



DIASPORAS AND THE INTEGRATION OF 'MERCHANT COLONIES': FLEMISH AND DUTCH NETWORKS IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN

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ISSUES IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MERCHANT COMMUNITIES: AN INTRODUCTION

Since its beginnings, the historiography of Atlantic communities has been a complex field, as it involves various inter-disciplinary issues. Historians are able to use methods taken from the social sciences to analyse groups and societies that fall under different jurisdictions from both a historico-anthropological and sociological perspective. However, it remains to be seen what theoretical concepts and methodological approaches may be drawn from this topic. By using such methods, recent contributions have been able to explain the principal factors driving the expansion of merchant networks. In the words of Frédéric Mauro, 'the study of merchant communities represents the sociological dimension of research on merchant empires'.¹ From research on these communities in the Atlantic region, it is possible to infer that a key element of their socio-political and economic position was their strongly urban and commercial nature.

This entrenched urban nature made many merchant families susceptible to the historical processes taking place in Early Modern Europe between the 16th and the 18th centuries. These were the result of religious wars, structural changes in the economic development of different regions and the emergence of new forms of representation and political power. Due to the role these families played in the economic development and integration of regions and markets, the existing literature tends to underscore, in particular, their ability to control monopolies, their ability to operate as both private traders and under the auspices of companies, and their activity within the economic system. As they organised themselves into social networks of cooperation and competition, through their economic activity, colonies of foreign merchants promoted spatial economic integration and maritime routes between various European markets. These markets also acquired trade links with the colonies. In fact, merchant communities were, essentially, local urban groups which created trading organisations, exhibiting strong ties of solidarity and fraternity amongst their members. They established monopolies and created networks of communication. This fact is essential to our understanding of Spanish expansion into the Atlantic region.²

¹ Frédéric Mauro, 'Merchant Communities, 1350-1750', in James D. Tracy (ed.), *Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 255-285; and Ana Crespo Solana, 'Geostrategy of a System? Merchant Societies and Exchange Networks as Connection Centres in the Spanish Atlantic Trade in the First Global Age', in Rila Mukherjee (ed.), *Networks in the First Global Age, 1400-1800*, Delhi, Primus Book, p. 11-32.

² Cf. Introduction to: Ana Crespo Solana (ed.), *Comunidades transnacionales. Colonias de mercaderes extranjeros en la Europa atlántica*, Madrid, Doce Calles, 2010, p. 8-15.



Studies also point out certain aspects of the population makeup of these groups and their family relationships. Complex elements arising from socioeconomic and institutional research have also been identified. French, German, English and Flemish communities in Spain have all been examined and this has highlighted some interesting discrepancies regarding the current state of research on foreign colonies.³ For example, attention has been drawn to the difficulty in defining such contradictory terms as *nation*, *merchant colony* and *consulate*. *Nation* generally refers directly to the community itself, with its internal hierarchy and fraternal bonds. The members of a *nation* are linked by family, economic and social relationships, as well as common geographic and linguistic origins. However, a *merchant colony* is nearly always based on the institutional system and a shared religion.⁴ *Consulates*, on the other hand, were organisations imposed by the Spanish Crown according to its diplomatic interests at a given time. They did not always favour the interests of the merchant communities established in Spain.⁵

However, the Historiography has highlighted the global interactions resulting from the formation of trans-national diasporas and the development of certain specialised mercantile societies. These phenomena were fed by a continuous flow of humans and economic activity from one end of the ocean to the other. Such interactions furthered the development of trading methods and practices, and served as a breeding ground for the creation of new commercial and financial skills. As with the case of Iberian expansion, historians take as their starting point existing literature on mercantile communities, their migrations and the formation of colonies and micro-societies throughout the period of European Atlantic expansion. The most important texts in the literature on Atlantic mercantile communities give some insight into the evolution of these colonies and the main issues for debate regarding their function and characteristics. One key argument refers to whether or not these colonies were homogeneous in nature.

It is generally accepted that there was a certain degree of homogeneity in terms of geographical, linguistic and religious origins. This can be corroborated in the Irish, Flemish and French colonies established in Spanish cities. Broadly speaking, two types of analysis have been used when studying merchant communities: one based on micro-economic study of a family business and the other on the foreign trading community as a whole, with all of its features.⁶ The aim has been to highlight the historical structures of the British, French or Hispanic communities, using a number of common and distinguishing features. This goal has been achieved with mixed results. From a historical viewpoint, such features run parallel to the formation of nation-states arising from the Atlantic expansion begun in the 16th century.⁷

³ Bernd Hausberger & Antonio Ibarra (eds.), *Comercio y poder en América colonial: los consulados de comerciantes, siglos XVII-XIX*, Madrid, Frankfurt am Main, Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2003.

⁴ José Antonio Salas Aussens, *En busca de El Dorado. Inmigración francesa en la España de la Edad Moderna*, Bilbao, Universidad del País Vasco, 2009; Klaus Weber, 'German Merchants in the Atlantic: Trade and Colonial Goods and European Manufactured Goods, Linking Hamburg, Cadiz and Bordeaux (1700-1830)', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Überseegeschichte* 1 (2001), p. 169-174; Andreas Gestrich & Margrit Schulte Beerbühl (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society, 1660-1914*, German Historical Institute London, Bulletin, Supplement n° 2, London, 2011; Diogo Ramada Curto & Anthony Molho (eds.), *Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World*, EUI Working Papers, HEC, n° 2002/2.

⁵ Ana Crespo Solana, 'El interés público y el interés particular: una visión comparativa en las representaciones de los mercaderes flamencos en la Corte de Felipe V', in René Vermeir, Maurits Ebben & Raymond Fagel, (eds.), *Agentes e identidades en movimiento. España y los Países Bajos, siglos XVI-XVIII*, Madrid, Sílex, 2011, p. 373-403.

⁶ Ana Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes atlánticos. Redes del comercio flamenco y holandés entre Europa y el Caribe*, Córdoba, Universidad de Córdoba, Cajasur 2009; Oscar Recio Morales, *Ireland and the Spanish Empire, 1600-1825*, Dublin, Four Court Press, 2010; M. Nélida García Fernández, *Comunidad extranjera y puerto privilegiado. Los británicos en Cádiz en el siglo XVIII*, Cádiz, Universidad de Cádiz, 2005.

⁷ Claudia Schnurman, 'Atlantic Trade and Regional Identities. The Creation of Supranational Atlantic Systems in the 17th Century', in Horst Pietschmann (ed.), *Atlantic History. History of the Atlantic System, 1580-1830*, Gottingen, Hamburg, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002, p. 179-197; David Hancock, 'The British Atlantic World: Co-



Methodological questions and the use of some sources give rise to certain problems. These issues become more apparent in the case of foreigners who settled in the Hispanic world. Studies relating family structure, businesses and regulations governing immigration to the formation of trading networks have been possible with the use of varied documentary sources. Despite gaps and methodological challenges resulting from a lack of uniformity, censuses, registrations, neighbourhood lists and notary records have all enabled historians to study certain groups of nationals residing in major port cities. Such sources have also brought us closer to key aspects of the daily lives of these groups. Nevertheless, there are still important demographic issues to be resolved, including the exact number of colonies, the percentage of the population they represented and even the true weight of these foreign traders within the Spanish economy as a whole. Furthermore, in terms of their social and economic function, historians encounter difficulty when attempting to survey the state of the question. These challenges arise from both the multifaceted nature of these merchant colonies and the large number of studies undertaken on the subject.⁸ Despite this, monographic studies have been carried out by colony. These focus on their economic role, organisation into social networks, family structures, institutional and political relationships with both their place of residence and countries of origin, and the social and economic mechanisms they developed as part of Ancient-Regime Spanish society.⁹ Within the context of study of trading communities in the Spanish Atlantic region, one of the most interesting groups of colonies to be investigated are those made up of Flemish and Dutch merchants. This is due to both their individual characteristics and their capacity for survival. This article aims to provide a general overview of the most important aspects of these communities, which became hugely influential and active within contemporary Spanish society.

The Flemish and Dutch case (Netherlanders in general) is a paradigmatic example of a commercial community in Spain over a period of almost three centuries. The Flemish case is perhaps exceptional due to its large numbers, its dramatic drive during the final decades of the 16th century (comparable only to the drama of the Jewish exodus), and the early geographical extent of its networks. In this final aspect, it can be said that the Flemish were ahead of the British and the French. In the main, the various waves of immigration were centred on the provinces of Flanders, Brabant and Holland. These population movements were related to new international maritime circuits, the economic development of the north and south European regions, and the structure of historical relationships which would underscore their links with the rest of Europe. The addition of the Burgundian states to the Hapsburg Empire, and hence to the Hispanic Monarchy, together with the 1495 marriage of Philip of Burgundy to Juana of Castile, were the political preliminaries to these trends. They would, to some extent, mark the destiny of the Low Countries united with the Hispanic Empire.¹⁰ The following sections will describe the general evolution of the Netherlanders community within the Spanish world, with specific attention to the colony established in Cadiz. Together with Seville, Cadiz was the

ordination, Complexity, and the Emergence of an Atlantic Economy, 1651-1815, *Itinerario*, 1999/2, p. 107-126; Nicholas Canny & Anthony Pagden (eds.), *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989; Paul Butel & L. M. Cullen (eds.), *Cities and Merchants: French and Irish Perspectives on Urban Development, 1500-1900*, *Franco-Irish Seminal of Social and Economic Historians*, Dublin, Trinity College, 1986; and more recently, K. J. Banks, *Empires Across the Sea: Communication and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763*, Montreal and Ithaca, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

⁸ M Begoña Villar García, 'La burguesía de origen extranjero en la España del siglo XVIII', *Baetica. Estudios de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, nº 18 (1996), p. 437-455.

⁹ As can be seen in the collective work: M. Begoña Villar García, & Pilar Pezzi Cristóbal (eds.), *Los extranjeros en la España Moderna*, Málaga, Universidad de Málaga, 2003.

¹⁰ M. A. Echevarria Bacigalupe, *Flandes y la Monarquía Hispánica, 1500-1713*, Madrid, Sílex, 1998; Raymond Fagel, 'España y Flandes en la época de Carlos V: ¿un imperio político y económico?', in Ana Crespo Solana & M. Herrero Sánchez (eds.), *España y las 17 Provincias de los Países Bajos. Una revisión historiográfica (XVI-XVIII)*, Córdoba, Universidad de Córdoba, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 2002, p. 515-532.



commercial and maritime capital of the Spanish Atlantic world. It was there that the largest Flemish and Dutch colony in the Spanish empire was created.¹¹

THE 'FLEMISH INVASION' OF ATLANTIC PORT CITIES

Historiography has described a true Flemish invasion of the Atlantic port cities, as nearly all Flemish migrants went to merchant cities with economies directed towards the Atlantic. The strong commercial links between the southern Low Countries and Spain, Portugal and Italy shifted the axis of trade towards the southern Iberian Peninsula. Eventually, these activities became increasingly focused on the Hispanic colonial world. It should be emphasised that, even when migrants settled in French cities or London, most of their concerns centred on the Atlantic economy to some extent. Obviously, this did not only apply to the Flemish, as it occurred at a time when European businesses were generally becoming more focused on the Atlantic. The southern cities of the Low Countries maintained relations with some areas of northern France and the French Atlantic coast, where Dutch and Flemish communities also developed. Studies of the Netherlanders in the Atlantic region suggest that there was no real common national identity. Instead, there emerged a functionality that paralleled the reinforcement of trade and networks in this Atlantic, Hispanic and colonial environment. However, it is true that an Atlantic community was formed in a number of stages. This process was the result of political and economic circumstances, with this community constituting a coherent entity in socioeconomic and cultural terms.¹²

The relative demographic importance of the Flemish on the European Atlantic coast varied from one city to another, and existing research has provided data on these communities which are more qualitative than quantitative. In France, the Dutch and Flemish settled in the port cities of Burgundy and Nantes. However, they were subjected to xenophobia and French laws, and were all but expelled during the Hispano-French wars of the second half of the 17th century.¹³ Flemish merchants also settled in the Italian cities of Livorno, Genoa, and to a lesser extent, Naples. Despite these Mediterranean coastal locations, their commercial activities drew them towards the Atlantic economic axis. They achieved a practical balance between this and trade with the Levant, which reached a peak during the 17th and 18th centuries. It was vigorously maintained through the fleets of the Dutch company *Levantse Handel* and Atlantic trade.¹⁴

The Hanseatic port of Hamburg also attracted many Dutch traders. Like Antwerp and Amsterdam, it experienced a sizeable increase in population due to migration. 1567 was a

¹¹ This research was published in Ana Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos. Redes del comercio flamenco y holandés entre Europa y el Caribe*, Córdoba, Universidad de Córdoba, 2009, p. 106-115.

¹² Jan Willem Veluwenkamp, 'Merchant colonies in the Dutch Trade System (1550-1750)', in Karel Davids, C. Fritschy & Van der Valk (eds.), *Kapitaal, Ondernemerschap en beleid. Studies over economie en politiek in Nederland, Europa en Azië van 1500 tot heden*, Amsterdam, NEHA, 1996. For the Spanish world, see Ana Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz y los Países Bajos, una comunidad mercantil en la ciudad de la Ilustración*, Cádiz, Fundación Municipal de Cultura, 2000; John Everaert, *De Internationale en Koloniale handel. De Vlaamse Fima's te Cadix*, Bruges, De Tempel, 1973.

¹³ Peter Oss, 'A community in decline? The Dutch merchants in Bordeaux, 1650-1715', in Cleo Lesger, C. Noordegraaf, & als (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market*, Den Haag, Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1995.

¹⁴ Marie Christine Engels, *Merchant, Interlopers, Seamen and Corsairs. The Flemish Community in Livorno and Genoa (1615-1635)*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1997; P. Castignoli, 'Il Libro rosso della Comunità Olandese-Alemana a Livorno (1622-1911)', *La Canaviglia. Livorno nella storia, nella narrative, nell'arte*, IV, 4 (1979), p. 170-175; C. Ciano, 'La comunità fiamminga di Livorno all'inizio del Seicento', *Nuovi studi Livornesi*, I: 25-43; and by the same author: 'Mercanti a Livorno nel 1799 e il Sismondo', *Bolletino Storico pisano* (BSP), vol. 36/38 (1967-1969), p. 149-167.



particularly decisive year, as it marked the beginning of the departure of the Dutch from their territories due to religious dissention. Calvinists and Mennonites moved to Hamburg and other Baltic ports. Later, Stockholm, Riga and Archangel became important centres for these merchants. They traded actively with the Dutch Republic and shared with Sephardic Jews the benefits generated by Hanseatic-Hispanic relations from the late 16th century onwards.¹⁵ In Portugal, the Lisbon colony seems to have been one of the most interesting Flemish settlements on the Atlantic. Indeed, during the 16th and 17th centuries, Lisbon shared dominance of the American and Eastern markets with Seville. It is also likely that the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580 would have been beneficial to Flemish businesses in both cities, as networks were strengthened. Thus, the Lisbon community was easily established and soon became very important.

Flemish colonies established on the Iberian Peninsula (as in Seville or Cadiz) are comparable with communities in other related regions such as the Canaries and the Azores. The Canary Islands were an important place of settlement, although they were different from Cadiz. According to Everaert, Flemish traders arrived there beginning in 1660 on ships from Holland and Zealand. However, compared to the important Antwerp houses that had emigrated to Cadiz, Lisbon or Seville, these families came from more humble origins. Although the Azores were originally colonised by the Portuguese, they were often called the *Vlaamse Eilanden* (Flemish islands). The Flemish had settled there in the 1440's, under the administration of governors appointed by the king.¹⁶

In all cases (North European, Mediterranean and Hispanic), comparisons can be made and differences drawn which point to a socio-political rather than an economic environment. It is also necessary to consider the issue of religion and social practices relating to the Catholic faith in the territories of the Spanish Monarchy.

It is worth noting that in the Iberian world, which had clear Catholic religious and cultural roots, these communities were more socially integrated and never isolated from the rest of the Spanish and/or Portuguese social spectrum. A similar situation was found in the cities of Livorno and Genoa, where there were also Flemish colonies. They developed certain symbiotic mechanisms, such as the creation of a confraternity of merchants, and other assimilation strategies. For example, Flemish and Dutch Catholic merchants in Seville and Cadiz founded a charitable organisation, or brotherhood, called the Patronato de San Andrés to engage in religious and charitable activities.¹⁷ Conversely, Dutch colonies in Baltic, Hanseatic or Scandinavian cities settled in closed groups ruled under a Protestant town hall or municipality. In addition, businessmen in cities such as Archangel or St. Petersburg usually settled in urban centres reminiscent of the port-factories founded by the Dutch in other parts of the world. Despite these variations, such cities maintained their working *consulates* in the same way that nations preserved their internal hierarchies and many of the elite values inherited from their ancestors. In fact, the foreign nation continued to adhere to a range of bourgeois and aristocratic values which by the 18th century had begun to disappear in the cities they had left behind. This explains the gradual diversification and characteristic of these two

¹⁵ At that time, Hamburg had 40,000 inhabitants, of which the greater part were Calvinists and other Protestants of Dutch origin and Sephardic Jews: see Vid E. Kleesmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Hamburg*, Hamburg, Die Hanse, 2002; J. W. Veluwenkamp, *Archangel. Nederlandse Ondernemers in Rusland, 1550-1785*, Amsterdam, Balans, 2000.

¹⁶ John Everaert, 'L'Hispanisation d'une bourgeoisie mercantile: les immigrés flamands et wallons a Tenerife (1670-1745)', *Congreso americanista de Granada*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, Servicio de Publicaciones, 1992, p. 145-178.

¹⁷ See ideas already given in my work on comparative studies of the Dutch in Europe: Ana Crespo Solana, 'Las Comunidades mercantiles y el mantenimiento de los sistemas comerciales de España, Flandes y la República Holandesa, 1648-1750', in Ana Crespo Solana & Herrero Sánchez (eds.), *España y las 17 Provincias de los Países Bajos. Una revision historiográfica (XVI-XVIII)*, 2 vols., Córdoba, Universidad de Córdoba, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Fundación Carlos de Amberes, here: volume II, p. 446-467.



groups in relation to their motherlands. It also sheds light on the conservative and aristocratic characteristics such communities exhibited during the 18th century.

As research has shown, the majority of Dutch citizens from the southern provinces began to choose the south of Spain, the Italian estates and Portugal. They were attracted by highly commercial centres linked to the Spanish empire and by the natural affinity with their Catholic roots. Other options previously chosen by Dutch citizens, like Amsterdam or Northern European urban centres, appealed mainly, although not exclusively, to non-Catholics. There were exceptions during the 18th century, when foreigners no longer felt religious matters to be significant. Dutch Catholics from Antwerp initially immigrated to these northern cities, possibly due to their inability to travel south. It was only the second generations that would embark on private business and other missions, once relationships with the Flemish in Andalusia had been established through trading networks. It is certain that all of these communities retained similar socio-mental institutional behaviours, although these differed to various extents. Studies have been carried out on the socio-mental, economic and cultural impact of a community on two levels: one, the micro-society formed by the nation and the various groups that comprised it, and two, their integration into society, in some cases generating mechanisms of symbiosis. Throughout their historical evolution, Flemish and Dutch merchant communities in the peninsular territories of the Spanish Monarchy exhibited certain characteristics similar to others in the Spanish Atlantic region. In short, they displayed many of the behavioural characteristics described in the relevant general historiography. Some of these traits stand out, such as the formation of local communities, which soon developed into networks of economic cooperation and competition. Many members of the community, or at least the wealthiest among them, maintained close ties with the local government. More importantly, religious and social practices within that community enabled them to create associations (in the form of brotherhoods). These were intended to generate a tradition of fraternity¹⁸ – bonds of trust – and to make the community visibly active, thus building a positive reputation within Spanish society.

However, there are still certain matters relating to foreign merchant communities that need to be investigated. They include the rights and privileges to which foreign merchants aspired, giving them the ability not only to trade, but also to acquire prestige and social acceptance as good citizens within the local environment. There is also the issue of clarification of terms such as *nation* and *community*. And an explanation is also required for some of the social behaviours exhibited by members of the community. These features can be observed in descriptions of the development of the Flemish and Dutch community in Cadiz during the centuries of the Modern Age. This community certainly represents a model of a foreign merchant colony in Spain. Due to its geographical situation as an international commercial centre, Cadiz resembled other European ports as a destination for immigrants. At least officially, it was the guardian of the monopoly on commerce with the Indies. Yet in addition, Cadiz presented virtually the same social and economic conditions as other cities, particularly Bilbao and Tenerife, where Flemish immigrants also settled. However, it has been shown that Cadiz housed the largest merchant colony, and enjoyed a privileged position as a key city for American trade and re-exporting American products to other parts of the peninsula. It also served as a link to the Eastern Mediterranean and the ports of the central Mediterranean coast of Spain (Malaga and Alicante were also home to especially active communities). The majority of Flemish immigrants to Spain preferred Cadiz over Seville or Lisbon. In many cases they considered these southern cities a stepping stone for transatlantic migration to the Atlantic region. The Flemish presence was very important for many Spanish urban centres, and their socioeconomic impact on the port cities of Andalusia and the Atlantic islands must be emphasised. Views on the origins of their settlement in certain locations such

¹⁸ Mauro, art. cit., p. 285.



as Cadiz or Madrid have been collated and documented. For example, a 1722 petition sent to the Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros (Board for Foreign Affairs) stated that their presence in Cadiz was so ancient and deeply rooted that 'its beginnings are unknown, except that they predate 1598, and that with the English invasion suffered by this port, the contents of their archives disappeared; at that time there were already houses owned by the Body of the Nation, governed by a Steward appointed every year to look after the common businesses, and whose regime still exists today without any change'.¹⁹ In fact, the Flemish came to the Iberian Peninsula prior to the 15th century. The best definition of a Flemish immigrant to Spain is that of Belgian historian Eddy Stols, who described them as 'craftsmen, small businessmen and adventurers'.²⁰ Throughout the centuries of settlement in Spanish cities, Flemish and Dutch immigration maintained virtually the same features: dynamic and vast wealth, with leaders who were professionals engaged in commerce, banking, shipping and manufacturing industries. This latter feature was common within the framework of European migratory flows throughout the Modern Era.

The Flemish-Dutch colony of Cadiz in the 17th and 18th centuries offers an ideal analytical model for study of the evolution of a settled group within Spanish society. This community is also one of the few foreign colonies to have been studied thus far. Such studies have been based on the following criteria: quantification of the group, its political and socioeconomic importance, and the socio-cultural and socio-mental weight of its presence within the city and the surrounding social environment.²¹ Compared to other parts of the peninsula, southern Andalusia was one of the most attractive centres for foreign migration, directed mainly to Seville and other cities on the Bay of Cadiz, such as Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Jerez de la Frontera and El Puerto de Santa María.²² These settlements (especially Puerto de Santa María and Sanlúcar) and Seville became a large area of operation for businesses, together with Ayamonte, the Portuguese Algarve and Malaga. Through a network of family agreements and powers by proxy, foreign traders based in this geographical region extended their operations to a central zone and its periphery, which were further subdivided into smaller areas. Functionally speaking, this was frontier territory in European foreign trade. As such, it constituted a vital link with the Americas and other markets in North Africa and the Mediterranean. The fact that the *Carrera de las Indias* (Route of the Indies) had an official monopoly based in this region is one of the main features that attracted immigrants, although there were others. The gradual decline of inland Castilian areas caused new population movements. A coastal economy dedicated to foreign trade led to an increase in work in all types of commercial businesses and shipping. And certain outcomes of social turmoil attracted craftsmen, artists and factory workers.

For the purpose of quantitative analysis, historians have met with the obvious problem that censuses, electoral rolls, lists of names, registrations of foreigners, etc. constitute an inadequate source of information. When studying a foreign community, the contents of these documents must be compared with an analysis of other sources. In the present study, notary office documents were consulted, primarily from Cadiz and Amsterdam, as well as private papers in the Antwerp Archives. These confirmed that a large number of Dutch people who had come from both the northern and southern Low Countries were temporarily or permanently resident in Cadiz. Apart from providing the opportunity to ascertain this merchant group's social characteristics, crosschecking and comparison of these sources make

¹⁹ Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (AHNM), Estado 641, Printed work.

²⁰ Eddy Stols, 'La colonia flamenca de Sevilla y el comercio de los Países Bajos españoles en la primera mitad del siglo XVII', *Anuario de Historia Económica y Social* (1969) nº 2, p. 356-374.

²¹ Manuel Bustos Rodríguez, *Burguesía de negocios y Capitalismo en Cádiz: los Colarte, 1650-1750*, Cádiz, Diputación Provincial, 1991.

²² Manuel Bustos Rodríguez, 'La burguesía mercantil en el Cádiz del siglo XVII: origen, nombres y estructura', *Homenaje a Antonio de Bethencourt Massieu*, Las Palmas de Gran, Canaria, Cabildo Insular, 1996, p. 313-359.



it possible to reliably estimate its numbers. A true quantitative study of these communities and the migration and settlement of traders is only possible by crosschecking notarial sources from various cities. Information included in the Cadiz electoral rolls is not totally reliable or accurate in describing the true nature of the nation, as it has been proved that the Flemish gave false information when censuses were compiled and that their actual population was much larger.²³

From the following data, it can be inferred that there was an increase in the number of Flemish communities in Seville, Lisbon and Cadiz, three important ports on the Spanish Atlantic coast. A study carried out by Stols gives a detailed account of commercial houses in Seville, Lisbon, Cadiz and the Canaries, and provides important quantitative comparisons with those existing later in Cadiz. He cites a total of 587 important family names whose members had settled in those areas between 1598 and 1648.²⁴ John Everaert gives a total of 314 Flemish citizens naturalised between 1598 and 1700.²⁵ Quantitative data from notarial documents makes it possible to ascertain the number of individuals who formed part of these communities between 1648 and 1800. Historical data from Spanish, Dutch and Belgian archives show that a large proportion of the immigrants came from the southern provinces, especially Flanders (25%) and Brabant (48%). However, there are also some interesting figures from other northern regions, namely the maritime provinces of Holland and Zeeland (15%), and other provinces (12%).²⁶

THE CONCEPT OF A MERCHANT NATION AND THE PRIVILEGES OF THE NETHERLANDERS IN SPAIN

An important factor likely to influence the social, cultural and institutional survival of this mercantile group were the commercial and tax advantages granted to Flemish citizens and Dutch businessmen by peace and commercial treaties signed between 1648 and 1729. These advantages led to an increase in their presence in Spanish port cities. In addition, other obvious social issues influenced how contemporary Spanish society and the administration perceived these groups.²⁷ It shall be necessary to outline some vital issues in order to define the true essence of the foreign nation with regard to these social matters. It is also necessary to explore the strengthening of foreign communities on Spanish soil, particularly the Dutch case. From a social perspective, one fundamental issue is clarification of the privileges, or alleged privileges, obtained by merchant groups in the Iberian world. What is the reality of the situation? It is not entirely clear how important this is to the debate over the origins of national and collective identities, but it is a fact that the settlements along the Atlantic coast greatly influenced the linguistic and cultural map of Europe. Prior to the Dutch Revolt against the Habsburg Empire (1568-1648), and during the time of the rebellion of the *comuneros* (peasant communities), the contradiction between the alleged privileges granted to Flemish merchants in Spain by the emperor and social tensions within the court of Charles V became

²³ Ana Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

²⁴ Eddy Stols, *Spaanse Brabanders of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld, 1598-1648*, 2 vols., Brussels, Paleis der Academiën, 1971, here volume II, p. 2-71 and appendix.

²⁵ John Everaert, 'Infraction au monopole? Cargadores-navegantes flamands sur la Carrera de Indias (XVIIe siècle)', in Acosta Rodríguez, Antonio, González Rodríguez, Adolfo & Vila Vilar, Enriqueta (eds.), *La Casa de la Contratación y la navegación entre España y las Indias*, Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla, Fundación El Monte, 2003, p. 761-777.

²⁶ Inventories of wills and testaments from the Provincial History Archive of Cadiz have been used for the second half of the 17th century; these data have never been published. However, data used for the 18th century are well known and have been published in Ana Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²⁷ Cf. clauses 11, 12 and 13 and 17, referring to the free residency of the Flemish and the Dutch in Spanish ports. *Tratado de Paz ajustado entre la Corona de España y los Estados Generales de las Provincias Unidas de los Países Bajos en Utrecht, 1714*, Printed Document, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.



apparent. The difficulty lies in determining whether these alleged privileges were obtained by the Flemish as special subjects of the king of Spain, as opposed to those who dared rebel against him (the Dutch). There is unquestionable evidence that these privileges existed prior to the personal union of the kingdoms brought about by the marriage of Philip the Fair and Juana of Castile. It would be fascinating to uncover the historical evolution of these privileges granted to the nation between the 15th and 18th centuries. However, such an exercise is difficult, primarily due to the disappearance of important sources. According to 19th-century chronicler Hye Hoys and other available information, the Flemish nation held various legal documents in archives belonging to the churches of the confraternities and community stewardships.²⁸

There are also clues that indicate the strategies used by Dutch immigrants to acquire residency rights. These include *cartas de marca* (letters of marque), documents of safe conduct for trade, naturalisation papers, various legal suits lodged by merchants to obtain residency, and decrees and privileges agreed upon by the Spanish monarch and the authorities in Brussels during the period of the archdukes and even later, when Spain had definitively lost control of the southern Low Countries to the Austrian imperial government. The various *fueros de conservaduría* (jurisdiction by an administration) obtained by the Flemish nation in Spain need also be mentioned.²⁹ From 1648 on, and especially throughout the 18th century, the importance of the diplomatic context must be considered, as peace treaties and agreements between countries helped create an institutional superstructure in Spain. This then enabled some communities to find legal support to protect their residence in Spain and their activities (as was the case of the French, English, Flemish and Dutch). In an effort to control the extent of economic activities conducted by foreigners (both resident and transient), the Junta de Dependencias de negocios extranjeros (Board for Foreign Business Affairs) was created in 1714. This organism reinstated old privileges, jurisdictions and competences that the nations had attained since the 1620's, with the Crown's official agreement to allow a network of foreign consulates to be established on Spanish soil. From 1740 on, the struggle between this official Board (which reported to the Secretary of Administration) and community representatives reveals that the Crown still considered foreign merchants a fifth column of European commerce. Yet in reality, the interests of most colonies were growing separate from those of their mother companies.³⁰

In general, there were two types of privileges: those attained by foreigners adapted to a Spanish-ruled jurisdiction as former subjects of the king of Spain (let us not forget that the Flemish employed this argument to the very end), and those achieved as foreign residents and their children, *jenízaros* (children of mixed nationalities), in the context of colonial trade. Institutional problems arising from foreign involvement in trade on the Route of the Indies are well known, as indicated by the famous saying 'he who makes the law also makes the rules'. From the beginning, laws opened legal doors to allow foreigners to take part in trade with the Indies and it was generally accepted that there were several ways to achieve the status of a subject of the king of Spain.³¹ These included by letter of naturalisation or by marriage. Such mechanisms were important for inhabitants of Cadiz and Seville, as they enabled them to trade legally with the Indies under the conditions imposed by the Spanish monopoly. Some

²⁸ Which in the case of Cadiz, were the churches of Rosario and San Francisco, respectively, and in Seville, the Church of the Incarnation. I Hye Hoys, *Fondations pieuses et charitables des marchands flamands en Espagne*, Brussels, Précis Historiques, 1882, n° 31.

²⁹ Ana Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos*, op. cit., p. 135-139.

³⁰ There is information on the Junta de Dependencias in Ana Crespo Solana, Ana & Montojo Montojo, Vicente, 'La Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros (1714-1800): Tránsito socio-político de una historia institucional', *Hispania*, vol. 69, N°232 (2009), p. 363-394.

³¹ Margarita García-Mauriño Mundi, *La pugna entre el Consulado de Cádiz y los jenízaros por las exportaciones a Indias (1720-1765)*, Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla, 1999; José María Oliva Melgar, *El monopolio de Indias en el siglo XVII y la economía andaluza. La oportunidad que nunca existió*, Huelva, Universidad de Huelva, 2004.



problems relating to Flemish naturalisation have been identified from existing documents and thus need to be considered. For instance, colloquially speaking, there is the difficulty that the administration of the time had with the use of the term 'Flanders', further proof of the intentional confusion between the Flemish and Dutch. On the other hand, many northerners were granted naturalised status, as was the case of Captain Juan de Banes, resident of Seville and citizen of Amsterdam. Although originally from 'the lands of Flanders', in June 1693 he was able to present the three pieces of evidence required for naturalisation: marriage to a Spaniard, residence in the city for several years, and professing the Catholic faith.³² Most naturalisation documents for Flemish people described a number of attributes that directly and automatically associated them with the elite of Spanish cities: they were prominent residents, owned properties in the city and had the capability to invest in assets within the country.³³

Another issue was how a certain group saw itself as a community. In the Flemish case, there are indications of the existence of a Hispano-Flemish nationality which was institutionalised by a number of socio-political processes and protected by privileges. A Pragmatic Decree dated 1533, found in a late 18th-century document of ennoblement belonging to a Dutch merchant from Cadiz, mentions special favours granted to Spanish communities by Charles V and Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella. The Flemish preserved these documents with others relating to their confraternities and the archives of the nation, which were safeguarded by the steward. Although most of these documents have now disappeared, their existence is known from applications or requests ("peticiones") submitted to the Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros (Board for Foreign Affairs) during the 1720's, and other private papers. In any case, the Spanish 'Ancient and Noble Flemish nation' was an institution with its own jurisdiction. Its members had special naturalisation privileges granted by the Spanish monarch that allowed them to live and trade in Spain. For centuries, this situation remained unchanged: with local powers and privileges granted by laws and resolutions. They retained their own archives, judges and a hierarchy within the colony. This included an elected steward who acted as legal representative of the community to the existing powers, including the Crown.

A third problem was one of concept and closely related to existing privileges: the use of the term *nation* as an historical and analytical type, here referring to as *merchant nations*. This entity encompassed all individuals of the same nationality arriving in a city. It included not only what can be described as the body of the nation itself (consisting mainly of the city's more hierarchical groups, political offices such as steward or consul), but also the main family dynasties. Due to their long history of settlement, noble origins and wealth, these families carried out the most important official duties of the community, at both a municipal and state level. The main body was formed by those who defended the nation as a whole, sent representatives to Court if necessary, chaired local meetings and acted as judges in cases of bankruptcy or other financial difficulties. The nature of their authority was more moral than political, granted by the agreement of all the families in the community. They were also the most zealous in their compliance with social practices and rules of behaviour related to religion, marriage and integrity in business.

The way in which immigration took shape encouraged an increase in practices intended to protect individual material and spiritual interests. It is difficult to define the concept "Nation", although it does appear in numerous private, notarial, official, municipal, diplomatic and other sources. The identity of the nation or community is also an obvious problem of historiography. It is subject to the evolution of the historical argument over other similar terms such as *urban oligarchy* or *bourgeoisie* within the structure of Early Modern

³² Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla (AGI), Contratación 51B. Judgement dated 22 June 1693.

³³ AGI, Contratación 50B. Naturalizaciones de flamencos (1584-1672); AGI, Contratación 596B. (1612-1693) (1698); AGI, Contratación 5470.



society.³⁴ The merchant nation developed certain mechanisms for settlement and integration into the society which received it. There were instances where the place of residence had social and institutional foundations that were conducive to a permanent settlement. This was the case of Cadiz, although it is not certain that other Spanish cities were the same, at least from an institutional viewpoint. However, we do know that other European cities where the Dutch settled also had similar boundaries. This was precisely what gave them internal solidarity and cohesion, coupled with the fact that every community offered financial support to deal with potential problems members of the communities might encounter (confraternities, guilds, factories, etc.). The terminology would vary according to each individual case.³⁵ The existence of a confraternity, with collective burial facilities for the community, ensured travelling merchants some protection in the event of illness or death. Such protection could extend beyond the actual geographical settlement, as shown by a letter sent by lawyer Don Matías Bernardi, pastor at Cadiz Cathedral, to Melchior Fourchoudt when the latter's son Justo died in the city in 1676. The city's civic and religious authorities took the initiative, burying travellers in the Chapel of San Andrés. And the community bore all costs, as well as being responsible for informing the family of the deceased when there were no partners or relatives in the place where they died.³⁶ The nation, its confraternity and the internal hierarchy itself, with its legal jurisdiction and privileges, stood in opposition to the consulates, which were not always loyal to the merchants. The relationship between the consul of a country and its institutions or communities was not always harmonious. In many instances, foreign merchants saw the consul as a social climber who wished to take advantage of their money, or as a servant of the Spanish Crown, even though they had the same nationality. This was the case of the consul Vermolen.³⁷

The term *nation* denoted a micro-society, an extended version of a family clan. Family ties played a very important role and the ability of an individual to become established often depended on these connections. Family and commerce offered businessmen the possibility of forming a close-knit group, socially defined by the privileges and characteristics of their nation. In addition, the interests of networks of intermediaries, trade deals conducted according to company instructions with subsidiary traders, and the creation of consulates were enough incentive to attract immigrants. That the consulate of the country would act as a possible legal structure also contributed to this appeal. There can be no doubt, however, that what really attracted the traders who ventured to seek their fortune so far from their homes and families was the existence of a micro-society of relatives and friends prepared to welcome the newcomer.

There was a strong sense of fraternity within the colony, at least in the 'ancient and noble Flemish nation'. The group was characterised by solidarity, making it virtually a guild, or clan, bound by privileges and duties towards the city of residence. The colony also built a good reputation in Spanish society. The way they conducted their business, clearly symbiotic behaviour within the local socio-mental framework, and institutions they sustained and left behind – the colony's work for the community – left a significant mark on the city of Cadiz.

³⁴ According to: Francisco Aranda (coord.), *Poderes intermedios, poderes interpuestos. Sociedad y oligarquías en la España moderna*, Universidad Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca, 1999.

³⁵ Ana Crespo Solana, 'El Patronato de la nación flamenca gaditana en los siglos XVII y XVIII: trasfondo social y económico de una institución piadosa', *Studia Historica, Historia Moderna*, vol. 24 (2002), p. 297-329.

³⁶ Jan Denucé, Letter of 5 January 1676: '(... Andres) is naer synen uystersten wille begraven in de kercke der minderbroeders in de Capella van synen Patrôon den H. Andreas, in den kelder van onse Nederlandse Natie, ghekleet met het habit van de selve Religieusen. Syn lyck is vergheselschapt van alle die van de Nederlantse Natie, ende een groote menichte van volck deser stadt, aen dewelcke syne deught ende stichtbaer leven bekent was, soo dat ick waerlyck mach segghen dat hier wynighe treffelycker begraefenissen ghesien syn'.

³⁷ There are also documents in the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz (AHPC). p.n. 9/1598, fol. 230, 267, 297, 384, 389, 400, 424, 523-28, 498, 534, 534, 594, 659.



These issues suggest a group protected by Ancient Regime privileges and indicate certain patterns of integration, cohesion and inclusion at different levels of contemporary Cadiz society.

For these reasons, the 'ancient and noble nation' was a citizen organisation valued by Cadiz society. Even after the Dutch Republic and the southern provinces had become two separate national entities, many immigrants arriving from the northern provinces preferred to become part of this illustrious Flemish Catholic organisation, despite the existence of a small consulate for Dutch businessmen.

Efforts to improve their surroundings and their fortunes are evident from the works and institutions they left behind, which best define the Flemish and Dutch nation in Cadiz during the 18th century. The socio-mental and cultural exchanges among members of this group integrated into Cadiz society are clearly defined by symbiosis and reciprocity. The creation of the Benevolent Trusteeship and Confraternity of San Andrés de los Flamencos in several Spanish cities is evidence of this. The *Vlaamse broederschap* (Flemish brotherhood) was typically found in settlements in Catholic countries, in contrast with the *Nederlandse* or *Vlaamse Gemeenschap*, which was characteristic of Protestant groups (Calvinist or Mennonites) established in the reformed Catholic countries of Northern Europe. Study of these groups has furthered our understanding of its institutional, religious and socioeconomic work. It has also provided information about the material heritage left by the Flemish colony in Cadiz, especially in relation to buildings. This organisation owned properties for the benefit of the community. These were subject to speculation and their income, administered by the steward of the Flemish nation, was invested in a type of social security of the time. In addition, the nations and their confraternities were expressions of the 'common good'. This was one of the areas of responsibility of the ancient communities, but gradually declined towards the end of the Ancient Regime, coinciding with the crises of the late 18th century. During these decades of collapse and change, with the French invasions of Belgium, the Low Countries and Spain, the corporate interests of the communities began to decline due to their inability to face the coming changes. In many regions of the world, faith in the collective capacity to move forward was lost, and the ideal of the 'common good' disappeared with the gradual breakdown of the community.

However, it has been shown that in the Flemish case, a Hispano-Flemish society continued to exist, albeit headed by an aristocratic group that never severed its family ties with Flanders and Brabant. And this was despite their remoteness from many aspects of the national interests of their original country. This aspect of Dutch society was unlike any other foreign community in Spain. A community of Hispano-Flemish residents who felt truly Spanish had developed over time, which adds another element to this debate: the possibility of defining them as *bourgeoisie*. The diversity of the immigrant population should also be considered, as it was generally made up of pilgrims, travellers looking for work, artisans, factory workers, artists, humanists, philosophers, merchants and soldiers. They cannot all be included in this definition, but can be described as part of this heterogenous world, already found in Castile during the first half of the 16th century, and throughout its later social and economic evolution. This development has been defined as the emergence of a number of people who initially had no privileged status – and were therefore members of the third estate – yet managed to prosper and grow stronger.³⁸ This phenomenon was repeated in certain cities which were integral to the Monarchy's economy, from centres of Castilian wool production in the 16th century, to centres of the American commercial monopoly in the 18th century.

³⁸ Alberto Marcos Martín, 'Sobre Burgueses y burguesías en Castilla durante la primera mitad del siglo XVI', in: Juan Luis Castellano (ed.), *Europeísmo y Universalidad. Población, economía y sociedad*, Vol. IV, Granada, Sociedad Estatal para la conmemoración de los centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, p. 443-466.



It has also been demonstrated that Flemish citizens who settled in Spain and other parts of Europe replicated certain aspects of the elite from their original countries. The behavioural constraints of these groups coincided with the general characteristics of the ennobled bourgeoisie throughout modern Europe. It may be that this was the reason some members of these groups would eventually seek to be recognised as national subjects of a state, government or king in the places where they had settled. It was also possibly the motivation for the later struggle of foreign traders with the Crown to achieve their own jurisdiction. These were the key players in a unique model of integration over the centuries. The guidelines used to compare different communities can be more clearly understood in the 18th century, when the Flemish and Dutch living in Spanish territory went through a period of crisis and change. This upheaval gave rise to a defining moment in the development of some of the mechanisms for permanence and social integration most closely associated with Ancient Regime Spanish society. Although individual circumstances continued to determine whether the settlement process was temporary or permanent, its mechanisms and commercial strategies were basically the same over long periods. The role played by the family and neighbourhood networks also remained fundamental. This process was based on well-established migration links, attracting close relatives to those already settled abroad, who became part of the family business and eventually entered the world of trade. Foreign merchants in these trading societies cooperated with each other, at times forced by economic or family ties, or by necessity, but also out of self-interest. The desire to defend their businesses, as well as their own survival and that of their cities, in a Europe that was constantly at war, to a certain extent justified two aspects observed in these communities: firstly, the need to belong to a nation with its own jurisdiction and, secondly, the desire of wealthy merchants to be ennobled. Nobility and legal jurisdiction were the only means to guarantee certain individual privileges and benefits within the stratified society of 17th- and 18th-century Spain.

AN HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY

The financial sector was crucial to understanding this so-called diaspora. Most migratory groups chose to go to expanding regions which complemented their places of origin, in order to protect trading links that had been already developed and maintained. Many of the structural reasons underlying the trading networks and spatial integration of these regions are economic (links between markets and regions within an existing axis of exchange), while also having political and religious motivations. In the case of the Low Countries and the Spanish Monarchy, the union of the provinces of the 'Burgundian circle' and the crowns of Castile and Aragon cannot be ignored, as it granted privileges and rights to Hispano-Flemish citizens. These advantages would set them apart from other foreign communities in Spain well into the 18th century.³⁹ In terms of Dutch migration to Spain, there were two types of influx. Although motivated by similar reasons, they relate to two loosely defined phases of Flemish settlement on the peninsula. During most of the 16th century, there was a massive influx which it has not been possible to precisely quantify. This included merchants and aristocratic travellers, most in the service of the Spanish Crown. With these early arrivals, the creation of an economic framework encompassing Castile and Flanders, based on the wool and cloth trade, encouraged bilateral relations and the creation of the Spanish nation in Bruges. It also brought many Dutch tradesmen to cities like Valladolid, Burgos and Medina del Campo, although very little specific information is available on the populations in these Castilian settlements. In some cities, such as Valladolid, there were problems of coexistence between the Flemish and native Spanish. These were primarily due to local rejection of the Burgundian court accompanying

³⁹ On the origins of these rights: Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.



Charles V when he arrived in 1517.⁴⁰ Many courtiers were members of the Flemish nobility and supporters of Philip the Fair. Once at court, they managed to move into important positions, earning the mistrust of the Spanish. When the war escalated in the early 17th century, the number of arrivals increased. They also changed in nature, becoming a flow of immigrant workers. At the same time, there was a demonstrable increase in the Flemish birth rate in Spanish cities due to the diaspora. These factors operated in conjunction, as many of the families moving south later settled in Spain, first trading on behalf of others and later finding their own opportunities.

It is important to mention that over the course of these centuries, the various communities of Flemish origin went through an interesting process of resettlement. This development can be explained by a wide spectrum of reasons, from the purely economic to the socio-political and even the socio-mental. In fact, during the 16th and 17th centuries, immigration and the subsequent formation of relatively integrated colonies occurred in those cities closely linked to imperial power, although the large groups in Seville and the Canary Islands were not excluded. However, by the second half of the 17th century, the largest documented communities seem to have been established in urban centres on the periphery of the peninsula. There are two economic explanations for this movement to the south and other locations linked to the maritime powers, England and The Netherlands. Firstly, there were the routes of the convoys sailing from Flemish and Dutch ports. And secondly, there was the decision made by the most active members of the colony to build a life and do business in urban centres that were crucial to the Spanish economy, especially ports in southern Andalusia associated with the Route of the Indies. This term referred to maritime trade between the Iberian Peninsula and the American colonies, as well as all business and other enterprises associated with that activity. When a trader engaged in American trade by loading his merchandise onto the fleets and galleons, it was said that he was taking part in the Route of the Indies. Ultimately, this term defined a historical category that entailed the development of a definitive way of life, one which was strongly linked or even subject to the evolution of a specific mercantile-geographical system. Furthermore, this system was not limited. Instead it was connected to other trading areas which were not part of the Spanish empire, yet were nonetheless intrinsically linked to it.⁴¹

A collective or historical biography is made possible by existing research and the reconstruction of family genealogies using notarial documents. Comparison of sources from different document types allows us to undertake a prosopographic analysis of the elements of a group or community, social networks and interest groups in Ancient Regime society. At the same time, Prosopography is an interesting tool for the study of the social, economic and political behaviour of the elite and other groups. A detailed genealogical analysis also provides the opportunity to measure the survival of these migrant dynasties in terms of number of generations. Some Flemish dynasties from Cadiz, such as the Colarte,⁴² Vint,⁴³ Coghen y Montefrío, Van Hemert, de Somers, Swerts and Vande Voorde families, are proof of this survival. These were all Dutch Catholic families, usually from the northern and southern Brabant. Their family biographies have been reconstructed using different documents, from strictly official to private and notarial sources. Can it be said that family lines follow certain similar behavioural patterns over generations? What can be stated with certainty is that one of the conditions underlying the formation of the Flemish bourgeoisie was the practice of travelling to and settling in Spanish cities. This was also closely related to the nature of family

⁴⁰ Raymond Fagel, 'Valladolid y Flandes en la época de Carlos V: ¿rechazo o atracción?', *Valladolid, Historia de una ciudad, Actas del Congreso Internacional de Historia de Valladolid*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 7-11 October 1996, p. 679-690.

⁴¹ A detailed explanation of this term can be found in: Crespo Solana, 'Geostrategy of a System', *art. cit.*, p. 19-20.

⁴² Bustos Rodríguez, *Burguesía y Capitalismo*, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁴³ Will of Juan de Vint, 6 February 1699, in AHNM, Consejos Suprimidos bundle 5083.



networks. The model of the Flemish traveller has been widely studied and is found again and again. For example, in the case of the Canary Islands, descriptions of journeys made by Flemish youths from Antwerp via Ostend all have common points, such as an endogamous family and trading practices. Some were passing traders who decided to settle in the cities of southern Andalusia. In fact, there is an obvious relationship between the ports of origin, the route of the convoys transporting men and merchandise, and the creation of networks.⁴⁴ Most of these men came to the city at a young age, recommended to another Flemish merchant who had already settled there and enjoyed a good reputation in local society. Flemish young men typically travelled to the Indies using their own resources, inherited from the paternal family in Flanders, and with another person acting as a mentor in Cadiz. There was also the possibility of travelling to Flanders to finalise the details of their marriage and inheritance, then returning to Cadiz with property received from the parents. The practice of arranged marriages is widely reported. The young man generally married another member of the same family living in Cadiz, possibly a Flemish woman born there, or a Spanish woman from an important family of merchants, ship owners or civil servants associated with local institutions. A settled businessman would build or buy a house in Cadiz and live there with his wife, dedicating many years to trade with the Americas, sending goods to the Indies and investing money in fleets and galleons.⁴⁵

It is also important to consider to what extent the trading networks are the result of family ties and patronage among the merchants themselves. According to information on marriages registered by Cadiz notaries, there were two main trends which suggest the prior creation of a network. Cadiz had a large population of unmarried men, as they were based there temporarily and planned to return home. However, there were also many marriages. In many cases, it has not been possible to confirm the dates of the wedding ceremonies, but it is evident that the largest number of marriages was to Spanish women, followed by women of the same nationality as the groom. Only occasionally do they appear to have married daughters of other foreign traders. In most cases, marriages were endogamous, both from a professional point of view (unions between trading families, followed by the nobility and the military) and in geographical terms.⁴⁶

Research provides examples of Flemish dynasties and families who had been well established for three or four generations. These were aristocratic merchant groups and families who had been settled in Spain from the time the Low Countries were still an important part of the Monarchy. These families had arrived during the second half of the 16th or the first half of the 17th centuries. For this reason their aristocratic roots and values were still a prevalent part of their lifestyles. Many families carried on the original activities of their ancestors, but not all were previously industrialists or merchants. Many had been burgomasters and part of the local political establishment. The fact that political and social circumstances in the cities of Flanders and Brabant accounted for this trend has already been discussed in the literature. There had been an increase in the number of members of the local establishment: dynastic families who in times of crisis and expansion began to take part in colonial businesses, purchasing and exporting certain manufactured and luxury goods, especially textiles and small works of art.

⁴⁴ John Everaert, 'L'hispanisation', *art. cit.*, p. 146.

⁴⁵ Ana Crespo Solana, 'Legal Strategies and Smuggling Mechanisms in the Trade with the Hispanic Caribbean by Foreign Merchants in Cadiz: The Dutch and Flemish Case, 1680-1750', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas, Anuario de Historia de América Latina*, 47 (2010), p. 181-212.

⁴⁶ Examples of Flemish and Dutch marriages to Spanish and non-Spanish woman in: AHPC, notarial archives: 9/1594, 175-77v; 9/1584, 655-58v; 16/3777: 47-49; 11/2227- 2228: 684-85v; 8/1447: 15-25v; 3/762: 49-51; 21/5087: 269-71; 8/1474: 662-66v; 10/1826: 415 and v; 12/2413: 634-36v; 9/1585: 52-60v; 11/2192:1070-71v; 16/3768: 481-89v; 9/1602: 196-201v; 17/3834: 1105-1107v; 9/1581: 62-64v; 15/3607: 856-59; 9/1583: 553-557v; 9/1576: 20-22v; 11/2211:292-95v; 5/989: 240-41v; 15/3629: 25-162v; 9/1624: 265-268v; 5/1593:155-158v; 23/5333: 267-69; 5/992: 652-55v; 5/1004:970-71v; 9/1576: 9 and v.; 5/1016, s.f.; 5/1015: 1 and v; 15/3623: 643; 16/3635: 92-95v.



Examples include the Van Kessel and Van Haure families of Cadiz, later linked to the Coghens and the Conincks by marriage. They include business partners who later became part of the family, marrying the daughters of these aristocratic merchants. The De Roy family has also been studied. Originally from Antwerp, they settled in Amsterdam. After two generations of being Dutch, they immigrated to Cadiz and became linked by marriage to a noble Andalusian dynasty. Such biographical narratives are common in this type of family.⁴⁷

The lower or middle-ranked Flemish nobility that had become established within the community engaged in trade with the Americas. However, this did not represent a disadvantage when asserting the right to join military orders.⁴⁸ Members of these groups also became part of the local nobility (such as the *maestranzas* (Bullring) of Seville, Ronda, Granada and Valencia) and even had their own family crests. It was in Cadiz that relationships were forged not only with other Low Countries nationals, but also with Spaniards. The need for bonds of friendship or family relationships (or both) and to mix with other individuals from the same nation existed from the time of the earliest Dutch settlements in Spanish territory. But within the context of relationships, both with natives and fellow countrymen, one of the most significant aspects was the institution of *padrinazgo* (patronage or sponsorship). This institutionalised bond was used to formalise social ties, usually through ceremonies such as weddings and christenings. Many of the family clans established in the earlier stages of Flemish immigration adopted ways of life parallel to those of the nobility, although not dissimilar in style to their original cities. Records from the *Reales Consejos* (Royal Councils), granting the title of knight of a military order to Flemish men settled in Spain, indicate that they belonged to city dynasties and were part of the local military and noble power structure in the service of the king of Spain. One example of this was the merchant Juan de Wint y Swerts, born in Ypres in 1614 and a resident of Cadiz. In 1659, King Philip IV ordered the governor of the Low Countries, the Marquis of Caracena, to carry out investigations in Ypres, Diessen and Bruges, where relatives of de Wint's lived. The reason for this was to confirm his right to request membership in the Order of Calatrava. De Wint obtained the title of knight and married the daughter of the first Marquis de los Alamos del Guadalete. In his 1669 will, he stated that in his youth he had had an illegitimate son in Flanders who 'had gone to the Indies two years earlier, to the province of Tierra Firme (Mainland), assigned to a cargo for which he had not paid or rendered account'. Another son from his marriage, Juan Carlos Francisco de Wint y Lila, born Cadiz in 1657, would later become an active trader with the Indies. This clan, which was related to the Colarte family, conducted business with the Americas until at least the second half of the 18th century.⁴⁹

In Andalusia, these families enjoyed an aristocratic way of life, acquiring city and country properties, which would become one of the most profitable capital investments. The domestic lifestyle of these social groups was very similar and was reflected in their demand for goods from Northern Europe: trade in luxury items and manufactured products to match their social aspirations. Their business links with the important Route of the Indies were another way to preserve the basis of this lifestyle during difficult times, secure dowries for their daughters, maintain their houses and carriages, and offer an ostentatious display of devout practices. The impact of these values on expanding European cities, in contrast to the possibilities offered by the opening up of the Atlantic, has been the subject of a complex debate. However, very little new information has been contributed since Ruth Pike pointed out two parallel trends: the commercialisation of the nobility and the ennoblement of rich merchants.⁵⁰ These were traders who combined their business interests with a desire to lead a

⁴⁷ Ana Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz*, op. cit., p. 230.

⁴⁸ AHNM. Santiago, expt. 2001. Report by Ventura de Acuña, Cádiz, 20 August 1663.

⁴⁹ AHNM. Calatrava, Exp. 307.

⁵⁰ Ruth Pike, *Aristócratas y comerciantes. La sociedad Sevillana en el siglo XVI*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1978.



noble and aristocratic life based on ownership of land and commerce. It should be remembered that a thirst for material power is closely linked to the initial formation of a new civilisation based on material culture. Merchants used their wealth to buy noble titles and build up assets. In Seville, as in Cadiz, a portion of the capital from the New World was invested in city and rural properties. This activity reflected an economic and social reality with which members of these communities closely identified. One example is the Beyens family, whose rise to aristocracy was recorded in a very important document: the official request by José Maria Beyens y Beyens for the charter of succession to the title of Count of Villamar after the death of his father Don Lorenzo Narciso Beyens Huwin, who had been granted the title on 25 September 1773.⁵¹ The Beyens family were well respected merchants who traded with the port of Cartagena in the Indies. Family reports had been sent to this port since the early 18th century and by 1766, Alejandro Beyens, son of Lorenzo Narciso Beyens, was master of the frigate *Nuestra Señora del Carmen y San Vicente Ferrer*, also known as *La Galga*.⁵² He had inherited the vessel from his father who was its previous master. This member of the family had paid half an *annata* (one year's income) on 17 November 1773 to exchange the title of Viscount of San Lorenzo for that of Count of Villamar.

Paradoxically, this aristocratisation of a sector of the community, and hence the creation of an internal hierarchy within the group, encouraged new waves of migration among merchant-travellers. In many cases, these were the children of Northern European nobles or wealthy traders who went to work in Andalusian cities, either temporarily or permanently. Some were ennobled, but this did result in a total neglect of their businesses, which even expanded as a result of work shared among network members. Rather than using money, these trading aristocrats handed the merchandise over to the ship owners and kept a percentage of its value in return. This strategy is evident from notarised payment documents and letters of testament from businessmen. Beginning in the 1680's and 1690's, there were large groups of aristocratic merchants settled in Andalusia. Subsequently, the method of immigration began to change: most arrivals came to take up regular work with these groups and carry their consignments, especially those related to the American markets. The institution of family patronage, *mayorazgos* (primogenitures) and requests for noble titles can be explained as attempts by the most established groups in society to provide their descendants with security. This was not surprising, given the difficulties of a trader's life, which included travel and cycles of migration when starting up a business. This also explains a growing trend in which sons did not become traders, but instead join the administration, army or Church. There are two underlying reasons why the lineage of a merchant dynasty engaged in business would be interrupted: the delay or loss of fleets due to accidents, shipwrecks, etc., and the fiscal policy of the government. These were real problems for merchants. With regard to the actions of the Spanish Crown, the main issue was the large number of confiscations of private capital, which was highly detrimental to foreigners. By the end of the 18th century, few merchants' sons became traders; instead there is a clear increase in the pursuit of other professional activities. When trade between Cadiz and the Americas began to decline following the Free Trade years and the start of the Napoleonic Wars, immigrating to America was increasingly seen as a great opportunity. However, large-scale Belgian and Dutch migration to America did not begin until after the American independence movements. For many Flemish Andalusians, the Atlantic crossing was the last chance to improve their life and would become a widespread phenomenon, or rather feeling, among inhabitants of other European cities on the Atlantic coast. The Catholic Flemish emigrating to the provinces of the free Republic and later to Spain exhibit many features which resemble those of the Flemish nobles who, for various reasons (religious, economic or family), had travelled to and settled in Andalusian cities. The well-

⁵¹ AHNM. Consejos, 9837 A, Exp. 2, year 1803.

⁵² AGI. Contratación 2648.



known example of the Van Hemert family demonstrates some of the similarities and differences in comparison with previous cases. They emigrated from Antwerp to Haarlem, where they became cloth manufacturers and traders in textile products. Their business grew during times of crisis and they began to take short trips to Andalusia, where they forged ties with the Lie family, wealthy merchants from Seville. Lie business operations were relocated from Seville to Cadiz, broadly coinciding with the transfer of the official authorities governing trade with the Indies to the same city. They traded very successfully between Seville and Cadiz, built business relations with the Route of the Indies, and developed an active textile distribution service to other inland Andalusian cities, such as Antequera. They adopted a bourgeois lifestyle, but without obtaining any aristocratic titles or relinquishing their trade between Holland and the Americas. This family is an especially interesting example, because the family home in Seville, owned by Pablo and Jorge Deuwaerder between 1752 and 1771, can still be admired today.⁵³

Wills by Flemish citizens of Cadiz provide evidence of a heritage that has now been lost, but is not alien to certain practices within modern Spanish society. One of the most interesting aspects of the material evidence is the family home.⁵⁴ This was a *casa grande* (an example of a residence for the whole family, including servants and clerks working for the business), usually situated in streets close to the city's centres of trade and port activity. Some of these houses still survive in the oldest areas of cities such as Cadiz, and the location of Flemish-owned houses can be established today. They consisted of a main living area, corridors and upstairs rooms. The interior was often decorated with marble tiles or even ceramic tiles brought from Delft. Outside, there were outhouses, enclosed wells, gardens with animal pens, and a coach house where wealthier families kept their carriages. Information from electoral rolls shows that they owned slaves as house servants, mainly Negroes from Curaçao.⁵⁵ Their wills also provide evidence of significant assets: furniture, paintings, small works of art, metalcrafts, jewels and property. Contents also included white and coloured garments, jewellery, paintings, chairs, and gold and silver items.

⁵³ *Casa Fabiola. Una sede con Historia*. Fundación José Manuel Lara, Texts by Teresa Prieto, Seville, 2002, especially pages 77-107.

⁵⁴ Bustos Rodríguez, *Burguesía de negocios*, p. 123.

⁵⁵ Archivo Histórico Municipal de Cádiz (AHMC), Electoral Roll 1773, Nº 1006.



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