There are five volumes of Genoese notarial deeds concerning Cyprus to-date, containing well over one thousand five hundred documents for the period 1296 to 1310, not to mention the older publications of Cornelius Desimoni. These documents yield valuable information not only on the commercial activity that characterized Cyprus in these years, but, more generally, on the social, religious, judicial, and economic features of the Lusignan regime. A proper appreciation of the structure and contents of these documents enables one to realize their potential to the full and appreciate the value, the diversity and, on occasion, even the uniqueness of the information they disclose.

In terms of structure most of these documents are divisible into three parts. The first is the invocation, the invariable formulaic phrase “in nomine Domini, Amen.” The second part, constituting the main business of the document, states the parties involved and the nature of their business. The parties themselves were usually merchants from Genoa, as one would expect from documents drawn up by a Genoese notary, but they also included Venetians, persons from other towns in Italy such as Pisans, Florentines and Anconitans, and persons originating from Catalonia, Provence, or Ragusa. They could, moreover, also

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2 CSFS 31, no. 272; CSFS 32, nos. 4, 18, 23, 39, 174; CSFS 49, nos. 65, 157, 176,
include refugees from Latin Syria who had settled on Cyprus, either Latin Christians, Greeks, especially from Antioch, or Syrian Christians, who on occasion fell into the categories known as “White Genoese” or “White Venetians.”

Turning to the business transacted, in many cases this is simply a sum of money lent by one party to another. Sometimes, however, the business may involve a commenda-type loan, otherwise known as a sea-loan. Under the terms of such a loan, one party provided the capital, either in the form of cash or even in kind, such as textiles or agricultural produce, while the other party undertook either to sell the merchandise entrusted to him, returning the proceeds but keeping a share of the profit, or else to purchase goods with the money entrusted to him, once again keeping a portion of these goods. Sometimes the destination that the borrower was to journey to and the nature of the goods that he was to purchase are specified, while at other times either or both of these matters are left to his discretion. Indeed, on occasion the destination is deliberately withheld or given in a very general manner, such as “a port of his own choosing,” no doubt so as to hide the fact that it was one of the Muslim ports forbidden to western merchants under the terms of the papal embargo on direct trade with the Muslims, promulgated in 1292, one year after the fall of Acre and Tyre to the Mamluks, and lasting until 1344. The share of the profits kept by the borrower was


Desimoni, *AOL* 2, nos. 109, 143, 158, and *ROL* 1, nos. 391, 470, 474, 479, 487;