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Geographies of finance and metamorphoses of power: dynamics of urban transformation during the 15th and 16th centuries in Rome

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Abstract

This paper will analyze the relationship between market dynamics, financial flows, geography and urban space throughout the 15th century and into the 16th in Rome and Siena. These relationships will be strengthened and justified by the account of several important merchants and banker families that animated the Italian and international landscape during this period. Siena and its environs will be addressed first. Here, the families mentioned above built a strong and profitable cooperative and alum production was launched in the mineral deposits of Tolfa. Next, the reasons this area came to excite such interest in the popes will be explored. Employing various instruments and the help of financial players like the Chigi, the popes sought several times to win a monopoly. The city of Rome, with its urban and economic dynamics, backgrounds the story. Through the policies of various popes who ascended to power, Rome sought to transform itself into the new pole of Christianity and a true center of international markets and finance.

Keywords: Siena, Tolfa alum, Rome, Chigi, Rione Ponte