



THE PORTUGUESE SEPHARDI OF AMSTERDAM AND THE TRADE WITH WESTERN AFRICA, 1580-1660

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1614, after receiving several complains against João Soerio, lease holder of the royal monopoly of Cape Verde and Guinea, Philip I of Portugal decided to suspend the contract with him and issue a warrant of arrest against Soeiro's factors and other New Christian merchants based in the aforementioned regions. Among those listed were Luís Fernandes [Duarte], Gaspar Nunes, Pero Rodrigues da Veiga, Jerónimo Freire or Jacob Peregrino, Simão Rodrigues Pinel, and Estêvão Rodrigues Penso¹. All of them appear referred in the Notarial Contracts of Amsterdam as merchants with residence in the city and involved in the trade between the United Provinces of the Netherlands, Western Africa and other regions. In these activities, they acted, either single-handily, in partnership with other members of the Jewish community or in the capacity of commercial agents of other Jewish and Christian merchants based in the same economic centre². In this article we will analyze the participation of the Portuguese Sephardi of Amsterdam and other Dutch port cities in the trade with western Africa between the 1580s and 1660s.

In recent years, several historians have focused on the study of the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam and the United Provinces, including their main economic activities and their participation in the society of Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century³. More recently and in the context of the

¹ Maria Manuel Torrão, « Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento », Maria Emília Madeira Santos (dir.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde*, vol. 2, Lisbon/Praia, Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga, Instituto Nacional da Cultura de Cabo Verde, 1995, p. 44.

² Gemeentearchief Amsterdam [GAA], *Notarialen Archieven [NA]* several books. See also: E. M. Koen, « Amsterdam Notarial Deeds pertaining to the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam up to 1639 », *Studia Rosenthaliana*, n. 1-2, 1967, p. 110-122; n. 2, 1968, p. 111-126, 257-272; n. 3, 1969, p. 113-125, 234-254.

³ On the Portuguese Sephardic Jews in the Dutch Republic, Western Europe and the Atlantic World, see: Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within the Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the world maritime empires (1540-1740)*, Leiden, Brill, 2002. *Id.*, *European Jewry in the Age of mercantilism, 1550-1750*, London, Clarendon, 1998. Paolo Bernardini & Norman Fiering (dir.), *The Jews and the expansion of Europe to the West, 1450-1800*, New York, Berghahn, 2001. Y. Kaplan, *An alternative to modernity. The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe*, Leiden, Brill, 2000. Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans. The Portuguese Jews of 17th-century Amsterdam*, London, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation 2000. O. Vlessing, « The Portuguese Jewish merchant community in 17th-century Amsterdam », C. Lesger & L. Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: merchants and industrialists within the orbit of the Dutch Staple market*, The Hague, Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1995, p. 223-43. Daniel Swetschinski & L. Schönduve, *De familie Lopes Suasso. Financiers van Willem III. The Lopes Suasso family, bankers to Willem III*, Zwolle, Waanders, 1988. Daniel M. Swetschinski, « Kinship and commerce. The foundation of Portuguese Jewish life in 17th-century Holland »,



Sephardic Diaspora Studies, several scholars have also made important contributions to better our understanding of the Jewish communities in the Spanish Americas, Senegambia and Cape Verde⁴.

However, little is still known about the participation of the Amsterdam Jewish community in the trade with western Africa and about the organization of these activities and their articulation between various ports involved in this business in both continents. In this study we will try to fill this gap in the historiography. To do so, firstly, we will examine the mechanisms used by the Sephardic merchants living the Republic to finance and insure the ships operating in this commerce. This will be followed by an analysis of the organization of the commercial ventures and the Jewish investment in this business, including their main geographical areas of activity and main commercial branches. We will close with a brief study of the types of agents, and financial and commercial networks built by the Jewish merchants of the Republic to finance, insure and operate their trade with Western Africa, highlighting the trans-cultural, trans-national and trans-imperial character of some of these webs.

Our study covers the 1580s and 1660s. These years correspond to the period of major conflict between the United Provinces and the Habsburg Empire. Between 1580 and 1640, Portugal was also part of the empire, and therefore involved in this conflict, dating only from 1662 the signature of the Peace Treaty between Portugal and the United Provinces⁵. The naval conflicts between the two states during these years and in the context of the Eighty Years War (1568-1648) had direct effects on the commercial activities, not only due to the economic losses caused⁶, but also due to changes introduced by the states involved in the conflict concerning the participation of private merchants in the overseas trade.

In the case of the United Provinces, the private merchants witnessed the introduction of several changes concerning their freedom of participation in the Atlantic commerce, and the trade with Western Africa. These changes have also affected the Portuguese Jewish merchants based in the Republic. In general, the period here under study may be divided in three main moments: 1590s-1621; 1621-1637; 1638-1674. During the first period that stretches between the rise of Amsterdam as the great economic centre of Europe and 1621, the merchants in the Republic enjoyed almost

Studia Rosenthaliana, vol. 15, n. 1, 1981, p. 52-74. Jessica Vance Roitman, *The Same but different? Inter-cultural Trade and the Sephardim, 1595-1640*, Leiden, Brill, 2011. Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period: the economic relationship between Amsterdam and Lisbon, 1640-1705*, Amsterdam, Aksant, 2004.

⁴ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. José da Silva Horta & Peter Mark, *The Forgotten Diasporas: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the making of the Atlantic World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Daviken Stunicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. *Id.*, « La 'nation' portugaise. Réseaux marchands dans l'espace atlantique à la époque moderne », *Annales HSS*, vol. 58, n. 3, 2003, p. 627-648.

⁵ Eduardo Brazão, *A diplomacia portuguesa nos séculos XVII e XVIII*, vol. 1, Lisbon, Editorial Resistência, 1979. Virginia Rau, *A embaixada de Tristão de Mendonça Furtado e os arquivos notariais holandeses*, Lisbon, Academia Portuguesa de História, 1958. Edgar Prestage, *A embaixada de Tristão de Mendonça Furtado à Holanda em 1641: primeiras embaixadas de el-rei D. João IV com documentos elucidativos*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1920.

⁶ J. de Laet, *De Iaerlyck verhael van de Vernichtinghen der Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie in dertien boeken*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1931, p. 282-85. Victor Enthoven, « Early Dutch Expansion in the Atlantic Region, 1585-1621 », Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (dir.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 17-48.



complete freedom of trade. This was only limited by the commercial embargoes imposed by Philip I of Portugal and II of Spain in 1598 against Dutch ships in the context of the Eighty Years War. According to the embargoes Dutch vessels were forbidden to visit Iberian ports. These restrictions were suspended during the Twelve Years Truce (1612-1622). But, in the meantime, to obtain the colonial products that they used to acquire in Portugal and Spain, merchants of the Republic began their commercial activities in the Atlantic, sailing directly to the supplying markets of colonial products in Western Africa, the Americas and Asia.⁷

Between 1621 and 1623, the trade of the United Provinces would enter a new phase. All merchants based in the Republic, including the Jewish community, witnessed the establishment of the West India Company (*Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie*, WIC) by the States General in 1621 and the imposition of a monopoly over all Atlantic trade. All private merchants were granted a period of two years to remove all their investments from the aforementioned regions and, after this period, forbidden to participate directly in the Atlantic trade. Thereafter, this trade was reserved only to the WIC⁸.

Given its military character, from the outset of its activities in 1624, the WIC would have some difficulties to operate simultaneously its activities of predation in the open sea, the naval attacks against fortified ports, and the trade and shipping of colonial products between the Republic and various Atlantic outposts and territories, that gradually came under the control of the Company. Among these were the north-eastern Brazilian captaincies (1630), the Portuguese forts of the Gold Coast (1637 and 1642), the island of São Tomé and the Angolan Coast (1641)⁹. By the end of the 1630s and in the following decade, it would become evident to the Directors of the Company – the Gentlemen Nineteen –, that it was necessary to open the monopoly to the participation of private merchants from the Republic¹⁰. Between the 1630s and 1640s,

⁷ Christopher Ebert, « Dutch Trade with Brazil before the Dutch West India Company, 1587-1621 » in Johannes Postma & Victor Enthoven (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 49-76. Victor Enthoven, *op. cit.*, p. 17-48. W. S. Unger, « Nieuwe gegevens betreffend het begin der vaart op Guinea, 1561-1601 », *Economisch-historisch Jaarboek*, n. 21, 1940, p. 194-217.

⁸ H. den Heijer, « Directores, Stadhouderes e Conselhos de administração » in M. Wiesebron (dir.), *O Brasil em arquivos neerlandeses (1624-1654): Brazilië in de Nederlandse archieven (1624-1654)*, Leiden, CNWS, 2005, p. 17-43. *Id.*, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 1994, p. 69-80.

⁹ Charles R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá and the struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1682*, London, University of London, 1952. P. C. Emmer, « The First Global War: The Dutch versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590-1609 », *e-JPH*, n. 1, Summer, 2003. *Id.*, « The Struggle over sugar. The abortive Attack of the Dutch on Portugal in the South Atlantic », *Mare Liberum*, n. 13, June, 1997, p. 57-69.

¹⁰ The internal structure of the Company reflected the political and administrative structure of the Dutch Republic. Five chambers were established: Amsterdam, Zeeland, the Northern Quarter, the Maas River and the Chamber of 'City and Surrounding Lands' (Groningen). The Chamber of Amsterdam represented exclusively the interest of the city; the Chamber of Zeeland defended the ambitions of Middelburg, Flushing, Veere and Tholen. The Chamber of the Northern Quarter stood for the cities of Friesland and the Chamber of the Maas River for the cities of Rotterdam, Delft and Dordrecht. Whereas the Chamber of 'City and Surrounding Lands' represented Groningen and its hinterland. The influence of each chamber within the Company was determined by the volume of capital invested and the political and economic power of the provinces and cities they represented. Amsterdam held 4/9 of the Company capital, Zeeland 2/9; whilst the other three chambers had 1/9 each. These factors also determined the number of directors that each chamber could elect. Amsterdam, elected 20 directors, Zeeland 12 directors, and the remaining three chambers 14 directors in total. An assembly of directors was in charge of the management of the Company, the so-called Board of Directors or Gentlemen Nineteen. Once again, the number of directors appointed by each chamber with a seat in the board depended upon the capital invested and the political and economic power of the provinces and cities represented.



the WIC would authorize the participation of merchants in the Atlantic trade. First, they were permitted to participate in the trade with Brazil and the Caribbean (1638), later in the slave trade between Angola, Brazil and the Spanish Americas (1647), and finally, in the commerce with North America, including the slave trade (1648). By the end of the 1640s, a new phase in the commerce of the Republic would start with a monopoly opened to the participation of privates in the Atlantic trade¹¹. It was within this context that the Portuguese Sephardi in the Republic developed their economic activities, including the trade with western Africa, which we will analyze in detail in the following pages.

Our argument is based on information gathered from the collection of notarial archives of Amsterdam and Rotterdam and the collection of the WIC deposited at the Netherlands National Archive in The Hague. Precious elements for our study were also obtained in various Portuguese archives, in particular in the collection of the Lisbon Inquisition at the Portuguese National Archives and the collection of the Overseas Council at the Historical Overseas Archive. Several collections of published sources, journals of voyages and recent secondary literature have also been used to complement our study¹².

CREDIT AND INSURANCE

To guarantee their participation in the commerce with western Africa as well as with other regions, the Portuguese Sephardic merchants of the Republic resorted

Amsterdam and Zealand appointed four directors each for the Board, whereas the other chambers appointed only two each. A representative of the States General also had a seat in the Board. The presidency of the Board was held either by Amsterdam or Zealand. The former was authorized to lead the Board during six consecutive years and Zealand two years. Usually, the Gentlemen Nineteen gathered twice or three times per year to define the management policies of the Company. They were also in charge of the finances of the WIC and the distribution of dividends among shareholders. The Board had still authority to form special commissions for the study of certain matters. The members of the commissions were chosen among the directors. Once again, the number of directors from each chamber to take a seat in these commissions was proportional to the capital and power of each chamber. The Chambers, on the other hand, were responsible for the implementation of the policies defined by the Board.

¹¹ Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven: scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740*, Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 1997. *Id.*, « The Western African Trade of the Dutch West India Company, 1674-1740 » in Johannes Postma & Victor Enthoven (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 139-170. P. C. Emmer, « The West India Company, 1621-1791: Dutch or Atlantic? » in Leonard Blussé & Femme Gaastra (dir.), *Companies and trade: essays on overseas trading companies during the Ancien Régime*, Leiden, Leiden University Press, 1981, p. 771-795.

¹² See, among others: Pieter van den Broecke, *Pieter van den Broecke's journal of voyages to Cape Verde, Guinea, and Angola, 1605-1612*, edited and translated by J. D. La Fleur, London, Hakluyt Society, 2000. Adam Jones (dir.), *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1983. Pieter de Marees, *Pieter de Marees: Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)*, edited by Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones, Oxford, The British Academy and Oxford University Press, 1987. Albert van Dantzig (dir.), *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674-1742: a collection of documents from the General State Archive at The Hague*, Accra, GAAS, 1978. Louis Jadin (dir.), *L'Ancien Congo et l'Angola, 1639-1655: d'après les archives romaines, portugaises, néerlandaises et espagnoles*, 3 vols., Brussels/Rome, Institut historique belge de Rome, 1975. Klaas Ratelband (dir.), *Vijf Dagregisters van het kasteel São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) aan de Goudkust (1645-1647)*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1953. Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugaliae monumenta Africana*, Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses; Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1993, vols. 1-3 e 5. André Álvares de Almada, *Tratado breve dos rios de Guiné do Cabo Verde*, Lisbon, Editorial L. I. A. M., 1964. António Brásio (dir.), *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, 1^ª serie, 15 vols. / 2^ª serie: 6 vols., Lisbon, Agência geral do Ultramar / Academia Portuguesa de História, 1952.



regularly to the financial services and the insurances offered by several businessmen based in Amsterdam¹³. These practices were adopted by several members of the Jewish community, either to protect their own financial interests, or to safeguard the interests of third parties, whenever acting as representatives of other Jewish merchants and associates.

The first step in the organization of the business was the acquisition of capital to finance the entire operation. To raise the required funds, the Portuguese Jewish merchants of the Republic resorted to members of the community as well as to businessmen external to the group. In 1617, for example, Manuel Carvalho, resident in Amsterdam, gave credit to Diogo Nunes Belmonte, merchant of the Jewish community, to finance the voyage of the *St. Michiel*. Captained by Sebastião Ribeiro, also based in the city, the ship was to sail to Angola, where she would be loaded with slaves for the Spanish Americas¹⁴.

But, the Portuguese Sephardic merchants of the Republic did also act as guarantors of other parties. On 9 October 1656, for instance, Fernão Martins da Silva, resident in Amsterdam, gave a bottomry, i.e. a contract that combined credit and insurance, to William Pestell of London, valued in 1,000 guilders. The bottomry was to finance the voyage of the *Peacock* between Amsterdam and Guinea, and it was to be paid after the return of the vessel, together with an additional 4% of interest charged by Martins da Silva¹⁵.

The second step in the organization of the commercial ventures to western Africa was the acquisition of insurance for ships and cargos. During the period under study, several businessmen in Amsterdam appear directly involved in the insurances obtained by the Portuguese Sephardic merchants of the city. Among these men were Jan Jansz Smits, Claes Andriesz, Albert Schuijt, Barent Sweets, Jan de Clerck, Pelgrom van Dronckelaer, Anthoni van Diemen, Hans van Soldt, Hans van Geel, Hendrick Voet, Williem Pauw, Van den Bogaert, Wijbrant Warwijck and Salomon Voercknecht¹⁶. During the period under study, circa 65% of the insurances issued by these merchants were requested by Portuguese Sephardic merchants based in the Republic and other territories for ships operating between the Republic and western Africa, and their cargos¹⁷.

Among the members of the Jewish community of Amsterdam that obtained their insurances from the aforementioned businessmen were Gaspar Fernandes, Duarte Fernandes, Diogo Dias Querido, Diogo Nunes Belmonte, Diogo da Silva, and Pero Rodrigues da Veiga. On 19 January 1611, for instance, Diogo da Silva e Diogo Dias Querido requested the services of Barent Adriaen Adriesz, Wijbrant Warwijck and

¹³ For further information on the Netherlands insurance market see: Sabine Go, *Marine Insurance in the Netherlands. A comparative institutional approach 1600-1870*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2009. Frank C. Spooner, *Risks at Sea. Amsterdam Insurance and Maritime Europe, 1766-1780*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983. J. P. Niekerk, *The Development of the Principles of Insurance Law in the Netherlands: From 1500 to 1800*, 2 vols., Cape Town, Uitgeverij Verloren, 1998.

¹⁴ GAA, NA 146/199v-200v: 23-02-1617.

¹⁵ GAA, NA 980/189: 9-10-1656.

¹⁶ GAA, NA 196/199-200v: 21-03-1609; NA 258/83: 28-01-1614; NA 254/188-189: 22-05-1614; NA 253/476v: 13-04-1612; NA 138/210v-211v: 25-03-1615.

¹⁷ Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674*, Leiden, Brill, 2011, chap. 7.



Anthoni van Diemen to insure the *Santiago*. Skipped by Herbert Marselssen of Rotterdam, the ship was to sail between the aforementioned city and the ports of Portugal, and Joal in the Petite Cote of Senegal. The return cargo was to be insured by Claes Andriesz, Jaspas Grevenraet, Barent Sweets and Jan Jansz Smits¹⁸.

However, these insurances were obtained not only for vessels operating from the Republic and freighted or property of Portuguese Sephardi based there. These merchants often acted as intermediaries between Amsterdam insurers and merchants operating in the trade with western Africa from other European regions, namely from several Portuguese coastal cities. For instance, in 1615, Gaspar de Rodrigues Nunes, Jew resident in Amsterdam, obtained insurance for the ship *São Pedro*, property of Francisco da Costa Brandão and Simão Rodrigues Lobo, merchants in Lisbon. Jan Jansz Smits, Jan Jansen van Helmont and Albert Schuijt, mentioned earlier, agreed to insure the risks of the voyage between Lisbon and Angola, under the command of skipper Rodrigo Álvares, also from Lisbon¹⁹.

In some cases, the acquisition of insurances in Amsterdam was a strategy adopted by some merchants to be able to sail from one of the main ports of the Republic directly to Portuguese overseas territories, and in this way avoid the fiscal control imposed by the Portuguese Crown in Lisbon and in the main ports of the western coast of Africa under Portuguese control, such as Ribeira Grande, São Tomé and Luanda. This strategy would be made easier if merchants could combine the purchase of insurance with the freightage of ships in the Republic, in particular, those authorized to sail under Dutch flag. This practice was adopted by both Portuguese Sephardic merchants based in the Republic and by their associates operating in the trade with western Africa from Portugal and overseas. João Soerio, lease holder of the contract for the management of the royal monopoly on the trade with Cape Verde and Rivers of Guinea between 1608 and 1614 is a case in point. His main contacts in Amsterdam were Gaspar Nunes, Duarte Fernandes, Pedro Rodrigues da Veiga, Diogo da Silva and Diogo Dias Querido, among others²⁰. Several of the commercial agents of these merchants for the trade between the Republic and the Rivers of Guinea were, in fact, referred in the Portuguese sources also as factors of the aforementioned contract lease holder. Among them were Gaspar Fernandes, Simão Rodrigues Pinel and Estêvão Rodrigues Penso²¹, whilst others were simply referred to as *lançados* and *tangomaos*²². This type of connections and cooperation between Portuguese Sephardic merchants and Christian merchants for their businesses in various geographical areas is directly linked to the commercial organization of all these operations, which we will analyze now in more detail.

¹⁸ GAA, NA 253/476v: 13-04-1612; NA 129/163-164: 4-12-1612; NA 130/13v-14: 14-12-1612; NA 130/18-19: 17-12-1612.

¹⁹ GAA, NA 378A/339: 29-05-1615.

²⁰ GAA, NA 125/27v-28v: 27-04-1611; NA 124/131-131v: 5-08-1611.

²¹ GAA, NA 62/218v: 19-01-1611; NA 253/476v: 13-04-1612; NA 129/163-164: 4-12-1612; NA 130/13v-14: 14-12-1612; NA 130/18-19: 17-12-1612.

²² IAN/TT, *Inquisition of Lisbon*, book 205, folios 573-573v. Peter Mark & José Horta, *op. cit.*, chap. 1, 2 e 3. George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in western Africa: commerce, social status, gender, and religious observance from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2003. Philip Havik, *Silences and soundbites: the gendered dynamics of trade and brokerage in the pre-colonial Guinea-Bissau region*, Münster, LIT, 2004. Jean Boulègue, *Les Lusos-Africains de Sénégambie, XVIe – XIXe siècles*, Lisbon, Ministério da Educação; Paris, Université de Paris I, 1989. António Carreira, *Os Portugueses nos Rios de Guiné (1500-1900)*, Lisbon, Tejo, 1984.



TRADE ORGANIZATION: PARTNERSHIPS, FREIGHTAGE, AND EQUIPAGE

The preparation of a commercial venture between the United Provinces and western Africa required not only high investments and involved high risks for which it was essential to raise enough capital and obtained the best insurances, but also demanded the establishment of commercial partnerships for the freightage and equipage of the vessels. In many of these operations, as we will see next, the Portuguese Sephardic merchant community of Amsterdam and the Republic will combine the use of logistical and human resources of the community and the vast shipping sector of Amsterdam.

In most of the cases, the participation in the trade with western Africa was done by means of short- and medium-term partnerships, which gathered several merchants in the organization of one or more voyages. For example, on 22 March 1626, Diogo Nunes Belmonte, together with Francisco de Vaz Leão, also merchant in Amsterdam, freighted *De Gulden Sterre*, capacity 50 *last*²³ and property of Lambert Cornelisz Cruyff, inhabitant of Enkhuizen. The ship was freighted for a total of 2,700 guilders to sail the route Amsterdam – Salé – Amsterdam, under the command of Harck Gerritsz of Venhuizen²⁴.

However, freighting and equipping ships in partnership was also a common practice in association with outsiders of the Jewish merchant community. On 4 October 1619, for example, Diogo Vaz de Sousa, Sephardic merchant, established a partnership with Adriaen Ryser, Gerrit de Beer, Pieter and Jacques de Barys, all merchants in Amsterdam, to freight and furnish *De Swarte Beer*, skippered by Andrien Claessen of Amsterdam to sail to Cape Verde. The cargo valued in 150 Flemish pounds was, in part, property of Diogo Vaz de Sousa²⁵.

Many of the ships used by the Portuguese Sephardic merchants of the Republic were, in fact, freighted from owners and shipmasters based in Amsterdam and other port cities. On 13 March 1611, for instance, João Lopes da Costa, Gaspar Nunes and António Nobre, all residents in Amsterdam, freighted from Pieter Bodaen, Gillis du Pluis, and Claes Claessen *Die Fortuijn en Die Hoop*, skippered by Tonis Allersten, also from Amsterdam. The freightage between Amsterdam, the island of Palma in the Canaries, Rufisque, Joal and other ports in the Petite Cote of Senegal, included free passage for two passengers, a servant of the freighters and a cooper, and cost 4,600 guilders. The ship was permitted to stay 15 days in Palma to load wine and other products and four months in the Senegambia region to trade²⁶.

Like in the case of credit and insurance analyzed earlier, the members of the Portuguese Sephardic merchant community of Amsterdam were also important contacts for freightage of ships in the Republic for merchants with residence elsewhere in Europe, including Iberia. This practice was kept in use for a long time not only for trade with western Africa, but also for other commercial branches. In 1671, for instance,

²³ 1 *last* equalled 2 tonnes.

²⁴ GAA, NA 632/57/59: 22-03-1626.

²⁵ GAA, NA 160/28-29v: 4-10-1619.

²⁶ GAA, NA 124/25v-26v: 16-03-1611.



Jerónimo Nunes da Costa, agent of the Portuguese King in the Republic and prominent member of the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam set a contract on behalf of Francisco Ribeiro da Costa and associates, merchants in Angola and Madeira, for the shipping of several products from these regions on board the ship *De Romeijnse Maecht*, skipped by Jan Pietersz of Venhuyzen and property of Sijvert Crommendijck, Tade Pieterss Stricjckbol, and associates²⁷.

AGENTS

However, capital, insurance and good commercial organization were not sufficient to guarantee the success of the business. In fact, to participate and protect their interests in any business branch, merchants of the early modern period could choose to live in their main regions of business, have direct associates to take permanent and/or temporary residence in those places, or hire agents or commercial representatives to safeguard their interests locally. The same type of solutions was also adopted to defend their interests on board merchant ships or in the temporary and/or permanent commercial outposts. To operate in the trade with western Africa in an efficient way, the Portuguese Sephardi of Amsterdam, like other businessmen in the Republic, needed to recruit commercial agents to defend their interest in their areas of investment. For this, the Sephardi would recruit different agents, either among the members of the community, or outsiders to the group.

During the period under study, the members of the Portuguese Jewish community usually stayed as residents in Amsterdam, and had as their main associates and/or partners, merchants with residence in other important commercial centres, either in Portugal and the Mediterranean, or in the overseas territories. Simultaneously, they resorted to the recruitment of agents and factors to travel on board ships accompanying merchandise in their long-distant circuits and to take care of commercial transactions in western Africa and other regions.

In the capacity of commercial partners of Dutch, Flemish, German and other foreign merchants of the Republic, the Portuguese Sephardi of Amsterdam also opted, in some cases, to travel to western Africa to defend their own interests. This choice was likely due to their deeper knowledge of the region and local commercial practices. This would have been especially the case, in the early seventeenth century, when Dutch businessmen had just begun their commercial contact with these regions. In this period, members of the Jewish community often appear in the sources as partners-agents of merchants outsiders to the group with residence in the Republic and interests in the western African trade. On 4 October 1619, for example, Diogo Vaz de Sousa, merchant in Amsterdam, and partner of Adriaen Ryser, Gerrit de Beer, Pieter and Jacques de Barys, already quoted, agreed to travel on board *De Swarte Beer*, sailing to Cape Verde, as co-owner of the cargo and responsible for its security during the transport and transactions in the western coast of Africa²⁸.

This practice is also adopted in commercial partnerships involving only members of the Portuguese Sephardic merchant community of Amsterdam and the

²⁷ GAA, NA 3589/284A: 23-09-1671.

²⁸ GAA, NA 160/28-29v: 4-10-1619.



Republic. On 24 December 1610, for instance, Gaspar Sanches and Pero Rodrigues da Veiga freighted *Het Vliegende Hert*, skippered by Heyns Claessen to sail between Amsterdam and Portudal, and had agreed that Pero da Veiga and his brother Gaspar Fernandes would go on board to trade the merchandise²⁹.

However, in most of these voyages to western Africa as well as in trips heading to other colonial spaces, the wealthiest merchants often chose to stay in Europe and sent their agents on board ships or recruited factors to represent their interests in these distant and, sometimes, inhospitable places. This was a common practice also among the merchants of the Portuguese Sephardic community of Amsterdam. On 19 September 1609, for instance, Gaspar Nunes and Gaspar Fernandes hired as agents Luís Fernandes and Gaspar Fernandes, cited in the beginning of this study. These agents were to travel on board the *St. Jacob* heading to the ports of Portudal, Joal and Rufisque. There, they would be responsible for trading the cargo and purchase goods, including elephant tusks, wax, hides and other products³⁰. Simão Rodrigues Pinel and Estevão Rodrigues Penso, already quoted, were also part of the group of men regularly hired by the merchants of the community for these voyages and transactions in the region of the Rivers of Guinea. On 19 January 1611, for instance, these two men were hired by Diogo Dias Querido and Diogo da Silva to travel on board the *Santiago* between Amsterdam and the ports of Portudal and Joal and to trade the cargo there³¹.

The Portuguese Sephardi did also celebrate labour contracts with some merchants to act as their factors in the western coast of Africa. Diogo da Silva, Portuguese Jew and merchant in Amsterdam, together with his partners (among them Diogo Dias Querido) hired and maintained factors in the Petite Cote of Senegal serving in these ports for periods of one to two years, and sometimes even longer. Simão Rodrigues de Noé, Diogo Vaz and Jerónimo Freire (the latter also known among the members of the community by the name of Jacob Peregrino or Pelegrino) were three of these men. Between 1609 and 1620, their names appear regularly in the notarial acts of Amsterdam concerning the activities of Diogo da Silva and his partners in the region of the Rivers of Guinea³². In 1612, for instance, Querido freighted the *Jonas* for a voyage between Amsterdam and Senegambia, and calling at Cape Verde, Portudal, Joal and Rufisque. In the return-voyage, the shipmaster, Douwe Annes of Enkhuizen and his crew should bring the merchandise acquired in the coast. In addition, they should also obtained a statement from Querido's factor in the region at the time, Jacob Pelegrino, confirming that the ship master and crew have fulfilled all their obligations, as determined in the freight contract³³. This reference confirms the presence of Peregrino in the coast in the capacity of factor of Querido for a period likely superior to one year, as these voyages often lasted more than 20 months.

Outsiders to the Portuguese Sephardic community were also often hired as

²⁹ GAA, NA 62/210v: 24-12-1610.

³⁰ GAA, NA 160/28-29v: 4-10-1609; NA 62/210v: 24-12-1610; NA 62/206: 22-11-1610; NA 375/516-516v: 20-09-1612. T. Green, « Further considerations on the Sephardim of the Petite Côte », *History in Africa*, n. 32, 2005, p. 169, 175. P. Mark & J. da S. Horta, « Two early Seventeenth-Century Sephardic communities on Senegal's Petite Côte », *History in Africa*, n. 31, 2004, p. 239.

³¹ GAA, NA 62/218v: 19-01-1611.

³² GAA, NA 115/23: 19-09-1609; NA 117/22: 19-09-1609; NA 117/22-23: 19-12-1609; NA 62/206: 22-11-1610; NA 62/209: 8-12-1610; NA 128/182-183: 19-09-1612.

³³ GAA, NA 128/182-183: 19-09-1612; NA 645/887: 22-01-1620.



agents by Jewish merchants of Amsterdam, to serve either in the Republic or overseas. On 5 August 1611, for example, Duarte Fernandes, resident in Amsterdam, granted power of attorney to Jaspas Moerman, merchant in Rotterdam, to control the arrival and unloading of merchandise brought from western Africa in ships freighted by Fernandes and his associates³⁴.

This practice would continue in use in the following decades as means to defend the commercial interests of the Jewish merchants of Amsterdam in the Provinces and overseas. In 1646, for instance, Isaac de Carvalho, member of the community, on behalf of Pedro Dias and associates, based in Rouen (France), hired Pieter Meijnertsen of Hoorn to travel on board the *Eendracht* to the Calabar Coast in the capacity of commercial agent of the aforementioned merchants³⁵. As a whole, these agents formed in many cases extended financial and commercial networks that guaranteed the successful participation of the Portuguese Jewish Sephardi in the trade with various regions of western Africa and within its different commercial branches.

INVESTMENTS: GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS AND COMMERCIAL BRANCHES

During the period here under study, the investment of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam and their associates, either in the Dutch Republic or elsewhere, showed distinct characteristics in the decades before and after the establishment of the WIC.

In the years prior to 1621, the Portuguese Jewish merchants of Amsterdam managed a portfolio of investments in three main geo-economic regions of the western coast of Africa, namely the north of Africa, Senegambia and the Rivers of Guinea, and the coast of Angola. Their investments were, however, more prominent in the two latter regions than in the former. Among the most active members of the Portuguese Sephardi in these two regions were Gaspar Sanches, Gaspar Nunes, Pero Rodrigues da Veiga, Duarte Fernandes, Diogo da Silva and Diogo Nunes Belmonte. Let us analyse now in greater detail their participation in the various commercial branches of these two regions. To do so, we will use a small number of examples, whose selection has been made accordingly to the quality and number of sources available.

During the 1600s and 1620s, Gaspar Sanches, resident in Rotterdam, and Gaspar Nunes, inhabitant of Amsterdam, were certainly two of the most active Portuguese Jewish merchants in the trade between the Republic and the region of Senegambia, Rivers of Guinea and Cape Verde. In partnership, Sanches and Nunes organized several voyages to the aforementioned regions of western Africa. Their activities were centred, essentially, in the ports of Portudal, Joal, and Rufisque and in the Cape Verdean islands. On 19 September 1609, for instance, the two merchants freighted the *St. Jacob*, with a capacity of 80 *last*, for a total of 7,000 guilders. The ship, skippered by Govert Jansen of Rotterdam, was to sail between the latter city and Portudal and return to the same port in the Maas River. In the following year a similar contract was signed with the same captain³⁶.

Gaspar Sanches and Gaspar Nunes appear also involved in the commerce of

³⁴ GAA, NA 124/131-131v: 5-08-1611.

³⁵ GAA, NA 1690/599: 16-04-1648.

³⁶ GAA, NA 115/22-23: 19-09-1609; NA 117/22: 19-09-1609; NA 117-22-23: 19-09-1609; NA 62/195v: 30-09-1610.



hides between the Republic and Cape Verde. On 14 January 1611, for example, Paulus Claesz declared before the notary in Amsterdam that he had bought circa 50 hides for the value of 50 *stuivers* per piece. These were part of a load of hides, property of Sanches and Nunes imported from Cape Verde by Gaspar Fernandes, agent of the aforementioned merchants, on board the ship of Govert Jansen. In the following year, these merchants hired again Govert Jansen for one more voyage to Cape Verde to acquire a new shipment of hides³⁷.

In Angola, the main activity of the Portuguese Jewish merchants of Amsterdam appears to have been the slave trade and purchase of ivory. During the period under study, Diogo Nunes Belmont appears among the most active businessmen in the region. The ships freighted by Belmonte to trade with Angola were mainly busy with the transport of slaves from Angola to the Spanish Americas, and with the shipment of precious stones and other local products from the Americas to Europe. On 22 May 1613, for instance, Belmonte freighted *De Engel Michiel* to transport slaves from Luanda to the Spanish Indies. The ship was expected to return to Seville with a load of gold, and silver³⁸. In the following years and until the first half of the 1620s, several similar voyages were organized by Belmonte and his associates for identical purposes, as we will explain in more detail in the last section of this study devoted to the reconstruction of financial and commercial networks of the Portuguese Jewish merchants to operate in Europe and overseas.

But, here, it is also important to emphasize that the activities of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam were not limited solely to the decades prior to the 1620s. After the establishment of the WIC, in order to continue participating in the Atlantic trade, the Portuguese Jewish merchants adopted several strategies (alike their fellow Christian merchants). In fact, these businessmen continued their activities in the Atlantic and western Africa either indirectly by offering their shipping services to the Company, or directly by challenging the monopoly of the WIC over the Atlantic commerce.

In the decades following the establishment of the WIC, the efforts of the Company to implement and control the monopoly led many merchants with interest in trading with the regions under the jurisdiction of the Company to become involved in activities deemed as illegal by the WIC. Among the several strategies adopted were, for example, the use of false passports and papers, the establishment of freight contracts that forced ship captains to depart from ports outside of the Republic and that recommended shipmasters to avoid anchoring at Atlantic ports controlled by the WIC, including those in the western coast of Africa. On 16 April 1648, for example, *De Eendracht*, freighted by Isaac de Carvalho, already quoted, for a voyage between Amsterdam and the Calabar Coast, departed from the Republic, but with a passport issued by the King of France. In the return-voyage to Europe, due to problems with the 240 slaves onboard, the ship was forced to anchor in the island of São Tomé, and the officials of the Portuguese Crown decided to arrest the ship, crew and cargo under the suspicion of false documents³⁹.

However, the Portuguese Jewish merchants of the Republic did also develop

³⁷ GAA, NA 62/217v: 14-01-1611; NA 62/219: 19-01-1611; NA 62/421: 2-01-1612; NA 62/589: 31-01-1612.

³⁸ GAA, NA 258/8iv: 19-03-1613; NA 254/188-188v: 22-05-1614.

³⁹ GAA, NA 1690/599: 16-04-1648.



collaborative relations with the Company, including, in some cases, the establishment of partnerships for the transport of merchandise, as well as the direct participation in the Atlantic commerce; the latter made possible by the end of the 1640s. In 1660, for instance, António Luís, merchant in Amsterdam, signed a freight contract with Claes Pieters Booschieter and Pieter Honting, directors of the Chamber of West Friesland and the North Quartier of the Company. The *St. Jacob* was to sail between the Republic and the Gulf of Guinea, where she should be loaded with slaves, destined to Curaçao for further re-exportation into the Spanish Americas and the intra-Caribbean slave market⁴⁰.

Given, however, the high risks associated with this type of activities, the constant disputes between the European States for the control of the imperial spaces, and the regular attacks to ships, from the 1640s onwards, several members of the Portuguese Sephardic merchant community of the Republic opted to replace their direct participation in the trade with western Africa and other Atlantic regions under the jurisdiction of the Dutch Company, with forms of indirect involvement in these businesses. These forms would be mainly two: purchase of shares of the WIC in the Amsterdam stock exchange and credit offers to other Jewish merchants based in the Caribbean, the Antilles and the Dutch Guianas. Here, the latter were involved in trade and in the development of plantation for intensive production of cash crops, in particular, sugar cane⁴¹. After the later 1640s, the Portuguese Sephardi appear referred in the Notarial Acts of Amsterdam mainly as buyers and/or owners of WIC shares, often from the Chamber of Amsterdam. Luís Gomes de Ávila, Manuel Dias de Pas, Luís Mendes de Pas, Duarte Dias de Pas, Andréa de los Rios, Miguel de los Rios, Luís de Azevedo, Joseph Mendes da Costa, Jacob Vila Real and Diogo Rodrigues de Spinosa were among the businessmen of the community involved in this type of activity. The purchase of Company shares was often done through brokers of the Amsterdam stock Exchange and other businessmen in the city, including Albertus Ruijtier, Samuel Cassart, Dirck and Adriaen Snooy, Egbert Schut, Adriaen Blocq Martensz and Philippo Sannios⁴². This practice would continue in the following decades. Still in October and November 1660, for example, Abraham Sena, Portuguese Jewish merchant resident in Amsterdam gave permission to Jean van Haringhoeck, to sell shares of the WIC in the value of 2,400 guilders⁴³.

⁴⁰ GAA, NA 2211/666: 25-10-1661. See also: H. Jordaan, « The Curaçao Slave Market: From Asiento trade to Free trade, 1700-1730 » in Johannes Postma & Victor Enthoven (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 219-258. Wim Klooster, « Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade » in *Ibid.*, p. 203-218. Johannes Postma, « Suriname and its Atlantic connections » in *Ibid.*, p. 287-322.

⁴¹ Catia Antunes, « Desarrollo y Características de una Sociedad Multicultural » in A. Crespo Solana and M. D. Gonzalez-Ripoll (dir.), *Historia de las Antillas no Hispanas*, Madrid, Ediciones Doce Calles/Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2011, p. 421-440. *Id.*, « Poblacion en las Antillas Neerlandesas, siglos XVI-XXI » in *Ibid.*, p. 399-420. C. Ch. Goslinga, *A short history of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam*, La Haye, Martinus Nijhoff, 1979. *Id.*, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1985. *Id.*, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1990.

⁴² GAA, NA 2188A/134: 23-02-1649; NA 876/24v-25: 11-02-1650; NA 2189A364: 11-05-1650; NA 2189B/662: 26-08-1650; NA 2189B/688: 27-08-1650; NA 2189B/706: 31-08-1650; NA 2189B/709: 31-08-1650; NA 2189B/940: 21-10-1650; NA 2189B/954: 27-10-1650.

⁴³ GAA, NA 1136/313-318v: 7-03-1661.



NETWORKS

To guarantee good connections between various regions of investment and commercial branches it was essential for any merchant of the time to build a network of agents to finance the business, safeguard related risks, to assure the transactions and transport of cargos in safety.

Diogo Nunes Belmonte, also mentioned in the sources as Jacob Belmonte, is a case in point to illustrate the type of networks built by the merchants of the Portuguese Sephardic community operating in western African and combining this activity with a wide range of other initiatives. His activities can be traced between 1613 and 1629. During this period, Belmonte was involved in the trade with western Africa, the north of Africa, Brazil, Spanish America and the Mediterranean. Given Belmonte's connections with ship masters of the Hanseatic cities it is also likely that his businesses and activities did also encompass the Baltic; although in the source materials we did not find direct evidence of his participation in this area.

In terms of business branches, Belmonte had a diversified portfolio, combining investments in various commercial branches along the western coast of Africa with businesses in other overseas and European spaces. In the archives, we could find clear evidence of his involvement in the ivory, hides, and gold trades, in the slave trade, and in the sugar shipping and trade, as well as of other products, including precious stones.

In western Africa, Belmonte had investments in the north of Africa, Guinea and Angola. In the north of Africa, Diogo Nunes had commercial relations with the city of Salé (present-day Morocco). In this business, Diogo Dias Querido, his brother-in-law, also known as Aron Querido, was Belmonte's main partner and agent, staying, at times, in Salé, in the capacity of Belmonte's factor⁴⁴.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the main investments of Belmonte were in Guinea and Angola. In the Rivers of Guinea, Diogo Nunes participated actively in the trade of hides and ivory. The ships freighted by Belmonte to operate in this region sailed between the Republic and Guinea, returning to their ports of departure, or, sometimes, to other destinations, located mainly in the Mediterranean. Here, Belmonte, also had important businesses. In 1612, for example, Diogo Nunes in partnership with Diogo Dias Querido, Eliau Benevista and Francisco Lopes Pinto, the latter two Jewish merchants based in Venice, entrusted Jacob Peregrino, Jewish merchant in Amsterdam, already quoted, a cargo to be traded in the Petite Cote of Senegal. In the return-voyage to Europe, the captain of the ship *Jonas*, Douwe Annes of Enkhuizen, already cited, had clear instructions to sail to Livorno, where the cargo (possibly slaves, hides and ivory) was to be traded. In these activities, Dias Querido and his associates in Venice, appear to be Belmonte's main commercial partners and representatives in the Mediterranean region⁴⁵.

The ships heading to Angola, on the other hand, were busy with the transport of slaves to the Spanish Americas, and returned to Seville loaded with precious metals and other products, as we have mentioned earlier⁴⁶. To participate in the transatlantic

⁴⁴ GAA, NA 632/57/59: 22-03-1626.

⁴⁵ GAA, NA 258/83: 28-01-1614; NA 645/887: 22-01-1690.

⁴⁶ GAA, NA 258/81v: 19-03-1613; NA 254/188-188v: 22-05-1614.



slave trade Belmonte depended on efficient connections in Europe, Africa and the Americas. In Europe, Diogo Nunes was associated with Sebastião Ribeiro and Manuel Carvalho, both based in Amsterdam. In this business, Sebastião Ribeiro was not only an investor in the voyages, but also served as ship captain on several occasions. In 1613, for instance, in the voyage of *De Engel Michiel*, freighted by both merchants, Ribeiro not only commanded the ship but also received clear instructions to buy slaves in Angola, and sell them in the West Indies. Among the ports listed to disembark and sell slaves were: the islands of Jamaica and Martinique, and several ports along the coast of Honduras⁴⁷.

Belmonte and Ribeiro also maintained close connections with Custódio Lobo da Costa in Lisbon; whilst in the Spanish Americas his main contact was Francisco Ribeiro. Custódio da Costa, brother of Ribeiro was also merchant, and on several occasions also acted as captain of the ships freighted by Belmonte and Ribeiro, and as their representative in Iberia and overseas. In 1623, for instance, the ship *Espírito Santo da Nazaré*, freighted by Belmonte and Ribeiro, was commanded by Costa. The ship departed from Lisbon to Seville. There Costa was responsible for taking care of all paper work at the *Casa de la Contratación* to acquire all required licences to sail to the Spanish America, the main destination of the vessel⁴⁸. From Seville, Costa was expected to head south to Angola, where he was also responsible for the purchase of slaves⁴⁹. Manuel de Carvalho, Portuguese resident in Amsterdam, was also involved in this business, providing credit to Belmonte⁵⁰.

During this period, Belmonte appeared also involved in the sugar trade between Brazil and Portugal⁵¹. However, the participation of Belmonte in the sugar trade was not only limited to the import of Brazilian sugar to Portugal, but also included its redistribution to the Dutch Republic and the Hanseatic cities⁵². Diogo Nunes appears also engaged in the redistribution of Brazilian sugar across the Mediterranean, using several ports in the Italian cities for this purpose. During this period, Belmonte freighted several ships in the Republic to transport sugar from Porto, Viana and Lisbon to the ports of Livorno, Pisa and Venice⁵³.

In the Mediterranean, Belmonte was also involved in the trade of hides and precious stones⁵⁴. In this region, his main activities depended on a wide network that linked Livorno, Venice and Pisa: Jorge da Veiga Pinto was his contact in the first city, Eliaú Benevista, Rafael da Cunha and Abraham Cousin in the second, and Francisco Gomes de Morais in the latter.

Equally important to guarantee his participation in the different regions and business branches were Belmonte's contacts in northern Europe. These connections were essential to obtain insurances and credit. In Antwerp, his main contacts were

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Linda A. Newson & Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale: The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish America in the Early Seventeenth century*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, chap. 1. Henriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, Sevilla, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1977.

⁴⁹ GAA, NA 646^a/394: 28-03-1623.

⁵⁰ GAA, NA 146/199v-200v: 23-02-1617.

⁵¹ GAA, NA 253/reg. 12/37: 21-03-1613.

⁵² GAA, NA 646sa/672: 1-09-1623.

⁵³ GAA, NA 151/1v: 28-10-1617; NA 645/449: 3-10-1618; NA 645/509: 14-02-1619; NA 645/778: 31-06-1619.

⁵⁴ GAA, NA 254/301-303v: 4-08-1614.



Manuel Nunes d'Évora, and Manuel and Diogo Francês; whilst Jacome Luis and Johan Luce were his main representatives in Baione and London. Finally in Amsterdam, Belmonte depended upon a specific group of businessmen to insure his vessels. Among these were Jan Jansz Smits, Anthoni van Diemen, Pelgrom van Dronckelaer, Hans van Soldt de Jonge, Hendrick Voet, Albert Schuijt, Willem Pauw, and Van der Boggeart. In 1614, these men would insure slaves transported from Luanda to the Spanish Indies on board *De Engel Michiel*, already mentioned⁵⁵.

Like other networks recently studied⁵⁶, and in contrast with the traditional historiography, the network of Belmonte shows clearly the presence of merchants outsiders to the Jewish community of the Republic and other regions. The case here analysed also makes evident the length of these networks from a geographical view point, encompassing, sometimes, territories under the jurisdiction of different european monarchs and their empires. This evidence also confirms the diverse and complementary character of the investment of these businessmen in various business branches⁵⁷.

CONCLUSION

The data analyzed in this study clearly show that to organize their participation in the trade with western Africa and other regions, the Portuguese Sephardi merchants of Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic relied not only on members of the community but also on outsiders.

We find, therefore, Christian businessmen based in Amsterdam as insurers of ships and cargos of Jewish merchants. Partnerships in the freightage and equipage of ships with outsiders are also regularly referred in the sources. Less common was the recruitment of commercial agents among merchants that did not belong to the community. However, this choice or preference was, in our view, due to the knowledge that these men had of the overseas territories, the several commercial branches, and trading practices in use. This know how gave them a good reputation either among the merchants of the Portuguese Sephardic community, but also among the Christian merchants of the Republic, who also hired their services.

The information here presented shows once again the advantages of the Diaspora for the development of the economic activities of the Sephardi. But, simultaneously, also challenges the image of these activities and their actors as solely of Jewish origin; an idea dominant in the historiography till recent times. Like other

⁵⁵ GAA, NA 254/188-189: 22-05-1614.

⁵⁶ Francesca Trivellato, *The familiarity of strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and cross-cultural trade in the Early Modern Period*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009. Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and trust in the eighteenth century Atlantic World. Spanish merchants and their overseas networks*, [s.l.], Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 2010.

⁵⁷ Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, « Crossing Empires: Portuguese, Sephardic, and Dutch Business Networks in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1580-1674 », *The Americas*, vol. 68, n. 1, Julho, 2011, p. 7-32. For recent discussion on the formation of informal networks and their operations in imperial spaces see, among others: Amélia Polónia, « Informal self-organised networks in the First Global Age. The case of the Jesuits in Japan », *The Bulletin of the Institute for World Affairs Kyoto Sangyo University*, n. 28, 2012. Catia Antunes, « Free Agents and Formal Institutions in the Portuguese Empire: Towards a Framework of Analysis », *Portuguese Studies*, vol. 28, n. 2, 2012, p. 173-185. Ana Sofia Ribeiro, *Mechanisms and criteria of cooperation in trading networks of the First Global Age. The case study of Simon Ruiz network, 1557-1606*, PhD diss., University of Porto, 2011.



recent studies about networks of Jewish merchants and their financial and commercial transactions⁵⁸, our study shows that these merchant also balanced partnerships with merchants outside the group and that these partnerships were, often determined far more by economic interest, skill, reputation and trust, than by sentiments of belonging to the same ethnic, religious and cultural group.

⁵⁸ Catia Antunes, « Amsterdam Cross-Cultural Partnerships in the Baltic-Atlantic Link, 1580-1674 » in Leos Muller, Philip Rossner, & Toshiaki Tamaki (dir.), *The Rise of the Atlantic Economy and the North Sea/Baltic Trade, 1500-1800*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011, p. 103-119. *Id.*, « Investimento no Atlantico: redes multiculturais de negocio, 1580-1776 » in *XV Congresso Internacional de AHILA - 1808-2008: Crisi y Problemas en el Mundo Atlantico*, Leiden, Dept. Estudios Latinoamericanos, 2009.



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