# A financial transaction of the Order of St Lazarus in the 18th Century

Charles Savona-Ventura

**Abstract**
This paper examines a financial document from the late 18th century concerning the Order of Saint Lazarus, highlighting its administrative structure, economic activities, and financial negotiations. The analysis sheds light on the financial procedures, obligations, and transactions of Chivalric Orders during this period, with particular attention to the roles of key figures such as the Order's Grand Treasurer.

**Keywords**
Order of St Lazarus; financial negotiation; economic activity; 18th century

## Introduction

By the 18th century, the Order of Saint Lazarus, originally a Hospitaller Order dedicated to caring for lepers, had evolved into a noble institution with considerable territorial and financial interests across France. These financial interests required careful management and complex mechanisms of administrative accountability including debt management within the elite circles of the *ancien régime*. The document analysed herein provides a snapshot of the Order's financial dealings in respect to debt management.

## Documentary source

The document was first discovered by Chev. Pierre-Julien Auroux[1], a member of the Grand Priory of France, and originally depicted on his

[1] Chev. Pierre-Julien Auroux is originally from Versailles. After living in Africa and the French West Indies, he returned to live in Versailles before settling in Quercy. He

Facebook page. This two-page manuscript document, dated 23 July, 1781, provides a snapshot into the financial dealings of the Order of Saint Lazarus.[2]

**Analysis of the document**

At the heart of this particular transaction are the financial affairs of the Comte de Bainville, serving as the Order's Grand Treasurer, who had fallen into debt and was seeking a resolution. The document outlines the situation, the proposed repayment plan, and the key individuals involved.

It appears that Count François-Louis Lattaignant de Bainville had accrued a significant debt with the Order of Saint Lazarus during his 24-year tenure as *Trésorier Général* of the Order [1760-1784]. The Count of Bainville was originally admitted as *Chevalier* to the Order in 1759, being subsequently promoted to *Commandeur*.[3] While occupying this office, the Count of Bainville would have been in charge of the financial administration of the Order involved in managing assets, collecting revenues from Commanderies, and disbursing funds for its various activities. After his retirement in 1785, the post of *Trésorier Général* was apparently abolished and the responsibility for the overall supervision of the Order's finances was added to the administrative brief of the *Chancelier & Garde des Sceaux & Surintendant des Finances*, then being occupied by the Chev. the Marquis Anne-Pierre de Montesquiou-Fezensac [admitted 1775].[4] After 1781, a new post was created to

joined the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem in 2021. He was appointed Chancellor of the Priory of Notre-Dame de France of the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem in 2024.

[2] Pierre-Julien Auroux. *ORDER of SAINT-LAZARE - Settlement of a debt by the Count of BAINVILLE in 1781*. Facebook page (22.viii.2025), https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=24428153610150100&set=pcb.24428153940150067 [accessed 27.viii.2025].

[3] H.-M. de Lange & J.L. de Treourret de Kerstrat. *Les Ordres de Saint-Lazare de Jerusalem et de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel aux XVII et XVIII siecles* (Paris: Publications Ltk, 1992), admission note 1759/2, p.258.

[4] The previous incumbent to the post of *Trésorier Général* was Chev. Commander Godefroy-Maurice de la Rye [admitted 1705]. *Almanach Royale*, 1760, pp.120;

manage the day-to-day management of the finances. The person appointed in 1781 to the post of *Trésorier Général des dits Ordres* was M. de Bard. He retained his employment until the turmoil brought about by the French Revolution in 1791. [5]

**The debt**

During his tenure as *Trésorier Général*, the Count of Bainville appeared to have accrued a significant debt amounting to a total of 19,558 *livres*, and 4 *deniers*.[6] This debt stemmed from two sources:

- A sum of 7,976 *livres* and 9 *sols* related to an outstanding bill entrusted to M. de Bard, which had not been acquitted by January of that year.
- A sum of 11,581 *livres*, 11 *sols*, and 4 *deniers* owed to the Order for revenues from Commanderies (territorial districts) placed under the administration of Messrs Fossard and Souci.[7]

*Almanach Royale*, 1785, pp.209-210; H-M de Lange & J.L. de Treourret de Kerstrat, 1992, *op. cit*., admission note 1775/1, p.287.

[5] The *Almanach Royale* series was an annual publication serving as a French administrative directory first published in 1701 and ran uninterruptedly until the onset of the French Revolution in 1791. Vide: *Almanach Royale,* 1781, p.206; *Almanach Royale,* 1791, p.251.

[6] The monetary system in France up to 1794 was based on the *livre* as the basic denomination. Each *livre* was divided into twenty *sous* (or *sols*), each *sou* was made up of twelve *deniers*. An *écu* was equal to three *livres*. After 1795, the *franc* was adopted, each *franc* being equivalent to 1 *livre*, 3 *deniers*, or the equivalent to 4.5 gr. of silver. The *euro* replaced the French *franc* in 2002 with 1 *franc* being equivalent to 0.153 *euros*. The debt in today's value in silver would amount to about €94,000.

[7] In 1690, the annual dues to the mother-house at Boigny from each of the Grand Priories amounted to 750 *livres*, while Commanderies were required to forward about 12.5% of their annual incomes [income 3000 *livres* → dues 375 *livres*; 2000 *livres* → 250 *livres*; 1200 → 150 *livres*; 900 → 112 *livres*]. See J. Le Pelletier. *Recueil général de tous les bénéfices & commanderies de France, & de ses dépendances. Par ordre alphabétique. Avec leurs noms Latins, François, leurs revenus, leurs qualitez, leurs diocèses, & le lieu où ils sont situez. Ceux qui possèdent les archevêchez & évêchez, leur éloignement de Paris ; & combien les bulles & celles des abbayes sont taxées de florins en Cour de Rome*. Paris, 1690, (+64+15pp.).

**The Proposed Repayment Agreement**

To resolve this debt, the Comte de Bainville proposed a repayment plan to the Order. The main terms of the agreement were as follows:

- The Comte de Bainville would transfer to the Order a secure claim valued at 15,500 *livres*, bearing interest at 5%, which he personally held against the Comte and Comtesse de Quitry.[8] This was to be reimbursed in four instalments by August of the same year (1781).
- After this claim was transferred and successfully repaid, the Comte de Bainville's remaining debt to the Order would thus be reduced to 4,058 *livres* and 4 *deniers*. This was to be paid into the Order's Treasury through the intermediation of Mr de Bard, listed as current *Trésorier Général desdits Ordres*.
- A proposal was further made to the Grand Master to authorize M. de Bard to transfer to the Comte de Bainville the sum of 7,976 *livres* and nine *sols*.

**Certification for the agreement**

A primary and essential condition of the agreement was the approval of the Grand Master of the Order, Monseigneur Louis Stanislas Xavier (brother of the King Louis XVI, and eventually King Louis XVIII). The agreement was drawn up and certified by Chev. Commander Claude Dorat de Chameulles in his role as *Secrétaire Général*. He further confirmed the Grand Master's approval for the arrangement.

Claude Denis Dorat de Chameulles (*1729) was received into the Order of St Lazarus as a Knight of Justice during his minority years in 1730 through provisions made by the Grand Master, the Duke of Orleans. He succeeded his father, Claude Dorat de Chameulles [*1696, †1771;

[8] This probably refers to Comte Henri de Chaumont de Quitry, Marquis de Quitry (*1765, †1848), married to Madeleine Charlotte Thaïs de Riquet de Caraman. He served as an *Officier de Dragons*. His father, Comte Jacques Guy Georges Henri de Chaumont-Quitry, died in 1779. See Erica Howton. *Henri de Chaumont de Quitry, marquis de Quitry* (San Francisco, U.S.A.: Geni, 2025), https://www.geni.com/people/Henri-de-Chaumont-de-Quitry-marquis-de-Quitry/6000000018427068888 [accessed 27.08.2025].

admitted 1720], as Commander of Saint-Louis de Juvisy and as Secretary General of the Order presumably after his death in 1771. Claude Denis married in 1766 Marie Françoise de Maupassant.[9] He was responsible for the publication of two lists of members of the Order dated 1759 and 1774.[10]

**Conclusion**

The handling of debts and guarantees demonstrated the Order's need to maintain integrity and liquidity to sustain its territorial and managerial functions. The involvement of noble figures and royal princes underlines the interconnection of noble privileges, financial interests, and missions. This 18th-century financial record offers insight into the fiscal operations of the Order of Saint Lazarus and its interplay with noble and royal authorities. It exemplifies the intricate balance of diplomacy, finance, and hierarchy characteristic of the *ancien régime*, revealing how Noble Orders navigated economic realities within their social and political contexts. It reveals the importance of personal connections, the use of complex financial instruments, and the need for high-level approval in settling even seemingly straightforward debts. It provides a valuable glimpse into the social and economic landscape of pre-revolutionary France and the challenges faced by institutions like the Order of Saint Lazarus.

[9] H.-M. de Lange & J.L. de Treourret de Kerstrat, 1992, *op. cit*., admission note 1730/23, p.251; admission note 1720/17, p.211; *Almanach Royale,* 1743, p.108.

[10] C.-D. Dorat de Chameulles. *Liste de MM. les chevaliers, commandeurs et officiers des ordres royaux, militaires et hospitaliers de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem ...* (Paris : Vve Delatour, 1759); C.-D. Dorat de Chameulles. *Liste de MM. les chevaliers, commandeurs et officiers des ordres royaux, militaires et hospitaliers de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem ...* (Paris: P.-F. Gueffier, 1774).

## Transcript

Ordre de S. Lazare.

Il a été représenté à très haut, très Grand, très Puissant et très excellent Prince, Louis Stanislas Xavier, Fils de France, Frère du Roy Monsieur, Grand maître General tant au Spirituel qu'au Temporel des Ordres Royaux, Militaires et Hospitaliers de Notre-Dame du Mont Carmel et de S. Lazare de Jérusalem, Bethléem et Nazareth tant deçà que delà les mers, que par le dernier compte rendu par M. le Comte de Bainville, Grand Trésorier de l'Ordre, il s'était trouvé redevable à l'Ordre d'une somme de sept mille neuf cents soixante seize livres neuf sols, pour l'aucun de laquelle, il avons remis à M. de Bard, un effet de pareille somme payable en Janvier dernier, lequel n'ayant pour encore été acquitté, il en demeure responsable, et d'après l'examen de la gestion des Commanderies territoriales de l'Ordre des sieurs Fossard et Souci auxquels il en avoir confié l'administration, et dont par conséquent il est garantie, il se trouve être encore dû à l'Ordre pour le revenu des d[ites] Commanderies la somme de onze mille cinq cent quatre-vingt une livres, onze sols, quatre deniers. Ces deux objets réunis forment un total de dix-neuf mille cinq cent cinquante-huit livres, quatre deniers.

Pour acquitter cette somme, mon dit sieur Le Comte de Bainville offre à l'Ordre par la voie du transport avec toute garantie tant en principal qu'ancrages, une créance assurée par de bons titres par-devant notaire portant intérêt a cinq pour cent qui la à exercer sur M. le Comte et Mme. la Comtesse de Quitry solidairement, la quelle monte à quinze mille cinq cent livres et dois être remboursée du mois d'aout prochain en quatre aux.

Pour deben passer cette opération se trouverons réduis à la somme de quatre mille cinquante-huit livres quatre deniers qui payerons au trésor de l'Ordre entre les mains de M. de Bard, Trésorier General de l'Ordre.

Si Monseigneur accepte cet arrangement, on a l'honneur de proposer à Monseigneur d'autoriser le dit de Bard à se mettre au dit de Bainville son effet de sept mille neuf cent soixante seize livres neuf sols et a accepter au nom de l'Ordre le trauysau proposé avec toute garantie de la par dud(it) de Bainville.

Fait à Paris le vingt trois Juillet mil Sept cents quatre-vingt un.

Et au bas en célio de la main de Monseigneur [bou].

Certifié le présent extrait véritable et conformés a la décision de Monseigneur dont l'original est demeuré entre les mains de nous Chev. Commander et Secrétaire General dud[it] Ordres.

Dorat de Chameulles

**English Translation** *[ChatGPT generated]*

Order of St. Lazarus.

It has been represented to a very high, very Great, very Powerful, and very excellent Prince, Louis Stanislas Xavier; Son of France, Brother of the King Monsieur, Grand Master General both Spiritual and Temporal of the Royal, Military, and Hospital Orders of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth, both here and abroad, as per the latest report by Mr Count of Bainville, Grand Treasurer of the Order. He was found to be indebted to the Order in the amount of seven thousand,nine hundred seventy-six livres, nine sols, for none of which we have remitted to Mr Bard a note of a similar amount payable last January, which still remains unpaid; he is responsible for it. Based on the examination of the management of the territorial Commanderies of the Order entrusted to Messrs Fossard and Souci, to whom administration was confided, and for which he is therefore guarantor, it appears that he still owes the Order the income of said Commanderies, amounting to eleven thousand, five hundred eighty-one livres, eleven sols, four deniers. These two sums combined total nineteen thousand, five hundred fifty-eight livres, four deniers.

To settle this amount, my said Lord Count of Bainville offers to the Order, by way of transfer with full guarantees in principal and collateral, a claim secured by good titles before a notary, bearing interest at five percent, which he would exercise against Mr the Count and Mrs the Countess of Quitry jointly and together. The claim amounts to fifteen thousand, five hundred livres, and must be reimbursed starting next August in four instalments.

To complete this operation, the remaining balance will be reduced to four thousand, fifty-eight livres, four deniers, which will be paid to the Treasury of the Order in the hands of Mr Bard, General Treasurer of the Order.

If His Excellency accepts this arrangement, we have the honour to propose to His Excellency to authorize the said Mr Bard to receive from the said Mr Bainville his note of seven thousand, nine hundred seventy-six livres, nine sols, and to accept on behalf of the Order the proposed transfer, with full guarantee from the said Bainville.

Done in Paris, on July 23, 1781.

And signed at the bottom by the hand of His Excellency [signature].

Certified true and conforming to the decision of His Excellency, whose original remains in our hands, Chevalier Commander and General Secretary of the Orders.

Dorat de Chameulles.

# Ordre de S^t Lazare.

Il a été representé a Tres haut, Tres Grand, Tres Puissant et Tres excelent Prince Louis Stanislas Xavier, Fils de France, Frere du Roy Monsieur, Grand maitre General tant au Spirituel qu'au Temporel des ordres Royaux, Militaires et hospitaliers de Notre Dame du Mont Carmel et de S^t Lazare de Jerusalem, Bethléem et Nazareth tant deca que delà les mers que par le dernier Compte que M. le Comte de Damville Grand Tresorier de l'ordre a rendu de sa gestion, il s'etoit trouvé redevable a l'ordre d'une somme de sept mille neuf cent soixante six livres neuf sols, pour laquelle de laquelle il avoit remis a M. de Bard un effet de pareille somme payable en Janvier dernier, lequel n'ayant point encore été acquitté, il en demeure responsable, et depuis l'examen de la Gestion des Commanderies territoriales de l'ordre des Sieurs Forrard et Lucé auxquels il en avoit confié l'administration, et dont par consequent il est garant il se trouve etre encore dû a l'ordre pour le revenu des Commanderies la somme de Onze mille Cinq cent Quatre vingt neuf livres, Onze sols, quatre Deniers. — ces deux objets réunis forment un total de Dix neuf mille Cinq cent Cinquante huit Livres, quatre Deniers. — Pour acquitter cette Somme, monsieur Sieur —

le Comte de Bainville offre à l'ordre par la Voye du Transport avec toute garantie tant en principal quaranteages, une Creance assurée par de bons Titres par devant notaire portant interêt à Cinq pour Cent qu'il a à exercer sur M. le Comte et Mr. la Comtesse de Chastellux solidairement, laquelle monte à Quinze mille Cinq Cent livres et doit etre remboursée du mois d'avril prochain en quatre ans.

Son debet par cette Operation se trouveroit réduit à la somme de Quatre mille Cinquante huit livres quatre deniers qu'il payeroit au Tresor de l'ordre entre les mains de M. de Bard Tresorier General de l'ordre

Si Monseigneur accepte cet arrangement, on a l'honneur de proposer à Monseigneur d'autoriser ledit Sr. de Bard a remettre audit Sr. de Bainville son effet de Sept mille neuf cent Soixante et Seize livres neuf sols et a accepter au nom de l'ordre le Transport proposé avec toute garantie de la part dud. Sr. de Bainville

Fait à Paris ce Vingt Trois Juillet mil Sept cent Quatre vingt un. /

Et au bas est écrit de la main de Monseigneur bon. /.

Certifié le présent extrait Veritable Et conforme a la decision de Monseigneur dont l'original est demeuré entre les mains de nous Chev. Commandr. et Secretaire General dud. ordre Gerard de Chamvallon