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The *Livre de Raison* of Jean Teisseire

**Abstract:** The Archives Départementales du Vaucluse (now being transferred to the Archives Municipales d’Avignon) hold a series of Provençal documents written between 1370 and 1377 by Jean Teisseire, a hemp grower from Avignon. The main manuscript is a *livre de raison*, or *cartularium*, which helped Teisseire organize his commercial and public activities. Known since the nineteenth century, these personal notes are compared with other manuscripts of the same kind and analysed in English here for the first time. The writing practices of Teisseire (formatting, referencing), as well as the use he made of these personal manuscript books are dealt with in detail. Teisseire’s private papers were likely preserved because he died without progeny.

1 **Introduction**

Jean Teisseire, a hemp grower of fourteenth-century Avignon in France, produced a unique corpus of personal and professional documents, including his well-known *livre de raison*, or *liber rationis*, which contains records from 1370 to 1377. These papers were intended to help him organize his activities and transactions as a private and public actor of the city. The first scholarly mention of his *livre de raison* dates to 1889. That is when George Bayle consulted it while investigating Teisseire’s religious activities and a trial in which he and two of his employees were involved. Bayle did not analyse the *livre de raison* as such, but he wrote a precious article that examines some since-lost notarial documents. In an article of 1910 entitled ‘Un marchand avignonnais au XIVe siècle’, Joseph Girard used Bayle’s article and other documents to deal with Jean Teisseire as a merchant.¹ Girard analysed the biography of Jean Teisseire, without providing any information about the composition of Teisseire’s *livre de raison* or his writing practices. Much later, in 1996, Anne Marie Hayez studied the elite of Avignon and paid attention to Jean Teisseire’s estate management and economic strategies.² So while the Teisseire documents have been known for some time, only a few of his writing practices and economic strategies have been studied by

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¹ Bayle 1889; Girard 1910.
² Hayez 1996.
This state of affairs is not surprising, given the small amount of attention paid to the private papers of merchants in medieval Western Europe by nineteenth-century scholars, who were the first to study *livres de raison* as a source. Through these documents, historians tried to analyse privacy and family intimacy in the Middle Ages and the Modern Period in Western Europe. The purpose was not to provide a better understanding of the source itself, but to read testimonies concerning a specific period. This approach can be seen, for example, in the studies of the Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques. Indeed, in 1885 and 1892, one of the programmes of this committee was called ‘Anciens Livres de Raison and de comptabilités, papiers de famille’. Because of the richness of private archives in Provence and Limousin, these two provinces of central and southern France were the focus of scholarly interest. Thus in 1882 Louis Guibert edited *Le livre de raison d’Etienne Benoist (1426)*. In 1888, Guibert provided a general analysis in *Livres de raison, registres de famille et journaux individuels limousins et marchois*. For Provence, Charles de Ribbe wrote multiple studies on private papers. In 1873, de Ribbe published *La Famille et la société en France avant la Révolution d’après les documents originaux*, adding German documents in 1886; this work was the first European research project based on private papers. These studies, even if they did not pay attention to the materiality and codicological aspects of the documents, were nonetheless effective in preserving, itemizing, and publishing exceptional documents. These editions are precious even if they contain only a selection of extracts, depending on the choices and interests of the editor. For example, Edouard Forestié, when explaining his selection of documents about the Boysset brothers of Saint-Antonin-en-Rouergue, says ‘the analysis we just had the pleasure to submit and the few quotations included seem sufficient to highlight what merits interest in these documents’. Jean Teisseire’s *livre de raison* was studied in the same way by Joseph Girard in the early twentieth century. The selected extracts provided information about Teisseire’s life, behaviour, and personality, or about his faith. When Pierre Pansier chose excerpts in his *Histoire de la langue Provençale*, he selected passages and phrases with a specific syntactical interest. Finally, the corpora established by scholars and archived in the library of Avignon are also

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3 Guibert 1882; Guibert 1888.
4 Ribbe 1873 and 1898.
5 Forestié 1892.
7 Pansier 1927.
selected passages of this particular livre de raison, according to the concerns these scholars had (history of art, history of craftsmen, etc.).

Beginning in the 1990s, a new approach to private papers was adopted by historians. Without offering here a comprehensive account of this new approach, some important milestones can be mentioned. Jean Tricard’s work is one such milestone. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, he wrote several articles highlighting the interest of private papers in which he also established a clear and consistent definition of what a livre de raison is. Comparing French private papers (especially from Limousin) to Italian family papers, he underlines the difficulty of defining private papers, because they are by nature heterogeneous. If family and economic matters are the main issues in livres de raison, Tricard shows that they differ one from another (e.g. in size, length, author, language, and denomination). The definition he eventually gives is nonetheless enlightening. These documents are neither journals nor family papers. They answer to the need to organize a professional and personal life (ratio): a livre de raison is a book that encompasses accounting and management as well as personal and economic matters, which means that they are complex objects. More recent analyses of these private papers have followed. In 2003, a research programme led by Jean-Pierre Bardet and François-Joseph Ruggiu was established to study private writings in France, from the end of the Middle Ages to 1914. This wide chronological scope resulted in a huge database that has facilitated numerous studies on, for example, the materiality of private papers, as well as what they reveal about individuality, intimacy, gender, love, first-person writing, and friendship. The content and the form of the documents are understood as a whole: in other words, the meaning of the texts only becomes clearer, according to Bardet and Ruggiu, with a thorough analysis of the author and the author’s family, social relationships, writing practices, and strategies. In this way, the definition of livre de raison is understood through the intention of the scriptor:

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8 See especially corpus 4382, which is a collection of papers and notes concerning Avignon’s brotherhoods; see corpus 4470 and corpora 5692–5745, which are collections of notes concerning artists and craftsmen of Avignon between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries.
10 On family papers in Italy, see Mordenti 2004 and Klapisch-Zuber 2009. Even if Jean Teisseire’s livre de raison is not a family book, many of his writing practices can be compared to these documents, as we will see.
11 This group, established in 2003, was supported by the Sorbonne University and the CNRS. The titles of some of their workshops well indicate the group’s focus: “‘Car c’est moy que je peins”, Individu et liens sociaux dans les écrits du for privé’ (2008), ‘De l’écriture de famille à l’écriture de soi’ (2010).
such private papers were a way to organize and classify thoughts and activities. That very organization is why an intimate link is drawn between these documents and memory in the articles of Sylvie Mouysset, who works on private papers in the Modern Period in Western Europe.\footnote{See Mouysset 2003 and 2007. Even if the author presents the question of memory through documents of the Modern Period, many observations can be applied to the Middle Ages in Western Europe.}

Today all these approaches are encompassed by a more general reflection on writing practices: why do we write and how? How are accounts established? How can writing be a way to administrate? Private papers are important though not the only sources for studying such issues. Jean Teisseire’s \textit{livre de raison} is at the crossroads of questions about private papers and the study of graphic choices, documentary writings, and personal administration. Writing is indeed a way to organize, and the different graphic signs result from significant choices made by the \textit{scriptor}. Since Michael Clanchy and James Goody, and their seminal research about links between writing practices and memory, research that was conducted by analysing graphic choices in England during the Middle Ages, this approach to studying private papers has combined history and anthropology in order to understand the process of documentary innovation and administration.\footnote{Goody 1978; Clanchy 2013. For a synthesis of these renewals, see Bertrand 2015 and a recent article by Dewez 2019.} Inscribed in social and transactional networks, this process is at the intersection of written and oral considerations, and of personal and professional matters; therefore this process connects literacy activity and the art of accounting.\footnote{On graphic signs and formal approaches to writing practices, see Barret, Stutzmann and Vogeler 2016 and Mostert 2017. On accounting and lists, see Beck and Mattéoni 2015 and Anheim et al. 2020.}

Building up on these studies and questions, the present article investigates Jean Teisseire’s papers in order to understand the way he wrote, organized, and archived them. The investigation will result in a better understanding of writing practices and economic strategies.

\section{Presentation of the manuscript}

Jean Teisseire’s papers were preserved in the archives of Avignon when that city became the universal heiress of Jean Teisseire’s estate, since he died without
surviving progeny. If the manuscripts had been kept by Jean Teisseire's family, they might have been lost, as often happens with private papers. These documents' chain of transmission thus explains the complexity and richness of this material and the fact that it was archived by the city, albeit incompletely. Indeed, the city's choices influenced the preservation of the Jean Teisseire dossier. Avignon chose to preserve Jean Teisseire's documents insofar as they were useful for its own administration (taxes on different lands, deeds of selling and buying of properties, etc.). Private matters and papers were of no interest to the city council, and as a result these papers were progressively lost; manuscript Avignon, Archives Départementales du Vaucluse (henceforth ADV, and now AMA, Archives Municipales d'Avignon), II330 (henceforth II330) is an exception to this rule. Such a conclusion is supported by analysis of the city inventories from the fifteenth (1416) to the eighteenth centuries (1725). Therefore, although Jean Teisseire's archives were conserved as a whole by the city of Avignon, many individual documents within the collection were lost: of the 224 documents mentioned in the first inventory of 1416, only 182 remained in the inventory of 1725.

To understand the organization of the writings, a list of the documents Teisseire used and wrote can be established. The main such list is manuscript II330. This manuscript, which was second-hand to them, contains information that was compiled by Jean Teisseire and his son, Bertranet, between 1370 and 1377. The document includes a list of debts, accounts, and a livre de raison, consisting in the transcription of several professional and personal transactions.

Other isolated items pertaining to Jean Teisseire have been found:
- in the Bibliothèque Ceccano in Avignon, document number 5390 contains an account by Jean Teisseire, dated 1 October 1362.\textsuperscript{16}
- loose leaves written by Jean Teisseire, called notisias and inserted in manuscript II330. Jean Teisseire calls them notisias when he refers to these transactions in his manuscript. Most of them were probably lost since they are not glued to his book but just put in as plantadas, in the craftsman's vocabulary.
- a letter from Olivier Amoros to Jean Teisseire, in 1369, from Barcelona. Jean Teisseire wrote a short sentence on the verso of this document.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} See Dubois-Morestin 2018 and 2019a, 2019b.
\textsuperscript{16} Avignon, Bibliothèque Ceccano, manuscript 5390, entitled 'règlement de comptes, 1372, 1er octobre'. This title is inaccurate, since the paper is in fact dated 1 October 1362.
\textsuperscript{17} Avignon, ADV, II329.
several accounts originally written by Jean Teissiere to keep a record of his role as guardian for several persons, notably Peyret Ortolan, from 1350 to 1357.18

Many documents mentioning the ropemaker could be added, but this list includes only the documents that Jean Teissiere wrote himself and which were dedicated to a personal use. While the isolated documents and short accounts can give precious information about the different activities and roles of Jean Teissiere, this article will mainly address manuscript II330, which is the ropemaker’s only complete and preserved *livre de raison*.

This manuscript is not referred to the same way in the different scholarly papers and studies about Jean Teissiere. Joseph Girard speaks of a *livre de comptes*19 but also uses the term *cartulaire*, translating the Latin word *cartularium*, which is how Jean Teissiere referred to his own manuscript. In the inventory of Robert-Henri Bautier and Janine Sornay, the manuscript is referred to as a *registre de comptabilité commerciale*.20 Finally, in Anne Marie Hayez’s article,21 the book is referred to as a *livre de raison*. These different terms evoke the difficulty of precisely defining this document: it belongs to the category of private papers, and it is only by analysing the document’s composition that we can reveal its purpose and determine a proper name. Thus, codicology and a typology of the manuscript’s entries are necessary to understand how it was used by Teissiere.

This manuscript is in folia of 30 × 20 cm. As can be seen in Fig. 1, the book’s original binding was made of leather and parchment, which was common in Western Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The binding is attached to the quires by visible threads, following a side-sewing pattern. All the leaves of the manuscript are made of paper, with a rattle watermark at the centre of the pages. This watermark is not decisive for dating the manuscript, since it was the most common watermark in Italy and in the south of France during the fourteenth century. The laid lines are horizontal and run perpendicular to the chain lines, as is visible on blank folia (see Fig. 2). Finally, the manuscript is introduced by a cover page with contains short notes and whose bottom

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18 Avignon, ADV, Grandes Archives, box 96, 3156bis and 3156ter, entitled ‘1353–1356, cahier de 27 feuillets venant du Livre de compte de la tutelle de Peyret Ortolan’; previously kept in the city archives (CC1, 1309–1400).
19 Girard 1910, 1.
20 See Bautier and Sornay 1971.
21 Hayez 1996.
right portion has been cut away (see Fig. 3). The manuscript contains 302 folia, only some of which were numbered by the craftsman himself. The manuscript is regular in its composition (8 or 9 bifolia in 18 units). By its size, it is a convenient document which could be used daily, like a merchant diary. If we compare this document to the different *livres de raison* of Provence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we observe that this size is quite common.\(^{22}\) The use of vernacular language is also comparable to other merchant diaries. Jean Teisseire wrote this manuscript in medieval Provençal rather than Latin. By its size, length, and language, the *livre de raison* of Jean Teisseire is representative of fourteenth-century merchant diaries.

The artefact under examination here is particularly complex since Teisseire re-used an older manuscript. Some parts of the manuscript were used by an anonymous Italian merchant to record accounts from 1364 to 1367.\(^{23}\) Teisseire bought this book just a few months before he began to use it, since the last transactions written by the anonymous Italian merchant date to 1369, and Jean Teisseire started to write his own notes in 1369 as well. Jean Teisseire used the manuscript upside down, writing his transactions on the blank pages.

The ropemaker's reuse of the manuscript explains the heterogeneity of its composition. The manuscript has four main components:

− a list of debts copied from previous *cartularia* that Jean Teisseire was no longer using when he started this new manuscript;
− the accounts of Saint Bénézet hospital; from 1372 to 1374, Jean Teisseire was responsible for its administration;
− three quires of accounts recorded by the anonymous Italian merchant;
− Jean Teisseire’s *cartularium*.

These four components are not inserted the same way into the manuscript and are not numbered according to the same pattern. At least three foliations can be observed: a modern one in red, which tries to give coherence to this heterogeneous manuscript (see Table 1 and Fig. 2) and uses Arabic numerals; the anonymous Italian merchant’s foliation, on his quires, also in Arabic numerals; and finally, Jean Teisseire’s foliation, in Roman numerals. But Jean Teisseire num-

\(^{22}\) The comparison is with a list of private writings from France, and more precisely a list of diaries: http://ecritsduforprive.huma-num.fr/accueilbase.htm (accessed on 2 February 2023).

\(^{23}\) This merchant is unknown, but from what we can read in the manuscript, he was a silk merchant. The fact that Jean Teisseire used a second-hand manuscript is not unusual, but quite common: it shows his great familiarity with writing and that these documents were primarily for personal use.
bered only his *cartularium*, not the other components that he wrote himself, such as that containing the hospital accounts. This pattern of foliation points to the special significance that the *livre de raison* had for him: he may have thought of it as a particular unit in the management of his transactions.24

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24 We will return to this point later.
Fig. 2: Last page of the manuscript (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 198r).
Fig. 3: Cover page of the manuscript (Avignon, ADV, II330).
Table 1: Filiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Folia</th>
<th>Foliation</th>
<th>Quires</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover page</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>not numbered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of debts</td>
<td>2–8</td>
<td>modern foliation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital accountings</td>
<td>9–41</td>
<td>modern foliation</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian quire 1</td>
<td>42–70</td>
<td>Italian foliation (51–26)</td>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>used upside down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian quire 2</td>
<td>71–97</td>
<td>Italian foliation (25–1)</td>
<td>5–6</td>
<td>used upside down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cartularium</em> (<em>livre de raison</em>)</td>
<td>98–287</td>
<td>Jean Teisseire’s foliation (1–187) + modern foliation 188–189</td>
<td>7–18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian quire 3</td>
<td>288–297</td>
<td>not numbered</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>used upside down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A closer examination of quires 7 to 18 will give us a more precise comprehension of the way this manuscript was used. These quires correspond to the part entitled *Cartularium* by the hemp maker. The different entries and notes written in this part deal with a variety of subjects:

- notes concerning the activity of Jean Teisseire as a ropemaker (commercial transactions, contracts, transactions with employees);
- notes concerning the activity of Jean Teisseire as a land and property owner;
- notes concerning all the economic transactions (debts, credits, rents, inheritances, etc.) between Jean Teisseire and members of his social network;
- notes concerning personal aspects of Jean Teisseire’s life.

All these entries, consisting of ten to twenty lines and covering half a page, are mostly linked to the commercial and economic activities of Jean Teisseire. The only references to personal matters concern his children Bertranet and Martin Teisseire. Bertranet also wrote transactions in the *livre de raison* until his death on the 18 December in 1370: the mention of his death appears in Jean Teisseire’s hand on fol. 30°. The only mention of Martin comes in a contract of 1372 between Jean Teisseire and a teacher who must teach Martin psalms and the alphabet:

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25 Nothing is said about Teisseire’s daughter; from other sources we know she was already married by the time her father had begun to keep this *livre de raison*. 
L’an MCCCLXXII disapte premier jorn del mes de may mezem Martin a l’escola a l’agleyza de Sancta Perpetua per apenre l’abese a los psalmes a fon de covinent espres entre nos el maystre que l’ensenha que z el lo deu ensenhar l’abese e los set salmes denfra un an complit e devem li donar XVIII gros per tot lo dig han a pres que Martin aia l’abese e los set salmes e d’autremens non deu aver lo compliment de la dicha soma lo dig maystre que si fa apelar Johan Aynes de Nisa. Paguem al dig Johan Aynes lo jorn sus dig que martin yntret a l’escola VIII gros. Lo dig maystre deu provezir Martin de l’abese e de set salmes a sos despens. E d’aiso avem polisia de sa man en lo mieua petit cofret denfra la mieua caisa en ma cambra.

‘On the first day of the month of May in the year 1372, Martin enters school at the church of Saint Perpetua to learn the alphabet and the psalms. We agreed with the teacher that [Martin] must learn the alphabet and seven psalms in one year. I will give [the teacher] 18 gros for the year if Martin knows his alphabet and seven psalms. Otherwise, the teacher will not have the 18 gros. The teacher is Jean Aynes of Nice. I will pay him 9 gros the day Martin enters school. The said teacher must give Martin [the books for] the alphabet and the psalms. I have the notice of this transaction in a little box in my room.’

Thus, the entries mostly concern payments, contracts, or transactions: Jean Teisseire did not record his feelings or thoughts about personal aspects of his life. Even in biographical matters, his main concern is linked to accounting and the administration of his affairs. This book, referred to as a cartularium since it was made of small cartas (‘charters’, as notaries would call them in their cartularies), was comparable to a notarial register.

It is precisely the heterogeneity of the matters dealt with in the manuscript which allows us to speak of a livre de raison. As defined by Tricard and Noel Coulet, a livre de raison has three main characteristics:

− heterogeneity: accounts can be mixed up with lists, recipes, prayers, a family tree, draft papers, or loose sheets of paper.
− personal matters: we have already seen examples in Jean Teisseire’s book, and Noel Coulet found similar items in six livres de raison from late medieval Provence.

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26 I1330, fol. 68r. Regarding the role of teachers and masters, see Kinztinger 2000. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this article are my own.
27 Many studies have dealt with the organization and purpose of cartularia. In ecclesiastical institutions and notary offices, charters were collected in registers, which formed a record of professional activities. On these scholarly approaches to cartularia, see Chastang 2006 and Boisseuil, Chastang and Feller 2010.
29 In the livre de raison of Jean Blaise, Jean de Barbentane, or Jaume Deydier, all between 1313 and 1385. As a comparison, see Claustre 2021, who deals with Colin de Lormoye and his accounts.
The Latin word ratio is particularly useful in understanding what a livre de raison is: it is a book of ratio. With this manuscript Jean Teisseire could account to himself and sometimes to others for the management of his affairs. The purpose, in other words, was memory, which is perfectly clear on the manuscript's cover page, where we can read the words remembransia sia ('let us remember that') (see Fig. 3).

3 Jean Teisseire, hemp grower and expertus

The private archives of Jean Teisseire provide exceptional insight into not only the economic choices and behaviour of a late medieval craftsman of Western Europe but also into his literacy. What we know about his biography will help us understand the way he used this book and his daily writing practice. Jean Teisseire was born in Avignon in the 1320s. The city enjoyed a special status at that time because in 1309 the popes had decided to reside there, at first temporarily, and then after 1316, permanently. So the city's history during this period was linked to the presence of the popes, who guaranteed its independence. The papal residency in Avignon encouraged the commercial and economic activities of merchants, craftsmen, and courtiers. This dynamism provided opportunities for social climbing, and Jean Teisseire is representative of these merchants' activities and behaviours.

Jean followed in his father's footsteps. Guillaume Teisseire, who died in 1334, had also been a hemp maker, and Guillaume's other son, Raymond, was

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30 As shown in Noel Coulet's article, the examples of Guillaume de Rouffilac and Jaume Deydier are representative for family books, which were written for later generations. Such an ambition does not fit Jean Teisseire's purposes, since his sons died before him.

31 These words were crossed out by Jean Teisseire when this specific transaction was completed. It is nonetheless the only known use of the word remembransia.

32 The exact date of his birth is unknown, but the moment of his death is known from his testament: Avignon, ADV, Grandes Archives, box 96, Pintat, 3216.

33 On Avignon in the fourteenth century and the economic activity of merchants and craftsmen, see Sclafert 1929; Guillemain 1964; Rollo-Koster 2009; Mollat 1950; and Lentsch 1999. On economic dynamism in the cities, see Renouard 1941; on important families of the city, Hayez 2006; and more recently, on construction sites in Avignon during the fourteenth century, see Dautrey 2002 and Bernardi 2002.
likewise a ropemaker. Jean began his career as an apprentice to the hemp maker Pons Marroco. After completing the apprenticeship in 1345, Jean Teisseire set up his own business in Avignon; he might have been in his twenties at this time. Teisseire specialized in cultivating hemp and manufacturing ropes, fasteners, canvasses, and mats, all of which he sold in the region of Avignon and abroad, notably in Catalonia. As a craftsman and a merchant of the city, he was a member of the social elite. Through his three matrimonial alliances, Jean Teisseire reinforced this professional stature: his first wife was the daughter of a merchant, and his third wife came from a prominent family of hemp makers.

If Jean Teisseire was a craftsman, he was also an active member of the political and economic life of Avignon. The large scope of his activity made the use of manuscripts necessary: he was both a public and private actor of the city.

In addition to being a cultivator of hemp and a ropemaker, Teisseire was a wine merchant and owned a tavern; he also possessed lands which he could sell or rent. These properties, mainly for vines, were situated in the neighbourhood of his cordatorium, or workshop, which was outside the city's fortifications. As a property owner, Teisseire rented, bought, and sold tables, houses, and hotels, all of which were inside the city, in the Corderie neighbourhood, following a strategy of spatial concentration. It is interesting to note that these transactions appear mainly in notarial papers, which were archived by Teisseire in a specific box. The livre de raison mentions these transactions only when they required careful attention, such as when payment was not made immediately, which implied a delayed treatment of the transaction. For example, in 1371, on the 30 August, Jean Teisseire sold to a baker named Anric half of a house and the attached yard. The amount due was 150 florins, and the payment plan was the following: 25 florins for the first six months, 25 after that, and two payments of

34 See Girard 1910 and Hayez 1996.
35 Indeed, families of hemp makers in the south of France and in Avignon were among the most prominent families at the time. This manufacturing and commercial activity seems to have been very lucrative for craftsmen in late medieval Europe. The following scholars do not deal specifically with the role of ropemakers but do mention them as members of important families in these regions: Lonchambon 1998; Rossiaud 2002; Stouff 1986; Coulet 1988; and Reynaud 1929. This last source studies halfa (esparto) workers and mentions that their good reputation is still not better than the reputation of ropemakers.
36 For an exhaustive perspective on this activity, see Hayez 1996.
37 This box is now Avignon, ADV, Grandes Archives, box 96, Pintat, 3216.
38 We will return to ways in which the livre de raison was used, but we can nonetheless keep this example in mind as an explanation of the variety of transactions contained in the manuscript.
50 florins the following year. Jean Teisseire needed to keep a record of this trade in his *livre de raison* in order to record these payments as they were made and thus complete the transaction. Indeed, we can read that the first two payments were made, and the remaining ones were included in secondary transactions: Anric the baker lent money to Jean Teisseire and sold him different materials, which allowed a deduction of 50 florins the following year.39

39 This transaction can be found in II330, fols 51' and 74' for the last payment, in 1373, after the deduction of several purchases (notably, bread); see Figs 11 and 12.
Fig. 5: Internal references (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 73r).

Besides his commercial activities, Jean Teisseire engaged in the life of his community. In 1365, he was in charge of tax collection, in the parishes of Saint-Pierre and Saint-Symphorien. This special tax had to cover the cost of fortifications between the Saint Bénezet bridge and the cardinal of Bologna’s livery. This is what we can read in a notarial deed, dated 5 May 1365:

Noverint universi et singuli presentes [...] quod discretus vir Johannes Textoris, cor
derius de Avinione, institutus fuerit per consilium civium civitatis Avinionis ad levandum et recipiendum a civibus civitatis predicte in parrochiis Sancti Petri et Sancti Simphoriani [...] de pecunia recepta mille florenos auri
'Each and everyone present knows that Jean Teisseire, a prudent man, ropemaker of Avignon, was appointed by the city council of Avignon to levy and collect tax from the city’s citizens in the parishes of Saint Pierre and Saint Symphorien [...]. The amount of money received is 1000 gold florins.\textsuperscript{40} 

The responsibility for collecting tax was renewed in 1375,\textsuperscript{41} when Jean Teisseire was a member of the city council (also called ‘syndic’ in official deeds),\textsuperscript{42} from 1361 to at least 1377.\textsuperscript{43} He attended the different sessions and participated in special commissions, including those tasked with reviewing the status of corporations, such as the fishmongers in 1374. Above all, he was appointed administrator of the Saint Bénezet hospital, from 1370 to at least 1374.\textsuperscript{44} This charity was overseen by the city council, and notables were appointed administrators of the hospital from 1302 on, beginning with Jean de Bagnols. This administrative responsibility meant that Jean Teisseire was in charge of the charity’s expenses and purchases, mainly dealing with domestic issues. He knew how to count, calculate, measure, and make estimations, mastering monetary values and techniques of conversion.

All these activities led Jean Teisseire to be an expert in writing. His talents were acknowledged both in his craft and in his public responsibilities. This is why we can use the Latin term \textit{expertus} to describe him: he was experienced, but also qualified and authoritative in his field of expertise. His judgement, opinion, and ability to deal with different kinds of transactions, thanks to his administrative skills, made him a real \textit{magister expertus}.\textsuperscript{45} Even if it was a process of learning by doing,\textsuperscript{46} his skills brought Teisseire \textit{fama} in his network of merchants, notables, and craftsmen in Avignon and elsewhere in the south of France.

\textsuperscript{40} Avignon, ADV, Grandes Archives, box 22, 5 May 1365.
\textsuperscript{41} Avignon, ADV, B2, fol. 59\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{42} These syndics appeared in Avignon in 1225 and rapidly became members of the city administration, similar to the Italian model.
\textsuperscript{43} Avignon, ADV, Grandes Archives, box 8, deeds 284 and 285. For 1361, see box 34, deed 983.
\textsuperscript{44} One part of Jean Teisseire’s manuscript, II330, contains the accounts of this hospital (fols 11–42).
\textsuperscript{45} These notions have been studied by Denjean and Feller 2013.
\textsuperscript{46} Many examples of such processes can be found in the late Middle Ages and in the Modern Period. For an example quite similar to Jean Teisseire, see Rives 2010.
4 Teisseire’s writing and archiving practices

4.1 A daily practice

Jean Teisseire wrote almost every day. Writing in the cartularium was, at least from 1370 to 1377, a daily habitus. The years 1375–1376 are visibly more prolific than the others and represent 64 per cent of this part of the manuscript. The difference between these and the preceding years may be due to the numerous responsibilities that Jean Teisseire had between 1370 and 1374, which led him to delegate his professional activities to employees and associates. Rather than writing in his book, these employees would have had their own papers, which may explain the lack of professional transactions from 1370 to 1374. Since the main purpose was to produce a clear picture of ongoing business, Teisseire paid attention to the precision, meticulousness, and readability of his notes. His chronological organization and attention to clarity of presentation allowed him to make efficient use of the book. Indeed, he needed to have a quick overview on the transactions to be completed or updated. It is interesting to notice that Jean Teisseire possessed skills that his son Bertranet did not, as far as we can tell from the first thirty pages of the cartularium, which Bertranet composed. In the manuscript, Jean Teisseire was expertus when his son was still learning. I will give some examples of Jean Teisseire’s thoroughness.

The first example is the list of debts already mentioned as one part of manuscript II330. This list, which occupies the first eight folia, consists of a table summing up the transactions that had not been completed in a previous livre de raison.47 The table saved Teisseire from the need to refer to other documents, and it bears the following title: ‘Here are written all the debts that still have to be paid, according to the 1367 cartularium and according to the 1369 cartularium, as follows’. This list is perfectly well organized and homogeneous; each entry mentions the same elements:

− the name of the debtor, sometimes with an indication of his geographical origin;
− the page of the previous manuscript which mentioned the transaction;
− the amount due, in the margin on the right;
− in the left margin, the year of the debt.

47 Although these previous cartularia were not archived, and so are not preserved, we can infer their existence from internal references made by Jean Teisseire.
A blank is left between each entry, allowing for the transactions to be completed. This arrangement can be interpreted as a way to remember transactions and organize private records and archives. The list is a memo, almost a directory by which Jean Teisseire could easily find the data he was searching for, most likely the names of delinquent debtors.

Fig. 6: List of debts (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 9r, modern foliation).

We find the same attention to presentation in the last part of manuscript II330, in the *cartularium*. As efficiency was needed, Jean Teisseire adapted his writing practices to the intended use of his *livre de raison*. This use explains the large margins, the regularity of the writing, and the graphic organizers, of which there are several types, including horizontal lines between each entry and side-bars for mentioning specific information about a transaction (such as a year, or

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48 The use of lists and graphical ruptures in private writings from medieval Western Europe was the subject of several workshops from 2013 to 2018. See Angotti et al. 2019 and Anheim et al. 2020.
an update). Jean Teisseire also used drawings, though they are rare and reserved for very specific cases, such as transactions connected with important relationships. The drawings are mostly of hands and fingers, though brackets are also used to indicate significant transactions (see Figs 7 and 8). Some specific graphic organizers highlight the transition from one year to another. To facilitate searching for something in his book, Teisseire customarily wrote on the recto of the folio and used large-format writing.

Fig. 7: Graphic organisers (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 1r).
Fig. 8: Drawings (hands) (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 168r).

Letters could also help him to organize lists, as can be seen in Fig. 8. We can mention here the example of accounts related to Olivier Amoros, one of Teisseire’s employees (factor): in this case, in fols 43 to 45, Jean Teisseire established an account summing up all the transactions that were not yet completed and that therefore preserved a relationship between him and his factor. Because the list was long and extended over several pages, the craftsman organized it differently from other transactions. He used small letters at the beginning of each entry and wrote a specific note to himself at the end of the first page: ‘turn page’. Together these techniques exhibit great expertise in the graphic systems that could be employed for these purposes (see Fig. 9).

49 The text originally said gira pagina (see Fig. 9).
Finally, Teisseire's daily writing practice can be understood through the chronology of the *cartularium*. Adhering to a strict chronology, Teisseire developed a whole system of updating, marking the completion of a transaction, and internal references. The *livre de raison* was not supposed to be written once and for all. It was instead a regularly updated document that allowed for modifications. Comparison of all the entries leads us to understand that he wrote not only every day but even multiple times a day. Indeed, palaeographical analysis of writing patterns, based on several examples throughout the manuscript, reveals that Jean Teisseire would begin to write an entry immediately and complete it later if necessary. There was no delay between transactions and writing: the manuscript became his memory. As an example, we can analyse fol. 38 (Fig. 10). He wrote a first transaction on Monday 17 March, followed by several notes made on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 18th and 19th, and he had to make some updates in the margin on the 20 March. This example proves that he wrote al-
most every day from the 17th to the 20th: when it was time to provide an update, he had already begun a new transaction and did not have enough space to write the update for the 20 March.

All these examples reveal the picture of a man who worked pen in hand.

Fig. 10: Cancellations (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 38r).
4.2 Private archives and family memory

This daily writing practice, necessary for managing Teisseire’s professional and public activities, eventually birthed the aim of archiving all the notes. These archives were supposed to be transferred to his associates (notably Peiret Guichart) after his death, but the archives obviously came to be considered personal papers, which were transferred to the city as part of Teisseire’s estate. Far from being a family book, such as we find in Italian examples from the late Middle Ages, this manuscript was nonetheless supposed to be preserved. Teisseire’s expertise in archiving can be shown through internal and external references to other documents or to the livre de raison itself. In the case of internal references, the ropemaker mentions preceding or following pages as sources of information linked to the current transaction. When he refers to preceding pages, the phrase *deu atras* (‘he also owes’) indicates that previous debts ought to be remembered in connection with the new transaction. This practice of cross-referencing creates coherence and consistency between the different entries. When referring to following pages, the phrase *mudem avant* indicates that the debt was cancelled or the credit paid later on. These internal references bring clarity to the different transactions by mentioning the page number on which the conclusion or the beginning of a professional relationship could be found. For example, on fol. 155r, we read ‘la primera obliguansa d’aquestos cent florins es escricha atras en CIII cartas’, which means that the first mention of the hundred florins that are to be paid occurs on fol. 103r (Fig. 11). The latest entry mentions that this amount has been paid ‘aquestos sent florins desus escrig foron paguas a mosen Durant’ (‘these hundred florins mentioned above were paid to Mr Durant’). Another example can be found on fol. 173r, where we read the following notation: *mudem avant en CLXXV cartas* (‘completed on page 175’), i.e. ‘we can confirm that on fol. 175 this transaction is completed’.

Teisseire also made references to other books that he kept and archived, as well as to personal writings about his professional relationships. We have already mentioned fol. 173r, where we read ‘aiso fon mudat al cartolari lonc de l’an M (blank)’ (‘this was completed in the long cartularium of ...’). It is interesting to notice that Jean Teisseire intended to complete this note by adding the year of this new livre de raison, but this addition was forgotten.

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50 On transactions between debtors and creditors, see Signori 2018.
51 Such as his relationship with Peiret Guichart.
52 This long cartularium has not been preserved.
Fig. 11: Internal references (deu atras) (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 155r).
Fig. 12: Internal references (*mudem avant*) (Avignon, ADV, II330, fol. 173r).
These references give us precious information. If they create coherence, they also reveal the breadth of Jean Teisseire’s archives. Table 2 lists the items contained in these archives, as those items appear either in external cross-references of the cartularium or as they appear in an inventory that was drawn up after Teisseire’s death and that mentions the way these books were preserved.

Table 2: List of external references to cartularia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Original name</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1356</td>
<td>Cartolari vieilh de l’an 1356</td>
<td>Old cartulary of 1356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1367</td>
<td>Cartolari vieilh de l’an 1367</td>
<td>Old cartulary of 1367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Manoal par d’aquest de l’an 1367</td>
<td>Identical book of 1367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1369</td>
<td>Cartolari que fon fag avant aquest</td>
<td>Cartulary that was written before this one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Manoal que fon fag l’an 1369</td>
<td>Book that was started in 1369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Cartolari d’avant aquest</td>
<td>Previous cartulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1370</td>
<td>Cartolari de l’an 1370</td>
<td>Cartulary of 1370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>Cartolari l onc⁵³</td>
<td>Long cartulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Cartolari l onc nou</td>
<td>New long cartulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>Cartolari l onc de l’an 1378</td>
<td>Long cartulary of 1378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of the numbers of the pages mentioned by Teisseire, we can determine that these books were all about the same length, except for the new cartularium. In addition to these livres de raison, Teisseire also owned books which have not been preserved. These books were specifically dedicated to his professional activity and were not livres de raison according to the aforementioned definition. We can nonetheless sum up all these books in Table 3.

The cartularium or livre de raison was indeed just a small part of an enormous corpus containing numerous personal papers. The role of the livre de raison was to create chronological and spatial coherence in personal and professional administration. Consequently the livre de raison fits very well the definition of personal papers given by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber,⁵⁴ according to

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⁵³ Indeed, Jean Teisseire always refers to this book as the ‘long’ one. We can only imagine that its dimensions were not comparable to those of manuscript II330.

⁵⁴ Klapisch-Zuber 2009, 372. She regrets that it is nonetheless impossible to compare all these documents. Even in Florence, which is known for its archival richness, Klapisch-Zuber men-
which the ricordanze had to be on hand, ready to be organized and gathered in a memorial book. Such a book would be an entry point to complex and large archives, acting as their index and inventory. The liber rationis guides its scriptor, Jean Teisseire, through all the domestic and personal papers that he produced as a craftsman and a businessman. The liber rationis thus creates a moral and temporal unity reinforced by the ropemaker’s classification and archiving. In this perspective, all these papers can be seen as an organized private archive.

Table 3: List of external references to other manuscripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Petit cartolari</td>
<td>accounts of the bishop of Avignon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cartolari</td>
<td>accounts of the workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartabel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libret</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Libre dals cordies</td>
<td>accounts and technical details about ropemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Cartolari vert</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manuscript II330 itself also provided a way to organize loose leaves, which Teisseire often inserted into the codex, sometimes in the cover of the cartularium. In fact this practice is mentioned on fol. 117v. In this example, Teisseire explains that a note, called a sedula, was written on a loose leaf that can be found in the cartularium itself. In this way, the book also became a binder.55

Several boxes were used to organize archives in Jean Teisseire’s house and workshop. Thanks to the inventory established after his death, and several references made in the manuscript itself, we have clear insight into the organizations that comparison is rarely possible: ‘Ainsi, les ricordanze du quotidien sont bien toutes là, à portée de main et de mémoire, tapies dans le dédale des livres de comptes avant d’être parfois rassemblées et ordonnées dans un livre memorial de plus grande envergure’.

55 It is nonetheless difficult to analyse this practice since a large majority of these small papers were lost; they might have been given back to Jean Teisseire’s associates, or they might have slipped out of the codex. A dozen of these papers were found randomly inserted in manuscript II330.
tion of these boxes. Analysis of these documents reveals that the classification was made according to the type of document and not according to chronology.

We have to admit that the ropemaker’s system of classification is not perfectly clear to an external observer. The different cartularia seem to have been scattered in different places and rooms. On the other hand, notarial deeds and receipts were archived in specific boxes. This impression of disorder must not be taken for granted: Jean Teisseire was obviously able to handle all these documents. Nonetheless, by adding up all the documents and archives belonging to Jean Teisseire, we reach the following result (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Type of document</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Storage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedroom</td>
<td>cartularia and notarial deeds</td>
<td>9 cartularia; various deeds and papers</td>
<td>a little box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearby yard</td>
<td>cartularia</td>
<td>8 cartularia</td>
<td>boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room next to the kitchen</td>
<td>cartularia and notarial deeds</td>
<td>5 cartularia; various deeds</td>
<td>none mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Organization of personal archives

5 Conclusion

Whereas the homo novus and the rural dignitary were still content to keep a diary and one all-purpose book, the great merchants and bourgeois felt the need for more specialized books, from business books to family books. These books certainly met new technical needs but also cultural needs. If the merchants contented themselves with recording the facts of their existence on a daily basis, the bourgeois had the ambition of establishing a family memoire. The livre de raison was no more than an accounting book; in time and with social success it would become the memoire of a lineage.57

This quotation from Jean Tricard explains what this book probably would have been for Jean Teisseire if he had not died without progeny. All his cartularia, his livres de raison, were not only a tool in the management of his business but also

56 This is not unusual. Jean Tricard mentioned the same kind of habit in the livres de raison of Etienne Benoist and Jaume Deydier. Klapisch-Zuber also evokes this practice for Francisco di Baldino Inghirami, in 1471; see Musacchio 1999, 37.
57 Tricard 1988, 274.
a way to remember his transactions, relationships, decisions, and sometimes personal matters. These documents, then, participate in creating the memory and history of a family and a workshop. Indeed, some of these archives were given to Peiret Guichart, one of Teisseire’s associates. Thus, Jean Teisseire was clearly conscious of a possible transmission, if not to his own family, at least to the men he had trained. The reputation of his activity was at stake, and all the documents could vouch for the integrity and the good *fama* of his workshops.58

Acknowledgements

I thank the Archives Départementales du Vaucluse and the Archives Municipales d’Avignon for having granted permission to publish images of the manuscript.

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58 For the question of *fama* and recognition, see Albert and Ternon 2013.


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