

THE PETIT FAMILY : JOURNEY AND DESTINY OF A DYNASTY

(1660—1757)



Buscoz Sylvain—M2 History
Under the direction of Beroujon Anne

ABSTRACT

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the royal power further strengthened the control it exercised over the book and printing trades, and gradually reduced the number of printers in the cities, in Paris as in the provinces and very quickly, he only had recourse to the services of its appointed printers, to print the official documents produced by his administration. In Grenoble, the humble Petit family, nevertheless managed to succeed and establish a singular and surprising dynasty of printers-booksellers, whose different members stand out for their unique enduring career among their peers. their business lasted for almost 80 years alongside the largest Grenoble dynasties in the middle, until the third generation put an end to it by refusing to take over the family business. The aim of this study was therefore to retrace the lives of the members of this dynasty, their career and their interactions with the printing industry at significantly different ages and periods.

KEY WORDS

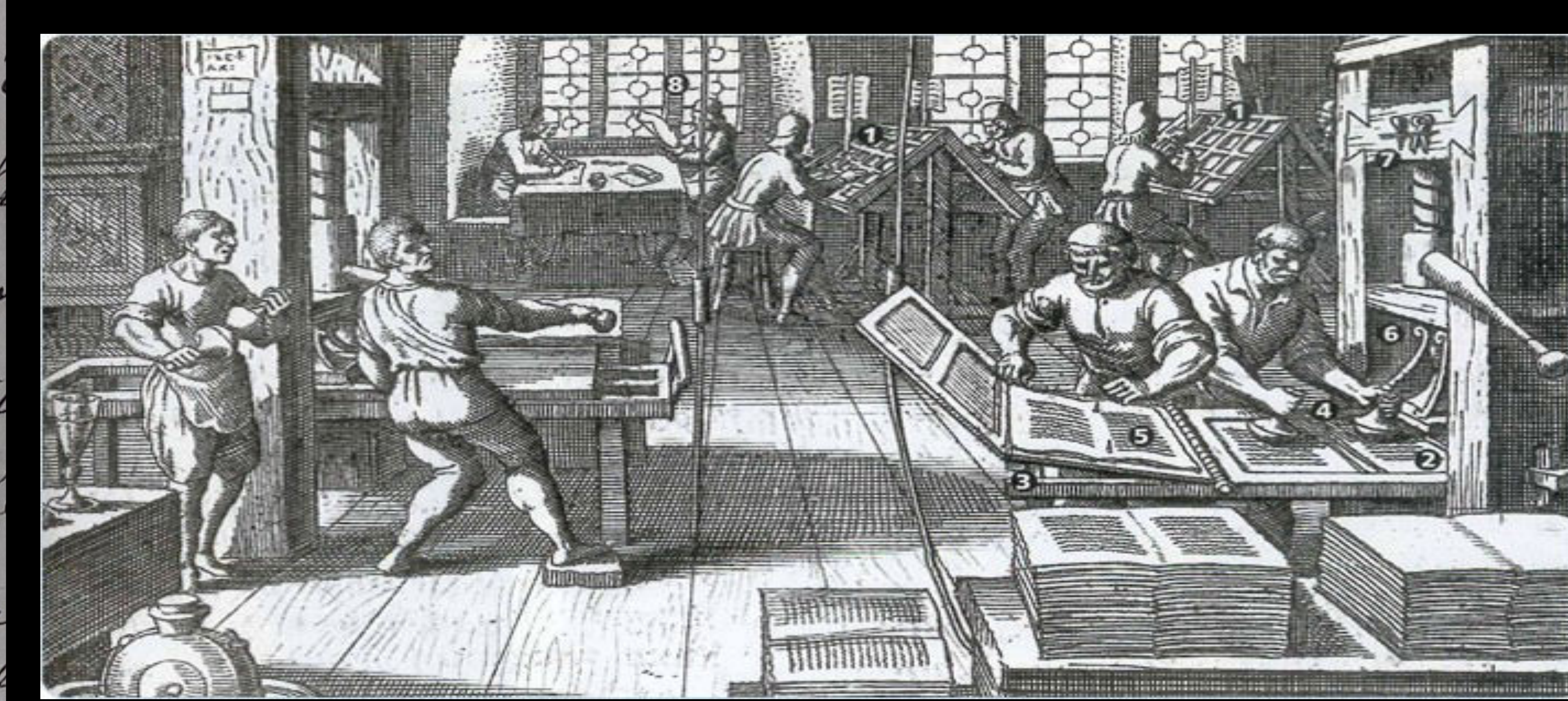
- **Petit**
- **Provincial city**
- **Printer-bookseller**
- **King's Printer**
- **Establishment**
- **Correspondence**
- **Tour de France**
- **Succession**
- **Posterity**

REFERENCES

- Robert Allier, The printers of Grenoble under the Ancien Régime, Grenoble, 2012.
- Marius Audin, History of printing, Radioscopy of a Gutenberg era in computing, Paris, Picard, 1972.
- Maurice Audin, Henri Hours, Henri-Jean Martin, The Golden Century of the Lyonnaise Printing Industry, Paris, Ed. Du Chêne, 1972.
- Frédéric Babier, Sabine Juratic, Michel Vangheluwe, Northern Lights: Printers, booksellers and book people in the North in the 18th century (1701 - 1789), Droze, 2002.
- Jean-Guy Basset, Collection of several notable judgments of the court of Parliament, aid and finances of Dauphiné, second edition, Grenoble, 1686.
- Günter Berger, Literature and readers in Grenoble in the 17th and 18th century, Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, number 31, 1986.
- Anne Beroujon, Writings in Lyon in the 18th century: spaces, exchanges, identities,

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Above all, I wanted to thank Anne Beroujon, my dissertation supervisor for her accurate advices and her kindness. I'm also grateful to Eric Syssau, Isere Regional Archives director, who made this study possible. Finally, I have to say thank you to my parents and to Imane, Delphine, Victoria and Gauthier for their support.



INTRODUCTION

I focused my attention on the birth and the affirmation of the Petit family, who, despite an unfavourable environment for the development of new independent businesses, managed to establish a new dynasty of printers-booksellers in Grenoble between the end of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century. The preliminary work on the printers of Grenoble allowed me to learn more about the origins of the Petit family and the conditions which enabled them to reach the coveted title of Master Printer of the city of Grenoble. This family has indeed a very particular background. Jacques Petit, founding father of this young dynasty in 1660, because of his family origins, seemed foreign to the world of printing and yet, after brief studies in Lyon, he returned a few years later to Grenoble, his hometown, and managed to gain acceptance as a printer in the city's service after only a year. Dedicating part of his work to the Parliament of Grenoble, this proximity to the highest authorities of the city thus made it possible to ensure a certain stability for the dynasty.

Thus, it is the singularity of the journey of this humble dynasty of printers from Grenoble, from its establishment to its disappearance that makes it interesting and unique. Although compared to other families from the same era, their appearance on the print production scene was relatively brief and understated, their history is nonetheless fascinating to study and recount. Also, our questioning focused not only on the unusual journey of the Petit family, from Jacques to Pierre-Antoine Petit, within the world of the printing-bookstore, their interactions with it, but also on its place within the latter, since, as I mentioned earlier, the Petit family's entry into printing was established in a particular way. We then tried to draw up the profile of the Devoise son, who, within an already unique family, is also distinguished by his character and his background. All this with the final aim of answering the problem which is to know what the posterity of this dynasty was, as well for the small family as for the city of Grenoble. To this end, we will first see the origins and the establishment of this dynasty in Grenoble, then the life and constraints of the printer through the Petit family to finally conclude on the future of the dynasty through the questions of inheritance and transmission.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Our study is mainly the fruit of reflections on forms from various sources, such as correspondence, which moreover constitute a large majority of my sources, but also official texts, trial reports, and of course, a material bibliography provided. The main archive place consulted is the Departmental Archives of Isère, where a wealth of information about the Petit family is kept.

We therefore devoted ourselves to the study of letters in lieu of correspondence between Mathieu Petit and Pierre-Antoine his son, between 1725 and 1747, offering us the opportunity to consider the question of models of correspondence, a field in which contributed in particular Roger Chartier and Cécile Dauphin for the 18th and 19th centuries

The reconstruction of the course and the work of Jacques Petit, the founder of the dynasty, is mainly done by studying bundles N ° 1 and N ° 2 of cote 288 J concerning the said family, unfortunately largely illegible and / or very difficult to transcribe due to the poor condition of certain documents and the sometimes approximate calligraphy of the authors of the time. However, Edmond Maignien's notes on the life and work of Jacques Petit add to the knowledge transmitted about him.

In the case of his son, Mathieu Petit, it is the analysis of the correspondence, maintained in bundle N ° 3 of the same coat, which he maintains with Pierre-Antoine, his son, and the minutes of his conflict with the other Master Printers of the city, after the death of his father, which tells us about the latter's life. Here again, our knowledge of our man remains relatively scarce and does not offer us the opportunity to portray a precise portrait of the character.

As far as Pierre-Antoine Petit is concerned, the correspondence he keeps with Mathieu Petit, then Sieur Tournier, his attorney, after the death of his father for the settlement of his estate, show themselves to be quite rich in information and allow us to retrace the life of the young man during his journey through the Kingdom of France, and leave us some clues about the future of the family.

On the right, an extract from an official register printed by Jacques Petit (image 1 - date unknown) and a letter sent by Pierre-Antoine Petit to his father at the start of his journey (image 2-1726)

RESULTS

At the end of our study, the various fields and aspects explored have enabled us to highlight several points and provide answers to the questions surrounding the course and fate of the dynasty of the Little Printers. We have attempted, throughout our study, to demonstrate the particularities of the establishment and the course of this family within the Grenoble printing industry in the 17th and 18th centuries, relying mainly on the background of the Departmental Archives of Isère concerning the Petit family.

Thanks to this preliminary work, we were then able to tackle the integration of Jacques Petit, founding father of the dynasty, in this particular environment that is that of books and printing. Having to deal with limited sources, we have nonetheless managed to retrace his professional life, from his discovery of Gutenberg's arts, through his training and apprenticeship to his integration into the corporation of printers in the city, and his astonishing social rise.

We were then led to discuss the lawsuit brought against Mathieu Petit by different families of printers in the hope of taking back the place left vacant by the late Jacques Petit. At the same time, we were able to address the issue of laws and procedures entering into force in this type of conflict, further demonstrating all the complexity and challenges of obtaining the mastery of printing.

Finally, we witnessed the end of this dynasty with the departure of Pierre-Antoine Petit from Grenoble, and without another heir son, the dynasty is doomed to disappear. Through the correspondence that the young man has with Mathieu Petit during his trip, we have the opportunity to address the importance and the challenges of letters and correspondence in social and family relations, a real theater in which Pierre evolves. Antoine as he crosses the kingdom of France.

Thus, thanks to this research, which is part of the more global historiography of the history of books and printing, we have been able to trace the evolution of the Petit dynasty, humble printers from Grenoble, from its foundation to its collapse, by addressing general themes such as legal proceedings, transmission, genealogy or the world of letters and epistolary exchanges.

We were thus able to answer the questions asked in the introduction, concerning the installation, the development and the death of this dynasty, but beyond that, we now know the major issues which revolved around the title of Master printer in a secondary city like Grenoble. This revealed legal and political tensions, especially during the transmission of the family business, similar to those that have been observed in other cities thanks to other studies on the subject, allowing us to include this memoir in the historiography of the book and the tensions within the editorial field of the time. In addition, although our study concerns a small family of printers in a small provincial town, it shows us that the issues and the difficulties faced with in this environment were the same everywhere at the time and did not spare any family, whether of humble birth or powerful. Finally, it also makes it possible to retrace, at least on the surface, the life of this forgotten dynasty which, however, at the time was able to stand out from the rest of its peers, precisely because of this complexity of action which was specific to their profession.

DISCUSSION

Initially, we sought to place this dynasty in a more global context which was that of the world of books in Grenoble in the 17th and 18th centuries, in order to better understand the circumstances and challenges of the establishment of a new lineage. In the middle of the printing press, while beginning to point out what makes all the originality of this one.

Secondly, we therefore looked at the transmission and perpetuation of the dynasty through the efforts of Mathieu Petit, son and heir of Jacques, but also the beginning of its decline, with the departure of Pierre-Antoine Petit and his refusal to continue the work of his predecessors.

Finally, in the last part, we tried to trace the legacy and posterity of the Petit family, in particular by exploiting the correspondence that Pierre-Antoine maintains with Tournier, his attorney, with whom he manages the property bequeathed by Mathieu Petit after his death.

By answering these questions, we were able to put our finger on what made the originality of this dynasty, whether it was its unexpected arrival on the printing market, its maintenance alongside great families in the same field until finally his sudden death due to the departure of the last son who refused to take over the family business. In addition to these results, this study made it possible to bring out of the shadows an entire genealogical branch of this unfortunately forgotten family which,

