castro are documented by the data on the movements registered by *Banco della Pietà* in Naples in 1612 (when the Count de Castro was Ambassador of Spain in Rome) published by Nicolini, 1950, p. 185, and Nicolini, 1951, pp. 239, 299.

²² For the Benavente years in Naples, see Coniglio, 1955, pp. 149-155, Colapietra, 1972, pp. 195-200, De Rosa, 1987, pp. 71-88, 110-127.

of the spring and summer of that year, one and a half million *tomoli*²³ of wheat had to be imported, practically one and a half times the city of Naples' consumption needs. Through the report that, at the beginning of 1607, the highest magistrate in charge of the Neapolitan *anona* – the *Grasciero maggiore* the Marquis of Corleto – sent to Philip III, we know that about half of this enormous quantity was obtained by Miguel Vaaz from the whole of Europe: 550,000 *tomoli* procured on his own and another 120,000 in partnership with the Genoese merchant Cesare Zattera.²⁴ This episode was long remembered by his contemporaries, who commented on it with great delight:

*"In these years 1607 and 1608, ... there being shortages throughout the whole of Italy, thanks to the diligence of his lordship the Count of Benavente and the efforts of Miguel Vaaz, a Portuguese gentleman, ships laden with wheat have converged here, a sight never before beheld in this port (of Naples) to everyone's amazement."*²⁵

The benefit that Miguel Vaaz obtained from his great efforts in the provisioning of the city's *anona* is made clear in the missive that the Grand Duke of Tuscany's agent in Naples, Cosimo Del Sera, sent to

²³ The *tomolo* (plural *tomoli*) was the traditional unit of volume for dry goods used in Naples and was equivalent to 55.5 litres; it was also equivalent to the *fanega* or *benaga* used in Castile.

²⁴ The Marquis of Corleto's report, dated 8 January 1607, which estimated the population of Naples to be 264,000 and, consequently the minimum needs for provisioning to be 960,000 *tomoli* of wheat, reconstructs in detail all the acquisitions of wheat carried out by the *anona* in the second half of the year 1606 to meet the shortage (AGS, Estado, Nápoles, l. 1104, f. 12; see also Coniglio, 1955, 45-48, and Colapietra, 1972, pp. 191, 261). On the relations between Miguel Vaaz and Cesare Zattera see A. M. Vincenti to the Venetian Senate, Naples, 25 February 1603 and 4 March 1603: Vaaz and Zattera signed a contract for 100,000 *tomoli* of wheat, to be imported from the Marche and the Abruzzi regions, in central Italy, at a cost of 21 and 23 *carlini* per *tomolo*, respectively (Barzazi, 1991, pp. 488-491).

²⁵ "...in questi anni 1607 and 1608, [...] essendo universale penuria per tutta Italia, per diligenza del signor Conte di Benavente et per opera di Michele Vaaz gentiluomo portoghese, sono da tutte le parti del mondo concorse navi cariche di frumento, cosa mai più veduta in questo porto [of Naples], con stupore universale"

See, for example, Capasso, 1882 (now in De Rosa, Cestaro, 1973, pp. 49-86, 56 for the quotation). On the author of these words, Giulio Cesare Capaccio, see Novellino, 2006. On the other hand, comments full of admiration for Miguel Vaaz continued to be made, even after his luck had definitively run out: see Parrino, 1730, v. II, 60.

Florence on 27 July 1606, showing that the price presented by Vaaz and Zattera was on average 26 *carlini* per *tomolo* whereas, a few days before the confirmation of the bad harvests, the price had not risen above 18 *carlini*, an increase, therefore, of more than 40%²⁶! In actual fact, the commercial operation carried out by Miguel Vaaz in 1606 was much more complex than the way it was summarized by the Grand Duke of Tuscany's agent: in partnership with Cesare Zattera, Vaaz had imported into Naples 120,000 *tomoli* of wheat from the interior of the kingdom (at a cost per *tomolo* of 21 *carlini* for the soft variety and 23 for the hard), from Germany (at 24 *carlini*) and from the north of Italy and France (at 26 *carlini*); subsequently 100,000 *tomoli* of wheat from Spain and Portugal (at 25 *carlini* per *tomolo*) had been imported by Vaaz alone, and from the north of Italy and from France (at 28 *carlini*); finally, Vaaz had brought into Naples another 450,000 *tomoli* at the price of 28 *carlini*, but for this quantity, clearly the largest imported by the Portuguese merchant in 1606, the Marquis of Corleto, author of the list from which the data mentioned are taken, does not indicate the origin, which makes it highly probable that it was the product of Vaaz's privateering activity.²⁷

If the situation of grave shortages marked the central years of the first half century in which Miguel Vaaz rose to, not only economic but also political, power, it was with the arrival in Naples of Pedro Fernández de Castro, Count of Lemos in 1610, that the Portuguese banker consolidated his central role in the kingdom's finances, rapidly reaching the coveted position of Counsellor to the Viceroy.

As the Count of Lemos himself wrote to Madrid on various occasions,²⁸ Miguel Vaaz was the real author of the reforms that the Viceroy carried out in various sectors of the kingdom of Naples' economy, above all in the management of income and expenditure, in state accounting, in

²⁶ Palermo, 1846, pp. 264-65.

²⁷ In addition, Vaaz's interests are not confined to the wheat trade; for example, in 1604, he had obtained the annual licence for the supply of salted meat to the kingdom's galleons (ASN, Camera della Sommaria, Partium, v. 1638, c. 19 r).

²⁸ AGS, Estado, Nápoles, l. 1106, f. 133, *Relación de las rentas etc.*, memoir, dated Naples 26 March 1611, annexed to the missive sent by the Count of Lemos to Filipe III (in fact to the secretary Andrés de Prada), Naples, 28 March 1611, *idem*, f. 132.

drawing up the kingdom's budgets, and in issuing public debt. All these reforms were the expression of one political project that aimed to reorganize kingdom's finances, the essential basis for guaranteeing the defence of its territory and participation in the rearmament process that integration with the Spanish monarchy implied.²⁹

More precisely, with the *prammatica* of 15 October 1612,³⁰ as part of the general reorganization of the kingdom's whole administrative machinery, and after having made a thorough study of the disbursements with the aim of avoiding fraud and mismanagement, the Count of Lemos established that income, from that date onwards, would be subdivided into two quotas: one, amounting to about 15%, destined for the kingdom's general Treasury, and the other intended for a section of the state budget still to be instituted, the *Cassa Militare*, the Military Treasury, which would take the remaining 85%. The Military Treasury was to cover, not only the military expenses of defence and policing, but also the funding of the principal public works and the payment of the Viceroy's and his collaborators' salaries. All the income earned by the bankers in the payment of loans, or transferred as a basis for the payment of interest on the public debt, and bought back with budget surpluses, would be added gradually to the entry items of the *Cassa Militare*, which were declared non-transferable.³¹

The Viceroy's intention was that the accounting reform and, above all, the creation of the Military Treasury would serve, not only to guarantee the soldiers' regular pay, avoiding default which could create dangerous tensions among the troops, but also to prevent recurring emergency situations, which continuously put the Viceroy in the position of having to accept the very onerous conditions imposed by the bankers for the granting of large loans. In fact, in parallel with the interventions in the administrative machinery and the kingdom's accounting, the Count of Lemos made a drastic reduction in the public debt's interest rates: for

²⁹ For a synthetic overview on the reforms of the Count of Lemos in Naples see Enciso Alonso-Muñumer, 2007, pp. 420-448.

³⁰ Giustiniani, 1804, pp. 300-333.

³¹ Coniglio, 1955, pp. 207-213; Galasso, 1994, pp. 157-158; Sabatini, 2006.

non-life bonds that had yielded 9-10%, the rates were reduced to 7%; for life-bonds that had yielded 12-13%, the rates were reduced to 10%.³²

Only a businessman as well versed in public and private finances as Miguel Vaaz could point out to the Viceroy where the most concealed frauds were and what was the best way to limit, as much as possible, the power of the bankers over the King's money management. And the Count of Lemos, who called Vaaz the "*instrumento principal de mis acciones*" and who had praised the altruism with which he had worked on the revision of the kingdom's accounts – "*fue solo el que ha deseado el encantamiento del Balanço, advirtiendome de sus errores y ajustando la cuenta con esquisito primor y trabajo*" – never failed to stress to Philip III that the Portuguese businessman demonstrated a loyalty to the Sovereign that transcended his own interests, as was proved by the fact that, in the operation of reducing the public debt's yield, Vaaz himself had lost about 3,000 ducats.³³

In fact, even in the years when Naples was governed by the Count of Lemos, Miguel Vaaz had continued his profitable activity in the wheat trade,³⁴ in the light of which the losses he sustained with the reduction

³² AGS, Estado, Nápoles, l. 1106, f. 132 and 133 and Coniglio, 1955, p. 199. The Duke of Urbino's agent in Naples estimated that the reduction in the public debt's interest rates had resulted in a saving of 400,000 ducats for the kingdom's coffers, 250,000 of which were from the Genoese banker (Palermo, 1846, pp. 223-224); if Miguel Vaaz was really considered to be behind this measure, we can imagine that this did not contribute to improving the already tense relations between the Portuguese and Genoese bankers in Naples; on this matter see Sabatini, 2010A.

³³ AGS, Estado, Nápoles, l. 1106, f. 133; see also Muto, 1980, p. 93.

³⁴ That the Count of Lemos did not behave any differently from his predecessor in the question of the provisioning of wheat, is demonstrated by, among other things, the contracts signed for the year 1610, the year of his arrival in Naples, with Miguel Vaaz in partnership with the Genoese Giacomo Fornari (ASN, Notamenti del Collaterale, v. 3, c. 19 r); for the years following, from 1610 to 1616, see Coniglio, 1955, p. 34 (the source quoted by Coniglio for these dates is the *Liber Conclusionum Originalium* of the *Archivio Storico del Comune di Napoli*, v. 1405 and 1406, which, however, as the author himself points out, was destroyed in a fire in 1946 and thus is not available for consultation). The Count of Lemos proved to be nevertheless, more intransigent than his predecessors in demanding from Vaaz the enforcement of the contract for the supply of wheat and in refusing imports when these were not up to the quality contracted, as occurred, for example, in 1615 (Coniglio, 1955, p. 200). Data for the same years, on Vaaz's activity as the Count of Lemos' banker, both in his private dealings and in his functions as Viceroy, in Nicolini, 1950 and 1951.

in the public debt's yield seem paltry. In addition to this activity, he had increased the process, already under way since the end of the previous decade, of acquiring fiefs in the best wheat-producing areas in the kingdom – Roscignano, San Nicandro and Casamassima in the province of Terra di Bari, Belrisguardo in Principato Citra, San Donato in the province of Terra d'Otranto – culminating in the purchase of the city of Mola, which was in the province of Terra di Bari.⁵⁵ Philip III confirmed the granting of the title of Count with the name of this town (Mola) to Miguel Vaaz, in recognition of services rendered to the Viceroy. This was in 1613; in the previous year the Count of Lemos had presented his reform programme to the King.⁵⁶

Two years later, in 1615, in the territory of Quattro Miglia, a rural fief in the commune of San Michele in Terra di Bari, purchased in 1608, Miguel Vaaz founded a new community, which he christened Casa Vaaz. He brought from the coast of Dalmatia to the port of Barletta a ship with 460 orthodox peasants, who had escaped from the Ottoman advance, in order to put them in an unpopulated territory; the new community's obligation to colonize the land was signed in Naples on 6 July 1615 by Padre Damiano de Damianiis, who had guided this small group in its journey across the Adriatic sea.⁵⁷ From 1616, in consequence of the first of the Inquisition trials that were brought against the Vaaz on the charge of Judaism, the community was re-baptized with the name of San Michele and other inhabitants of the area were added to the original population, in order to exorcise the danger of heresies that could result from the continuation of Greek Orthodox rites; this transformation was sanctioned,

⁵⁵ ASN, Cedolari feudali, v. 44, cc. 70 v-71 r.

⁵⁶ In 1612 the Count of Lemos asked Filipe III for Miguel Vaaz. "*por más conveniente merced que renta o ayuda de costa [...] un título de duque o marqués y plaza en el Consejo Colateral, que en esto segundo ganará infinito el servicio de V. Mag. [por] ser grande su suficiencia para ocuparla en cosas publicas y de las de aquel Reyno [of Naples], de toda Italia y de Levante, de que tiene mucha inteligencia*" (AGS, Estado, Nápoles, l. 1107, *Consulta sobre la remuneración de las personas que estuvieron en el Parlamento general de Nápoles*, Naples, 10 September 1612, c. 1 r-4 v). For the title of Count of Mola, granted by Philip III in Madrid on 4 May 1613, see AGS, Secretarías provinciales, Naples, l. 177, c. 164 v.

⁵⁷ D'Addabbo, 1936, pp. 295-96; Sirago, 1987, p. 130.

in 1619, with the signature of a contract by the new inhabitants.³⁸

Miguel Vaaz's new position, not only resolved, once and for all, the problem of his status as a foreigner, for as Count of Mola he became a citizen of the kingdom of Naples³⁹, but also clearly reflected an important change in social terms; the purchase of a large house in the elegant Neapolitan district of Chiaia, very near the home of the aristocratic Spanish family of the Alarcón y Mendoza, was a clear sign of this change.⁴⁰

On the other hand, in these same years there were other important events, that reinforced the image of the Vaaz family's rapid social rise: Simão Vaaz, son of Eduardo Vaaz, nephew and heir to the property and title of Miguel Vaaz, who had no issue, embarked on a career in the kingdom's courts. In 1611, Simão Vaaz, *doctor in utroque iure*, was appointed by the Count of Lemos commissioner for the Spanish enclave in Tuscany, the *Estado de los Presidios*; in the same year as a judge *in civilibus* he entered the *Vicaria*, the highest civil and criminal court in Naples, and in 1614 he became president of a section of the *Camera della Sommaria*, the kingdom's highest administrative court, a position he maintained until 1653.⁴¹

The history of Miguel Vaaz's niece, Fiorenza Vaaz, daughter of Bento Vaaz, is even more emblematic: in 1615 she married D. Giovanni Pignatelli, second-born of the Duke of Noja, who belonged to one of the most important aristocratic families in the kingdom of Naples.⁴² It is of no small importance that the marriage between Fiorenza Vaaz and Giovanni Pignatelli constitutes an exception to the strict endogamy that the Vaaz practised, always marrying among members of their own family, according to a very widespread custom in all New Christian communities. Miguel Vaaz himself was married to his niece Ana, daughter of his brother

³⁸ D'Addabbo, 1936, pp. 297-298; Sirago, 1987, pp. 130-131.

³⁹ Through the *prammatica De officiorum provisione* issued on 12 March 1550 by the Viceroy, Pedro de Toledo, and by the contemporary imperial chapters of Brussels, whosoever received a feudal investiture in the kingdom of Naples *ipso facto* became "*natural del reyno*" to all effects. Villari, 1976, p. 20.

⁴⁰ Belli, 1991, p. 13.

⁴¹ Toppi, 1666, pp. 26, 138; Intorcica, p. 390.

⁴² Confuorto, 1693.

Bento, of whom another daughter, Majora, had married her cousin, the already mentioned Simão Vaaz, who, however, in his second marriage, wedded Anna Brancaccio, a representative of one of the oldest families of the Neapolitan nobility. Simão's son, Eduardo, also married a second cousin, Gratia Vaaz de Andrade.⁴³

4. The Fall: from the Duke of Osuna Years to the Trials of the Inquisition

All this shows clearly that, until the Count of Lemos left Naples in 1616, the social position of the Vaaz, especially that of the most prestigious member of the family, Miguel Count of Mola, had been greatly consolidated, compared to that of the previous decade. However, the situation changed completely and radically in a few months, with the arrival in Naples of the new Viceroy, Pedro Téllez Girón, Duke of Osuna.⁴⁴ The Duke of Osuna, a radical opponent of the Count of Lemos in the fight between factions at the Court of Philip III, unleashed a violent persecution against all his predecessor's closest collaborators.⁴⁵ Miguel Vaaz himself was among the persecuted, as the Duke of Osuna suspected him of having sought to obstruct his posting to Naples, and so, on the arrival of the new Viceroy, the Municipal Council accused Vaaz of selling rotten or poor-quality wheat to the city.⁴⁶

Miguel Vaaz's family suffered their first blow. Early in 1616 Miguel Vaaz's brother, Bento, and his wife Beatriz were accused of Judaism before the Inquisition, in a trial considered to have been instigated by

⁴³ *Idem*.

⁴⁴ On the Duke of Osuna see Linde, 2005, and on his government in Naples see Schipa, 1911, and Colapietra, 1972, pp. 201-208.

⁴⁵ On the rivalry between the Count of Lemos and the Duke of Osuna see Galasso, 1994, pp. 178-184. On the other hand, the hostility of some sectors of Neapolitan society towards the Count of Lemos and those near him had already manifested itself towards the end of his term of office, at least from 1614 onwards: see Enciso Alonso-Muñumer, 2007, pp. 383-409.

⁴⁶ Zazzera, 1846, pp. 478, 482. The accusations made against Vaaz during the Duke of Osuna's government appeared in numerous anonymous manuscripts that circulated in Naples during those years: BNN, ms. X B 65, *Michele Vais [sic] e le sue pregiudiziali invenzioni* (see Villari, 1976, p. 183).

the Viceroy himself.⁴⁷ In the following year, it was the turn of Miguel Vaaz: on 4 May 1617, the Duke of Osuna ordered the detention and seizure of the goods of a group of Neapolitans suspected of conspiring against him. Miguel Vaaz was accused, not only of conspiring against the Viceroy, but also of having exchanged correspondence with infidels.⁴⁸ Miguel Vaaz encountered the guards when leaving his house to go to mass in the neighbouring convent of the Celestine monks, where he found sanctuary under the protection of the ecclesiastical immunity that the religious community enjoyed.⁴⁹

The Count of Mola remained confined to the convent of the Celestine monks for three years, until 1620, when the Duke of Osuna was replaced because of his heavy hand in governing Naples.⁵⁰ Vaaz, who subsequently claimed that he had been warned in dreams of the imminent danger by Saint Pedro Celestino, wished to honour the debt of gratitude that he owed the Celestines by buying a piece of land adjoining his house and the convent for 1,000 ducats, which he then offered to the monks with the obligation to build a church dedicated to Saint Michael, and by donating 10,000 ducats for the construction of the church and a further 9,000 ducats for the decoration of its interior; he later founded a *monte*, that is, a quantity of bonded goods, to guarantee funds for the building.⁵¹

Despite being captive, Miguel Vaaz continued to do business. In 1619 he appeared as the title holder of a contract for supplying 9,000 *tomoli*

⁴⁷ The documents relative to the inquisitorial proceedings against Benedetto Vaaz and his wife Beatriz are in ASDN, *Fondo Sant'Ufficio*, pp. 201-480 /A (Galasso, Russian, 820).

⁴⁸ Comparato, 1974, p. 294; the persecution of Miguel Vaaz is connected with the secret contacts between the New Christians and the Jews, exiled by the Spanish monarchy in London, Amsterdam, Leghorn and Venice, and part of the spy network of the Ottoman Empire (on which see Rodrigues Da Silva Tavim, 2004, p. 273). On the contacts between the New Christians of Naples and the Jewish communities at Leghorn and Venice see, respectively, Frattarelli Fischer, 2008, and Ruspio, 2007.

⁴⁹ The events are reconstructed by Vaaz himself in the deed of gift with which he subsequently rewarded the Celestines for the protection they gave him (see below and Belli, 1990, p. 13).

⁵⁰ Schipa, 1911.

⁵¹ The deed of gift, dated 4 May 1622, exactly five years after the failed attempt to arrest Vaaz, and the act of constitution of the *monte*, dated 29 July 1623, are published in full in the appendix to Belli, 1990, pp. 22-7.

of wheat in Naples, although, in the same year, he had traded a quantity of wheat almost four times larger, 34,000 *tomoli*, through a nephew, who had arrived from Portugal, Francisco Vaaz de Andrade, and had married his brother Bento's daughter, Beatriz.⁵² But the replacement of the Duke of Osuna with Cardinal Gaspar Borja y Velasco, who held the position of interim Viceroy of Naples from June to December 1620 – awaiting the arrival of Philip III's new representative, Cardinal Zapata – gave Miguel Vaaz an unexpected opportunity to regain all his previous ascendancy over the government of the kingdom of Naples.

Cardinal Borja was accompanied by his private secretary, Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, who, in Naples, held the important position of Head of the Viceroy's Secretariat and Secretary of State and War. Diego de Saavedra Fajardo kept close relations with Miguel Vaaz, because of the ties between the Spanish diplomat and the Count of Lemos, of whose Rome agent he was secretary, and he himself was the Rome agent of the Count of Castro, when the latter acted as Viceroy of Sicily. And so, the presence of Saavedra Fajardo beside the interim Viceroy represented an important opportunity for the Count of Mola to recover his social position.⁵³

But Miguel Vaaz did not take advantage of this opportunity, and, after regaining his freedom, did not try to return to the world of business, probably because of the climate of hostility that continued against him. Despite the end of Osuna's government, this hostility was seen in an episode that took place in November 1622, when, in one of the municipal bodies, the Portuguese merchants' speculative activities were publicly denounced and a commission was formed to petition the Viceroy, Cardinal Zapata, to intervene against the fraudulent accumulation of wheat.⁵⁴ It was not until the following decade that the name of Vaaz was

⁵² Coniglio, 1955, p. 34. However, it is evident that during his captivity Miguel Vaaz did not succeed in exercising full control over his business, as is demonstrated by the fact that, in 1622, the payments for the supply of wheat that he had effected between 1616 and 1619 were still outstanding (AGS, Estado, Nápoles, I. 1884, *Bilancio d'esatto e pagato del anno 1621 del regno di Napoli*, Naples, 25 October 1622, cc. 15 r, 20 v and 25 v.).

⁵³ Sabatini, 2008.

⁵⁴ Faraglia, 1878, pp. 151, 198-200.

linked once again to contracts of any importance for the supply of wheat⁵⁵, but it was to be with other members of the family, Miguel Vaaz having died in 1623, aged about 70.

His will and numerous other documents with which Miguel Vaaz, in the last years of his life, sought to put his business in order, allow us to gauge his vast wealth and to evaluate his annual income at 23,000 ducats; the most important part of his property were his fiefs. His nephew Simão inherited Mola (and the associated title of Count), Casamassima, Rutigliano, San Nicando and the rural village of San Michele; his nieces Fiorenza and Beatriz, daughters of his brother Bento, inherited Belriguardo and San Donato respectively.⁵⁶

In the generation after Miguel, some Vaaz family members still carried out commercial activities⁵⁷, but the most prominent members

⁵⁵ In 1630, Benedetto Vaaz de Sousa, in partnership with João Mennes Liriquez (probably an error of transcription for Menezes Enriques), imported from the Levant 30,000 *tomoli* of wheat; in 1632 Simão Vaaz imported from Apulia 1,000 *tomoli* of wheat; in 1633 Benedetto Vaaz de Sousa, in partnership with Emanuel Vaaz de Andrade, imported 1,000 *tomoli* of wheat from an unspecified location; also in 1633 a group of Vaaz merchants imported, mainly from Apulia, 56,384 *tomoli* of wheat etc.. (Coniglio, 1955, p. 35).

⁵⁶ The will, dated 17 September 1623, and the inventory of the estate *post mortem*, dated 7 November 1623, are published in full in the appendix to Belli, 1990, respectively pp. 27-31 and pp. 31-42. It is interesting to note that Miguel Vaaz excludes completely from the inheritance, apart from small legacies, his nephew Jorge Vaaz, brother of Simão and Governor of the city of Matera, who seems to have become unpopular with the family because of bad behaviour, probably considered an obstacle to the family's social ascent (Jorge Vaaz, while Governor of Matera, had been tried and condemned, following the general inspection of the kingdom's administration undertaken by Juan Beltran de Guevara from 1607, see AGS, Secretarias provinciales, Nápoles, l. 235, Naples, 8 July 1617, c. 32: "*Jorge Vaaz, gobernador de la ciudad de Matera, ha sido condenado en quinientos ducados para el fisco por cobechos y extorsiones que ha cometido en su oficio*"; see also AGS, Secretarias provinciales, Nápoles, l. 138, f. 7). The bad relations carried over into the following generation, between the children of Simão Vaaz and those of Jorge Vaaz, the latter also accused of having lowered the family's social status by contracting marriages considered inappropriate and dishonourable (Confuorto, 1693). On the other hand, it was to be the accusation of a daughter of Jorge Vaaz, Fiorenza, that determined the proceedings against Eduardo Vaaz for Judaism and, with his condemnation, the social ruin of the whole family (see below).

⁵⁷ In 1623, the year of Miguel Vaaz's death, Jorge Vaaz's children, Michele and Emanuele Vaaz are registered as merchants in the corporation of the *Arte della Seta* of Naples (ASN, Matricole, v. 8, cc. 188 r and 216 r); previously, in 1609, Miguel's brother Bento was registered in the same corporation as a silk merchant (*idem*, v. 7, c. 42 v).

were now his nephews, the high-ranking magistrate, Simão Vaaz and his cousin Fiorenza Vaaz Pignatelli. It was Simão and Fiorenza who, as executors of Miguel Vaaz's will, continued the work of building the church of Saint Michael, employing the greatest Neapolitan architect of the time, Cosimo Fanzago and later, for the decoration of the interior, one of the best European painters of the seventeenth century, Luca Giordano.⁵⁸

In 1633, Francisco Vaaz de Andrade, who had married Beatriz, the sister of Fiorenza Vaaz, was granted the title of Duke of San Donato⁵⁹; in 1645, Simão obtained for his first-born son, Michele Vaaz, the title of Duke of Casamassima⁶⁰; his second-born son, Eduardo, had followed in his father's footsteps, entering the magistracy in 1636 and attaining, in 1643, the position of judge *in criminalibus* in the *Vicaria* court in Naples.⁶¹ The three daughters of Simão Vaaz married prominent nobles, all members of the city's *Seggio*⁶²: Anna married the Duke of Belcastro, Orazio Sersale of the *Seggio di Nido*, Gratia married Antonio Muscettola, first-born son of the Duke of Spezzano, and Fiorenza married Geronimo Carmignano of the *Seggio di Montagna*. In addition, in 1645, Simão Vaaz left the palace in the district of Chiaia that had belonged to his uncle, to move to an elegant, but more sober, building in Via Toledo, next to the palace that had belonged to the Marquis of Belmonte, Carlos Tapia, the most eminent Neapolitan magistrate of the first half of the seventeenth century.⁶³

The fact of having left the world of Neapolitan high finance, and being fully integrated into the profession of magistrate and the high-ranking nobility, seems to have led to the cessation of the hostility that

⁵⁸ Belli, 1990, pp. 13-15.

⁵⁹ Sirago, 1987, p. 133.

⁶⁰ Confuorto, 1693.

⁶¹ Toppi, 1666, pp. 66-71, Intorcchia, 1987, p. 390.

⁶² On the Vaaz's matrimonial policy see Visceglia, 1983. The oldest families of the Neapolitan nobility were grouped into five councils, each of which was designated as a *Seggio*, which exercised important functions in the management of the city and the political life of the whole Kingdom (see Tutini, 1644; Galasso, 1978).

⁶³ Belli, 1990, p. 14.

had accompanied the rise of the family. It should be mentioned that, during the period of the revolts of 1647-1648, both Simão Vaaz, who, at the time, held the important position of Governor of the Foggia Customs⁶⁴, and his son Michele, who had the rank of Captain of Militia, showed their loyalty to the Spanish Crown, fighting alongside the Count of Conversano against the mutineers.⁶⁵

However, at the end of the 1640s, because of their Portuguese origins, the Vaaz were suspected of connections with the Neapolitan exiles, who had found refuge with the Pope after the revolt of 1647-1648. These exiles entered into contact with the agents of John IV of Bragança, in particular with the Jesuit António Vieira, who was in Rome at the beginning of 1650, to study the possibility of a new pro-Lusitanian rising in Naples.⁶⁶ Padre Vieira's mission did not enjoy the success expected; however, during the government of the Count of Oñate as Viceroy of Naples, between 1650 and 1654, strong suspicions fell on the city's Portuguese community and, if it did not actually reach the point of action against the Vaaz family, this was only because of the personal prestige of Simão Vaaz, whom Philip IV in 1653 had appointed to the Collateral Council, the highest political organ, that advised the Viceroy in the running of the kingdom's affairs.⁶⁷

However, after the death of Simão Vaaz in 1655 (his first-born son, Michele, had died in 1654, so that both titles of Count of Mola and Duke of Casamassima passed on to Eduardo), manifestations of hostility

⁶⁴ This position had the responsibility of controlling the whole complex administrative and fiscal machinery that presided over the transhumance system in the kingdom of Naples; in this role and suspected of corruption, Simão Vaaz was involved in the investigation conducted in the kingdom of Naples by the Inspector General Juan Chacón Ponce de León from 1644 (AGS, Secretarías provinciales, Nápoles, l. 227, *Instrucción al licenciado don Juan Chacón Ponce de León etc.*, Zaragoza, 9 September 1644, c. 6 v; *idem*, l. 230, *Memoria de los ministros contra quien resultan cargos de la visita general del Reyno de Nápoles etc.*, Madrid, 9 December 1651, c. 1 r).

⁶⁵ Sirago, 1987, p. 135.

⁶⁶ On the mission of António Vieira in Naples as an agent of D. John IV, in 1650, and his contacts with the Neapolitan exiles with a view to a pro-Lusitanian rising of the kingdom, see Sabatini, 2010B.

⁶⁷ Intorcía, 1987, p. 390.

towards the family were soon seen again. In 1657 the Viceroy, the Count of Castrillo, ordered the arrest of Eduardo Vaaz on the charge that, in his capacity as president of the criminal section of the court of the *Vicaria*, he had tried to protect the son of another high-ranking magistrate, accused of homicide; imprisoned in Sant'Elmo Castle in Naples, Eduardo was also accused of practising Judaism, by a cousin of his, Fiorenza Vaaz, and his property was immediately confiscated.⁶⁸

In spite of there being strong precedents in the trial for Judaism of Bento Vaaz's maternal grandfather in 1616⁶⁹ and the abjuration of his uncle Francisco Vaaz de Andrade, Duke of San Donato, who, on his deathbed in 1636, had declared that he had never abandoned the Jewish religion⁷⁰, in the early phase the Inquisition does not seem to have played a determinant role in the Eduardo Vaaz litigation. However, the situation changed in 1659 with the appointment of Monsignor Camillo Piazza as head of the Neapolitan Inquisition. He filled the gap left by the death of his predecessor, during the plague of 1656, and put an end to the interim period, during which the Papal Nuncio acted as head of the Neapolitan Inquisition.⁷¹

Monsignor Piazza, breaking with the tradition of moderation that had characterized the Inquisition in Naples, at least in the previous twenty-five years, intensified his activities considerably, rapidly pushing forward the trials already under way, preparing new ones, and filling the Inquisition's dungeons.⁷² He immediately concentrated his attention on Eduardo Vaaz and his family. Later on, following the confessions obtained during the interrogations, arrests were made for the same crime of Judaism and the accusation of belonging to the same sect as Eduardo Vaaz: his brother Benedetto with his wife Gratia, his sisters

⁶⁸ The chronicles of the time attribute Fiorenza Vaaz's accusation to Eduardo's alleged opposition to her marriage to the barber who apparently helped her during a plague epidemic the previous year (Confuorto, 1693).

⁶⁹ See above.

⁷⁰ The episode of Francesco Vaaz de Andrade's apostasy is referred to in Capecelatro, pp. 69-70.

⁷¹ Galasso, 1982, p. 62.

⁷² Amabile, 1892, pp. 38-40.

Gratia and Fiorenza, his aunt Beatriz Vaaz de Andrade, with her son Emanuele, Duke of San Donato and daughter Fiorenza, his cousin Gratia Vaaz with her husband, Eduardo de Rivieta, and a son from a previous marriage, Eduardo Mendez, his cousin Beatrice Vaaz, her husband Enrique Suarez Colonel and his brother-in-law Antonio Suarez Colonel were all arrested.⁷³

In addition, in September of the previous year, the Papal Nuncio in Naples, Monsignor Giulio Spinola, had written to the Collateral Council requesting that those accused of Judaism should be taken to Rome to be tried by the Holy Office⁷⁴, having afterwards told Pope Alexander VII's Secretary of State, Cardinal Flavio Chigi, that he had obtained from the Viceroy, the Count of Peñaranda, confirmation that the Collateral Council had agreed to the request⁷⁵. Tried in the court of the Holy Office in Rome in 1660 and found guilty, the defendants abjured publicly, in January 1661, in a ceremony celebrated in the Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, where the sentences were read; Eduardo Vaaz was condemned to life imprisonment, in addition to some minor penalties, such as the payment of 2,000 Roman *escudos* as alms⁷⁶.

When informed of the condemnation, the Collateral Council decreed the definitive confiscation and return to the royal Treasury of all the property seized from Eduardo Vaaz⁷⁷. This decision provoked a violent reaction against the Viceroy, both on the part of Monsignor Piazza, who defended the right to proceed with the confiscation of the property for the Holy Office, and on the part of the kingdom's aristocracy that, through the Municipal Council of the city of Naples, invoked in its turn the application of Pope Julius III's Brief of 7 April 1554, that had

⁷³ Of the names that appear in the records of the inquisitorial proceedings, only those of Giovanni Vargas, son of the Duchess of Cagnano, the Attorney at Law, Girolamo De Rosa and his mother, aunt and nephew are not directly related to the vast family group of the Vaaz (Sirago, 1987, pp. 138-139).

⁷⁴ ASN, Collaterale, Notazioni, v. 63, cc. 142 r - t.

⁷⁵ Sirago, 1987, pp. 139-140.

⁷⁶ ASN, Collaterale, Notazioni, v. 65, c. 18 r; Confuorto, 1693; Fuidoro, 1934, p. 63; Sirago, 1987, 140.

⁷⁷ ASN, Collaterale, Notazioni, v. 65, c. 27 r.

prohibited the confiscation of heretics' property in the kingdom of Naples.⁷⁸ The conflict was decided, on the one hand, by the expulsion of Monsignor Piazza from the kingdom and, on the other, by the reaffirmation of the right of the Collateral Council to proceed with seizure of the heretics' property.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1662 the seizure of that part of Eduardo Vaaz's property, which had not already been transferred, was revoked, perhaps as the result of a memorandum presented to the Collateral Council by his wife⁸⁰, who was now acting as attorney in her husband's interests. Or, more probably, because, perhaps through the will of other high-ranking magistrates, this act of clemency was included in the pardons for which the city of Naples petitioned Philip IV on the occasion of the celebrations for the birth of Prince Carlos, on the previous 6 November.⁸¹ Numerous goods and properties, either freehold or feudal, among which, one of the most valuable, the duchy of Casamassima, had already been sold and, only after long drawn-out litigation, did the family of Eduardo Vaaz manage to retain the countship of Mola.⁸²

In 1666, the Collateral Council decreed a pardon for the offences committed by Eduardo Vaaz in the kingdom of Naples, by reason of "*essere stato onorato da S. Maestà con il grado di Giudice e [per] i Ministri che ha tenuto la sua Casa*"; Vaaz himself, in 1667, pleaded to the Collateral Council to intervene with the Pope to secure an equivalent act of clemency.⁸³ At the end of 1670 or the beginning of 1671, Eduardo Vaaz was released and returned to Naples; significantly, he did not

⁷⁸ Giannone, 1865, p. 563 (but the Inquisition, on 20 July 1556, had reintroduced the confiscation of heretics' property in the kingdom of Naples).

⁷⁹ Amabile, 1892, pp. 44-49; Galasso, 1982, pp. 62-64.

⁸⁰ ASN, Collaterale, Notazioni, v. 65, c. 38 (session of 2 May 1661).

⁸¹ AGS, Estado, Nápoles, l. 3285, *La ciudad de Nápoles, con motivo del nacimiento del Príncipe Carlos, solicita [el] levantamiento del secuestro de los bienes del Conde de Mola*, Naples, 1662, unnumbered paper.

⁸² The long and complex litigation is reconstructed in Sirago, 1987, pp. 145-148; on the judgement of Eduardo Vaaz's condemnation, see Sirago, 1980.

⁸³ ASN, Collaterale, Notazioni, v. 67, c. 123 r (session of 13 September 1666) and c. 169 r (session of 28 February 1667).

return to the family palace in the centre of the city, but remained at the gates of Naples, in the Casale di Capodimonte, where he died in 1671.⁸⁴ But prior to his death, and in spite of the partial recovery of their property, the Vaaz had already been banished from the ruling elite of Spanish Naples, and no descendants of Eduardo Vaaz ever recovered the social prestige that Miguel or Simão Vaaz had enjoyed.

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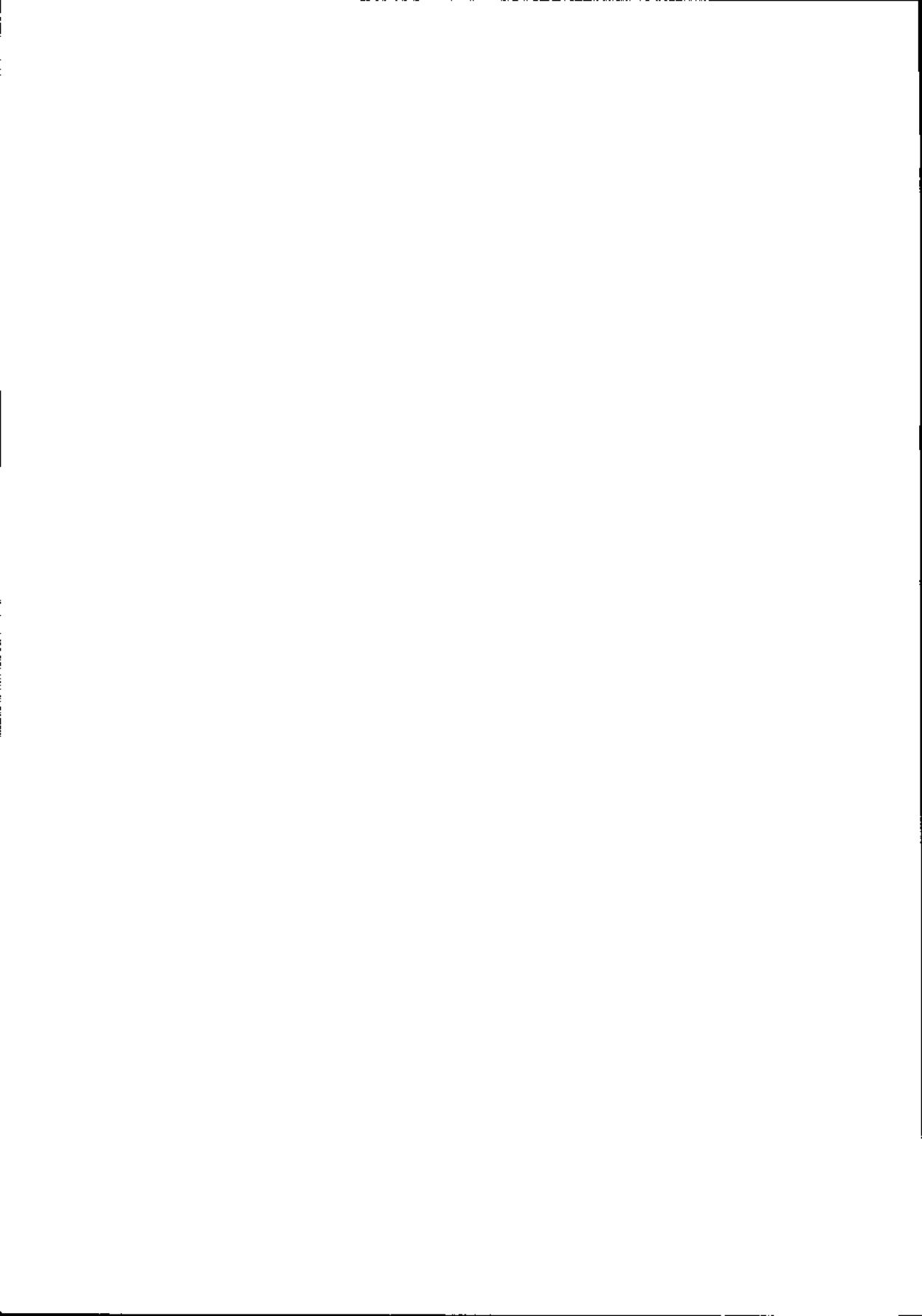
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ABBREVIATIONS

- AGS: Archivo General de Simancas
ASDN: Archivio Storico della Diocesi di Napoli
ASN: Archivio di Stato di Napoli
BNN: Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli

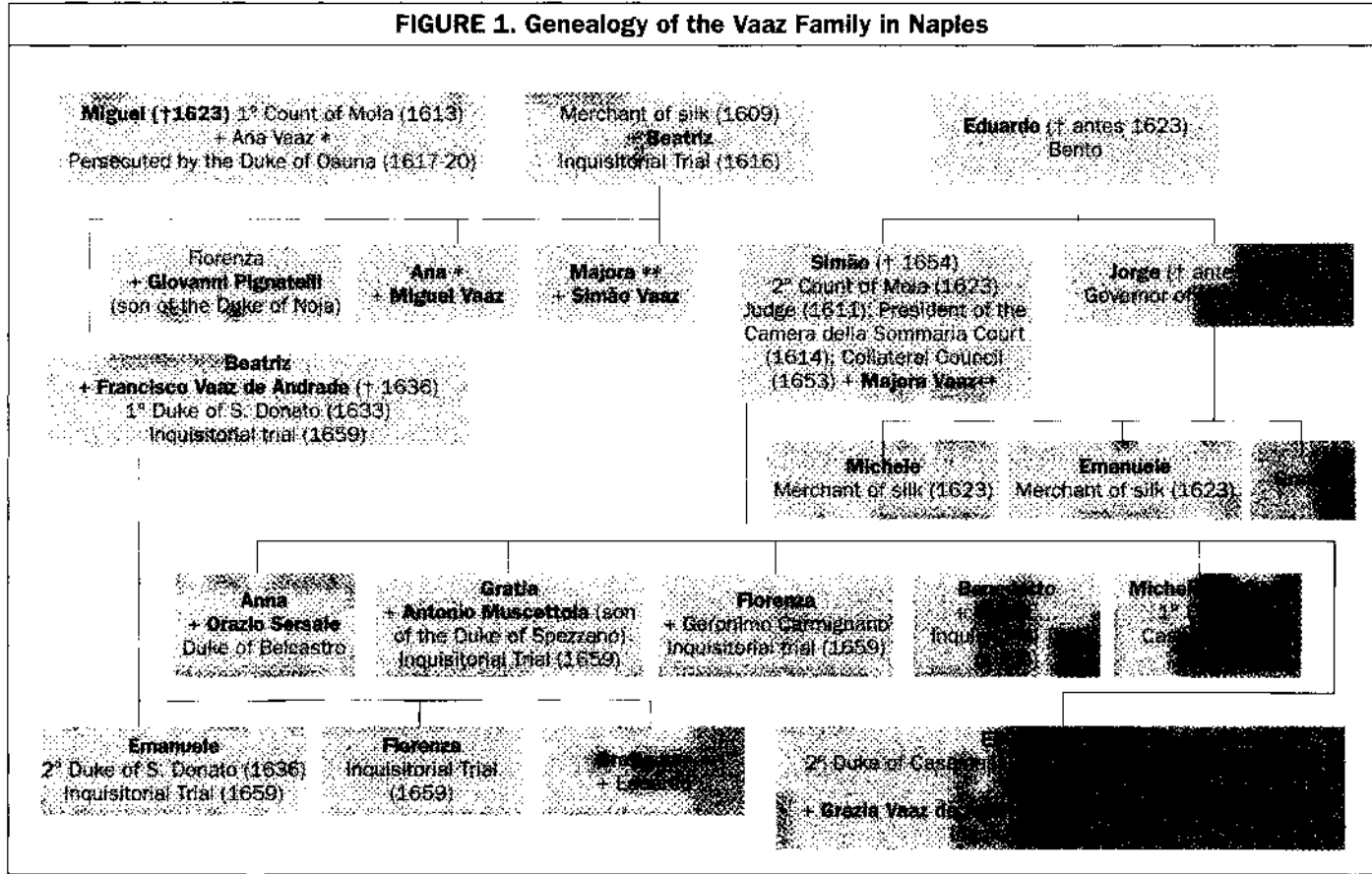


Appendix

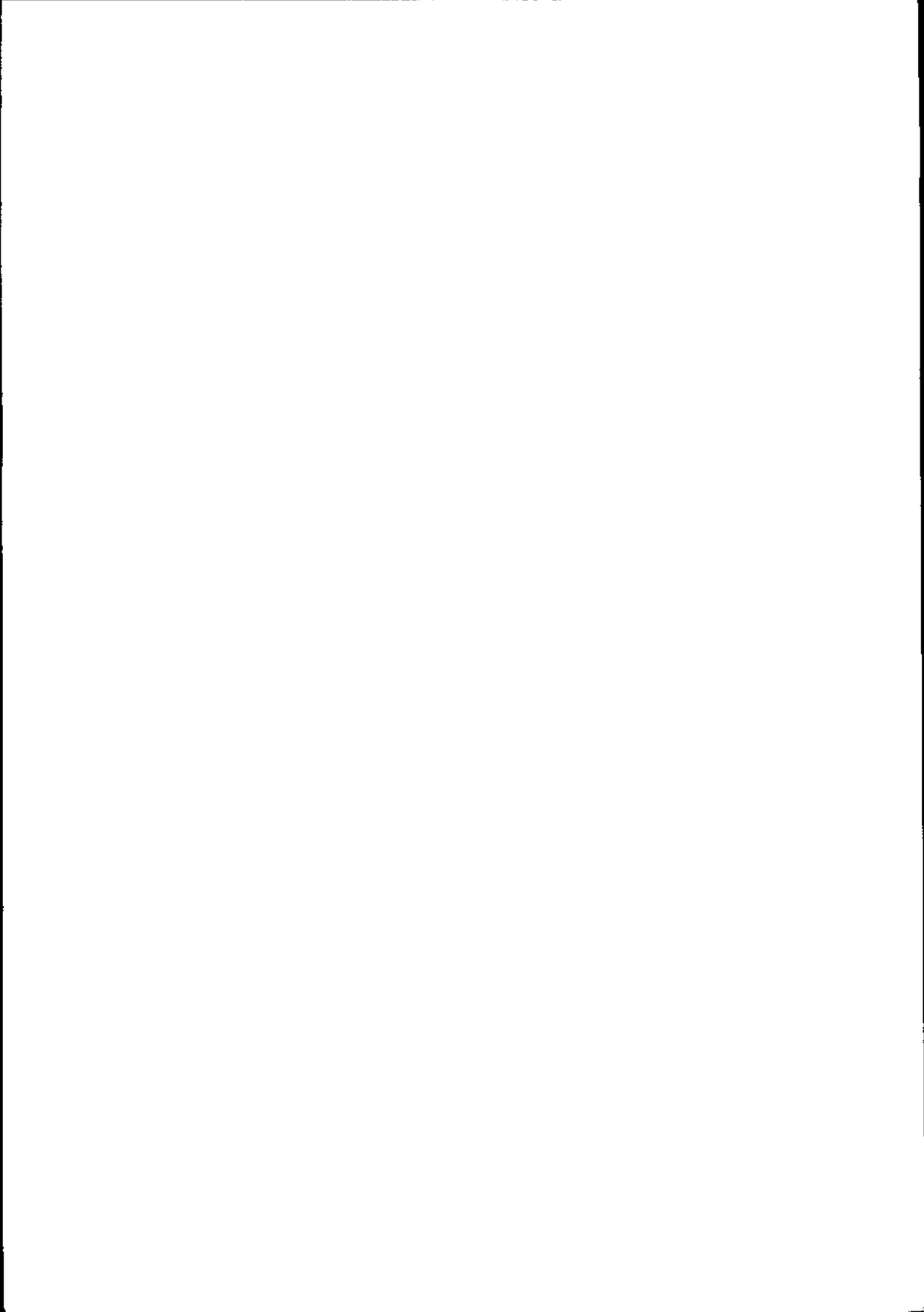
The Vaaz: the rise and fall of a family
of Portuguese bankers in Spanish Naples



FIGURE 1. Genealogy of the Vaaz Family in Naples



The Vaaz: the rise and fall of a family of Portuguese bankers in Spanish Naples



In memoriam

