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TRANS-NATIONAL COOPERATION:
AN ASSET IN THE PORTUGUESE OVERSEAS TRADE.
FOREIGNERS OPERATING
IN THE PORTUGUESE OVERSEAS TRADE, 1580-1590

The approach to the period of Iberian Union and its consequences in terms of fostering or disrupting trans-national social networks has recently been re-discovered by the historiography. The thematic extent of such literature has gone from politics to religion, from social elites to economic dynamics, especially in what concerns the Iberian overseas dominions¹. Despite the revival of such topic, a systematic and balanced approach to trade and finance partnerships and cooperation between Iberian long-distance merchants and their relations and actions with the “rival” competitors has not been yet systematically considered.

This paper aims to present an on-going research project about trans-national and trans-imperial Iberian networks of trade and finance during the period of the political union of Portuguese and Spanish Crowns, under the Habsburg rule (1580-1640). Did the political Union alter Iberian business cooperation? Did the Union create conditions for a new business dynamics? Did this political process help strengthen relationships between merchants or, on the contrary, did it potentiate rivalry and competition among merchants from different

¹ M.G. VENTURA, *Portugueses no Peru ao tempo da União Ibérica: mobilidade, cumplicidades e vivências*, Lisbon 2005; S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *Holding the world in balance: the connected histories of the Iberian overseas Empires, 1500-1640*, «American Historical Review», 112 (2007), pp. 1359-1385; D. STUDNICKI-GIZBERT, *A nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640*, Oxford 2007; *Missions religieuses modernes. «Notre lieu est le monde»*, edited by P.A. Fabre and B. Vicent, Rome 2007; *Las redes del Imperio. Élités sociales en la articulación de la Monarquía Hispánica*, edited by B. Yun Casalilla, Madrid 2009; J.C. VILARDAGA, *São Paulo na órbita do Império dos Filipines. Conexões castelhanas de uma vila da América Portuguesa durante a União Ibérica (1580-1640)*, São Paulo 2010 (PhD thesis).

origins? As an essay on this topic, the following pages will consider the immediate effects of the Union in Iberian partnerships in trade and finance. The point of view will be the presence of Spanish and other foreign merchants in the Portuguese overseas trade in the first ten years of the Union through the lenses of Lisbon notarial records, namely liabilities, discharges, powers of attorney, freight contracts or charter companies' establishments.

1. *A brief balance to a new question*

What happened in 1580, that lasted until 1640, to support such a scientific interest? With the premature death of the Portuguese king Sebastian in 1578, the Avis dynasty was rushing to its end. The direct successor was King Sebastian's great uncle, the cardinal Henry, which ruled Portugal during 15 months, between August 1578 and January 1580. Not only was he a clergyman, but he was also almost 70 years old when he reached the throne. This made the throne succession a problem. Well positioned candidates were now the grandsons of the former Portuguese king, Manuel I, including the Spanish monarch Philip II. Through complex diplomatic and military pressure, in 1581, in Tomar, the Portuguese representatives of the nobles, the clergy and the commoners acknowledged Philip as king of Portugal, if he was willing to respect some conditions. Those implied that the Portuguese kingdom should always remain formally separated from Hispanic dominions and it should be ruled according to its own laws and mores².

Regarding trade, the representatives of the Portuguese municipalities presented some observations and requests to the new monarch, which would not only improve Portuguese businessmen profits but also legalize a daily practice, as we will describe next. First, these men asked the abolition of monopoly politics and contracts regarding trade

² 2º VISCONDE DE SANTARÉM, *Memórias e alguns documentos para a história e teoria das Côrtes Geraes que em Portugal se celebraram pelos Três Estados do Reino*, II, Lisbon 1924, p. 78. For further explanation on the problem of Portuguese succession in 1580 and Philip II acclamation as Portuguese king: M.R.T. BARATA, *A União Ibérica e o Mundo Atlântico: 1580 e o processo político português*, in *A União Ibérica e o Mundo Atlântico. Segunda jornadas de História Ibero-Americana*, edited by M.G. Ventura, Lisbon 1997, pp. 47-64; J.F. SCHAUB, *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica: 1580-1640*, Lisboa 2001, pp. 21-23; F. BOUZA, *D. Filipe I*, Mem Martins 2005, pp. 39-203; A. POLÓNIA, *D. Henrique. O Cardeal-Rei*, Lisboa 2009, pp. 257-295.

in the overseas dominions, allowing free trade to such territories. Second, they asked the permission for other Hispanic kingdoms to import iron, wood, wheat, leather and horses into Portugal without paying taxes and to abolish the prohibition of importing such commodities from Castile. Third, they requested the naturalization of Portuguese subjects as Hispanic therefore, allowing to reach Castilian Indies³.

Despite such requests, in 1582, the Monarch signed the so-called "Patent Letter" in which he pledged himself to give the Portuguese people certain privileges, favors and mercies. On the trade topic, he assured that: 1) the Orient, African and Brazilian trades should continue to be exclusive to Portuguese subjects and Portuguese ships; 2) border customs between Portugal and Castile would be extinguished, such as custom taxes, to enhance trade between the two Hispanic dominions; 3) the Castilian wheat would be allowed to be imported in Portugal; 4) defensive naval measures would be taken in order to guarantee secure navigation in the Indian fleet and in African dominions⁴.

Nevertheless, the principle of national exclusivity of trade in overseas territories was maintained. Since 1526, the Castilian Crown and Charles V allowed the subjects of his empire to trade with Castilian Indies. However, in 1538 he restrained that permission to the naturals only. No foreigner, designation which included Flemish, Portuguese or Italians who were under the Habsburg jurisdiction, could participate in the American venture. And in 1556 the ordinances of the Sevillian «Consulato» excluded from the guild every foreigner⁵. This legislation survived to the new order of Habsburg rule in Spain and 1580s events did not alter this reality. Portuguese subjects continued to be considered as foreigners and vice-versa. However, naturalization processes began to be more and more frequent after 1620s, when the truces with the Netherlands ceased, and the financial effort of the Spanish crown increased, both due to a belligerent policy and to the effort to protect an empire spread all around the globe. Foreigners who worked as middleman in Seville and Cádiz wanted to directly profit from the American affairs, which was only conceived if they had been considered Castilians. If they were living for a long period in Spain or in the Indies (10 years first, 20 later), possessed

³ SANTARÉM, *Memórias e alguns documentos*, pp. 78-81.

⁴ BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE PORTUGAL (BNP), Rs 68 P., *Patente das mercês, graças e privilégios que El Rey D. Philipe nosso senhor faz mercê a estes Reinos*, 1582.

⁵ J.B. RUIZ RIVERA, M.C. GARCÍA BERNAL, *Cargadores a Indias*, Madrid 1992, p. 57.

real estates for over 4.000 ducats (after 1618) and were married to a Spanish woman they could obtain this privilege. If any of these conditions did not verify, they would pay a considerable amount for it⁶.

Apart from this formal interdiction of a systematic chain of commerce between Portuguese and Spanish overseas territories, Portuguese and Spanish merchants shared common formal rivals in their most rentable revenues: the overseas trade, both Atlantic and Oriental. Formal incorporation of Portuguese dominions under Habsburg administration made them targets of the Dutch rebels in their conflict against Spain. But even before that, the Netherlands and England sake for juridical contestation of the Iberian principles of *mare clausum*. Privateering, piracy and formal military conflicts undermined the attractiveness of overseas trade in the Atlantic and in the East between 1580 and 1640. Spanish rulers forbade Dutch trade in Iberian ports in 1585, 1595, 1598 and 1605. The conflict against the Portuguese territories in the East exacerbated with the VOC constitution and its control of spice supplier islands, which persisted even in the Twelve Years Truce.

In 1580s and 1590s, English and French privateers destabilized trade in the Caribbean and in the most important American ports, such as Vera Cruz and Nombre de Dios. After the WIC constitution in 1621, privateering and smuggling invaded even more the Atlantic. In the 1620s and 1630s, Dutch took Northern Brazilian territories in Bahia, Recife and Pernambuco, Elmina in Western African coast and tried to conquer Angola. In the Spanish Indies, between 1628 and 1636, they captured at least 547 ships⁷. They occupied Curaçao, San Eustaquio and Sabra. The English took Jamaica, Saint Kitts, Barbados, Saint Vicent, Barbuda and Dominica. The French occupied Guadalupe and Martinica.

The multiple embargoes to Dutch, French and English goods in Iberian ports, whose commodities constituted the biggest portion of exports to America, not only motivated these powers' attempt to establish direct trade in those territories, but also ruined some Castilian merchants whose profits came from re-exporting these products to Indies⁸. In such unstable and hardly competing conjuncture how did Portuguese and Spanish merchants dealt with each other? How did

⁶ A. DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, *La concesión de cartas de naturaleza para comerciar en Indias durante el siglo XVII*, «Revista de Indias», 75 (1959), 8, pp. 227-239.

⁷ J.R. FISCHER, *Relaciones económicas entre España y América hasta la independencia*, Madrid 1992, p. 103.

⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 174-175.

the Iberian merchants, as individuals, who had formal and destructive rivalries with other powers, dealt with merchants from those parts?

2. *A new theoretical approach: cooperation in a trans-national stage*

A recent approach to Early Modern trading networks has highlighted its «cross-cultural» character⁹. Instead of regarding kinship, “nationality”, ethnic and cultural similarities as the ties which bound together mercantile partnerships, this approach underlines the multinational and multicultural character of business networks. Merchant communities needed to increase their network efficiency by trading with different people from different social backgrounds, in transnational stages, integrated in diverse overseas imperial realities¹⁰.

This approach contradicts, in a partial way, the already classic works of Douglass C. North, which stressed that the costs of transactions among more homogeneous networks would be lower, since policing other’s action was easier and a stricter control of information maintained transaction on track¹¹. Authors like X. Lamikiz, F. Trivellato or F. R. da Silva have argued such idea, proving that multinational, multicultural and, sometimes, trans-imperial networks were the key to agency problems and opened business opportunities and new channels of information which otherwise would not exist¹².

Moving inside the constraints of European overseas Empires and its monopolistic regimes, merchants constituted these cross-cultural networks outside the authorities’ strings. These agents established contacts free of any institutional or national control or guidance, building up “self-organized networks”¹³.

⁹ P.D. CURTIN, *Cross-cultural trade in World History*, Cambridge 1984.

¹⁰ J.C. BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640*, Baltimore 2007; J. ROITMAN, *Us and them: inter-cultural trade and the Sephardim*, Leiden 2008 (PhD thesis); F. TRIVELLATO, *The familiarity of strangers. The Sephardic diaspora, Livorno, and cross-cultural trade in the Early Modern period*, New Haven-London 2009; C. ANTUNES, *Lisboa e Amesterdão, 1640-1705. Um caso de globalização na História Moderna*, Lisbon 2009.

¹¹ D.C. NORTH, *Transaction costs in history*, «Journal of European Economic History», 14 (1985), pp. 557-576.

¹² TRIVELLATO, *The familiarity of strangers*; X. LAMIKIZ, *Trade and trust in the eighteenth century Atlantic world. Spanish merchants and their overseas networks*, Woodbridge 2010; F.R. SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa. Empires, merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674*, Leiden 2011.

¹³ For the emergence of such concept in historiography: A. POLÓNIA, J. OWENS,

The concept of self-organization derives from the interaction between individual interests and the existence of social structures which frame opportunities and strategic choices of those individuals. Self-organization creates a new order that functions according to informal rules in order to maintain its proper operations¹⁴.

These historical perspectives raises the question: how was it possible for merchants from such different backgrounds, who did not know each other, to sustain trading partnerships, avoid cheating problems and promote mechanisms for trust building? Cooperation arises as a key concept in the understanding of the functioning of such informal systems, as were these merchant networks in the Early Modern period.

A vast interdisciplinary literature on cooperation has agreed that there are some preconditions in its development among humans. First, and most importantly, the act of cooperation is led by a motivation that conducts humans to partially forget their self-interest in order to help another person. The pioneer in cooperation studies, William D. Hamilton, has proved that cooperation exists when an individual assumes a costly behavior which brings him and others a bigger benefit, that is, a positive fitness¹⁵. Cooperation is, thus, driven by a goal-oriented action, in which the cost in cooperating is lower than the benefit, not only for the recipient but also for the cooperator¹⁶.

Cooperation-based self-organizing networks in the Portuguese overseas expansion in the first global age, 1400-1800, DynCoopNet, Working papers, s.d., <http://www.dyncoopnet-pt.org>; *Self-Organizing networks and GIS tools. Cases of use for the study of trading cooperation (1400-1800)*, edit by A. Crespo Solana and D. Alonso Garcia, Special Issue of «Journal of Knowledge Management, Economics and Information Technology», 1 (2012); A. POLÓNIA, *Indivíduos e redes auto-organizadas na construção do império ultramarino português*, in *Economia, instituições e império. Estudos em homenagem a Joaquim Romero de Magalhães*, a cura di A. Garrido, L.F. Costa and L.M. Duarte, Coimbra 2012, pp. 349-372; C. ANTUNES, *Free agents and formal institutions in the Portuguese Empire: towards a framework of analysis*, «Portuguese Studies», 28 (2012), pp. 173-185.

¹⁴ A.L. BARABÁSI, R. ALBERT, *Emergence of scaling in random networks*, «Science», 286 (1999), pp. 509-512; D.J. WATTS, *Small worlds: the dynamics of networks between order and randomness*, Princeton 1999; K. SAWYER, *Social emergence: societies as complex systems*, Cambridge 2005.

¹⁵ W. HAMILTON, *The genetic evolution of social behavior*, «Journal of Theoretical Behavior», 7 (1964), pp. 1-16 and 17-52.

¹⁶ For a deeper understanding on the concept of cooperation and how it could be applied to Economic History studies please consider A.S. RIBEIRO, *Mechanisms and criteria of cooperation in trading networks of the First Global Age. The case study of Simon Ruiz network, 1557-1597*, Porto 2011 (PhD thesis).

Long-distance trade dynamics demanded a bigger complexity in trade logistics and financing. This essay will observe the presence of foreigners in the Portuguese overseas trade through the existence or not of such «trans-national cooperation».

Studies concerning overseas Iberian trade have clearly stressed that the political Union was most beneficial to Portuguese merchants and seamen¹⁷. They were monopolistic slave traders to America, legally after 1595, through the regime of *asientos de negros*¹⁸, the biggest smugglers in Rio de la Plata region and Peru¹⁹, or the main bankers of the Habsburg Monarchy²⁰.

Case studies are unanimous in considering that all these Portuguese participation in Spanish overseas trade and finance were previous to the political Union and that, after 1580, there was an increase in the presence of the Portuguese in such activities. Serrano Mangas sustains that the presence of the Portuguese was a necessity for covering gaps in supply in the areas of Hispanic dominions²¹. For some authors, the Union favored this presence not only in a formal way, in which the Crown created legal instruments to increase the Portuguese participation (as in the case of slave supply to Spanish Indies, or in the case of financing the Royal Treasure after the bankruptcy of 1627)²², but

¹⁷ R. LAGUARDA TRÍAS, *Pilotos Portugueses en el Rio de la Plata durante el siglo XVI*, «Revista da Universidade de Coimbra», 34 (1988), pp. 57-84.

¹⁸ E. VILA VILAR, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos. Los asientos portugueses*, Sevilla 1977; F. SERRANO MANGAS, *La encrucijada Portuguesa: esplendor y quiebra de la Union Ibérica en las Indias de Castilla (1600-1668)*, Badajoz 2001; STUDNICKI-GIZBERT, *A nation upon the Ocean Sea*.

¹⁹ R. LAFUENTE MACHAIN, *Los Portugueses en Buenos Aires (siglo XVII)*, Madrid 1931; A. CANABRAVA, *O comércio português no Rio da Prata, 1580-1640*, São Paulo 1984; J.I. ISRAEL, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: jews, cripto-jews, and the world of maritime Empires, 1540-1740*, Leiden 2002, pp. 97-150; VENTURA, *Portugueses no Peru ao tempo da União Ibérica*.

²⁰ J.C. BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese bankers at the Court of Spain, 1626-1650*, New Brunswick 1983; M. SUAREZ, *Desafíos transatlánticos: mercaderes, banqueros y el estado en el Perú virreinal, 1600-1700*, Lima 2001; C. SANZ AYAN, *Estado, Monarquía y Finanzas: estudios de historia financiera en los tiempos de los Austrias*, Madrid 2004; ID., *Los banqueros del rey y el Conde Duque de Olivares*, in *Felipe IV. El hombre y el reinado*, edited by J. Alcalá Zamora, Madrid 2005, pp. 157-178.

²¹ F. SERRANO MANGAS, *La presencia portuguesa en la América Española en la época de los Habsburgos (siglos XVI-XVII)*, in *A União Ibérica e o Mundo Atlântico*, pp. 73-74.

²² VILA VILAR, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos*; N. BROENS, *Monarquía y capital mercantil: Felipe IV y las redes comerciales portuguesas (1627-1635)*, Madrid 1989, pp. 36-45.

also informally, mingling and making use of a Hispanic identity²³. Still, authors like Boyajian, Laguarda Trías, Vila Vilar or Studnicki-Gizbert sustain that this Portuguese success was already being prepared, through a direct or informal (and veiled) presence in such affairs before 1580.

But the historiography, even the Spanish one, has obliterated the role of Spanish merchants both in European and American trade after 1580s, time when these trading routes were in the hands of foreign merchants, including the Portuguese²⁴. In fact, the competition between Castilian merchants and the Portuguese in Spain and in America, at least since the beginning of the 17th century, has to be underlined. Complaints of *creolos* and Spanish merchants settled in America towards the civil authorities and to the Inquisition were frequent and only ceased until after the Portuguese independence restoration in 1640 and Portuguese formal exclusion from those territories²⁵. Some authors highlight the 1630s as the decade of scission: between a tolerant policy by the Spanish and the authorities and severe official tentative to control Portuguese smuggling network in the Indies²⁶.

On the contrary, recent small studies, using prosopography, have underlined that some Spanish agents have also benefited from the Portuguese trade. It is known the collaboration of Portuguese and Spanish merchants in the Far East, namely in the axe Malacca-Macao-Nagasáki-Manila-Cebù-Acapulco²⁷. Also, the presence of Spaniards in Southern Brazil, where an informal Spanish colonization of Portuguese areas near Asuncion, in the hinterland of São Paulo, benefited from the trade between Paraguay province and the Portuguese settlements

²³ SERRANO MANGAS, *La encrucijada Portuguesa*; T. HERZOG, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America*, New Haven 2003.

²⁴ RUIZ RIVERA, GARCÍA BERNAL, *Cargadores a Indias*, pp. 143-153; *El sistema atlántico español (siglos XVII-XIX)*, edited by C.M. Shaw and J.M. Oliva Melgar, Madrid 2005.

²⁵ See examples in ISRAEL, *Diasporas within a diaspora*, pp. 97-150.

²⁶ S. SCHWARTZ, *Panic in the Indies: the Portuguese threat to the Spanish Empire*, «Colonial Latin American Review», 2 (1993), pp. 165-187; SUBRAHMANYAM, *Holding the world in balance*, pp. 1381-1385; F. BETHENCOURT, *The Iberian Atlantic: ties, networks, and boundaries*, in *Theorising the Ibero-American Atlantic*, edited by H.E. Braun and L. Vollendorfe, Leiden 2013, pp. 30-33.

²⁷ L.M.R. SOUSA, *O Japão e os Portugueses (1580-1614): religião, política e comércio*, Porto 2007, pp. 333-351; M. OLLÉ, *Portugueses y Castellanos en Asia oriental*, in *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica. Dinâmicas de integração e conflito. Quintas jornadas internacionais da Red Columbaria – História das Monarquias Ibéricas*, edited by P. Cardim, L.C. Costa and M.S. Cunha, Lisbon 2013, pp. 253-275.

in the Piratininga upland²⁸. Sporadic documental evidences have shown, in this way, both Spanish and Portuguese agents could have profited from the political Union in terms of trade opportunities and complementarities.

Portugal and Spain became part of a «composite monarchy», a monarchy composed by different relatively autonomous political organizations²⁹. In this sense, as sustained by Yun Casilla, it was the individual who locally enhanced the negotiation between the Crown (as the center of the Monarchy) and distant territories part of the Habsburg Empire. In this perspective, also merchants could have performed such role. Despite considered foreigners in each other spaces, the possibility of Portuguese and Spanish businessmen who cooperated in maintaining the cohesion (even if unconsciously) of an Iberian profitable economic space that went from the Indian and Pacific oceans to the Atlantic exists³⁰.

Still, there is small information on the presence and the role of Castilian merchants in the Portuguese overseas trade. On the contrary, some interesting investigation on other foreign communities and their role in the Portuguese overseas trade and Portuguese Empire financial sustainability has been developed, namely for the Italian and German communities, as the essays by Alessandrini, Crivelli, Viola and Pohle will demonstrate in the essays presented in this journal³¹. Helping the Crown Treasures gave them solid revenues in terms of public rents and the Habsburg monarchy was well-trained in providing this system. This gave the Genoese a partial control in the Castilian-European trade administration³². The role they displayed in collaborating or competing along the Iberian merchants as yet to be known.

²⁸ M. FLORES, *História do Rio Grande do Sul*, Portoalegre 1997, pp. 26-29; VILARDAGA, *São Paulo na órbita do Império dos Filipes*; S. NOVAIS, *Fontes para o estudo da presença colonial espanhola nos «Campos de Xerez»*, in *Cadernos de Resumos do II Congresso Internacional de História da UFG/Jataí – História e Mídia*, 2011, at <http://www.congressohistoriajatai.org/anais2011/link%2035.pdf>.

²⁹ J.H. ELLIOT, *A Europe of composite monarchies*, «Past and Present», 137 (1992), pp. 48-71.

³⁰ B. YUN CASALILLA, *Introducción. Entre el imperio colonial y la monarquía com- puesta. Élite y territorios en la Monarquía Hispánica (ss. XVI y XVII)*, in *Las redes del Imperio*, pp. 14-15.

³¹ Consider the works of N. ALESSANDRINI, *Os italianos na Lisboa de 1500 a 1680: das hegemonias Florentinas às Genovesas*, Lisboa 2009 (PhD thesis), and B. CRIVELLI, *Traffici finanziari e mercantili tra Milano e Lisbona nella seconda metà del XVI secolo*, Verona 2012 (PhD thesis).

³² R. ROMANO, *Banchieri genovesi alla corte di Filippo II*, «Rivista Storica Ital-

Part of this scientific silence, we believe, is due to the data sources in which historians of the Iberian economic relations have sustained their evidence, which are a valid part of the reality. Official correspondence, Treasure public debt's documents and monopolistic contracts, as the *asientos de negros* or *asientos de comercio* have made clear the role of Germans, Genoese and Portuguese merchants networks and their links throughout the world in financing the Crown and their trading revenues, as a return favor. The documents of all Iberian Inquisition Courts have shown the immense Portuguese migration to the Spanish Indies related to trade affairs. However, its prevalence of the Portuguese New Christians and the way inquisitors tried to prove their connections with other New Christians, inside or outside their family groups, probably created a misconception on the constitution of their trading networks (impregnated of homophily) and underestimated the role of non-Jewish Portuguese merchants. Part of the tremendous documental asset of the *Archivo General de Indias* has yet to be explored concerning the role of foreigners in Iberian trade. They are long documental series which could give the researcher a full picture on the quantity, weight and role of foreigners in Iberian overseas trade and their cross-cultural interactions.

This article proposes the use of notarial records related with long-distance trade as a mean to discover certain partnerships and partner choice mechanisms in daily trading operations. The role of foreigners operating from a certain location (such as Lisbon, Porto, Seville, Vera Cruz or Lima) enhance a more reliable reconstruction of trading networks, since trade involved a multiplicity of roles escaping a formal official contract and appearing most of the time indirectly in these contracts. Only part of Lisbon notarial archives from 1580 to 1590 subsisted in Portugal. But considering Lisbon as the head of the Portuguese empire, the sample of 115 contracts allows a representa-

iana», 56 (1949), pp. 241-247; F. RUIZ MARTIN, *Los hombres de negocios genoveses de España durante el siglo XVI*, in *Fremde Kaufleute auf der iberischen Halbinsel*, edited by H. Kellenbenz, Cologne-Wien 1970, pp. 84-99; R. CARANDE, *Carlos V y sus banqueros*, Barcelona 1987; C. ÁLVAREZ NOGAL, *El crédito de la Monarquía Hispánica durante el reinado de Felipe IV*, Valladolid 1997; C. ÁLVAREZ NOGAL, L. LO BASSO, C. MARSILIO, *La rete finanziaria della famiglia Spinola: Spagna, Genova e le fiere dei cambi (1610-1656)*, «Quaderni Storici», 124 (2007), pp. 97-111; D. ALONSO GARCIA, *Genoveses en la Corte. Poder financiero y administración en tiempos de Carlos V*, in *Génova y la Monarquía Hispánica (1528-1713)*, 1, Genova 2011, pp. 251-278.

tive (even if not complete) set of the agents (Portuguese and foreigner) who made the overseas trade their main activity. Notarial contracts also allow the observation of how official and informal mechanisms of trade could articulate in such a controlled scenario³³.

A prosopography approach to the information of notarial contracts aims to reconstitute small biographies of the agents and how their position and role in this trade dynamics could evolve. One person is never part of one social community only. Notarial archives combined with this methodology also enable to re-build the links and their typology, which tied agents together, aiming to understand the way these individuals foster trust between them. A network analysis methodology supports a quantitative approach in the study of cross-cultural cooperation and allows understanding not only the role, the positioning and the weight of an individual in the network, but also the functioning of the structure and how the structure conditions the pattern of partnerships in a trading group.

3. *Iberian cooperation in Portuguese overseas trade, 1580-90*

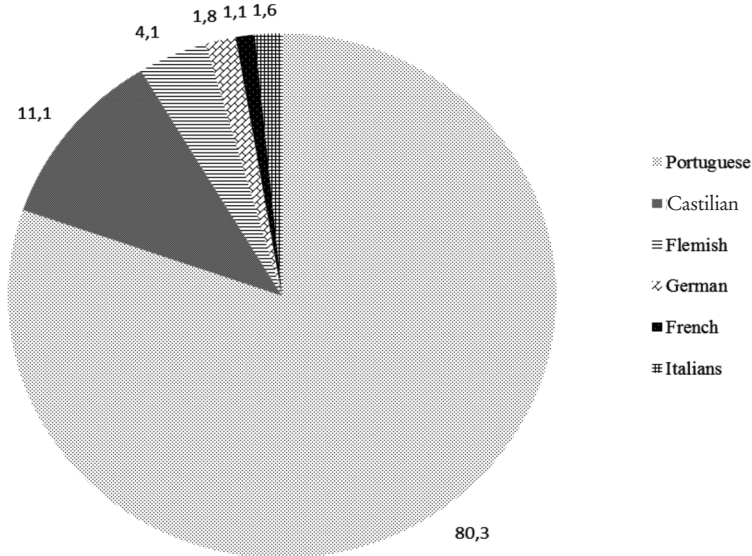
In the sources it was possible to identify, between 1580 and 1590, 443 agents participating in the Portuguese overseas trade. Despite the Portuguese formed a large majority of these men, Castilian, Flemish, French, German and Italians were also present in the trade. The relative numbers underlined by the notarial records seem to stress the hypothesis of the great strength of the Portuguese agents in global overseas trade dynamics over the loss of Spanish merchants influence, even in the Spanish Americas, at least since the 1570s. However, they still represent the biggest foreign group operating in Portugal and in the Portuguese overseas trade (Fig. 1).

The analysis of bills of exchange and business correspondence with Portugal of the Castilian merchant Simón Ruiz within the scope of DyncoopNet-pt research project³⁴, has allowed the reconstitution of Iberian trading networks before 1580. This network revealed cooper-

³³ Using this methodology, a study highlighted the role of Flemish merchants in Seville and how they connected with other foreigners and Castilian merchants. E. CRAILSHEIM, *Seville and the European Atlantic trade. A network study of French and Flemish merchant communities in early modern history (1580-1640)*, Graz 2009 (PhD thesis).

³⁴ For more information see the article in this themed section by Polónia and the website of the project www.dyncoopnet-pt.org.

Fig. 1 – *National groups of agents engaged in international trade since Portugal, 1580-1590 (%)*



Source: ADL, 7th and 15th Notaries of Lisbon, 1580-1590.

ation links between Portuguese and Castilian agents in times of formal imperial rivalry and monopolistic trading policies, showing informal commercial partnerships which knew no formal boundaries and crossed over legal constraints. Portuguese merchants from Lisbon, Évora and Porto appear among the long-lasting partners of Ruiz, they are among the most connected agents and their relevance for the network function was far more relevant than other groups of merchants³⁵. In the lack of systematic studies, this conclusions function as a model for Iberian trading and financial collaboration before 1580.

The complementarity of Iberian imperial spaces in terms of valuable trading products, routes and spaces favored the establishment of cooperative trading partnerships which allowed the participation of Portuguese agents in the silver revenues of the Spanish fleets and the integration of Castilian agents in spices and other Oriental luxury goods, slaves or Brazilian sugar trade, blooming since the 1570s. On the other hand, financial liquidity was quite an asset for the wealth-

³⁵ RIBEIRO, *Mechanisms and criteria of cooperation*, pp. 153-173.

iest Portuguese agents, since they maintained strong ties with their representatives in the Low Countries, which were essential for the Castilian, unwelcomed in such territories³⁶. It was before the Iberian formal union that the Portuguese merchants sustained their basis for their role as main bankers of the Habsburg monarch, especially under Philip III and Philip IV reigns, taking informal partnership with the Crown's *asientistas* to enter in the business. After all, they were the best positioned to place the money where it was needed: Antwerp³⁷.

Network analysis statistics offers an interesting perspective of the Castilian participation in the Portuguese foreign trade after 1580. The most connected agents of this set of trading affairs were Portuguese: Diogo Faleiro, with 32 links, and Francisco Rodrigues de Elvas, directly linked to 31 persons. Looking for the major hubs of the network (those with more than 10 contacts, representing 7.9% of the total number of agents), we observe that only two Castilian agents were quite connected in the network: Ventura de Frias and Lancerote de Serra.

Ventura de Frias was a Spanish agent of other Spanish merchants in Portugal, such as Simón Ruiz and Francisco de Cuevas³⁸. Still, he established in Portugal his own commercial partnerships with other Castilian, such as Inigo de Salazar, with whom he exchanged with Castilian bankers, like Juan Ortega de la Torre in Madrid, one of the main Spanish bankers at the time³⁹. In 1589, he was one of the best known and solvable banker operating in Lisbon, currently being an alternative to pay refused bills of exchange. The Portuguese Gregório Gomes refused to pay a bill of exchange of 15 thousand *reais* from Antão da Silva in Ponta Delgada (Azores) and the beneficiary Francisco Álvares Couto tried to find an exchange office that would pay it, despite possible solvency problems with the issuer, in the Lisbon business street, Rua Nova dos Ferros. Ventura de Frias accepted the bill⁴⁰.

On the contrary, Lancerote de Serra was a Castilian merchant settled outside Portugal, in Seville. Seville was a crucial place for most of the Portuguese agents dealing with American trade. He often acts

³⁶ Ivi, pp. 107-108 and 121-124.

³⁷ BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese bankers at the Court of Spain*, pp. 1-27; RIBEIRO, *Mechanisms and criteria of cooperation*, p. 107.

³⁸ Check <http://timelink.dyncoopnet-pt.org/mhk/dyncoopnet/id/rp-robot-125> for the biography of Ventura de Frias. ARQUIVO DISTRITAL DE LISBOA (ADL), 15º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 11, livro 52, ff. 26v-28v.

³⁹ ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 19, ff. 98v-100.

⁴⁰ Ivi, caixa 5, livro 22, ff. 118v-119v.

as payer of bills of exchange issued in Lisbon by Portuguese agents, and paying other Portuguese in Seville, as Simão de Tovar, for instance⁴¹. He also established a commercial partnership with one Portuguese, Francisco Rodrigues Serra, to enter slaves in the Spanish Indies. Before 1586, in the *licencias* regime, it was necessary for the Portuguese slave traders to have a Castilian frontman as part of this business, informally circumventing its legal framework. Francisco and Lancerote bought 16 slaves from the Portuguese merchants Manuel Fernandes Correia and António Correia de Gusmão, who were preparing an illegal venture to the Indies. They were then obliged to deliver them to Manuel Tovar and Brás Ferreira in Cartagena de Índias, and to Nicolau Fernandes in Santo Domingo. Despite the prohibition, there were Portuguese agents as representatives in slave trade affairs in Spanish overseas territories before 1595⁴².

Measuring the betweenness centrality, as a mean to consider the relevance of the agents in tying together different individuals and acting as a bridge to foster communication within different sets of agents in the network, it is clear that Castilian agents were not especially relevant in the Portuguese overseas commerce. Despite frequent in the trading process, they seem to be less relevant for the Portuguese trade than this trade could be for them. The exception was Lancerote de Serra, connected directly to several Portuguese agents, acting as their representative in Seville, a key figure in the relationship between Portuguese merchants in Lisbon and their Portuguese agents in Seville.

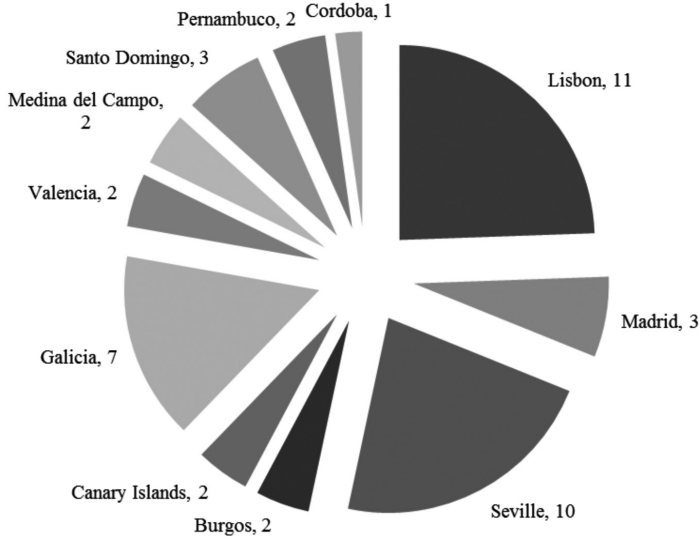
If Iberian Union legalized and informally promoted the access of Portuguese traders to Spanish overseas dominions, Iberian partnerships, in this first moment of the political Union, were a mechanism to ease the access of Spanish traders to certain goods demanded in America, such as Indian cloth and African slaves, and to informally participate in this trading dynamics. Even less often, cooperation with Castilian agents could have also been attractive to the Portuguese.

There were two main hubs of permanence of these Castilian agents directly linked to business in Portugal: Lisbon and Seville, maritime centers for the overseas expansion, logistics and trade (Fig. 2). These locations were directly linked with the functions these agents performed. Most of these Castilian agents were settled in Lisbon, hub of the Portuguese overseas trade, head of the Portuguese Court where monop-

⁴¹ Ivi, caixa 3, livro 16, ff. 27-28v.

⁴² Ivi, caixa 4, livro 20, ff. 135v-137.

Fig. 2 – *Geographical settlements of Castilian agents in the network, 1580-1590*



Source: ADL, 7th and 15th Notaries of Lisbon, 1580-1590. Total number of cases: 49. Unknown geographical references: 3.

oly contracts of spices were negotiated, the head of *Casa da Índia*, where spices were dealt, main port of departure of ships both to the Atlantic Africa and America, both to the East and Southeast Asia.

The well-known brothers Pedro and Francisco de Maluenda, from Burgos, were established in Lisbon at least since 1581. It is not known when they moved from Castile to Portugal, but they were two of the most famous and wealthiest *asientistas* of the Habsburg Crown, already before 1580⁴³. In Lisbon, they were preferential bankers of Castilian agents settled in Medina del Campo or Madrid, like Lope de la Camara/ Cosme Ruiz, Dom Alonso Martines de Lerma⁴⁴. Henrique de la Serra was also operating in banking and in buying and selling interests. In 1586, the Portuguese Garcia Leitão was arrested for a debt to Henrique de la Serra of 1.000 *cruzados* plus interests.

⁴³ H. LAPEYRE, *Simon Ruiz et les asientos de Philippe II*, Paris 1953.

⁴⁴ ADL, 2^o Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 5, livro 22, ff. 75v-77; Ivi, 15^o Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 11, livro 52, ff. 26v-28v.

His guarantors, Pero Cortês, Tomás Rodrigues and Amador da Costa, paid to Henrique de la Serra all the debt to Leitão's release⁴⁵. Lisbon, was, in this sense, a preferential market for Castilian banking activity. Besides its ports' movement and the abundance of active commercial investment and capitals, Lisbon and Portugal never had an organized banking structure, with established exchanging fairs which permitted advantageous exchange rates to foreign places. The significant volume of foreign trade in Portugal soon demanded the search for good financial markets which allowed international transferences. That was the reason why Portuguese merchants used Medina del Campo fairs to exchange with Antwerp or Lyon. However, at the end of the sixteenth century, these fairs suffered extreme delays and the Spanish successive defaults led to the decadence of some of these merchants and the inefficiency of exchanging. Thus, it is plausible that some of these merchants, like the Maluendas, chose to establish new exchange houses in Lisbon, where solvency of individual agents was not a problem.

Seville was the door for American trade, since even foreign ships participating in such navigation route were forced to depart from the Guadalquivir port or its satellites (Cadiz and San Lucar de Barrameda), at least if they were licensed to do so. Banking was also the main activity of Castilian merchants settled in Seville, who participated in business within this relations' system. Rodrigo Fernandez took some bills of exchange from Seville to Lisbon, to the Portuguese António Rodrigues de Morais, in 1583⁴⁶. Miguel Lambias owned a private bank in Seville, together with the Portuguese Diogo de Albuquerque⁴⁷. Banks were essential from the deposit of money resulting from trading business with Spanish Indies, waiting to exchange it in Portugal or to promote further reinvestment of profits in another shipment. But some Portuguese merchants also chose to place in Seville their attorneys and representatives, agents who deeply knew the dynamics of this market and dominated the logistics of America shipment and commercial structure⁴⁸. Cosme del Cache was chosen by Luis Gomes

⁴⁵ Ivi, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 3, livro 14, ff. 18-20.

⁴⁶ Ivi, 15º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 11, livro 53, ff. 14v-15v.

⁴⁷ Ivi, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 3, livro 16, ff. 27-28v.

⁴⁸ This was a common principle for choosing agents, like Trivellato has shown for Portuguese's Hindu agents in Goa (TRIVELLATO, *The familiarity of strangers*), or Costa et al. for Brazilian gold exploitation in the 18th century (L.F. COSTA, M.M. ROCHA, T. ARAÚJO, *Social capital and economic performance: trust and distrust in eighteenth century gold shipments from Brazil*, «European Review of Economic History», 15 (2010), pp. 1-27).

Angel as his agent in Seville in 1588⁴⁹. In 1580, the Portuguese António Nunes Caldeira, settled in New Spain, sent Garcia Caldeira and Ramiro Álvares da Costa in Lisbon 50 *arrobas* of *grã* (a dye plant from America) and to Diogo Nunes 300 *pesos* of silver in *reales*. The transfer of silver from Seville to Lisbon was against the law. Also Portuguese trade from America without a license was not allowed. Only ten years later, in 1590, the representatives of António Nunes Caldeira in Seville (the Portuguese Simão de Tovar and Diogo Pinheiro) managed to release the silver and other commodities from *Casa de Contratacion*, which had confiscated. They said they succeeded thanks to the collaboration of an official from the *Casa de Contratación*, called Belchior del Alquar. The collaboration was not done for free, of course, since it implied going against the regulations of American trade. This intervention must have come together with a bribe or other convenient arrangement⁵⁰.

The connections between Madrid/Medina/Burgos and Lisbon also linked directly commerce, financial and insurance markets. Madrid was particularly relevant to the Portuguese merchants since they needed to put their capitals there when servicing the Crown and, when paid, needed to bring the money back to Lisbon. That was Lope de la Cámara (director of Simón Ruiz's filial in Madrid) or Juan Ortega de la Torre's function.

Another different axe of Iberian trading activity was Galicia and different Portuguese ports. This is an ancestral connection and a persisting route, especially in times when shipping was a central activity directly connected with trade. The omnipresent product of such circuit was timber. In 1586, João de Pinhão negotiated a contract of timber supply with the Portuguese merchant Vasco Fernandes do Porto⁵¹. André Lopes and Baltazar Solhoso discuss their accounting on the import of wood in Lisbon in 1588⁵². The presence of these agents is, however, quite punctual, pointing the diversity of timber importers and timber resellers in Portugal. It was a business where different small Portuguese retailers tried to obtain profits and indirectly be part of the colonial process revenues⁵³.

⁴⁹ ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 4, livro 20, ff. 18v-19v.

⁵⁰ Ivi, caixa 5, livro 23, ff. 124v-126.

⁵¹ Ivi, caixa 3, livro 17, ff. 10-12.

⁵² Ivi, caixa 4, livro 19, ff. 72-73v.

⁵³ E. FERREIRA PRIEGUE, *Galicia en el comercio marítimo medieval*, La Coruña 1988; L.F. COSTA, *Naus e galeões na Ribeira de Lisboa. A construção naval no século XVI para a Rota do Cabo*, Cascais 1997.

Castilian agents were also particularly relevant as Portuguese merchants' agents in the Spanish overseas territories such as the Canary Islands and the city of Santo Domingo. Despite Portuguese agents constitute the majority of Portuguese merchants' representatives in Spanish America, they were not always the solution⁵⁴.

Some Castilian agents acted as frontman of Lisbon merchants in Spanish territories like Las Palmas Island, in the Canaries Archipelago. In 1586, Tomás de Vendoval was the commercial agent of Simão Lopes de Lima and Ciprião Rodrigues, and ensured the shipment of wine to the Americas on their behalf⁵⁵. Francisco Lopez de Almansa was the agent for João Gomes' merchandise dispatch in Santo Domingo in 1586⁵⁶. Exceptionally they were also engaged as Portuguese agents in Brazil, in the sugar export hub, Pernambuco. Even if it was not allowed, Gaspar Rodriguez de Cartagena and Gaspar Fernandez de Cartagena sent boxes of sugar to Portugal, participating in this network as representatives of Lisbon merchants⁵⁷. It was in this particular set of international trade that rivalry would easily emerge between Portuguese and Castilian merchants. But it seems probable that individual decisions on how profitable would the cooperation be with the Portuguese merchants led several Castilians to accept the sometimes illegal agency of Portuguese trade. The resistance to the Portuguese presence in exclusive Spanish economic regions came from those who would not have had direct profit from it. Self-interest and competition drove those complaints.

The Mediterranean routes do not seem to be interesting for merchants settled in Lisbon. Their trading affairs were related with a small cluster of textile production and dyeing in the South of Spain at the end of the sixteenth century. In 1583, Francisco Gomes Português bought 20 black tissues from Diego Perez in Cordoba⁵⁸.

Castilian merchants interacted sparsely in the network. They were part of different 19 communities (clusters) of the 65 founded in the

⁵⁴ In this period, the same data source has revealed that, from a total of 16 agents settled in the Spanish overseas territories, 10 were Portuguese and only 6 were from Castilian origin. A.S. RIBEIRO, *Cooperative rivalry: Iberian merchants in cross-imperial transactions in the period of the Iberian Union (1580-1640)*, in *Fighting Monopolies, Building Global Empires: Power Building Beyond the Borders of Empire, 15th through 18th centuries*, edited by A. Polónia and C. Antunes, in press.

⁵⁵ ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 3, livro 17, ff. 91-93v.

⁵⁶ Ivi, caixa 3, livro 14, ff. 92v-93v.

⁵⁷ Ivi, caixa 4, livro 19, ff. 7v-8.

⁵⁸ Ivi, 15º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 13, livro 63, ff. 10v-12.

modularity partition of the network. None of them integrated exclusively Castilian agents, meaning that they did not operate as a nationalized guild, but individually, deciding with whom to interact in a self-organized action, not driven by a central institution policy. In the less integrative community, 13 out of the 19 members of such merchant group were Castilian. This group of merchants was made of those whose strongest activity was exchanging and financing trades, such as Ventura de Frias, Juan de Ibarra, Juan Ortega de la Torre, Inigo de Salazar, Pedro and Francisco Maluenda.

Castilian agents were perfectly integrated with Portuguese agents (almost exclusively), but also with Flemish merchants. A Flemish-Portuguese-Castilian *consortio*, constituted by Julian de la Corte, Francisco Rodrigues Serra and Lancerote de Serra, bought a part of a slave transport license to the Spanish Indies in 1588 to Manuel Fernandes Correia and António Correia de Gusmão. These slave sellers, acting as frontmen for both the Flemish and the Spanish, would buy the slaves in Guinea and bring them to Cartagena⁵⁹.

The Castilian most well connected in the network were part of the bigger cluster. In order to sustain their position as interlocutors and intermediates between Spanish and Portuguese agents, they directly engaged with great characters of the network. Lancerote de Serra, for instance, integrated a cluster that tied together the main hubs of the Portuguese foreign trade as Manuel Gomes, Duarte Mendes or Francisco Rodrigues de Elvas. If only 6 of the clusters in which Castilian agents were involved, resulted from an unique notarial contract, being less representative and disconnected from the vast majority of merchants involved in Portuguese overseas trade, most of them were connected to active communities of merchants acting in Portugal with individualized motivations and actions. If they were not the main characters of the Portuguese foreign business affairs, they certainly tried to interact with such people. This conscious behavior clearly supports the theoretical insights of the «preferential attachment» mechanism in network formation. This means that the more connected a node is, the more likely it is to receive new links. Being connected with one of the most connected agents allows to obtain more links and more business opportunities⁶⁰.

Even if the presence of Portuguese agents in the foreign trade af-

⁵⁹ Ivi, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 4, livro 20, ff. 135v-137v, and livro 20, f. 99r-v.

⁶⁰ BARABÁSI, ALBERT, *Emergence of scaling in random networks*.

fairs in Portugal was massive, Castilian agents were the most significant foreign group operating in Portugal, and they were well-articulated with the most relevant agents, namely in the Atlantic trade. They lack the capital needed for great investments in the transoceanic trade, but they had the financial ability the Portuguese credit market was missing. Spanish merchants operated independently from a national guild, as they had in Flanders, acting as «free-riders» associating with other individuals, accordingly to their own interests and motivations.

4. *Informal foreigner cooperation: necessity and opportunity*

Despite the prohibition of trading contacts with Dutch or English merchants after 1585-86, there are several Flemish/Dutch agents operating from Lisbon (Jacome Fixer or Jerónimo van der Hude), Brazil (Rafael van Dam or Paul de Vores), Cadiz and San Lúcar de Barameda (Jacques de Boert or Gaspar Cornatof)⁶¹. One first glance to these settlements, points out the connection between two obvious Iberian points of interest for the merchants involved: salt and sugar. Not only trade, but also shipping and freight market seemed preferential businesses.

Still, their paradigm of trading interactions is quite different from Iberian merchants. Most of their trading relations were established within their national communities, as it is the case of Jhoan Cleonard and Juan du Bois, settled in Lisbon, who in 1588 owned a ship placed in Cádiz which, according to the regular route of the salt trade, moved to Northern France, the Netherlands or Northern Germany. To take care of the boat and to negotiate freight contracts in Spain, the owners chose as their representatives other Flemish/Dutch merchants: Jacque de Boert and Gaspar Loscart⁶². Attorney powers implied deep trust relations. The tendency for choosing other compatriots as legal representatives seems to have been a mechanism used by these merchants to overcome suspicion in business, since the context was adverse to them, despite the possibility of great incomes.

In 1586, one year after the Iberian embargo to Dutch ships and products, Joan de Fraye, merchant in Lisbon, had as his representative to sell his commodities in Madrid another Flemish/Dutch: Duarte

⁶¹ It is very difficult to state if these men were from Southern or Northern Low Countries, that is, if they were rebels or if were faithful to Philip II.

⁶² ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 4, livro 21, ff. 117v-118.

Slutor. However, due to the embargo, Duarte did not send the revenues from the selling back to Portugal. As Joan did not know if Duarte was betraying him or if the embargo had something to do with this delay, he decided to give power of attorney to a Castilian, Hernando de Campos⁶³. Merchant in Madrid, he would be more effective in taking legal and informal procedures to ensure the money would return to Lisbon.

Cooperation between Dutch and Hispanic merchants came from a necessity. There were some points of contact with the Portuguese and even the Castilian merchants, as seen before. Paulo de Vores and Rafael van Dam, business partners settled in Brazil in 1582, were financially depending on Portuguese businessmen, such as Pedro Anes do Porto, who financed their American enterprise⁶⁴. It seems that Portuguese (or even Iberian) contacts were particularly relevant in the American overseas trades. It was certainly a necessary asset to be part of it, when it was not allowed. Portuguese notarial records also describe a partnership between João Henriques and Jacome Fixer, both settled in Lisbon, exporting goods overseas⁶⁵. Being linked to Portuguese agents favored the entrance in the Atlantic sugar business, especially after 1585.

Other foreign community, quite significant in this period, operating in the Portuguese foreign trade was the German, who mostly interacted with the Flemish/Dutch. In fact, in this period Flemish and German merchants were represented in a common consulate in Lisbon and San Lúcar de Barrameda. In Portugal and Andalusia, the consul was Flemish or Dutch. This strategy of a joint formal consulate was highly beneficent for both of them. Both in Portugal and in Castile, German merchants had for a long time trading privileges offered by the Crown⁶⁶. In order to keep these privileges, German cities remained neutral in the conflicts between Spain and the rebel provinces or England. In fact, historians point out this neutrality as the central reason supporting the emergence of Hamburg, as a trade *entrepôt* in Europe. The neutrality diminished the possibility of ship

⁶³ Ivi, caixa 3, livro 15, ff. 67v-69.

⁶⁴ Ivi, caixa 2, livro 12, ff. 57v-61.

⁶⁵ Ivi, caixa 3, livro 16, ff. 130v-132.

⁶⁶ V. RAU, *Privilégios e legislação portuguesa referentes a mercadores estrangeiros (século XV e XVI)*, in EAD., *Estudos de História*, Lisbon 1968, pp. 131-173; EAD., *Os mercadores-banqueiros estrangeiros em Portugal no tempo de D. João III (1521-1557)*, in EAD., *Estudos sobre a história económica e social do antigo regime*, Lisbon s.d., pp. 67-82.

arrests from both parts of the conflict, when crossing the North Atlantic and the North Sea.

Germans exported sugar and salt directly to the Baltic and to the emergent European sugar *entrepôt* of Hamburg⁶⁷. In 1584, the merchant Mateus Call freighted the ship of Joan Olsquer to take salt from Setubal to Lubeck. From there, the master should have continued to Dantzig, where he should have loaded the ship with wheat and bring it directly to Seville⁶⁸.

There are three powers of attorney involving German merchants choosing other Germans to be their representatives in business. It was the case of Pedro Bas who, in 1590, nominated Cristóvão Bonnamor as his supervisor for Hamburg business. In the Portuguese notarial scriptures, between 1580 and 1590, German and Dutch agents are the only responsible for exporting/transporting sugar to the Baltic and to the German markets. However, the biggest part of records regarding this time period both in Porto and Lisbon has disappeared. Still, according to the literature, this situation will strongly change in the last decade of the sixteenth century and in the beginning of the seventeenth century, time of Portuguese New Christian migration to Hamburg⁶⁹. However, sugar was certainly bought from the Portuguese and it is probable that, like the Dutch, some German merchants established partnerships in which one part provided the sugar or salt, and other the best possible transport to more competitive markets.

The preference of fellow countrymen as business partners (so distinctive from other foreign merchants operating in Portugal) could have been a strategy to defend such communities, organized in groups, from an adverse business scenario in the Peninsula. It does not seem suitable arguing that Northern European merchants were keener in establishing business partnerships within their national groups more than other merchants. For the Dutch case, studies point out the collaboration between Portuguese Sephardic Jews established in Amsterdam and Dutch merchants in the seventeenth century, not only in terms of freight contracts, but also in the establishment of trading partnerships with certain share of gains and losses. During this particular time, Filipa Ribeiro da Silva describes the trading associations between Portuguese and Dutch merchants in Western Africa trade

⁶⁷ ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 4, livro 21, f. 134r-v.

⁶⁸ ADL, 15º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 13, livro 63, ff. 119v-122v.

⁶⁹ D.P. BELL, *Jews, ethnicity and identity in early modern Hamburg*, «Transit», 3 (2007), pp. 1-16.

circuits, that is the slave trade⁷⁰. For the eighteenth century, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl has highlighted the role of «cross-cultural» interactions in the settlement of a vigorous German merchant community in London⁷¹.

To be part of the Iberian overseas trade, the main sugar, spices and silver source of supply for European markets, was quite an opportunity to increase the incomes. However, to be tolerated by the authorities, it was important to preserve the public image of no involvement or taking any position regarding the Dutch-Spanish conflict. The risks would have been higher if Dutch/Flemish/German merchants directly confronted or competed the great local protagonists of the long-distance trade. The strategy for surviving in Iberian overseas trade, in a period when their own ships were not yet controlling the Indic and the Atlantic, seemed to be working aside the Portuguese, increasing trust ties within themselves and cooperating with them when it was strictly necessary.

Both these foreign merchant communities maintained some contacts with the French. French ship captains from Marseille participated in 4 of the 5 events involving French agents. In 1586, Justo Jacome appears renegotiating a freight contract with Johan Boudet from Le Havre, insisting that the ship, instead of going from Lisbon to Rouen, should disembark in Le Havre, where the danger of privateer attacks should be reduced. Justo Jacome was a Flemish merchant in Rouen, who had a partnership with a German and a Dutch based in Lisbon, Otto Vogel and Gaspar Comans. The ship from such international company carried sugar, salt and Brazil wood⁷².

French ships were crucial to circumvent navigation restrictions in this time of war involving maritime powers such as the Rebel Provinces, England and Spain. As Broens underlined, the terrestrial transportation of commodities from Northwest French ports to Flandres, namely Antwerp (that was still an important trading center for Iberian markets), Amsterdam, or even cities like Hamburg, was essential to Iberian trade. This historian reveals how the Portuguese community in Rouen grew after the Iberian Union, especially after 1596, with the realm of Philip III in Spain⁷³. Apparently, between 1580 and 1590, ei-

⁷⁰ ANTUNES, *Lisboa e Amesterdão*; SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa*.

⁷¹ M.S. BEERBÜHL, *Deutsche Kaufleute in London. Welthandel und Einbürgerung (1660-1818)*, Munich 2007.

⁷² ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 3, livro 17, ff. 75v-78.

⁷³ BROENS, *Monarquia y capital mercantil*, pp. 31-34.

ther the Portuguese still kept a low profile in this circuit or, more plausibly, this smuggling route was not denounced in public record documents.

French were also the main transporters for Portuguese trade in the Mediterranean. António Mendes, Diogo Faleiro, Heitor Mendes, António Dias and Manuel da Horta were part of the supreme class of Portuguese merchants. They also had investments around the globe: they traded in India, Brazil and West coast of Africa. And if historiography has, in a certain way, diminished the role of Mediterranean circuit for Portuguese overseas re-exports, the presence of a collective company with such distinctive members freighting the galleon “Santa Clara Boa Ventura” in 1582, should indicate that some revenue would come from it. The captains of the ship were French, from Marseille – Antam Landiem and Baltasar Bernan –, and should take sugar and all sort of spices from Lisbon to Livorno⁷⁴. It is known that several Portuguese New Christians ran to some Mediterranean cities where they could freely return to Jewish faith, without being persecuted, like Venice, Livorno, Ragusa, Salonica or Constantinople. Trading continued to be one of their most frequent activities and an asset to expand Portuguese revenues⁷⁵.

On the contrary, Italian merchants interacted with all kind of agents, applying their capital in different business branches, especially in the East trade. The Genoese Sebastian Lercaro was deeply involved in East India trade. He established a partnership with the Portuguese Francisco de Vila Fanha to explore the gemstones’ trade before 1586⁷⁶. In 1588, together with Agostinho Bezio, also Genoese, he obtains the monopoly of Algarve’s coral exploitation for three years⁷⁷. Coral was an expensive and demanded good in the Portuguese East. Lercaro and Bezio reinvested the selling profits in clove, which was then sold in Lisbon⁷⁸.

Juan Bautista Rovelasca was one of the pepper contractors that, together with the Portuguese Tomás Ximenes, António Fernandes de Elvas and Luis Gomes de Elvas, expanded their trading partnership to the affairs in Malacca⁷⁹. In 1583, these partners freighted a ship to

⁷⁴ ADL, 15º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 11, livro 52, ff. 28v-30v.

⁷⁵ B. ARBEL, *Trading nations: Jews and Venetians in the early modern Eastern Mediterranean*, Leiden 1995.

⁷⁶ ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 3, livro 17, ff. 88-89.

⁷⁷ Ivi, caixa 4, livro 19, ff. 54-55v.

⁷⁸ Ivi, ff. 52v-54.

⁷⁹ G. SILVA, *Contratos da trazida de drogas no século XVI*, «Revista da Facul-

transport bills of exchange and money to Malacca, where their representatives – *feitores* – expected the payment to send, in return, pepper, drugs and other commodities under the debt value⁸⁰. The Portuguese interference in intra-Asian trade grew immensely in the Habsburg rule and Italians and Germans were formally involved. This involvement was a revenue from the Crown, due to their participation in the pepper contracts and Portuguese debt acquisition. Some of them would join the East trade informally, by cooperating with the Portuguese agents well established in the region⁸¹.

The surnames Lercaro, Doria or Negro found in the Spanish Court since Charles V appear now obtaining revenues not only in Spanish public debt, but also in the Portuguese overseas trading routes overseas. Bartolomeu Doria, in 1586, gives his power to other two Genoese, Paulo de Negro and Ambrósio Cantelo, to assist him not only in his businesses in Lisbon, but also in the entire Peninsula, since he had business in Madrid to attend to⁸². The Union opened the doors to obtain Portuguese monopolistic contracts, even if some of these agents, before 1580, were part of the Portuguese Crown financial support and spice trade.

Iberian merchants were less often engaged to foreign merchants in Portugal, in terms of cooperation. In fact, with the Italians' exception, the interaction with Dutch, Flemish, German or French agents was generated by a necessity, especially an efficient and secure capacity of transportation. In contrast, partnerships with Iberian merchants emerged also from a necessity for those merchants to participate in the Portuguese Atlantic deals, less subordinate to the official control. It involved not only dealing with Portuguese frontmen, but also having a Castilian backup to intervene near the Court in Madrid when overcoming some restrictions in the trade was needed. Convenient and opportunistic, establishing a collaborative relationship with formal rival and competitors was exposed to some risks, especially to be expelled and to lose all patrimony and business reputation. In such

dade de Letras», 15 (1949), pp. 5-28. V.M. GODINHO, *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, III, Lisbon 1971, pp. 68-70.

⁸⁰ ADL, 15º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, caixa 11, livro 53, ff. 125v-127v.

⁸¹ The role of German merchants in Indian trade since the beginning of Portuguese *Estado da Índia* is being well considered in K.S. MATHEW, *Indo-Portuguese trade and the Fuggers of Germany. Sixteenth century*, Manohar 1997; P. MALEKAN-DATHIL, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, Münster 1999; BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese trade in Asia under the Habsburgs*.

⁸² ADL, 2º Cartório Notarial de Lisboa, ofício A, caixa 3, livro 15, ff. 10v-11v.

ties, profit should have been higher than the cost, otherwise cooperation would not have emerged. For foreign merchants in Portugal, the cooperation with locals was born out of a necessity. Yet, it should have meant an opportunity.

5. *Final remarks: a quantitative and qualitative balance*

The paper has described until now what was the role of foreign merchants in the Portuguese overseas trade. It went from transportation to banking, financing and money exchange services, from representation and agency to equal partnerships. That is, a whole diversity of positions and roles that constituted Early Modern long-distance trade. Table 1 demonstrates that there was no particular specialization in certain contracts, according to certain geographic origins of the individuals. Despite the fact that no foreigner participated in a company, the other type of contracts demonstrates a relevant role of foreign presence in the Portuguese overseas trade.

In its organizational complexity, Portuguese overseas trade was essentially made of Portuguese capital, shipping and know-how. As Table 1 evidences, Portuguese agents participated in almost all the analyzed contracts.

Tab. 1 – *Relative presence of foreign and Portuguese merchants in notarial contracts, by typology (1580-1590)*

Typology of contracts	Portuguese presence (%)	Castilian presence (%)	Flemish presence (%)	German presence (%)	French presence (%)	Italian presence (%)
Power of attorney	78.2	26.1	13.1	4.3	2.2	6.5
Liability	94.7	15.8	10.5			5.7
Discharge	88	24		4		8
Contract	85.7	14.3				14.3
Company	100					
Freight	77.7	22.2	11.1	22.2	22.2	
Selling contract	100	33.3	33.3			
Guarantee	100	100				
Total	85.2	22.6	8.7	4.3	2.6	6.1

Source: ADL, 7° and 15° Cartórios notariais de Lisboa, 1580-1590.

Nevertheless, if in terms of the number of individuals involved in the network, foreigners represented 19.6%, they were involved in

44.3% of the total number of contracts. Perhaps the fact of being foreigners or, in the case of Portuguese agents, to deal with foreigners, implied more care in writing trading contracts in public notaries. Those contracts enhanced the possibility of court application, if defection or cheating came along. And it was also important to sustain the veracity of trans-national and long-distance operations.

Comparing the representativeness of foreigner individuals with their presence in total number of contracts, it is clear that their weight in the Portuguese trade was slightly more relevant than the number of individual figures demonstrated. That is particularly true in the case of Castilian, Flemish and Italian agents.

Even if they constitute the 11% of the total number of individuals in this particular network, Castilian agents participated in more than 22% of the contracts. The first natural deduction is that some of those individuals participated in more than one contract. This is the case of two of the most well connected agents in the whole network: Lancerote de Serra and Ventura de Frias. The Castilians did not only participate as attorneys and guarantees, but also in contracts involving financial operations, as discharges and liabilities. They were also involved in freights, as part of the set of agents who negotiated the transportation and in buying and selling, especially slaves, as stated above. In all these contracts, their role implied strong trust relations, mostly with Portuguese agents. Italians are quite relevant in this sample. Representing only 1.6% of the individuals, they participate in 6% of the contracts, especially those regarding trade with the East, reflecting their involvement in the monopolistic policy of the Crown.

But many of these contracts with foreign protagonists were not cross-cultural, namely the ones with Flemish and Germans. In fact, only less than 30% of the contracts involved trading affairs between individuals from different geographical origins (Table 2). Again, it is clear that there was not a type of trading operations more cross-cultural than others. Selling contracts are, indeed, the one that raises some reserves. The sample is very small and, in all these acts of selling, high value commodities, as sugar and slaves, were at stake.

The network hierarchy values, such as degree or betweenness centrality, are not favorable to the foreign merchants operating in and from Portugal. They are low ranked in the functioning of the network and, apart from some Castilians, the functioning of Portuguese overseas trade would not have been compromised if they were involved in it. But if they were not fundamentally necessary to overseas trade, cross-cultural operations were a window of opportunities

Tab. 2 – *Cross-cultural contracts in the Portuguese overseas trade, 1580-1590*

Typology of contracts	Nr. of contracts	Nr. of cross-cultural contracts	% of cross-cultural contracts
Power of Attorney	46	13	28.3%
Liability	19	5	26.3%
Discharge	25	8	32%
Contract	7	1	14.3%
Charter company	5		
Freight	9	4	44.4%
Selling contract	3	2	66.6%
Guarantee	1	1	100%
Total	115	34	29.6%

Source: ADL, 7° and 15° Cartórios notariais de Lisboa, 1580-1590.

for them. It was much easier to informally penetrate in this type of trade circumventing legal constraints with the help and partnerships of the locals. It was a win-win situation. In such regard, the dependency of foreigners on Portuguese agents was consented and, in certain cases, necessary.

Despite some literature highlight the fact that the Union and the belonging to a «composite monarchy» have boosted the path of a tighter connection between his members, the political Union seems, according to Portuguese notarial records, to have not altered much the Iberian trading partnerships, at least in its first years⁸³. Magalhães Godinho defended that 1580 was a point of arrival, instead of a point of departure. To him, the Union only increased Iberian economic integration for the next forty years, but it was not the beginning of nothing new⁸⁴. The data seems to point out that the first years of the Union did not increase overwhelmingly the cross-cultural cooperation between Portuguese and Castilian, but it did maintain a tendency, which began at least a decade before the Union. Portuguese and Castilian continued to operate together aiming to profit from both imperial trading routes, fighting their own monopolies through the establishment of informal partnerships, that were sometimes hidden for the

⁸³ YUN CASALILLA, *Introducción. Entre el Imperio colonial y la monarquía compuesta*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ V.M. GODINHO, *1580 e a Restauração*, in ID., *Ensaio*, II, Lisboa 1978², pp. 255-291.

authorities, in order to obtain trading licenses. Perhaps it has potentiated the Iberian trading partnerships.

However, it seems that the union could have permitted a bigger flexibility to the permeability of foreigners in the Iberian overseas trade, as it was already happening in Castile before 1580. As described by Bartolomé Yun Casilla, «being a “foreigner” could constitute, if well used, an immaterial capital of indubitable possibilities at the time of becoming profitable»⁸⁵. It was the transnational character of this network, and its wide range of information, that made foreigners take an advantage on the Union, even if an informal or illegal one. Nonetheless, Portuguese created their small dependencies, especially from the banking activity provided by the Castilians and the foreign transportation abilities to escape privateering and conflict.

In a balance between cost and benefit, trans-national cooperation at many levels emerged as an individualized and rational choice process of decision-making. Cooperation did not depend on legal constraints. They were used and bypassed according to the momentary necessities. No one, whatever the origin, should be excluded *per se*. Besides the risk of being caught and of losing all the investment in dealing with formal enemies, the urge for profit turned transnational cooperation into an opportunity for network and business contacts enlargement. Early Modern business knew no boundaries as so many others have proved. However, this essay also aims to conclude that most of these men kept a foot within the formal system of monopolistic administration (mainly in the East trade case), and the other in the informal trading system, building less obvious trading ties, sometimes defying the rules of the formal system in which they participated. Examples of this were the (illegal) selling of sub-licenses for slave import in the Indies to Castilian or Flemish/Dutch merchants, the use of pepper contract to enlarge the trading network in the East, or the informal splitting of royal contracts exploitation, as the Algarve corals.

But this is an on-going investigation and its results are not yet closed. In Portugal, many of these notarial records for this chronology have disappeared. We are far from having a complete notion on the notarial activity of foreigners in Portugal. Also, the notarial records are not completely representative of all trading affairs, since most of them were completely informally established, as the scarce remaining business correspondence of this period reveals. A comparison with

⁸⁵ YUN CASALILLA, *Introducción. Entre el Imperio colonial y la monarquía compuesta*, p. 19.

notarial records from other countries (Spain, The Netherlands, France, England, Italy and former Iberian territories in the East and the Atlantic) and documents from the Crown and *Casa da Contratación* would enrich this analysis and, assuredly, give it a different perspective. Still, these 443 individuals constitute a small snapshot of the complexity that the Portuguese overseas trade demanded and allow to understand (even if not completely) how the new political scenario created several mechanisms for individual success in business, in the first decade of the Iberian Union. The Portuguese were far from being the only benefited by this new context.

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