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Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World

edited by

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Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World

Introduction

DIOGO RAMADA CURTO AND ANTHONY MOLHO

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“Circuits et réseaux se trouvent dominés régulièrement par des groupes tenaces qui se les approprient et en interdisent l’exploitation aux autres, le cas échéant.”¹ Fernand Braudel’s insight was at the heart of a small workshop on commercial networks in the early modern world that was held at the European University Institute in Florence in late October 2001. In turn, the workshop itself was part of a year-long seminar whose object was to read and reflect upon, along side a group of young researchers, Fernand Braudel’s two great works, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* (1949), and *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme XVe-XVIIIe siècle* (1979). The starting point of the seminar was simple enough. How can we, today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, read Braudel? What ideas, suggestions, hypotheses is it still possible to find in these two classic works that might serve as useful points of reference for an investigation of topics that were central to Braudel’s own interests? And how can this exercise contribute to a fresh approach to the study of early modern European history? For an historian engaged in the study of the Mediterranean in the late medieval and early modern centuries, and another in that of European expansion and colonial imperialism from the fifteenth century onwards, Braudel’s works appeared as a kind of vade mecum, from which, time and again, we drew the most varied themes of collaboration.

From the very beginning, we thought that the seminar could proceed along two basic axes, one geographic and conceptual, the other methodological. The first was to place at the center of our inquiries the history of the Mediterranean Sea, but, along side it, to extend our discussions to the histories of other oceans in the early modern era. A comparative agenda, and the research interests of several seminar participants dictated such a widening of geographic scope. From our perspective, the history of the Mediterranean offered a splendid case for the study of the circulation of products, and people (particularly of merchants involved in long-distance trade), the encounters/confrontations of

¹ Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle économie et capitalisme XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, tome II – *Les jeux de l’échange* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1979), ed. “Le Livre de Poche”, p. 165.

different cultures, and the collision of empires, most especially those of Philip II and Süleyman the Magnificent. Anyone familiar with Braudel's works will recognize that these were central themes in his history of the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century. Yet, from the start it was also evident that the same topics could also be used to understand the histories of the Atlantic, and Indian Oceans, of the Indonesian Archipelago, and of the China Sea. This ambition to use the Mediterranean as a starting point to think comparatively about other intercontinental spaces was already expressed by two scholarly series published by the "Centre de Recherches Historiques" of the old "VI^e Section de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes". In fact, since the 1950's a series entitled "Affaires et gens d'affaires" had started to illuminate attitudes, techniques, and the role of merchants, giving particularly emphasis to Italian groups, but also covering non Italian families like the Fugger, the Ruiz, or French and Portuguese houses. The imposing publication of merchant letters, dating from the last decades of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, clearly established the contrast between Genoese circuits of banking operating in Madrid and the Portuguese networks extending from India to South America.² In another series on "Ports, routes, trafics", Braudel and his collaborators also attempted to place the Mediterranean in a large comparative context, which encompassed the Atlantic and even went as far as the Philippines.³ In our case, it would be fairer to say that this perspective, that extended our inquiries from the Mediterranean to other Oceans and Seas, was more of a working hypothesis. It stressed the importance of a larger comparative agenda, that was formulated slowly, thanks to the works of many scholars, but that was, initially at least, inspired by "cette histoire comparée du monde qui, seule, pourrait résoudre ou, pour le moins, poser correctement nos problèmes".⁴ Repeatedly we turned to the studies of Jacob van Leur, Bernard Bailyn, Irfan Habib, Kirti Chaudhuri, Ashin Das Gupta, Michael N. Pearson, Philip Curtin, Joseph Miller, Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, Denys Lombard, Christopher Bayly, Sanjay Subrahmaniam, Leonard Blussé, and others, in order to analyse their approaches, hypotheses and

² Henri Lapeyre, *Simon Ruiz et les "asientos" de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953); Idem, *Une famille de marchands, les Ruiz; contribution à l'étude du commerce entre la France et l'Espagne* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1955); José Gentil da Silva, *Stratégie des Affaires à Lisbonne entre 1595 et 1607. Lettres marchandes des Rodrigues d'Evora et Veiga* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1956); Idem, *Marchandises et finances*, vol. II – *Lettres de Lisbonne (1563-1578)* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1959); Idem, *idem*, vol. III (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1961); Felipe Ruíz Martín, *Lettres marchandes échangées entre Florence et Medina del Campo* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1965).

³ Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique, 1504-1650*, 8 tomes (Paris: Armand Colin, S.E.V.P.E.N., 1955-1960); Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique au XVII^e siècle (1570-1670). Etude économique* (Paris, S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960).

⁴ Braudel, *op. cit.*, II, p. 146.

conclusions, to understand the vocabulary they used to convey their ideas, and to measure their findings against those of Braudel.⁵

The second axis of our discussions was more methodological, perhaps even epistemological. In our weekly sessions we were repeatedly struck by what seemed, at once, our proximity to and distance from Braudel's ideas and conclusions. Surely, today, we stand rather far removed from the conceptual contexts of economic history within which Braudel had cast his own inquiry. Although today's research agendas have distanced themselves from these positions, they cannot avoid issues raised by cultural anthropology, and by the linguistic or cultural turn, and these, naturally, do not figure at all in Braudel's works.⁶ Yet, concurrently and soon following the opening of our discussions, it became clear to everyone that one of the key insights available in our inquiries was Braudel's idea that there is no simple linear history in the development of markets. Here was a firmly non teleological view of the relationship between the past and the present that brought Braudel very close to the sorts of historical

⁵ Jacob Cornelis van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: essays in Asian social and economic history*, translation by James S. Holmes and A. van Marle (The Hague: W. Van Hoeve, 1955); Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, 1st ed. 1955); Blair B. King and Michael N. Pearson, eds., *The Age of Partnership: Europeans in Asia before dominion* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979); Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra, eds., *Companies and Trade : essays on overseas trading companies during the Ancien Régime* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1981); Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean : an economic history from the rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Ashin Das Gupta and M. N. Pearson, eds., *India and the Indian Ocean 1500-1800* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1987); Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death : Merchant capitalism and the Angolan slave trade, 1730-1830* (Madison, Wis. : University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Irfan Habib, "Merchant Communities in Precolonial India", in James Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires: long-distance trade in the early modern world, 1350-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 371-399; Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais: Essai d'histoire globale*, 2 vols. (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990); Christopher Bayly and S. Subrahmanyam, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India", in *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 242-265; Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund, eds., *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400-1750* (Stuggart: F. Steiner, 1991); S. Subrahmanyam, ed., *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1996); Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Viventes : formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, séculos XVI e XVII* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000); Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500-1800. Collected essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶ An interesting example of how the use of cultural anthropology intends to modify the perspective of the history of the Mediterranean is exemplified by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A study of Mediterranean History* (London: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 461-523.

views recently developed, in large measure, thanks to the linguistic turn and cultural studies. For our specific discussions, Braudel's view provided the conceptual ground from which to examine the history of the early modern era from a global, non-Eurocentric perspective. The decision to focus the seminar's collective attention on the histories of commercial networks in the early modern era was borne in the course of the seminar, as we set out to understand the implications both of our comparative agenda, and of the reflection on our positioning vis-à-vis Braudel, simultaneously distant from, and close to his works. Here was a concrete topic that could enable us to reach several goals: be at once specific and comparative; examine some of the current explanations about the nature of early modern capitalism; place our understanding of European history within the context of broader world developments; finally, see the degree to which we could still draw on Braudel for an understanding of these phenomena. The histories of merchant communities and of their complex internal hierarchies, ranging from peddlars to bankers, seemed to offer an excellent entry into his work.

In a most important respect, however, Braudel could offer us only indirect help. The word "réseau" does not even appear in the index of *La Méditerranée*, and the one entry for the word "diaspora" refers to migrations of mountain peoples. When he used the concept, it was only to characterize a small group of Italian bankers who controlled, throughout Europe, different forms of exchange, and who "domine par là le jeu de la spéculation marchande."⁷ Yet, one of that great book's most significant passages points precisely in the direction of the historical importance of commercial networks. Where can we find the unity of the Mediterranean world, asked Braudel. His answer was crucial for our understanding of our own enterprise: "Aujourd'hui encore [...] une Méditerranée des hommes n'existe que dans la mesure où continuent à la créer l'ingéniosité, le travail, la peine des ces mêmes hommes. Ce n'est pas l'eau qui lie les régions de la Méditerranée, mais les peuples de la mer [...]. La Méditerranée n'a d'unité que par le mouvement des hommes, les liaisons qu'il implique, les routes qui le conduisent [...]. Dans ce processus aux mille variantes, tout part évidemment d'une activité marchande omniprésente, primordiale, organisatrice."⁸ Braudel's Mediterranean could not exist outside the movement of people who, over the centuries, criss crossed that sea, in search of profit, adventure, or safety. For our part, starting from this Braudelian observation, we wanted to ask a series of questions of our own: What kind of unity, and what sorts of links were forged by the movement of people implied in the very concept of commercial network? And from that question there arose a series of others. What was the nature of these networks? Who comprised them? How did

⁷ *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 5ème ed., tome I (Paris: Armand Colin, 1952), p. 294-295.

⁸ *Idem*, I, pp. 253, 292.

they function? What was their relationship to contemporary economic structures and to political institutions? Perhaps most importantly as our work progressed, what analytical tools might be necessary for understanding their histories?

In another respect, Braudel's assistance was more immediate and direct. Inspired by the work of the Indian economic historian Irfan Habib, the author of *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme* had called attention to the sophisticated level of merchant organization in the Indian Ocean. More particularly, he had emphasized the importance of the Hindu money-changing system with which Europeans came in contact in the sixteenth century.⁹ Implicit in Braudel's analysis was a questioning of the old master narrative of European economic history. Different merchant groups, identified mostly as "nations" created and dominated "circuits et réseaux". For Braudel, this idea was applicable not only to the Italian merchants, Lucchese, Florentines, Genoese, who were organized in colonies, but also to Chinese, Japanese, and Indian merchants. There was no doubt about the role of these: "leurs réseaux résisteront aux surprises portugaises et aux brutalités des Hollandais."¹⁰ Since Braudel, other historians had been more explicit, even polemical, in making this point. A long and rich series of studies into the role of merchant communities and commercial networks, in the Indian Ocean and beyond, had often made short shrift of old explanations and traditional research agendas regarding the economic "rise of the West." For our purposes, one point had emerged most clearly in these studies. From 1498 when Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut, through the eighteenth century, European merchants in Asia mostly participated in old, and well established local networks of trade that were operated by local entrepreneurs. Old certainties had been questioned in the course of these studies. The grand explanations of European economic history could no longer be sustained, and a whole range of subjects had to be rethought. These comprised not only traditional questions of economic and social history, but encompassed domains of political history, and the history of culture. They ranged from our very understanding of the history of capitalism, to often self satisfied celebrations of European rationality, and to the construction of a teleology of that rationality's transmission from the Italian centers of commercial capitalism in the late Middle Ages, to north European (mostly Protestant) regions, to the eventual triumph of a bourgeoisie committed to the principles of free trade.

Our decision to organize a workshop on commercial networks was born in the course of these discussions, with Braudel often serving at once as foil and guide, and with the work of many other historians serving often to orient (but perhaps just as often to disorient) our thinking. The notion was that the

⁹ *Civilisation matérielle économie et capitalisme XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, II, p. 130-131.

¹⁰ *Idem*, II, p. 166.

presentation of a small number of highly focussed papers by scholars working on specific aspects of our general topic would help us to crystallize our thinking on questions that were occupying our discussions. The workshop was held on 30 and 31 October 2001, with six papers presented, five of which are published below. The versions of the papers published here express not only their authors' original ideas, but also bespeak the lively discussion that characterized our meeting. Prodded by a number of the participants, and encouraged to clarify and sharpen the formulation of their ideas by Lucette Valensi and Avrom Udovitch, who acted as the seminar's formal commentators, the presenters rewrote, often extensively, their papers, in the form they appear below.

What then do these papers tell us about commercial networks in the early modern world? How do they address the questions that we faced in the course of our discussions? The first, immediate, if perhaps not unexpected, answer is that often the contents of these papers come close to Braudel's own topics and questions. No need to dwell on this point, save perhaps to note that historians today could do worse than to begin their inquiries on the history of the early modern economy and society by turning to the themes raised by Braudel himself. Yet, a reading of these papers also suggests that these Braudelian themes are approached today from decidedly non Braudelian perspectives. This observation holds especially true in the scope of the historiographic references and the range of theoretical tools brought to bear by North-American and Italian authors. David Hancock's musing largely holds true for the other papers as well. His method, he says, is "eclectic, theoretically influenced but not theoretical," entailing a "detailed and particularistic" approach to "uncovering the past." Key here is his expression "theoretically influenced but not theoretical," a stance with which, no doubt, Braudel would wholeheartedly agree, but one which brings Hancock and his contemporaries in contact with a vast array of new theoretical impulses on which to rely in constructing their arguments.

There is no clearer example of this situation than in the papers that deal with the Atlantic community. In Braudel's days, studies of the Atlantic economy and of colonial societies were almost invariably focussed on imperial institutions – even if Braudel himself had stressed the importance of merchant networks composed of Armenians, Jews and more particularly of Portuguese New Christians.¹¹ Later, following him, this focus was enriched by new sociological perspectives, all the while keeping the inquiry's focus sharply trained on the Empire. Compare these approaches to those of the New Atlantic History, represented here by Hancock's article on the emergence of an Atlantic

¹¹ *Idem*, II, 167-176.

network economy in the seventeenth century.¹² Concentrating on the production, circulation and consumption of Madeira wine, Hancock advances a sophisticated argument drawing on recent theoretical discussions in “chemistry, geology, physics and artificial intelligence.” His key point is his reference to “complex systems.” When applied to a unit of analysis such as the Atlantic community, the historian faces a situation whose dominant characteristic was “an inter-connectedness of world society and economy,” where “causes of action were multiple,” relationships between different factors taken into account “not merely hierarchical,” and where there prevailed a “decentralization of social and economic authority.” Precisely such a “multi directional communication in the world of Atlantic commerce built the important ties that bound people together across imperial boundaries and transformed a collection of independent operatives and operations into a resilient commercial infrastructure.”

Each in his own way, the other three authors present arguments about the commercial networks they study, each inspired by different, but commensurate theoretical points of departure. Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert’s analysis of the Portuguese commercial networks starts with the important observation that these trading networks “were decentralized in form and function,” and that they differed markedly from “more formally organized commercial institutions, such as joint-stock companies, or the modern corporation.” This observation, in turn, begs for an explanation. For if commercial networks were decentralized in form and function, how can we account for their internal cohesion, and for the willingness of their members to cooperate with each other, even in the absence of legal institutions that could enforce contracts between them? Were these merchants moved by the sort of economic rationality that previous scholars, from Max Weber to Douglas North and Abner Greif, often imputed to them? Studnicki-Gizbert reaches a different conclusion. He writes that the Portuguese merchants “knit together their networks on a different basis than that posited by neo-classical economic analysis and utilitarian social theory. Interdependence and mutualism defined and created these networks.” In turn, this observation takes this young Canadian historian to an exploration of a range of subjects intended to define the Portuguese conception of “self and collectivity,” a search that finally leads him to the important conclusion that “credit,” or “good reputation” was the “most important commodity” circulating in the network, and that this commodity was acquired and accumulated by a series of practices such as gift giving, marriage exchanges, and ties of *compadrazgo*. In short, rather than promoting values of individualism, the proper operations of commercial networks depended on “interdependence in social relations.”

¹² For a complete bibliography of the New Atlantic History stimulated by Bernard Baylin, see the references provided by David Armitage, “Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?”, *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), pp. 427-445.

Following a somewhat different itinerary, and drawing on a different set of theoretical sources, most fruitfully the work of the American anthropologist Fredrick Barth, Francesca Trivellato, whose essay is devoted to cross-cultural merchant networks woven by three different sets of merchants – Jews of Livorno, Italians of Lisbon, and Hindus of Goa – reaches comparable conclusions. Her theoretical point of departure is network analysis, with whose aid she seeks to understand “durable commercial relations” especially among groups who were members of “mercantile communities of different ethnic and religious origins.” She writes that “network analysis can contribute to narrow the gap between an anthropological approach (focusing on social bonds and ethical norms) and an economic approach (presuming rationality as a basis for economic activities), for it allows us to look at both the working of reciprocity and reputation control between members of different communities, and also at the construction of their identities as a process of the integration itself, rather than as a given.” Her analysis leads her to a double conclusion about the workings of a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, inter-continental network of private merchants. First, that in order to function, such a cross-cultural network “needed to be tightly connected, vast in its geographical breadth, and long-lived.” Second, that, as in the case of the merchants studied by Studnicki-Gizbert, the most important commodity available to the merchants of the network was reputation, a commodity, shrewdly suggested by Trivellato following a passing hint of Braudel’s¹³, that circulated within the network thanks to the correspondence frequently and regularly exchanged between its members.

One theme recurs with persistence in these essays: An understanding of commercial networks in the early modern world is impossible on economic terms alone. Cultural values, as for example changing tastes of wine consumption, conceptions of self and collectivity, culturally determined sources of trust and reputation control, or first-hand knowledge of local traditions are essential for understanding how these networks were constituted and how they persisted over time. Maria Fusaro’s essay on the operations of commercial networks in the Venetian Mediterranean, most especially on the interaction of Greek and English merchants, makes its most theoretical contribution at this point. For, as she argues, the anti-Venetian alliance between Greeks and English could be successful not only because of the presence of a common rival but also because of the Greeks’ familiarity with local “cultural peculiarities,” an advantage that gave a decisive edge to this partnership of anti-Venetian commercial networks. Of course, cultural considerations were always present in previous discussions of commercial networks. Even the most recent studies, when focussing on their internal operations, dwell on their ethnic/linguistic,

¹³ Braudel, *La Méditerranée*, 294: “un petit groupe d’ hommes avertis, renseignés par une active correspondance...”

familial, or national characteristics. The very way in which the issue of commercial networks is often formulated singles out this dimension, writing as historians often do about Armenian, Jewish, Greek, or Arab networks. Even Philip Curtin, whose pioneering studies on cross-cultural trade have greatly contributed to the recent discussions of the history of commerce, refers to trade diasporas, implying by this term the dispersion of culturally homogeneous groups in diverse geographic points. The four papers below raise this issue at two different levels: the alleged homogeneity of the networks's membership, and the degree of inter cultural exchanges between networks.

Francesca Trivellato's reflection on the internal membership of these commercial networks offers an opening for further reflection on the first of these two issues. She writes that "the adjective cross cultural is itself problematic, because it presumes that more or less clear boundaries between 'cultures' can be traced, thus obliterating internal diversity and conflict and assuming fixity over time[...]. My analysis looks at collective identities neither as fixed characters nor as constantly fluid representations." A somewhat similar point could perhaps have been made on the basis of Fusaro's evidence. Her paper brings to the fore the existence of interesting and composite groups of Anglo-Greek, and Greco-Venetian entrepreneurs, whose activities served to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps between competing groups of merchants in the islands of the Ionian Sea. Hancock strikes a variation of this theme, when he points to the fact that Madeira's successful trading houses "had to go beyond the base of family, kin, and ethnic relations to more extended personal and business relations." In short, what emerges here is the more complex, and variegated nature of these networks, and the variety of criteria by which membership in a network was worked out, shifting and changing over time, on the basis of the circumstances in which groups of merchants had to work. The issue of intercultural trade appears nearly in all papers. Trivellato examines the relations of Sephardic Jews, Italians based in Lisbon, and Hindu merchants in Goa, while Fusaro deals with English, Venetians, and Greeks working in the Ionian Sea. What emerges most forcefully from these two papers is the degree to which cross-cultural cooperation was essential for the success of these networks. The coral and diamonds that sustained the trade between the Mediterranean and the Indian Oceans, and the currants of the Peloponesos and the Ionian islands that attracted English merchants to the east-central Mediterranean brought into contact groups of merchants with vastly different traditions. It was perhaps one thing for Greeks, then subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and English to find grounds of cooperation, even if religious, linguistic, and political differences between them were far from negligible.

The cultural gap was altogether of a different order when the groups in question were as diverse as Sephardic Jews, Italians, that is Catholics based in

one of the rigidly observant Catholic countries of Europe where the Inquisition remained active for generations, and the Camotim, Hindu merchants in Goa. Yet, even in these cases, ties between these networks were constructed over time, based on mutual interest, and trust that were accumulated over the years. Drawing on these studies, it will now be possible to go beyond a duality that is often found in current treatments of commercial networks. One need no longer choose between anthropological analyses centered on individual communities (defined by kinship, ethnicity, or religious affiliation), and functionalist analyses of economic institutions, based on assumptions about human rationality and perceptions of economic advantage. The complexity of the situations revealed by our studies cannot be reduced to anthropological or functionalist models.

The same tendency to rely on more complex concepts and analytical tools is evident in the descriptions of circuits of trade and the dynamics of the markets that are presented in these papers. The point made by Studnicki-Gizbert is nicely complemented by Lucia Fratarelli-Fischer's paper. These two scholars suggest that it might be possible to conceive of two different ways of describing the Portuguese presence in the Atlantic and Mediterranean networks of trade. The group of Portuguese New Christians established in Peru – working within an institutional imperial structure that they were never able to control entirely – developed a network of trade, credit, and social communication between Potosi, Lima, Seville, Lisbon, Madrid, and Amsterdam. For their part, the Portuguese Jews from Livorno developed an extensive network of trade, encompassing different Mediterranean ports, relying on the tobacco contract in Lisbon to supply the Tuscan market. In the former case, the network served the interests of a mobile group. In the second case, it seems that the involvement in the long-distance trade allowed the group to enter into local life (which resulted in substantial investments in landed property, close relations and protection from the Grand Duke, and kinship alliances with the local aristocracy). In both cases, it is possible to follow the same ambiguities between overlapping identities, including kinship, Jewish roots, converso institutions such as chapels or confraternities, or national affiliations rooted, perhaps, in Lusitanian feelings of belonging to the same people.

One should have thought that the issue of the relations between commercial networks and existing structures of state authority would have loomed large in these papers. If they do, it is only indirectly. Surely, mercantilism now appears as an inadequate political context within which to examine the histories of commercial networks. Yet, even after discarding a simple mercantilist model, examples of complex relations between these networks and different forms of political authority are not hard to find here. They range from the symbiotic relationship that English merchants who became incorporated in the English Levant Company cultivated with the English state,

to the persecution to which New Christian merchants were not infrequently subjected by the Inquisition. Jorge Pedreira, in a paper that was not included in this collection, offered an interesting variation of the variability of relations that could be struck between merchants and the “state”. In his paper, Pedreira focused his attention on groups of Portuguese merchants working in the Atlantic port cities of Luanda, Pernambuco, and Rio de Janeiro, and the tensions generated between them and the political structures of the Empire. His argument pointed out an interesting phenomenon: Colonial merchants were able to penetrate municipal institutions, reach high social status, and accumulate considerable wealth, all the while, until the mid-eighteenth century, members of the equivalent group working in the mother country were denied these privileges by the Portuguese State. The same group of colonial Portuguese merchants were linked to each other into a network that promoted their political careers in a series of inter linked imperial ports from Luanda in the West coast of Africa, to Rio, in Brazil.¹⁴

Maria Fusaro provides an example of another kind of relationship between groups of merchants and institutions. The English Levant Company was crucially important in the establishment of English commercial control of the eastern Mediterranean, and in the confrontation between the English and Venetians in the years from ca. 1540 to 1660. However, instead of repeating traditional claims about forms of organization and patterns of rationality ascribed to North European merchant companies, in contrast to South European countries allegedly in decline, Fusaro explores the different forms of infiltration into local networks used by English merchants. In this case, it was not a Jewish network that played a key role, but a Greek one. Was this the equivalent of a form of indigenous collaboration with emerging imperial or colonial powers? Or was this English external support the best alternative for the Greeks? These are not mutually exclusive hypotheses. In any case, the important point concerns the description of different networks of trade collaborating and competing, but not necessarily following the same pattern in their organization or behavior. The varying reliance of these networks on the symbols, and, by extension, the substance of state authority is a case in point. The English flag was as proud a symbol of the English ambitions in the Mediterranean, as the Lion of Saint Mark of the Venetians’ long standing claims of superiority in the central and eastern Mediterranean. By contrast, Greeks had to content themselves with different strategies. Indeed, they represent perhaps the most interesting case of collective invisibility, as, when they could, they used Venetian, or British ships, or, even, flew the Ottoman flag. In the absence of a state with which they could readily identify and on whose resources they could rely, another state would do, at least

¹⁴ About the social status of merchants in Pernambuco, see Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *A Fronda dos Mazombos: nobres contra mascates Pernambuco 1666-1715* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995).

for a short while. Armenian and Jewish merchants understood that strategy well enough, and often shared it, even while competing with each other and with Greeks, in the Balkans and elsewhere.

These papers offer enough materials with which to imagine the possibility of crafting a dynamic and complex model of commercial networks in the early modern world. Essential for an understanding of this imaginary model might be the idea that networks based on a single identity (ethnic, religious, or linguistic) – or governed by what Avrom Udovich called a “tribal grammar” – were likely, especially if they were successful, to be transformed into more complex organizations. Indeed, one should accept the idea that networks based on a single identity might belong to a simpler and earlier form of organization than networks that combined and integrated groups, whose members had a variety of social and ethnic identities. Some of the seminar participants insisted on this point, and much of our time in one of the seminar’s sessions was devoted to it. Some participants referred to this as an evolutionary process –from a simpler to a more complex form of a network’s social organization—but several others, ourselves included, are more resistant to the use of such weighty, and deterministic terminology. Be that as it may, such change would seem to confirm another change, in the nature of the commodities associated with commercial networks. The process toward the emergence of a more refined division of labour (as described by Hancock and Trivellato) ran parallel to the specialization in the trade of a single product (Madeira wine, diamonds or coral, and tobacco). These two processes (increasing division of labour and commodity specialization) were not unrelated to the increasing complexity in the ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of commercial networks.

In short, we venture to advance a working hypothesis, applicable, perhaps, not only to the cases analyzed in the papers below. Networks organized on the basis of kinship, religion, and other non economic considerations would seem to promote trade in a variety of products, while more complex networks would tend to be oriented toward more specific commercial interests –tobacco, sugar, Madeira wine, diamonds, coral, etc. Thus, it would seem that in the period encompassed by these papers, the process toward the creation of more complex networks, more highly focused on specific commodities was at work. This development, in turn, may bespeak the increasing detachment of the economic sphere from traditional ethnic, religious, and linguistic considerations. It may well be that this historical and dynamic model adapts the well known and long standing theory regarding the existence of networks based upon weak ties. Loosely knit networks that connect individuals in a variety of directions, and that encompass friends and acquaintances in a series of non intersecting groups, may be more efficient in creating opportunities and promoting the defense of economic interests, than might tightly knit networks, each of whose members

knows the rest, all, collectively, contributing to the existence of a considerable social communication and to a combined pressure to reinforce traditional religious and family values.¹⁵

How does this dynamic model about early modern commercial networks compare with Braudel's explanations about the same kind of "circuits et réseaux"? To answer this question, one should note the big contrast between conditions governing research two generations ago, and those prevalent today. Braudel and his collaborators could count on weaving their projects around common research themes, on starting their often massive inquiries with very similar sets of questions, on sharing a common vision about their collective research enterprises. Things are very different today, with no center of gravity—personal or institutional—that could aspire to hold together research projects as diverse, yet overlapping in their interests, as were the projects of Ruggero Romano, José Gentil da Silva, Henri Lapeyre, Alberto Tenenti, Ruiz Martin and others. For them, inquiries about merchant networks were part of a larger, common project about the economic and social history, not necessarily of Europe alone. Some features of this common project had to do with the economy: establishing of a hierarchy among different "circuits" that extended from commercial to financial or banking exchanges, and from local to long-distance trade. Other features addressed questions of social organization, especially the often tumultuous and certainly not linear process that resulted in the emergence of a bourgeoisie. In some instances, this process was disrupted by a *trahison* of bourgeois standards and behaviour, and a reversion to the standards of a noble class. In others, the emergence of the bourgeoisie hinged on opportunities developed by small "nations," placed on the margins of contemporary societies, whose actions transcended the interests of individual states, as they were then emerging, or of the great contemporary Empires. Gentil da Silva once remarked that, in the early modern world, "on trouve des gens, des personnages qui sont en dehors de tout Etat. Il y a une sorte de commerce qui demeure en dehors de l'organisation politique de l'Europe qui se fait."¹⁶ It was not an accident that one of the main shifts in the history of merchant groups happened when the Genoese were substituted in the late 1620s by a group of Portuguese New Christians as bankers of the king of Spain. This shift was but one example of the resistance of the Mediterranean world's economy, and of its eventual weakening in the face of a vast, new Atlantic network, that linked

¹⁵ Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1964; 1st ed., 1957); Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (1973), pp. 1360-1380 (we thank Gérard Dellile for this reference); Harrison C. White, *Identity and Control: A Structural Theory of Social Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁶ José-Gentil da Silva, "Discussion," dans *Economies Méditerranéennes. Equilibres et Intercommunications, XIIIe-XIXe siècles*, 3 vols. (Athènes, 1985), Vol. 1, p. 219.

Potosi to Madrid and Amsterdam, and that, in the end, signaled the triumph of northern Europe, over the long prevalent Mediterranean world. More to the point, the shift itself could emerge clearly only because of the coordinated and parallel inquiries sponsored under the aegis of the *Vie section*, and that could harness vast scholarly energies under the beneficent, but, one suspects, ever vigilant guidance of Fernand Braudel.

In the fragmented and polyphonic world of our time, collective enterprises of this sort are difficult to develop. Today, it is not easy to establish a common language and to develop collective research projects. We do not necessarily think that the decades following the conclusion of World War II were necessarily a golden age of historical writing, nor do we lament its passing. We just wish to underscore the price that such fragmentation necessarily exacts: less coherence, less of a unified vision, less of a possibility that results of one research project will be seen within the context of a larger interpretation. To the degree that the following papers are products of individually conceived and developed research initiatives, they are clearly products of our time. The fragmented vision of how merchant networks functioned in the early modern world that emerges from them also bespeaks the individuality, and greater degree of isolation in which modern historians work today. And this, despite the availability of new technologies, and new means of communication.

Yet, if we underscore the price paid by this fragmentation, we also wish to point to the greater degree of experimentation, perhaps even of inventiveness that this new generation of historians of merchant networks bring to bear on their research. To an understanding of the function of social groups in economic and social terms, the papers oppose a more anthropological and cultural orientation. To an essentialist or substantivist conception of social stratification, according to which groups of merchants were seen as an incipient middle-class, they oppose a more experimental view of society, that springs from a relational logic of understanding. They study merchant networks much in the same manner that other historians—from Syme, Namier, and Ottokar to, most recently, Dale Kent—have analyzed links between courtiers, political clients, members of factions, and villagers. Two generations ago, it would have been common to launch global or macro studies to test ideas of modernity, or to locate a given society on a trajectory of modernization. By contrast, the papers that follow bring to bear an experimentation in the scale of analysis, and a predilection for the micro level that is not always, at least not always easily, subject to broad, macro-level generalizations.¹⁷

¹⁷ Nathan Wachtel has very recently referred to the necessity of a micro perspective, in order to understand the nature of Portuguese, New Christian or Jew commercial networks in Latin America, see *La foi du souvenir. Labyrinthes marranes* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 30-31.

In the course of our seminar's discussions, one student wished to know if these papers represented a progress toward our understanding of the history of commercial networks. At the time, we found the question difficult to answer. Now, following some inconclusive reflection, we somewhat hesitatingly respond that these papers offer a rather good view of the current state of the question, and of the variety of approaches, questions, scholarly impulses, and grander visions of the history of Europe that prevail in the scholarly world in which we, our colleagues and students work today. Not the least of our ambitions in our seminar at the European University Institute was to pose a series of such questions, about our "métier". This might mean at once to understand better the scholarly world in which we live and work, and the great intellectual and scholarly inheritance left to us by our predecessors.

The Emergence of an Atlantic Network Economy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Case of Madeira

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Each year, ever more scholarly writing casts itself as “Atlantic History.” In the past two decades, published studies of migration flows, labor systems, intellectual influences and adaptations, and commercial exchanges have uncovered a hitherto neglected early-modern Atlantic world. What was earlier dubbed Anglo- or British-, Dutch, French-, Spanish-, or Portuguese-America is now as often described as part of Atlantic-America – a community that exchanged commodities, services, settlers and laborers, waged war on itself, and shared political ideas and institutions, even while its constituent states also exhibited distinctive cultures. That community was “the scene of a vast interaction” among three old worlds, and in various ways the studies of this “single functional unit,” both integrated and cohesive, strive to “encompass the entire Atlantic basin, not simply descriptively but conceptually” as well.¹

The origins of this approach can be traced to the writings of the founders of what came to be known as “the imperial school of early American history.” Chief among them were Charles Andrews of Yale and Clarence Haring of Harvard, who wrote extensively from the 1910s through the 1940s – Andrews on England and Haring on Spain. They viewed the empires built by these powers

¹ Jacques Godechot and Robert Palmer, “Le Problème de l’Atlantique du XVIIIème Siècle,” *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche*, Storia Contemporanea V (Florence, 1955); Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, VIII/1 (Paris, 1959); D.A. Farnie, “The Commercial Empire of the Atlantic, 1607-1783,” *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 15 (1962), pp. 205-18; Donald Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, v. 1 (New Haven, 1986), p. 65; Bernard Bailyn, “The Idea of Atlantic History,” *Itinerario*, v. 20 (1996), pp. 12-14, 33. See also John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1998), p. 1 (“interactions on an intercontinental scale”). Cultural and literary historians have not been shy about extending the definition and broadening the subject, at least in theory. Beginning in the 1970s, John Pocock called for the study of a pan-Atlantic culture, but oddly what distinguished that culture were English language and institutions. Gordon J. Schochet, ed., *Empire and Revolutions* (Washington, D.C., 1993). In *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York, 1996), Joseph Roach (heavily influenced by Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic”) struggles to recreate the flow of information around the Atlantic in his analysis of the relationship of memory, performance, and substitution and to locate “the peoples of the Caribbean rim at the heart of an oceanic interculture embodied through performance” but in the end succeeds merely in comparing theatrical performance in only London and New Orleans. Laura Brown, in *Ends of Empire* (Ithaca, 1993), makes a more successful attempt in writing a history of one aspect of “oceanic interculture” in feminist readings of colonialist ideology, especially in the way the image of the female shaped capitalist commodification in early eighteenth-century English literature; it is, though, only a community of the mind. Unfortunately, few scholars have picked up the gauntlet thrown down by the geographer Meinig.

structurally, almost as ideal forms that were viable only as abstractions. This structural perspective found the sinews of empire in institutional, governmental, and bureaucratic activities. The social and economic life of Atlantic empires was accordingly interpreted as a function of institutions, an extension of metropolitan governments and the creation of ministers.²

The structural perspective eclipsed the field for a generation, until the 1940s, when a new group of scholars began to re-examine early-modern Atlantic empires, states, and communities from a more “sociological” perspective. A wider range of historical phenomena demanded explanation – ideologies, social forms, economies, and colonial laws and politics – and a wider array of evidence was marshaled to understand them. Scholars adopting this perspective conceived of empire more as a process than as a structure, and the connections they found were typically social and human. Such an approach allowed economic and social historians to investigate both the “micro,” the individual context of action of early-modern Europeans and Africans in the New World, and the “macro,” the widening sphere of cause and effect as the empires interacted in expansion, trade, and war. Repeatedly, their researches identified individual choice within social and cultural contexts, rather than centrally directed, bureaucratically implemented policy, as the lens for understanding this subject.³

The newer Atlantic perspective extends sociologically-informed history to an entire Atlantic community. The continuity lies in the examination of commercial, social, and cultural lives, especially of the marginal members of society. At the same time, the perspective opposes the nearly total preoccupation of early-modern Americanists and Britainists with domestic affairs, and sees the larger Atlantic basin as a historical entity comprised of, but different from the smaller regional groupings or still smaller colony, county, or town jurisdictions.⁴

² Charles Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, 1934-1938); and Clarence Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (New York, 1947).

³ By a “sociological” perspective, I do not mean to limit the discussion to the subjects of modern academic Sociology. Here, I am using the term more broadly to refer to the social, economic or ideational – as opposed to formal, institutional or structural – aspects of life in the past. For examples, see William T. Baxter, *The House of Hancock* (Cambridge, MA, 1945); Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1948); Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955). Later contributions include: Edward C. Papenfuss, *In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805* (Baltimore, 1975); Louis M. Cullen, “The Dublin Merchant Community in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Cities and Merchants*, eds. P. Butel and L. Cullen (Dublin, 1986); Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, 1986); Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson* (Ithaca, 1986); David H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley, 1991); Gary B. Nash, “The Early Merchants of Philadelphia,” *The World of William Penn*, in R.S. and M.M. Dunn, eds. (Philadelphia, 1996); Tamara Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven, 1989); Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, 1998); Jean Agnew, *Belfast Merchant Families in the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin, 1996); Louis M. Cullen, *The Brandy Trade under the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁴ Works resisting colonial myopia include: David Cressy, *Coming Over* (New York, 1987); Mack Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction: Expulsion and Redemption in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, 1992); Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of*

Those who have focused on the eighteenth century, in particular, have uncovered an intensification of trans-Atlantic economic linkages: a surge in commercial correspondence, a growth in the number and intricacy of supplier/consumer relationships, a rise in the availability and flexibility of financial services involving credit and insurance, and an increase in the publication and dissemination of maritime and mercantile information.⁵ Their researches, moreover, have highlighted a dynamic simultaneous globalization of commercial activity, as more goods went to more, and more distant places around the world. By 1800, the Atlantic was more integrated economically than it had ever been, and more linked to the larger world beyond.⁶

My own recent research into the Madeira wine complex develops these general insights, extends them to particular projects of late seventeenth- and

Sail (Cambridge, MA, 1997); Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many Headed Hydra* (New York, 2000); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁵ On aspects of eighteenth-century linkage, see Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (London, 1973); Jacob Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge, MA, 1980); Ian Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995); John J. McCusker, Jr. and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁶ For work highlighting globalization and integration, see Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol & the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 9-10, traces the stretching of one port's commercial lines. On the international distribution of India, British and European cloth, see John Irwin and Katharine Brett, *The Origins of Chintz* (London, 1970), pp. 3-6. Similarly, American commodities were shipped to newer, more distant markets, as the century wore on. Jacob Price, *The Tobacco Adventure to Russia: Enterprise, Politics, and Diplomacy in the Quest for a Northern Market for English Colonial Tobacco, 1676-1722* (Philadelphia, 1961); *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor, 1973); Paul Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca, 1980); Peter Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York, 1989); and R.C. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic economy in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," *Economic History Review*, XLV (1992), pp. 677-702.

Another mark of the integration was the rise of like institutions and ideologies in different countries. Similar cities served similar functions around the Atlantic rim. Anne Perotin-Dumon, ed., "Cabotage, Contraband, and Corsairs: The Port Cities of Guadeloupe and their Inhabitants," in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities* (Knoxville, TN, 1991), p. 61. Distinct similarities among labor markets emerged. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-Maritime World, 1700-1750* (New York, 1993), p. 80; Rediker and Linebaugh, *Hydra*. Certainly, the spread of slavery was as Atlantic a phenomenon as ever there was one. Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969); Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*. Like kinds of economic management – plantation experts – appeared in all empires and created "a unique market-oriented set of cash crop-producing areas." P.C. Emmer, "The Dutch and the Making of the Second Atlantic System," in Barbara L. Solow, ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (New York, 1991), p. 79. On ideological convergence, see Lester Langtry, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1850* (1996); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000); Eliga Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 2000).

eighteenth-century men and women, and begins to question how a composite Atlantic system, its institutions, actors, and ideas, evolved over the century. The production, distribution, and consumption of Madeira wine illustrate the evolving economic and social life of the early-modern Atlantic market community. This truly inter-imperial commodity was produced in a Portuguese island province. It was distributed around the Atlantic Ocean's rim, principally by British, American, and Portuguese merchants, primarily but not exclusively into Britain and her colonies, where its distribution developed and ramified remarkably over the course of the 1700s. And it played a significant supporting role in the complex social lives created by those who consumed it.

At the heart of the Madeira wine complex was a commodity that was produced on the Portuguese island of Madeira, 500 miles west of Morocco, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Chief among its destinations was English (later British) America. Exportation there began in the seventeenth century, a function of geography and diplomacy. Atlantic shipping surged during the 1600s, and English and American ship-owners, cargo-owners, and captains sought alternatives to ships' having one of the legs of their voyages free of cargo and perhaps even ballast. As Madeira was "not much out of the way going down to the West Indies," it came to be regarded as "generally worth a ship's while ... to touch" there, as it frequently "met with some freight" that was of "great service." By taking on a cargo of wine in Madeira, British owners could recover some of their costs on two-thirds of an outbound voyage from Europe, and American owners could recoup all their expenses on a return voyage to the colonies; captains could protect their ships with the ballast, as casks filled with wine increased vessel stability. Moreover, British monarchs, ministers, and politicians were keen to grant trade preferences to Portugal, as a means of checking the power of France. As early as 1651, in an attempt to destroy the Dutch carrying trade, Parliament passed an ordinance that mandated English-or plantation-owned and English-captained shipping, and outlawed foreign goods or commodities being imported into Commonwealth lands in foreign "ships belonging to the people thereof" unless from the place of the goods' origin or the port of first shipment. Madeira wine, among other trans-Atlantic commodities, was implicitly excused from its constraints, until a few years later, in 1663, when Parliament expressly exempted from import duties Madeira wine carried directly into America. These privileges were furthered by Paul Methuen's 1703 treaty that favored the importation into England of Portuguese wines over other wines, in exchange for duty-free exportation of English cloth to Portugal. Doubly nurtured, a trade in Madeira's wine flourished as never before during the period 1703-1815.

With Madeira wine as a representative example, I want to understand how the Atlantic inter-imperial market grew and evolved in the two centuries after England joined Spain, Portugal, Holland, and France in vying for a share of the riches of the New World. The inter-connectedness of world society and economy is, after all, one of the momentous achievements of the last half millennium. The opening of Europe and Africa to the west in the early modern period is a major piece of that story. Understanding it means understanding how that community's social and economic institutions and ideas evolved out of a congeries of seemingly disconnected impulses, actors, conditions, and opportunities during the 1700s.

In doing so, I do not want to neglect the insights of social and economic theory; yet, I believe that theory cannot exhaust the possibilities of understanding. Geographic, economic, and social phenomena of the complexity of the creation of an Atlantic world cannot be fully comprehended by abstract and theoretical explanations. Understanding complex historical events requires attention to specifics: the specific physical and mental situations that specific individuals found themselves in, and their specific responses. In doing so, I have found it useful to consider the Madeira wine system of producers, distributors, and consumers, with its associated institutions and ideas, as *a complex social and economic system*.

Now, what does this little piece of jargon mean? The idea of *complex systems*, also called non-linear, adaptive or networked systems, comes from chemistry, biology, geology, physics, computer science, and artificial intelligence, all of which have investigated the ordered behavior of large-scale aggregates as the result of complex interactions among many smaller-scale elements that operate according to much simpler behavioral rules. It is a response to the perceived constraints of traditional approaches in these disciplines, as practitioners have begun to exhaust the explanatory power of the idealizations and assumptions that made the traditional approaches analytically tractable. When they carry over this approach to social and economic life, the complex systems thinkers have a point of view about social actors, human institutions, and the relationships among actors and institutions:

- Social actors have many specific links among themselves. Collective behavior is the result of these actors operating in parallel, each one coordinating with specific others. For ideas, institutions, and forces to affect an individual they must be brought to bear via these specific links. Social and “economic action involves interactions among agents, ... [which] is both constrained and carried by networks defined by recurring patterns of interaction among agents. These network structures are characterized by relatively sparse ties.” “Sparse ties” is the scientist’s way of saying that each person is linked to a small number of others compared to the universe of people in the world.
- Large-scale phenomena arise out of, “emerge” from the multitudinous interactions along these links. Not only do “units at one level combine to produce units at the next higher level,” but social and “economic entities have a recursive structure: they are themselves comprised of entities.” This emphasizes not only the socially constructed nature of human institutions, but also the fact that our social constructions may be round about (non-linear), concatenated (institutions creating institutions), and surprising to their creators.
- Social and economic action are “structured by emergent social roles and by socially supported procedures – that is, by institutions.” This considerably problematizes the idea of causation in social life. Our world “is not strictly hierarchical, in that component entities may be part of more than one higher-level entity, and entities at multiple levels of organization may interact. Thus, reciprocal causation operates between different levels of organization – while action[s] ... at a given level of organization may sometimes be viewed as autonomous, they are nevertheless constrained by

action[s] ... and entit[ies] ... at other levels. And they may even give rise to new patterns and entities at both higher and lower levels.”⁷

The contrast is with systems with only a few important links among actors, on the one hand, and with systems where the plethora of interactions on each individual can be summarized as net, anonymous forces, on the other. Both of these contrasting approaches are easier to analyze, because fundamentally they posit simpler worlds. No doubt, in many instances, they are adequate. But they do not do justice to the development of the Atlantic society and economy.

Looking at the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Atlantic economy as a complex social and economic system directs our attention to certain features rich in interpretative significance. It allows us to appreciate and make room for the extent of the *decentralization* of social and economic authority for much of the period. As John Holland notes, when the interactions among agents are specific, “there are rarely any global controls on interaction – controls are provided by negotiations of competition and coordination between units, mediated by standard operating procedures, assigned roles, and shifting associations.” Metropolitan control was almost always contested in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For any social or economic act, the effects of the center were mediated by people and institutions with proximate links to the actors.⁸ Regarding the emerging Atlantic economy as a complex social and economic system turns the searchlight away from the traditionally privileged center, the European metropolis, and the body of mercantilist precepts that explained and promoted its commercial interactions. That is not to say there were no central directives or influences or mercantilist ideas had no sway, for they did; but mercantilist directives were frequently not dispositive along the periphery. Much of what we have learned in the past few decades about material life in the early-modern European, colonial, and Atlantic worlds suggests that the emerging Atlantic economy (like the economies of constituent states and colonies) was both shaped by various arenas

⁷ Complex, nonlinear, dynamical, adaptive systems have been increasingly studied by a number of specialists in a variety of fields, such as chemistry, geology, physics, and artificial intelligence. The most accessible introductions to the subject appear in Roger Lewin, *Complexity: Life at the Edge of Chaos* (New York, 1992); Grégoire Nicolis and Ilya Prigogine, *Exploring Complexity* (New York, 1989). On their application to economics, see W. Brian Arthur, “Inductive Reasoning and Bonded Rationality,” and Paul Krugman, “Complex Landscapes in Economic Geography,” in *The American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings*, v. 84 (May 1994), pp. 406-16. The most succinct and convincing statement of complexity principles and their application to an emerging global economy appears in John H. Holland, “The Global Economy as an Adaptive Process,” in Philip W. Anderson *et al.*, eds., *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System*, v. 5 (Redwood City, CA, 1987), pp. 117-18. The perspective is explored at greater length in Hancock, “Complex Adaptive Systems in Early-Modern Atlantic History” (unpublished manuscript, 1990), and “Introduction,” *Madeira Wine and the Organization of the Early-Modern Atlantic Economy* (forthcoming, 2002). Complexity should not be confused with “Chaos,” an idea that fascinated scholars in the 1980s. W. Brian Arthur *et al.*, “Introduction: Process and Emergence in the Economy,” in *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System II*, eds. W. Brian Arthur, Steven N. Durlauf, and David A. Lane (Reading, MA, 1997), p. 2.

⁸ Holland, “Global Economy,” pp. 117-18; W. Brian Arthur, “Self-Reinforcing Mechanisms in Economics,” pp. 9-31, and Stuart A. Kauffman, “The Evolution of Economic Webs,” pp. 125-46, esp. 132, in Philip W. Anderson *et al.*, eds., *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System [I]* (Reading, MA, 1988).

and ambivalently non-metropolitan. This is at odds with the thrust of more traditional imperial scholarship. For instance, most scholars have regarded trade within the British empire as a “hub-and-spoke” affair that ran from “peripheries” to the “metropolis” London, or variations on that theme. This is partly because they have concentrated on the sugar and tobacco trades whose features fit the hub-and-spoke model tolerably well.⁹ But neither all the facts nor all the trades conform; many pursuits – like fish, fur, cloth, and hardware – bore more resemblance to a spider’s web than a wheel.¹⁰ Insistence on a “hub-and-spoke” model also denies the porosity of the Atlantic empires. Many European migrants who went to the Americas in search of opportunity did so with little regard for imperial borders. British Newfoundlanders supplied not only British but also French, Spanish, and Portuguese households with North Atlantic cod. British and British American traders regularly acquired French sugar products in both the French West Indies and France and, without taking the goods first to Britain, distributed it throughout English-speaking America. Too, French and Spanish wines commonly poured into the British American colonies while Britain was at war with France and Spain during the Seven Years War period, just as French furs were frequently smuggled into British North America and Spanish silver flowed into Portuguese Rio without license. To the annoyance of metropolitan mandarins (and some modern economic historians who believe the only economy is a countable economy) but to the profit of enterprising Europeans and

⁹ The subject of the trans-Atlantic tobacco trade is synonymous with the name of Jacob Price. The best detailed introduction to the material can be found in his “The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., v. 11 (1954), pp. 179-99; *The Tobacco Adventure to Russia*; “The Economic Growth of the Chesapeake and the European Market, 1697-1775,” *Journal of Economic History*, XXIV (1964), pp. 496-511; and *France and the Chesapeake*. On the sugar trade, see Richard Pares, “The London Sugar Market, 1740-1769,” *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., v. 9 (1956), pp. 254-70, and “A London West India Merchant House,” in Richard Pares and A.J. Taylor (eds.), *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier* (London, 1956), pp. 75-107. On the slave trade, see K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London, 1967); James Rawley, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York, 1981); Joseph Inikori, “Market Structure and the Profits of the British African Trade,” *Journal of Economic History*, v. 41 (1981), p. 756.

¹⁰ On fish, see David Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements* (New York, 1977), pp. 513-32; Harold A. Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy*, rev. ed. (Toronto, 1954); Ralph G. Lounsbury, *The British Fishery at Newfoundland, 1634-1763* (New Haven, 1934); James G. Lydon, “Fish and Flour for Gold,” *Business History Review*, v. 39 (1965), pp. 171-83, “North Shore Trade in the Early Eighteenth Century,” *American Neptune*, v. 28 (1968), pp. 261-74, “The Salem and Bilbao Fish Trade: Symbiosis in the Eighteenth Century,” *North American Society for Oceanic History, Proceedings*, v. 1 (1977), and “Fish for Gold: The Massachusetts Fur Trade with Iberia, 1700-1773,” *New England Quarterly*, v. 54 (1981), pp. 539-82; H.E.S. Fisher, *The Portugal Trade: A Study of Anglo-Portuguese Commerce, 1700-1770* (London, 1971); Charles de La Morandière, *Histoire de la pêche française de la morue dans l’Amérique septentrionale*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1962-66); A.R. Michell, “The European Fisheries in Early Modern History,” in *The Economic Organization of Early Modern Europe*, eds. E.E. Rich and C.H. Wilson (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 133-84. On fur, see Murray G. Lawson, *Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism, 1700-1775* (Toronto, 1943); Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (New Haven, 1930); Paul C. Phillips, *The Fur Trade*, 2 vols. (Norman, 1961); Francis X. Moloney, *The Fur Trade in New England, 1620-1676* (Cambridge, MA, 1931); Thomas E. Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison, 1974); Jean Lunn, “The Illegal Fur Trade out of New France, 1713-1760,” *Canadian Historical Association, Report of the Annual Meeting*, v. 18 (1939), pp. 61-76.

Americans, trade across imperial boundaries was commonplace, and at times a not insignificant share was illicit.¹¹

In addition, regarding seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Atlantic society and economy as a complex system highlights its *self-organizing* characteristics. Societies and economies have “many levels of organization and interaction. Units at any given level typically serve as ‘building blocks’ for construction units at the next higher level.” Organizations of this level of complexity are not merely hierarchical, for “all sorts of tangling interactions” operate among levels. Patterns and regularities can emerge, self-organized, from what appears to be chaotic behavior at the smaller scale. Whether they start “from an almost homogeneous or almost random state,” the economist Paul Krugman recently notes of the formation of modern cities and business cycles, economic systems “spontaneously form large-scale patterns.” The “randomness and chaos seem spontaneously to evolve into unexpected order.” Krugman’s observations about cities and business cycles are apposite *a fortiori* for the society and economy at large. We should not be misled by the word “spontaneous”; emergence is spontaneous only in the sense of being activated without apparent central thought or direction. Individual behaviors and networks are self-serving, instinctive, impulsive, sometimes automatic, and occasionally involuntary, but not necessarily unreasoned, unstructured, or unconstrained. No person or state sought to create an Atlantic market economy, but few contemporaries would have denied its existence or importance. Furthermore, emergent phenomena need not, and often do not look like their constituent parts – the human body is not an organic molecule writ large, for instance, and a market is not a goal-seeking actor in the way that an entrepreneur may be. This releases us from the constraint of having to apply the same historical constructs to all levels of analysis, but it imposes on us the obligation to connect constructs across levels.¹²

¹¹ On smuggling in the Atlantic, a woefully under-studied topic given the extent of the phenomenon, see Lunn, “Illegal Fur Trade”; Charles Frostin, *Histoire de l’autonomisme colon de la partie de St. Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Lille, 1973); Carlos D. Malamud, “El comercio directo de Europa con América en el siglo XVIII,” *Quinto Centenario*, v. 1 (1981), pp. 25-52; Carl A. Hanson, “Monopoly and Contraband in the Portuguese Tobacco Trade, 1624-1702,” *Luso-Brazilian Review*, v. 19 (1982), pp. 149-68; John R. McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisburg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1985); Zacarías Moutoukias, “Power, corruption, and commerce: the making of the local administrative structure in seventeenth-century Buenos Aires,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, v. 68 (1988), pp. 771-801; Héctor R. Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés en el Caribe y el Golfo de México (1748-1778)* (Seville, 1990); Ramón Aizpurua Aguirre, *Curacao y la costa de Caracas: Introducción al estudio del contrabando en la provincia de Venezuela en tiempos de la Compañía Guipuzcoana, 1730-1780* (Caracas, 1993); Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, 1997); Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden, 1998). I am indebted to Wim Klooster for some of this information. Historians of British America have been reluctant to admit the extent of smuggling. Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1951), pp. 69-70; Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire: The British Customs Service in Colonial America, 1660-1775* (Cambridge, 1967); John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), p. 49.

¹² Holland, “Global Economy,” pp. 117-18; Paul Krugman, *The Self-Organizing Economy* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 3, vi, 36. See also Gell-Mann, “What is Complexity?” pp. 16-19; José A. Scheinkman and Michael Woodford, “Self-Organized Criticality and Economic

Third, the complex systems lens shifts the relationship between social and economic conditions and individual behaviors. With an appreciation of the decentralized and self-organizing nature of society, the scholar need not search for controlling agents and need not iron out the role of disorder and contingency in describing, explaining, and understanding the past. Central actors and anonymous forces *created the conditions* for individuals' actions and reactions, but causes of action were multiple and varied, and the proximate causes were local to the actor. In our choices among explanatory devices, historians frequently favor the isolation of deterministic forces and controlling institutions. However, in complex systems like the Atlantic economy, Britain's Navigation Acts, the remarkable agricultural productivity of the Americas, and the changing nature of the labor force are more appropriately regarded as *conditions*, not causes, for the patterns of trade and social life. The patterns of distribution of Madeira across the Atlantic were individual calculations made by merchants in Madeira, captains on the high seas, and wholesalers and peddlers into the interior of America. To understand the effects of the Navigation Acts or the nature of the labor force on their decisions requires a fine-grained analysis of the channels of influence. Some economists who have made use of the complex systems approach have been surprised to discover that "history matters," that theoretical regularities *or* high-level generalizations are not dispositive in life, although it would shock few historians. Large-scale forces do shape the contours of life, but specific outlines are drawn by the people directly involved.¹³

In addition to enabling historians interested in society and economy to identify and appreciate the decentralized, self-organized, and conditioning features of historical events, the complex systems approach has an additional virtue: it justifies an historically-grounded particularistic approach to social and economic

Fluctuations," *The American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings*, v. 84 (May 1994), pp. 417-21; P. Per Bak and Kan Chen, "Self-Organizing Criticality," *Scientific American*, v. 264 (January 1991), pp. 46-53; Murray Gell-Mann, "What is Complexity?" *Complexity*, v. 1 (1995), pp. 16-19.

¹³ Arthur, "Self-Reinforcing Mechanisms," pp. 11, 17, 26. The principle highlighted here is not so much a feature of the world, as it is a commentary on its features and how they mediate macro-forces and -systems and micro-individuals and -events. Consider as an example the analysis of a competitive market. If the cost of an input into the production of a competitively traded output falls, one can predict that the equilibrium price of the competitively traded output will also fall, assuming only that supply is not completely inelastic and demand is not completely elastic. Did the fall in the input price *cause* the fall in the price of the output good? From one point of view – the point of view of market equilibrium analysis – the answer might as well be "yes." As far as one cares in equilibrium analysis, the fall in the input price caused the fall in the output price (all other things being equal). But one may have other questions in mind, especially if one cares what will happen in some specific market: How fast will the price change? Will suppliers be able to maintain output prices for some period before they fully adjust? What price will particular individuals, who will not canvass the entire market before buying, pay? Will the fall in price be more pronounced for some types of customers – repeat customers, say, or customers with more time to shop, or more affluent customers? Will the price reduction be seen as a fall in the list price, or as higher discounts or more timely delivery? For answering these questions, it is more helpful to take the fall in the input price as a *condition* of the linked markets (for inputs and outputs), rather than a cause. Such thinking results from considering the market as a complex system, and follows, in principle, the suggestion made by Ronald Coase in 1974: "The Lighthouse in Economics," *The Journal of Law and Economics*, v. 17 (October 1974), pp. 357-76.

history which builds a story from individual elements. The many, specific links among people that a complex systems approach highlights correspond to a historically-grounded intuition about how most of life was (and is) lived: like ourselves, men and women in the past had lots of particular pressures and influences on them, and responded to specific, named others. In creating a trans-Atlantic commodity, for instance, producers responded to their customers, employees, and suppliers, and to officials in the localities where they worked and traded; the influences on their behaviors were mediated by those specific people. Likewise, in buying and using the commodity, and in creating social personae, consumers responded to the specific, named others who entered their daily lives, whether by encounter or reputation. When we reconstitute these interactions and influences we detect an Atlantic *system*, a set of institutions – decentralized and self-organized – that crossed continents and the ocean, as well as linguistic, cultural, and imperial boundaries, and that created the conditions under which its own members re-created and re-generated it. And, we detect the myriad of connections, influences, ties, links and conditions that made the Atlantic a system as well as an ocean.¹⁴

By pointing out that a complex systems approach justifies an historically-grounded particularistic approach to social and economic history, I mean to defend the historian's methods, our eclectic, theoretically-influenced but non-theoretical, detailed, and particularistic method of uncovering and reconstituting the past. However, in its current state, it is not itself a methodology, still less a theory, whether “complexity theory” or anything else. It does not now rise to the level of a set of propositions from which we can make deductions or that directs us toward particular evidence we should bring to bear. It may develop into a theory, or it may not. Given the state of today's knowledge, it would be more accurate to call it a *stance*, a *point of view*, or a *perspective* on how human life unfolds in time.¹⁵

An appreciation of complexity provides a helpful intellectual apparatus for understanding the development of eighteenth-century Atlantic society and economy. In the case at hand, it provides a means of assessing the importance of the linked processes of production, distribution, and consumption of Madeira wine, and a glimpse of the emergence of a trans-imperial market economy. One can see this at work in the transformation of the product, the ordering of the market, and the internationalization of consumer taste.

Production

Particular and reciprocal personal trans-Atlantic linkages and exchanges among producers, distributors and consumers transformed Madeira wine from a cheap, simple table wine into an expensive, complex, highly-processed luxury wine over the course of the eighteenth century. Innovations in Madeira wine-

¹⁴ Stuart A. Kauffman, “The Evolution of Economic Webs,” in Philip W. Anderson *et al.*, eds., *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System [I]* (Reading, MA, 1988), p. 132.

¹⁵ Scientists drawn to complex systems approaches face the same dilemmas. It remains to be seen whether useful new generalizations will come from the cross-disciplinary study of complexity, or whether it will remain at the level of suggestive metaphors.

growing and -making were the direct result of highly verbal, often contentious epistolary conversations among growers, the distributors' agents, wholesalers and retailers around the Atlantic, and consumers in America, Britain and the East. As a result, producers increased the number of grape varieties from four to twenty-three, prepared unblended wines that ran the gamut from sweet to dry, fortified their wines with brandy, agitated the beverage to distribute the alcohol more evenly, aged the wine, and intentionally heated it.¹⁶

Fortification is often singled out as one of the hallmarks of Madeira's wine, but it was introduced into production and distribution only during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and it took decades to become widespread. Although the practice was first prescribed by an English physician in the early seventeenth century, the first descriptive mentions of adding brandy to Madeira appeared in the early 1740s. In the 1741 edition of his *Gardener's Dictionary*, Philip Miller noted the penchant of the Portuguese to add brandy to their Madeira. Two years later, in one of the earliest editions of *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin urged his readers who were either shipping or selling Madeira to mix it with brandy. The first reference to island distributors adding brandy as a supplement appeared ten years later, and suggests that the practice was gaining acceptance on the island by mid-century. Only after distributors and consumers blazed the trail did growers and producers adopt the technique.¹⁷

The practice of adding spirits to the wine, it was firmly believed, "helped" "very indifferent and clear" grades. It imparted a smooth taste to rough, acidic or full-bodied wines. As one firm explained to London purchasers, since Madeira's wine was "sweetish" in the must, it needed more brandy "than was common" to other wines; brandy would "eat off the sweetness" and thereby "prevent fretting." In addition, fortifying wine added alcoholic strength and thereby pleased consumers in certain markets, where "they like everything that is powerful and heady." However contemporaries described or justified it, by 1760, fortification appears to have been adopted by enough export firms to warrant the island government's banning the importation of expensive French brandy on the grounds that too much of it was being watered down, and that diluted brandies sullied the reputation of export wines. Some export firms, especially those

¹⁶ David Hancock, "Commerce and Conversation in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic: The Invention of Madeira Wine," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, v. 39 (Autumn 1998), pp. 197-219.

¹⁷ On alternate wines generally, see Alan D. Francis, *The Wine Trade* (London, 1972); Warner Allen, *Sherry and Port* (London, 1952); George Robertson, *Port*, 4th ed. (London, 1978), 12, 15, 16; Julian Jeffs, *Sherry*, 4th ed. (London, 1992). Among Iberian wines, Madeira was the first to be fortified. However, in the seventeenth century, Dutch merchants were already rectifying their own brandy and adding it to common beverage wines to *brandewijn*, so named from the "burning" process of distillation, a drink more suitable for long-distance travel. On Madeira fortification, see William Vaughan, *Directions for health, natural and artificiall*, 7th ed. (London, 1633), a reworking of his *Natural and artificiall directions for health* (London, 1600); Philip Miller, *Gardener's Dictionary* (Dublin, 1741), sub "wines"; Richard Saunders, *Poor Richard, 1743* (Philadelphia, 1743), in Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, v. 2 (New Haven, 1960), p. 367; Francis Newton to Thomas Newton, August 4, 1753, Francis Newton to George Spence, October 27, 1753, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 1, ff. 62, 77.

specializing in higher-quality wines, initially refused to add brandy; as late as 1807, they were still decrying such “spoilage” and arguing for its use only as a last resort. But despite the remonstrations of a few, the “brandy doctrine” was more or less universally accepted by 1790, even by growers and producers. Brandy became the “indispensable” component of all grades.¹⁸

Widespread fortification with brandy was largely consumer- and distributor-responsive. That is, it was the result of negotiated discussion. Such discourse “on the ground,” among a lot of “small players,” is most clearly seen in the decision of producers and distributors involved in production to add brandy to Madeira – a response to a multitude of local influences and incentives. There were many palates in the wine’s principal market, British America, and island growers and merchants altered wine formulas to suit their clients, negotiating them with American distributors and buyers in each region in response to the preferences of purchasers there. Foremost in customers’ minds were questions of color and taste. With no adulteration, new wine bore a reddish color and sweetish taste; old wine, having experienced additional fermentation and climatic heating, gained a lighter hue and a drier flavor. The addition of brandy accelerated both changes.

In the British West Indies and the southern colonies of British North America, where there was no concern for the wine spoiling for lack of heat, a love of wines of a darker hue and sweeter taste flourished. To satisfy these customers, who wanted to avoid the lightening and intoxicating effects of additional alcohol in hot climates, Madeira distributors put less brandy in their export; sometimes, in response to requests from Caribbean planters, they left it out altogether and sent a quarter cask of red must and another of brandy along with a pipe of wine so that it could be colored and strengthened to taste. In contrast, consumers to the north asked for a paler, drier wine, and so producers and shippers added one or two gallons more brandy than they put in Caribbean wine. South Carolinians and Virginians ordered extremely pale, dry white wine (“white as water,” they often requested) that had been heavily fortified, while Philadelphians requested golden wines with slightly less brandy and slightly more sweetness. New Yorkers wanted an amber, somewhat reddish drink that was even less brandied and more sugared. But here the Madeirans balked. If the

¹⁸ Today, one knows it ensures microbiological stability, rendering impotent most bacteria and strains of yeast, and thereby precluding further fermentation. Newton & Gordon to Kearny & Gilbert, January 25, 1768, v. 4, f. 171, Thomas Murdoch to Thomas Gordon, January 28, 1789, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks; John Leacock to Michael Nowlan, June 2, 1779, Leacock Papers; Johann Wilhelm Von Archenholz, *A Picture of England* (Dublin, 1791), p. 203; James Gordon to Alexander Gordon, March 14, 1768, Gordon of Letterfourie Papers; Provedoria da Fazenda, no. 942, ff. 19-20, Arquivo Regional Madeira, Funchal; Newton & Gordon to Kearny & Gilbert, January 25, 1768, v. 4, f. 171, Thomas Murdoch to Thomas Gordon, January 28, 1789, v. 11, f. 218, Thomas Murdoch to Thomas Gordon, January 28, 1789, v. 11, f. 218, and June 15, 1789, v. 12, f. 86, Newton & Gordon to Thomas Gordon, August 19, 1789, James Gordon to Thomas Gordon, September 3, 1803, and Thomas Murdoch to Robert Lenox, September 30, 1803, v. 25, f. 173, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks; James Gordon to Alexander Gordon, May 22, 1769, Letterfourie Papers; Newton & Gordon to Thomas Gordon, January 28, 1789, v. 11, f. 177, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks; John Leacock, Sr. to William Leacock, May 29, June 27, 1799, Leacock & Sons Letterbook 1799-1802, ff. 35, 52-8, Michael Nowlan to Gedley Clare Burges, February 25, 1762, Nowlan & Burges Letterbook, Leacock Papers.

islanders had had their way, they would have sent the wines to New York completely untouched: “our best wine,” Thomas Murdoch informed John Campbell of New York, was “excellent only in proportion as it is simple.” For decades they battled with importers over the amount of brandy, and in the end succeeded with a formula for New Yorkers that was more fortified than they had wished, yet less than New-Yorkers had wanted at the outset. Each market demanded and, after rounds of negotiation, received its own distinctive formula.¹⁹

Distribution

Over the eighteenth century, the Madeira wine trade spread to nearly every colony or possession in British or formerly British America, and over time the outlets for distribution in each place became more numerous and specialized. In 1700, Madeira merchants dispatched Portuguese, British, American, and Dutch ships from their port of Funchal to South Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts, as well as Barbados, Antigua, St. Kitts and Jamaica. One or two ships from Madeira dropped anchor in Connecticut, Rhode Island or Bermuda, but these were rare. By 1800, ships regularly left the island for all the principal North American ports, plus lesser ones in Maryland (Baltimore), Massachusetts (Salem), Nova Scotia (Halifax), Newfoundland, Quebec, and nearly all the Caribbean sugar islands and India.

At the beginning, this trade was haphazard and personal. Wine drinkers could not depend upon its shipment and arrival. Madeira firms developed business with customers they already knew through blood tie or prior acquaintance in a large port town; gradually, they increased the number of people to whom they shipped in that town; until finally they expanded from that base, first to other centers in the colony and then to hitherto untapped adjacent colonies. On the North American mainland, firms typically began in one of three or four cities with reliable shipping facilities – Boston, New York, Philadelphia or Charleston – or in one of two plantation regions blessed with passable rivers – the Chesapeake or the South Carolina low-country. Successful firms in time moved on to integrate forwards into other, sometimes new distribution channels. At the beginning of the century, Madeira merchants on the island and wholesalers/distributors in America were linked principally by arm’s-length trade; but by the end of the eighteenth century, many of the firms provided importation and distribution services, sending their own representatives to the colony to manage the importation and first sale. By the cumulative actions of these individuals, a trans-Atlantic commodity distribution system emerged from a relatively semi-organized group unpredictably supplying its kin and friends into a

¹⁹ Thomas Murdoch to Pierce Butler, October 18, 1800, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks; and Spence, Leacock & Spence to John Erskine, June 26, 1762, and John Leacock to William Leacock, May 10, 1796, Leacock Papers; Henry Laurens to Corsley Rogers & Son, May 16, 1755, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, v. 1, p. 248; Newton & Gordon to Capt. John Diffell, January 17, 1776, v. 6, f. 38, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks; Thomas Newton to Newton & Gordon, November 26, 1759, Thomas Newton Letterbook, Madeira Wine Company Archives; Baynton & Wharton to Thomas Newton, October 2, 1763, Box 2, Cossart & Gordon Papers, Liverpool University Archives; Newton & Gordon to John Campbell, April 14, 1798, v. 18, f. 316, William Johnston to Francis Newton, January 22, 1786, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks.

set of substantial, reliable trading firms and outlets that managed to get the produce from the vineyard to the tables of complete strangers.

Given the extent to which Madeira's trading houses were initially built along family and kinship lines, it is not surprising that deploying familial, kin and ethnic connections was the first important means of building correspondent bases. Newton & Gordon's first correspondent in Jamaica was the brother of Alexander Johnston, the Scot who first provided work in London for the Jacobite Francis Newton and later provided the capital to set up Thomas Gordon in business; of the 52 correspondents Newton & Gordon attracted over the next ten years, over three-quarters were either friends of their families, friends of Alexander Johnston, or other Scots.

But to succeed, a firm had to move well beyond the base of family, kin and ethnic relations to more extended personal and business relations. Early friendships helped at the outset: "Early attachments are always the most lasting," noted one schoolfellow of Thomas Gordon; they "often reap much a happiness in point of society, business or advancement in life." There was "vast advantage," for instance, to boys "being sent to publick school"; certainly, Thomas Gordon's Mercer's School gave him an introduction to John Corrie, James Plunderleath, Andrew Robertson and Basil Cooper – all subsequent correspondents – in much the same way that John Leacock's Christ's Hospital alumni "network" centered on London subsequently funneled consignments to him.²⁰

Later attachments were also grist for the mill. After he moved to Madeira from New York in 1756, Thomas Newton wrote a volume of letters with the intent of enlarging the orders of his firm in the New York area. He had no more tie to many of his correspondents than having lived eight years among them. Often he wrote twenty letters a day with the same message. Friendship and acquaintance were primary reasons for his calling on a New York customer and expecting an order in return. "I rely on your *friendship* in giving me the preference of what you do this way," he wrote Anthony Sarly in 1756. From his "*intimate friendship*" with Malcolm Campbell, he flattered himself that Campbell would expend his "utmost endeavours to procure me soon the consignment of a vessel & to speak to all your friends & acquaintances to give me the preference." "Old acquaintance" with Dr. Robert Knox and "*intimate friendship*" with his brother were enough to win an order. Not just any acquaintance would do, of course; some were better than others. Most firms were "ever ambitious of extending...connexions with gentlemen of character," and, to them, "character" often meant having numerous friends and being willing to share them.²¹

As island competition mounted after 1750, Madeira merchants did not leave it up to their customers – a group with whom they had less and less direct ties – to come or write to them. The partners of firms visited primary markets on

²⁰ John Corrie to Thomas Gordon, January 7, 1771, Box 5, Bundle 1770-1771, Cossart & Gordon Papers, Liverpool University Archives.

²¹ Thomas Newton to Anthony Sarly, January 22, 1756, to Malcolm Campbell, January 22, 1756, to Dr. Robert Knox, March 23, 1756, to Evan Cameron, June 3, 1756, Thomas Newton Letterbook, ff. 1, 3, 7, Madeira Wine Company Archives.

a regular basis “in order to acquire some more friends in those quarters.” Most mid-sized and large firms sent a partner to America and Britain every two or three years. In 1756, Dr. Richard Hill went to Maryland and Pennsylvania to “drive all before him,” that is, to procure orders from old and new customers and arrange for return consignments, and he stayed for two years. Gedley Clare Burges of Madeira left his sometime partner Robert Jones in London and, with Jones’ letters of recommendation in his brief, set out on an elaborate “visitation of the counties,” taking in Liverpool, Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and Bristol. Early the next year, his competitor George Spence of Newton & Spence made a similar journey to Scotland to drum up orders. In 1758, after Francis Newton parted with Spence and aligned himself with Thomas Gordon, Gordon and the London general merchant Alexander Johnston went to Bristol and Liverpool “to procure a good deal of business” for the new firm. Given the absence of other Madeirans, they met with success. In America, Newton’s brother Thomas, the third partner in Newton & Gordon, and the New York merchant John Provoost traveled to various towns in New York and New England to do the same, but with less positive results, for there they encountered the likes of John Searle and James Anderson (an agent of the Madeiran Andrew Donaldson) who were also personally scouring the region with the intent of “procuring an opening to a larger correspondence.” Even more purely personal trips, occasioned by the death of a parent or one’s marriage, were turned into vigorous attempts to expand one’s portfolio of customers.²²

After 1750, as the necessity for expanding customer lists grew greater, due to not only the presence of more merchants on the island but also economic dislocations within Madeira’s fragile economy, the firms appointed part-time and later full-time agents in London, Philadelphia and New York. Eventually, they settled their own partners there to monitor commercial developments and scout out and secure new correspondents.²³ After Francis Newton’s arrival in Madeira in 1748, for instance, he relied on his former employer Alexander Johnston to

²² Daniel Henry Smith to James Gordon, July 25, 1774, Letterfourie Papers; Francis Newton to George Spence, June 9, 1756, December 6, 1756, February 17, 1757, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, vol. 1, ff. 208, 235, 248; Gedley Clare Burgess to Michael Nowlan, July 29, 1756, Burgess & Nowlan Letterbook, f. 23; Thomas Newton to Francis Newton, October 31, November 29, 1758, September 4, 1759, Thomas Newton Letterbook, ff. 44, 46, Madeira Wine Company Archives; Thomas Newton to Newton & Gordon, July 10, 1762, Box 8, Bundle 1774-1775, Cossart Gordon Papers, Liverpool University Archives; and Newton & Gordon to Thomas Newton, June 9, September 3, 1763, May 15, 1765, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, vol. 3, ff. 154, 193, 407.

²³ The Madeirans appear to be effecting what economists have noted for later periods. For a discussion of how economies first worked across markets and later worked across hierarchical firms, see the studies by Ronald H. Coase, “The Nature of the Firm,” *Economica*, v. 4 (1937), pp. 386-405; Oliver E. Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications* (New York, 1975); and Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, 1990). The most recent contribution to this literature – Bengt Holmström and John Roberts, “The Boundaries of the Firm Revisited,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, v. 12 (Fall 1998), pp. 73-94 – in looking at Japanese subcontracting, American steelworking, airline alliances, and broadcasting systems observes for the late twentieth century what the Madeirans learned in the eighteenth century: ownership pattern and behaviors are not only responsive to “the provision of investment incentives and the resolution of hold-ups” but also “agency problems, concerns for common assets, difficulties in transferring knowledge, and the benefits of market monitoring.” Page 75.

handle London concerns. But, by 1761, there were “so many partners” of competitors “residing in London” that Newton & Gordon began to worry. London-based partners could devote more time and procure more orders than a part-time agent with other interests and commitments. Like nearly every firm of any size and ambition, they soon sent a partner there.²⁴ But it was not enough to cover only London. American ports needed to be managed personally as well. So in 1758 Newton & Gordon sent Thomas Newton to New York; after he died, they made John Provoost and later Waddell Cunningham their agents; and, at the end of the century, their “transactions in America” went “more or less through the hands” of their agent Robert Lenox. “Having partners on the spot” came to be regarded as a *sine qua non* of working “in the Madeira Way.”²⁵

As competition among distributors continued to accelerate in the last quarter of the century, the exporters began to send their wine to its purchasers in the countryside at the exporter’s own expense. Some firms sent personal representatives to “go a drumming” up business and, when payment was received, shipped the wine via wagon trains or river boats. Other more aggressive retailers shipped the wine to backcountry retailers at the outset. Instead of requiring payment in advance, they struggled to procure repayment in the months ahead. The Quaker firm Lamar, Hill, Bisset & Co. combined both approaches.

Dr. Richard Hill naturally turned first to the colony and city he had left behind, and the first orders he filled were those submitted by family members or relatives still resident in Maryland and Philadelphia, like his son Richard, Jr., his son-in-law Samuel Preston Moore, and his cousins (the children of Philadelphia’s Mayor Richard Hill). Before five years were up, though, he was supplying many of the city’s most successful import houses, firms which were more often than not headed by prominent Friends – Israel Pemberton, John Smith, Burd & Swift, Baynton & Wharton. With each passing year, Hill’s firm added smaller and newer Philadelphia merchants and firms to its lists of correspondents. By the beginning of the Seven Years War, it had “engrossed most of the American business” in the city, by pushing on old friends and, in a move which probably swayed more than anything else, by “holding part of [their] vessels and being concerned in their cargoes.” At the end of the war, their customers included old acquaintances and mercantile connections – William Redwood, Reese Meredith, James Clunow, John Armit, George Smith, James Pemberton, Samuel McCall, Sr., John Gibson, Shoemaker & Pennington, William Logan, Meredith Neave, Charles & Alexander Stedman, Robert Bulley, Joshua Maddox, John Sibbald, Samuel Parratt, James Wallace, and Samuel Miles, to name only a few – who took the wine for their own consumption or for resale to their own customers. In nearly all these cases,

²⁴ Nearly every other firm of Newton & Gordon’s size and scale and ambition also sent partners to London to reside. Robert Scott, Sr., had moved there in the late-1730s, and John Pringle joined him in the late 1750s. James Gordon followed them in 1760, as did Thomas Lamar in 1762 and Charles Fergusson in 1763.

²⁵ Francis Newton to Waddell Cunningham, July 4, 1755, to John Provoost, August 2, 1758, Newton & Gordon to David Barclay, December 6, 1764, to John Provoost, July 23, 1766, to Mackintosh & Hannay, July 8, 1767, to Colt, Baker & Day, October 11, 1798, to William Cole, August 16, 1802, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, vol. 1, ff. 165, after 281, vol. 3, f. 353, vol. 4, ff. 33, 105, vol. 19, f. 105, vol. 23, f. 392.

the choice of correspondent was influenced mainly by specific family, religious or social connections.²⁶

After Dr. Richard Hill died in 1762 and his son and heir Henry took up residence in Philadelphia, the firm began to move farther afield in its search for customers. It cultivated the custom of general-store-keepers and tavern-keepers in the city. Years later, the firm supplied wines to the new City Tavern, “a genteel tavern” with club rooms, a room for public entertainment, lodgings rooms “for the accommodation of strangers” and “every other conveniency,” which Henry Hill and 52 other Philadelphia gentlemen-subscribers opened in 1773 “for the convenience and credit of the city.”²⁷ Moreover, the firm took advantage of Philadelphia’s role as commercial entrepôt and started directly supplying consumers, store-keepers and tavern-proprietors in surrounding counties and the backcountry.²⁸ According to Hill’s books, accounts were opened with residents in Shippensburg and Carlisle, as well as with Hance Hamilton in York, Edward Shippen in Lancaster Town, John Harris, Jr., at Harris’ Ferry, and the frontier soldiers stationed at Fort Augusta, north of Harris’ Ferry, in addition to a host of retailers and householders closer to home in Chester and Bucks Counties. On occasion, Hill’s backcountry customers (usually merchants, store-keepers and tavern-keepers) came to his business office in his new house on South Fourth Street, where he kept an extensive cellar. But, over time, he more willingly seized the initiative and went to them. Most years from 1767 through 1785, when fighting during the Revolution did not prevent him, he embarked on trade “missions” which took him to Christiana Bridge, York, Shippensburg, Harris’ Ferry, Lancaster and Reading, and then back again to Philadelphia. On these circuits, he met with both established and potential customers, including on one occasion several wagon-train leaders and pack-horse traders, whom he lured with a variety of samples and an offer of easy credit. Each year, Henry Hill’s

²⁶ Francis Newton to George Spence, March 7, 1757, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 1, f. 248. Likewise, the Searle firm tried to engross all the New York business to itself. They had “great friends there” and, during the war, were “very industrious in procuring them consignments.” One “friend,” their cousin Lewis Pintard, procured “a vast deal of business to their friends ... by getting intelligence of every vessel” that left New York, Connecticut and the Jerseys for the island and by “getting intimately acquainted with the captains & owners.” Like the Hills, the Searles also took “a concern in several [ships] to promote the interest of the house.” Often the house took a one-third share, and Pintard and the owner the remainder.” By mid-century, it seemed clear to most in the American trade that “there is no doing anything considerable here without being concerned in a vessel & even some part of the cargo.” Francis Newton to Thomas Newton, August 31, 1753, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 1, f. 70; Thomas Newton to Malcolm Campbell, October 20, 1756, Thomas Newton to Francis Newton, December 26, 1758, Thomas Newton to Francis Newton, February 19, 1759, Thomas Newton Letterbook, ff. 22r, 77r, 52v.

²⁷ John D. R. Platt, *The City Tavern: Historic Resource Study* (Denver: National Park Service, 1973), pp. 8-20, 243-45. See also Penelope H. Batcheler, *The City Tavern: Historic Structure Report – Architectural Data Section* (Denver, 1973), pp. 113-121, and Constance V. Hershey, *The City Tavern: Historic Furnishings Plan* (Denver, 1974), pp. 61-72, for the use of Hill’s Madeira at the Tavern.

²⁸ Previously, many of the firm’s customers in Philadelphia had managed the trade to the hinterland. In the early 1770s, for instance, William Pollard regularly supplied Madeira wine to Black Log Valley settlers, such as his brother-in-law Thomas Swaine. William Pollard Letterbook “1772-1774,” HSP.

expressed excuse for the trip was to visit a friend or relation; but the actual reason for his journey was to enlarge the firm's correspondence.²⁹

Madeira wine's distribution system developed over the century in what seems to us predictable ways. In Madeira, a number of firms that started better positioned with their customers, or more adept at responding to their evolving needs, or better skilled at deploying the rhetoric of cultural refinement, became larger and more successful than their competitors, and managed the trade more extensively. Yet the reasons for their success were always local or particular, the result of individual ambition, genius, skill or luck. Moreover, no central governmental authority or culture in Lisbon, Funchal, New York or London directed their work. Distribution channels in the Americas developed along similar lines. From the start, they were individual, informal and irregular. In some cases, wine-trading houses in Madeira, ever attentive to the possibilities of family ties, kinship, ethnicity and acquaintance, struck up commercial relationships with individual consumers.³⁰ These arrangements were often with the wealthiest in colonial communities. Elite urban merchant families like the Hancocks, Browns, Van Cortlandts and Willings annually requested two, sometimes four pipes from Madeira, regardless of price, which they used in their homes. They also ordered a pipe or two of "the very best Madeira wine" for their friends and peers. In 1759, Thomas Hancock did this for Massachusetts' governor; eight years later, his nephew John did the same with a pipe for its treasurer, and two pipes for his friends John and Jonathan Amory, two wealthy Boston traders who were strangers to Madeira's distributors. Elite consumers also purchased in bulk for resale. In the same year that John Hancock placed the Amorys' order, John

²⁹ In Spring 1785, for instance, John Harris, Jr., a store- and tavern-keeper at Harris' Ferry, ordered a pipe of Madeira wine from Henry Hill, agreeing to pay for it half in cash and half in rye, oats, boards and shingles. After its arrival by wagon the following Autumn, Harris began to supply his patrons. December 1785 through February 1786 seem typical. In December, he supplied Henry Moore of Middleton with some wine and oats for 8/9; William Kelso of Cumberland with wine and toddy while playing cards for 3/1; and John Henry of Harrisburg with a bottle of wine for 7/6. During January, he gave John Flahinger half a pint, John Henry three pints directly and another 2 quarts of wine specifically denoted Madeira by Henry's servant. In February, four town residents took his wine: Henry (a bottle), the Rev. Joseph Montgomery (a pint), Alexander Porter (2 gallons), and David Jordan the blacksmith (a pint). In all cases, he was paid in cash, though usually a year or two after the sale. Harris also sent wine Madeira to the soldiers at Fort Augusta, at the confluence of the north and south branches of the Susquehanna River. John Harris, Jr., Ledger, 1786-1791, HP. Lancaster County distribution sources include the John Harris, Jr., Ledgers, 1748-1775 & 1770-1791, HSP; James Burd Account Book, 1747-1748, APS; Burd-Shippen Family Papers, and Edward Shippen Thompson Papers, Pennsylvania State Archives; Edward Shippen Papers, HSP; and William McCord Ledger, 1761-66, Day Book, 1763-67, Invoice Book, 1764-67, Pennsylvania State Archives. Apart from Jerome Wood's excellent study, *Conestoga Crossroads* (Harrisburg, 1979), little work has been done on Lancaster County. Even less has been done on other counties supplied by Hill. There is nothing on Berks, for example, apart from the biography of Conrad Weiser by Paul Wallace, and the Conrad Weiser account-book published by the Pennsylvania German Society. Nor has work been done on the developing economies of York and Cumberland Counties; but see Hance Hamilton Papers, Box 1, HSP, for some primary trade material.

³⁰ See, for example, Robert Carter to John Hyde, May 26, 1729, Robert Carter to Micajah Perry, July 2, 1729, Robert Carter Letterbook, ff. 62, 77, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

ordered six pipes that he then resold to several Boston public houses “where the Best Company resorts.”³¹

Apart from individual exporters’ occasional shipments to elite drinkers, and subsequent distribution and resale by them, wine distribution was in the hands of American middlemen. At the high end of the entrepreneurial ladder, wine exporters shipped to wine importers, who in turn dealt with coastal- or port-town drink retailers (inn- and tavern-keepers), general-store-keepers, and urban householders, and gradually similar men and women in the backcountry.³² At the low end, there were wagon-train operators, pack-horse traders and itinerant peddlers – workers who would take almost anything for a price and whose employment depended heavily on the presence and passibility of roads, bridges, canals, ferries and the general westward extension of American society. Their means were often insufficient to purchase and transport whole barrels of wine; but on at least a few occasions a peddler was seen to be carrying bottles or barrels of wine and rum on his back or in his cart, as well as coffee and sugar. In the backcountry, peddlers, pack-horsemen and wagoners sold to consumers outright or to enterprising farmers, who in turn set up ad-hoc retail establishments and dispensaries in their own houses and barns. Itinerants thus enabled rural enterprisers to supply their patrons with a glass of wine, alongside a dram of whiskey and cider.³³ Yet, slowly, the necessity for their work was eliminated. As the population of the backcountry grew and its economy prospered, such operations often took on the look of or were replaced by the well-fixed stores, warehouses, inns, taverns, and dram-shops of the coastal port towns, and ad-hoc establishments. Roaming interests pushed further west.³⁴ These

³¹ John Hancock to Lamar, Hill, Bisset & Co., January 20, November 12, 1767, Hancock Papers, Special Collections, Harvard Business School, Boston. After the Revolution, Lamar, Hill, Bisset & Co. resumed their shipment of two pipes per year.

³² Inns, taverns, ordinaries and general stores spread with remarkable speed, as metropolitans, colonials and Indians clashed with the French during the 1750s and 1760s. War-time food and drink demands were greater than those that could be supplied by ordinary farmers; as a result, more well-equipped, institutionalized dispensaries arose to meet them, in western Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. The dispensaries remained to serve incoming settlers after the French and Indian War was concluded. Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville, 1977), pp. 144-45. See also, more generally, Charles J. Farmer, “Country Stores and Frontier Exchange Systems in Southside Virginia during the Eighteenth Century,” 2 vols. (Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland, 1984).

³³ The farmer-retailers bought as readily from local county merchants and wagon-train traders as from packhorse traders and itinerant peddlers. On the wagons, see Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, pp. 108-09. The literature on itinerant peddlers is not extensive. See Richard R. Beeman, ed., “Trade and Travel in Post-Revolutionary Virginia: A Diary of an Itinerant Peddler, 1807-1808,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXIV (1976), pp. 174-88; Daniel H. Usner, Jr., “The Frontier Exchange Economy of the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Eighteenth Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLIV (1987), pp. 165-192; and Daniel B. Thorp, “Doing Business in the Backcountry: Retail Trade in Colonial Rowan County, North Carolina,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLVIII (1991), p. 400. Much work remains to be done on the packhorse trade.

³⁴ On the quite remarkable growth of taverns and dram-shops in the towns and counties of Massachusetts, see David Conroy, “The Culture and Politics of Drink in Colonial and Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1681-1790” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Connecticut, 1987), p. 179. On taverns and tavern-keepers generally, also see Kym Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago, 1983); Robert Graham, “The Taverns of

changes were uncoordinated. The provision of drink in each community was highly depended on county officials, on suppliers, and on drinkers who frequented the stores and taverns; little notice was given to what was going on in London or Lisbon. Yet, at the same time, even the humblest drinker was aware of their connection to the wider world. War among Europeans or famine in England, the Azores or Italy forced shifts in everyday purchasing and consuming. Backcountry concerns might be highly local, unique to each market, but these were related back to the retailers in Lancaster, Philadelphia and eventually Funchal.

More than by personal distribution or small-scale retailing, the century was characterized by a proliferation of specialized services in the last third of the eighteenth century, and this had an immense effect on wine distribution in America, as it did on the distribution of almost all consumer goods.³⁵ At the beginning of the century, ordinary people purchased wines and spirits in a tavern, ordinary or dram shop; by the end of the century, they were just as likely to buy it in a storekeeper's shop or house that doubled as a store. That is because, over the course of the period 1663-1763, wine marketing and retailing emerged as a principal business. Through the first 150 years of American settlement, wine-selling had been an adjunct to other trades. Merchants who imported wine on their own account or as agents of European entrepreneurs always imported other things as well. They were in the truest sense of the word "general merchants." Wine to them was a product, not a business. The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which commenced publication in December 1728, contained only three wine advertisements in 1729 and 1730, and these hawked only "fine wines" or "good wine." By 1737, five different retailers advertised Madeira, red Port, Canary, and Claret; in 1738, one retailer floated Frontignan; and in 1739 one retailer hawked Florence. All of these goods were put up for sale alongside dry goods. In fact, the most common distributors of imported wines in the colonies during the first half of the century were dry-goods wholesalers, perhaps because the Wine Islands were well-situated entrepôts for distributing British cloth to Southern Europe and the Americas. Cloth ships bound from London to America often unloaded the Southern European portion of their cargo in Madeira and took on wine. For many of the same reasons, as heavy importers of Southern European and Wine Island fruit and salt, wholesale grocers also sometimes loaded and later dispensed the wines, but less frequently. Moreover, for obvious reasons, proprietors of inns,

Colonial Philadelphia," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, v. 43 (1953), pp. 318-25; Peter Thompson, "A Social History of Philadelphia's Taverns, 1663-1800" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1989); Patricia Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia, 1700-1774" (A.M. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1968); Anne Hedges, "Richmond's Taverns in the Years 1775-1810" (A.M. thesis, University of Richmond, 1993); James W. Hosier, "Travelers Comments on Virginia Taverns, Ordinaries and Other Accommodations from 1750 to 1812" (A.M. thesis, University of Richmond, 1964); Paton Yoder, "Tavern Regulation in Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, v. 87 (1979), pp. 259-78; Gretchen Sorin, "Tavern Fare Comestibles in Alexandria, 1770-1810," *Northern Virginia Heritage*, 3 (1981), pp. 3-20.

³⁵ Two other sales outlets also grew in importance in the 1700s: urban vendue-masters, and the assignees of bankrupts. In 1766, for instance, New York had two vendue-masters – Nicholas William Stuyvesant, and Moore & Lynsen – whose public auctions were held at their offices, the site of the property being sold, a coffee-house or tavern, or a dock. *New-York Mercury*, June 9, 1766.

taverns and ordinaries distributed wine, although the dispensing was only one of the many services they offered.³⁶

Specialized wine traders first appeared in the newspaper advertisements, tax lists and trade directories of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston in the 1750s and 1760s, but they did not flourish until the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. In Philadelphia, for example, no mention of a “wine shop” or “wine store” as a distinct establishment occurred until 1753 when Samuel Grisley began advertising “old choice Madeira wine, by the quarter cask, gallon and quart” and old Malmsey, Lisbon and white wines by the bottle “at his wine store, below the Jersey market, where there is a green lamp before the door.” No mention of a “wine merchant” occurred before the early-1770s, although that is surely what Grisley was in 1753, as well as what William Braventon (who had resided in both London and Portugal and “acquired much experience in the art and mystery of the wine trade”) was in the same year when he announced his setting up shop as a “vintner” (blender) and “wine cooper” (blender and packager) – professionals that for centuries had combined the work of selling wine with blending and packaging it. The lag in terminology notwithstanding, the niche was developed by the 1770s, when John Mitchell opened a “Wine, Spirit, Rum and Sugar Store” in Front Street. His offerings testify to a focus and to a greatly expanded range: Madeira, Claret, Port, Lisbon, Sherry, Mountain, Tenerife, Fayal, Frontignan, French White, Hock, and Red Lisbon wine; Spanish Brandy, Shone’s, Kenton’s and Parker’s London Porter; Burton and Taunton bottled ale; West India and New England rum; Holland Geneva; plus a wide range of oils, teas, sugars, spices and the like. Mitchell sold his wines “new or old,” “dry or sweet,” “genuine,” “excellent,” or “of the best quality,” by the pipe, hogshead, quarter cask, anchor, gallon, or dozen.³⁷

³⁶ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 12, 1737 (John Valentine), November 16, 1738 (Evan Morgan). In the first twenty years of its publication (1731-1749), some 21 wholesalers and retailers advertised Madeira wine in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on 48 separate occasions. The first mention of Madeira appeared on August 22, 1734, when seven pipes were put up at public vendue.

³⁷ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 13, 1753, June 26, 1755. See also May 17, August 21, 1773, and May 11, 12 (Bache’s Wine Store), November 23 (Mitchell’s Wine, Spirit, Rum & Sugar Store), 1774. Before 1775, there is no mention of a “wine shop” (although that is surely what Grisley opened) or a “wine cellar” as a retail establishment. Moreover, there is no one who advertises himself as a “wine merchant” *per se*, although in March 1772 the German Ludwig Kuhn describes himself as a clerk who “would suit a wine merchant best, as in Europe he has been a considerable time in that trade, as well for himself as others, and consequently is a good judge of wines.” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 26, 1772. Benjamin Morgan had advertised his services as a wine cooper as early as 1729. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1729. Similar specialization occurred outside Philadelphia at roughly the same time. Further west, in Lancaster, for instance, the Scot James Burd, who had previously worked as a merchant in Philadelphia, was the first to open a “Wine Store” in 1759, in concert with his father-in-law Edward Shippen, Sr. There he sold several qualities of Madeira, which he obtained either directly from the Hill firm or indirectly from his brother-in-law Edward Shippen, Jr. and Thomas Willing in Philadelphia, as well as Tenerife and Malaga, in addition to rum, spirits, brandy and sugar. Lily L. Nixon, *James Burd: Frontier Defender, 1726-1793* (Philadelphia, 1941), p. 127; and Wood, Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads*, p. 98. Despite the push for specialization, the combination of retail services persisted, especially in non-urban or undeveloped regions. As late as 1797, the proprietor announced the sale of “dry and wet goods,” at his Spring House Store, eight miles from Chestnut Hill on the road to Bethlehem. There, it was declared, “tavern-keepers may be

During and after the Revolution, cellars, merchants, coopers and vintners appeared in growing number. Some 89 separate individuals and firms placed ads relating to wine in the newspapers between 1775 and 1783. Later on, Clement Biddle's *Philadelphia Directory* of 1791 notes the presence of eight wine specialists: not only four described as "wine merchant," including one who had previously worked in Madeira, and one described as "wine merchant and grocer," but also another as "wine cooper" and two more as "bottler[s] of liquors" (an occupation with tasks similar to those of a vintner). By 1811, when a *Census Directory* was published, the number had doubled: the city had at least six specialized wine merchants, five wine coopers, five liquor stores where wine was sold, and one proprietor of a bottling cellar.³⁸

Thus, the extensive, multi-directional communication in the world of Atlantic commerce built the important ties that bound people together across imperial boundaries, and transformed a collection of independent operatives and operations into a resilient commercial infrastructure. Because of this communication, a market emerged from a congeries of independent, disconnected individual behaviors. Particular conversations with their customers, suppliers, agents and friends provided Madeira's traders with information, created understanding among parties, and helped build global organizations. Personal, conversation-based, negotiative relationships provided valuable sources of information about the opening of new markets, the successes and failures of other merchants on the other side of the ocean, local prosecution of infractions of the Navigation Acts, the tastes of specific communities, and the like – all matters which were local to the arena of consumption and foreign to the distributor.

At the level of individual agents, the historical record shows them at work, responding to the opportunities that arose during their rather mundane lives, and responding in ways heavily influenced by the specifics of their environment, their relations with their community, and their own particular needs. Out of thousands

supplied with wines and liquors warranted free of adulteration on very moderate terms," as well as "every article suitable for a store." *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 31, 1797.

³⁸ Clement Biddle, *The Philadelphia Directory* (Philadelphia, 1791); and Anon., *Census Directory for 1811* (Philadelphia, 1811). Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 77, sketches the ancillary specialization by region and by commodity at work in Philadelphia's import trading community; the process was fixed by the 1780s. For similar growth in wine specialists in other American towns and cities, see Anon., *The Boston Directory* (Boston, 1789); Edward Cotton, *The Boston Directory* (Boston, 1807); William Duncan, *The New York Directory and Register, for the Year 1792* (New York, 1792); *Longworth's American Almanac, New-York Register, and City Directory* (New York, 1807); Eleazer Elizer, *A Directory for 1803* (Charleston, 1803). David Hancock, "Markets, Merchants, and the Wider World of Boston's Wine, 1700-1775," in Conrad Wright and Katheryn Viens, eds., *Entrepreneurs: The Boston Business Community, 1700-1850* (Boston, 1997), pp. 21-22, 28-33, documents the increase in captains and merchants shipping and trading wine in Boston and Massachusetts. The New York case was the most pronounced. Some 175 enterprisers (vendue masters, merchants, wholesalers, retailers, store-owners, specialists like cork-cutters, and brokers) advertised the sale of wine in New York City between 1768 and 1775; during the war, 387 individuals advertised. The average number of advertisements placed in New York City newspapers more than doubled from 42 in the pre-war period to 98 in the war-period. The high level of war-time advertising was maintained after the war. Robert Dructor, "The New York Commercial Community: The Revolutionary Experience" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1975).

of similar responses, a more highly elaborated and differentiated economy emerged: ships going to Madeira to off-load American staples became ships also going to Madeira to load island wine; one-off trades became multi-step, multi-place exchanges managed by an army of employees; taverns became stores, and in turn general stores became wine stores. One sees a regularity and direction emerging out of the “ant-pile” of all these disconnected people just doing what locally made sense to each one.

Consumption

Social and cultural institutions evolved in the eighteenth century alongside innovations in production and the vast elaboration of oceanic and inland distribution. Wine and wine-drinking were part of these institutions and their evolution. A close examination of the linked markets for the production, distribution, and consumption of Madeira wine casts some light upon these institutions and helps us understand how individual growers, traders and drinkers deployed the tools at hand to promote their commercial and social projects, and how social norms and standards emerged and changed. Once again, one finds trans-Atlantic conversation critical in forming and transmitting these standards.

As a result of a century of changes in the production and distribution of wine, late-eighteenth-century imbibers could choose among more alcoholic drinks, more wines, and more types and grades of Madeira, as well as more places to procure them. On the consumption side, the story of Madeira is embedded in the story of other wines, spirits, and even some non-alcoholic drinks. Often, the records do not distinguish among them, and refer only to “wine,” “liquor” or “drink,” when complementary evidence suggests what was drunk was Madeira wine. Over the century, Madeira’s share of the Americas’ imported drinks market fell. In the early period 1714-1723, some 82% of the British colonial wine imports was Madeira; by 1805-1806, that share had fallen to 8% of the United States wine imports, although given the tendency to label Madeira rather vaguely that may be a conservative estimate. Nevertheless, the preference for Madeira was progressively reduced, and after the Revolution the market was opened to other wines, particularly those of Spain and France. But the changes would have happened anyway. The white population of what became the United States grew twenty-fold over the century, while the production capacity of Madeira remained essentially flat. Some Madeira that had been wasted or drunk on the island early in the century was made available for export by the third quarter of the century, but Madeira’s markets grew, too, both in Europe and India, and drew off the newly released product but also customary lots formerly sent to the Americas.

There are two principal sets of records that document the change in what Americans drank in the eighteenth century: shipping lists that show what traders were importing into British America, and probate inventories that show what people were storing at home at the time of their deaths.

In the absence of other compilations, Naval Office Shipping Lists (NOSL) – quarterly lists of all ships entering and exiting colonial ports that were kept by naval officers appointed by the Treasury and resident in the port towns – and

colonial port manifest books of entry provide the only available extensive quantitative source for figuring out the imports of wines and spirits to the colonies.³⁹ For some colonies and some periods, it is possible to reconstitute an “imported beverage portfolio” with these records and track the changes in the composition of that portfolio.

With Philadelphia, New York was one of the two principal ports for wine’s importation. Of the two, New York is the better documented.⁴⁰ Wine imports into New York are detailed in Table 1 and Graph 1.⁴¹ Before the French and Indian War, total wine imports show a slow increase. In the earliest period for which the records survive, 1703 to 1707, 320 pipes of wine came in through the port of New York each year, on average.

³⁹ That foundation is shaky in places; it is not as solid as that provided by Madeira’s *livros dos entradas* and *saidas* or even by Britain’s American Inspector-General’s Ledgers for the years 1768-1776 (CUST 16, PRO). The Lists contain certain gaps: they have not survived (1) for every approved customs port in certain colonies (there are no lists for Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, or North Carolina, for example); (2) for some customs ports in other colonies; (3) for some years (there are no lists for 1705-1712 for any colony, or for the Revolutionary War years – a great gap, as newspapers accounts of prize sales suggests that the flow of Portuguese wines into the large American ports occupied by the Americans was substantial, despite the non-importation of certain goods and the closing of Portuguese ports to American traders); (4) for some quarters in years when entries have been entered in other quarters (sometimes only two quarters have survived, as is the case with Nova Scotia entrances and clearances in 1749, or only one quarter, as with Massachusetts entrances and clearances in 1752); or (5) haphazardly, when the Naval Officer or his clerk neglected to record certain categories of information, such as the nationality of the ship or the port the ship had just come from. For prizes, see *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 22, 1775, January 24, June 19, July 31, August 7, 21, October 2, 9, 16, 30, November 6, 1776, February 5, 12, June 18, August 27, September 3, 1777, January 8, 10, 24, February 7, 21, May 23, 30, June 6, 13, July 14, October 27, November 26, 1778, March 3, 17, April 21, June 9, July 28, September 22, October 13, December 15, 1779, May 3, 17, 24, 31, June 28, July 19, November 1, December 27, 1780, January 17, February 14, 28, March 14, April 25, May 2, 16, August 29, September 5, 12, October 24, 1781. For examples of missing quarters, see CO 5/849, CO 221/28, T 64/84, PRO.

⁴⁰ On imports into New York, see William I. Davisson and Lawrence J. Bradley, “New York Maritime Trade: Ship Voyage Patterns, 1715-1765,” *New York Historical Society Quarterly*, v. 55 (1971), pp. 308-17; Cathy Matson, “Commerce after the Conquest: I: Dutch Traders and Goods in New York City, 1664-1764,” *De Halve Maen*, LIX (March 1987), pp. 8-12; Philip L. White, *The Beekmans of New York in Politics and Commerce, 1647-1877* (New York, 1956); David A. Armour, *The Merchants of Albany, New York, 1686-1760* (New York, 1986), p. 178; and Dructor, “New York Commercial Community.”

⁴¹ The data series of wine imports is very noisy due to weather conditions that affected the crop and shipping. The five-year moving averages reduce the effect of the noise.

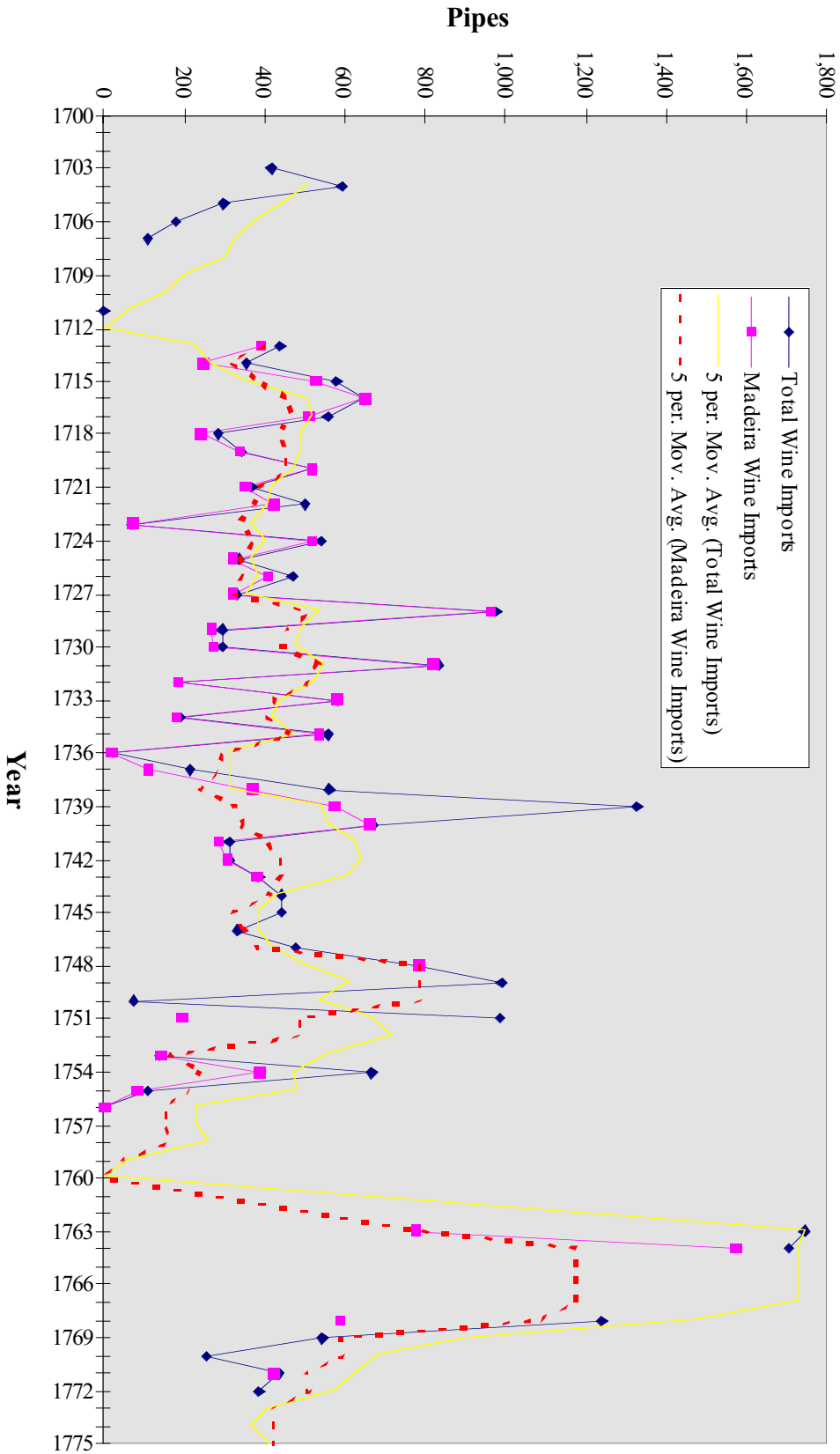
**Table 1: Wine Imports into New York from All Points (in 110-gallon pipes)
1700-1775**

Year	Quarters of		Imports						
	Ships	Surviving NOSL	Total	Madeira	Azorean	Portuguese	Canary	Spanish	Other
1700									
1701									
1702					3.6				
1703			417.5						
1704			593.1						
1705			299.7						
1706			179.5						
1707			110.5						
1708									
1709									
1710									
1711									
1712									
1713	52	cd	436.8	388.8					48.0
1714	27	abcd	355.8	245.5					110.3
1715	24	abcd	578.5	527.0					51.5
1716	7	bcd	647.5	646.5					1.0
1717	12	abcd	554.3	508.3	13.0		20.0		13.0
1718	8	abcd	285.3	240.3	44.0		1.0		
1719	12	Ab d	341.5	337.5					4.0
1720	9	abcd	516.5	515.5					1.0
1721	10	abcd	368.1	352.5			15.6		
1722	11	abcd	498.0	422.5			75.5		
1723	6	abcd	70.5	68.5	2.0				
1724	13	abcd	537.1	515.0	0.1		22.0		
1725	17	abcd	339.4	319.8			10.0	1.0	8.7
1726	11	abcd	470.0	406.8			51.0		12.3
1727	13	abcd	327.3	319.3	1.0		2.0		5.0
1728	17	abcd	977.3	964.3			1.0	12.0	
1729	16	abcd	292.3	267.3			11.0		14.0
1730	19	abc	293.0	270.5			20.3		2.3
1731	19	bcd	833.0	818.5			14.5		
1732	10	abcd	186.0	185.5					0.5
1733	15	abcd	581.3	577.3			2.0		2.0
1734	11	abcd	188.8	177.5			5.0		6.3
1735	14	abcd	555.8	535.3			15.0	2.0	3.5
1736	6	abcd	21.3	15.8					5.5
1737	12	bcd	213.5	111.3	8.0		75.0	19.3	
1738	18	abcd	559.6	368.8			181.3	9.0	0.6
1739	19	abcd	1,326.4	571.9			659.3	94.0	1.3
1740	15	abcd	670.3	661.3	1.0	5.0	2.0		1.0
1741	8	abcd	310.0	285.0		8.0	1.0		16.0
1742	9	abcd	310.3	305.5					4.8
1743	6	ab	385.6	382.5					3.1
1744			442.8						
1745			440.5						

**Table 1 (cont.): Wine Imports into New York from All Points (in 110-gallon pipes)
1700-1775**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Ships</i>	<i>Quarters of Surviving NOSL</i>	<i>Imports</i>						
			<i>Total</i>	<i>Madeira</i>	<i>Azorean</i>	<i>Portuguese</i>	<i>Canary</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Other</i>
1746			331.8						
1747			476.5						
1748	9	bc	782.3	782.3					
1749			988.0						
1750			75.0						
1751	8	d	987.3	192.5	64.0				
1752		a							
1753	4	d	139.8	139.8					
1754	17	abcd	663.8	386.8	256.0		15.0		6.0
1755	7	abc	110.0	84.8	25.3				
1756	8								
1757	12								
1758	28								
1759	50								
1760	51								
1761	14								
1762	23								
1763	24	abcd	1,742.4	775.9			624.8	216.5	125.3
1764	27	abcd	1,703.8	1,572.5	100.0		2.5		28.8
1765		cd							
1766									
1767									
1768		abcd	1,238.7	586.1					
1769		abcd	543.6						
1770		abcd	255.9						
1771		abcd	433.5	420.0					
1772		abcd	384.8						
1773									
1774									
1775									
Total			27,370.9	17,251.9	517.9	13.0	1,826.6	353.8	475.3
Percentage of Total				63.0%	1.9%	0.05%	6.7%	1.3%	1.7%

Graph 1: Wine Imports into New York, 1700 - 1775



This increased to 494 pipes per year in 1749 to 1755. The statistics for the French and Indian War period are much thinner; wars generally disrupted trade and its recording, and the results are not to be trusted. Yet, some want was felt, for, in both 1763 and 1764, New Yorkers greedily imported over 1,700 pipes of wine. These extraordinarily high levels probably reflect the pent-up demand that accumulated during the war, because the level of wine importation dropped thereafter. It averaged 570 pipes in 1768 to 1772.⁴² Madeira's share of total wine imports consistently fell – from approximately 97% in 1703-1707 to 47% in 1768.⁴³ Throughout the colonial years, Madeira imports always exceeded those of the Azores, Canaries, Portugal or Spain, but slowly the others gained ground.

As went New York's wine imports, so went the other colonies'. Grouping together all surviving British North American colonial port entries for 1700 to 1775 reveals that some 58% of all imported wine was Madeira, another 7% was Azorean, and 9% Canary. Thus, wines from the Wine Islands dominated British North American markets. In contrast, wines from the Spanish mainland (Alicante, Malaga, Mountain, Passado, Sherry) provided only 1%, and wines from the Portuguese mainland (Lisbon, Port, Viana) comprised only 0.3%,⁴⁴ even though Iberian wines like Port dominated the market in England and Wales.⁴⁵

⁴² Comparing the imports to the size of the colony's white population (as estimated by John McCusker in *The Rum Trade*), it appears that average per capita importation was 2.1 gallons of wine in 1714-1718, 1.6 gallons in 1749, 0.9 gallons in 1754, 1.5 gallons in 1763-1764, 0.4 gallons in 1768-1772, and 0.6 gallons in 1789/1790.

⁴³ In 1703-1707, only 13.8% of the wine imports were denoted "Madeira." Another 82.7% were labeled "Wine." Since 75.9% of all wines entered into the port came on ships coming directly from Madeira, it is safe to assume that at least two-thirds of the wine was Madeira wine. The rise to 97% in 1771 is almost certainly an aberration, having to do with the end of colonial non-importation, a run of low vintages in the Azores and Canaries, and most importantly the fact that the source (CUST 16) does not include Azorean wines for some unknown reason.

⁴⁴ A final category of "other" wines, including French, Italian, and those listed simply as "wines," constituted 16.9%. Colonies in North America for which Naval Office Shipping Lists have survived include: New Hampshire (1724-25, 1727, 1742-43, 1745-49, 1751-55, 1757-64, 1766-69), Massachusetts (1716-19, 1752-65), New York (1713-43, 1748, 1751, 1753-55, 1763-64), New Jersey (1723-27, 1733, 1739-41, 1743-51, 1754-55, 1757-59, 1763-64), Maryland (1754-64), Virginia (1700-04, 1726-59, 1768-69), South Carolina (1717-18, 1724, 1731-32, 1734-38, 1758-60, 1762-63, 1766, 1768-1772), Georgia (1752, 1754-57, 1760-67), and East Florida (1764-69). In some instances, colonial government manifest books, recording imports of dutiable goods like wine and spirits, and General Accounts abstracted from them have survived and complement the Shipping Lists. The New York accounts and manifests are the best, fullest example, covering the years 1703-09 and 1743-62 – years not well covered by the Lists. Except for Maryland's NOSL, all other Lists are housed at the PRO: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia (CO 5/1446-1447), South Carolina (CO 510-511), Georgia (CO 5/710), and East Florida (CO 5/573). Analysis of NOSL for British West Indian ports provides similar shares. Jamaica (CO 142/15-19), Tortola (CO 317/1), St. Christopher (CO 243/1/15, CO 33/18, and T 1/489/ 498, 507, 512), Nevis (CO 187/1-2, and T 1 489, 498, 507, 512), Antigua (T1/152 and T 1 489, 498, 507, 512), Montserrat (T 1 489, 498, 507, 512), Dominica (CO 76/4-8), St. Vincent (CO 265/1-2), Grenada (CO 106/1-8), Tobago (CO 290/1-3), and Barbados (CO 33/13-26, and T 64/47-49).

⁴⁵ Port wine at the end of the century was "the most universal in Britain," and had been so throughout the century. At the beginning of the century, "the common draught" of Portugal wines, mainly Port and Lisbon, was "fixed" and pleased Britons "tolerably well." Arthur W. Secord, ed., *Defoe's Review*, Bk. 2 of vol. 1 (New York, 1938), p. 362 (January 2, 1705), p. 358 (December 30, 1704). By 1755, Madeira Wine was not uncommon in Britain, but that was not

The removal of Great Britain's mercantile restrictions during the Revolution accelerated some pre-war trends. Madeira wine's hold on the market – already loosened – weakened further. Madeira's share of the wine imported into the United States fell from 31% in 1789-1790, to 8% in 1805-1806; it had averaged 36% in the immediate pre-1776 period. Wines from other wine-producing countries, like Spain and France, were now regularly imported. Sherry and St. Lucar wines in particular had come into vogue and were introduced in greater volumes; in half of the years between 1794 and 1806, the total quantity of Sherry imported actually exceeded that of Madeira. Nevertheless, Madeira remained the single most valuable of America's wine imports: given the high market price of Madeira, its share of the value of all wines totaled together was still unmatched.

Probate inventories, recording the possessions of an individual at the time of his or her death, paint a similar, if more complicated picture of increasing choice among drinks, and shed some light on the increasing distinctions among drinkers that that allowed. Few of these distinctions had anything to do with Portugal or England directly, indeed with anything beyond the social and cultural world of the consumers. I have constructed consumer databases from probates of Suffolk County (Boston) and Hampshire County, Massachusetts, New York City and County, New York, and the colonies of South Carolina and Jamaica. For each region, I surveyed all probates for a decade towards the beginning of the eighteenth century and another decade towards the end.⁴⁶

Some results from the analysis of these inventories are arrayed in the tables that follow. First of all, Table 2 confirms the increase in the variety of wines that

saying much. Within forty years, it was “scarcely reckoned one of” their wines. Similarly, Sherry, which was around 1780 “in vast vogue,” was by 1795 “retiring from our acquaintance.” John Wright, *An Essay on Wines, Especially on Port Wine* (London, 1795), pp. 19, 42-43.

⁴⁶ The construction of the database operated on three principles. First, four colonies were selected, largely on the basis of geographical distribution: Massachusetts, New York, South Carolina, and Jamaica. Secondly, within two of those colonies, a metropolitan county (that housed the seat of government) and a less-developed interior county were selected: for Massachusetts, Suffolk and Hampshire; for New York, New York and Albany. *County* officials in these two colonies were responsible for the recording of testamentary dispositions, probate inventories and related deeds. In South Carolina and Jamaica, however, *colony* officials were responsible for collecting and collating such records; sometimes, they noted the residence of the decedent, but sometimes not. As a result, it is not always possible to distinguish metropolitan from backcountry decedents. Accordingly, the samples for Carolina and Jamaica were constructed to include inventoried decedents from all counties and parishes. For each jurisdiction, whether colony or county, a database of all decedents whose estates were inventoried for two periods was compiled – a decade or half-decade near the beginning of the century, and a decade or half-decade near the end. Since the survival of probate records has not been uniform across colonies, exact overlap of all four studied regions was impossible to effect. For instance, the Massachusetts county records were culled for the years 1703-1707 and 1803-1807; New York probate inventories were culled for 1703-1712 and 1790-1799. Jamaica records are spottier, however, and as a result in the earliest decade could yield data only for the years 1700-1705 and 1713-1716; the records for intervening years are inaccessible. Similarly, Carolina probates were not recorded until the 1730s; the first decade surveyed is therefore 1732-1741. The data, then, in some cases is scattered across time, although enough overlaps have been constructed to permit comparison among regions.

were consumed. In the two northern metropolitan counties, the number of varieties of wine recorded in probate records at the end of the century was three to six times the number early on. (The numbers in this table suggest that the varieties of wine in New York inventories rose from one to thirteen, but that is because I have included “Made Here A” – what today we might consider a “Madeira-flavored beverage” – with true Madeira.) There is an only slightly smaller increase in the varieties of other alcoholic drinks. In backcountry Hampshire County the pattern is similar, but the variety is smaller, both early and late. This is what we expect, because of the port cities’ economic role and population density. There was actually no wine recorded in Hampshire County probate inventories in 1703-1707. Increases in variety took place similarly to the south. The data suggest that this may have occurred earlier in Carolina and Jamaica than in the north, but we cannot be sure of this until New York City and County inventories are examined for mid-century.

Table 2: Varieties of Wines and Other Alcoholic Beverages Listed in Probate Inventories

		<u>Wines</u>	<u>Other Alcoholic Beverages</u>
1700-1705	Jamaica	6	6
1703-1707	Hampshire County, MA	0	2
1703-1707	Suffolk County, MA	4	6
1703-1712	New York County, NY	1	7
1713-1716	Jamaica	3	9

1732-1736	Jamaica	13	16
1732-1741	South Carolina	6	6

1765-1774	South Carolina	23	31

1790-1799	New York County, NY	13	15
1803-1807	Hampshire County, MA	6	9
1803-1807	Suffolk County, MA	14	28
1807	Jamaica	6	10

As noted in Table 3, in both urban and rural county estates, alcoholic beverages like rum or cider appeared more commonly than wine. Suffolk County was typical: in 1703-1707, only 4% of all inventories had wine in them, while 11% had some other alcoholic beverage; a century later, 6% had wine in them, while 12% had some other alcoholic drink. The trend in backcountry Hampshire was somewhat more pronounced. New York is an anomaly: the percentage of estates with alcoholic beverages declines over the century, although, as we have seen, the varieties of drink increased. The dominance of spirits, especially rum, throughout the century is clear. Given the plentiful supply of molasses and Americans’ push into rum distilling, this is what one would expect.

Table 3: Percentage of Inventories with Varying Amounts of Wine

		<i>Just Wine</i>	<i>Just Other</i>	<i>Both Wine</i>	<i>Either Wine</i>
			<i>Alcoholic</i>	<i>and Other</i>	<i>or Other</i>
			<i>Beverages</i>	<i>Alcoholic</i>	<i>Alcoholic</i>
				<i>Beverages</i>	<i>Beverages</i>
1700-1705	Jamaica	1.0%	6.4%	3.4%	10.8%
1703-1707	Hampshire County, MA	0.0%	10.3%	0.0%	10.3%
1703-1707	Suffolk County, MA	0.6%	8.1%	2.9%	11.6%
1703-1712	New York County, NY	2.1%	12.5%	4.2%	18.8%
1713-1716	Jamaica	0.7%	4.7%	1.0%	6.4%

1732-1736	Jamaica	2.4%	4.9%	2.6%	9.9%
1732-1741	South Carolina	0.5%	5.1%	1.0%	6.6%

1765-1774	South Carolina	2.1%	6.3%	5.0%	13.4%

1790-1799	New York County, NY	1.1%	5.5%	3.8%	10.4%
1803-1807	Hampshire County, MA	0.0%	21.1%	0.9%	22.0%
1803-1807	Suffolk County, MA	2.2%	7.9%	3.6%	13.7%
1807	Jamaica	0.0%	25.0%	18.3%	43.3%

One more point about consumption that emerges from this analysis is its correlation with the wealth of the decedent. (Table 4) Early in the century, people who had Madeira wine in their estates were no wealthier than other drinkers – in fact, in some cases, less wealthy. Yet at some point in the 1720s or 1730s that state-of-affairs changed. By the later period, in each of the five samples, decedents who held Madeira wine were wealthier than decedents who held any wine, who in turn were wealthier than all decedents. Certainly the lots that were inventoried recorded fairly large and therefore expensive containers: tuns, pipes, hogsheads, and quarter-casks – requiring too steep an outlay for most middling urban or rural families, who more commonly got their wines from taverns or shops in rented bottles. At the same time, wine and, in particular, Madeira wine became more expensive compared to both overall price indices and the specific prices of other alcoholic drinks. The origins of this were dispersed around the globe: Asian and American demand increased, while the island's natural production increased slowly and then stagnated; the Factory on the island raised export prices; and rituals appropriate to an expensive commodity accreted to the wine.

Table 4: Wealth at Death (in Pounds Sterling)

Massachusetts	<u>1703-1707</u>		<u>1803-1807</u>	
	<i>Hampshire</i>	<i>Suffolk</i>	<i>Hampshire</i>	<i>Suffolk</i>
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wealth-holders	129.0	336.0	408.14	1502.4
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wine-holders	0.0	209.1	1,443.73	4805.8
Average Value of Total Estate of All Madeira-holders	0.0	199.1	0.00	5107.0
Average Value of All Wine in All Estates with Wine	0.0	9.9	5.43	53.6
Average Value of All Madeira in All Estates with Madeira	0.0	8.5	0.00	81.5
New York	<u>1703-1712</u>		<u>1790-1799</u>	
	<i>New York</i>		<i>New York</i>	
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wealth-holders	971.6		1116.3	
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wine-holders	229.9		1752.0	
Average Value of Total Estate of All Madeira-holders	229.9		3831.2	
Average Value of All Wine in All Estates with Wine	64.0		1840.9	
Average Value of All Madeira in All Estates with Madeira	64.0		585.2	
South Carolina			<i>1732-1741</i>	<i>1765-1774</i>
			<i>All Counties</i>	<i>All Counties</i>
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wealth-holders			721.2	1131.1
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wine-holders			1041.1	5181.5
Average Value of Total Estate of All Madeira-holders			616.0	5220.4
Average Value of All Wine in All Estates with Wine			12.9	19.1
Average Value of All Madeira in All Estates with Madeira			6.3	32.4
Jamaica	<u>1700-1705</u>	<u>1713-1716</u>	<u>1732-1736</u>	<i>1807</i>
	<i>All Counties</i>		<i>All Counties</i>	<i>All</i>
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wealth-holders	759.6	777.0	1636.2	8410.7
Average Value of Total Estate of All Wine-holders	710.5	672.8	3215.2	15284.9
Average Value of Total Estate of All Madeira-holders	1072.5	292.5	4214.8	13506.3
Average Value of All Wine in All Estates with Wine	98.2	5.3	63.7	173.2
Average Value of All Madeira in All Estates with Madeira	186.9	2.3	130.9	81.7

More than anything else, for our purposes here, probate inventories confirm what shipping lists suggest: Madeira wine became an international luxury good in the eighteenth century, and as we shall see that status was closely associated with wealth, cultural refinement and cosmopolitanism. In the 1670s

and 1680s, consuming wine in America as an accompaniment to a meal or an act all its own connoted few things. Wine was a nutritional supplement and a staple of the diet, and it always provided individual physical satisfaction and stimulation – the quenching of thirst or easy intoxication. Moreover, it was a sign of social communion and hospitality. However, in the century that followed – a century marked by the proliferation of choice – imported wine began satisfying new motivations and conveying new meanings.

Few wines had given rise to many wines. This increased product differentiation provided the conditions for individuals to use wine to make social distinctions: some wine could be distinguished as fine wine and connected to specific classes, persons, venues or events. In America, the finest was Madeira wine, and its case is exemplary. Few of its connotations had much to do with metropolitan London culture, greater British culture, or provincial Portuguese customs. They were the product of North American people and circumstances, although at each step along the way they were influenced by their conversations with Madeira producers and distributors. The change in Madeira's status was accompanied by a rise in wine ceremony and celebration and an increase in the use of drinking artifacts and rituals. The composite wine culture that George Washington partook of at the end of the century was not something William Byrd would have known or understood at the beginning; nor would Washington's contemporaries in England or Portugal necessarily have appreciated it.

Contemporaries' stray and often terse remarks in diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, and the like reveal both the persistence of older meanings for Madeira and the emergence of new. Consider these meanings under three headings: wealth, refinement, and European cosmopolitanism.

Wealth: Wine consumption came to signify the possession of wealth. As the probate analysis tells us, after the 1730s, the "quality" in America preferred a wider range of drinks, and some drinks over others. Certain wines like Madeira after mid-century became markedly more expensive when compared to other imported wines like Canary or Lisbon wine, or locally-manufactured spirits like whiskey or even rum. Over time, Madeira gained a reputation as a luxury, while others gained notice as ordinary, cheaper alternatives.

That reputation was not lost on contemporaries; it was noticed and remarked upon extensively. "People of Fortune" in New Hampshire drank "very good" Madeira and old rum, observed the traveler James Birket in 1751, whereas "the lower sort" drank cider, new rum locally distilled, and common Wine Island Vidonia.⁴⁷ After 1755, according to the century's leading expert on the history of wine, John Wright, "the tables of the opulent in our East and West Indies seldom exhibited any other wine" but Madeira wine. The "extravagance of the planters in Virginia," "many of whom had great estates," was evidenced by their preference for rich, rare wines like Madeira. One of the reasons Grenville's administration strove to enact a high import duty on Madeira in 1764 was to tap

⁴⁷ Birket, *Some Cursory Remarks*, pp. 9-10.

the wealthy – a calculation which appears to have succeeded with some planters.⁴⁸

Especially after the American Revolutionary war, the price of Madeira kept it off many tables, and it was frequently mentioned as a luxury fit only for “the quality.” In trying to revive his flagging business, William Lee, a planter and wine-merchant who worked from his James River plantation Green Springs, near Williamsburg, noted somewhat sadly that the “gentry here ... are the only people that drink wine in this country.” But this was not true just in Tidewater Virginia but everywhere in North America. Wherever the Scots arriviste Patrick Campbell looked between Albany and Montreal in 1791, he could find neither wine nor punch: the product “of these new settlements cannot as yet afford this luxury,” he surmised, and he had no choice but to drink grog and rasp rum, poured from glass decanters into glass tumblers. Even George Washington 1794 noted that the duty upon the wine made it “one of the most expensive liquors that is now used”; accordingly, he advised his niece to use Claret rather than Madeira, “*unless* it be on extraordinary occasions.” Yet, if he succeeded in convincing her, or if in fact he abstained himself, he was unique, for few rich Americans could “do without either a horse or a pipe of Madeira.”⁴⁹

Cultural Refinement: In September 1736, William Allen, Philadelphia’s mayor gave a feast. It was deemed “the most elegant Entertainment” in Philadelphia’s history, because it possessed four ingredients: good food, fine wines, acceptable guests, and “easiness & order.”⁵⁰ Fine wine had become a declaration of gentility, sophistication, and allegiance to the goal of living well. But owning and serving fine wines was fast becoming insufficient on their own to engender *politesse*; in addition, the consumer had to know how to use them, and how to talk about them. The wines had to be served with appropriate fanfare and ritual, requiring appropriate paraphernalia, and worthy of detailed discussion, in order to impart an elegance to the event and host.

Steps in serving wine were elaborated over the course of the eighteenth century, and then scrutinized by drinkers: matching wine to food, choosing wine,

⁴⁸ Wright, *Essay*, p. 42; Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1951), pp. 172, 188; Edmund and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (New York, 1962), pp. 39, 41, 45; R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783*, v. 1 (New York, 1982), pp. 487-93, 508-11; and Newton & Gordon to George & John Riddell, June 3, 1765, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 3, f. 413.

⁴⁹ William Lee to Lamar, Hill, Bisset & Co., January 5, 1784, William Lee Letterbooks, Virginia Historical Society; Matthew Miller (Gosport) to Newton & Gordon, February 2, 1780, Unnumbered Bundle, Box 1780/1781, Cossart Gordon Papers, Liverpool University Archives; George Washington to William Pearce, November 23, 1794, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, v. 34 (Washington, D.C., 1940), pp. 41-42, 53; Robert Beverley to William Beverley, August 22, 1794, *Virginia Historical Magazine*, v. 21 (1913), p. 102; Patrick Campbell, “Travels in North America,” *The Publications of the Champlain Society* (Toronto, 1937), p. 46; William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D.*, v. 1 (Gloucester, 1962), p. 299 (September 8, 1791).

⁵⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 30, 1736; William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York*, ed. Michael Kammen (Cambridge, 1972), p. 227.

opening the bottle, allowing the wine to breathe, decanting the wine (choosing the decanter, presenting it and using it to pour), and serving the wine (choosing the glassware and pouring the wine). Key to the acceptance of their distinctions was their transmission by local friends one respected, and their application in local circumstances.

The shrewish Princetonian Philip Vickers Fithian who was serving as the tutor to the children of Robert Carter III at Carter's 70,000-acre estate, Nomini Hall, in Westmoreland County, northern Virginia, in the early 1770s, had perhaps the most refined sense of the service of wine in the last three decades of the century and the tongue to go with his palate. When he attended a ball in the neighborhood in January 1774, for instance, he pronounced the dinner "as elegant as could be well expected," for there were "several sorts of Wine, good Lemon Punch, Toddy, Cyder, Porter & c." Several months later, "an elegant Supper" was noted only for its "good *Porter* & *Madeira*."⁵¹ But Fithian was not alone in his judgments. John Pope, on a tour through the western and southern territories of the new United States visited Charleston and witnessed the ritual of drinking *Madeira* wine in full form. On arriving, he visited Colonel William Washington, "in Company with" his old preceptor the Rev. Wilson. "They were seated opposite to each other, about 5 feet asunder, separated by two Glasses and a Decanter of generous old *Madeira*." On entering the room, after proffering congratulations and "mutual Professions of Friendship," "a third Glass and another Decanter (as if by Enchantment) made their Appearance on the Table, and the Duumvirate was soon converted into a Triumvirate."⁵²

The possibilities for social failure in drinking wine were increasingly great. When wine was used by men or women of a false gentility and a thin sense of discernment, those who set themselves up as social arbiters noted it immediately.⁵³ In July 1774, a Tobacco Inspector paid a visit to Nomini Hill and dined with the Carters. The Inspector, Fithian records in his journal, was "rather Dull" and "unacquainted with company," "for when he would ... drink our Health" in a Toast, he "held the glass of Porter fast with both his Hands, and then gave an insignificant nod to each one at the Table, in Hast, & with fear, & then drank like an Ox." A tragedy of errors, it seems. Even one so young as the censorious Presbyterian tutor knew that not only was Porter the wrong drink to choose for such a toast, but that the way he held the glass was uncouth, and his phrasing of the toast lacking in all "manner."⁵⁴

With such perils in mind, American men and women devised a cultural and social assemblage to make their refinement even more manifest, much as they did across the sea. Sometimes they copied their betters or peers in Europe and

⁵¹ Fithian, *Journal*, pp. 57 (January 18, 1774), 77 (March 12, 1774).

⁵² John Pope, *A Tour* (Richmond, 1792), p. 84.

⁵³ Landon Carter, *Diary*, sub December 15, 1776, when Carter prided himself on serving only one bottle of wine after dinner.

⁵⁴ On his second attempt, having seen but "a little [of] our Manner," he made the toast to "Ladies, when only Mrs. Carter was in attendance." Fithian, *Journal*, p. 138 (September 12, 1774).

sometimes local worthies. Sometimes they struck out on their own and improved. They elaborated the art of toasting – devising appropriate surroundings, proper sequencing, witty phrasing and correct handling – and they adopted and extended an art of presentation that made use not only of new rules of etiquette but also new glass or metal wine-drinking paraphernalia – glasses, decanters, labels, coasters, and cisterns or coolers. Perhaps most tellingly, they incorporated and modified when appropriate the distinctions in cultural language that the distributors and others were peddling; for theirs was a world where “the detail and discussion of” the wines was fast becoming “an important part of social conversation.”⁵⁵

This particular social conversation between Madeirans and Americans amplified the number of traits used to describe each variety: body, smoothness, color and taste. Each trait had its own lexicon, which had to be mastered if one was to be regarded as a connoisseur of wine.⁵⁶ Madeira’s consumers read the letters of their suppliers for detailed descriptions of discriminating customs. Madeira distributors like Newton & Gordon or Leacock & Sons loved to expatiate on the how best to package the cask, fine the wine, and furnish a table with imported glassware.⁵⁷ The subject of fining (or “forcing” as it was known in England), for instance, was of “greatest consequence” to distributors like Newton & Gordon and others, since, if their wine should be “treated in a wrong & in an injurious manner by a Quack,” it would be deprived “of the only valuable essential, full body & high flavour.” Through “many experiments on the subject” in 1791 and 1792, Newton & Gordon and competing firms making similar

⁵⁵ Edward Warren, *The Life of John Collins Warren, M.D.*, v. 1 (Boston, 1860), p. 14.

⁵⁶ Thomas Murdoch to Pierce Butler, October 18, 1800, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, Cossart Collection; and Spence, Leacock, & Spence to John Erskine, June 26, 1762, and John Leacock to William Leacock, May 10, 1796, Leacock Papers. On colors appropriate for the London market, where “high coloured wines will never please,” see March 12, 1774, Liverpool University Archives; for the Glasgow market, where “high coloured wines ... were [also] not so salable,” see Andrew Ramsay to Newton & Gordon, September 24, 1759, Cossart & Gordon Papers – Loose Papers, Madeira Wine Company; and for the New York and New England market, see John and William Gordon to Robert Lenox, October 11, 1805, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, Cossart Collection. Henry Laurens to Corsley Rogers & Son, May 16, 1755, in *Papers of Henry Laurens*, v. 1, p. 248; Thomas Newton to Newton & Gordon, November 26, 1759, Thomas Newton Letterbook, Madeira Wine Company Archives; and Baynton & Wharton to Thomas Newton, October 2, 1763, Box 2, Cossart Gordon Papers, Liverpool University Archives.

⁵⁷ On packaging the casks, see Newton & Gordon to Evans, Offley & Sealy, September 23, 1797, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 18, f. 80. On choosing correct glassware, see Leacock & Sons Letterbook 1797-1797, f. 6, where Leacock suggests “small glass tumblers which hold half a pint & a quarter pint” that were “fit for seeing wine.” Wine glasses had become as much an instrument for viewing wine and all its characteristics as a receptacle for holding alcohol. “Drinking glasses for Madeira wine” by the end of the century had to be “decent.” Such was the kind that Thomas Murdoch probably ordered from England for his own house on the island where he lectured house-guests on the art of holding, viewing, tasting and describing Madeira wine. Until glass manufacturers began producing specially made Madeira glasses in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Madeira drinkers probably used small glasses or cordial glasses – ideally, “low, heavy glasses” designed “to hold as little as possible” – one-third or two-thirds the volume of a common wine glass. Newton & Gordon to Johnston & Jolly, December 18, 1767, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 4, f. 67.

experiments formed distinct ideas about how their customers should fine their wine, and many precepts contravened reigning fashion in London: blood would, they admitted,” produce different shades of colour,” but (playing to their audience of would-be cognoscenti) “surely to a man who knows what genuine Madeira was, it would be as ridiculous [to speak] of a particular shade of paleness ... as it would be to talk to a Jockey of the particular colour of a horse, provided the animal was possessed of every part of excellence.” Milk, too, was “infinitely too strong for the man who sets a value on the body & fine fruity flavour of his liquor”; besides, it left “a ropy kind of film on the liquor” that impeded viewing. Likewise, isinglass had “a bad smell.” Instead, one island wine firm urged their buyers in America to adopt “the method practiced long in the house & still practiced by most of our neighbours of putting 24 to 30 whites of eggs together with the shells (comminuted & mixed together) to each pipe.” The wine was to be fined “the day” the American got it “from on board ship” and “in six weeks it will have recovered sufficiently” to be drinkable. Nevertheless, it still needed to be immediately racked, allowing it to sit for ten or fifteen more days before tasting.⁵⁸ Fining, as Newton & Gordon assured their clients, was only the first among many steps to be taken by a connoisseur. In the case of a “very old and very fine” Sercial – “a great rarity” – Newton & Gordon advised John Gibbes of Charleston to bottle it once he had fined it and allowed it “to become perfectly clear,” “for it is a capricious liquor.” The bottles were “to lie on their side”; by no means were they “to stand on their bottom,” as was the practice in some parts of Great Britain. Newton & Gordon wrote from their experience, not from their reading, and suggested that Gibbes apply their method “not with Sercial only but all other liquors.” Because of Sercial’s scarcity, American connoisseurs were urged to take “only a glass or two during dinner.” Competing firms had just as many ideas about like connoisseurship, a word they began to bandy about with greater frequency.⁵⁹

Pronouncements by distributors were more often than not responses to consumers’ queries about how to care for, display or drink the wine. Sometimes

⁵⁸Newton & Gordon to William Mitchell, May 4, June 4, 1792, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 14, ff. 180, 224, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks. A similar fining recipe (according to “the Lisbon way”) calling for more egg-white was previously propounded by James Jenks, in *The Complete Cook* (London, 1768), p. 322. On various methods of fining employed, see Paul V. Thompson and Dorothy J. Thompson, ed., *The Account Books of Jonathan Swift* (Newark, DE, 1984), p. 191 (1718: eggs); Aaron Hill, *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.*, 2nd ed., v. 2 (London 1754), p. 103 (1740: gesso or lime); *The Annual Register*, v. 2 (1759), p. 383 (extracting Hill); *The Complete Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, v. 2 (London, 1765), sub “wine” (1765: isinglass); and Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons*, p. 191 (Peter Lyons of Hanover, Virginia, ordering isinglass from London in 1771). In ancient times, according to Dr. James Hardy, lead, gypsum and arsenic were used as fining agents. *A Candid Examination of what has been advanced on the Colic of Poitou and Devonshire* (London, 1778), p. 83. As early as 1669, Dr. Walter Charleton held up the Spanish practice of adding gesso as admirable. *Of the Mystery of Vintners* (London, 1669), p. 203. By the nineteenth century, more writers on wine were describing the art of fining in print. C. H. Kauffman, *The Dictionary of Merchandise & Nomenclature* (Philadelphia, 1805), pp. 363-64; and Gourlay, *Observations*, p. 18.

⁵⁹Newton & Gordon to John Gibbes, May 29, 1802, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks, v. 23, f. 312, and Newton & Gordon to Joseph S. Lewis, April 18, 1804, v. 25, f. 387, Newton & Gordon Letterbooks.

distributors' communications concerned consumers, inasmuch as the directives could be at odds with the practices promulgated by local grandees or dispensers. This provoked extended correspondence until the matter, say fining, was re-engineered to the satisfaction of producers, distributors and consumers – an arduous task. Somewhat more independent commentary was penned by medical men or men of means who enjoyed their bottle and reveled in travel. These accounts and manuals by doctors and aesthetes of all nations – mainly British but some French, Spanish and Italian – began appearing in the last quarter of the eighteenth century to educate and improve wine-drinking audiences. John Croft's 1788 *Treatise* is typical for the multiplicity of the distinctions he dispenses:

Perhaps sound, old mellow Madeira may be preferred to any other sort of Wine as a good stomachic. There are two sorts which grow in the island from whence it takes its name, though properly of the same grape. The genuine, natural, and best sort, is of the colour of oil, and tinges in the glass, affording a hue or shade of a light blue, and has a kernelly taste like a walnut. The commoner sort is made of the ordinary grape, and they tinge it in the Wine-press with the *uva roxa*, or red grape, which they cultivate on the island for that purpose, and it makes the wine of a foxy or deep colour. As the caprice of fashion has reigned in England of later years in respect to Wines, as well as other articles of luxury, sometimes they required them of one colour, and at other time of another, as said before.

In addition, Croft advised his readers on “the proper time to begin to drink” and “the best time to bottle” wine. Duncan McBride was no less reluctant to pompose, and his 1793 *General Instructions for the Choice of Wines and Spirituous Liquors* included an accounting of “those Wines which are best to be used at the Tables of the Opulent.” Thus, when the doctor John Wright educated his readers in 1795 on “the component parts of wine,” his readers were ready. Specialized books for wine-thirsty audiences were published with increasing frequency and in increasing volume in the two decades that succeeded the close of the Revolution.⁶⁰

Cosmopolitanism: As Madeira wine became more expensive, and so indicative of wealth, refinement and gentility, its European-ness was also highlighted. For eighteenth-century Americans, consumption of wine came to signify for some drinkers a cosmopolitanism – the attitude that the drinker was worldly, and had transcended local, regional or national limitations. In the last quarter of the century, American cosmopolites often chose their wines for this reason.

Often Americans used gifts of wine to honor or thank their countrymen as well as Europeans in a way that demonstrated the giver's familiarity with trans-Atlantic conventions and tastes. In 1735, Governor Gooch of Virginia sent the Bishop of London some Madeira wine. To placate their friend Thomas Hancock for some slight, Messrs. Harris & Crisp sent the merchant a “present of wine.”

⁶⁰ Croft, *A Treatise*, pp. 24, 283; Wright, *An Essay*, p. 34; McBride, *General Instructions*, pp. 22-46.

Benjamin Franklin both sent and received European and American wines in great quantity. Like turtle, he regarded such beverages as ideal trans-Atlantic gifts. The London overseas trader John Sargent II returned the favor, and sent the “electric philosopher”’s son “a little Present of Wine” in July 1773. Thomas Everard of Virginia ordered 96 bottles of “fine old Madeira” to be sent from Madeira to London, where one Mrs. Horrocks, a Virginia plantress was visiting the metropolis and intending “to distribute [them] among her friends” upon her departure. During the American Revolutionary war, such “civilities” and their associations were not wholly banished. The Marquis de Chastellux, not insignificantly, sent to General Washington, the Commander in Chief, a cask of Claret, as a token of his esteem. John Marsden Pintard, the New Yorker recently appointed by Congress to be the States’ Commercial Agent on Madeira, sent the President of Congress some Madeira as “a mark of remembrance” in 1783. The giving of wine-gifts went on and on and on.⁶¹

Giving wine as gifts whose status was burnished as a luxury had a triple effect: it showed the recipient that he or she was an object of great respect; it displayed the giver as a person of some means and discernment; and it projected European connections. Many regarded the European-ness of a wine as a distinct virtue. Early on, in one Boston newspaper, a writer asked the reader: “And who can keep a genteel House without a cask of wine in his cellar? How very *unpolite* to invite a friend to Dine, and be wanting in wine or punch. So very *sickish*” it was to serve “any thing of our own Country make.” With such constraints in mind, Madeira – the expensive Portuguese wine grown on an island in the middle of the Atlantic, by some geographers’ reckoning more part of Africa – was best suited for the purpose of reconnecting ties to the Old World. Wines, in this sense, were not unlike languages spoken in coffeehouses or dresses worn in public: after the War for America, “every language of Europe is now spoken” in American taverns and “every dress of Europe is now seen” in American streets. As with clothing and languages, drink could signify to others that America was tied to Europe.⁶²

⁶¹ Charles Wolley, *A Two Years’ Journal in New York and Part of its Territories in America* (Cleveland, 1902), pp. 65-66, 68; *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, v. 32, p. 328 (1735); Thomas Hancock to Harris & Crisp, August 23, 1750, Thomas Hancock Letterbook 1750-1762, Hancock Papers, Harvard Business School; Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, v. 8 (New Haven, 1965), p. 120 (Mary Fisher to Benjamin Franklin, August 14, 1758), v. 14 (1970), pp. 309-10 (Thomas Livezey to Benjamin Franklin, November 18, 1767), and William B. Willcox, ed., *Papers*, v. 20 (1976), p. 328 (Benjamin Franklin to William Franklin, July 25, 1773); Frederick Smyth to Aaron Lopez and Jacob Rivera, January 8, 1773, Aaron Lopez Papers, Box 14, Folder 10, Collections of the American Jewish Historical Society; Thomas Everard to John Norton, September 25, 1772, in Frances N. Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons, Merchants of London and Virginia* (Richmond, 1937), p. 276; Thomas Jefferson to William Small, May 7, 1775, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, v. 1 (Princeton, 1950), p. 165; Marquis de Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782*, v. 1 (Chapel Hill, 1963), p. 153 (December 7, 1780); John Marsden Pintard to Elias Boudinot, April 3, 1783, Boudinot Correspondence, Folder 41, American Bible Society; and Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, v. 1 (New York, 1901), p. 272.

⁶² *The Boston Weekly News-Letter*, October 11, 1750; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 12, 1781.

Conclusion

The eighteenth-century Atlantic world was a remarkable place. The conditions under which individuals lived and acted are well known: the economic success of the New World, for instance, the contests among the European powers to dominate that world, the mercantilist ideology that translated the contests into trade relations and government policies. Into this world stepped a group of particularly situated individuals, who sought economic and social success in the local environments that they found themselves in. Few if any of these local actors in the story of Madeira wine regarded themselves as moving about an Atlantic stage, whether by setting standards of connoisseurship and determining social hierarchies, solving short-run distribution problems, or inventing new products. Most of them – to the extent that they articulated it at all – thought of themselves as making do in their particular social milieu, and with the particular economic opportunities they found for themselves. Achieving success was generally enough.

And yet, collectively, they changed the world: Madeira wine metamorphosed from common “plonk” into the highest status, most expensive wine in America – suitable for occasions of state and the tables of the rich and refined; its taste and the taste of Americans were internationalized. The distribution infrastructure of the Atlantic and inland North America was developed, elaborated, differentiated and regularized. And a sterling example of pre-Industrial product and process innovation took place. As we have seen, the market for Madeira wine organized itself; a congeries of local decisions with little or no central direction. But not just the market; the social and ideational concomitants also organized themselves in tandem, each influencing the other through the continuous, conversational feedback the participants provided each other.

In 1700, an individual could have predicted that if the number of Americans and their wealth grew apace, a relatively undifferentiated wine-drink would become differentiated. Producers would respond to the growing market by going after different parts of the market, and consumers would respond to increased variety offered by making differing symbolic uses of different drinks thus proffered. This is the regularity favored by economists: “the differentiation of product is governed by the extent of the market” (a variation of Adam Smith’s celebrated title attached to Chapter III of Book I in the Wealth of Nations). The particularity beloved of historians is that in 1700 it was impossible to predict that *Madeira wine* would be the premier luxury drink, with cider the common beverage and Port hardly known. With hindsight, one can only understand that outcome by looking at the particular unfolding of the market.

The outcome of this rather exciting picture is that it shatters much of the reigning mental picture of the eighteenth-century British American world, one part of which concerned wine. The picture is Anglo-centric: primarily peopled with Great Britons and managed from its metropolis; more-or-less rigid in the operation of imperial institutions and initiatives; static from an entrepreneurial

standpoint; and focused on the mother country and metropolis in social and cultural norms and affairs.⁶³ The world of Madeira wine, and wine-drinking in America, though, was anything but that!⁶⁴ It was not Anglo-centric. If anything it was centered on an island in the middle of the Atlantic, a province over which the kingdom of Portugal always had difficulty exerting control. In practice, the wine's world had no core. The trade was not managed from any center – London, Lisbon or Funchal; actual strategies, choices and decisions were made in an ongoing set of decentralized negotiations between men and women on both sides of the Atlantic, in at least four or five places. Rather than rigid, the trade and its practitioners were flexible – protean men, working in an uncertain and porous environment, with an opportunistic approach to everyday business. Innovation was more the order of the day than any passive imprisonment to inherited traditions and resources; these pre-industrial people were enormously dynamic – witness the turnover of businesses, the development of new commodities, and the derivation of new socially significant uses. And finally, the styles of consuming did not take their cues from the centers of the empires: drinkers around the Atlantic Ocean rim, as well as as far east as Calcutta and Lempao, were focused more on their own opportunities and needs than on the fashions and dictates of the mother countries' gentility. Such deviations from the norm should cause us to reconsider characteristic traits before we apply them to the larger functioning unit we now call the Atlantic World.

⁶³ Russell R. Menard, "British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in Lois G. Carr *et al.*, eds., *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill, 1988), pp. 99-132; David Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America* (Cambridge, 1981); James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, 1994); David H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed* (New York, 1989); Stephen S. Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1569-1681* (Chapel Hill, 1979); Alison Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690-1790* (Cambridge, MA, 1991); James A. Henretta, "Salutary Neglect": *Colonial Administration under the Duke of Newcastle* (Princeton, 1972); Stanley N. Katz, *Newcastle's New York: Anglo-American Politics, 1732-1753* (Cambridge, MA, 1968); Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire: The British Customs Service in Colonial America, 1660-1775* (Cambridge, MA, 1967); and in the area of culture and consumption the highly influential works of Timothy H. Breen – "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies*, v. 25 (1986), pp. 467-99, and " 'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, v. 119 (1988), pp. 73-104 – and the monumental summary by Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?" in Cary Carson *et al.*, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, 1994), pp. 483-697. On the connections between Britain and America, see Richard L. Bushman, "American High-Style and Vernacular Cultures," in Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, 1984), p. 366, who argues that "cultural evolution in England and America" was "a single integrated process."

⁶⁴ A number of recent works similarly question the Anglicized orientation of British America. For instances of Germans participating in this world, see George F. Jones, *The Salzburger Story* (Athens, GA, 1984); Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York, 1986); Mack Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction* (Ithaca, 1992); A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property: German Lutherans* (Baltimore, 1993); Rosalind Beiler, "The Transatlantic World of Caspar Wistar: From Germany to America in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1994).

Jews of Leghorn, Italians of Lisbon, and Hindus of Goa: Merchant Networks and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period

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Abstract

This essay attempts to delineate a network approach to the study of cross-cultural trade in the early modern period. To do so, I borrow from the British tradition of *network analysis* –understood in analytical rather than mathematical terms– and the works of Fredrik Barth. In the context of current debates on ‘trading diasporas’ and ‘merchant networks,’ a network approach has three invaluable advantages. It allows historians to analyze inter-group (rather than intra-group) relations, and thus overcome a limitation common to both anthropological and economic approaches. Moreover, it narrows the gap that divides anthropological studies (focused on the internal organization of trading diasporas and the role of cultural norms) and a rational theory understanding of merchant coalitions as the product of self-interested individual actions. Finally, because it is micro-analytical, a network approach allows historians to examine the workings of specific informal networks that traversed commonly defined geographical, political and cultural areas, and thus complicates our understanding of supposedly linear macro-phenomena.

The operational validity of such an approach is tested using a case study concerning the role of informal merchant networks in the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds that boomed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This exchange remained in the hands of trading diasporas and interlopers, and escaped the monopoly of the European chartered companies involved in Euro-Asian commerce. Sephardic Jews in Europe dominated this trade. This essay focuses on the Indo-Portuguese (rather than the Anglo-Dutch) branch of coral-diamond exchanges. Sephardim of Leghorn, Amsterdam and London conducted this trade in connection with the Italian merchant community of Lisbon and a prominent Hindu caste of Goa. This informal network remained vital until at least the 1730s, that is, after the eclipse of the Portuguese primacy in the Indian Ocean and after diamond mines were discovered in Brazil in the late 1720s.

Lacking a central authority and a common legal system, this cross-cultural, inter-continental merchant network worked thanks to reciprocity and reputation control. Business correspondence was the oil of such mechanisms. Cooperation was enhanced by the control exerted on its members by each community participating in the network.

This case study reveals that cross-cultural trade did not function only within a framework of relations between a minority group and a dominant society, and that the development of formal economic institutions (such as the European chartered companies) did not supplant informal cooperation between private-order merchant networks.

In one of the earliest treaties of English commercial law, Gerard Malynes asked “whether a merchant may trafficke with Turks, Heathens, Barbarians, and Infidels, and perform promise with them?”¹ The question was, of course, rhetorical. Considering the incredible expansion of European intercontinental commerce that had occurred in the previous century, Malynes was inquiring into the available legal sources and instruments of contract enforceability within the framework of a customary, largely uncodified mercantile law that had universal aspirations.² The analytical problem was not whether Christian merchants were *allowed* to make agreements with members of communities considered to be radically ‘other’ (and thus potentially untrustworthy) –something that European merchants (though mostly in occasional transactions rather than in long-term partnerships) had been doing since antiquity. Instead, the crucial problem was –and still is today– to understand why and how such diverse traders *kept* their promises.

In the last two decades, this issue has become more and more central to analyses of long-distance trade conducted by anthropologists and economic historians. How did merchants build their own reputation and monitor the trustworthiness of their agents and partners, especially across cultural and geographical divides, when legal coercion was absent, weak or undesirable? Answers to this question draw upon two main theoretical approaches. Anthropologists generally insist on the social and cultural elements (usually regarded as natural and homogeneous) that channeled cooperation and reputation control among members of the same mercantile community, in particular when living in dispersal. In contrast, economic historians have tackled the problem of agency in long-distance trade assuming rational behavior, but they diverge about the importance we should attribute to formal institutions. During the 1970s, the *new institutional economic history* contended that state-emanated institutions play the central role in reducing uncertainty, granting the enforcement of property rights and lowering transaction costs. Scholars inspired by these views have studied the organization of European commerce in the medieval but especially the early modern period, depicting a process of change with a marked evolutionist underpinning in which the European expansion fostered the vanishing of peddlers and small-scale (often family run) commercial partnerships, and the rise of more efficient formal institutions such as chartered

¹ Gerard MALYNES, *Consuetudo, vel, Lex Mercatoria, or The Ancient Law-Merchant...*, London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1622 (modern edition Phoenix: Metheglin Press, 1996, p. 8).

² Jean HILAIRE, *Introduction historique au droit commercial*, Paris: PUF, 1986; Bruce L. BENSON, “The Spontaneous Evolution of Commercial Law”, *Southern Economic Journal*, vol. 55, 1989, pp. 644-61.

joint-stock companies.³ More recently, another trend has emerged, which instead looks at how economic exchanges occur in the absence of violence, institutional coercion or a common legal system. Using game theory and rational theory models, its advocates explain good conduct in business as a result of informal elements (such as friendship, reputation, information flow, and shared beliefs) that induce self-interested individuals to commit themselves to honesty.⁴

In this essay, I will discuss a specific aspect of agency relations in long-distance trade: namely, the creation of durable, voluntary commercial exchanges between mercantile communities that did not share the same cultural values and social norms, and lacked exogenous instruments (whether legal or military) to enforce their contracts. This specific issue has thus far received little attention, because it challenges most theoretical presumptions and forces us to analyze inter-group (rather than intra-group) relations. All social sciences, in fact, whether they examine the socio-cultural or economic determinants of cooperation, tend to focus on the internal solidarity of a certain community—either locally or in its spatial distribution. Despite a growing interest in trading diasporas and merchant networks, historians have regrettably added little to our knowledge of inter-group business cooperation, both in narrative and in analysis. Here I will try to suggest how a network approach can contribute valuable insights to the history of cross-cultural trade in the early modern period.⁵

³ Classical examples in Niels STEENSGAARD, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1974, and K.N. CHAUDHURI, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. More recent formulations in Ann M. Carlos and Stephen NICHOLAS, ““Giants of an Earlier Capitalism”: The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals”, *Business History Review*, vol. 62, no. 3, 1988, pp. 398-419, and ID., “Agency Problems in Early Chartered Companies: The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company”, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1990, pp. 853-75. The *new institutionalist* approach to long-distance trade is recapitulated in Douglass C. NORTH, “Institutions”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1991, pp. 97-112.

⁴ On the role of reputation as an economic incentive, see Daniel B. KLEIN (ed.), *Reputation: Studies in the Voluntary Elicitation of Good Conduct*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997. On non-market institutions as self-enforcing mechanisms, see Avner GREIF, “Reputation and Coalition in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders”, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1989, pp. 857-82; ID., “Contract Enforceability and Economic Institutions in Early Trade: the Maghribi Traders’ Coalition”, *American Economic Review*, vol. 83, no. 3, 1992, pp. 525-48; ID., “Historical and Comparative Institutional Analysis”, *American Economic Review*, vol. 88, no. 2, 1998, pp. 80-4; ID., “The Fundamental Problem of Exchange: A Research Agenda in Historical Institutional Analysis”, *European Review of Economic History*, vol. 4, 2000, pp. 251-84.

⁵ I use the expression ‘network approach’ rather than *network analysis* because, as it will become clear in this essay, I borrow from this method of the social sciences, leaving aside its

The adjective ‘cross-cultural’ is problematic because it presumes that more or less clear boundaries between ‘cultures’ can be traced, thus obliterating internal diversity and conflict, and assuming fixity over time.⁶ For lack of a better term, I employ the expression ‘cross-cultural trade’ to refer to sustained economic exchanges between merchant communities of different ethnic, religious, national, and geographic background, especially when occurring outside any common institutional framework –something we might call ‘horizontal cross-cultural trade’ (as it does not focus on the relationship between a minority group and dominant society, but on informal networks between different communities). Conceiving these cross-cultural trading relations in light of the concept of ‘network’—understood in analytical rather than mathematical terms—has at least three main advantages.

First, it allows us to examine inter-group relations as a dynamic process. If early modern society was highly stratified, status definitions were not immobile. Geographical as well as cultural distances, moreover, created the need for mediation and specialized brokers. A network approach defines groups in relation to this process of interaction, and stresses the importance of agents linking different networks. In so doing, it analyzes collective identities neither as constantly fluid representations nor as fixed characters. Even in a segmented pre-modern world, durable trading relations developed over large cultural gulfs and vast geographical spaces. These distances required that trading partners create a common understanding (if only of the terms of exchange), but did not necessarily result in colonization or assimilation. Once we conceptualize these horizontal cross-cultural commercial relations as the outcome of a network of interconnected communities, we can show how trust and reputation worked across what are often perceived to be ‘natural groups,’ and we can recapture the tension between cultural distinctiveness and processes of interaction.

Second, a network approach allow us to reconcile the pervasive opposition between individualism and collectivism, or, between a neoclassical assumption of self-interested individuals, who cooperate only as long as it is economically advantageous to do so, and an essentialist notion of culture and ethnic groups that often lies behind studies of trading diasporas. A network, in fact, is constituted of individuals, but is also more than the sum of the individuals who make it up. From this simple recognition derives an approach

rigorous mathematic component. I use the term ‘network’ analytically to examine the interrelationship between specific individuals and groups.

⁶ This risk is evident, for example, in the approach to world history by Jerry H. BENTLEY, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

that supposes rational individuals but makes room for social mechanisms to explain individual and collective behaviors.⁷ Analyzing the multiple elements that intervene to define actors' strategies complicates our understanding of the interrelation between culture and economics.

Finally, the network approach that I outline is necessarily micro-analytical. If applied to the study of intercontinental trade between Europe and Asia, this means examining the workings of specific merchant networks to which certain commodity or credit lines were entrusted. Such a micro-analysis of cross-cultural exchanges that traversed clear distinctions between peripheral, semi-peripheral and central areas includes branches of trade that were both exceptional and ordinary, and allow us to cut across geographical and political boundaries.⁸

The first part of this article is devoted to a critical discussion of different methodological approaches to issues of cross-cultural trade and merchant networks, with particular attention to anthropological and economic studies of long-distance commerce. This overview is not meant to be exhaustive, but aims to place the question raised here in the context of current debates and highlight the contributions that other social sciences can bring to historical inquiry, as well as their limitations. Drawing from the British tradition of *network analysis* and the works of anthropologist Fredrik Barth, I will suggest why and how we might apply a network approach to stable trading relations among culturally heterogeneous groups.

In the second part I test the operational validity of such a network approach with regard to the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds that boomed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I will look specifically at the Indo-Portuguese side of this intercontinental barter, which was carried out without the aid of a central authority and through an informal

⁷ In a network approach, individual rationality is conceived as bounded by uncertainty, scarcity of information, the options offered by the network itself, as well as by the larger structure in which it operates.

⁸ This essay can also be read as a modest attempt to take up the call for surmounting the impasse dividing 'world history' and 'microhistory' launched in the dossier "Une histoire à l'échelle globale", *Annales HSS*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2001. It is however mostly indebted to some contributions of Italian *microstoria*, including its adoption of *network analysis* (in particular, the focus on individual strategies and manipulations of normative frameworks, and the variation of scales as a heuristic device to recapture the coexistence of multiple contexts for individuals' social action). Giovanni LEVI, "On Microhistory", in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991, pp. 93-113; Jacques REVEL, "Micro-analyse et construction du social", in Id. (ed.), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1996, pp. 15-36.

network of merchant communities of different ethnic and religious origins. I will show how the Sephardic Jews of Leghorn, Amsterdam, and London dominated the trade thanks to their relations with the Italians of Lisbon –who acted as their intermediaries in Portugal, a country where Jews were neither allowed to reside nor trade– and with Hindu merchants of Goa, who procured the rough diamonds to be sent in Europe. Relations between these groups were limited to the exchange of these goods, with almost no direct social interaction (while a very limited, temporary movement of personnel still existed, intermarriage and religious conversion were virtually absent). These economic transactions, however, were made possible by a common system of reciprocity and control. It is thus appropriate to define such trading relations as cross-cultural given that the pursuit of economic gain was inseparable from the development of a common logic.

Trading diasporas and merchant networks in recent literature

Do we need to distinguish between ‘trading diasporas’ and ‘merchant networks?’ Competing definitions of these expressions have been offered and no clear boundaries between the two can be traced. To a large extent this blurring is the result of the need to capture linguistically and conceptually phenomena that are difficult to classify under a single heading. Words, however, signal meanings that often transcend their literal sense. Thus we observe a preference for ‘diaspora’ among anthropologists, sociologists and cultural theorists, while economic historians generally resort to ‘network.’ In fact, the expression ‘trading diaspora’ carries the assumption that economic action is embedded in social and cultural norms. In contrast, ‘commercial’ or ‘merchant network’ (depending on whether the emphasis is on the exchange or on the actors) generally presume economic rationality.⁹ Historians have long preferred to speak of ‘merchant communities’ in an attempt to be faithful to past notions of collective entities –as, for example, in the literature concerning the presence of foreign “nations” in the commercial towns of medieval and early modern Europe.¹⁰ Today they are increasingly interested in issues concerning long-

⁹ Of course, this distinction between ‘trading diasporas’ and ‘merchant networks’ is reductive, as the two expressions are often attributed overlapping meanings and used interchangeably. In one definition, for example, “the expression ‘trade diaspora’ is used to describe networks of proactive merchants who transport, buy and sell their goods over long distances”; Robin COHEN, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997, p. xii.

¹⁰ A recent overview in Frédéric MAURO, “Merchant Communities, 1350-1750”, in J. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 255-86.

distance trade raised by related disciplines, from which they borrow concepts and draw inspiration, although a coherent body of historical literature on the topic of trading diasporas and merchant networks has yet to appear.

In the 1980s and 1990s, concepts of ‘diaspora’ have mostly been the province of sociologists as well as cultural and literary theorists. Common to these diverse perspectives is the understanding of diasporas as one manifestation of contemporary ‘transnationalism,’ including politically and economically forced migrations, and the life of separate communities of ethnic refugees.¹¹ These approaches not only shape most current debate on the subject, but also induce historians to pay more attention to the ambiguities inherent in all collective identities, especially when examining the processes of mediation performed by trading diasporas. Recent theories of transnationalism are thus highly suggestive insofar as they look at questions of identity in less deterministic terms than has traditionally been done. However, they are concerned with diasporas in the context of post-colonization and globalization rather than as historical phenomena.¹² More fruitful for historians are works of anthropologists and economic historians who have studied issues pertaining to cross-cultural and long-distance trade.

The notion of ‘trading diaspora’ was raised to an analytical category by the anthropologist Abner Cohen in the late 1960s. Arguing against its specificity, he suggested using it in place of ‘network,’ which refers to a variety of different sociological phenomena. Cohen understood ‘diasporas’ as all groups living in dispersal but highly interdependent, and defined their membership and their spheres of operation in terms of exclusiveness.¹³ This path-breaking essay was resurrected in the early 1980s by Philip Curtin, who produced the most

¹¹ Among a growing literature, we can single out the review *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (published since 1991), the book series entitled “Global Diasporas” (edited by Robin Cohen), and the monography by Steven VERTOVEC and Robin COHEN (eds), *Migration, Diasporas, and Transnationalism*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 1999.

¹² From the Editorial of the first issue of *Diaspora* (1991, vol. 1, no. 1): “Linked as they are to nationalism and current struggles, these terms [i.e., transnationalism and diaspora] are emotionally and intellectually charged.” For an understanding of ‘diaspora’ as nearly synonymous with “an unfinished modernity,” see James CLIFFORD, “Diasporas”, in Id., *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 244-77.

¹³ Abner COHEN, “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas”, in C. Meilasseaux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 266-81 (p. 267n1).

systematic analysis of trading diasporas, covering an impressive variety of cases from ancient antiquity to the mid eighteenth century, across all continents.¹⁴

The protagonists of Curtin's book are "[t]rade communities of merchants living abroad among aliens in associated networks;"¹⁵ the object of his inquiry is the relations that these communities of "stranger merchants" established with the "host society." Communities of foreign merchants who settled down in new places favored cross-cultural trade because they "could serve as cross-cultural brokers, helping and encouraging trade between the host society and people of their own origin who moved along the trade routes."¹⁶ Curtin thus depicts trading diasporas as influential historical agents of social and economic mediation. But Curtin's characterization of cross-cultural trade in terms of the set of relations between a diasporic minority and a resident majority is reductive. This formulation rests at once on the idea of stable demarcations between 'cultures' and the inevitability of assimilation. Curtin argues that the process of adaptation, learning, intermediation and negotiation in which trading diasporas were engaged lead –more or less slowly– toward their assimilation and disappearance.¹⁷

Is this model universal? Is it fully appropriate to a pre-modern world where social hierarchies and collective identities were largely defined by normative frameworks? Even a sympathetic reader would be surprised that

¹⁴ Philip D. CURTIN, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. This book lies at the intersection of different disciplines, but could have not been conceived without Abner Cohen's concept of 'trade diaspora,' which Curtin praises for its precision in contrast to the alleged vagueness of 'trade network'; *ivi*, p. 2n2. Curtin is also indebted to Polanyi for the notion of 'embeddedness,' and the role of port-cities in pre-modern markets. Karl POLANYI, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time*, Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1944; ID., Conrad M. ARENSBERG and Harry W. PEARSON (eds), *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, Glencoe, ILL: Free Press, 1957. To some extent, though he does not acknowledge it, Curtin also participates in the long-standing debate on the role of minorities in the development of western capitalism. Werner SOMBART, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, New Brunswick-London: Transaction Books, 1997 (first German ed. 1911); George SIMMEL, "The Stranger", in K.H. Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of George Simmel*, Glencoe, ILL: Free Press, 1950, pp. 402-8.

¹⁵ CURTIN, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, p. 3. Curtin examines both informal networks that were "linked by little more than the solidarity of a common culture," and the communities of servants of European chartered companies, which were formally organized and given monopoly over their states' commercial, military and administrative operations conducted overseas. The heart of Curtin's analysis, however, lies in the first kind of diaspora.

¹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 3.

Jews, one of the most vital trading diasporas of the medieval and early modern period (though one of the most studied), are not included in Curtin's extensive survey. The inclusion of Jews would have complicated his model, for no other reason than because in Christian Europe and the Muslim world they remained for centuries an unassimilated alien minority. Curtin instead devotes a very interesting chapter to the Armenian diaspora of the seventeenth century. The similarities between Jews and Armenians are as striking as their differences. In the seventeenth century, Armenian merchants were present in largely the same areas and branches of trade in which the Sephardim were also active, but the latter formed (often large) communities whose livelihood was defined by a set of restrictions and privileges. In contrast, the Armenian diaspora in Europe was comprised mostly of Christian men. This feature explains their much greater propensity to assimilate (via marriage to non Armenian women, for example) and their different position in relation to political authorities. Even such a sketchy comparison between the Armenian and Sephardic diasporas highlights the limits of Curtin's conception of cross-cultural trade in terms of the relationship between a diasporic minority and a dominant society. Cross-cultural trade could in fact also develop 'horizontally', in the sense that it could favor economic exchanges between culturally, ethnically and nationally distinct merchant communities without involving a process of assimilation.

Moreover, by focusing on intra-group solidarities, Curtin devotes little space to the mechanisms that allowed cross-cultural trade to operate, such as the informal sources of trust and reputation control. His analysis presumes that members of a homogenous ethnic and religious group living in dispersal have a natural tendency to cooperate with each other. This assumption, however empirically grounded, is inadequate to explain cross-cultural networks made of heterogeneous communities. The assumption is common to all social sciences, including recent trends in economic theory that grant importance to informal elements (commitment, trust, reputation, information exchange), but limits the analysis to intra-group exchanges.¹⁸

Economic historians have indeed paid increasing attention to merchant networks, and specifically to agency relations in long-distance trade in times of poor communication and great uncertainty. The concept of 'trading diaspora' has been denied all epistemological validity by K.N. Chaudhuri, who contends that "the general characteristics of human behaviour" (i.e. economic rationality), rather than their spatial dispersion, social interdependence and informal organization, account for the commercial organization of Jews, Armenians and

¹⁸ See, for example, Janet Tai LANDA, *Trust, Ethnicity, and Identity*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, chapter 5.

other groups active in the Indian Ocean in the early modern period.¹⁹ This position, which presumes self-interested individuals not influenced by social relations, has been nuanced by economic historians interested in the relationship between personal networks and business organization. A growing economic literature, in fact, focuses not on the effect of legal systems and state building in economic development, but on self-enforcing mechanisms that facilitate economic exchange without the support of government institutions.²⁰

This interest in private-order institutions has nourished studies of medieval Mediterranean trade. Avner Greif has applied game theory to understand the commercial organization of Maghribi Jews in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as it emerges in the documents of the Cairo *geniza* used by S.D. Goiten to portray the social and economic life of North African Jews in the Middle Ages.²¹ Trading relations between agents of this group located on distant shores of the Mediterranean were governed by different kinds of contractual agreements: partnerships, agencies, loans, or contracts similar to the Italian *commenda*. More often, however, Maghribi Jews conducted long-distance trade outside any formalized commercial association: they rendered service to their co-religionists in return for analogous favors but without any monetary remuneration. Scholars had already called attention to the predominance of informal business cooperation among these Medieval Jewish traders.²² Greif departs from previous interpretations to argue that trust among these merchants did not arise as result of social or ethical sanctions, but was the consequence of mechanisms of reputation control among self-interested individuals driven by the prospect of economic gain. In his model, Maghribi Jews were a “coalition,” that is, an economic “institution” based on an implicit, non-legal contract in

¹⁹ K.N. CHAUDHURI, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 224-6.

²⁰ On the influence of informal rules on market mechanisms, in addition to the work of Avner Greif (footnotes 4 and 25), see also Victor NEE, “Norms and Networks in Economic and Organizational Performance”, *American Economic Review*, vol. 88, no. 2, pp. 85-9, and Alessandra CASELLA and James E. RAUCH (eds), *Networks and Markets*, New York: Russell Sage, 2001.

²¹ S.D. GOITEN, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967-1993, 6 vols.

²² S.D. GOITEN, “Formal Friendship in the Medieval Near East”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 115, no. 6, 1971, pp. 484-9; Avrom L. UDOVITCH, “Formalism and Informalism in the Social and Economic Institutions of the Medieval Islamic World”, in A. Banani and S. Vryonis Jr. (eds), *Individualism and Conformity in Classical Islam (Fifth Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference)*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977, pp. 61-81.

which the exchange of information (including information about the aptitude and trustworthiness of the parties involved) created a system by which honest conduct was the most profitable and rational behavior.²³

Greif's theoretical framework fosters a rapprochement of concepts of 'community' and 'market,' but leaves them unintegrated. Greif focuses only on intra-group relations, and depicts a historical evolution from informal (traditional) to formal (modern) market institutions. He observes that Maghribi traders did not enter into business association with other Jews or with Muslims active in the same areas, and interprets this to mean that coalition boundaries were defined by information-transmission mechanisms that provided information on members' past conduct and used economic sanctions rather than social exclusion in the event of transgression.²⁴ In his model, such closed coalitions can only be superseded by the emergence of formal institutions. Greif in fact opposes "collectivist" to "individualistic" societies: the former are segregated, which means that intra-group exchange works thanks to informal mechanisms but inter-group relations are non-cooperative; the latter are integrated, in the sense that formal institutions (such as courts) allow members of different groups to conduct their transactions.²⁵ In his view, "individualistic" societies represent modernity.²⁶

Historical complexity escapes such rigid dichotomies. There is, for example, ample evidence of the existence of durable *inter-group informal* networks. These networks were indeed closed, in the sense that they were limited to the communities that actively participated in them, but reputation mechanisms traversed cultural divides. The economic role of Jews in early modern Europe also depended on the possibility of informal cross-cultural

²³ See, in particular GREIF, "Reputation and Coalition" and "Contract Enforceability". In Greif's definition, institutions are "the non-technically determined *constraints* that influence social interactions and provide incentives to maintain regularities of behavior"; ID., "Historical and Comparative", p. 80.

²⁴ ID., "Reputation and Coalition", pp. 877-97.

²⁵ ID., "Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies", *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 102, no. 5, 1994, pp. 912-50; ID., "Impersonal Exchange and the Origins of Markets: From the Community Responsibility System to Individual Legal Responsibility in Pre-modern Europe", in M. Aoki and Y. Hayami (eds), *Communities and Markets in Economic Development*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 3-41.

²⁶ In Greif's model, "collectivist" societies of the past can be equated with present-day developing countries, while "individualistic" societies have their roots in the Medieval Latin world and gave rise to western civilization. For examples of segregation in the juridical system of contemporary, western "individualistic" societies, see Guido ALPA, *Status e capacità. La costruzione giuridica delle differenze individuali*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1993.

exchanges. Early modern Europe was a highly segregated society. Political, legal, and economic rights were far from equally distributed, and this also influenced access to the market. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the forced conversion imposed in Portugal in 1497, Sephardic merchant-bankers could not trade with Iberia (nor its rich colonies) without the cooperation of Christian partners and agents. In some centers, like Leghorn and Amsterdam, Sephardim had large, well-organized communities, but their access to court and participation in economic ventures was often limited by local legislation. Jews, nonetheless, were involved in a large variety of commercial and financial transactions. Clearly, their activities were neither the result of intra-group cooperation alone nor always permitted by formal institutions. The trade of coral and diamonds illustrates that Jews had to rely on other ethnic and religious groups in order to facilitate their investments, and that they controlled these cross-cultural networks thanks to informal reputation mechanisms.

A network approach to the history of cross-cultural trade

Historians, influenced by Curtin's work more than by recent developments in economics, have become increasingly attentive to trading diasporas and commercial networks. Various research has emphasized the contribution of local merchant communities to the international economy, and stressed the coexistence of cultural, religious, political and economic factors shaping their identity. Like anthropologists and economists, however, historians tend to focus on the internal organization of homogenous groups and their relations to dominant societies. Continental and maritime Asia has proven to be an important laboratory for discussion of these topics, but different trading diasporas has been studied largely in isolation.²⁷

In his introduction to a collective volume of reprints entitled *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has provided an overall assessment of the literature in this field, and put forward an agenda for future research. He praises the study of "merchant communities" (this is the expression that he prefers to use) as a way to shift historical inquiry away from

²⁷ Denis LOMBARD and Jean AUBIN (dir.), *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chine, XIII^e-XX^e siècles*, Paris: EHESS, 1988 (Engl. ed. *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea*, New Delhi-New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Stephen Frederic DALE, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Claude MARKOVITS, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Scott C. LEVI, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550-1900*, Leiden: Brill, 2002.

abstract individuals (merchants as a class) towards concrete collective groups, and thus as an alternative to both Marxist and Weberian paradigms of the role of trade in the development of capitalism. This approach complicates linear models of change by highlighting the real mixture of traditional and modern features that characterizes these communities, and suggests that notions like ‘the rise of the bourgeoisie’ or the ‘superiority of Western economic rationality’ are difficult to sustain against the evidence.²⁸

Historians, however, tend to evoke the term ‘network’ for its ability to call to mind what is sometimes impossible to map and define, rather than to denote specific phenomena. Contending definitions of what a network is can, of course, always be provided. My aim here is to show what we can gain from adopting a more content-specific characterization of this term to study cross-cultural trade. As should have become clear by the theoretical overview conducted thus far, durable inter-group commercial relations are generally ignored for reasons that have to do with disciplinary traditions. A network approach inspired by the British *network analysis* and the works of anthropologist Fredrik Barth allow us to overcome this limitation.

The original formulation of *network analysis* goes back to the mid 1950s, when British anthropologists working on African urban societies grew increasingly dissatisfied with the structural-functionalist approach of Radcliff-Brown and Evans Prichard, which had been developed in relation to small-scale societies but appeared inadequate to explain how complex, large, mostly urban social structures functioned. *Network analysis* emerged as an alternative to these oversimplified models, and became the fundamental contribution of the so-called Manchester school. In the late 1950s, as Clyde Mitchell put it, “the notion of the social network was raised from a metaphorical to a conceptual statement about social relationships in social situations.”²⁹ *Network analysis* has been

²⁸ Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, “Introduction”, in Id. (ed.), *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996, pp. xiii-xxvi. Subrahmanyam also criticizes Curtin for ignoring all relations of trading diasporas with political power, portraying merchant communities as “relatively open and ‘floating’ groups that exist through all of human history”; *ivi*, p. xiv.

²⁹ J. Clyde MITCHELL, “Social Networks”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 3, 1974, pp. 279-99 (p. 280). The development of non-quantitative mathematical ways of rigorously describing sets of relationships among a number of individuals (i.e., graph theory) made this shift from a metaphorical to a conceptual use of the term ‘network’ possible. Over the years, mathematical methods have been developed by American rather than British network analysts (see Fortunata PISELLI (ed.), *Reti. L’analisi di network nelle scienze sociali*, Roma: Donzelli, 1995). For general overviews of *network analysis*, see also J. Clyde MITCHELL (ed.), *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969; Jeremy BOISSEVAIN and J. Clyde MITCHELL

fruitfully applied primarily to studies of kinship relations and gender roles, systems of patronage and political clientele, access to labor markets, professional and social stratification, flows of information and other topics. Surprisingly, historians of business organization have rarely taken up its suggestions.³⁰

For social and economic historians, *network analysis* can narrow the gap between a concept of ‘diaspora’ that focuses on cultural and normative dimensions, and economic models that presume atomized, self-interested individuals. Moreover, it offers a lens through which to analyze the construction of individual and group identities. The latter point has been developed by Fredrik Barth, in an intellectual trajectory that is both connected to *network analysts* and independent and original of them.³¹ All his empirical and theoretical works focus not on the internal constitution of ethnic groups but on boundaries, cultural contacts and variations, delineating a generative approach to culture and collective identities. In the 1960s, Barth was a pioneer in studies of inter-ethnic relations, and found that sustained relations between different ethnic groups do not necessarily dissolve the boundaries between them, which explains why important and stable relations are maintained across boundaries and are often based precisely on the clearly demarcated ethnic identities of the groups involved.³² In his later studies, Barth demonstrates how culture is always “in the making,” and thus how the relationship between the individual and the collective needs to be understood as a process of perpetual redefinition and creative

(eds), *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction*, The Hague-Paris: Mouton & Co., 1973; Jeremy BOISSEVAIN, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974.

³⁰ Glimpses of a network approach appear in Gunnar DAHL, *Trade, Trust, and Networks: Commercial Culture in Late Medieval Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 1998. For a more systematic use of *network analysis* to study the role of personal ties and political clienteles in the organization of trade, contraband and entrepreneurship, see Zacarías MOUTOUKIAS, “Réseaux personnels et autorité coloniale: les négociants de Buenos Aires au XVIII^e siècle”, *Annales ESC*, vol. 47, no. 4-5, 1992, pp. 889-915; ID. “Negocios y redes sociales: modelo interpretativo a partir de un caso rioplatense”, *Caravelle*, no. 67, 1997, pp. 37-55.

³¹ On the suggestions provided by Barth to historians, and specifically on his influence on Italian *microstoria*, see Paul-André ROSENTHAL, “Construire le “macro” par le “micro”: Fredrik Barth et la *microstoria*”, in Revel, *Jeux d’échelles*, pp. 141-59.

³² Fredrik BARTH, “Ecological Relationship of Ethnic Groups in Swat, North Pakistan”, *American Anthropologist*, vol. 58, no. 6, 1956, pp. 1079-89; ID. (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences*, Bergen-Oslo-London: Universitets Forlaget-George Allen & Unwin, 1969.

manipulation.³³ Barth's works show a steady effort to model the coexistence of differences and similarities, and thus the dynamic construction of collective identities. These lines of inquiry help us to rethink cross-cultural networks in the early modern period, when collective identities were less subject to assimilation and creolization than they are today. They allow us to examine the nexus between ethnic segmentation and economic interdependence in long-distance trade, and to look at the space which different groups carved out for themselves by controlling flows of information (information that is both a strategic economic advantage and a form of social control).

The case study below concerns the making of mechanisms of reciprocity and reputation control that traversed ethnic and religious boundaries, even in the absence of an overarching sovereign authority. The exchange of coral and diamonds between Europe and India escaped the monopoly of European chartered companies to remain in the hands of private merchants and trading diasporas. It was not possible, of course, for these private traders to conduct this intercontinental commerce without the institutional support and naval infrastructures of European powers.³⁴ This point, however, is not relevant to our discussion because this institutional support did not intervene in the actual formation and maintenance of networks' cohesion. Considering that in these exchanges fraud was not persecuted legally, only a network approach can elucidate the informal mechanisms of inter-group cooperation.

***A cross-cultural network of private merchants at work:
the coral-diamond trade***

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds was not a minor share of the commerce between Europe and South Asia. Until 1728 (when the first diamond shipment reached Lisbon from Brazil), the kingdom of Golconda in southern India was the world's largest repository of rough diamonds. In turn, red coral—an exclusively Mediterranean product—was in high demand on the Indian

³³ ID., *Cosmologies in the Making: A Generative Approach to Cultural Variation in Inner New Guinea*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

³⁴ I discuss this problem in a comparison between Jewish and Armenian practices in the exchanges of coral and diamonds, and specifically their different relations to the English East India Company, which from the mid seventeenth century was the most important commercial institution involved in this trade. Francesca TRIVELLATO, "Trading Diasporas, Chartered Companies, and Long-Distance Trade: Jews and Armenians in the Exchange of Mediterranean Coral and Indian Diamonds during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", forthcoming.

subcontinent. Coral was thus one of the few European items traded in India, and was also bartered for diamonds and other precious stones.

In the sixteenth century the Portuguese conducted this trade, but it was the English in the mid seventeenth century who enhanced it.³⁵ As Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean was declined, the English became involved in the exchange of coral and diamonds because they made greater room for private trade than the Dutch.³⁶ Through a series of decrees promulgated by the East India Company and Parliament between 1664 and 1732, the English progressively liberalized the trade of coral and precious stones: first by the system of “indulgences,” which allowed ship officers to purchase limited amounts of returning goods (except pepper and calico) outside the Company’s monopoly and carry them on board, then by lowering custom duties for coral and diamonds, and finally by lifting all limits on import and export of these items altogether.³⁷ These policies were prompted by a simple economic rationale, considering that it would have been enormously costly –if not impossible– to monitor a monopoly of items so easy to smuggle as precious stones. In turn, these provisions made it possible for private merchants to take advantage of the English East India Company’s infrastructures.

European Jewry had been active in the marketing and manufacturing of precious stones since the Middle Ages. The exiled Portuguese who fled the Iberian peninsula in the sixteenth century exported the tradition of diamond cutting to Antwerp, and later to Amsterdam as well as to other Sephardic

³⁵ On the importance of this trade and the role in it of both Portuguese Jewish and English private merchants, see Holden FURBER, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976, pp. 133-4, 260-2; Gedalia YOGEV, *Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978; Søren MENTZ, “English Private Trade on the Coromandel Coast, 1660-1690: Diamonds and Country Trade”, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1996, pp. 155-73. Less is known about the Portuguese involvement in the trade before the mid seventeenth century. Since precious stones were easy to smuggle, any official trade statistics might be unreliable. However, it has been calculated that between 1580 and 1640 diamonds and precious stones in general (*pedrarias*) made up on average 14% of the return cargoes of the *carreira da Índia*; James C. BOYAJIAN, *The Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 42-3, 107-22. See also Godehard LENZEN, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, New York: Praeger, 1970 (first German edition in 1966).

³⁶ Inter-Asian private trade was officially allowed by the VOC only in 1742 (for all goods except spices, copper, tin and opium). At Surat, though, coral too was included among the goods reserved to the Company; Om PRAKASH, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 232-3.

³⁷ YOGEV, *Diamonds and Coral*, pp. 68, 71, 83, 91, 96-7, 100-2, 104-7, 133.

settlements.³⁸ During the seventeenth century, these Jews became more and more present in the coral-diamond trade with India.³⁹ The geography of the Sephardic diaspora gave it a competitive advantage, while the geography of coral-diamond trade contributed to more Sephardic migrations. Thus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Sephardic capitals of Christian Europe coincided with the capitals of the coral-diamond trade: Leghorn was the Mediterranean center of coral trade and manufacturing;⁴⁰ Amsterdam remained throughout the period the site of most diamond cutting and polishing;⁴¹ and once London became the world market for rough diamonds in the late seventeenth century it began to attract an increasing number of entrepreneurial Sephardim.⁴²

The increasingly dominant role of England in Euro-Asian commerce also had consequences for the coral-diamond trade: while red coral continued to be

³⁸ In Venice, for example, jewelers of Sephardic descent are documented already from the fifteenth century. In 1436, the jewelers' guild forbade instructing Jews in the craft (a sign of their ubiquitous presence); Biblioteca del Civico Museo Correr, Venice, Mss. IV, nos. 139, 205. See also David JACOBY, "Les Juifs à Venise du XIV^e au milieu du XVI^e siècle", in H.G. Beck, M. Manoussacas and A. Pertusi (eds), *Venezia centro di mediazione tra oriente e occidente (secoli XV-XVI). Aspetti e problemi*, Firenze: Olschki, 1977, pp. 163-216 (pp. 184, 199). In the seventeenth century, numerous records document frequent conflicts between the jewelers' guild and Jewish traders who operated illegally; Archivio di Stato, Venice, *Arti*, busta 422.

³⁹ In addition to Sephardic Jews, Armenians and servants of the English East India Company were also largely involved in dealings of coral and diamonds. By the early eighteenth century, however, Sephardim had taken over the majority of the trade that occurred outside Persia.

⁴⁰ On the local Jews' involvement in coral manufacturing, see Renzo TOAFF, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e Pisa (1591-1700)*, Firenze: Olschki, 1990, pp. 319, 389, 397. On coral fishing in the Mediterranean, see Giovanni TESCIONE, *Italiani alla pesca del corallo ed egemonie marittime nel Mediterraneo*, Napoli: Industrie Tipografiche Editoriali Assimilate, 1968.

⁴¹ Herbert I. BLOOM, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Port Washington, NY-London: Kennikat Press, 1969 (first ed. 1937), pp. 40-4; Luís CRESPO FABIÃO, "Subsídio para a história dos chamados "judeus-portugueses" na indústria dos diamantes em Amsterdão no séculos XVII e XVIII", *Revista da Faculdade de Letras [de Lisboa]*, no. 15, 1973, pp. 455-519; Edgar SAMUEL, "Manuel Levy Duarte (1631-1714): An Amsterdam Merchant Jeweller and His Trade with London", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, vol. 27, 1978-80, pp. 11-31; Jonathan I. ISRAEL, "The Jews of Venice and their Links with Holland and with Dutch Jewry (1600-1710)", in G. Cozzi (ed.), *Gli Ebrei e Venezia secoli XIV-XVIII*, Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1987, pp. 95-116 (pp. 103-4).

⁴² England readmitted Jews in the late 1650s. The expansion of English economic power attracted Sephardic merchants, some of whom established themselves as important merchants and financiers of the crown. Cecil ROTH, *A History of the Jews in England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964 (first ed. 1941), pp. 192-6; Harold POLLINS, *Economic History of the Jews in England*, London-Toronto: Associated University Press, 1982, pp. 42-60; David S. KATZ, *The Jews in the History of England 1485-1850*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 176-7; YOGEV, *Diamonds and Coral*.

shipped from Leghorn, Madras slowly supplanted Goa as the main Indian supplier of rough diamonds.⁴³ Nonetheless, throughout the eighteenth century, and especially until the 1730s (when the English lifted all restrictions on diamond trade), the Sephardim of Leghorn continued to carry out the exchange of coral and diamonds relying on the Portuguese-Indian connection. They were shipping their coral to Goa via Lisbon. This branch of the coral-diamond trade is of great significance not only because it signals the persistence of Indo-Portuguese networks, but also because of the variety of actors involved in it. In fact, the correspondents of the Sephardim of Leghorn in Lisbon were members of the Italian (thus Catholic) community, and their agents in Goa were Brahmins of a dominant Hindu caste of the region, the Saraswat. In other words, this sub-branch of the coral-diamond trade was entrusted to the workings of a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, intercontinental network of private merchants.

The astounding geographical scope and the diversity of merchant communities involved in these exchanges raise questions about how such an informal coalition functioned. How could the actors involved trust their correspondents? How did they ensure the delivery of their orders? Could they punish the dishonest conduct of a distant agent? These questions become even more dramatic if we consider that by this time merchants had become less and less itinerant, and therefore had to rely on means of communication more than face-to-face interaction. If tightly connected and long-lived, even such a diverse cross-cultural network of private merchants could be efficient. Although its members lacked legal instruments to enforce contracts, mutual assistance and reputation control developed across distant areas and different communities because information concerning the misconduct of any participants in the trade could be easily spread among all the other members of the network. If a Hindu merchant of Goa tried to cheat one of his Jewish correspondents in Leghorn, for example, the information would soon reach the Jews of Amsterdam and London, as well as their Italian intermediaries in Lisbon. In addition, the internal cohesion of each merchant community participating in a cross-cultural network acted to prevent individual misconduct, which reflected negatively on the entire group. The Jewish communities of the diaspora seem to have been particularly effective in overseeing their members' conduct: wherever they acquired a formal

⁴³ Goa was the center of diamond trade from 1650 to 1730; Charles R. BOXER, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*, London: Hutchinson, 1969, pp. 148-9. In the 1730s, the influx of newly discovered Brazilian diamonds to Europe caused a drop in the price of precious stones, but by 1740 the diamond imports from India resumed and in fact expanded over the course of the following four decades; YOGEV, *Diamonds and Coral*, pp. 120-3. By then, Madras/Fort St. George, where Jewish merchants of London had been settled since the 1680s, had replaced Goa as the main source of diamonds; *ivi*, p. 69.

organization, rabbinical and lay courts were able to impose administrative, legal and religious sanctions, and their voluntary associations could exert pressure on members who didn't abide by the rules.⁴⁴ For a minority group, internal cohesion and collective reputation were indispensable assets. When on 9 September 1743 Ergas and Silveira of Leghorn wrote to their London correspondent Benjamin Alvarenga thanking God that the coral-diamond trade was mostly in the hands of their “nation,”⁴⁵ they were also expressing awareness that the reputation of their coreligionists was crucial in sustaining their credibility.

Ergas and Silveira were one of the most prominent merchant houses in Leghorn in the first half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ The Ergas family was among the Sephardic exiled who settled in Pisa at the end of the sixteenth century and, as many other Iberian immigrants there, they soon moved to Leghorn for the greater commercial opportunities it offered.⁴⁷ In the heart of Counter-Reformation Italy, Leghorn was an “oasis” granting unprecedented rights to Jews.⁴⁸ Home to a thriving Jewish community, the port of Leghorn also became the basis of English and Dutch operations in the Mediterranean.⁴⁹ In the

⁴⁴ In seventeenth-century Amsterdam, for example, excommunication (*herem*) was applied not only against religious dissidents, but also against members charged with committing all sorts of transgressions (concerning dietary laws, marital laws, relations with non-Jews, and more). Yosef KAPLAN, “The Social Function of the *Herem* in the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century”, in J. Michman (ed.), *Dutch Jewish History. Proceedings of the Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands (November 28–December 3, 1982, Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem)*, Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University-Hebrew University of Jerusalem-The Institute for Research on Dutch Jewry, 1984, pp. 111-56.

⁴⁵ “...es de dar gracia a Deus que este negocio este la maior parte en nostra nacion...”; Archivio di Stato, Florence (hereafter ASF), *Libri di commercio e famiglia* (hereafter LCF), 1636.

⁴⁶ The activities of Ergas and Silveira of Leghorn are well documented thanks to the records that were seized by Tuscan tribunals at the time of their bankruptcy in 1746. These comprise 13,658 copies of business letters (1704-1746), several account books (1705-1746), and court papers. ASF, LCF, 1615-1644; Archivio di Stato, Leghorn (hereafter ASL), *Capitano, poi Governatore, poi Auditore vicario* (hereafter CGA). *Atti civili spezzati*, 2245/953; 2249/953; 2234/190, 953; ASL, CGA. *Cause delegate*, 2500.

⁴⁷ In 1594 Abraham son of Isaac Israel Ergas rented a house in Pisa, where he became part of the Sephardic elite; Lucia FRATTARELLI FISCHER, “Ebrei a Pisa fra Cinquecento e Settecento”, in M. Luzzati (ed.), *Gli ebrei di Pisa (secoli IX-XX)*, Ospitaletto-Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1998, pp. 89-115 (p. 111). By 1626 he had moved to Leghorn, where he held important offices in the Jewish community; TOAFF, *La nazione ebrea*, pp. 336, 455.

⁴⁸ Attilio MILANO, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, Torino: Einaudi, 1963, pp. 322-8. For a comparative perspective, see Jonathan I. ISRAEL, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989 (2nd ed.).

⁴⁹ On the booming of Leghorn in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Fernand BRAUDEL and Ruggiero ROMANO, *Navires et marchandises à l'entrée du port de*

mid seventeenth century, members of the Ergas family were among the most successful merchants and financiers of Leghorn, as well as outstanding intellectuals and rabbis.⁵⁰ After the bankruptcy of “Abram, Isach e Abram Ergas” in 1684,⁵¹ one branch of the Ergas family established a new partnership with the Silveira. Descendants of a great merchant clan of Lisbon, expatriated in the 1630s to Madrid, Amsterdam and the Levant, the Silveira intermarried with the Ergas and with them started a commercial house based both in Leghorn and Aleppo.⁵² The activities of this family partnership ranged from local and regional to long distance trade (including shipments from North Africa to Northern Europe, import of colonial products from the Americas, and export of Tuscan textiles), as well as maritime insurance, brokerage, and currency exchange. Ergas and Silveira were also among the elite of the Sephardim of Leghorn engaged in the coral-diamond trade, and they conducted it mostly via Lisbon and Goa. Through their records, it is possible to see a vast, cross-cultural network take shape.

The correspondence of Ergas and Silveira show that over a period of about thirty years, between 1713 and 1741, they conducted the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds relying on a pre-existing network formed by Italian merchants in Lisbon and Hindu agents in Goa.⁵³ The

Livourne (1547-1611), Paris: Armand Colin, 1951. On English trade in Leghorn, see Gigliola PAGANO DE DIVITIIS, *Mercanti inglesi nell'Italia del Seicento. Navi, traffici, egemonie*, Venezia: Marsilio, 1990 (Engl. ed. *English Merchants in 17th-century Italy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On the port and merchants of Leghorn in the eighteenth century, see Jean-Pierre FILIPPINI, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)*, Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998, 3 vols.

⁵⁰ In the 1640s and 50s, the Ergas of Leghorn stood out for their Mediterranean trade and financial activities; Michele CASSANDRO, *Aspetti della storia economica e sociale degli ebrei di Livorno nel Seicento*, Milano: Giuffr , 1983, pp. 88-9, 95-6, 106-7, 173-5. Joseph Ergas (1688-1730) and his father Manuel were two of the most influential rabbis of their times; TOAFF, *La nazione ebrea*, p. 236.

⁵¹ ASL, CGA. *Atti civili*, 365/462; CGA. *Atti civili spezzati*, 2193/164.

⁵² In 1705, David Silveira married Esther Ergas, sister of Moses (principal of Ergas and Silveira), and in 1740, his son Isaac Silveira (1707-1766) married Deborah, daughter of Moses; ASL, CGA. *Atti civili spezzati*, 2245/953. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, the Silveira were one of the principal families of European Jews who resided and operated in Aleppo under French protection; Simon SCHWARZFUCHS, “La “Nazione Ebraica” Livournaise au Levant”, *Rassegna mensile di Israel*, vol. 50, 1984, pp. 707-24 (pp. 709-10). On the Silveira of Lisbon, see James C. BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese Bankers at the Court of Spain, 1626-1650*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983, pp. 30-2, 117, 129, Appendix A-7, and ID., *The Portuguese Trade*, cit., pp. 14, 37-8, 117, 134, 143, 215-7, 256. On the Silveira, see also the paper of Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert in these Working Papers.

⁵³ The 242 letters sent by Ergas and Silveira to Italian merchants of Lisbon are written in Italian, while the 86 letters addressed to Hindu traders of Goa are in Portuguese. Portuguese is

persistence of the same names among their correspondents in these two places indicates that this trade was not conducted through a series of occasional contacts, but was inscribed in a stable network of inter-group relations.

On 20 January 1713, toward the end of the War of Spanish Succession, Ergas and Silveira shipped five packets of manufactured corals to Barducci, Giudici and Perini, Italian merchants in Lisbon. This partnership had been recommended to them by their cousins, Abraham and Manuel de Mora *alias* Bonaventura and Lopes de Morales, other Sephardim of Leghorn. In the letter that accompanied the packets, Ergas and Silveira requested Barducci, Giudici and Perini to place the coral on board the next *carreira da Índia* to be delivered to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa. A second letter, addressed to the Camotins, ordered them to ship diamonds or, as a less welcome alternative, textiles of the best quality back to Lisbon in return for the coral that they were to receive; Barducci, Giudici and Perini would ensure that the diamonds (and other merchandise) reached Leghorn.⁵⁴ These two letters that inaugurated the Ergas and Silveira's venture into the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds discloses the effectiveness of reputation mechanisms. The one to Barducci, Giudici and Perini carried the recommendation of close relatives, who were known in the Portuguese trade and agreed to guarantee Ergas and Silveira's honest conduct and business proficiency. The Italian merchants, in turn, were able to secure for Ergas and Silveira good relations with the Camotins of Goa. The entrance into a cross-cultural network was thus made possible by solid webs of reciprocal control among relatives, friends and agents. Moreover, these business letters worked essentially as unlimited powers of attorney in dealings that occurred over a very long distance and did not permit access to local courts.⁵⁵

also the prevalent language in the surviving correspondence of the Comotim/Kamat family for the years 1777-1819; Teotonio R. De SOUZA, "Mhami House Records: Indigenous Sources for Indo-Portuguese Historiography", in *II Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa. Actas*, Lisboa: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1985, pp. 933-47. On the Kamat see footnote 69.

⁵⁴ Both letters are dated 20 January 1713; ASF, LCF, 1628. When trading with Iberian territories, Sephardim used Christian names to avoid the Inquisition, hence the term *alias*. The testament of Emanuel *quondam* Abraham de Mora (1709) is in ASF, *Notarile Moderno. Testamenti*, Lorenzo Leoni, 23736, fols. 24r-25r. In the 1720s-40s, the Barducci of Lisbon were also active also in the export of Brazilian sugar and tobacco, and the import of grains; Arquivo da Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Loreto, Lisbon (hereafter ANSL), Caixa 4, 4.

⁵⁵ On the attribution of full legal standing to merchant letters in medieval Italy, see Maura FORTUNATI, *Scrittura e prova. I libri di commercio nel diritto medievale e moderno*, Roma: Fondazione Sergio Mochi Onory per la storia del diritto italiano, 1996.

Business correspondence was the oil of cross-cultural trade. If reputation was a merchant's capital, business letters were one of the most viable channels by which to spread it. Despite the emergence of new periodical publications of economic information in the late sixteenth century –from single-sheet currents (lists of local prices, exchanges rates, stock exchanges and the like) to more voluminous almanacs and gazettes–,⁵⁶ throughout the early modern period business letters had not been superseded. They provided merchants with information about local economic as well as political conditions, and, more importantly, fulfilled functions for which public sources were inadequate. If the bankruptcy of a large merchant house could be publicized in gazettes and economic newspapers, business letters were the only means to diffuse information regarding the standing of smaller merchants. Letters served to introduce new agents but could also work to exclude those considered unworthy or unreliable.⁵⁷ For a trading diaspora like the Sephardim, business letters had the additional advantage of putting distant members into contact, thus broadening the network and offering a larger range of services to third agents. Finally, in our case, private business correspondence ensured the secrecy that was necessary in dealings in precious stones.

In some contexts, merchant letters were absolutely indispensable to bring together communities that were separated both by geographical distance and legal restrictions. After the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1536, it became very dangerous for the exiled Jews and *marranos* to rely on New Christian relatives or agents in Portugal for the conduct of their trade. Moreover, in some Jewish communities, traveling to Iberia (the “lands of idolatry,” as it

⁵⁶ John J. MCCUSKER and Cora GRAVESTEIJN, *The Beginning of Commercial and Financial Journalism: the Commodity Price Currents, Exchange Rate Currents, and Money Currents of Early Modern Europe*, Amsterdam: NEHA, 1991. For an overview of the transfer of economic information in the early modern period, see Pierre JEANNIN, “La diffusion de l’information”, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Fiere e mercati nella integrazione delle economie europee, secc. XIII-XVIII (Atti della “Trentaduesima Settimana di Studi” dell’Istituto Internazionale di Storia economica “F. Datini”, Prato, 9-12 maggio 2000)*, Firenze: Le Monnier, 2001, pp. 231-62.

⁵⁷ The Ergas and Silveira’s correspondence does indicate that cross-checks worked to threaten negligent members with expulsion from the network (see footnote 70). It does not, however, mention cases of actual expulsion from the network by reputation mechanisms. This should not be surprising considering the success of this informal network. In his analysis of the documents concerning the Maghribi ‘coalition’, Greif has found very little evidence of misconduct; GREIF, “Contract Enforceability”, p. 528n8, and ID., “Cultural Beliefs”, p. 924n13.

was called) was stigmatized as suspicious behavior.⁵⁸ Sephardic merchants thus had to use intermediaries in order to carry on trade with the Iberian world. The Italian merchants and financiers resident in Lisbon were among those who supplied the Sephardic diaspora, especially in the Mediterranean, with essential economic services. After having contributed to the Portuguese maritime expansion, by the early sixteenth century the Italians of Lisbon had increasingly been replaced by Flemish and German competitors.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, a resident community of Italian (mostly Genoese and Florentine) merchant families continued to enjoy a certain status in the Portuguese capital, where they gathered around the church and confraternity of *Nossa Senhora do Loreto*.⁶⁰ While well integrated in the local society, the Italians of Lisbon maintained a separate identity even once their golden age had declined. Indeed, some Italians (like other foreigners) were naturalized by means of marriages to Portuguese or by royal privileges; a few even joined the ranks of Portuguese nobility, mostly by entering religious orders.⁶¹ The most affluent of these long-term residents had investments in the Portuguese public debt and mercantile companies (like the *Compania Geral do Grão Prá e Maranhao*), and also owned real estate and land

⁵⁸ Yosef KAPLAN, “The Travels of Portuguese Jews from Amsterdam to the “Lands of Idolatry” (1644-1724)”, in Id. (ed.), *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1985, pp. 197-224.

⁵⁹ Charles VERLINDEN, “La colonie italienne de Lisbonne et le developpement de l’économie metropolitaine et coloniale portugaise”, in *Studi in onore di Armando Saporì*, Milano: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1957, 2 vols, vol. 1, pp. 617-28; Virgínia RAU, “A Family of Italian Merchants in Portugal in the XVth century: The Lomellini”, *ivi*, pp. 717-26, and EAD., “Les marchands-banquiers étrangers au Portugal sous le règne de João III (1521-1557)”, in M. Mollat and P. Adam (eds), *Les aspects internationaux de la découverte océanique aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles. Actes du Cinquième Colloque International d’histoire maritime (Lisbonne, 14-16 septembre 1960)*, Paris: SEVPEN, 1966, pp. 295-307.

⁶⁰ The term ‘Italian’ derives from contemporary sources. All Italian merchants resident in Lisbon were required to join the confraternity of Loreto, and pay a small tax on all their imports and exports to it; Giuliana ALBINI, “Per una storia degli italiani in Portogallo: l’archivio “Nossa Senhora do Loreto””, *Nuova Rivista Storica*, vol. 66, 1982, pp. 142-8. In 1672, 97 men were listed as members of the Italian congregation: half of them (49) were from Genoa, more than a quarter (21) from Florence; ANSL, Caixa VII, 42.1. In 1719, 145 men signed the new statutes of the congregation; *ivi*, Caixa XI, 14.

⁶¹ João Thomaz Ghersi of Genoa was one of the few important Italian merchants in Lisbon to request membership of the prestigious *Ordem de Christo*, which he was granted in 1685, thus elevating him to noble status; Arquivos Nacionais Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (hereafter ANTT), *Habilitações da Ordem de Christo*, letra J, maço 93/96. From 1665, Ghersi had been the business partner of Niccolò Micon, a Genoese merchant living in Lisbon, who died in 1671; ANTT, *Registro Geral de Testamentos*, livro 29, fols. 99v-102r. His son Mathias Thomas Ghersi was a “homem de negocio,” a designation reserved for the mercantile elite; *ivi*, livro 107, fols. 1v-3v. His brother Cesare Ghersi was a lay agent (*familiar*) of the Holy Office of Lisbon, and in 1680 deputy of the *Junta de Tabaco*; ANSL, Caixa XII, 130.

properties. In most cases, though, ties to the homeland did not dissipate.⁶² On the contrary, many Italian merchants continued to carve their niche precisely as intermediaries between Portugal and the Italian peninsula.

In the Middle Ages, the Genoese, Florentine and Venetians based in Lisbon had been the partners and agents of Italian merchant houses. From at least the early seventeenth century on, the business correspondents of the Italian merchants of Lisbon began to include Sephardic Jews who had settled in Italian port-cities, especially Leghorn and Venice. This new range of agents has two remarkable qualities: it signals the ability of Italian merchants to adapt to the structural changes occurring in the Mediterranean economy, and it testifies to the presence and function of cross-cultural commercial networks. In their trade with Goa, Ergas and Silveira relied on these merchants of Genoese and Florentine descent, and only occasionally on Dutch and French residents of Lisbon.⁶³ The Genoese family of Ravara, who in the first half of the eighteenth century was well rooted in Portugal, conducted trade between Lisbon and Genoa, and at the same time often offered its services to the Sephardim of Leghorn.⁶⁴ The same held true for the Florentine Girolamo Paolo Medici and Enea Berodardi⁶⁵ or the brothers Antonio e Bartolomeo Manzoni.⁶⁶

⁶² Others argue that by the fifteenth century the Italians of Lisbon had already assimilated into the home society at the expense of their national origins. Jacques HEERS, “Portugais et Génois au XV^e siècle: la rivalité Atlantique-Méditerranée”, in *Actas do III colóquio internacional de estudos luso-brasileiros (Lisboa, 1957)*, Lisboa: Imprensa de Coimbra, vol. II, 1960, pp. 138-47 (now in ID., *Société et économie à Gênes (XIV^e-XV^e siècles)*, London: Variorum, 1979).

⁶³ The Ergas and Silveira’ correspondents in Lisbon, listed according to the number of letters sent to them between 1713 and 1744, were: Medici & Beroardi (82), Ravara (51), Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso (36), Medici & Niccolini (16), the Dutch Schutte & Buess (15), Olivieri & van den Brugge (12), Andrea Martellucci (10), Stefano Olivieri (7), the French Lorenzo Reisson (5), Barducci, Giudici & Perini (4), Gianmaria Cambiaso (2), Antonio Manzoni (1), and Giacomo Manzoni (1).

⁶⁴ Close ties to Genoa are indicated in testaments drafted in Lisbon by Bento Ravara (who died in 1702), the marquis Pedro Francisco Ravara (deceased in 1718), Joseph Ravara (deceased in 1721), and Anna Maria Guido marquise of Ravara (deceased in 1754). ANTT, *Registro Geral de Testamentos*, livro 99, fols. 118v-119v; livro 150, fols. 187v-190v; livro 166, fols. 106v-109v; livro 258, fols. 74r-77r.

⁶⁵ Medici and Beroardi were partners in Lisbon from 1722 to 1737 in a commercial house that after 1737 was owned solely by the latter. Medici was the brother of a Florentine senator and also the Tuscan representative in Lisbon, where from 1738 he was partner of Niccolini. He died in 1742; Fabrizio GHILARDI, “Un diplomatico fiorentino alla corte dei Braganza (1737-1742)”, in *Toscana e Portogallo. Miscellanea storica nel 650° anniversario dello Studio Generale di Pisa*, Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1994, pp. 245-53. Beroardi died in Lisbon in 1748 having accumulated a large fortune thanks to his business; *ivi*, livro 244, fols. 1r-15v. His trading relations extended to Brazil; Luis LISANTI, *Negocios coloniais (uma correspondência comercial do século XVII)*, São Paulo: Ministério da Fazenda, 1973, p. cxxxi. Some records

In the capital of the *Estado da Índia*, the correspondents of Ergas and Silveira were members of the Saraswat caste, who had acquired an influential position in the economic activities of Western India, and most importantly the Camotins (Portuguese for Kamat), probably the wealthiest family in town.⁶⁷ Hindu merchants have left scarce records, but we know that they were heavily engaged in trade, farming and credit activities, for their business expertise and professional qualifications were highly regarded by both local rulers and distant correspondents.⁶⁸ The Camotins in particular proved absolutely indispensable to the rulers of Goa as translators, state contractors, tax-farmers, ship suppliers and brokers, as well as to European merchants.⁶⁹ From the letters that Ergas and

document that Beroardi traveled to Genoa and elsewhere in Italy at least during the War of Spanish Succession; ANSL, Caixa 4, 13.

⁶⁶ ANTT, *Registro Geral de Testamentos*, livro 109, fols. 167r-171r.

⁶⁷ Besides Nillea, Gopala and his son Fondu Camotim, correspondents of Ergas and Silveira in Goa were Hiria and Panduronga Pambu, Regolato Belacrisme, Panduronga and Sedaxiva Naiques (Portuguese for Naik), Babuxa Quenny. In 1739, during the Maratha invasion of Goa, Fondu Camotim (Phondu Kamat) was described as the wealthiest merchant in town; Teotonio R. DE SOUZA, “French Slave-Trading in Portuguese Goa (1773-1791)”, in Id. (ed.), *Essays in Goan History*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1989, pp. 119-31 (pp. 121-2). On the Saraswat, see Frank CONLON, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, 1700-1935*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. I thank Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who at an earlier stage of this research helped me with Hindu names and bibliographical references.

⁶⁸ Ashin DAS GUPTA, “Trade and Politics in Eighteenth Century India”, in S. Subrahmanyam and M. Alam (eds), *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, Delhi-New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 361-97 (first published in 1970); Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM and C.A. BAYLY, “Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India”, in S. Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India*, Delhi-New York, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 242-65; Ifran HABIB, “Merchant Communities in Precolonial India”, in Tracy, *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, pp. 371-99; *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500-1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta*, New Delhi-New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁶⁹ The Portuguese legislation that discriminated against non-Christians in all economic activities was never implemented. On the economic activities of the Camotins/Kamat, see M.N. PEARSON, “Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy: The Goa *Rendas*, 1600-1670”, *Mare Luso-Indicum*, vol. 2, 1972, pp. 61-73; Celsa PINTO, *Trade and Finance in Portuguese India. A Study of the Portuguese Country Trade 1770-1840*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994, pp. 53-6. On their role as official translators of the *Estado da Índia*, see Panduronga S.S. PISSURLENCAR, *Agentes de diplomacia portuguesa na Índia (Hindus, muçulmanos, judeus e parses)*, Bastorá-Goa: Tipografia Rangel, 1952, pp. xliii, lv, lvii; ID. (ed.), *Arquivos do Conselho do Estado*, Bastorá-Goa: Tipografia Rangel, 1953-57, 5 vols, vol. V, pp. 62, 528n, 536-7, 555-7. From the 1760s, the Kamat were associated with the French in India, and continued to trade in coral, with mixed success; Ernestine CARREIRA, “Marselha e o Oriente Português, o capitão Pierre Blancard”, *Revista de cultura (Instituto*

Silveira sent them, we learn that the Camotins operated as a united clan, concerned for the good standing of its members and the continued delivery of new orders by its correspondents.⁷⁰ The Camotins supplied Ergas and Silveira, as well as numerous other Portuguese Jews of Leghorn, with Indian diamonds as well as rubies, cotton textiles and occasionally other local products (indigo, Indian rubber, pepper and other spices).⁷¹

This trade was continuously menaced by competition and high risks involved in the number of intermediaries it had to pass through. Moreover, it was entirely based on reciprocal trust and not on fixed standards. The price evaluation of Mediterranean coral that the Jews of Leghorn shipped to Goa was subject to local market conditions, and governed by the assessments of the Camotins. On several occasions Ergas and Silveira told their correspondents that they would abandon this trade –a formulaic threat that was also a way to exert pressure on them. The structural decline of the position of Goa in Euro-Asian commerce and the gradual replacement of Madras as the Indian supplier of diamonds certainly weakened the network linking Leghorn to Lisbon. But it would be exaggerated to posit a sharp contrast between these two currents of the diamond trade –the one linking Lisbon to Goa and the one linking London to Madras–, not only because the shift took place over several decades between the late seventeenth century and the 1740s, but also because the Sephardim involved in this commerce perceived themselves to be part of an interconnected network. This is particularly visible for the axis Leghorn-Amsterdam.

The agents of the Jews of Leghorn in Lisbon and in Goa were largely the same ones who served the Jews of Amsterdam.⁷² The Camotins shipped

Cultural de Macau), vol. 14, no. 14, 1991, pp. 181-91. Thanks to Dejanirah Couto for providing me with a copy of this article.

⁷⁰ Writing the Camotins in January 1727, Ergas and Silveira complained to them about the lack of return cargos and letters from Nillea Camotim. Simultaneously, they also wrote Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso in Lisbon inquiring about the opinion that his “friends” recently returned from Goa held of Nillea Camotim; ASF, *LCF*, 1632.

⁷¹ In Leghorn, between 1719 and 1721 Abraham Sulema *alias* Francesco Vais notarized several powers of attorney for Italian merchants of Lisbon (including Tommaso Gaetano Medici, Enea Beroardi and Giambattista Ravara) so that they could retrieve from the *Casa da Índia* diamonds and other items sent him from Goa by the Camotins and others; ASF, *Notarile Moderno. Protocolli*, Agostino Frugoni, 24732, fols. 15v-16r, 90v-91r, 141v-143r; 24733, fols. 43v-46v.

⁷² When in 1722 the Portuguese ship *Nossa Senhora do Cabo* was captured in its way from Goa to Lisbon, and the diamonds carried on board seemed lost, Ergas and Silveira lamented the suffering it would cause the Sephardim of Leghorn and Amsterdam (“de nostra nacion aqui y Amsterdam”); ASF, *LCF*, 1631 (letter to Abraham Lusena, in Genoa, 22 April 1722). Shortly before, on 4 February 1722, they had written Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso of Lisbona to

diamonds from Goa to Amsterdam to Antonio Gabriel Nunes in 1706, and in 1727 to Jacob son of Moses Pereira.⁷³ In order to receive these diamonds from Goa, Amsterdam Jews also relied on Italian intermediaries. In 1704 Gaspar and Manuel Mendes gave power of attorney to Antonio Manzoni of Lisbon, entrusting him with claiming the diamonds from the *Casa da Índia* and shipping them to Amsterdam.⁷⁴ Occasionally, the Italians of Lisbon also served the Jews of London.⁷⁵ The interconnectedness of the Sephardic diaspora was an essential component in the cohesion of the cross-cultural network that included Italians and Hindus. In addition, these cross-cultural relations solidified over time. Notarial records of Amsterdam indicate that local Sephardim had relied on Italian correspondents in Lisbon at least since the 1620s,⁷⁶ while notarial records of Leghorn show how this network still existed in the 1750s.⁷⁷

A successful cross-cultural trading network was not only tightly interdependent and durable over time, but could also perform diverse transactions. There is evidence that the operations of the network that linked Jewish, Italian and Hindu merchants involved in the exchange of coral and diamonds went well beyond this specific branch of trade. After they lost the Northern Provinces of their Indian territories to the Marathas (1736-1740),⁷⁸ the

announce the imminent arrival of a shipment of coral from their relative Joseph de los Rios of Amsterdam. The shipment was to be delivered to Nillea Camotim in Goa; *ibid.*

⁷³ Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam (hereafter GAA), *Not. Arch.*, 11291, fol. 34. The diamonds shipped from Wisula Camotim to Nunes of Amsterdam were insured by Jacob Ergas in London; *ivi*, 2943, fol. 34. In 1707, Rachel Mocata, widow of David Franco Mendes, disposed of the diamonds she had received from the Camotins of Goa; *ivi*, 6036, fol. 58.

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, 2943, fol. 13.

⁷⁵ In 1728, the partnership Medici and Beroardi appears among the agents of Benjamin Mendes da Costa, leader the London Sephardic community; Stephen H.E. FISHER, *The Portugal Trade: A Study of Anglo-Portuguese Commerce 1700-1770*, London: Methuen, 1971, p. 55n, 57.

⁷⁶ In 1623 Francesco Morelli and Jacomo Tati, both Italian merchants of Lisbon, were agents for Felipe Henriques of Amsterdam; *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1991, p. 180 and 184. In his testament of 1629, Morelli included instructions for a shipment of coral that he had shipped to Goa, and for some parcels of diamonds that he had sent to Venice to be sold; ANSL, Caixa IX, 37. In the 1620s-30s, Lopo Ramires, a leading Jewish merchant in Amsterdam, regularly remitted sugar, diamond, dyewoods and spices from Lisbon to his brother Duarte Nunes da Costa, who resided in Florence, using vessels signed up at Lisbon or Leghorn; Jonathan I. ISRAEL, "The Changing Role of the Dutch Sephardim in International Trade, 1595-1715", in Michman, *Dutch Jewish History*, pp. 31-51 (p. 37).

⁷⁷ In 1757, Saul Bonfil of Leghorn entrusted Niccolini of Lisbon to retrieve his merchandise loaded in Goa by the Camotins; ASF, *Notarile moderno. Protocolli*, Filippo Gonnella, 27193, fols. 1v-2r.

⁷⁸ Francisco BETHENCOURT, "O Estado da Índia", in Id. and K. Chaurdhuri (eds), *História da expansão portuguesa*, Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1998, 5 vols, vol. III, pp. 250-69. For more

Portuguese crown appealed to Sephardic bankers for a loan of about 90 million *reis* (the equivalent of 450.000 *livres tournois*) to finance their military counter offense. The state bonds that were issued refer to ‘the money that is borrowed from the merchants of the Portuguese Kingdom, Leghorn and Amsterdam’ (“o dinheiro que se toma por empréstimo aos mercadores do Renyno, Leorne e Amstardão”) –an expression that clearly alludes to Portuguese New Christians and Jews. But the identity of these bankers had to be protected from the Inquisition, and the money had to be made available in Goa. Once more, it was the Italians of Lisbon and the Camotins of Goa who supplied the link to the Sephardic diaspora. In 1742 Italian merchants like Giovanni Battista Ravara, Enea Beroardi, Lazzaro and Gianandrea Cambiaso –all prominent members of the Italian community of Lisbon and among Ergas and Silveira’s correspondents– bought these state bonds and thus served as intermediaries in the repayment of sums in Lisbon.⁷⁹

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The network of European Sephardim, Italians of Lisbon and Hindus of Goa involved in the coral-diamond trade was well defined in its membership, had a long history, and was stable enough to foster a large spectrum of transactions. All these features allow us to refer to it as a ‘cross-cultural merchant network.’ In turn, this intercontinental informal network formed by merchant communities of different ethnic and religious origins challenges most presumptions of the literature on trading diasporas. This literature tends to look at the internal organization of groups living in dispersal, and to explain their economic success either as a direct consequence of their members’ ‘natural’ inclination to exchange information, lend credit, grant trust and share secrecy, or as the result of pure economic interest. Neither of these two explanations is sufficient to understand the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This cross-cultural network testifies to the fact that mutual assistance worked across ‘natural’ boundaries between ethnic and religious groups, provided that the connections between them were tight and prolonged enough to create reciprocal obligations and reputation control, and that each group policed its members.

In order to understand these informal mechanisms of cross-cultural trade we might resort to a network approach that overcomes the opposition between

details, see Panduronga S.S. PISSURLENCAR, *The Portuguese and the Marathas*, Bombay: State Board for Literature and Culture, 1975.

⁷⁹ ANTT, *Chancelaria D. João V*, livro 18, fols. 269r-270r; livro 22, fol. 123r-125r; livro 22, fols. 143r-144v.

an “oversocialized” and an “undersocialized” conception of social action.⁸⁰ Rather than invoking generalized morality, institutional arrangements or self-interest, a network approach can explain good conduct in business as the result of reputation mechanisms among agents who are linked by concrete personal relations and even collective structures. It thus makes room for both economic and non-economic motives in accounting for honesty. This is essential when, as in our case, we analyze a *network of communities*. In the case of cross-cultural relations established ‘horizontally’ among different merchant groups in the absence of a central authority, it is necessary to understand how each group defined itself in relation to others, and the ways in which cooperation traversed boundaries between communities that were closed but not self-sufficient.

In the early modern period, collective identity was largely determined by normative frameworks, but was also a byproduct of the process of interaction itself, and could be manipulated according to the circumstances. In reference to the ethnic and religious groups discussed here, we see how categories such as Sephardim, Italians and Hindus are insufficient to capture the self-representations of their respective members, although they could serve them with distinct sources of identities. The Portuguese Jews of Leghorn involved in the coral-diamond trade saw themselves both as part of the Jewish diaspora at large, and as forming a sub-group whose borders were defined by the economic activities in which they operated, the centers where they were settled, and the social milieu in which they participated.⁸¹ In Lisbon at the time, an “Italian” identity did not of course exist from a legal point of view, although celebrated in the church and confraternity of *Nossa Senhora do Loreto*. The “Italians” of Lisbon were either naturalized Portuguese or subjects of one of the regional states of the peninsula, in which case they responded to their consular and diplomatic representatives. Tensions between a collective “Italian” identity and the legal status of, for example, Genoese and Tuscans (reflected in the official terminology that included both a comprehensive term *–nação italiana–* and specific labels *–nação genovesa, florentina, milanez, and so forth–*) could be

⁸⁰ Mark GRANOVETTER, “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness”, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 91, no. 3, 1985, pp. 481-510.

⁸¹ In 1767, Jacob Baruch Carvaglio, a prominent Sephardic merchant of Pisa and Leghorn, drafted his last will while his son Abraham was about to marry Esther Belilios of Venice. Jacob named his universal heirs all the sons who were to be born from the marriage of Abraham and Esther or ‘from any other marriage that he [Abraham] would contrive with a woman of the Jewish Nation, of Portuguese or Spanish descent, born from parents living in Leghorn, Venice, London, Amsterdam or Aleppo’ (“da qualunque altro matrimonio che da lui [Abraham] contraesse con donna di nazione ebrea oriunda portughese o spagnola e nata da genitori abitanti in Livorno, Venezia, Londra, Amsterdam o Aleppo”); ASF, *Notarile Moderno. Testamenti*, Giovanni Lorenzo Meazzoli, 26541, fols. 28v-34r.

exploited strategically.⁸² Finally, the influential Camotim family and other members of the Saraswat caste, who served as correspondents of the Sephardim and the Italians in Goa, certainly maintained their distinctive ethnic and religious identity, while serving as indispensable intermediaries for both the Portuguese crown and the European traders in the region. While externally imposed, the definitions of these groups can be best understood in the framework of a model of dynamic interaction.

The network approach that I have illustrated in this essay is not a comprehensive model. It is, however, an attempt to restore the heuristic value of the term ‘network’ not as a vague surrogate for any form of commercial relation, but as an analytical tool to examine the nature and function of relevant historical episodes of cross-cultural trade. As I define it here, cross-cultural trade is a phenomenon too easily neglected by historians and social scientists, mostly because it escapes familiar categories. Contrary to general assumptions, even in the highly segmented world of the early modern period, trading diasporas did not simply act as ‘middlemen’ within dominant societies, but also developed durable commercial ties with other merchant groups outside any institutional arrangement. These networks of communities need to be studied on a micro-scale as well as part of the global system of trade in which they participated. Such a micro-analysis of specific merchant networks brings to light the continuous role played by informal mechanisms in highly sophisticated commercial webs, and is yet another confirmation of the incredible complexity of pre-modern trade.

⁸² In 1729, for example, the Tuscan merchants of Lisbon refused to contribute the tax that the consul of Genoa wanted to levy in order to subsidize the celebrations of the marriage between the Infanta of Spain and the Prince of Brazil. They contended that the tax was needed to sponsor an event in which the entire Italian community was represented in its corporate identity, and therefore had to be levied by the church, not by a consul. *Memorie e risoluzioni di tutta la nazione Italiana doppo l'incendio della chiesa in 1651 rispetive la compagnia della nazione e sopra l'archi trionfali*, in ANSL, Caixa 1, 16.

Interdependence and the Collective Pursuit of Profits: Portuguese Commercial Networks in the Early Modern Atlantic¹

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Abstract

Taking as its case study the Portuguese Nation of merchants operating in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Atlantic, the article examines the dynamics of how network forms of commercial affiliation were constituted. Since extant evidence does not support traditional explanations based either on “primordial” ties of religion, kinship or provenance or on rational self-interest, the article advances the concept of interdependence: a concept that describes the cultivation of mutual implication and collective obligation normatively, cognitively and in day-to-day social practice.

Sommaire

L'article examine les marchands de la Nation Portugaise, actifs dans le commerce atlantique des XVIe et XVIIe siècles, afin de mieux comprendre les dynamiques qui animaient la constitution des liens d'affiliation commerciaux. Un examen des données pertinentes démontrant que ni les explications basées sur les liens dits “primordiaux”, ni celles découlant de l'intérêt rationel, peuvent expliquer la logique sous-jacente à la formation des réseaux, l'article lui substitue le concept d'interdépendance. L'interdépendance décrirait cette propension à encourager l'engagement réciproque et les obligations collectives dans les normes, dans l'imaginaire social, ainsi que dans les pratiques quotidiennes.

¹ My thanks to the following scholars and forums for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this article : Diogo Ramada Curto, Anthony Mohlo and the participants of the EUI's “Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World”, as well as Claude Morin, Dominique Deslandres, Jacques T. Godbout and the participants of the joint “Midis d'histoire” – “Séminaire du Centre d'études des religions” meeting at the Université de Montréal.

The Portuguese Nation, as it was known to contemporaries, of merchants and financiers was surely one of the most dynamic institutions of transnational and inter-regional trade of the early modern period.² It dominated the Atlantic trades in silver, textiles, agricultural commodities and enslaved Africans of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. It maintained a strong presence in the European segment of the Asian trades. It was one of the most important participants in European state finances during the period.³ In sum, this nation, played a central, if hitherto dimly discerned, role in the history of the early development of overseas capitalist expansion.

It was a curious nation since it was not, as the etymology of the word might suggest, defined by attachment to a particular territory. Indeed, the Portuguese Nation was distinctly unattached and deterritorialized. Members of this nation could be found in any number of ports and commercial cities across Western Europe, the Mediterranean, the Americas, western Africa, and the Indian Ocean. Moreover, Portuguese merchants and their families were a notably pre-riparian lot, settling and resettling numerous times over the course of their lives. In its dispersion and its fluidity the Nation was akin to a diaspora, a characterisation that certain historians, emphasizing the Jewish ancestry of many of its members, have followed.⁴ This definition moves us closer to a second meaning connoted by the word nation: that of common bloodline or ancestry. But here too the characterization is imprecise since it is clear that Jewish

² On contemporary characterisations of the Portuguese mercantile community as a nation see Gregorio de Palma Hurtado, *Primer memorial de advertencias...sobre la falta de observacion de las cédulas de S.M.* (1611), Museo Naval de Madrid, Colección Fernandez Navarrete, volume 24; Anonymous, *Memorial dirigido a Sm por un vasallo y ministro suyo noticioso de las Indias Occidentales contra los portuguese que tratan en ellas.* (n.d.), Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, mss. 3064; Dr. Lorenzo de Mendocça, *Suplicación a Su Magestad Catolica ...en defensa de los Portugueses.* (1630), British Library, Rare Books, 8042.c.31.

³ Interested readers might profit from the following, summary, listing of recent works on various aspects of the Portuguese mercantile nation in the Atlantic: Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2001; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997; James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Bankers at the Court of Spain, (1621 – 1650)*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1983; Nicholas Broens, *Monarquía y Capital Mercantil: Felipe IV y las Redes Comerciales Portuguesas (1627-1635)*, (trad. Antonio Arance Saenz), Madrid, Editorial de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1989; Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550 – 1750*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985; Nathan Wachtel, *La foi du souvenir. Labyrinthes marranes*, Paris, Seuil, 2001.

⁴ Bodian, *Jews of the Portuguese Nation*, Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry*, Nathan Wachtel, *La foi du souvenir*.

ancestry fell far short of defining the totality of the members of the nation.⁵ In the Portuguese case the most applicable definition is that which emerged in commercial entrepôts throughout late-Medieval Europe. A nation was a community of foreign merchants bound together by their distinction from local society and, more positively, through a series of symbols, institutions, and social bonds that defined it as a vital collectivity.⁶

This essay inquires into the constitution of this transatlantic nation of Portuguese merchants. It seeks to understand the patterns that guided the formation of the social connections that in turn constituted this group. Because the members of the Portuguese Nation were geographically dispersed and yet socially connected, because the Nation was decentralised and yet coordinated, because it evinced a flexible, self-reproducing and resilient structure, the Nation is here analysed as a social and commercial network. More precisely, the Nation appears as an ecology of networks. The ties of kinship, of commercial association, of service and obligation, of common provenance, of religious affiliation all came to be layered and placed in dynamic relation to one another, much like the mutually influencing webs of relationships that define life in a forest grove or a coral reef.

Closer examination of this Nation is worthwhile because it deepens our understanding of certain key features of the early modern Atlantic economy. The Nation, as a network, fostered the emergence of the trust required to guarantee the regular turnover of market transactions in the absence of institutionalized enforcement mechanisms. In and of itself, this feature is not entirely surprising and has been observed in commercial networks operating in other times and other places.⁷ What is more important here is the manner in which the network form laid out the essential social infrastructure through which coursed vast

⁵ David Grant Smith, *The Mercantile Class of Portugal and Brazil in the Seventeenth Century. A Socio-Economic Study of the Merchants of Lisbon and Bahia, 1620 – 1690*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1975, p. 18.

⁶ J.A. Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567*, Louvain, Libraries Universitaire – Uystpruyst Éditeur, 1925, pp. 32-34; Frédéric Mauro, “Merchant communities, 1350 – 1750” in James D. Tracy, (dir.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires. Long-distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 261 – 282.

⁷ Avner Greif, “Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade : Evidence on the Magribi Traders”, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 49, n° 4, 1989, pp. 857 – 882; Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 6-7; Yoram Ben-Porath, “The F-Connection : Families, Friends, and Firms in the Organization of Exchange”, *Population and Development Review*, vol. 6, pp. 1 – 30; Walter W. Powell and Laurel Smith-Doerr, “Networks and Economic Life” in Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (dir.), *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, Princeton, Russell Sage Foundation – Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 368 – 402.

circum-Atlantic flows of goods and capital during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The networked nature of Portuguese Nation, and other (similarly-organized) Nations of Basque, Castilian, Genoese, Flemish, French and English merchants, assured for example the conduct of a steadily growing volume of illegal inter-imperial trade. By the mid-seventeenth century, to take a key example, fully forty-three percent of American silver imports were diverted from the Spanish monopoly system.⁸ Thus, in a period traditionally defined as the age of mercantilism, an important portion of one of the central sectors of the Atlantic economy operated beyond, and indeed across, the jurisdictional purview of the state. The silver trade, moreover, constitutes but one of many possible trades that demonstrate the central importance of the commercial network.

We shall return to this discussion of the role networked structures played in the development of the early modern Atlantic economy at the conclusion of this essay. Here I would like to reverse the perspective, from the telescopic to the microscopic as it were, in order to return to the central question of this essay. The problem here is to understand the small-scaled, even intimate, dynamics of how the very bonds that constituted these networks were formed and maintained.

Historians have addressed the issue in two ways. The first explanation lays emphasis on the fact that trading networks often appear to be constituted by individuals who share a common group identity, whether that of kin, ethnicity or religion.⁹ The deep and affective ties of membership allowed exchanges to function despite the risks and impediments that beleaguered long-distance trade at the time. No court system could effectively prosecute defrauders. The difficulties of communication meant that merchants were reliant on the decisions and trustworthiness of their associates. Trusting one's partner meant knowing him sufficiently to gauge his character and this seemed to emerge naturally from pre-existing bonds of kinship, common provenance, religion or "national" affiliation.

⁸ For the period 1636-1640 Michel Morineau estimates that 45 million pesos were imported into Europe. Of this amount only 25 152 123 pesos were registered as dockside imports in Seville. See Carlos Àlvarez Nogal, *El crédito de la monarquía hispánica en el reinado de Felipe IV*, Madrid, Junta de Castilla y León – Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1997, pp. 385, table 2; Michel Morineau, *Incroyables gazettes et fabuleux métaux. Les retours des trésors américains d'après les gazettes hollandaises (XVIe – XVIIe siècles)*, New-York – Paris, Cambridge University Press – Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1985, pp. 250, table 42.

⁹ Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, Mauro, "Merchant Communities", Juan Carlos Sola Corbacho, "El Papel de la Organización Familiar en la Dinámica del Sector Mercantil Madrileño a Finales del Siglo XVIII," *Historia Social (Valencia)*, vol. 32, 1998, pp. 3 –21.

The second explanation of how commercial networks were formed takes a more functionalist approach. Recognizing the importance of social ties in the economic operations of commercial networks, certain historians have sought to establish a logical chain of cause and effect between social structure and economic activity. Logic, however, demanded that they effectively separate the two – at least at a heuristic level – and assign causal precedence to one or the other. In the event, primacy was granted to the economic sphere. This allowed a set of axioms drawn from neo-classical economics and utilitarian social theory to enter into the very heart of what determined the structure and the mode of operation of commercial networks. Merchants, it has been argued, were first and foremost individual actors who organized their social and kinship relations through a blend of instrumental reason and the pursuit of self-interest. The tight mesh that bound individual merchants together formed, not houses or families or trading nations, but an economic institution. This economic institution was arranged in such a way as to maximize its performance in the market. The normative values and qualities manifested by traders – largesse, honesty, trustworthiness, honour – did not emerge from patterns of personal conduct. Rather they were functionally derived from the need to secure different forms of economic utility such as risk spreading or the reduction of transaction costs.¹⁰

What follows is a third account of the patterns that governed the formation of the Portuguese commercial networks. This alternative explanation appears necessary because closer examination of the evidence reveals that neither the ties of common identity nor the neo-classical model can fully explain the manner in which the Portuguese merchants constituted and maintained their networks. Instead, the Portuguese Nation was constituted through the cultivation of interdependence between its members. The term interdependence is suggestive of many things and is thus an elusive category of historical explanation. Here it is used as a concept that describes a specific set of norms, social imaginaries, practices and relationships defined by mutual implication and recognition, a focus upon collective relationships (rather than upon the individual participants) and, finally, a general impetus to broaden the kinds of ties that connected individuals. Interdependence, as a social ideal and as a social fact, can clearly be seen in the corporatist, patronage and kinship relations that loomed large in the early modern Iberian world. On a cognitive level it was revealed in the primacy of the collective over the individual and in the use of corporeal imagery to describe collectivities. Simultaneously, interdependence was a peculiar kind of social bond that individuals cultivated on a day-to-day basis through practices such as mutual recognition, gift-giving, and the creation of different kinds of kinship relations. Understood in these ways, interdependence allows us to better appreciate the constructed nature of the

¹⁰ Avner Greif, “Reputation and Coalitions”.

bonds that undergirded this long-distance trading network, bonds that often bridged the divisions of kinship, religion, common provenance and nationality. Paying attention to the notions and practices of interdependence also restores the historical context and human density pruned away by neo-classical models.

Membership

At its apogee in the early seventeenth century, the Portuguese mercantile Nation numbered some nine thousand merchants. Just over half of these individuals were actually born in Portugal. The remainder were born in one of numerous Portuguese quarters that had emerged in the ports and cities of the Atlantic. These individuals, and their families, were highly mobile, settling and resettling two to five times over the course of their lives. The internal composition of the Nation was socially fluid as well. Individuals, often hailing from non-commercial, commoner, backgrounds were constantly recruited into Portuguese merchant houses, just as, on the other end, members of these houses regularly left the world of trade to enter into the orders, the nobility or the lettered professions. This internal fluidity was replicated on a broader scale. New houses continuously emerged from Lisbon's retail sector, or from the hinterland regions of the Kingdom of Portugal, and staked out their place on the larger stage of the Atlantic trades. And, of course, as newcomers arrived more established merchant houses dissolved, moved out of trading or recombined with other, more commercially-vigorous houses.¹¹

All of these characteristics - the number of merchants that made up the Portuguese trading Nation, their geographic and social mobility, as well as that of the commercial houses they created - should guard against quick generalizations about the common experience and common identity shared by members of this group. This is a key point because the common bonds of provenance, kinship and religion - termed primordial ties by Clifford Geertz - have been accorded capital importance in the constitution and maintenance of diasporic merchant communities.¹² Because they are somehow fundamental, runs the argument, shared primordial affiliations engender both the social cohesion and trust that allow these communities to thrive. In the case of the Portuguese Nation, these bonds were constructed, rather than primordial, and negotiated, rather than unquestioned.

¹¹ A fuller, documented, discussion of these features appears in my doctoral dissertation, "Capital's Commonwealth : The World of Portugal's Atlantic Merchants and the Struggle over the Nature of Commerce in the Spanish Empire, 1492 - 1640," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Yale, 2001.

¹² Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution," in Clifford Geertz, (dir.), *Old Societies and New States*, New York, Free Press, 1963, 108 - 13.

For a complex set of reasons contemporaries, especially Spanish contemporaries, believed that Portuguese merchants shared a common religious affiliation as members of the New Christian or crypto-jewish community. The elision between national and religious identity has been repeated by a number of modern historians.¹³ However, the work of David Grant Smith clearly demonstrates that the merchant class of Lisbon was far from homogeneous since it included a large minority of Old Christians. His research also nuances our understanding of what the New Christian label implied. The majority of those merchants considered to be New Christians in the eyes of civil and religious authorities were in fact of mixed New and Old Christian ancestry; that is, they were only New Christian according to prevailing notions of blood purity.¹⁴ This pattern of religious heterogeneity appears to have obtained for Portuguese merchants working in the Spanish Atlantic as well. Though the Inquisition's persecution of Portuguese merchants on the charge of judaizing has raised the profile of religion as a way of defining the group, it is important to bear in mind that the tribunals only prosecuted a minority of the hundreds of Portuguese traders operating in their jurisdictions.¹⁵

As for those who were prosecuted, the question of their religious identity is a matter of considerable debate. The notorious ambiguity of the Inquisitorial documentation, combined with the heavy influence of non-religious factors pushing the tribunals to persecution, casts a long shadow of doubt over whether all these merchants did, in fact, secretly adhere to Judaism.¹⁶ Clearly, many of those who tried by the Tribunals were affected by the Jewish revival sweeping through the Portuguese diaspora. But, as the recent work of Nathan Wachtel shows, the individual responses to this revival varied. Some energetically sought to convince their family and associates of the need to return to the "Law of

¹³ Antonio Dominguez Ortiz, *La clase social de los conversos en Castilla en la Edad Moderna*, Madrid, 1955; Julio Caro Baroja, *Los Judios en la España Moderna y Contemporánea*. Madrid, Ediciones Arion, 1961.

¹⁴ David Grant Smith, *The Mercantile Class of Portugal and Brazil in the Seventeenth Century. A Socio-Economic Study of the Merchants of Lisbon and Bahia, 1620 – 1690*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1975, pp. 18 and passim.

¹⁵ 46 by Tribunal of Cartagena de Indias; 79 by Tribunal of Lima, 129 by Tribunal of Mexico City. See Stanley Hordes, "The Crypto-Jewish Community of New Spain, 1620 – 1649. A Collective Biography," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Tulane University, 1980, table XXX; Alfonso W. Quiroz, "The Expropriation of Portuguese New Christians in Spanish America, 1635 – 1649," *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv* vol. 11, n° 1 (1985), Ana María Splnediani et. al. editors, *Cinquenta Años de Inquisición en el Tribunal de Cartagena de Indias*. Vol. 2 and 3, Bogota, Centro Editorial Javeriana, 1997.

¹⁶ Harry Cross, "Commerce and Orthodoxy, A Spanish Response to Portuguese Commercial Penetration in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1580-1640," *The Americas*, vol. 35, n° 2, (1978), Jaime Contreras, "Family and Patronage : The Judeo-Christian Minority in Spain," in Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz (dirs.), *Cultural Encounters : The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 128.

Moses". Others were convinced and joined in the movement. And still others, while they did wrestle with the possibilities of a conversion to Judaism, chose to remain Catholic.¹⁷ What is fascinating is that the latter maintained their intimate, day-to-day, connections with family-members and associates who had embarked upon the difficult task of cultural and religious re-appropriation. Religiously-speaking, then, the Portuguese merchant networks were hybrid and heterogeneous. Creating the bonds of a common marrano or crypto-jewish identity was, as Wachtel has demonstrated, a delicate process, one ensnared between the forces of memory and forgetting. Such bonds were not stable enough to act as a foundational identity tying Portuguese merchants together.

If religious affiliation amongst the Portuguese traders was heterogeneous and fluid, so too were more secular forms of common identity such as provenance and kinship. By definition, the Portuguese commercial networks of the Atlantic were primarily composed of individuals who hailed from the Kingdom of Portugal or one of the ex-patriate communities established in the Spanish empire and beyond. All the same, many Portuguese merchant houses had partners and associates who came from other national backgrounds. Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo, among the chief Portuguese wholesalers in Seville at the time, maintained long-term partnerships with Richard Sweet (of England), Albert Anquelman and Heinrich Selmer (both of Germany) and an unnamed Flemish merchant.¹⁸ The house of Juan Rodriguez Mesa, probably the leading Portuguese merchant of Cartagena de Indias, was built around his partnership with Andres de Blanquesel, an outsider.¹⁹ Among the Portuguese merchant Manuel Bautista Perez' closest associates in Lima was none other than the Castillian banker Juan de la Cueva.²⁰ One could go further along this same vein.

The presence of English, German, Flemish and Castillian merchants in the very heart of of the Portuguese trading houses raises the issue of network limits. It seems that the boundaries of these commercial networks were porous and admitted the existence of relations that bridged different trading nations. These bridging relationships were no doubt invaluable to the conduct of trade in the early modern Atlantic economy. They allowed trading houses to access regional and sectorial markets that were dominated by other nations. Consequently, they also broaden our view of the global organization of overseas trade during this period. One might start, as is the case with this article, with an examination of a

¹⁷ Nathan Wachtel, *La foi du souvenir*.

¹⁸ *Suit of Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo against the estate of Luis Fernandez Suarez, 1637*, Archivo Historico Nacional - Madrid (AHN) Inquisición (Inq.)1611, exp 17.

¹⁹ *Suit of Francisco Lopez Nieto against the estate of Juan Rodriguez Mesa, 1651*, AHN Inq. 1608, exp 19; and AHN Inq. 1610, exp. 7.

²⁰ Margarita Suarez, *Comercio y Fraude en el Perú Colonial. Las Estrategias mercantiles de un banquero*, Lima, IEP, 1995, pp. 46 – 50, and personal communication.

particular commercial network but it is important to keep in mind that, regardless of where one begins, other networks were present upon the social horizon of the chosen network. Bridging relationships were the conduits that allow us (as well as goods, capital and information) to transcend these horizons.

The issue of nationality needs to be pursued further. After all, if the Nation was not completely homogeneous there is something significant about the fact that it was known as the *Portuguese* Nation. But what did this national identity really mean for merchants contemplating the creation of a new commercial partnership? Questions of personal familiarity and trust would have loomed foremost in their minds, since these were indispensable qualities in the exercise of long-distance trade. Common nationality was no guarantee of either: after all, what common experience would Sebastian Duarte, of Montemor, have shared with his associate Manuel Bautista Perez, of Ansam, before they met in Cartagena de Indias?

A closer examination of the constituent members of the Portuguese Nation reveals a notably broad and even distribution of regional origin. The 358 Portuguese individuals charged by the three tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition in the Americas came from 90 different locales in Portugal, Spain and the larger Atlantic world. Certain places, to be sure, feature more prominently in this listing. Lisbon, Seville, Mexico City and the small town of Castelo Branco in the Alentejo each produced over twenty individuals in the sample. But these were anomalies that – save the example of Castelo Branco – can be explained by their size and their role as central hubs in the Spanish Atlantic economy. If common provenance had been a determining factor in the constitution of the network we might expect to see a greater degree of clustering around fewer places of origin. As it was, the geographical distribution of these individuals was generally even as the accompanying table and figure demonstrate. (See table 1, and figure 1)

The case for the heterogeneous character of the Portuguese commercial network can be pressed further into the realm of kinship, the bond that has often been situated at the heart of long-distance trading linkages. To better appreciate the place and role of kinship in the Portuguese network requires a more focused examination of the merchant house, the fundamental unit making up the overall network. Each Portuguese merchant house was a composite of families. Manuel Bautista Perez' house, for example, was made up of four different families: his own, that of his wife, Guiomar Enriquez, that of his business partner and brother-in-law, Sebastian Duarte, and that of another brother-in-law, Luis de

Vega.²¹ The cluster of families that formed this house counted at least fifty-eight members (see fig. 2). Most of the established Portuguese merchant houses were roughly the same size, constituted by two to three dozen family members.²²

What emerges from this examination of the Portuguese houses is the manner in which they fused together distinct kinship groups through marital alliances. That is to say that only a portion of the members of the house were recruited from a pre-existing pool of kin. The remainder were added in progressively over time, often after a period of association and friendship that could last years. The case of Bautista Perez' house nicely illustrates this process. Bautista Perez himself was recruited into the Atlantic trades on basis of kinship. Orphaned at the age of five, he went to live with his uncle Diego Rodriguez de Lisboa where he became an apprentice and then a partner in the house. After a number of years in which he worked the Peruvian side of this partnership, Bautista Perez married Guiomar Enriquez. The marriage joined the Lima merchant to a rather trading family with members stationed in Spain, Portugal and the Americas. It was during this same period that Bautista Perez entered into a long-term partnership with Sebastian Duarte, his two brothers and his five cousins, merchants all. There were now effectively three families making up the house, even if the tie between the Duartes and the others was not, strictly-speaking, based on kinship. That would change in 1634, after close to a decade of association, when Sebastian Duarte married Bautista Perez' sister-in-law Ysabel Enriquez. Another partnership, this one with Luis de Vega and his brother Diego, was similarly transformed into kinship upon Luis' marriage with Bautista Perez' sister Isabel.

The use of marriage as a means of thickening the connections between merchants of a house also operated to link together different houses. James Boyajian's reconstitution of the principal Portuguese merchant-banking houses amply shows the degree to which they were joined through multiple marriage alliances.²³ Here too kinship was a created, rather than an *a priori*, bond. Below we shall return to the constructed nature of kinship in order to explore its meaning and role in the constitution of the Portuguese trading network.

The Axioms of Interconnection

The preceding pages have attempted to nuance our understanding of the criteria Portuguese merchants used to create their networks. Aside from a common Portuguese identity, there was no pre-existing social or religious bond

²¹ They formed part of what James Boyajian has identified as the Rodrigues de Lisboa house. See his *Portuguese Banker*, Appendix A-6.

²² Boyajian, *Portuguese Bankers*, Appendices A-1 to A-18.

²³ *Ibid.*

that fully determined the structures of commercial association. This is not to say that common provenance, religious affiliation or kinship had *no* role to play in this respect, since obviously they did. But the fact that membership in the network, or even the house, did not completely correlate with these criteria is suggestive. More often than not, the links that made up the network arched over the boundaries of social or religious affiliation.

The heterogeneous nature of the Portuguese network indicates that other processes were simultaneously at work in its development. Since this was a trading network it is logical to expect that economic rationales were woven into the creation of commercial associations. The prevailing analysis of such rationales is drawn from institutional and neo-classical economics. It posits that the trading network was the product of rational, self-interested individuals who, in a period where contracts could not be enforced and communications were slow and uncertain, struck upon the social arrangement that most efficiently maximized their economic utilities.²⁴

Here again nuance is important. The preceding explanation pays little attention to the more affective or social nature of the bonds that made up a commercial network; it doesn't particularly need to. The relations of trade can be coherently explained within the framework of economic theory. That is, they can be extracted - disembedded- from the world of social relations and culture. Beyond the somewhat drastic simplification of human experience imposed by this model, its starting assumptions are anachronistic. The fully autonomous actor who wields instrumental reason in the pursuit of self-interest is not a universal entity but a historically constituted one.

Thanks to the rich documentary evidence left by the Portuguese merchants - letters, account books, lawsuits and Inquisition trials - it is possible to see how they knit together their networks on a different basis than that posited by neo-classical economic analysis and utilitarian social theory. Interdependence and mutualism, rather than individualism, defined and created these networks. To better understand this the remainder of the article examines Portuguese conceptions of self and collectivity, how interdependence was woven into the normative values of the group, how it framed their social relations and how it guided the practices of overseas trade.

In the seventeenth-century Iberian world, there existed no concept of an autonomous, self-determined individual in the modern, liberal, sense of the term. The word itself did not even appear in the dictionaries of the period.²⁵ The idea,

²⁴ Avner Greif, "Reputation and Coalitions."

²⁵ Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Espanola*. (1611), Edited by Martin de Riquer, Barcelona, S.A. Horta, 1943.

and social reality, of the individual as we know it began to be historically constructed only in the eighteenth-century through the conjunction of new social practices and ideological frameworks. As late as 1723, when it finally made its appearance in Spanish lexicons, the word “individual” primarily referred to an adjective (meaning singular) or a logical category, “the particular within each species, whose nature is the singular [expression] of that of the rest.” The *Diccionario de Autoridades*, it is true, also added a definition of an individual as “a person” but the illustrative citation it used defines a single member of a group of people sharing a common identity.²⁶ Membership made the man.

The importance of the collectivity in self-definition also flowed out of early modern understandings of the nature of human beings. Instead of being sealed off from the world (*homo clausus*) the individual was porous and thus his or her inner nature – or humoureal arrangement - was in constant interface with the external environment.²⁷ More to the point here, the self was constituted through its interactions and affiliations with the other selves that made up the surrounding collectivity. This idea was expressed at both a political and a interpersonal level. In order to express the interdependence of the different members of a society, political theorists of the period recurred to the image of the body-politic or, *corpus mysticum*.²⁸ Each individual and group was figuratively bound to one another, as organs and members of a single body. Their welfare depended on the welfare of the others and upon the welfare of the whole. To be cast out of the body – usually in a bid to save the whole – condemned the isolated member to death.²⁹ On a more personal level individuals often underscored their mutual interconnection with their fellows. “I will find my peace with your arrival,” wrote Juan de Mena from Cartagena de Indias to his brother in Madrid, “because together we shall become one another’s fortune.”³⁰ Or, to take another example, the Portuguese would often say that they

²⁶ “Assi es llano/ quando el individuo, mio/ con los Jodios, Jodio/ con los Christianos, Christiano.” Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de Autoridades*, (1723), facsimile edition, Madrid, Biblioteca Románica Hispánica – Editorial Gredos, 1963, 255.

²⁷ On the modernity of *homo clausus* see, Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process : The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, (translated by Edmund Jephcott), Oxford - Cambridge, Blackwell, 1994, pp. 205 – 207.

²⁸ See José Antonio Maravall, *Teoría del Estado en España en el Siglo XVII*, Madrid, IEH, 1997, pp. 115 – 118.

²⁹ See, for instance, Mathew 5 :29 and 30. The corpus mysticum idea would also prove central in the rising tide of anti-semitism the Portuguese Nation confronted in the mid-seventeenth century. See, Vicente da Costa de Matos, *Breve discurso contra a heretica perfidia do Iudaismo*. (1622), British Library, 482.a.3 (3), folio 143v.

³⁰ Juan de Mena, *Cartagena de Indias to Diego de Espiga, Madrid, January 31st, 1575*, Transcribed in Enrique Otte, *Cartas privadas de Indias*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1993, pp. 290.

were “invested” in one another.³¹ We can interpret words like fortune or investment in a narrow, commercial sense. But if we read them in a broader sense, fortune as success, investment as something that envelopes or pervades, we begin to see how individual selves permeated one another and how this mutual infiltration was the basis for the welfare of both.

The central role Portuguese merchants assigned to interdependence in their social relations, and their sense of self, is further revealed in their views on self-interest. “I am not moved by my particular interests,” declared Diego Lopes Fonseca, “but rather those of my friends.”³² Portuguese merchants recognised that self-interest unravelled the tight weave that held the group together. In this they differed little from the social ideology that held sway in early modern Iberia. Theologians, political and moral philosophers all inveighed against the machinations of self-interest. It jeopardised the corporatist arrangements upon which the existing social order was built. Self-interested action also revealed a lack of reason, an individual’s inability to exercise his or her *ratio* over more primal, libidinal, passions.³³ An individual’s capacity to reign in such passions was not only a basic condition for engaging in collective life, it demonstrated cultivation and civility.³⁴

The Values of Interdependence

A good reputation was a merchant’s most precious asset. “I may lack money and luck,” wrote Andres Rodriguez de Extremoz, “but, thanks to God, I have my reputation and the good opinion [of others].”³⁵ It established his standing within the community, helped him secure long-standing commercial relations and provided the collective confirmation of his self-worth. Reputations were created relationally, continuously being fashioned, and refashioned, at the interface between a given merchant’s comportment and the opinions of his fellows. Given the numerous and dense linkages that bound Portuguese merchants together, they had ample opportunities to watch one another and to gather news about those further away. They lived together in large households. They congregated in one another’s residences for meals and celebrations. They

³¹ *Francisco Lopez Feo, Lima, to Sebastian Duarte, Aug 10th, 1630*, Archivo General de Lima (AGL), Inquisición (Inq), Contencioso (Cont), 22.

³² *Letter from Diego Lopes de Fonseca, Lima to Blas de la Peña, May 2nd, 1634*, AGL Inq. Cont. 22, lib. 3, folio 184r.

³³ Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests. Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 9 – 10, José Antonio Maravall, *Estado Moderno y Mentalidad Social (Siglos XV a XVII). Volume 2.*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1986, pp. 104, 111-114.

³⁴ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

³⁵ *Letter from Andres Rodriguez de Extremoz, Lisbon, to Juan Rodriguez Mesa, Cartagena de Indias, June 23rd, 1635*, AHN Inq. 4816, exp. 1, folio 12v.

crossed one another in the plazas and docklands of their respective cities. They met, by chance, aboard ship or in distant ports. And they wrote, tirelessly filling page after page of correspondence that circulated throughout the wider Atlantic network of houses. The Atlantic-wide constellation of merchant houses was like a neighbourhood abuzz with gossip.

Much of the “talk” that transpired in these meetings or through the letters was sociable, working to keep affective bonds alive and meaningful. However, also coursing through the gossip was a steady stream of judgement and evaluation. In this way, the network, as a peculiar structure of social relations, locked in collective norms by broadly diffusing information about the actions of its members. Luis Perez de Cea, unhappy with the treatment he had received from Duarte Rodriguez de Leon, canvassed his peers in Seville for their opinion. The verdict was unanimous: “After talking to all men of this Plaza, they were stupefied that he could have done such a thing...by reason and by justice, he should have paid me in the same manner as the other [unnamed merchant].”³⁶ Gossip travelled. When Simón Rodriguez finally arrived in Lisbon after a long journey from Cartagena de Indias, he made sure to pay a visit to Andres Rodriguez de Extremoz. He wanted to inform Andres of his brother’s less-than-honourable dealings. Apparently Simón was not the first. “All of the merchants who arrive here [from the Indies] have complained about your comportment – with ample reason.” The bad news was spreading and threatened to sully the name of the entire house. Andres felt that soon his own reputation would be tarnished to the point that he could no longer walk on Lisbon’s plaza.³⁷

Reputations were undermined by the spread of talk between Portuguese houses, but they could also be built up in the same manner. When his character was called into question, Blas de Paz Pinto sniffed, “If Your Grace wants to know my nature, you have but to write to anyone of our friends. Don’t expect anything less than full recognition.”³⁸ Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo, of Seville, was an *honourable* man because, as one of his long-standing associates declared, “he is a man of great honesty, and conscience.” But he was a *reputable* man because, had he not been consistently honest and conscientious, word would have gotten around: “In all the dealings he has had with a variety of people...never once has [he provoked] the least complaint.”³⁹ The strength of

³⁶ *Letter from Luis Perez de Cea, Seville, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, April 18th, 1634, AGL Inq. Cont. I. 21.*

³⁷ *Letter from Andres Rodriguez de Extremoz, Lisbon, to Juan Rodriguez Mesa, Cartagena de Indias, June 23rd, 1635, AHN Inq. 4816, exp. 1, folios, 11v and 13r.*

³⁸ *Letter from Blas de Paz Pinto, Cartagena de Indias, to Pedro Duarte, Panama, January 24th, 1630, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.*

³⁹ *Declaration of Francisco Carillo, Seville, 1653 [earlier], AHN Inq. 1611, exp. 17, bloque 2, folio 84r. My underlining.*

Nuñez Gramaxo's reputation carried across the Atlantic where it covered his nephew Luis Fernandez Suarez, a young man who had been sent to cut his teeth in the Indies trades. Even before Luis had left Seville, Manuel Bautista Perez was informed of his impending arrival. The terms used are telling: "Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo's nephew and son-in-law will soon be sailing for Cartagena, like his uncle he is a person of great merit."⁴⁰ Blas de Paz Pinto felt the same way when Luis disembarked two months later:

"In this fleet arrived the son of Fernando Fernandes Ribeiro, nephew and son-in-law of Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo...he plans to establish his house here...I have heard that he is a capable person of great consideration, in sum: the true disciple of Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo. I believe that he will get along well with everyone here because it is his nature. May God guide his path."⁴¹

As they commended, or protested against, one another's actions, the Portuguese merchants expressed the normative values of the group. This was done implicitly by describing the offending or praiseworthy act. It was also done explicitly. Many of their letters reveal a pedantic tone as the writer took the time to underscore the implications of a given kind of comportment. The values that made for a good reputation had to be constantly relearned and reinforced. These values were: honesty, frankness, largesse, and humility.

Like other early modern merchants, Portuguese merchants depended on the basic honesty of their associates. In the absence of legal institutions that could enforce contracts between them, merchants only entered into association with those that they could trust to carry out their commissions or repay their loans. Blas de Paz Pinto had, for instance, loaned Juan Rodriguez Mesa the considerable sum of twenty-two thousand pesos on basis of his word.⁴² Honesty was the guarantee of that trust. The merchant's multiple affiliations to his fellows was, in turn, the guarantee of that honesty. Only someone willing to accept complete exclusion from the group would contemplate outright fraud; and a merchant alone was no merchant at all. In the event, fraud seems to have been relatively rare amongst the Portuguese houses. It appears in one letter, and here the sanctions were severe. "The dog Alvaro Gonzalez, of France, has run off with two thousand ducados that he owed to my brother," wrote a bitter Diego Lopez de Torres, "He also defrauded my son-in-law Antonio Diaz de Lisboa,

⁴⁰ *Letter from Anonymous, Seville, to MBP, Lima, April 24th, 1634.* AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

⁴¹ *Letter from Blas de Paz Pinto, Cartagena de Indias, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, June 30th, 1634,* AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

⁴² *Letter from Luis Fernandez Suarez, Cartagena de Indias, to Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo, Seville, April 5th, 1636,* AHN Inq. 1611, exp. 17.

who has vowed to find and kill him.”⁴³ Given the extent of his house’s contacts, Antonio Diaz de Lisboa’s chances of locating the culprit were rather good.

Related to honesty was the value of frankness, the quality of being open and forthright with others. In a highly interdependent group like the Portuguese merchant class, it was critical to keep the information flowing. Creditors were willing to accept delays in repayment provided they were well-apprised of the decision. It allowed them to make the necessary adjustments in their subsequent dealings. Openness also played an important role in maintaining the social cohesion of the houses. An individual who was perceived to be hiding his intentions quickly raised the suspicions of his fellows. “With regards to the harm done by Juan Báez,” wrote Simón Diaz Pinto, “it could not have been prevented since we never knew the secrets of his thoughts.”⁴⁴

Below we shall see how acts of largesse formed an important part of how male merchants developed paternalistic forms of authority. Largesse has often been seen as a quintessentially aristocratic value.⁴⁵ As the Lope de Vega’s aphorism went: “A gentleman must be a bridge over which money can pass.”⁴⁶ Nevertheless, merchants too endorsed these general norms regarding the relationship between people and material wealth. Money had a collective purpose. It was the merchant’s responsibility to use it for the sustenance of the families, houses and community in which he was a member. Avarice, on the other hand, was frowned upon by the Portuguese precisely because it revealed the lack of communal ends. The following snippet of moralising makes this clear:

“The son is a good person...he does not waste his money but he is not mean and puts it to honourable uses. As for the father, I have never seen such a vile and low-born creature...I let him know that where there is such avarice there can be no ends nor friends.”⁴⁷

The Portuguese merchants were a notably proud lot. Thus it may be strange to find that they held humility to be one of the component values of honour and reputation. Nevertheless, if they were proud in fact, the Portuguese were humble in form. Correspondents, from the smallest merchant working in

⁴³ Letter from Diego Lopez de Torres, Lisbon, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, April 1st, 1634, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

⁴⁴ Letter from Simón Diaz Pinto, Seville, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, April 17th, 1634, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

⁴⁵ I.A.A. Thompson, “Neo-Noble Nobility: Concepts of *Hidalguía* in Early Modern Castile,” *European History Quarterly*, vol. 15, 1985, pp. 379-406.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 387.

⁴⁷ Letter from Fray Rodrigo Álvarez, Seville, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, April 25th, 1634, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

the Peruvian backlands to the great financiers of Lisbon and Seville, were always known as “Your Grace”. Salutations came in the form of the *besa-mano*, a social ritual plucked from feudal etiquette in which individuals knelt and kissed the hand of their superiors. In their letters the Portuguese repeatedly placed themselves in the service of their associate’s house. Even Manuel Bautista Perez, commonly acknowledged as the “Captain General” of the Portuguese migrant community in Lima, expressed his gratitude to the likes of Hernando Blas Pinto, a small-time merchant in Cartagena. He wrote: “Thanks to all the favours you have granted me, I find myself enriched to the point that I am incapable of satisfactorily returning my gratitude.”⁴⁸ These were all forms of deference. They symbolically affirmed, in word and in gesture, a merchant’s dependence upon others.

The densely knit and interdependent nature of the Portuguese merchants’ social and economic relations was reflected in their normative values. In general, these values inculcated the importance of putting the needs of the collectivity first. The honesty and frankness of an individual merchant were critical in assuring the fortunes of the numerous associates to whom he was linked. *Largesse*, the act of giving without thought of return, aimed at distributing assistance to other members of the group. Formal humility was a vernacular of interdependence.

Maintaining collective bonds was not easy – hence the repeated enunciation of its values – but it was critical. Though outright transgressions of these bonds appear to have been relatively rare amongst the Portuguese merchant houses, the same can not be said for self-interested action. There were many ways in which Portuguese merchants could pull against the bonds of collectivity without, for all that, fully severing them. Their correspondence was filled with complaints of such acts: acts of pride, of greed, of secretiveness and dishonesty. However, one in particular stands out because of the force of its condemnation of self-interest and its implications, the twenty-one page tirade written by Andres Rodriguez de Extremoz to his brother Juan Rodriguez de Mesa.

The facts of the matter were this: Juan Rodriguez Mesa had a long-standing debt of twenty-four thousand pesos that he owed to his brother. This, in and of itself, was normal and acceptable. Andres had remitted a large cargo of goods and was content to wait the time it took for Juan to sell the shipment and remit the principal it represented (with interest). Problems, however, arose when Andres learned that Juan had invested this money in his own venture – the sale

⁴⁸ *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, to Hernando Blas Pinto, Cartagena de Indias, May 25th, 1634, AGL Inq. CdA 35, folio 408r.*

of commodities to Guatemala and New Spain – for his own personal profit. It did not help matters that Andres was short of the liquidity he needed to negotiate and purchase the upcoming rent of the Angolan slave asiento.

“I am notably impassioned against you. I swear to God that what I saw in your letter drained all my desire to appear in public...I had already heard from others there [in Cartagena de Indias] that you act like some low-born gambler and that you repel the protection and estates of the others.” *But the real cause of Andres’ ire was the manner in which Juan violated his obligations to the house.* “I swear to you that I care less for life itself than the offences you have done me, the injuries of my own blood...From what I read in your letters it appears that one should not expect anything from one’s own brother, or from those due to help out of obligation; that it is better, in fact, not to have concourse with anyone at all!” *Their estate could only grow if they worked together.* “You bastard, giving money to one’s family is good and holy and the manner by which an estate grows...Without me you would not even exist and yet you treat me with mistrust.” *Self-interest, the sin of ambition, was a flaw of the character.* “I have always seen the house’s account as something that is ultimately shared in common. This has always been my nature, yours [on the other hand] I now see more clearly...What a shame to see that Your Grace is solely ruled by ambition. It is incomparably better to starve than to give into this, the gravest of sins.” *What was the value of money obtained at this price?* “As long as God grants me life, I do not want a single *chavo* [penny] from you...If these are the stakes, then it is better not to see a profit at all. Let the Devil himself take the money acquired in such a manner, without integrity or good purpose.”⁴⁹

After he had vented his anger, Andres calmed and then turned to more commercial matters, “let us sort out these affairs so that we may be able to get on with the business.”⁵⁰ After all though Juan was guilty of pulling off in his own direction, this did not truly warrant a breaking of relations. Once he had been reminded of his priorities to the house, life could continue. One might, however, query the force of Andres’ reaction. Juan had clearly touched a nerve. The strength of his brother’s outburst, perhaps surprising to our eyes, suggests the paramount importance he accorded to the welfare of house. It was the collectivity in which they were both enmeshed and it was imperative their interests be subsumed into its own.

Framing Interdependence

⁴⁹ *Letter from Andres Rodriguez de Extremoz, Lisbon, to Juan Rodriguez Mesa, Cartagena de Indias, June 23rd, 1635.* AHN Inq. 4816, exp. 1, folios 9v – 22v. The selections are taken from folios 10r – 13v.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, folio 19r.

It was not enough to reaffirm the bonds of interdependence or to enunciate its values. Interdependence had to be created in practice. One of the most powerful practices in this regard was gift-giving. For the Portuguese merchants gift-giving was not an episodic or extraordinary gesture. It was a regular aspect of their interactions amongst their peers and also with other groups of the Portuguese ex-patriate communities scattered throughout the Atlantic. Gift-giving was a means of extending bonds outside the merchant class. Amongst merchants, gift-giving added a further layer of significance to their relations with their partners and associates. In both cases, gift-giving was a practice that allowed the nature of this relationship to be redefined, pushing it towards a form of kinship. And indeed, as interdependence between merchants and merchant houses deepened, new familial alliances often followed. By tracing the uses of kinship as a metaphor and as a language to describe social bonds, we see the workings of power within interdependence. Though trading networks were decentralized, they were not bereft of hierarchies. In the Portuguese case these were the small and intimate hierarchies of paternalism.

Communities of Portuguese migrants established themselves throughout the Atlantic world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were formed by mariners, labourers, artisans, clergymen, as well as the merchants under examination here. Despite the inequalities of wealth and status that divided them, all of these people had to be somehow joined as Portuguese if their community was to have any meaning. The privileged institutions for creating these kinds of cross-class relations were the chapels and hospitals that sprang up throughout the ports and cities of the Atlantic.⁵¹ These institutions not only provided spiritual and material succour for members of the community, they also functioned as spaces where social connections could be created. Chapels, for instance, hosted the Portuguese confraternities whose members were convened on a weekly basis. Merchants had an important role to play in these communal institutions. They provided the lion's-share of the funds required to build, maintain and refurbish the hospitals, the chapels and the altars. Monies were also given to pay for the masses and burials of poorer members of the confraternity, to provide dowries for orphaned Portuguese girls or to pay for the

⁵¹ Consiglieri Sà Pereira, *A Restauração vista de Espanha: Historias de Portugueses Contadas por Espanhois*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1933, pp. 119. Pedro Texeira, *Topographia de la Villa de Madrid*. Facsimile of the 1656 plan of Madrid. (Madrid: Ediciones la Libreria, n.d.), Marco Dorta, *Cartagena de Indias. La ciudad y sus monumentos*, Sevilla, Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos, 1951, p. 74, Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos: Los asientos portugueses*, Seville, Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos. 1977, *Relacion de causa of Pedro Duarte, October 16th, 1641*. in Splendiani, *Cinquenta años de Inquisición*, volume 3, pp. 39.

ransoming of captives enslaved by corsairs.⁵² That is to say, the chapels and the hospitals provided the institutional framework through which Portuguese merchants could give a portion of their wealth to their community.

This kind of institutionalised gift-giving was interesting because the act of donation was mediated, almost hidden from view. The merchants' sponsorship of these institutions was not announced publically, no plaque or ceremony marked the inflow of the thousands of pesos they gave. Attention was concentrated on the refurbished altar, the new chapel and so on. By dissembling their role merchants were effectively adhering to one of the patterns governing what the anthropologist Jacques Godbout calls “the world of the gift”: namely, that all trace of instrumentality should be removed from the gesture of gift-giving.⁵³ Subsidizing the chapels and hospitals had to be done in the spirit of largesse, without thought of return. All the same, gift-giving was defined by exchange and so inevitably merchants did indeed “receive” something from their communities. In these small and densely knit communities gestures did not necessarily have to be announced to be known. Perhaps it was through this “freely given” acknowledgement - that is recognition that was not overtly paid for - that the community reciprocated. To be sure, there were more concrete forms of recognition. The consuls of the Portuguese ex-patriate communities were elected by the members of the confraternities and, in general, these consuls were merchants.⁵⁴

Portuguese merchants engaged in less mediated and personal forms of gift-giving as well. The gifts in circulation here ranged from charitable acts to goods that sought to delight. In addition to providing for his immediate family, Bautista Perez also assisted other members of the house as well as merchants from other houses. He dispatched a thousand pesos to contribute to the dowry of his niece Leonor Camillo in Lisbon and an unspecified amount to provide for

⁵² *Settlement of Alonso Nuñez' estate, Santiago de Guatemala, 1617*, Archivo General de Indias (AGI) Contaduria (Cont.) leg. 946, no. 14. A disbursement of 398 pesos for the Convent of Nuestra Señora de los Mercedes is mentioned in the *Suit of Alonso y Gaspar Rodrigues Pasarinhos, Trial over embargo, Seville, 1641*, AGI Cont 179, exp. 14. Manuel Bautista Perez would also remit from Peru 794 pesos in May, 1635, “for the poor” *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, to Hernado Blas de Pinto, ?, May 25th, 1635*, AGL Inq. CdA. 35, folio 410r.

⁵³ Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*. (translated by Donald Winkler), Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.

⁵⁴ Michèle Moret, *Aspets de la société marchande de Séville au début du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, M. Rivière & cie, 1962, pp. 55-56; (134). *Testimony of Bartolomé de Leon in the trial of Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, December 4th, 1635*. AHN Inq.1647, exp. 13, folio 78 v. *Accusation of Miguel Fernandez Pereira against Andres de Acosta, before the Council of the Indies, 1619*, AGI Escribania (Escr.)1021(A), folio 3r.

the recently widowed Margarita Diaz and her two daughters.⁵⁵ Or, from Blanca Perez: “Without your charity I would still be unable to cover myself. My son was able to continue his studies. He currently works in a hospital as a nurse. [He was unable to pay for his diploma]...For the love of God, do not forget to favour us so that he might obtain his grade for which he has worked so hard. We shall never forget to commend you to God in all our prayers.”⁵⁶ Bautista Perez lent his help to his brother-in-law Luis de Vega whose commercial affairs had been thrown into disarray.⁵⁷ He sent money to doña Ana de Prado, recently widowed in Panama.⁵⁸ And, if their response is any indication, he appears to have been fairly liberal in his assistance to other Portuguese merchants, even those who were ostensibly his competitors. “I am extremely grateful for the favour Your Grace has granted me,” wrote Manuel Tellez, “for which I kiss your hands a thousand times...you are like my Great Lord.” “With regards to the favours the lord captain Manuel Bautista Perez has granted us,” wrote Juan Rodriguez de Silva to his brother Jorge de Silva, “let him know that I kiss his hands. I beg of you: be conscientious in your dealings [with him]; his honour will preserve us.”⁵⁹

While such gifts sought to alleviate some need, others aimed at the pleasure of the recipient. Sebastian Duarte dispatched a steady stream of cured hams, olive oil, and other preserves to different associates in Porto Belo.⁶⁰ Anyone who had been trapped in this settlement during the off-season – when it reverted to a bunch of abandoned stalls and empty wharfs – would easily appreciate the value of such simple comforts. Juan Rodrigues Mesa was in the habit of sending sugar to the royal officials who also remained behind; a manner of sweetening relations?⁶¹ Given the wealth of many of the Portuguese merchants, gifts were often more elaborate and valuable. Rosaries crafted of semi-precious stones from Guatemala, pearl necklaces from Santa Margarita,

⁵⁵ *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima to Hernando Blas de Pinto, Cartagena de Indias, n.d.* AGL Inq. CdA. 35, folio 409v; *Margarita Diaz, Seville, to Sebastian Duarte, July 30th, 1629.* AGL Inq. Cont 21.

⁵⁶ *Dona Blanca Peres, Seville, to Sebastian Duarte, Lima, June 29th, 1629.* AGL Inq. Cont 21.

⁵⁷ *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima to doña Ysabel Bautista, n.d.* AGL Inq. CdA. 35, folio 392r.

⁵⁸ *Letter from doña Ana de Prado, Panama, to Jorge de Silva, Lima, July 6th, 1634,* AGL Inq. Cont. 22, lib. 3, folio 20r.

⁵⁹ *Letter from Juan Rodriguez de Silva, Panama, to Jorge de Silva, Lima, May 10th, 1634.* AGL Inq. Cont 22.

⁶⁰ *Agustin Rojas, Puerto Belo, to Sebastian Duarte, Cartagena, Sept. 3rd, 1629.* AGL Inq Cont 21; *Diego Pinelo, Porto Belo, to Sebastian Duarte, Sept 21st, 1629,* AGL Inq Cont 21.

⁶¹ *Account books of Juan Rodrigues Mesa – Jorge de Silva, 1652.* AHN Inq 1609, exp. 19 : 1, fol 13 r.

beaver hats from France, handsome book editions from Antwerp, and African slaves form but a sample of what circulated in this Atlantic gift-economy.⁶²

Perhaps what is more important than establishing what the Portuguese gave – whether subsidies to community institutions, assistance or presents – is to understand the nature of the bond generated by gift-giving. Gift-giving thickened the connections between donor and recipient. It created obligations that were not easily squared both because what was given escaped easy quantification and because gift-giving only worked if its exchanges remained indeterminate, flexible and implicit.⁶³ Arguably, Portuguese merchants did not particularly want to settle the mutual obligations gift-giving produced since doing so would sever the non-commercial bonds that tied them together. The longer gift-giving was sustained, the more relationships between people were infused by a non-instrumentalist logic, the more these relationships approached something on the order of kinship : a bond defined by its inconditionality and by the interdependence of its participants.

The metaphors of kinship surface repeatedly in the correspondence of the Portuguese merchants. Friendship was expressed as fraternity. “My friend,” wrote Fray Rodriguez Álvarez to his cousin, Sebastian Duarte, “ take example on our brother Manuel Bautista...this is the advice of a brother who wishes you but honour and increase.”⁶⁴ After reading Sebastian Duarte’s letter recounting the recent troubles afflicting his household, his factor in Porto Belo Agustín Rojas wrote that, “my tears sprang since I feel for your affairs as if they were those of my brother.”⁶⁵ Or this letter from Diego Lopez de Torres to Manuel Bautista Perez: “...I can truly say that my esteem for you could not be the greater if you were my actual brother. I owe you all the love and friendship that you have shown me...I love you with the unwavering love that our brotherhood demands.”⁶⁶

⁶² Antonio Justiniano, *Guatemala, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, Aug. 27th, 1633*. AGL Inq Cont 21. Simon Diaz Pinto, *Seville, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, April 17th, 1634*. AGL Inq Cont 21; Manuel Bautista Perez, *Lima, to Sebastian Duarte, August 16th, 1630*. AGL Inq Cont 21; Agustín de Rojas, *Puerto Belo, to Sebastian Duarte, September 22nd 1629*. AGL Inq Cont 21; Jacinto de Torres, *Mexico, to Sebastian Duarte, Jan 18th, 1630*, AGL Inq Cont 21; Pedro Pérez Guibovich, “La cultura libresca de un converso procesado por la Inquisición de Lima”, *Historia y Cultura* (Lima), vol. 20, (1990), pp. 143 – 145.

⁶³ Godbout, *World of the Gift*, p. 204.

⁶⁴ *Letter from Fray Rodrigo Álvarez, Seville, to Sebastian Duarte, Lima, April 26th, 1634*, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

⁶⁵ *Letter from Agustín Rojas, Puerto Belo to Sebastian Duarte, Panama / Lima, December 29th, 1629*. AGL Inq. Cont 21.

⁶⁶ *Letter from Diego Lopez de Torres, Lisbon, to Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, April 1st, 1634*, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

The creation kinship between Portuguese merchants took on the more insitutionalised forms of *compadrazgo* and marriage. *Compadrazgo*, the fictive kinship created through godparentage, was a well-established social practice in the early modern Iberian world. The Portuguese entered into *compadrazgo* relationships as a means of literally transforming their affiliations into kinship. By definition the primary bond in this relationship was that which existed between godfather and godchild. But *compadrazgo* implicitly created a relationship between father and godfather and this implicit relationship was in fact the determining one. Thus it is not surprising to find merchants from different houses becoming godfather to one another's children. Doing so gave new significance to their relationship. In their correspondence they addressed one another as *compadre* a more intimate term than friend. Moreover, *compadrazgo* relations could be extended across the lines that defined a trading "nation". Not only does this point to overlaps that existed between different national networks, it also demonstrates the manner in which kinship was a constructed social relationship, consciously forged to deepen the inter-connections between merchants.

A similar pattern emerged in the marital alliances contracted between different Portuguese merchant houses. A Portuguese merchant house was made up of a number of different family units bound to one another through marriage. Reaching out from the merchant house were yet more marriage connections that linked it to other houses around the Atlantic. The Portuguese engaged in this practice to such a degree that it is almost impossible to completely isolate one house from another. James Boyajian, whose genealogical research clearly demonstrates the dense web of kinship connections holding the Portuguese merchants together, suggests a commercial rationale for these marital alliances. Merchants spent heavily in their daughters' dowries in order to assure alliances with prosperous houses. These investments, he argues, were recovered many times over from the expanded network created by such marriages.⁶⁷ While economic benefits undoubtedly flowed out of a strategic marital alliance, one can question the existence of a marital market.

As Patricia Seed has amply demonstrated, marriage choice was a terrain of negotiation between women and their male relations.⁶⁸ This fact muddies the waters around the commercial rationales underlying marital alliances. Fathers sought a good match that would extend the house's commercial interests. But they preferred an "honourable man, someone you can claim as family."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Boyajian, *Portuguese Bankers*, p. 53.

⁶⁸ Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574 – 1821*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988.

⁶⁹ *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, to Diego Rodriquez de Lisboa, Lisbon, July 18th, 1622*, AGL Inq. Cont. 29.

Daughters often over-rode their fathers' wishes. Diego Rodriguez de Lisboa's daughter insisted on marrying someone she knew in Seville rather than some stranger in Lisbon. Guiomar de Brito dismissed three potential candidates put forth by her uncle and her brother. "I decided to chose the man who suited me, someone who was well-born and honourable...and I brought him into my house." Group identity was also held to be important. "I am very happy," wrote Duarte Rodriguez Leon to Sebastian Duarte, "to see that you were able to marry a woman from Portuguese Spain [Ysabel Enriquez]. With such a woman, a man can go far indeed."⁷⁰ These examples suggest that, when it came to marriage, commercial advantage had to be wed to the potential to get along "as family", honour, station, and collective identity.

The importance of kinship in the social relations of the Portuguese merchants was such that it came to frame the manner in which power was construed within the network. Powerful merchants were not bosses or magnates but rather fathers and patrons. Spanish authorities used the word *consul* to denote the representative elected by different Portuguese ex-patriate communities. But the more common terms used by the members of these communities were *patrão* or *patrono*, underscoring the weave of obligation and respect that defined the relationship between the elected merchant and his compatriots. The language of fatherhood was deployed on an inter-personal level as well. Manuel Bautista Perez, for instance, referred to his uncle, Diego Rodriguez de Lisboa as his father.⁷¹ Well he should. Diego, in the absence of Manuel's biological father, had raised Manuel through adolescence, trained him in the technicalities of overseas trade, and helped him get his start as an independent merchant in Lima. Bautista Perez also deferred to other, older, members of the house, symbolically placing himself, and his children, in their service. Upon the birth of his third child he wrote to Duarte Miguel de Leon, stating: "I hope for many more children, so that I might raise them for your service."⁷²

Two ideas conjoined in the language of paternalism : the idea of kinship, of unconditional and interdependent bonds, and the idea of a fundamental asymmetry in power. It formed what the early anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers called a "lopsided friendship."⁷³ The kinship dimension of paternalism was constituted

⁷⁰ Duarte Rodriguez, *Cartagena de Indias, to Sebastian Duarte, Lima, January 23rd, 1630*, AGL Inq. Cont. 21.

⁷¹ *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima, to Diego Rodriguez de Lisboa, Seville, n.d.*, AGL Inq. CdA 35, folio 408v.

⁷² *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima to Duarte Miguel de Leon, ?, May, 1635*, AGL Inq. CdA 35, folio 388r.

⁷³ Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954, p. 140.

through acts of gift-giving and assistance. The power dimension of paternalism was immanent in Iberian culture at large : a patrimonial society founded upon the family, whose final instance of authority in private and public matters was vested in the father.

The figure of Manuel Bautista Perez, the *patrão* of the Portuguese community in Lima, provides an excellent example of how paternal authority was constituted in practice. Bautista Perez was a powerful man. He had absolute domain over seventy-three African men, women and children: they laboured on his plantation, in his store, and in his house.⁷⁴ This power was enacted by demanding the total outward submission of his slaves, a subordination enforced – need it be recalled? – through physical violence. Had he lived to see his children grow into adolescence, his authority over them would have been of a kind. The Portuguese knew their adolescents as *mancebos*, a term that Covarrubias defined as: “A youngster, of the age known in Latin as *adolescens*. Derived from the noun *mancipium*, because he is beneath the power of his father, as if he was his slave; and thus the Law calls emancipation the [father’s] concession of his freedom.”⁷⁵ Bautista Perez’ power also extended over other members of his house, such as the time when he was called upon to arbitrate the end of a squabble between Sebastian Duarte and his sister Guiomar de Brito.⁷⁶ From Seville Guiomar would plead for his intercession, effectively asking him to act as their father: “ [Since] there is no orphan for whom you are not their father, for the love of God, I beg that Your Grace reconcile my brother.”⁷⁷ Merchants from other houses also deferred to his authority. Juan Rodriguez de Silva, for instance, would personally underscore his house’s dependence to the Lima merchant, writing that he was placing it “beneath the wings” of Manuel Bautista’s protection.

The Collective Pursuit of Profits

By way of conclusion, I would like to tighten the focus of this essay on to the commercial dimensions of the Portuguese trading Nation and attempt to reinterpret its operations in light of the preceding discussion on interdependence. The networks that composed the Nation were extremely complex, even from a strictly economic point of view. Not counting the

⁷⁴ *Inventory of Sebastian Duarte, June 21st, 1635*.AGL Inq. Cont. 29, folios 1r to 14v; Alfonso W. Quiroz, “The Expropriation of Portuguese New Christians”, p. 450.

⁷⁵ *Letter from Agustín de Rojas, Puerto Belo, to Sebastian Duarte, Lima, Dec. 21st, 1629*. AGL Inq. Cont 21; Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua Castellana*.

⁷⁶ *Letter from Manuel Bautista Perez, Lima to doña Justina Enriquez, Seville, September 10th, 1635*. AGL Inq. CdA. 35, folio 405r

⁷⁷ *Letter from Doña Guiomar de Brito, Seville, April, 1634, to Manuel Bautista Perez*, AGL Inq Cont 21.

merchants operating in the domestic Iberian economy, the Portuguese networks integrated over nine thousand individuals, from small retailers to the powerful *asentistas* engaged in the multi-million peso business of royal finances. The chains of integration linking all these people were complicated: they were direct and indirect, they extended in multiple direction and they were remarkably dense. Thus it is a radical simplification to define these networks as a decentralized structure, composed of a linked set of actors, dedicated to the movement of capital and commodities.

On the other hand, this definition provides a good starting point to explore how interdependence was woven into this structure. In a period when the transmission of information was slow and uncertain, it was extremely difficult to establish effective chains of command and surveillance. Other commercial organisations of the period, such as the joint-stock company, were able to marshal together the institutional resources required to control the actions of subordinates stationed in distant markets. Portuguese merchants, however, opted to decentralize the distribution of responsibility. Each merchant was the best judge of local market conditions and could quickly respond to opportunities as they arose. The state of seventeenth-century communications was, however, a two-edged sword. If it encouraged the devolution of commercial responsibility into the hands of individual merchants, it also imposed restrictions on a given merchant's direct access to sources of supply. In order to secure goods from abroad, Portuguese merchants had to collaborate with one another. They acted, by turn, as one another's partners, commission agents, debtors and creditors. It was the presence of these long-distance ties of collaboration that underwrote the vitality of the Portuguese Atlantic trades. These connections are what bound individual Portuguese merchants into a network, that is an integrated structure rather than a scattered assortment of individual merchants.

Arguably the most important thing circulating in this network was credit, credit in the sense of the esteem in which a merchant's character was held. Portuguese merchants needed to evaluate one another's "*caudal*", a word that meant both moral quality and economic capital, before associating themselves. It was on basis of *caudal* that the other kinds of credit, financial credit or commercial credit, were released and set in motion through the network. As was mentioned earlier, a merchants' reputation (essentially a collective assessment of *caudal*) was created relationally. It increased, or diminished, according to whether or not a given merchant adhered to the values and practices of interdependence.

Interdependence was also linked to credit during the early stages of a merchant's career. Most of the successful Portuguese merchants got their start thanks to loans of stock and capital forwarded by senior merchants. These

patrons, often kin, saw such investments as a means of simultaneously expanding the commercial interests of the house and caring for their charges. The outlays were akin to gifts. Luis Fernandez Suarez, for instance, arrived in Cartagena de Indias in 1634 with a cargo largely subsidised by his uncle, Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo. Though the senior merchant expected his share of the proceeds, he left it up to his nephew to see to the vent of the goods. Fernandez Suarez' pool of capital, established from his share of the profits, grew over the following years. This allowed him to purchase goods from his uncle and other Portuguese merchants on a commission basis. Nuñez Gramaxo, in essence, had used a portion of his capital to set his nephew up in business. This decision was in part an act of familial obligation: "to see to the good fortunes of Luis Fernandez Suarez" as one close associate characterised the undertaking.⁷⁸ It also allowed the house to re-establish a direct connection to the lucrative Tierra Firme market that had been defunct since the death of Nuñez Gramaxo's brother.⁷⁹

Interdependence was crucial for maintaining the movement of credit and commodities throughout the network. Indeed, one might argue that it accelerated their motion and guaranteed that it would not stop. Long-standing commercial associations were the norm amongst the Portuguese, lasting for many years and even, in the case of affiliated houses, over generations.⁸⁰ The longevity of these relations was assured by their practice of weaving them into bonds of interdependence that were difficult to sever: friendship, kinship, the mutual obligations created by gift-giving. In this regard the Portuguese stood in marked contrast to "higgling" merchants. The latter eschewed stable commercial relations since this afforded them the flexibility needed to rove from trader to trader in order to maximize their profits on each seperate exchange. The permanence of the Portuguese merchants' interconnections allowed them another kind of flexibility that was crucial in the Atlantic trades: latitude in the settling of accounts.

Juan Rodrigues Mesa and the Silva brothers, for instance, formed a partnership that lasted close to a decade. During this entire period they never managed to square their accounts. At the end of each year, one party was always in the debt of the other which, even from a strictly commercial rationale, meant that the partnership had to be maintained into the next season's trading. But

⁷⁸ *Claim of Antonio Nuñez Gramaxo against the estate of Luis Fernandez Suarez, 1637*, AHN Inq. 1611, exp 17.

⁷⁹ *Luis Fernandez Suarez, Panama, to Sebastian Duarte, September 18th, 1634*, AGL Inq Cont 21.

⁸⁰ A pattern evinced by the bazaar traders of Morrocco studied by Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz and Lawrence Rosen, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 123 – 314.

clearly none of the partners wanted to rupture the arrangement. Doing so would cut the flow of trade between them. If anything, the expectation that the partnership would last allowed the flows, and thus the imbalances, between the parties to grow over time. Rodrigues Mesa forwarded ever-larger shipments of goods which was matched by ever-larger silver remittances from the Silvas, but since parity was never achieved the quantities of silver and commodities spiralled in an ever-upwards motion.⁸¹ This kind of growth could not, of course, be sustained indefinitely. Yet even in bad times, during market gluts or silver shortages, the permanence of the bonds between Portuguese trader allowed them to bide their time and weather the down-turns. All the while they knew that eventually the market would pick up again. When it did the partnership would already be in place to resume the pattern of flow and counter-flow.

Finally, Portuguese commercial practices were not only entwined with other forms of interdependent relationships, they created, in and of themselves, important forms of economic interdependence. When Luis Fernandes Suarez first arrived in Cartagena de Indias he sent a letter off to Sebastian Duarte requesting an alliance between their respective houses. The terms he used were revealing. “I would be honoured,” he wrote, “if you would allow me to enter into your service so that I might attend to your estate with all the good will that duty obliges. [In this way] assistance might pass from one house to the other with the greatest satisfaction for both.”⁸² The idea that houses would share in the running of their mutual interests were put into action. Each Portuguese merchant divided his accounts into separate books. One set of books tabulated what was known as the running accounts, each book detailing the transactions contracted with a separate affiliated merchant: monies owed, shipments received, remittances dispatched and so on. All of these individual running accounts were subsumed into the *libro mayor*, or great book, which treated the merchant’s daily operations as a whole. These account books neatly demonstrate the criss-crossed nature of the Portuguese merchants’ estates. The *libro mayor* might be seen as a fluctuating inventory of the merchant’s estate but this estate was a composite, made up of his own dealings and the dealings of his associates that he managed in their name. In return the merchant apportioned parts of his estate into the care (and account-books) of his partners. By sorting out who apportioned what to whom it is possible to reconstitute the architecture of large portions of the Portuguese trading networks. It also allows a view of the dense hatching of commercial interdependence that undergirded their success.

⁸¹ Account books of Juan Rodrigues Mesa and Jorge da Silva and Juan da Silva, 1652. AHN Inq : 1609, exp. 19.

⁸² *Luis Fernandez Suarez, Panama, to Sebastian Duarte, September 18th, 1634*, AGL Inq Cont 21.

Figure 2
Manuel Bautista Perez' House

<u>Generation</u>		<u>Family</u>	
<u>Ego:</u>	<u>Ego:</u>	<u>Ego:</u>	<u>Ego:</u>
<u>Manuel Bautista Perez</u>	<u>Guiomar Enriquez</u>	<u>Sebastian Duarte</u>	<u>Luis da Vega</u>
Elders			
Father [?], Mother [?] of MBPerez.	<u>Parents:</u> Justina Enriquez, father [?]	<u>Parents:</u> Duarte Rodriguez, mother [?]	<u>Parents:</u> Father [?], mother [?]
<u>Aunts and Uncles:</u> Diego Rodriguez de Lisboa, Isabel Enriquez, Branca Gomez and Ant3nio Lopes de T3rres her husband, Geronimo Perez, Francisco Bautista	<u>Aunts and Uncles:</u> Manuel Diaz Pinto, Sim3n D3az Pinto and his wife Leonor, Ana de Paz, Ysabel Pinto, Margarita Diaz, Gil Lopez de Almeyda. <u>Elder's Cousins:</u> Fray Rodrigo Alvarez	<u>Aunts and Uncles:</u> Pablo Rodriguez, Phelipe Ruiz, Ana Lopez.	
Adults			
Manuel Bautista Perez	Guiomar Enriquez	Sebastian Duarte	Luis de Vega
<u>Siblings:</u> Juan Bautista Perez, Francisco Narvaez and his wife [?], Isabel Perez and her husband Diego Perez de Sobresmontes, and Blanca.	<u>Siblings:</u> Ysabel Enriquez, Sim3n Vaez Enriquez, Garcia Vaez Enriquez, Juan Baez. <u>Cousins:</u> Diego Perez de Sobremontes, Francisco Belmonte	<u>Siblings:</u> Duarte Rodriguez de Leon, Pedro Duarte, Guiomar de Brito, Guiomar Lopez <u>Cousins:</u> Vicente Rodriguez, Simon Fernandez, Vicente Fernandez, Juan Duarte Rodriguez, Pedro Rodriguez	<u>Sibling:</u> Diego de Vega.
<u>Cousins:</u> Isabel Enriquez and her husband Diogo Lopes de Torres (MBP's cousin), Phelipa Enriquez and her husband 3lvaro Fernandes da Costa, Jorge de Alemo and his wife (and cousin), Branca Gomes .			
Children			
	MBP's children with Guiomar Enriquez = Francisco, Justita and an unnamed daughter.		

Table 1:
Provenance of Portuguese Merchants in the Spanish Indies.

Provenance:	Tribunal:			
	Mexico City	Cartagena de Indias	Lima	All three tribunals
Spain				
Alcalá de Guadaira	1			1
Almagro	1		2	3
Antequera	2			2
Arcos de la Frontera	1			1
Badajoz	1		2	3
Burgos	3			3
Camarca	1			1
Carpio	1			1
Ciudad Rodrigo	3			3
Coria	1			1
Granada			1	1
Huelva	1			1
Jetafe	1			1
La Torre	1			1
Madrid	7	1	4	12
Malpartida	1			1
Medina de Rio Seco	1	1		2
Medina del Campo	1			1
Montilla	2			2
Osuna	1			1
Priego	2			2
Santa Baya	1			1
Santiago	2	2		4
Segovia	1			1
Seville	30	3	7	40
Toledo	1			1
Tordesillas	1			1
Valencia	2			2
Valladolid	1			1
Zalamea la Real	1			1
Unspecified	3			3
Sub-total:	76	7	16	99
Portugal				
Abrantes	2			2
Alentejo			1	1
Alpedrinha	1			1
Ameda	1			1
Aveiro	1			1
Azores			1	1
Botao	1			1
Braga	3	4	6	13
Caminha	4			4
Campo Mayor		1		1
Castro Daire			1	1
Castelo Branco	18	3		21
Chacim	1			1
Coimbra		4	1	5
Covilha	4			4
Cubillar		2		2
Duero		1		1
Elvas	1	1		2
Evora		4		4
Extremoz		1	1	2
Gouveia	1			1
Guarda	3		3	6
Laens	1			1
Lagos		2		2
Lamego	2	1	3	6
Lisbon	13	16	6	35

Monforte	3			3
Monsanto			1	1
Montemor	3	1	3	7
Oporto		1	1	2
Olivencia			1	1
Piñel		1		1
Porto Alegre		2		2
Ruyiseca			1	1
Sabugal	1			1
Samamede	1			1
São Vicente Davera	5			5
Serpa			1	1
Segura	1			1
Simide	1			1
Sosey	1			1
Tomar			1	1
Torre de Moncorbo			4	4
Vila da Frontera			1	1
Vila da Mora		1		1
Vila da Torre		1		1
Vila Franca		1		1
Vila Real			1	1
Vila da Saldanha			1	1
Vila Viciosa	1			1
Viseo		2	1	3
Unspecified	7	20		27
Sub-total:	81	70	40	191
Other				
Amsterdam	1			1
Bordeaux	1			1
Brazil			1	1
Canary Islands		1		1
Guadalajara	1			1
Havana		1		1
Mexico City	35			35
Peru	3			3
Veracruz	4			4
Unspecified			20	20
Sub-total:	45	2	21	68
Total:	202	79	77	358

Sources:

Stanley Hordes, "The Crypto-Jewish Community of New Spain, 1620 - 1690. A Collective Biography" Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 1980; Alonso W. Quiroz, "The Expropriation of Portuguese New Christians in Spanish America, 1635 - 1649," Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv, 11:1 (1985); Ana María Splendiani et al., editors, Cinquenta años de Inquisición en el Tribunal de Cartagena de Indias, 3 volumes, (Bogota: Centro Editorial Javeriano, 1997).

Commercial Networks of Cooperation in the Venetian Mediterranean: The English and the Greeks, a Case Study*

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The following essay re-examines one of the crucial issues of the Mediterranean economic transition, and tries to provide an alternative interpretative angle to the classic question of the crisis of the Republic of Venice in concomitance with the penetration of the English into the eastern Mediterranean. To achieve this it will concentrate on the mechanics of the English merchants entrance into the 'Venetian' Mediterranean during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The main question in this regard is: how did the English manage to penetrate so quickly and so effectively into the Venetian commercial system, and to establish themselves so rapidly as active economic operators in the territories under her control? This reversal of balance between Venetian and English merchants was in fact achieved by a relatively small number of English merchants – around twenty established in Venice, and less than a dozen between Zante and Cephalonia at any given time – who managed to infiltrate and establish themselves extremely successfully into the sophisticated Venetian commercial system.

Throughout this text I will focus my attention particularly on the main reason for the swiftness of the English penetration and settlement, that is to say on their alliance with the Greek subjects of the Republic, an alliance which was built on solid commercial cooperation. The Greeks proved to be extraordinarily useful allies for the English. Being able to take advantage of the Greek mercantile network was essential for them because of its central position within the Venetian state, and because of the multifaceted commercial contacts that the Greeks enjoyed not only within the Venetian dominions, but also in the eastern Mediterranean at large. The major strengths of the Greek merchants were in their surviving connections in the former Byzantine territories, in their growing economic role within the Venetian system, in their existing commercial networks with the Balkan Jews – strengthened through the Jews active in Venice

* I wish to thank Anthony Molho for inviting me to participate to the International workshop on 'Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World', at the European University Institute in Florence (October 2001), where I had the opportunity of discussing this text with a most stimulating audience. I also wish to thank Alessandra Campana, Franca Chiarloni, Rex Maudsley, Elio Pessa and especially Francesca Trivellato for the help and support they offered me whilst I was writing this article.

itself,¹ and in their specific knowledge of the languages and usages of the Levant area. The cooperation between Greek and English mercantile networks was based on communal economic interests: through their mutual interactions, a strong interdependence developed in their economic activities, which fostered a strong bond of reciprocal obligations borne out of the necessity to ally oneself with the other to achieve their respective economic goals.

In the course of the following pages I will also try to address some issues relevant to the activities of mercantile networks, which is here intended in terms of ‘sustained relations between individual and groups for the pursuit of commercial goals’, and I will give an overview of how two separate and structurally different networks – in this case the Greek and English – could cooperate to achieve complementary economic goals.²

The use of the concept of networks as an analytical category of historical research is relatively new. Inherited from the social sciences, only in the last decade there have been consistent attempts at applying it also to the study of history.³ From the beginning this proved to be a particularly profitable tool in regard to the study of economic history, and it has been particularly stimulating in regard to studies concerned with the social history of trade, especially of the long distance kind.⁴

¹ Alberto Tenenti, *Naufraques, Corsaires et Assurances Maritimes à Venise, 1592-1609*, Paris, S.E.V.P.E.N., 1959, p. 14.

² For another example of such cooperation, and for the theoretical mainframe of these issues, see Francesca Trivellato, *Jews of Leghorn, Italians of Lisbon, Hindus of Goa: Merchant Networks and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* in this issue.

³ Since its introduction in the historical discourse, the concept of network has been employed to study problems of growing complexity. In this essay, however, it is employed as a basic conceptual frame, definable as a ‘network approach’, and I will not utilize the instrument of Network Analysis in its classic format that is based on a mathematical and statistical formalization. I believe in fact that the nature of notarial sources does not allow me to use the material in such a formalized manner. On the problems of applying statistical elaboration to the analysis of historical sources, with all their limitations, several interesting contributions are to be found in “Informatica e fonti storiche”, R. Derosas and R. Rowland (dir.), *Quaderni Storici*, vol. 78, 1991. This ‘informal’ network approach has been widely used in Italy for studies of family structures: for example see Gabriella Gribaudo, “La metafora della rete. Individuo e contesto sociale”, *Meridiana*, vol. 15, 1992, pp. 91-108.

⁴ Abner Cohen, ‘Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas’, in C. Meillassoux (dir.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 266-281; Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984; Sanjay Subrahmanyam (dir.), *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, London, Aldershot, 1996, in this last text I refer especially to the editor’s introduction.

In dealing with merchants' networks, and the role they played within different economies, several studies have also dealt with the subject of Diasporas and the large role that the classic Diasporas (e.g. Jews, Greeks, Armenians) have played in long-distance trade. The existence of these two categories, which in some instances are difficult to extricate one from the other, has fostered a healthy debate, which is still very much active at the moment, on the reciprocal boundaries of such definitions.⁵ During the pages that follow I do not propose to enter into this particular debate, my only aim in this particular contribution is to shed some new light on a classic issue of early modern economic history, and I plan to do this through the micro analysis of the interaction of two separate and structurally different commercial networks, this reduction of the scale of analysis being an approach that has proven to be extremely useful in clarifying larger processes of historical development.⁶

I will also provide some examples of cooperation between networks which went beyond the traditional and above-mentioned subject of long-distance trade. Without denying that long-distance cross-cultural trade represents probably the best arena where to investigate such issues, I would like to bring to the surface the importance for this research of small-scale regional trades, whose development was equally supported by such cooperation. My aim is to highlight how this commercial cooperation between different networks was active also at a regional level, and how local circumstances played a decisive role both in shaping the interactions of these networks, and in influencing the role they played within the small-scale local economies, in this case of the Venetian dominions.

I believe this local dimension to be an extremely interesting and underrated corollary of the Anglo-Greek commercial interaction, and I think it is possible to gain a privileged insight into the early modern economic transition in the Mediterranean by investigating how a relationship that started and developed with an aim to facilitate long-distance trade, once established, extended itself also to the regional level, setting into motion a deep transformation of trade patterns within the whole region. This close interpenetration between long-distance and local trades – that is to say between the macro and micro levels –

⁵ The issue of the relation between Diasporas and 'trading communities' was very much at the forefront of the debate at the preliminary meeting last September in Corfù, of the participants of Session X of the forthcoming Thirteenth International Economic History Congress. Several different approaches can be seen in the essays presented within session X, "Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks, ca. 1000-2000", in *Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Economic History Congress*, Buenos Aires, 2002, forthcoming. On this subject see also the essay of Francesca Trivellato, *Jews of Leghorn*, cit.

⁶ On the recent developments of the micro historical approach, see the essays in J. Revel (dir.), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris, Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1996.

with the involvement of the same economic operators at both levels, had as a consequence to reproduce at the regional level the same dynamics of cooperation, division of labour and structures of financing trade that characterized the long-distance trade, albeit in a different environment and on a smaller scale.

The consistency and continuity of the relationship between these two separate networks, over an extended period of time, lets us feel that through their interaction another larger network was in a sense created, whose function was to take care of these trades. To use Braudel's words: "les réseaux se complètent, s'associent, se relaient, s'affrontent aussi";⁷ in this particular case the stress has to be on the cooperation, as the Greeks, apart from a very short period in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, were never able to compete with the English nor, in truth, did they try to do so. A traditional dependence on family links in recruiting associates for business, the lack of state support from their Venetian overlord, and a shortage of capital proved to be fatal shortcomings that barred these Greek Venetian subjects from entering into competition with what proved to be the superior rationality of the English mode of conducting business.

This Anglo-Greek alliance lasted solidly for slightly more than half a century. Started in the City of London at the beginning of the 1570s, where these Greek subjects of Venice were active in commercialising their goods, it progressively weakened from the 1630s in the Ionian islands, where English merchants had settled to organize the currants trade with England. At that point the English, already well settled in that area and indispensable for the local economy, started to turn to the Venetian authorities in an attempt to solve the problems of brigandage and criminality that they were more and more frequently encountering there. The situation had completely changed in those fifty years. By the 1630s the English had come to dominate the eastern Mediterranean traffics. In the Islands, the overproduction of the staple of Anglo-Venetian trade – currants⁸ – had caused a collapse in its prices, and this was at the root of ill feelings between the two groups. The English had acquired such superiority in the field that they did not need anymore such a strong cooperation with the local traders. With the English having fully achieved the upper hand, their alliance with the Greek merchants was weakened. The English did not need anymore the Greek cooperation as much as they had in the previous period, certainly not as far as long distance trade was concerned. The situation was slightly different in regard to the situation of regional trade, there their

⁷ Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XV^e-XVIII^e siècle*, tome 2, *Les jeux de l'échange*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1979, p. 137.

⁸ On the currants trade between Venice and England, may I refer to Maria Fusaro, *Uva Passa. Una guerra commerciale tra Venezia e l'Inghilterra (1540-1640)*, Venezia, Il Cardo, 1996.

cooperation remained a cornerstone of the regional trade networks. But even in these, the relative strength of the two commercial partners had dramatically shifted in favour of the English, and their mutual relationship reflected this change in circumstances. It was certainly not anymore a partnership of equals, as it had been for the first phase of their alliance during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

The crisis of Venice

The rise of England and the crisis of Venice are always mentioned in the same breath by historians.⁹ As Rapp put it “it was the invasion of the Mediterranean, not the exploitation of the Atlantic, that produced the Golden Ages of Amsterdam and London”.¹⁰ Before that happened Venice dominated the Mediterranean and was rightly considered to be an international trading power to be reckoned with. Afterwards the situation in the Mediterranean changed drastically, and Venice’s influence had to be profoundly re-evaluated.

Two separate sets of issues need to be examined in order to analyse how English merchants managed to penetrate the Venetian commercial system, damaging the Republic both in its role of mediation between east and west and in its export trade from its Greek dominions. On the one hand, there is the need to analyse the peculiar structure of English trade in the eastern Mediterranean – highlighting the crucial differences between the trade with the Ottoman territories and the one with Venice – and on the other, it is necessary to investigate the role which was played in this role reversal by the Greek mercantile network based in the Venetian dominions. To accomplish this it is essential to study the ramifications and consequences that the behaviour of the

⁹ Just to mention a few classic texts: Alberto Tenenti, *Venezia e i Corsari, 1580-1615*, Bari, Laterza, 1961, pp. 94-97; Ludwig Beutin, “La décadence économique de Venise considérée du point de vue nord-européen”, in *Aspetti e cause della decadenza economica veneziana nel secolo XVII, Atti del Convegno 27 giugno – 2 luglio 1957 (Venezia, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore)*, Venezia-Roma, 1961, pp. 87-108; Ralph Davis, “Influences de l’Angleterre sur le déclin de Venise au XVIIème siècle”, in *ibidem*, pp. 185-235; Domenico Sella, “Crisis and Transformation in Venetian Trade”, in B. Pullan (dir.) *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London, Methuen, 1968, pp. 88-105; Richard H. Tawney, *Business and Politics under James I. Lionel Cranfield as Merchant and Minister*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958, pp. 14-30; Pierre Jeannin, “The Seaborne and the Overland Trade Routes of Northern Europe in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries”, *Journal of European Economic History*, vol. 11, n° 1, 1982, pp. 5-61; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution. Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 1-91.

¹⁰ Richard T. Rapp, “The Unmaking of the Mediterranean Trade Hegemony: International Trade Rivalry and the Commercial Revolution”, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 35, n° 3, 1975, pp. 499-525, p. 501.

Greek merchants and ship-owners had towards the crisis of their overlord. These Greeks were able to play an essential role in these developments because the staples of the Anglo-Venetian trade were Ionian currants and Cretan wines, goods whose production and commercialisation were under their control in the Venetian Greek territories.

The major mistake of the Venetian government in its policy towards its eastern dominions had been to neglect the economic interests of its Greek subjects, particularly in the Ionian islands of Zante and Cephalonia, although a similar phenomenon was also visible in Crete. Notwithstanding the fact that the eastern Mediterranean trade had always been central to Venice's economic policy, or maybe exactly because of this, the issue of its defence from the Turkish threat – particularly in the century between the loss of Cyprus (1571) and the loss of Crete (1669) – engulfed into a suffocating embrace any other consideration, blinding Venice towards the necessity of a better structured economic policy for this area. Particularly contested in the dominions proved to be the *Dominante's* policy by which surplus agricultural produce could be exported only through the metropolis, something that was rightly felt as an unfair exploitation of local resources.¹¹ Maintaining the function of Venice as an entrepôt and centre of redistribution of the goods produced in her territories, ended up strangulating the economic development of her dominions. This political error had as a consequence the lack of economic integration of the Venetian Levant into the general economy of the Republic, something which led to a growing divergence between the economic interests of the *Dominante* and the ones of the dominions, and which was never properly addressed by the Venetian government. The Greek mercantile classes of Zante and Cephalonia, but also of Crete, suffered the consequences of this lack of policy, and they showed a remarkable resilience in trying to overcome the shortcomings of the *Serenissima* to keep their trades and their ships moving, particularly in their traditional Northern European markets.¹² In doing this they established with northern merchants an alliance that lasted even when the northerners themselves (English and *Fiamenghi*) started to enter into the Mediterranean to procure the goods they were interested in.¹³

¹¹ A short summary of the economic relationship between Venice and its dominions is in Michael Knapton, "Tra Dominante e Dominio (1517-1630)", in Gaetano Cozzi, Michael Knapton, Giovanni Scarabello, *La Repubblica di Venezia nell'età moderna*, 2 vols, Torino, U.T.E.T., 1986-1992, vol. 2, pp. 203-325, especially at pp. 260-265.

¹² The activities of these merchants and ship-owners are analysed in detail in my article "Coping with Transition. Greek Merchants and Ship-owners between Venice and England in the Sixteenth Century", in *Proceedings of the XIII International Economic History Congress*, Buenos Aires, 2002, forthcoming.

¹³ In this essay I will not deal with the 'Flemish' presence, which in the eastern Mediterranean and in this period was an extremely small phenomenon. Still, it is worth mentioning that

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century the English penetrated the Mediterranean for the first time in a consistent manner. As far as the Venetian territories were concerned, the English entered the Mediterranean to procure for themselves the goods that the Venetian trade network was not managing to bring to England anymore. The English had already been present in the Mediterranean from the middle of the fifteenth century, when they traded mostly in malmsey wine coming from Crete. Even during the period when the Venetian state merchant galleys (*galere di mercato*) still regularly reached England, some English ships had been going to Crete to load these wines. The Venetians had tried to stop this, and for this purpose in 1488 they had issued legislation that forbade foreign vessels from exporting wines out of Crete. This had caused a short tariff war between England and Venice.¹⁴

In 1533 the last 'Flanders' galley reached the English shores, after that date traffic between Venice and England was mostly carried out via the land route through Germany and Antwerp. Still, some private ships kept the sea route open, these ships were mostly owned by Greek subjects of the Republic, or by Venetian merchants who had commercial interests in Crete. These Greek merchants were described as Venetians, thereby acquiring invisibility to the historian, in reality they were not 'Venetians' but 'Venetian subjects' and we will see how this had important consequences. For the next forty years very few English ships reached the Mediterranean. This was to change in 1573, when at the end of the Venetian-Turkish war (1570-1573), English ships started to come back regularly to those waters.¹⁵

English and 'Flemish' merchants maintained in the town Venice a close partnership, especially in the dried fish trade, and in the financial operations side of their affairs.

¹⁴ The tax consisted of an extra duty of 4 ducats for every butt of malmsey loaded on foreign ships in Crete and directed to western Europe, see Alwyn A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton, 1270-1600*, Southampton, University College, 1951, pp. 221-222. Legislation forbidding to load Cretan wine on foreign ships had been issued also in 1441 and 1451, see David Jacoby, "Creta e Venezia nel contesto economico del Mediterraneo Orientale sino alla metà del Quattrocento", in G. Ortalli (dir.), *Venezia e Creta. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Iraklion-Chianà, 30 settembre-5 ottobre 1997)*, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti, 1998, pp. 73-106; also Maria Fusaro, *L'uva passa*, cit., p. 13. Enforcing legislation on custom tariffs for foreigners, in this case exporting wines from Crete, was a permanent problem for the Venetian authorities; for a late sixteenth century example of such practice see *Guildhall Library* (from now on *GL*), Ms 21317, vol. 10, n. 907 (6-4-1596). Cretan wines had been exported to the Flanders since the beginning of the fourteenth century, see Ugo Tucci, "Le commerce venitien du vin de Crete", in K. Friedland (dir.), *Maritime Food Transport*, Köln, Böhlau, 1994, pp. 199-211, p. 199.

¹⁵ On the dates of the English withdrawal from the Mediterranean there are different interpretations. My argument is that a complete stop of their presence lasted only from 1566 to 1573, for an outline of the historiographical debate on this subject see Maria Fusaro, *Uva Passa*, cit., pp. 12-19. Still, the dearth of sources for this period make interpretation not easy, particularly in the light of the presence of Greek merchants who kept the sea route open.

The Levant trades

To appreciate the behaviour of the English merchants, and the different ways in which they organized their trades, it is important to appreciate how the Levant Company was structured, and the repercussions that this had on the organization of trade in its areas of monopoly. The Levant Company was created in 1592 from the fusion of the Turkey Company (1580-1) with the Venice Company (1583). Throughout the 1580's there had been a strong internal debate within the two Companies, and between them and the English government, about the overlapping of their reciprocal areas of monopolies. There were also other problems: the Venice Company complained about the heavy fiscal load it was subjected to because of the high duties on currants, whilst the Turkey Company was burdened with the expenses of the Constantinople embassy, whose upkeep was its responsibility even if the ambassador was chosen by the Crown. Merging the two companies was considered a way to solve some of these issues and to facilitate the flow of trade.¹⁶ Still, even after the creation of the Levant Company, an internal division between the two areas – Ottoman and Venetian – survived, and the analysis of this issue is fundamental to the correct understanding of the modalities and characteristics of the English presence in the Mediterranean.

We can certainly assume that this division descended from the way in which the traffic was originally organised, however there are also other considerations to make in this regard. First we need to take into account the organization of the Levant Company, “which was not in itself a trading organization: its members traded individually, as independent merchants, subjecting themselves to such restrictions as they might impose in their corporate capacity as the Levant Company”.¹⁷ This meant that merchant-members and their agents had an extraordinary freedom in the practical organization of the trade. The everyday running of business was left to the men on the ground, and they could organize practically the trade in any way that they saw fit. Instructions sent from London were in fact rather generic and mostly concerned with quantities of imports, allowing great scope for differentiating the

¹⁶ On the debate about the fusion of the two companies see Mortimer Epstein, *The Early History of the Levant Company*, London, Routledge, 1908, pp. 25-39; Alfred C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1935, pp. 18-20; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, cit., pp. 64-5.

¹⁷ Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square. English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century*, London, Macmillan, 1967, p. 43. Although the Company started as a joint stock, it quickly became a regulated company and it remained such for all its life (with some exceptions, like currants during the Civil War). In Wood's interpretation, to which I subscribe, “[this] seem to prove that it suited better the circumstances of the trade”, in Alfred C. Wood, *A History*, cit., pp. 22-3; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, cit., pp. 66-7.

internal organization of the different areas of trade. This meant that under the formal umbrella provided by the Company organization, there was ample opportunity for informal arrangements between merchants themselves, and between merchants and other local economic operators. The ways in which the Levant Company's agents organized the everyday running of their trade, could therefore be studied also from the perspective of analysing the relations between social groups and institutions relating to the organization of economic life. This is a field in which there is great scope, and a wealth of documentary evidence, which would allow to further investigate the informal networks of merchants active within a formal institution.

Above and beyond the reasons mentioned above, there also existed structural differences in the organization of trade in the two areas. In Venice there was a total separation between the commercial and the diplomatic sides of the English presence. In Constantinople the two aspects were intertwined: the embassy in Constantinople maintained a dual aspect, its holder was a royal representative – commissioned by the sovereign and employed in diplomatic duties –, whilst at the same time he was a commercial agent paid for by a company of merchants, pledged to safeguard and promote their business interests. This peculiarity had serious consequences for the social profile of people active in business in the two areas: the Venetian and the Ottoman. A consequence of this was that, for a young and ambitious merchant, being involved in the Turkish trade was also a way to be introduced into political circles, something that could have an important impact on his future career, not only as a merchant but as a political operator back in England. A successful mercantile career in the Ottoman territories seemed often to have resulted in a successful homecoming. These opposing attitudes towards the political sphere were a crucial factor in shaping the differences between the two sides of the Levant Company trade. On the Ottoman side there was an exceedingly strict connection between trade and diplomacy, which created a background context to trading which was highly desirable for merchants of higher social status – mostly offspring of the gentry – whose social and political aspirations could be pursued at the same time as their business careers.¹⁸ On the contrary, on the Venetian side, where there was almost a total lack of contact between diplomacy and trade, doing business there afforded far fewer opportunities to make contacts which would be useful back in England, and the field was therefore left open for people of lower social status and more modest ambitions. Another interesting consequence of this was that in Venice there were effectively two separate English communities: one revolving around the embassy, and another one made

¹⁸ On the Levant Company's popularity amongst gentry's offsprings see Richard Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth Century England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 68.

up exclusively of merchants, and contacts between the two were very infrequent. These differences in behaviour mirrored the completely different circumstances of the two regions, and were the reason why these two divisions of the Levant Company's trade were run almost independently of each other.

The practical organization of the trade was also different: in the Ottoman territories, the legal position of the English merchants was heavily regulated by the privileges and immunities which had been granted to the English with the Capitulations; also, the nature of the state organization was such that a greater involvement of the Ambassador to the Porte and of the Company's consuls was necessary to conduct any sort of business. In Venice, on the contrary, there was not such a need. Being more free to act, and a great deal less controlled in the Venetian territories than was the case in the Ottoman ones, meant for the English a far broader degree of freedom in their everyday life. This resulted in closer contact with the local population – both Venetian and subject –, which led to more frequent informal links, commercial dealings and business associations. Secondly, but no less importantly, the nature of the trade was intrinsically different: on the one hand there was an exchange heavily relying on textiles, roughly definable as the barter of wool for silk and spices, and on the other, the purchase of a few commodities in exchange mostly for ready cash.

The above-mentioned differences between the two areas of the trade can be exemplified by a quick analysis of the two staple goods of the trades: silk and currants. The trade in silk with the Ottoman territories, like many others, was based on the English need to procure a peculiar commodity which had two defining characteristics: it should have a constant and reliable quality and, at the same time, should correspond to the needs of fashion back in England, so that it was always easily saleable at home. This kind of trade required a highly sophisticated degree of knowledge of both the intrinsic qualities of the purchased goods, and of what was required by the English market.¹⁹ This need for constant quality checks on the spot, whilst keeping a constant eye on what was coveted in London, made the job of the factors in the Ottoman territories far more complicated and difficult than in other areas of trade, where commodities

¹⁹ Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square*, cit., p. 144. It is worth mentioning here that the textile trade between England and the Ottoman territories did great damage to the Venetian textile industry, whose export to the Ottoman territories collapsed as a result of this. The penetration of the English woollens into the Ottoman market had far reaching consequences for the Venetian woollen industry, and was a significant factor in its decline during the seventeenth century, something in which English merchants played a crucial role, on this see Domenico Sella, "The Rise and Fall of the Venetian Woollen Industry", in B. Pullan (dir.), *Crisis and Change*, cit., pp. 106-126; for a recent reassessment see Walter Panciera, *L'arte matrice: i lanifici della Repubblica di Venezia nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, Treviso, Canova, 1996, particularly pp. 39-66.

were less influenced by fashion. There was the necessity to acquire skills which went far beyond the ability to judge the intrinsic quality of a commodity, such as knowledge of the latest fashions on both sides of the transaction, the kind of knowledge which is also a function of one's social status and lifestyle. The trade with the Venetian Greek dependencies, instead, based as it was on currants as the staple commodity, required only a knowledge of the intrinsic quality of the product, and except for the quantities required, there was no need for a constant stream of updates from London. Once organized, the trade from the Venetian territories ran like a well-oiled machine, needing only fuel – that is to say cash – to work. A trade uninfluenced by fashion, is one that can better withstand the frequent interruptions to the information flow, a classic weakness of medieval and early modern trade,²⁰ but it is also a trade that can be performed very effectively by people who are less conversant with the vagaries of London fashion.

First Contacts: Greeks in England

After the demise of the *galere di mercato*, as mentioned earlier, the sea route from Venice to England was kept open by private traffic, mostly made up by merchants and ship owners who were Greek subjects of the Republic. Most interestingly for my argument, the last remaining members of the Venetian mercantile community in London were all actively involved in trading with the Venetian Greek dominions.

The economy of the Ionian islands had, from very early on, been dependent on foreign markets as an outlet for production. This was not a novelty for the Venetian eastern dominions: both Cyprus and Crete had produced massively for the export market. Particularly in Crete, from the fourteenth century, sugar²¹ and wine had been produced for the export market, and as we have seen this had caused a tariff war in the late fifteenth century. Both in the Ionian islands and in Crete, merchants and ship owners tried to keep active the trade sea route to the north of Europe – their main export market –, when the 'northern branch' of the Venetian state galleys system collapsed. From the

²⁰ On the currants trade needing less qualified personnel, see also Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, cit., p. 87. Interesting consideration on the information flow are in Giorgio Doria, "Conoscenza del mercato e sistema informativo: il know-how dei mercanti-finanzieri genovesi nei secoli XVI e XVII", in H.Kellenbenz and A.De Maddalena (dir.), *La Repubblica internazionale del denaro*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982, pp. 57-122.

²¹ David Jacoby, "La production du sucre an Crète vénitienne. L'échec d'une entreprise économique", in *Rodonia: time ston M.I.Manousaka*, Rethimno, Panepistemion Kretes, 1994, pp. 167-180.

economic perspective, their situations also bore marked similarities.²² Like Zante and Cephalonia, Crete had a consistent share of its agricultural output destined for export. And, like the Ionian islands, it enjoyed a strategically central place in the eastern Mediterranean: all the *mude* to Constantinople, Alexandria or Syria converged on the Island.²³ The population of Crete had always been prone to rebellion, and it was for this reason that, from the mid-sixteenth century, as the Turkish threat grew, Venice implemented in Crete a series of economic measures designed to improve the economic situation of the local population, hoping to maintain their loyalty to Venice.²⁴ Seafaring benefited from these measures to a certain extent, with some local ship owners enlarging the scope of their trades beyond the eastern Mediterranean and the traditional routes to Venice. In both places, Crete and the Ionian Islands, having produces that were coveted in the international markets had acted as a stimulus for entrepreneurship, and had stimulated a pro-active involvement in economic activities. And it was for these reasons that the majority of ‘Venetians’ present in England in the last quarter of the sixteenth century were Greek subjects. In that network are to be found the roots of the Anglo-Greek alliance that was to become so crucial for the English penetration in the Mediterranean.

The major players in these trades were the Sumacchi and Seguro families of Zante – who kept their own agent in London, Zuanne da Riviera – and a few Cretan merchants and ship owners amongst whom the most important was Thodorin Lombardo. In addition to those mentioned above, the two Venetians brothers Jacopo and Placido Ragazzoni were also heavily involved in trade with England.²⁵ In London these ‘Venetians’ enjoyed a fruitful commercial and financial relationship not only with their English counterparts, but also with the principal Florentine merchants and financiers resident in the City, headed by Filippo and Bartolomeo Corsini.²⁶ Through them they were connected with the

²² Unlike Zante and Cephalonia, whose archives are almost completely lost, marvellous documentary sources survive for the history of Crete under Venice (1211-1669), see Manoussos I. Manoussacas, “L’isola di Creta sotto il dominio veneziano, problemi e ricerche”, in A. Pertusi (dir.), *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, vol. i, tomo 2, Firenze, Olschki, 1973, pp. 473-514.

²³ Silvano Borsari, *Il dominio veneziano a Creta nel XIII secolo*, Napoli, F. Fiorentino, 1963, p. 68.

²⁴ Chrisa Maltezou, “The Historical and Social Context”, in D. Holton (dir.), *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 17-47, pp. 29-32.

²⁵ A sketch of the activities of the Ragazzoni brothers is in Luciano Pezzolo, “Sistema di valori ed attività economica a Venezia, 1530-1630”, in S. Cavaciocchi (dir.), *L’impresa, l’industria, commercio, banca, secoli XII-XVIII*, Atti della XXII Settimana di Studi (30-4/4-5-1990), Firenze, Le Monnier, 1991, pp. 981-988, pp. 986-7.

²⁶ Filippo was born in Florence in 1538 and came to London in 1559; within 10 years was the largest importer in England of European goods besides being a substantial exporter. In 1579

Florentine northern European commercial networks. Giacomo and Placido Ragazzoni, Giovanni Da Riviera and Bartolomeo Corsini were the links between the English and the Greek-Venetians, and they were all connected in a tight network which operated within the triangle: Venice – Zante, Cephalonia and Crete – London.

The brothers Agesilao and Marco Seguro of Zante were amongst the most important members of this Greek-Venetian network.²⁷ They were active both as merchants and as ship owners; vessels belonging to them regularly reached England well into the late 1580s carrying currants and oil, not only for themselves but also for other merchants from Venice and her dominions.²⁸ Like all the other Venetian merchants mentioned above, the Seguro owned ships that regularly travelled to England and, again like all the others, they frequently employed English pilots on their ships for this trip. Employing an English pilot, and sometime even a whole English crew, was an *escamotage* that guaranteed some measure of security in the dangerous northern seas, in which Venetian crews were not used to navigate anymore.²⁹ This is in itself a very interesting admission of the depths of the seamanship (*marinarezza*) crisis of Venice. It is most interesting to note, also in regard to the general crisis of the Venetian shipbuilding industry in that period, how the Seguros used some Venetian-built ships, but also bought and commissioned some to be built abroad.³⁰

his younger brother Bartholomew joined him, and by 1584 the name of the business was Bartolomew Corsini & co. The brothers operated their import-export business out of their house in Gracechurch Street.

²⁷ The Seguro family had been for a long time one of the most powerful of the island of Zante. Already in 1542 the then *Rettore* had written of them: “Sonno li primi in questo luoco, sonno conivuti in consanguinità con tutti li altri cittadini, hanno la mittà di questa Isola in sua mano”, in ASV, *Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Rettori e altre cariche*, b.296 (Zante 1506-1749), fascicolo (from now on fasc.) i, *carte* not numbered (from now on cc.n.n.) (25-8-1542).

²⁸ *GL Ms. 22,274*, n. 1394 (8-3-1591). Not all their ventures were successful, in 1587 they were to lose a cargo of currants in a shipwreck in Gibraltar, see Archivio di Stato di Venezia (from now on ASV), *Notarile Atti*, b.6534 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.34r/v (6-2-1587).

²⁹ Interesting documents regarding a complex series of ‘loans’ and ‘swaps’ of English crews amongst the above-mentioned merchants are in ASV, *Notarile Atti*, busta (from now on b.) 7850 (Gerolamo Luran), *carte* (from now on cc.) 394r/v and 395r/v (23-4-1582); *ivi*, b.7849 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.77r/v (24-4-1582). Notwithstanding this precautions, shipwreck in the dangerous northern seas was a distinct possibility: Thodorin Lombardo would lose one of his galleons in 1582 on the coast of Brittany on his way to England, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6529 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.54r/v (29-1-1583); see also *ivi*, b.6536 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), c.38r (30-1-1589).

³⁰ For example in Danzig: ASV, *Collegio, Risposte di dentro*, filza (from now on f.) 7, cc.n.n. (27-5-1581 and 29-7-1581).

The Seguros actively cultivated good relations with English merchants and travellers, acting frequently as ‘facilitators’ in the Ionian islands for Englishmen in transit. In 1584, Marco Seguro hosted in Zante Thomas Sanders on his way to Tripoli of Barbary, and some of his party remained on the Island waiting for a passage back to England on a ship “of the saide Marcus Segoorus”.³¹

In the early 1580s, the only remaining ‘Venetian’ in London was Zuanne da Riviera, a native of Zante and an agent of the Seguro family.³² Da Riviera acted as consul for the Venetians, working hard to keep trade alive as the Venetian authorities themselves acknowledged.³³ Da Riviera was the key man who helped to build a lasting commercial alliance between his fellow-countrymen and the founding members of the Levant Company.

Giorgio Sumacchi and his son Michele had a very similar profile in their business activities. They divided their interests between the Ionian islands and Venice, but they also traded with Crete, whence they exported Muscat wines to England.³⁴ In their dealings in Cretan wines to the north of Europe they were frequently associated with the powerful Cretan merchant Thodorin Lombardo.³⁵ The Sumacchi also acted as intermediaries for other Venetian merchants in their trades to the Ionian islands,³⁶ where they were powerful members of the local

³¹ At the end they did find an earlier passage on an English ship. See “The voyage made to Tripolis in Barbarie, in the yeere 1584, with a ship called the Iesus, wherein the adventures and distress of some Englishmen are truly reported, and other necessarie circumstances observed. Written by Thomas Sanders”, in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation. Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 Yeeres*, Glasgow, MacLehose, 1904, pp. 198-199.

³² Several sources confirm Da Riviera’s role as agent of the Seguro family, for example see the defence memorial written by Ottaviano Volterra on the occasion of the only surviving trial for smuggling in 1589: “Zuanne Darevera [...] per ritrovarse a Londra alle facende di essi Sicuri, per li quali teniva casa” in ASV, *Quarantia Criminale*, b.103, fasc. 73, cc.77v-80r.

³³ Da Riviera’s actions came also to the attention of the Venetian ambassador in Paris in 1586 (Giovanni Dolfin) who kept on receiving requests of information about him and his role, which he duly reported to the *Collegio*, see *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English affairs, existing in the Archives and collections of Venice*, vol. viii, (1581-1591), London, 1894, n. 350, p. 163. On Da Riviera’s efforts to keep the trade alive, which ultimately obtained him the title of consul, see ASV, *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Risposte*, registro (from now on reg.)138, c.166v; another copy in *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, b.34 *nuova serie* (from now on n.s.), fasc. v, cc.n.n. (27-2-1591).

³⁴ For example see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.7867 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.657v-658v (19-5-1590).

³⁵ For typical contracts between them see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.7857 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.134v-135r (13-6-1586); and *ivi*, b.7866 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.127r/v (11-2-1590). The latter regards a particularly interesting shipment of Rethimo Muscat wines to Danzig.

³⁶ See, for example, ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6529 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.110v-111r (1-4-1583). They also rented Flemish ships jointly with the Seguro, see Wilfrid Brulez and Greta

elite. They were especially involved in the currants trade with England, and they were well-known figures in London commercial circles as powerful intermediaries to acquire currants in the Islands.³⁷ Their influential position in the Islands was well known in England, so much that when Acerbo Velutelli lost his monopoly on currant imports into England, it was they whom he accused of being behind the establishment of the New Impost in Venice.³⁸ It is interesting to notice that the Seguro and Sumacchi prominence was clearly acknowledged even by important Venetian merchants – like the Ragazzoni brothers and the patrician Corner family – for whom they acted in England.³⁹

This group of Greek subjects of the Republic played a very varied support role for all trades connecting Ionian islands and Crete the with the north of Europe, but also for the vast majority of trades between these Islands and Venice, as merchants, brokers and ship owners. An analysis of the notarial documentation in Venice, and of the material preserved in English archives, shows clearly how this small group of Greek-Venetian merchants and ship owners were fully involved in international trade on a scale far larger than it had

Devos, *Merchants Flamands à Venise 1568-1621*, 2 vols, Institut historique belge de Rome, Bruxelles-Rome, 1965-1986, vol. ii, n. 3803, p. 670 (12-11-1618); *ibidem*, n. 3805, pp. 671-2 (17-11-1618); *ibidem*, n. 3808, pp. 672-3 (22-11-1618). Michele was also active in the insurance business, see Alberto Tenenti, *Naufraiges, Corsairs*, cit., passim.

³⁷ For a deal of this kind, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.7847 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.166r-167r (18-9-1580), in this case Sumacchi was supposed to procure a large quantity of currants for Henry Ferenton, agent of the Levant Company member William Garway. On their crucial role as ‘facilitators’ see also the comments of Alfonso Strozzi to Bartolomeo Corsini, in *GL*, Ms.21317, n. 239 (16-6-1581).

³⁸ On Velutelli’s short-lived monopoly see Maria Fusaro, *Uva passa*, cit., pp. 19-22. Acerbo Velutelli, in a supplication to the Queen after the loss of his monopoly, was to accuse the “Italian” merchants Nicolò de Gozzi Pange and Innocenzo Locatelli of having colluded with the Sumacchi in pushing for new custom duties for foreigners in the Islands, see Public Record Office (from now on PRO), *State Papers* (from now on *SP*) 99, 1, c.16r (1583-4). Locatelli and the Sumacchi had been doing business together in northern Europe since the early 1570s; for a typical deal between them, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.11886 (Gerolamo Savina), cc.201v-202v (27-1-1576), in this case their business had been in Antwerp. Nicolò de Gozzi was not ‘Italian’, but from Ragusa, and he was a leading merchant in England at the time, probably one of the wealthiest foreigners along with Sir Oratio Pallavicino, on him see David Abulafia, “Cittadino e “denizen”: mercanti mediterranei a Southampton e a Londra”, in M. Del Treppo (dir.), *Sistema di rapporti ed élites economiche in Europa (secoli XII-XVII)*, Napoli, GISEM, Liguori, 1994, pp. 273-291, particularly pp. 286-287.

³⁹ On the Ragazzoni using Greek ships to collect currants from the Ionian islands and the Morea, see ASV, *Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Rettori ed altre cariche*, b.297, fasc. ii, n. 64 (16-12-1574); *GL*, Ms. 22274, n. 439 (9-3-1582) and passim throughout this file. For Giacomo Ragazzoni renting a ship from the Seguro see *GL*, Ms. 22274, n. 104, (10-3-1590). The Ragazzoni brothers were also active in the trade from Crete, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.8166 (Vettor Maffei), cc.91r-92v (30-1-1571).

been previously acknowledged.⁴⁰ They enjoyed fruitful business contacts with England, and were able to send their ships there both earlier and for a longer period of time than previously understood. Their mercantile activities were characterized by an extreme flexibility in their choice of carriers and by an interesting mix of ship owners and crews.⁴¹ A very interesting detail that has emerged is the fact that English merchants themselves were dealing with them on an equal basis, renting ships belonging to these Greek ship owners for their own trades, particularly for trading in the areas where they could not officially do business, like Spain during the Anglo-Spanish conflict. English merchants were also involved in insuring those Greek-Venetian ships.⁴² These documentary discoveries throw a new light on the activities of English merchants in the early phases of their penetration in the Mediterranean, and are extremely helpful in the re-evaluation of the practical ways in which the English managed to penetrate the Venetian commercial system, thereby strengthening their position in the area at large.

Greeks, Jews and the Balkan trades

Of all the Venetian-Greek merchants mentioned above, particularly the Seguro and the Sumacchi families were serious players on the larger international stage. They were also the link that connected English merchants in Venice with the large Jewish commercial webs active in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans. The English themselves took direct advantage of the Jewish Mediterranean trade networks with extreme infrequency, in a sense it can be argued that the Greek network played for them the mediating role traditionally associated with the Jews.

Greek merchants acted as a bridge between the English and the Portuguese Jews based in Venice, with whom the Greeks had regular commercial contacts, and whose goods they frequently transported on their ships

⁴⁰ I explore these activities at greater length in my article “Coping with transition”, cit..

⁴¹ ASV, *Notarile Atti*, reg.11920 (Andrea Spinelli), cc.42r/v (16-1-1599); *ibidem*, reg.3371 (G.Andrea Catti), c.121v, (29-3-1600); *ibidem*, reg.11923 (Andrea Spinelli), cc.73v-74r (28-1-1602); *ibidem*, reg.11925 (Andrea Spinelli), cc.569r/v (11-8-1604); *ibidem*, reg.7868 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.351v-352v (17-5-1591).

⁴² For example see *GL*, Ms.22281 (1582), this contract is for the ‘Santa Maria di Scoppo’ – a ship belonging to Michele Sumacchi – going from London to Zante via Castellammare di Stabia. Amongst the insurers were the Levant members William Garway and Thomas Cordell, and the Corsini brothers. Another example is in ASV, *Quarantia Criminale*, b.103, fasc. 73, cc.9v, 37r/v, where the agents of the Levant Company members Andrew Bayning and John Holmden, hired the “nave Madonna di Schoppo, parcenevole Marco Sicuro, patron Danit Carpenter inglese”, in *ibidem*, 37v-39r. See also ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6533 (Luca Gabrieli), cc.16v-17v (10-1-1586).

to England in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.⁴³ Particularly frequent were the contacts with the Ribeira and Pimentel families, who took advantage of the above-mentioned Greeks and Florentine networks for their trades with England.⁴⁴ The scant use made by the English merchants of the Jewish networks is apparent from the contracts finalized in Venice, where deals with Jewish merchants are extremely rare.⁴⁵ This was to change the following century when, during the Cretan war (1645-69), several Jewish merchants acted as intermediaries with English merchants and ship captains for the chartering of English ships to sustain the Venetian war effort.⁴⁶

Consistent and sustained direct contacts between English merchants and Jews based in the Venetian territories, appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century and almost exclusively involved the Copio, who were probably the most important Jewish family of Zante. Throughout the seventeenth century the Copio acted as brokers between ship owners and merchants in the Islands, and in Venice they arranged some of the major deals that involved consignments of goods in exchange for currants.⁴⁷ The Copio,

⁴³ On the relations between the Sumacchi and the Portuguese-Jewish network based in Venice, see Federica Ruspio, *La comunità portoghese a Venezia (1567-1618)*, tesi di laurea, Università di Venezia, 1998-99, pp. 142-149. For a typical contract between Michele Sumacchi and the Pimentel family of Portuguese Jews for shipping their goods to London on one of his ships see, ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6534 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.464v-467r (18-12-1587). For shipments of goods belonging to Jewish merchants – based in Venice and in her Greek dominions – on ships belonging to the Sumacchi, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6527-6528 (Luca Gabrieli), cc.81r/v (1-3-1582); *ibidem*, c.91r (13-3-1582). It has to be mentioned that at that time the Jews were just starting to own their own ships, and therefore they still heavily relied on third parties for their own shipments, see Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations. Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean*, Leiden, Brill, 1995, pp. 169-184. On Sumacchi's deals with the Ribeira family, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.7847 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.74r/v (20-5-1580) and *ivi*, b.7849 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.115v-116v (7-6-1582). Their contacts are also mentioned in Geoffrey V.Scammell, "Shipowning in the Economy and Politics of Early Modern England", *The Historical Journal*, vol. 15, n° 3, 1972, pp. 385-407, p. 396. There he wrongly called Michele Sumacchi "nominal owner of the Santa Maria".

⁴⁴ For these connections, see *GL*, Ms.21317, *passim*.

⁴⁵ For two of these rare direct contracts, see ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.11892 (Gerolamo Savina), cc.70v-71v (1-3-1582); *ivi*, b.8319 (Francesco Mondo), cc.365v-367r (20-8-1582). I wish to thank Luca Molà for bringing the latter to my attention.

⁴⁶ For an example of these contracts, see one mediated by the Jewish broker Josef Aboaf in 1656, in ASV, *Senato Mar*, reg.119, cc.5v-6v (7-3-1656).

⁴⁷ A typical contract between the Copio and the English for currants in exchange for textiles and tin is in ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6531 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.181r/v (28-5-1584). They also rented Flemish ships to trade with the Netherlands, see Wilfrid Brulez and Greta Devos, *Merchants Flamands*, cit., vol. ii, n. 2584, p. 281 (7-4-1610); n. 2734, p. 332 (27-7-1611); n. 2763, p. 343 (9-1-1612); n. 2772, p. 345 (1-2-1612); n. 2840, p. 366 (22-6-1612); n. 2907 and n. 2908, p. 388 (1-2-1613); n. 2924, p. 394 (4-3-1613). The Copio were also active

taking advantage of the Jewish mercantile network in the Ottoman territories, were in a prime position to commercialise large consignments of goods in the Morea, and to sustain this strategy they acquired large warehouses for the storage of goods in Zante.⁴⁸ Although the English mercantile network in the Venetian territories did business with them, it needs to be stressed that this is the only case in which a sustained relationship between English merchants and a Jewish merchant house has so far emerged from the documentation analysed.

The deals pursued in Venice by English merchants were not necessarily restricted to the territories under the Republic's control. Crisis might have been looming, but Venice was still a neuralgic centre of trade for the eastern Mediterranean, whence trade with the Balkans or with continental Greece could be easily arranged.

Large consignments of Morea currants exchanged for textiles, for example, were easier to organize from Venice than from the Ionian islands, at least in the earlier phases of the trade. Currants from the Greek mainland were inferior in quality to the Ionian ones, but they could be paid for with textiles, as opposed to the bullion that the Islanders demanded for their crops.⁴⁹ The English, naturally, would have preferred to be paid for currants with their textiles. English textiles had almost no market in Venice, a very small one in the islands of Zante and Cephalonia, and a potentially very large one in the Balkans and in the Ottoman Morea. Since trade in textiles with the Balkans could easily be organized from Venice, Jewish and Greek merchants who had their correspondents in Venice controlled this trade, which explains why the deals were finalized in Venice.⁵⁰ Once again, also for penetrating these markets, the Greeks represented the connecting link between the English merchants and local traders.

English merchants tried repeatedly to pay for currants with textiles also in the Islands, since this would have ended up being cheaper for them, and would have silenced those critics at home who complained about the bullion spent to acquire currants. They managed to do so only on very few occasions, in the

in the insurance business, see Alberto Tenenti, *Naufraques, Corsaires*, cit., passim. For their role as brokers for shipments from the Islands, at the middle of the seventeenth century, see the bills of load in the Tomà-Cutrica diatribe, where they often mediated for the hiring of English ships, in ASV, *Avogaria di Comun, Civile*, b.152, fasc. 19; and b.48, fasc. 13.

⁴⁸ ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.6531 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.181r/v (28-5-1584); ASV, *Collegio, Risposte di dentro*, f.30, cc.n.n. (4-2-1639 *more veneto*).

⁴⁹ For these issues underlying the currants trade, may I refer to Maria Fusaro, *Uva passa.*, cit., passim.

⁵⁰ On Jewish mercantile networks controlling Balkan trades, see Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations*, cit., p. 185.

early phase of their presence, when extremely large consignments of goods were arranged well in advance. Those deals normally involved a second phase in which their Greek counterparts would dispose of the textiles in the Ottoman territories, normally with help from the Greek and Jewish traders who controlled these trades.⁵¹ Once the English presence was solidly established in the Ottoman Empire and in Ragusa, these deals disappear from the documentation, and the currants of Zante and Cephalonia were paid for fully in bullion or, in the frequent times of grain shortage, with grain.

In the Ionian islands

The Ionian islands became the basis of the English presence, and in an attempt to stop currants being exported directly out of them, the Venetians reacted with an increase in custom duty for currants directly exported from the Islands to the West. Although this tariff quickly became the largest source of income of the Islands, and one of the principal of the Venetian custom system,⁵² it certainly did not stop the English from settling there and continuing to export directly to England and the north of Europe. Local Greek traders were indispensable for this trade. They provided essential logistic support, they liaised with the producers, they tampered with the customs ledgers to look as if they were the exporters and not the English, therefore avoiding them the higher tariffs, and they also smuggled currants out of the Islands into awaiting English ships. All things that greatly facilitated the English trade. Considering that the currants produced in the Ionian islands of Zante and Cephalonia were the staple of the Anglo-Venetian trade, it is not surprising that cooperation between English and Greek merchants was the foundation of trade.

The frequency of commercial deals between English and Greeks is the first thing that strikes one's attention in the extant sources. Especially in the papers of the only trial for smuggling currants out of the Islands that has survived, the extent and variety of these commercial contacts is impressive. Contracts between foreigners and Venetian subjects were severely prohibited

⁵¹ For some typical deals, see: ASV, *Notarile Atti*, reg.11982 (Gerolamo Savina), cc.70v-71v (1-3-1582); *ivi*, reg.8319 (Francesco Mondo), cc.365v-367r (20-8-1582); *ivi*, reg.7852 (Gerolamo Luran), cc.535r-536v (23-9-1583); *ivi*, reg.6531 (Luca and Giulio Gabrieli), cc.181r/v (28-5-1584). An analysis of the role played by Jewish merchants in these trades between the Islands and the Ottoman Morea is in ASV, *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Risposte*, b.150, cc.186r-189r (10-9-1636).

⁵² On the establishment of the New Impost, a higher custom tariff for currants being directly exported from the Islands to the 'West', and for an overview of its relative importance within the Venetian customs system, see Maria Fusaro, *Uva passa*, cit., pp. 27-44, and table 9, p. 135.

through a long series of reiterated legislation.⁵³ But the Venetian administration, both in the *Dominante* and in the Islands, was clearly not in any state to enforce such legislation, and therefore such contracts were regularly made, seldom discovered, and the culprits very rarely prosecuted.⁵⁴ Although prohibited, these contracts were essential in the everyday running of business, and given this peculiar situation it is arguable that mutual trust was essential to fulfil contracts that were legally unenforceable, and to guarantee the smooth running of business essential for both parties involved. The English were providing the Greeks with a market for the local produce and the opportunity to acquire cash, something of which there was a traditional scarcity in the Islands. The Greeks – acting as brokers, front men, or through their smuggling in favour of the English – were providing the coveted currants, whilst helping the English to partially eschew the extra tariff-duty that the Venetians had put on currants exported directly to the West. It is clear from the trial papers that the practices therein described represented the normal way to conduct business in the Islands. Not all contracts involved such massive amounts of merchandise as in the trial case, and the majority of contracts involved cash rather than goods, but absolutely everyone made contracts of ‘company’ with foreigners. Illegality was the basis of these deals, and legislation promulgated in Venice was consistently disregarded in the Ionian islands.

The successful English alliance with the indigenous population thus created a fruitful commercial partnership that was mutually beneficial. The English managed to achieve a good relationship with all strata of the Greek population with which they came into contact, and their presence had a fundamental role not only in the economic development of the area, but also in shaping the events that influenced the social structure of the Islands in that period. This is something that we are able to appreciate particularly well from the English attitude during the *Popolari* rebellion of 1628 in Zante. The role played in this event by the English can be considered a litmus test revealing their position and role within the Islands at large. The English merchants in Zante managed to extricate themselves from the conflict between the *Popolari* and *Cittadini* factions with amazing dexterity and political acumen. At that time, at the height of their alliance with the Greek subjects of the Republic, the presence of English merchants on the Island was so essential for the local economy that everyone strived to have them on their side, and the rebellion was ultimately

⁵³ ASV, *Senato Mar*, reg. 20, cc.97v-98r (1524); *ivi*, reg.23, cc.191r/v (1536); *ivi*, reg.27, cc.49r/v (1543); *ivi*, reg.44, c.239v (1581).

⁵⁴ The only semi-complete trial (the appeal is lost), about illegal contracts and contraband between English and Islanders, which has survived seems to be the one in ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, b.103, fasc. 73 (1589). The trial is recounted in detail in Maria Fusaro, *Uva Passa*, cit., pp. 108-115.

ended thanks to the direct mediation of the English merchants, in cooperation with the local Greek and Latin religious authorities.

The 1628 revolt of Zante represents an *unicum* in the Venetian territories. In a century characterized by social revolts throughout Europe, the territories of the Republic managed to emerge unscathed, except for this one incident.⁵⁵ The question is almost banal: why here? I believe that the strong English presence in Zante was at the root of the social changes that lead to the rebellion. The Island was exposed to a series of external stimuli, provoked by the English presence, which brought to light and to maturation a series of social issues that were latent in its social fabric. Particularly the new money made from the currants trade became a catalyst that accelerated this accumulation of discontent, creating frictions amongst different strata of the local population. Everyone in Zante, regardless of whether they belonged to the *Cittadini* or to the *Popolari*, tried to pull the English on their side during those events. The essential mediation role played by the English merchants would not have been so effective had it not been validated by the universal acknowledgement, on part of all the local population, of the indispensable role that the English had assumed in the local economy.⁵⁶

Local circumstances and conjunctural situations shaped the cooperation between the English and the Greek mercantile networks in the territories of the Republic. Once the English had established themselves in the Islands, economic collaboration with local merchants expanded beyond the currants trade to other areas of commercial activity.

I have mentioned earlier on the cooperation of Greek and English merchants and ship owners in the long-distance routes of international trade. It is worth also mentioning the existence of business partnerships for small-scale local shipping, that is to say within the Ionian islands and between the Islands and the Ottoman mainland. These partnerships were also extremely active in the regional trade connecting the eastern Mediterranean with Venice.

For the English merchants living in the Islands it was fairly common to buy small ships in co-ownership with Greek merchants. This kind of joint

⁵⁵ Gaetano Cozzi, “Venezia nello scenario europeo”, in Id., Michael Knapton, Giovanni Scarabello, *La repubblica di Venezia*, cit., vol. 2, pp. 5-183, p. 173. For the narrative of the events of the revolt in Zante, I am indebted to Dimitris Arvanitakis, *Social conflicts in the town of Zante. The ‘popolari’ rebellion of 1628*, doctoral dissertation, University of Athens, 1999.

⁵⁶ For an in-depth analysis of these events may I refer to Maria Fusaro, *The English Mercantile Communities in Venice and in the Ionian Islands, 1570-1670*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, pp. 198-203.

property was once again beneficial to everyone involved. For the English it avoided the need to rent boats for small short-distance transports, and the owning of a small ship provided also an easy way to increase one's income, finally having Greeks as co-owners provided also a convenient cover to avoid the payment of the duties reserved to foreign ships.⁵⁷ For the Greeks it meant having a larger cash flow and the certainty of employment. Because these trades were considered as smuggling by the Venetian authorities, they left scant documentary traces. The most frequent use of these small boats – especially *fregate* – was in fact to move goods from the Islands to the Morea where they were then loaded onto English ships, thereby avoiding the payment of custom duties.⁵⁸ These forms of cooperation were crucial for all the parties involved, being the backbone of local small-scale trading, and in them the English played a crucial role.⁵⁹

But cooperation between English and Greek merchants in local and regional trades was not limited to the instances of shared ownership of vessels mentioned above. Whilst the English had taken advantage of Greek-Venetian ships at the beginning of their trades with the area, slowly these roles were reversed, and the English came to play a very large role as carriers for inter-Mediterranean trades. With their presence solidly established in the area, their role on these routes grew steadily throughout the seventeenth century. The volume of inter-Mediterranean trade that was carried on English ships represents a crucial aspect of the importance of the English presence in the Mediterranean at large during the early modern period. It is something rather difficult to gauge, and has not been studied by English historiography because it left no traces in English archives. Very little documentation on this has survived. We have some figures from a trial dating from the middle of the seventeenth century, and from those we can see how more than fifty per cent of the trade between Zante and Cephalonia and Venice was on English ships.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See *General Public Records of the State, Archives of the District of Cephalonia*, (from now on *FAK-ANK*), *Notarial Archive*, b.74a (Pietro Sarlo), vol. i, c.68r (10-1-1633); *ivi*, b.91 (Rafael Pignatore), vol. i, c.35v (25-2-1636), I wish to thank Stamatoula Zapandi for bringing the latter to my attention. See also ASV, *Notarile Atti*, b.8449 (Alberto Mastaleo), cc.141r/v (21-9-1640).

⁵⁸ See, for example, ASV, *Senato Mar*, reg.97, cc.144r, 177r (1639). The *Rettore* of Cephalonia started a trial against two *fregate* that brought currants to the English ship 'Leon dorato', avoiding the payment of customs.

⁵⁹ Michael Knapton, *Tra Dominante e Dominio*, cit., p. 269.

⁶⁰ A commercial dispute that broke out between Nicolò Toma and Demetrio Cutrica – two merchants from Zante – in the 1640s, allows us to draw some interesting considerations: in the previous decade more than 50 per cent of the Island's trade with Venice was pursued on English ships. "Simon di Moisè Copio" appeared always to be the broker for such deals, interestingly all cargo included merchandise belonging to a *Seguro*, see ASV, *Avogaria di Comun, Civile*, b.152, fasc. 91; and *ivi*, b.48, fasc. 13.

Partnerships and cooperation in shipping were therefore rather frequent: in small scale local trades, like in the above-mentioned frigate partnerships; in medium scale shipping, like on the route between the Islands and Venice; and in the long-distance shipping to the north of Europe.

And, as I said at the beginning of this essay, it is most interesting to note how the protagonists at the regional level were the same as at the long distance trade. This points towards a close interconnection between regional and long-distance trade networks. In this particular case this proved to be a very successful strategy, which once again reaped advantages for all the parties involved. A commercial strategy which connected such different kind of trades proved to be particularly successful given the peculiarities of the English commercial presence in the Venetian Mediterranean.

In dealing with the connectivity and density of mercantile networks, these kind of contracts which involved small or medium scale operations, played a role that was possibly far superior to the value of the goods involved in the transactions. They created a tight web of everyday contacts which are extremely important in gauging the level of mutual interaction between the parties involved. Moreover, much can be learnt about the role that the English merchants played in the Mediterranean at large by concentrating on these flows of local traffic. The kind of shared ownership of vessels that we have seen above, with all the potential troubles which could arise from their discovery by the Venetian authorities, and the presence of arbitration sentences where Greek arbitrators represented English merchants, clearly demonstrate the existence of a high level of mutual trust.⁶¹ A cooperation founded on the coinciding economic interests of producers and buyers of specific products, over time developed to include interactions that were not connected exclusively with a simple exchange of goods for cash, and which necessitated of a higher level of long-term mutual trust to function. Thanks to the above-mentioned transactions, several Greek merchants of the Islands took advantage of the English presence to enlarge the scope of their trades, and to strengthen their own shipping networks benefiting of the general increase in traffic. These documents also reveal how even the smaller merchants had much to gain from the presence of foreign merchants, whose presence allowed them to move their goods to Venice, and therefore to increase their chances of income, profiting from the presence of foreign ships that they could use as carriers. For the English merchants based in Venice and her dominions an involvement in local trades afforded an excellent opportunity of investment, allowing them primarily to employ their ships for short periods with a good financial return, but also to have a privileged insight into the region to utilise as

⁶¹ For example, see *ΓΑΚ-ΑΝΚ, Notarial Archive*, b.61 (Dimo Ardavani), vol. iv, c.2v (9-1-1638).

a precious source of information regarding trade in the area. For the Greek subjects of the Republic, particularly when their own ship owners disappeared from the international scene, it represented a chance to increase their exposure of their produce to more external markets.

The relationship between the English and the Greek mercantile networks remained mainly restricted to business endeavours, the last term considered in its wider sense. Interestingly it did not stretch to intermarriage between the two groups, and this is surprising, because there was a long tradition of inter-religious and inter-cultural marriages between Englishmen and Greek women, particularly in the lands under Ottoman control, where the Greeks were the only women accessible to Englishmen without the risk of death.⁶² But the Anglo-Greek marriages of the Turkish territories or of Venice itself find no parallel in the Greek territories under Venetian rule.⁶³

Conclusions

Anglo-Greek connections, though strong, were therefore mostly focused on the achievement of mutual economic interests; in a sense it can be argued that the presence of Venice as a common commercial adversary gave focus to their interaction. Especially in the Ionian islands, English and Greek interests partly coincided and partly were mutually compatible. This created an atmosphere of cooperation and competition that shaped their alliance, the latter considered a necessary tool for achieving one's economic goal challenged by the Republic's government.

The cooperation between these two networks – one made up by English merchants active in the Venetian Mediterranean, and the other by Greek merchants subject of the Republic – is interesting also in view of their structural differences. The Greeks represented a 'classic' example of Diaspora network characterized by strong kinship links, common religious affiliation and a shared experience of living and acting as a minority under foreign rule.

⁶² Alfred C. Wood, *A History*, cit., pp. 225, 244-245. After 1677 the rules about citizenship in Turkish territories changed, from that date whoever married a Turkish subject automatically became one too. The Company at that point simply forbade marriages with Turkish subjects. There was no such problem with marrying a Venetian subject, and this happened with relative frequency in Venice itself.

⁶³ The only evidence of a relationship that was probably more than just professional is to be found in a testament outside our time-span: in 1689, the then Consul Clement Harby left to Adriana Sverona, "all the goods of mine at Zante, in my House [...] without rendring [sic] accounts or Inventory to anyone", see ASV, *Notarile Testamenti*, b.92 (Valerio Bonis), n. 66 (28-10-1689). In Venice it is possible to hypothesize a Greek descent for only one of the several wives for whom we have found documentary evidence, see ASV, *Notarile Testamenti*, b.1021 (Pasqualin Valaresso), n. 637 (3-10-1614).

The importance of the Greek commercial networks remained a characteristic of their existence well beyond the period that they acted under Venetian rule. The Greek Diaspora commercial networks survived and prospered, and in the nineteenth century they provided the financial backbone of the fight for independence, and later of the new Greek state.⁶⁴ But the Greek Venetian subjects, who were protagonists of trades with northern Europe in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, did not manage to maintain their momentum and their role on the international stage. The traditional structure that characterized the ways of conducting business of the most prominent amongst them – particularly of the Seguro and Sumacchi – ultimately proved to be a great disadvantage for their long-term prospects. Their reliance on kinship, and the lack of support from their Venetian overlord, were their undoing. As long as these families were lead by individuals gifted with a strong entrepreneurial flair, and as long as the English were not properly organized in their commercial penetration of the area, they prospered. Once the dominant individuals in these Greek merchants' dynasties left the stage, and once the English merchants had settled, their successors proved themselves incapable of maintaining the fortunes of their families at the same level. They disappeared from the international stage, and they managed to maintain a pre-eminent role only at the regional level.

The English mercantile network in the Venetian territories represented a completely different structure, apart from the common English origin we can see some consistency in their social origin, but their network was not supported by kinship ties or by a common religious affiliation. The English network self-replicated on the basis of the affiliation of these merchants to the Levant Company members back in London. This probably represented a more 'modern' structure, in which company affiliation and mutual economic interests substituted kinship and religious affiliation as the structure of reference, even in regard of the classic issues of mutual trust and transaction costs⁶⁵. This kind of

⁶⁴ On those, amongst a very rich bibliography, see Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchants", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 20, n° 2, 1960, pp. 234-313; Gelina Harlaftis, *A History of Greek-owned Shipping. The making of an international tramp fleet, 1830 to the present day*, London-New York, Routledge, 1996; Deno J. Geanakoplos, 'The Genesis of Modern Greek National Consciousness', in N.P. Diamandouros et alia (dir.), *Hellenism and the First Greek National War of Liberation (1821-1830): Continuity and Change*, Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1976, pp. 59-77; Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *The Greek Nation, 1453-1669. The Cultural and Economic Background of Modern Greek Society*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1976, especially the pp. 271-290.

⁶⁵ Frederic Lane has pointed up some economic functions of protection and protection costs in an important series of articles, based on the experience of the medieval Mediterranean, but with a much wider relevance: Frederic C. Lane, *Venice and History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1966, especially pp. 373-428. For the issue of protection costs, see also Philip

structure, quite apart from all other considerations, guaranteed more stability and continuity to the functioning of the network itself, above and beyond the single merchants who constituted it at any given time.

There is another reason why it is extremely interesting to analyse the Anglo-Greek commercial interaction at this particular juncture. Both groups seemed to specialize in catering for the same sector of the consumer market – the lower middle – both in terms of production and of distribution. Comparing these two groups, whilst it is important to make all the necessary qualifications concerning the quality and, especially the different scale of the trade, it is striking to see how much both groups tended to concentrate not on luxury products but on middling ones, which were aimed at a larger market. It is also interesting to note how in both countries it was the same social group that was engaged in the development of international trade. Both also shared a strong interest in naval transport for third parties, the English at least in the Mediterranean, both in short and long distance haulage. The existence of these common objectives helped build and structure a relationship that was beneficial to both parties for a long time. Venice fulfilled the ungratifying role of common enemy, at least in terms of economic policy, and therefore it represented the perfect counterpart to the Anglo-Greek alliance. The convergence of English and Greek commercial interests – above and beyond the trade in currants – proved an insurmountable obstacle to the declining forces of the Republic. Beyond the everyday common goal of paying as few customs duties as possible, there were clear convergences of commercial and maritime interests between Greek and English merchants, and this proved untenable for Venice.

An important peculiarity of the English mercantile presence in Venice was their relative freedom of action in a town, and a state, which had always tended to strictly regulate foreign commercial presence in its territory. Several reasons were behind this situation, amongst which were their late arrival and establishment in town, and the peculiar diplomatic situation between the two states during the reign of Elizabeth, when diplomatic relations between the two states were absent.⁶⁶ The practical, and paradoxical, consequence of this was the larger freedom that they enjoyed in their commercial dealings in the territories

D. Curtin, *Cross-cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 41-42; Gary M. Anderson and Robert D. Tollison, “Adam Smith’s analysis of joint-stock companies”, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 90, n° 6, 1982, pp. 1237-1256; Eidem, “Apologiae for chartered monopolies in foreign trade, 1600-1800”, *History of Political Economy*, vol. 15, 1983, pp. 549-566.

⁶⁶ For an in-depth discussion of the peculiarities of the English mercantile presence in Venice, of commercial privileges in Venice, and of the attitude of the Venetian state in regard to it, may I refer to Maria Fusaro, *Uva Passa.*, cit., pp. 9-26; Id., *The English Mercantile Communities*, cit., passim.

of the Republic. The long-term successful alliance that they established with the Greek commercial network was a corollary of this situation on the one hand, and of the nature of the goods of the trade on the other.

The peculiar way in which the English merchants did business in the Venetian territories proved to be an essential ingredient towards their ultimate success. Their superior underlying commercial organization, and the broad freedom that the Levant company merchants allowed their factors, provided an extremely flexible structure that was essential in effectively penetrating the Venetian market, and successfully challenging Venice's previous dominance of trade in the eastern Mediterranean. This penetration was achieved by a mercantile community characterized by a very informal structure, descending from the social make-up of the English merchants who were active in the Venetian territories, usually coming from a lower social stratum than their fellow countrymen who were active in the Ottoman Levant. This is in itself a proof of the success of the strategy employed by the Levant Company, which managed to contain within itself two very different ways of conducting business, thereby showing an excellent understanding of the importance of cultural peculiarities in the pursuit of commercial goals. Thanks to the flexibility of their trading structure, which allowed them to adjust their behaviour according to the social and political context in which they operated, the English merchants managed to successfully overcome the disadvantages that followed from not having been granted any commercial privilege in Venice. The chance to take advantage of the Greek mercantile network provided the English with an excellent opportunity to surreptitiously and swiftly insert themselves into the Venetian commercial system and, by penetrating its interstices, they undermined its trade structure from within.

Reti locali e reti internazionali degli ebrei di Livorno nel Seicento

LUCIA FRATTARELLI FISCHER

Il porto di Livorno e la “Livornina”

La città di Pisa e il porto di Livorno¹ diventano nel 1591 per gli ebrei sefarditi un nuovo polo di insediamento, che nasce, a differenza dei contemporanei insediamenti spontanei nelle città protestanti di Amsterdam e Amburgo,² in modo ufficiale sotto la protezione di un principe. Il *Privilegio* concesso da Ferdinando I, facendo leva sul diritto mercantile delle città emporio e dei porti, si rivolge (in nome della prosperità dei commerci) a tutti i mercanti Levantini e Ponentini, ma nel concreto si propone di assicurare l'insediamento degli ebrei, tanto che, a seguito del preambolo, in 33 articoli sono dettate le norme di tolleranza religiosa valide a facilitarne la vita e a proteggerli dall'Inquisizione. Consiglieri del Granduca di Toscana furono due importanti personaggi: l'auditore Pietro Cavallo e Carlo Dal Pozzo, arcivescovo di Pisa.³ Mediatore degli ebrei fu Magino di Gabriello, ebreo di Venezia nominato console della nascente comunità che ha le sue radici nella comunità marrana di

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Abbreviazioni

ASFi - Archivio di Stato di Firenze

ASLi - Archivio di Stato di Livorno

ASPi - Archivio di Stato di Pisa

ACDF, S.O- Archivio della Congregazione per la dottrina della Fede, Santo Ufficio, Città del Vaticano.

ACILi – Archivio della Comunità Israelitica di Livorno

¹ Sullo sviluppo del porto di Livorno F. Braudel, R.ROMANO, *Navires et Marchandises à l'entrée du Port de Livourne (1547-1611)*, Paris,1951.

² J.I. ISRAEL, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, Oxford 1989, pp. 53-69.

³ L.FRATTARELLI FISCHER, *Cristiani nuovi e nuovi ebrei in Toscana fra Cinque e Seicento. Legittimazioni e percorsi individuali*, in P.C. IOLY ZORATTINI (a cura), *L'identità dissimulata. Giudaizzanti iberici nell'Europa cristiana dell'età moderna*, Firenze, 2000, pp. 99-149.

quella città.⁴ Ispirandosi forse al modello di Daniel Rodrigo e di Rodrigo di Braganza, l'uno console degli ebrei a Venezia e l'altro a Spalato,⁵ egli fece circolare il Privilegio nella grande comunità veneziana dei conversos inducendo alcune famiglie a trasferirsi da Venezia⁶ e da Ferrara⁷ a Pisa.⁸ Nel 1592 fu inviato in Levante con un passaporto per sé e per gli ebrei che, con famiglie e sostanze, conducevano a Pisa e Livorno.⁹ L'arrivo dei mercanti ebrei porta un cambiamento del sistema di governo della comunità, formalizzato nel 1593. I mercanti chiesero e ottennero di potersi governare con massari da loro stessi eletti¹⁰. Dal 1593 ebbero quindi effetto di legge gli Ampliamenti delle concessioni, conosciuti con il nome di "Livornina" e la comunità degli ebrei a Pisa e Livorno fu istituita secondo il modello veneziano, che poneva tutti i poteri (politici, economici e giudiziari), nelle mani dei governatori laici e non nelle mani dei rabbini, che erano dei semplici salariati.¹¹

La tolleranza religiosa fu lo strumento, difeso con ogni mezzo da tutti i granduchi di Toscana, per garantire l'insediamento dei mercanti e i loro rapporti reciproci. La politica di dissimulazione e le mediazioni diplomatiche con la Santa Sede messe in atto da Ferdinando I e dai successori garantirono una

⁴ Magino è un ebreo veneziano che si presenta come esperto di novità tecniche protette da una società aperta a Venezia con il lucchese Battista Guidoboni, (L.MOLA', *The silk Industry of Renaissance Venice*, Baltimora-London, 2000, pp.204-14) Nelle grazie di papa Sisto V, al quale dedica un trattato (Magino Gabrielli, *Dialoghi sopra l'utilissime invenzioni circa la seta*, Roma, per gli Eredi di Giovanni Gigliotti, 1585), Magino è ben accolto nelle corti italiane. Le sue innovazioni sulla produzione della seta presentate nel 1587 a Francesco I e nel 1588 a Ferdinando I (ASFi, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 16, ins. 9) sono giudicate con sospetto dall'Arte della Seta di Firenze (ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 798, cc.473rv-474r.), egli riesce tuttavia ad avere la protezione del granduca e ingenti prestiti per commerci di stoffe fiorentine in Levante e introduce in Toscana una cartiera e una vetreria. Ma il suo maggior successo fu certamente l'opera di mediatore dell'insediamento degli ebrei sefarditi in Toscana.

⁵ ACDF, SO, St.St. BB 5.b, c. 226, lettera di P. Zaccaria di Venezia, l 29 luglio 1594.

⁶ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 839, c.594 : lettera di David Pomis che, inviando le sue pubblicazioni a Ferdinando I, lo benedice per il privilegio concesso agli ebrei.

⁷ A. LEONI, *La nazione ebraica spagnola e portoghese negli Stati estensi*, Rimini, 1992. R. SEGRE, *La formazione di una comunità marrana: portoghesi a Ferrara*, in C. VIVANTI, (a cura), *Ebrei in Italia dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti*, *Storia d'Italia*, Annali, 11, 1, Torino, 1996, pp.781-834.

⁸ M. LUZZATI, *Dal prestito al commercio: gli Ebrei dello Stato fiorentino nel secolo XVI*, in *La casa dell'Ebreo. Saggi sugli Ebrei di Pisa e in Toscana nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento*, Pisa, 1985, pp.265-295.

⁹ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 281, 147v.

¹⁰ ASFi, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 18, ins. 661,1/2. L. FRATTARELLI FISCHER, *Ebrei a Pisa fra Cinquecento e Settecento*, in *Gli Ebrei di Pisa (secoli IX-XX)*, Atti del Convegno internazionale, Pisa, 3-4 ottobre 1994, a cura di M. LUZZATI, Pisa. 1998, pp. 89-115.

¹¹ S. NADLER, *Spinoza. A Life*, Cambridge, 1999, ed. it. *Baruch Spinoza e l'Olanda del Seicento*, Torino, 2002, p.21.

protezione sufficientemente sicura e continua. Pertanto, a seguito della concessione del Privilegio ai mercanti Levantini e Ponentini (1591-93), Pisa e Livorno diventano un polo di transito e di insediamento di conversos e di nuovi ebrei.¹² La fama del nuovo insediamento si accresce non solo per vie parentali e interne alla “nazione”, ma anche tramite mediatori, inviati appositamente dai granduchi in Levante¹³ e anche nelle comunità criptogiudee della Francia.¹⁴ Si formarono così in Toscana tre nuclei principali di insediamento degli ebrei: la “nazione di Pisa”, “l’insediamento di Firenze”, e dal 1613, anno in cui si stacca da quella pisana, la “nazione di Livorno”¹⁵: ciascuna ha statuti e governo autonomo secondo un sistema tipico delle città degli antichi stati italiani.

Già nel 1595 la “nazione” di Pisa può contare sulla presenza di 60 capifamiglia: la lista nominativa sottoposta al rabbino Coen Ara¹⁶ offre la prima immagine complessiva di una comunità numerosa, i cui caratteri più evidenti sono l’aggregazione su base familiare (sono enumerati padri e figli o fratelli) e la mobilità (molti, a suo dire, li ha conosciuti a Venezia e a Ferrara, altri a Pisa, alcuni si sono già trasferiti in Levante, o a Ferrara e Venezia). Alcune famiglie, che godono il privilegio di Pisa, si sono insediate a Firenze e a Livorno. Una testimonianza del 1599 ricostruisce anche la rete più vasta degli ebrei già nuovi cristiani provenienti dal Brasile e dalle Indie¹⁷ e connessioni fra Venezia, Pisa, Firenze, Roma, Napoli e il Marocco.¹⁸

I legami sociali e parentali fra i nuovi cristiani abitanti a Firenze e Pisa con un privilegio del 1549 e gli ebrei di origine portoghese residenti a Pisa, Livorno e Firenze¹⁹ cambia la prospettiva storiografica incentrata sullo studio delle singole comunità e mostra una realtà complessa anche nel contesto del

¹² Il tema del passaggio dei nuovi cristiani all’ebraismo in G. KAPLAN, *From Christianity to Judaism. The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, Oxford, 1989. EAD., *Devianza e punizione nella diaspora sefardita occidentale del XVII secolo: i portoghesi ad Amsterdam*, in “*Rivista Mensile di Israel*”, LVIII, 1992, pp.163-200.

¹³ Al viaggio di Maggino del 1592 (*Mediceo del Principato*, 281, 147v.).

¹⁴ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 290, cc. 36v-37. Lettere patenti del 2. 4. 1596 per Isach Cavaliere e chiunque conduce e condurrà seco da suo viaggio in Bordeaux. Simone Valensino fu inviato a Tolosa nel 1607 (*Mediceo del Principato*, 300, c. 80).

¹⁵ R.TOAFF, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)*, Firenze, 1990, pp. 155-182.

¹⁶ AGDF, S. O., St.St. BB. 5b, c. 66. Coen Ara, è rabbino della comunità di Pisa, dichiara di essere nato a Venezia da Mosè nato a Scorpio e da Ester nata a Sofia. E’ molto interessante notare che Venezia fornisce i primi rabbini alle comunità nascenti in Italia come ad Amsterdam (S. NADLER, *Baruch Spinoza*, cit., p.13).

¹⁷ ACDF, SO, St.St. BB 5.b, c.91-93. Sulla condizione dei nuovi cristiani negli imperi coloniali iberici N. WACHTEL, *La foi du souvenir. Labyrinths marranes*, E’ditions du Seuil, 2001.

¹⁸ ACDF, SO, St.St. BB 5.b, f, 233. Diego di Marcena residente a Pisa nel 1599, al servizio del re Moro ha un nipote in Marocco.

¹⁹ L.FRATTARELLI FISCHER, *Cristiani nuovi e nuovi ebrei in Toscana*, cit. pp. 140-143.

granducato, dove comunità ebraica di Livorno per lo sviluppo dei traffici portuali diviene ben presto la più attiva. In un primo periodo, 1590- 1630, appaiono evidenti i legami fra i portoghesi che vivono come cristiani in Toscana e gli ebrei; fra il 1640 e il 1680 si assiste al radicamento degli ebrei a Livorno e nel territorio toscano; infine, a partire dal 1680, entra in crisi la presenza degli ebrei portoghesi, insidiata dall'arrivo di altri gruppi con reti e interessi alternativi.

Nella metà del Seicento Livorno raggiunge una posizione di importanza internazionale e diventa un punto nevralgico di reti commerciali di grande complessità. La “nazione” ebrea consolida la sua rete commerciale internazionale e nello stesso tempo dà inizio a un processo di stabilizzazione locale, fino ad oggi non adeguatamente rilevato. Nel 1642 la “nazione ebrea di Livorno” ha ormai da qualche decennio superato in numero e consistenza economica quella di Pisa, di cui pure era stata filiazione. In quell'anno infatti gli ebrei di Pisa sono 250 su una popolazione di circa 8.000 abitanti; a Livorno, su una popolazione cittadina di 12.300 abitanti gli ebrei sono 1211. E per tutto l'antico regime essi saranno il 10% della popolazione, raggiungendo il numero di circa 3500 a metà del Settecento.²⁰ Gli arrivi si susseguono in piccole ondate con l'immigrazione di famiglie provenienti dall'Africa del Nord, dalla Francia. Gli arrivi dalla Spagna e dal Portogallo sono determinati dall'azione dell'Inquisizione di quei paesi²¹ e spesso avvengono in modo fortunoso.²²

L'aumento delle persone e il ruolo economico della “nazione” risaltano attraverso il permesso di costruire una nuova e più grande sinagoga con tecnici e maestranze granducali.²³ Una concessione che si scontrava con il divieto canonico di edificare nuove sinagoghe, parzialmente aggirato col costruire la nuova nei piani superiori dello stesso sito della precedente e sullo spazio delle abitazioni limitrofe.²⁴ Fu anche ampliata la disponibilità di case, grazie alla costruzione ex novo di interi isolati. Nel 1654 una ditta di ebrei gestisce

²⁰ L.FRATTARELLI FISCHER, *L'insediamento ebraico a Livorno dalle origini all'emancipazione*, in M.LUZZATI (a cura), *Le tre sinagoghe. Edifici di culto e vita ebraica a Livorno dal Seicento al Novecento*, Livorno-Torino, 1995, pp. 33-46.

²¹ J. VEIGA TORRES, *Uma longa guerra social: os ritmos da repressao inquisitorial em Portugal*, in “Revista de Historia Economica e Social”, n. 1, 1978, pp. 55-68.

²² Nel 1655, ad esempio, si registra l'arrivo da Malaga su nave olandese di 40 passeggeri ebrei che “dicono di aver lasciato la terra per riguardo della giustizia e si imbarcarono di nascosto senza anche pigliare la loro patente di sanità” (ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 1819, lettera del 4 giugno 1655).

²³ E. KARWACKA CODINI, M. SBRILLI, *La sinagoga di Livorno. Una storia di oltre tre secoli*, in M.LUZZATI (a cura), *Le tre sinagoghe*, cit., pp. 47-82.

²⁴ Copia della lettera inviata dalla Congregazione del S. Ufficio al granduca per ammonirlo circa la costruzione e ingrandimento della sinagoga di Livorno in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano Latino, 10444, cc.136r-138.

l'urbanizzazione di due nuove aree sottratte alle servitù militari. Gli ebrei di Livorno dunque oltre al privilegio, sempre più raro nell'Italia del Seicento, di non essere chiusi in un ghetto²⁵, ottengono il riconoscimento della proprietà immobiliare piena. Essi aprono, inoltre, importanti attività manifatturiere per la lavorazione dello zucchero, dei berrettini di lana, della seta, del cuoio e del corallo. E' un comportamento che risale ai primordi della loro presenza a Pisa e a Livorno, fortemente innovativo rispetto al modello economico dei mercanti ebrei, che in altre regioni d'Italia si impegnavano soltanto in attività commerciali, unica garanzia dinanzi a partenze improvvise. In contropartita di tanti benefici, sono forse invitati a fondare un monte ebraico nella Dogana di Livorno versando 100.000 scudi, lì immobilizzati in cambio di un interesse del 6% annuo.²⁶

La possibilità di fare lavorare le materie prime da loro importate e l'appalto del tabacco, dell'acquavite e della carta, permisero a molti ebrei di insediarsi nelle campagne e di aprire botteghe nei luoghi di mercato, dove insieme con la compravendita esercitavano, sebbene vietato, il piccolo prestito per il consumo. Questo quadro rende certamente interessante cercare di individuare i meccanismi di aggregazione della comunità, le sue reti parentali e commerciali, i rapporti con le autorità granducali e con lo stesso granduca. Tutti i granduchi, infatti, confermarono nella sostanza i privilegi della Livornina e, anzi in alcuni casi, i rapporti informali fra gli esponenti di spicco degli ebrei e il principe permisero di risolvere particolari problemi e ottenere più ampi privilegi a livello personale.²⁷

Reti parentali

Il quadro delle famiglie e delle alleanze parentali degli ebrei residenti a Livorno risaltano in due elenchi inediti²⁸ presentati al granduca dal dottor Mosè Cordovero, l'uomo che per 45 anni aveva avuto la quasi totale egemonia sulla comunità di Livorno. Non sono firmati, ma sono da collegare alla lettera inviata al governatore di Livorno al fine di ottenere la mediazione granducale per

²⁵ A. MILANO, *Storia degli Ebrei in Italia*, Torino, 1963 e C. VIVANTI, (a cura), *Ebrei in Italia dall'alto Medioevo all'età dei ghetti*, *Storia d'Italia*, Annali, 11, 1, cit..

²⁶ ASLi, *Dogana*, 4, ins. 185 e passim, Il rescritto di fondazione del monte è del 21 aprile 1644.

²⁷ A Firenze a partire dalla metà del '600 molti ebrei influenti non erano costretti in ghetto: da una verifica del 1705 emerse che 102 famiglie pari a 434 persone (più della metà della popolazione ebraica a Firenze) abitavano fuori del ghetto in L. Frattarelli FISCHER, *Urban Forms of Jewish Settlement in Tuscan Cities (Florence, Pisa, Leghorn) during the 17th Century*, "Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies", Jerusalem, August 16-24, 1989, in *Papers in Jewish Demography*, a cura di U.O. SCHMELZ, S.DELLA PERGOLA, Jerusalem, 1993, pp.48-60.

²⁸ ASLi, *Comune preunitario*, 135, cc. 605-6 e c. 628, in appendice documenti n. 1 e 2.

dirimere i conflitti con un nuovo gruppo di famiglie che, coalizzate fra di loro, avevano dato la scalata alle cariche della “nazione”.²⁹

Secondo il dottor Cordovero, i mercanti ebrei aventi diritto all’elezione dei massari nel 1642 sono 85 e sono raggruppati in 32 “ceppi di case”.³⁰ E’ questa una informazione molto interessante, in quanto, rispetto agli elenchi dei capi di casa ricostruiti da più fonti³¹, mostra la configurazione della rete parentale degli ebrei negozianti e mercanti a Livorno, e ci permette di conoscere, attraverso una fonte interna alla “nazione” i raggruppamenti familiari degli aventi diritto all’elezione dei massari per “ceppi” estesi anche agli affini.

Il documento mostra che i capifamiglia che non hanno parenti maschi adulti residenti a Livorno rappresentano il 14%. Su 85 capifamiglia, infatti, sono 12 i “ceppi di case” costituiti da un solo mercante; sei sono formati da 2 capifamiglia, cinque da 3, cinque da 4, due da 5, due da sei capi di casa. Sembra chiara la tendenza all’insediamento di parenti in primo grado e della stessa generazione, fratelli cugini, e sorelle, la cui presenza è attestata dall’enumerazione di cognati e consuoceri,³² una parentela stretta per via femminile, che, a causa del costume endogamico nelle famiglie ebreiche di ascendenza portoghese e castigliana, consolidava e rinsaldava alleanze parentali già preesistenti. Solo la famiglia Cordovero ha una struttura complessa che comprende tre generazioni: il dottore Moisè, i suoi figli e nipoti. Ma se guardiamo in modo unitario all’insediamento toscano, i Cordovero appaiono più isolati rispetto ad altri mercanti che possono contare su familiari residenti a Pisa e Firenze, oltre che a Livorno.³³

Ancora più interessante è la lista presentata dal Cordovero per presentare le cinque “casate” che raggruppano 42 capifamiglia, che, “tutti d’accordo”, nel 1642 riescono ad eleggere un massaro per casata aggiudicandosi il pieno controllo della gestione della “nazione” di Livorno.³⁴ Attraverso questo documento il quadro si mostra infatti più complicato e intrecciato. La *nota degli elettori* mette in risalto la forza della parentela nel sistema delle alleanze, ed anche il fatto che essa si estende a comprendere i compagni di commercio e i loro congiunti o un “salariato”³⁵ come avviene nella potente casata Dela Pegna,

²⁹ ACILi, Rescrittos Antigos, c.31 in R. TOAFF, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa*, cit., p. 660.

³⁰ ASLi, *Comune*, 135, c. 629, in Appendice, documento n. 1.

³¹ R. TOAFF, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa*, cit., pp.442-466.

³² Vedi in Appendice il documento n. 1.

³³ Si veda l’importanza della famiglia di Isach de Pas sposato con Sara Franco Abunquerque , i cui fratelli, raffinatori di zucchero e mercanti abitano a Firenze e Pisa, David si trasferisce a Livorno solo alla metà del ‘600 : ASLi, *Dogana*, 4, ins. 182.

³⁴ ASLi, *Comune*, 135, c. 628, Appendice, documento n. 2.

³⁵ Si tratta del dottor Samuel Pardo.

che può contare su 18 capifamiglia. Il documento offre un riferimento nuovo per osservare il sistema delle alleanze familiari e interfamiliari e, se da una parte conferma la tendenza della diaspora mercantile sefardita ad articolarsi in postazioni di commercio di carattere familiare, indica che erano in atto anche alleanze più complesse e variegate. I rapporti familiari e personali che trovando espressione ai vertici della gestione della “nazione” conferivano infatti ai più importanti mercanti lo status e la visibilità necessari per contrattare direttamente con i poteri locali (il governatore e i provveditori), con il governo fiorentino (il segretario di guerra responsabile degli affari di Livorno) e con lo stesso granduca, favori, privilegi, protezioni per ampliare le rotte commerciali ottenendo passaporti, possibilità di navigare con bandiera granducale, lettere ai capi di Stato, fattori decisivi per definire gli indirizzi economici della “nazione” ebrea di Livorno.

Reti mercantili

A metà del Seicento Livorno ha pienamente acquistato importanza come nodo di connessione fra i circuiti commerciali del Levante, quelli del Nord Europa e la rete di cabotaggio peninsulare. In una relazione del 1642 il governatore della città osserva che in quegli anni “hora, per dir così, la città nasce, si moltiplicano gli abitatori perché tutti vi hanno impiego e guadagno”.³⁶ Attori decisivi per la costruzione di questa economia con relazioni internazionali furono i mercanti. Gli ebrei, grazie alle loro reti mercantili attive nel Mediterraneo musulmano, contribuiscono a rendere il porto di Livorno un mercato di transito, in cui confluivano le merci dell’Asia e dell’Africa, da scambiare con i prodotti italiani e quelli dell’Europa del Nord.

Il giro di affari della piazza e gli interessi dei mercanti che vi operavano si concentravano nei libri dei sensali, i mediatori dei commerci cittadini,³⁷ anche se, nel tentativo di imporre una tassa proporzionata ai guadagni dei sensali, i funzionari granducali sono costretti a dichiarare l’impossibilità di un controllo effettivo (solo attraverso una causa fra quattro sensali era emerso che la compagnia da loro fatta in tre anni aveva fruttato 22.000 pezze “oltre quello che dice esser sotto le panche”). Vi erano -inoltre- molti che senza essere scritti nelle liste dei sensali ne esercitavano le funzioni “come necessari in far vendere e comprare”.³⁸ La perdita dei libri delle compagnie mercantili e di quelli dei sensali non permette oggi di ricostruire volume e direzione dei traffici dei

³⁶ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2153, parte II, ins. 4. Relazione del governatore di Livorno sui sensali di Livorno, 24 maggio 1642.

³⁷ L’elenco dei sensali nel 1644 con la tassazione annua cui vennero assoggettati in ASFi, *Monte del Bigallo*, 644.

³⁸ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2153, parte II, ins. 4. Relazione del governatore di Livorno sui sensali di Livorno, 24 maggio 1642.

mercanti residenti a Livorno, seguendo la rilevazione operata nel 1642³⁹ si può individuare, per linee grossolane, la presenza delle “nazioni” mercantili di Livorno nell’economia dello Stato toscano: sono 220 mercanti (172 negozianti e 48 mercanti con fondaco).⁴⁰ In primo luogo i fiorentini (12 negozianti), che hanno credito e operano scambi con tutti i paesi europei e il Levante, l’importanza degli olandesi (in numero di otto)⁴¹ e soprattutto degli inglesi (dieci) che a Livorno potevano trovare le materie prime (lane spagnole, olio pugliese, seta orientale, necessarie per alimentare la loro industria tessile) e vi portavano stagno, piombo, pannine e pesci salati.⁴² Gli armeni vi trafficavano pepe, stoffe e sete di Persia e coralli.⁴³ Il commercio degli ebrei definito “generale”,⁴⁴ contava, nel 1642, su 80 fra mercanti e sensali, tassati per 4622 scudi, un terzo del contributo dovuto da tutti i mercanti stranieri presenti sulla piazza di Livorno, compresi gli inglesi che versano 1.400 scudi.

I negozianti ebrei gestiscono, come ricordato, un ampio spettro di attività, rendendo Livorno centro direzionale di imprese commerciali; consolidano i rapporti con il potere granducale e si diramano su un ampio bacino mostrando flessibilità e capacità di adeguarsi alle dislocazioni degli assi economici, spesso creando nuovi insediamenti e reti commerciali alternative. La diversità dei profili e dei comportamenti non consente di ricostruire esattamente i tipi di relazioni e le loro tappe in una successione temporale o logica, attira piuttosto la nostra attenzione la varietà degli intrecci, la estrema molteplicità degli scenari, dei profili e dei comportamenti.

La supplica al Granduca di Joseph e Salomon Crespino, rende visibili alcune scelte e i metodi di gestione di una ditta “con traffico grosso in Pisa e Livorno”. I due negozianti denunciano infatti la fine del fruttuoso commercio granario, che gli ebrei avevano gestito, durante la carestia del 1628 –30,

³⁹ ASFi, *Pratica segreta di Firenze*, 169, c. 241. La rilevazione è legata al donativo cui furono costretti anche i mercanti stranieri esenti come contributo per la guerra di Castro.

⁴⁰ Sul ruolo dei mercanti nell’età moderna : F.ANGIOLINI, D.ROCHE, *Cultures et Formations Négociantes dans L’Europe moderne*, Paris, 1995.

⁴¹ M.Ch., ENGELS, *Merchants, interlopers, seamen and corsairs. The ‘flemish’ Community in Livorno and Genoa (1615-1635)*, Amsterdam, 1997.

⁴² G. PAGANO DE DIVITIIS, *Mercanti inglesi nell’Italia del Seicento. Navi, traffici, egemonie, Venezia, 1990.*

⁴³ *Gli armeni lungo le strade d’Italia*, Atti del convegno internazionale (Torino, Genova, Livorno, 8-11 marzo 1997), Giornata di studio a Livorno, Pisa- Roma, 1998.

⁴⁴ La definizione si trova in una “Memoire de l’Etat present de Livourne et de son Comemrce, année 1699, in ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 1815, inserto rilegato n.n.. P. MALANIMA, *I commerci del mondo del 1674 visti da Amsterdam e da Livorno*, in G. BIAGIOLI (a cura), “Ricerca di Storia Moderna IV in onore di Mario Mirri”, Pisa, 1995, pp. 153-180.

importando grano dall'Arcipelago,⁴⁵ e prospettano la possibilità di “aprire mercato fra Livorno e taluni luoghi di Barberia”, cioè Salè e Tetuan, con la protezione del granduca. Ottenuto il privilegio nel gennaio del 1635, chiedono che sia esteso “per Seffin e altri luoghi che sono sulla costa di là dello stretto fino al Brasile, e, infine in una ulteriore richiesta, si assicurano la privativa delle esportazione da Livorno per il Marocco degli allumi di Roma e dei drappi fiorentini.⁴⁶ Per questi commerci essi noleggiavano a Livorno una grossa nave inglese. Possiamo pertanto presumere che avessero già stabilito i necessari contatti nei porti del Marocco. Del resto già nel 1613 erano giunti nel porto labronico 16 negri, cuoia, cera e 70 denti di elefante da Copoverde Guinea con una nave, che, “cosa mai seguita per il passato”, in mancanza di altre autorità costituite, recava patente di sanità di mercanti ebrei.⁴⁷

L'assenza di documenti sulle società mercantili non consente di dare valutazioni quantitative (gli ebrei non risultano registrati negli estratti delle accomandite fiorentine, ed anche i notai sono avari di notizie sulla costituzione di società commerciali, le registrazioni, peraltro, forse trascritte dal cancelliere della “nazione”, sono perdute). I dati raccolti mostrano però una varietà di situazioni e di interessi. Già agli inizi del Seicento troviamo società composte da ebrei e cristiani,⁴⁸ che solo talvolta sembrano rispondere alla necessità di esibire un prestanome cristiano. In particolare, nei traffici fra mondo cristiano e mondo musulmano anche a Livorno non mancano figure che si pongono necessariamente al centro di correnti di scambio fra ambienti di culture diverse.⁴⁹ Nei contratti di noleggio o di sicurezza stilati da più assicuratori non legati fra loro da particolari vincoli, ad esempio, le forze di più mercanti si scompongono e ricompongono in base alle informazioni e alla destinazione delle merci, tuttavia il nodo centrale dei rapporti commerciali mediterranei fra il mondo musulmano e il mondo cristiano è tenuto dagli ebrei.

⁴⁵ Si tratta dell'Arcipelago nel mare Egeo, dove anche di contrabbando giungeva il grano dell'Asia Minore caricato sulle navi inviate dagli ebrei di Livorno. Sull'importanza degli ebrei importatori del grano dell'Arcipelago ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 1803, lettera dell'8 febbraio e 31 maggio 1630.

⁴⁶ ASFi, *Auditore delle Riformazioni*, 36, cc.431-432.

⁴⁷ ASLi, *Sanità*, 53, lettera magistrale del 21 novembre 1613.

⁴⁸ Si veda, ad esempio, il contratto per lo sfruttamento delle miniere di allume di Monte Rotondo fra gli appaltatori cristiani e i sub appaltatori ebrei (ASFi, *Auditore delle Riformazioni*, 48, cc. 253-57) e il contratto di noleggio di una nave (ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, 13765, c.66rv., del 19 agosto 1625).

⁴⁹ Sul ruolo dei mercanti come mediatori culturali cfr. P.D. CURTIN, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge, 1984 , trad. italiana . *Mercanti. Commercio e cultura dall'antichità al XIX secolo*, Roma-Bari,1988. Per i meccanismi economici relativi al riscatto degli schiavi e delle prede in Algeri, di cui gli ebrei erano i mediatori principali ASLi, *Capitano, poi Governatori e Auditore*, 71, inss. 138 e146.

Una attività economica rilevante nella piazza livornese è il commercio del denaro. Gli ebrei, in deroga agli ordini generali (l'articolo 3 della Livornina proibiva esplicitamente di “esercitare le usure manifeste e paliate, o in altro qualsivoglia modo), ebbero nel 1595 l'autorizzazione di aprire a Livorno banche di prestito su pegno per i forestieri. Dal 1598 al 1626 il banco fu gestito in regime di monopolio da Daniel e Mosè Cordovero, ebrei castigliani e dal loro socio David Solema, che presto estesero il loro raggio di azione anche sulla popolazione locale, impegnandosi a tenere il tasso dell'8,50 % annuo per gli abitanti e del 15% annuo per i forestieri. Un giro di affari, che possiamo immaginare consistente nei momenti di passaggio di mano delle merci e del riscatto degli schiavi, ma importante anche per l'economia della città nascente. Eretto il Monte di pietà di Livorno, il banco degli ebrei fu chiuso nel 1626;⁵⁰ gli ebrei tuttavia continuarono a fornire una diversificata gamma di forme creditizie, che andavano dalla lettera di cambio, alle scritture private, ai contratti di retrovendita e al prestito su pegno. Inventari, clausole testamentarie forniscono indizi sicuri dei legami intrecciati fra i mercanti ebrei, capaci di soddisfare la domanda di credito, e una vasta clientela di ogni ceto sociale.⁵¹

Il traffico delle merci comportava anche la mobilità dei mercanti. Una piccola lista dei passaporti preparati fra il 1650 e il 1654 per “quelli che vanno per mare”, descrive con grande evidenza gli uomini, specificando nome, età, caratteri fisici e segni particolari: sono 15 ebrei in partenza per il Cairo, Alessandria d'Egitto, Tripoli di Barberia e Tunisi.⁵² Molto raramente, tuttavia, le navi noleggiate dai mercanti ebrei viaggiavano con un mercante, perché le ditte ebraiche potevano contare sui corrispondenti nei porti di destinazione delle loro merci. Così nel contratto di noleggio si limitano ad esplicitare il porto nel quale il capitano doveva scaricare e caricare con l'ordine di proseguire per altro porto seguendo le direttive del responsabile indicato sulle polizze di carico.⁵³

Coloro che si stabilivano a Livorno, spesso costituivano un *gruppo economico*: mantenevano, cioè, in prevalenza una rete di relazioni economiche in importanti piazze commerciali dei paesi di provenienza. Questa sorta di linearità fra il luogo di partenza e quello di arrivo presentava problemi particolari per gli ebrei già nuovi cristiani, che mantengono legami di affari con

⁵⁰ P.CASTIGNOLI, “Rassegna Mensile di Israel”, vol.50, 1984, pp.542-552, ora in *Studi di Storia. Livorno dagli Archivi alla città*, Livorno2001, pp149-154.

⁵¹ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, circa il prestito al principe di Massa garantito dai gioielli della duchessa.

⁵² ASFi, 2312, n.n. Fra le patenti registrate in questa filza sono di grande interesse anche quelle intestate a mercanti “turchi” che intendono commerciare nel porto di Livorno.

⁵³ ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, 14224, notaio F. Zanetti, c. 54v., così nel contratto di noleggio Michele Dela Pegna e compagni negozianti ebrei ordinano che la nave inglese di 350 tonnellate e 50 pezzi di artiglieria vada a Marsiglia, e di qui, scaricata e ricaricata, riparta per la Spagna.

il paese cattolico da cui erano partiti. L'arrivo di molti che, per sfuggire alle persecuzioni inquisitoriali si presentavano a Livorno come ebrei, portava la necessità di identificare la persona con due nomi:⁵⁴ un costume che a Livorno appare diffuso e accettato sia nelle registrazioni notarili che in quelle ufficiali davanti al governatore della città e nella "nazione" ebraica. Il documento che ci prospetta l'accettazione della doppia identità da parte ebraica è il testamento di Bernardo de Lemos alias Abram de Aguiar, che, stilato presso un notaio cristiano davanti a testimoni cristiani "portoghesi",⁵⁵ è depositato presso i massari dalla vedova con i nomi ebraici della famiglia, con l'avvertimento che il nome cristiano si giustificava con la pratica mercantile del defunto in Spagna.⁵⁶

Per i grandi mercanti ebrei sefarditi funziona un sistema di irraggiamento molto vasto su base familiare, anche se la forte coesione familiare non preclude l'opportunità di condurre di volta in volta affari con soci occasionali.⁵⁷ Si veda, ad esempio, la configurazione della rete mercantile di Abram De Pas: la casata de Pas a Livorno è composta nel 1642 dallo stesso Abram alias Manuel De Pas, dal fratello Abram Nunes mercante con fondaco in Livorno, dal genero Jacob Ferrera e da suo fratello Abram. Sposato con Sara de Pas, Abram ha tre figli maschi e due femmine, gestisce una bottega in via Ferdinanda, è fra i fondatori della fraternita *Hebra de Cazar Orfas e Donzeles, Mohar Ha Betulot*, ha una notevole fortuna, in parte investita a Livorno in una casa e in polizze del monte degli ebrei nella Dogana.⁵⁸

Il suo giro di affari è a largo raggio. Nel testamento del 1648 ricorda di avere affari a Genova, Amsterdam, Smirne, Costantinopoli, Venezia, Firenze, Tunisi oltre che a Livorno. I suoi figli risiedono in luoghi strategici per il commercio: Isach, gode la piena fiducia del padre, con cui gestisce gli affari a Livorno, Jacob vive ad Amsterdam, Salomon a Smirne, una figlia è sposata a Livorno con Jacob Ferrera, nominato esecutore testamentario. I matrimoni che Abram stabilisce per i figli non sposati, pena la decurtazione dell'eredità, sono all'interno della famiglia (Salomon dovrà sposare la cugina Luna figlia di David Nunes, la figlia Ester il nipote Jesua de Pas). Nel lungo testamento, che riporta

⁵⁴ Sulla funzione identificativa della designazione personale cfr. E. SPAGNESI, *Nome*, in *Enciclopedia del Diritto*, vol. 28, Milano 1978, pp.290-303.

⁵⁵ ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, prot. 16284, notaio T. Chimenti., c. 67v-69v.

⁵⁶ ACILi, *Testamenti dall'anno 1629 al 1713 stati ritrovati nelle filze antiche sciolte*, lettera I, 1654. Il testamento in italiano "vergato come cristiano" è presentato ai massari da Rachele (alias Angela) de Aguiar nel 1656.

⁵⁷ Si veda come esempio il contratto di noleggio di una nave per inviare mercanzie ad Alessandria d'Egitto sottoscritto da Abram de Pas in ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, prot. 15321, notaio A. Ciucci, atto n. 66. 11 settembre 1645.

⁵⁸ I dati biografici su Abram de Pas sono tratti da R. TOAFF, *La nazione*, cit., *passim*, dal testamento (ASLi, *Dogana*, 4, ins.182), il nome cristiano in una lettera di cambio del 1643 su nave inglese in ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, prot. 15319, c. 188.

in 29 punti le sue dichiarazioni e volontà, Abram de Pas preordina la continuità del suo nome nella famiglia e nella ditta nominando erede universale il prediletto Isach, al quale affida la gestione degli affari e della famiglia in accordo con la madre. Ma la morte precoce del figlio fa fallire il suo progetto di dar vita a una dinastia mercantile. La sua concezione patriarcale e autoritaria della famiglia-azienda, già minata dalle ribellioni del figlio Salomon, si frantuma per la richiesta della vedova di Isach di entrare in possesso della sua dote e dell'eredità del marito in nome dei figli minori. Gran parte del patrimonio liquido di Abram de Pas verrà dunque a confluire nella gestione di David Franco Albucherque,⁵⁹ figlio maggiore di una famiglia di negozianti e raffinatori di zuccheri che abitano e operano a Firenze, Pisa e Livorno, che continueranno le loro fortune con il nome Franco a Londra⁶⁰.

Lo stesso modello a largo spettro è descritto nel testamento stilato a Smirne nel 1651 da Lobo Suarez alias Joseph Suarez figlio di Emanuel Fonseca e Maria Nugnez, della città di Viscu in Portogallo, sposato con la cugina Rachele Suarez.⁶¹ Anche la fortuna di Lobo Suarez appare distribuita in investimenti mercantili in più sedi. Egli infatti è costretto a nominare quattro esecutori testamentari. Uno a Smirne,⁶² uno ad Amsterdam, uno a Livorno e Firenze, uno a Venezia. Ha una notevole fortuna, di cui conosciamo solo l'entità investita ad Amsterdam nella Compagnia delle Indie Orientali e a Firenze nel monte del sale. Una impresa vasta, di cui, restituita la cospicua dote alla vedova con aggiunta del lascito di tutte le gioie, degli ori, di una schiava e l'usufrutto di 2000 scudi depositati a Firenze, è erede universale il fratello, forse con il sottinteso che egli, come era costume, "per innalzare la casa del fratello defunto", si sarebbe unito in matrimonio leviratico con la cognata.

Ma questo testamento è interessante da più punti di vista. Fa vedere che l'ascesa dei traffici fra Smirne e Livorno (le navi nel triennio 1647-51: sei olandesi, 29 inglesi, otto francesi e tre barche, in totale 46 rispetto alle 10 navi e 14 polacche del triennio precedente⁶³) è sostenuta anche dalla presenza a Smirne, con protezione del console francese (vedi le capitolazioni fra Francia e impero ottomano del 1535), di un nutrito gruppo di mercanti ebrei in relazione

⁵⁹ Una copia in traduzione italiana del testamento di Abram de Pas si trova nella filza n. 4 della *Dogana* (ASLi., *Dogana*, 4, ins. 182) a causa del passaggio sotto la gestione di David Franco Abunquerche, fratello di Sara vedova di Isach de Pas e tutore insieme alla madre dei figli minori, delle polizze di Abram nel Monte ebraico della Dogana di Livorno.

⁶⁰ G. YOGEV, *Diamonds and Coral. Anglo Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade*, Leicester, 1978, pp. 102-109.

⁶¹ ASFi, *Notarile Moderno, Testamenti forestieri*, 10, n.88.

⁶² Si tratta di Jacob Pinheiro, fratello, forse, del più noto Moisè.

⁶³ R. GHEZZI, *Livorno e il mondo islamico nel XVII secolo. I bastimenti e il commercio di importazione*, Università di Bari, tesi di dottorato di ricerca in Storia Economica, XII ciclo (2001), coordinatore Antonio di Vittorio, Tutor Giorgio Mori, p. 225, tab. 24.

con i correligionari di Livorno. Gli undici testimoni alla stesura del testamento a Smirne hanno infatti relazioni commerciali con più mercanti ebrei di Livorno, i quali, chiamati ad autenticarne le firme dei testimoni, dichiarano di conoscerne i “caratteri di sua mano” per avere corrispondenza abituale con essi. Ancora più vasto risulta il raggio degli affari elencati nel fallimento, forse doloso, per circa 40.000 pezze di Abram Mocata, giunto a Livorno da Smirne. All’origine della bancarotta sono la lite con il socio Moisè Pigneiro di Smirne,⁶⁴ che rivendica la sua quota di 23000 pezze, e vari disastri (navi con le mercanzie prese dai pirati, polizze assicurative non riscuotibili, fallimento dei corrispondenti). Ma forse è interessante indicare i luoghi in cui questo mercante rifugiatosi a Livorno ha mercanzie e crediti difficili da esigere: coralli e smeraldi a Surat nelle Indie Orientali e a Goa, mercanzie in Salè e Cartagena, pennacchi lavorati nella Nuova Spagna e in Messico, gomma e mercanzie a Madrid e Cadice, vetri di Venezia a Smirne, e mercanzie varie a Livorno, tutte però ipotecate. Le sue difficoltà sembrano derivare proprio dall’ampiezza e dalla estrema complessità della sua rete mercantile e dalla lontananza dei suoi corrispondenti spesso non affidabili, mentre i rapporti con Livorno sono retti dai legami familiari: egli, infatti, è sposato con la sorella di Abram Sadich, un mercante residente in questo porto.

I legami fra Smirne e Livorno ci permettono poi di intravedere sotto la rete mercantile le possibilità di trasmissione del fermento messianico che si riaccende nelle comunità mediterranee degli ebrei di Spagna nella seconda metà del Seicento con la predicazione di S’Abatay T’evi, nato a Smirne nel 1626. A Livorno infatti l’attesa messianica predicata da S’Abatay ebbe tanta diffusione e risalto che negli statuti comunitari del 1676 (cap. 95) si elencano i provvedimenti contro gli aderenti al movimento sabatiano,⁶⁵ predicato dal cabalista Moisè Pinheiro dal dottor Miguel Cardoso.⁶⁶

Livorno non è solo punto di arrivo della diaspora ebraica. Tunisi fu il primo porto del Nord Africa nel quale si insediarono ebrei provenienti da Livorno per gestire gli scambi fra l’Africa del Nord e il mondo cristiano. Nel 1685 a Tunisi vi erano 49 famiglie (circa 300 persone) che provenivano da Livorno ed ebbero un ruolo preminente nel commercio tunisino, in quanto erano specializzate nella vendita delle prede e nel riscatto degli schiavi, nell’esportazione di cere, cuoi e altri prodotti locali. Un caso interessante, perché studiato attraverso la corrispondenza conservata negli archivi di Marsiglia, è il commercio triangolare che la ditta Jacob e Rafael Lombroso stabilì fra Tunisi, Livorno e Marsiglia. I Lombroso, a metà Seicento, vivono a Livorno: sono i più

⁶⁴ Sull’amicizia con il “messia” e la presenza a Livorno di questo personaggio G. SCHOLEM, *Sabbattay Sevi, il Messia Mistico*, Francoforte sul Meno, 1957, trad. it. Torino, 2001, p.710.

⁶⁵ R. TOAFF, *La nazione*, cit., la trascrizione di questo articolo alle pp.592-93.

⁶⁶ R. TOAFF, *La nazione*, cit., p. 369.

grandi importatori delle lane di Segovia e i maggiori produttori ed esportatori dei berrettini di lana alla levantina, fabbricati a Pisa ed esportati in tutto il modo musulmano. A Tunisi, dove stabiliscono un ramo della famiglia, i Lombroso stringono legami con mercanti francesi, che sotto il loro nome permisero alla ditta ebraica di godere dei vantaggi doganali concessi ai francesi e di inserirsi nel commercio di Marsiglia.⁶⁷

La rete “toscana”

La scelta di tentare il radicamento in Toscana sembra coincidere con un aspro conflitto che porta ad esautorare il dottor Moisè Cordovero, che aveva retto le sorti della “nazione per oltre 45 anni, e i suoi sostenitori, in favore di un gruppo nuovo.⁶⁸ Le liste nominative, abbiamo visto, sono state prodotte nel 1642, proprio in occasione della riforma della legge istitutiva della comunità decretata dal granduca per sedarne i conflitti interni.⁶⁹ I documenti ci mostrano la configurazione di due ‘partiti’: un gruppo compatto di parenti e alleati si contrappone al più vecchio establishment. Da una parte, con il dottor Cordovero ci sono 11 firmatari, molti anche parenti fra loro,⁷⁰ mentre le 5 casate a lui avverse, che lo accusano di aver amministrato la sinagoga per il suo interesse, e, pur non essendo massaro, di aver comandato sugli eletti, rappresentano circa la metà dei mercanti aventi diritto al voto.⁷¹ Sono, però, ben 57 coloro che esprimono al granduca la loro soddisfazione per la legge elettorale che favorisce la nuova coalizione.⁷² Contro il tentativo di Cordovero di arginare la scalata dei suoi avversari si schierarono i rabbini di Livorno, che si pronunciarono per la liceità di avere un corpo elettorale formato da congiunti,⁷³ mentre il granduca, interessato piuttosto a favorire la presenza dei mercanti, si limitò a ordinare una riforma che ampliava il numero degli elettori e stabiliva che i massari uscenti non potevano essere rieletti per tre anni.

I conflitti all’interno della “nazione” di Livorno per stabilire numero e qualità degli aventi diritto al voto sono frequenti e si spiegano con l’effettivo potere che i massari gestivano. I massari infatti avevano diritto di “ballottare”,

⁶⁷ M. ROZEN, *The Leghorn Merchants in Tunis and their Trade with Marseilles at the End of 17th Century*, in *Les relations intercommunautaires juives en Méditerranée occidentale, XIIe –XXe siècles*, Actes du colloque international de l’Institut d’Histoire des Pays d’Outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, Paris 1982, pp.51-59.

⁶⁸ Cfr, in testo relativo alla nota 26.

⁶⁹ Sulla riforma della “nazione ebraica” di Livorno nel 1642 ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2156, n.n. lettere del settembre 1643.

⁷⁰ La lettera del Cordovero anche in ACILi, *Rescittos Antigos*, c. 29, trascritta in R. Toaff, *La Nazione*, cit. pp. 659-60.

⁷¹ ASLi, *Comune*, 135, c. 614.

⁷² ASLi, *Comune*, 135, c. 605.

⁷³ ASLi, *Comune*, 135, c.607rv.

cioè di inserire o meno nella “nazione”, gli ebrei che ne facevano richiesta, era una decisione molto importante in quanto i “ballottati” diventavano ipso facto sudditi toscani, godevano dei privilegi della Livornina, ottenevano un salvacondotto per i debiti contratti con non toscani. Ai massari era assegnata anche la discussione e il giudizio delle cause fra ebrei e la facoltà di comminare la scomunica e l’esilio.

La complessità del gioco delle alleanze esploso nel 1642 emerge con una certa evidenza nel 1645 nel grosso affare dell’appalto del tabacco, un genere di lusso, la cui produzione e smercio, in connessione con la crisi dell’economia dello zucchero brasiliano, si sviluppa a metà del Seicento. L’appalto è infatti gestito da alcuni mercanti appartenenti alle casate che avevano esautorato il vecchio gruppo egemone.

L’appalto del tabacco, che comprendeva il monopolio della lavorazione e della vendita in tutto in granducato fu ottenuto nel 1645 mediante il pagamento di ben 10.000 scudi annui per dieci anni,⁷⁴ un affare di grossa entità che nel 1672 vale 34.000 scudi annui.⁷⁵ Nel 1645 gli appaltatori fanno una operazione complessa, che è economica e insieme ha risvolti che potremmo definire ‘politici’ rispetto alla presenza degli ebrei nel granducato: si tratta infatti della costruzione di un mercato per un prodotto nuovo gestito attraverso il radicamento nella società ospitante. E’ una scelta che rafforza i rapporti consolidati con il potere e comporta l’intensificarsi dei legami della “nazione” sefardita di Livorno con gli ebrei italiani abitanti nei ghetti di Firenze e Siena e nei feudi nei territori toscani di confine.

Gli appaltatori presentano all’approvazione granducale un capitolato, nel quale, ancor prima di esporre i paragrafi propriamente finanziari e organizzativi, pongono la richiesta (Cap. III), di “mandare persone loro dipendenti, e di lor nazione per tutto lo stato ed anche aprir bottega per la vendita [...] col godere di tutti i privilegi che godono gli ebrei di Pisa e Livorno”.⁷⁶ Questa clausola fondamentale per la conclusione dell'affare fu a lungo esaminata e discussa dai più alti funzionari granducali, “che ne davano ragguaglio giornaliero al granduca” nel timore di “troppo dilatare tal privilegio (cioè la Livornina) per tutti li Stati”,⁷⁷ ma infine fu accettata per i notevoli vantaggi economici che garantiva alle finanze del granducato. Possiamo dire che tramite questa

⁷⁴ ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, notaio Filippo Zanetti, prot. 14226, cc.16r-20v, 28 marzo 1645.

⁷⁵ ASPi, *Consoli del Mare*, 1044, c.240: Emanuel Levi ebreo chiede il 19 settembre 1679 la conferma dell’appalto del tabacco e acquavite per altri nove anni e si offre di pagare 34.000 scudi l’anno invece di 30.000 pagati precedentemente.

⁷⁶ ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, notaio Filippo Zanetti, prot. 14226, cit. a c.18v. è riportato il rescritto granducale, che dà valore di legge alle richieste degli appaltatori.

⁷⁷ ASFi, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 42, cc. 842 e cc. 851rv.

operazione si formalizza l'uscita degli ebrei dalla città verso la campagna e si predispone la formazione di un insediamento diffuso degli ebrei nei luoghi di mercato e nei centri agricoli del granducato. Mentre nella città di Livorno parte dei proventi della vendita del tabacco confluiscono nell'acquisto di proprietà immobiliari.

Per trarre indicazioni circa la strategia e l'implicita diplomazia relazionale dei protagonisti con gli ebrei delle comunità toscane possiamo solo cercare di ricostruire il mosaico dei rapporti che sono formalizzati in alcuni atti notarili.⁷⁸ Intanto vediamo chi sono gli appaltatori del tabacco. Una lite giudiziaria, che si protrae fino al 1661, lascia presumere che l'importazione a Livorno del tabacco brasiliano fosse in mano degli ebrei Abram Villareal, Abram Martin, Rafael Gabbay di Abram, essi ricordano infatti in una supplica il loro appalto del tabacco in Portogallo.⁷⁹

Gli appaltatori per la vendita e lavorazione nel Granducato di Toscana nel 1645 sono Jacob e David Israel de Tunis, Abram Vais Dela Pegna, Lazzero di David Vigevano e David Falcone. I sefarditi sono esponenti di spicco delle cinque casate che si erano affermate nel 1642 ai vertici della comunità e sono impegnati nella gestione del nuovo sistema assistenziale di cui si dota la comunità in quegli stessi anni. Jacob e David Israel de Tunis, Abram Vais Dela Pegna sono fra i fondatori della confraternita *Hebra de Cazar Orfas e Donzelas, Mohar Ha-Betulot*, David Falcone è il tesoriere dell'opera per il riscatto degli schiavi. Falcone risulta interessato all'acquisto di grosse partite di tabacco già nel 1640⁸⁰, ma l'azionista più importante dell'appalto è Jacob Israel de Tunis, che rafforza la sua posizione societaria acquistando la quota di Abram Vais Dela Pegna, che muore nel 1646. Giunto a Livorno da Tunisi negli anni Trenta, è già nella terna dei massari del 1634, nel 1642, capo di una casata che riunisce sette mercanti, è di nuovo massaro. Il suo raggio d'azione si sviluppa in Francia e nei porti del nord Africa, soprattutto Algeri, dove risiede il fratello a cui da Livorno invia periodicamente navi.⁸¹ Ha anche rapporti con i nuovi ebrei provenienti dalla Spagna, dove nel 1645 recupera l'eredità materna di Luna figlia di Abram Navarro alias Isabella di Manoer Robles, moglie di Josua Alcale, abitanti a

⁷⁸ Sull'appalto del tabacco non possediamo fonti sistematiche a causa della distruzione dei fondi del Sale e del Sale e Tabacco avvenuta già nel 1766, quando Pietro Leopoldo istituì l'amministrazione statale delle Regie Rendite.

⁷⁹ Nel 1644 in Portogallo la compagnia Fernandes e Sequeira ottiene per sei anni il monopolio del tabacco portoghese (cfr. C.A. HANSON, *Monopoly and Contraband in the Portuguese Tobacco Trade, 1624-1702*, in "Luso-Brazilian Review", n.19 (1982), pp. 149-168: 153) il monopolio in mano a privati può spiegare la concessione di un subappalto per l'esportazione stipulato con ebrei.

⁸⁰ Nel 1633 ebrei provenienti dal Brasile tentano di introdurre la coltivazione del tabacco nel pisano senza grande successo (ASF, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 40, cc.19-23).

⁸¹ ASPi, *Consoli del Mare*, 977, c. 7.

Livorno. David di Lazzero Vigevano, ebreo italiano, ha diritto alle cariche minori della comunità, in quanto la sua famiglia è giunta a Livorno con un privilegio, analogo alla Livornina, concesso nel 1595 agli ebrei espulsi dalla Lombardia spagnola.⁸²

Nel 1645, attraverso l'appalto del tabacco si consolidano, dunque, i rapporti fra alcuni grandi mercanti sefarditi e gli ebrei italiani, e, come accennato, si costruisce una rete che si articola e si infittisce sul territorio toscano e non solo.

Il controllo di gran parte del mercato del Granducato è affidato a quattro sub appaltatori generali, che stipulano a loro volta una società asimmetrica composta da tre sefarditi e da un ebreo italiano.⁸³ Sono di Livorno Abram e Moisè de Leon e Abram di Menachem Pardo, che per recarsi nei vari luoghi a controllare gli affari chiedono ai massari di essere esentati dalle cariche della nazione e di non essere colpiti da scomuniche per il possesso e l'uso di armi e il vestire pomposamente.⁸⁴ Il quarto socio, Salomon Pitigliano è un ebreo abitante in Firenze, che acquista nel 1654 una casa a Livorno. Essi assicurano la fornitura di tabacco per Firenze e controllano gli appaltatori dello Stato di Siena e gli appaltatori dei feudi dove erano ammesse comunità ebraiche (vedi la cartina in allegata), un affare che nonostante il contrabbando, rimane lucroso.⁸⁵ L'appalto del tabacco è inoltre il tramite che conduce ebrei provenienti da Firenze ad Arezzo, dove danno origine a una piccola comunità che riuscirà ad aprire anche una sinagoga nel 1666.⁸⁶

Gli ebrei di Livorno estendono il controllo della vendita del tabacco anche sugli stati confinanti assicurandosi la privativa dell'importazione e dello smercio.⁸⁷ A Livorno l'alleanza con i Vigevano, tramite il banchiere Finzi di Massa sposato con la sorella del Vigevano, apre nuove connessioni con il

⁸² Nonostante l'impegno di Magino, nominato console della comunità "lombarda" nel 1595, l'inserimento degli ebrei provenienti dalla Lombardia con diritto di praticare il prestito su pegno non ebbe seguito, forse anche per il veto della "nazione" portoghese di Pisa.

⁸³ ASFi, *Notarile moderno*, prot. 16467 (notaio R. Verzelli), cc. 61-64, transatio inter socios, 10/12/1657.

⁸⁴ R. TOAFF, *La nazione*, cit., p. 393; il documento in appendice 13, 33, pp. 668-669.

⁸⁵ ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici ecclesiastici poi Segretario del Regio Diritto*, 79. c. 95.

⁸⁶ ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici ecclesiastici poi Segretario del Regio Diritto*, 79. c. 95 e 437, c.52.

⁸⁷ Nel 1678 due ebrei di Modena David Telles e Angelo Fano ottengono da Emanuele Levi il subappalto generale del tabacco per tutti gli Stati del granducato di Toscana, eccettuato Livorno in ASFi, *Auditore poi Segretario del R. Diritto*, 6146, contratto del 22 agosto 1678. A seguito di questo contratto essi si stabiliscono a Livorno, come risulta dall'inventario dei magazzini e della loro abitazione (ASLI, *Capitano, poi Governatore e Auditore*, 365, ins.536.

principato dei Cybo Malaspina.⁸⁸ Nel 1645 l'appalto del tabacco a Massa e a Carrara è gestito da Giuda Levi di Zemah, Leone e Efraim D'Ancona ebrei di Livorno. A questi collegati sono gli appaltatori degli stati della Romagna. Negli anni successivi un ebreo di Livorno si trasferisce a Torino per vendere il tabacco.⁸⁹ Se queste diramazioni del commercio del tabacco si possono configurare come espansioni di carattere economico mercantile che si sviluppano nell'ambito di comunità ebraiche preesistenti, l'azione intrapresa a Genova ha un carattere più complesso. Il tentativo di creare un polo nella repubblica di Genova è simile, anche se molto meno fortunato, all'iniziativa di stabilire un insediamento ebraico a Londra,⁹⁰ dove i Franco insediarono un amo della famiglia per collocare in India i coralli mediterranei lavorati a Livorno.⁹¹

Sono, infatti, gli ebrei di Livorno ad adoperarsi per ottenere il privilegio di insediare una comunità a Genova. Nel 1655 alcuni ebrei di Livorno,⁹² accompagnati da Salomon d'Italia (di Casale Monferrato, allora stato di Mantova), si appellano ai Protettori del banco di San Giorgio chiedendo, grazie alla dichiarazione del porto franco, di introdurre famiglie ebrei in città. Sotto questa richiesta si intravede il desiderio di assicurarsi un più ampio mercato anche per lo smercio del tabacco. Tanto che ai Capitoli, pubblicati nel 1658 fa seguito la concessione della privativa del tabacco ad Abram Senior Coronel e Elias Cardoso, ebrei di Livorno.⁹³

Il tentativo dei negozianti ebrei di Livorno di espandere in Italia la loro sfera di influenza va in parallelo con il radicamento nel granducato di Toscana, dove gli ebrei crescono di numero e differenziano le loro attività. A Livorno la diaspora commerciale ebraica perde la sua specializzazione mercantile e acquista nuove funzioni. Tre soprattutto sono innovative: l'apertura di manifatture, l'impianto nelle Maremme di coltivazioni di soda bariglia (una pianta ricca di carbonato di sodio) per fare sapone con nuove tecnologie,⁹⁴ l'investimento e la speculazione immobiliare. I nuovi cristiani prima e poi gli ebrei impiantano e

⁸⁸ I. N. JACOPETTI, *Ebrei a Massa e Carrara. Banche commerci industrie dal XVI l XIX secolo*, Firenze, 1996, p.143.

⁸⁹ ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici ecclesiastici poi Segretario del Regio Diritto*, 68, c.435.

⁹⁰ P. BERNARDINI, *Prefazione all'edizione italiana di J. TOLAND. Ragioni per naturalizzare gli ebrei in Gran Bretagna e Irlanda (1714)*, Firenze, 1998, 50-57.

⁹¹ G. YOGEV, *Diamonds and Coral*, cit., pp.102-109.

⁹² Si tratta di Giuseppe Acosta, Aron e Leone de Tovar e di Moisè Calvos. R. URBANI, G.N. ZAZZU, *The Jews in Genoa*, Brill, London, 2001, p...Il tentativo di insediare la comunità a Genova fu ostacolato dai mercanti locali e dall'Inquisizione (ACPF, *Santo Offizio*, St.St. TT. 2m, ins. 4).

⁹³ Si tratta di Giuseppe Acosta, Aron e Leone de Tovar e di Moisè Calvos. R. URBANI, G.N. ZAZZU, *The Jews in Genoa*, cit., p...

⁹⁴ ASFi, *Auditore delle Riformazioni*, 45, cc 129-130. Il privilegio chiesto da David Franco Albuquerche nel 1656 è concesso per 12 anni.

gestiscono manifatture per la raffinazione dello zucchero, la concia e la lavorazione delle pelli e del cuoio, la lavorazione della seta per la produzione del filo e di drappi e la lavorazione e lo smercio del corallo con impianti che impiegavano materie prime importate via mare per fabbricare prodotti per l'esportazione. A causa della insufficienza a Livorno di manodopera e di spazio, gli imprenditori ebrei ottengono di scavalcare i limiti imposti dalle Corporazioni delle Arti e fanno lavorare a Pisa e nelle campagne fino a san Miniato, Pescia e la Montagna pistoiese le materie prime importate, che accompagnate da bollette, non pagavano le gabelle cittadine per i prodotti ad alta commercializzazione da esportare,⁹⁵ creando così una inedita unità produttiva territoriale che aggirava le norme l'organizzazione locale delle corporazioni di mestiere e rinsaldava la presenza capillare degli ebrei già assicurata dalla rete commerciale delle botteghe del tabacco.

Il possesso della proprietà immobiliare garantito dalla Livornina e diffuso a Livorno, anche se per lo più limitato a contratti di livello, negli anni Cinquanta del Seicento diviene un campo di investimento gestito dagli stessi ebrei. Abram e Jacob Isdrael Amnon⁹⁶ e Samuel Pardo, in una società in cui il Pardo ha quasi funzione di prestanome, sfruttando la possibilità di innescare una vera e propria speculazione immobiliare, acquistano dal granduca terreni edificabili nelle aree di servitù militare dei bastioni cittadini e rivendono lotti edificabili, case e appartamenti ad ebrei e cristiani.⁹⁷ Questa grossa opportunità porta molti maggiorenti ebrei a investire somme cospicue nell'acquisto di case in città e nell'affitto o nel livello di poderi nel Capitanato. Il patrimonio di molti ebrei entra così a Livorno nella tipologia della possidenza tipica della Toscana dell'epoca. Una scelta che conduce molte famiglie a stabilirsi per più generazioni a Livorno e dare origine a una lenta integrazione con la società maggioritaria, che avrà un primo sbocco istituzionale con la Legge Comunitativa di Pietro Leopoldo nel 1779. La riforma infatti ammette gli ebrei possidenti nelle borse dalle quali sarebbero stati tratti i membri delle cariche comunali, obbligandoli però a surrogare, cioè a nominare un rappresentante abile a ricoprire la carica, applicando ai possidenti ebrei gli stessi termini che si accordavano alle donne e ai corpi laicali. A Livorno invece, in considerazione della rilevanza sociale degli ebrei, si dispone che nel Magistrato risiedesse un

⁹⁵ _ASPi, *Consoli del Mare*, 978, cc. 99,203,355-56 ; 979 cc. 14-58, 76.

⁹⁶ Abram Isdrael Amnon è il finanziatore dell'edizione livornese della "Misnà" stampata a Livorno nella tipografia di Salomon Gabai, ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2174, lettere del 13 e 17 ottobre 1653. Sull'attività tipografica del Gabai P.C. IOLY ZORATTINI, *La tipografia del "Kaf Nachat" di Iedidia Salomon Gabbai a Livorno*, in *La formazione storica dell'alterità. Studi di storia della tolleranza nell'età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondò*, t.II, secolo XVII, Firenze, 2001, pp.495-516.

⁹⁷ ASFi, *Notarile Moderno*, prot. 14227 (notaio F. Zanetti) c. 6, 4/8 1646.

Ivi, Prot. 16274, (notaio T. Chimenti), c. 55 *Ivi*, Prot. 16275, cc. 132, 154,161,167-68, 174-75. *Ivi*, Prot. 16276, cc. 16; 77-78, 86v; 139.

deputato della “nazione” ebrea con diritto di voto, lusso, sedia e onorario uguale agli altri, rompendo così in modo evidente il carattere confessionale dello Stato di Antico Regime “ricollocando (pur se con molti limiti) gli ebrei, se proprietari, all’interno di un assetto giuridico che riconosceva solo nella proprietà e non più nel battesimo il titolo di ingresso nell’area della cittadinanza.”⁹⁸

Nonostante l’apertura, che in parte abbiamo visto concretarsi nella gestione degli affari per l’appalto del tabacco, fra ebrei “portoghesi” ed ebrei italiani la separazione all’interno della “nazione” degli ebrei di Livorno resta netta. Il sentimento di appartenenza e lo stile culturale, che caratterizzavano la “nazione portoghese/spagnola” di Livorno, si mantengono saldi.⁹⁹ Nel 1699 i “portoghesi” contrastano l’inserimento degli ebrei non portoghesi nella gestione delle cariche, e in più occasioni mostrano al granduca la loro disponibilità ad acquistare grandi quantitativi di drappi fiorentini per l’esportazione, pur di mantenere la supremazia nella “nazione”.¹⁰⁰ Gli ebrei italiani dovettero aspettare il 1715 per essere ammessi alle cariche e ottenere, almeno sulla carta, eguali diritti. Davanti alle lamentele e rimostranze dei “portoghesi”, la risposta granducale è senza appello: “non vi sono ebrei nobili e plebei, non vi sono ebrei spagnoli ed ebrei italiani, vi sono solo ebrei”.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ M. VERGA, *Proprietà e cittadinanza. Ebrei e riforma delle comunità nella Toscana di Pietro Leopoldo*, in *La formazione storica dell’alterità.*, cit., T. III, Secolo XVIII, pp.1047-1067.

⁹⁹ Sull’identità della “nazione portoghese” M. BODIAN, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation. Conversos and Community in Early modern Amsterdam*, Indianapolis, 1997.

¹⁰⁰ ACILi, *Rescrittos Antigos*, c. 127, in R. TOAFF, *La nazione*, cit., pp. 697-98.

¹⁰¹ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2479.

APPENDICE

Documento n.1.

Copia delle famiglie delli hebrei di Livorno cioè ceppi di case abili per elettori di massari, e per questa di presente si fece l'elezione l'anno passato [1641].

Abram di Medina

Jacob Medina fratello

Isach Medina fratello

Salomon Medina cugino

Isach Fonseca

Abram Nunes zio

David Galindo parente

Abram Cardoso

Abram de Pas

Abram Nunes fratello

Jacob Ferrera genero

Abram Ferrera fratello

Abram Levi Losada

Isach Antichio nipote

Isach Baruch Losada parente

Moisè Medina nipote

Isach Medina simile

Manuel Tobi

Abram Midente cugino

Abram Cardoso

Miguel de la Pegna genero

Abram Vais fratello

Isach Lusena cugino

Abram Lusena cugino

Salomon Namias simile

Abram Espinosa

David Isdrael di Tunese

 ambi nipoti

Isach Isdrael

Aron de Mercado

Salomon Mercado nipote

Isach Pegna Olivares

Isach Pegna

Aron Pegna

 tutti fratelli

David Pegna

Salomon Pegna

Abram di Leone

Isach Alcalaino

Abram di Lusena

Rafael di Luna

 cognati

Aron Bocara

David Coeglio

cognati

Joseph Morone

Isach Ergas

Jacob Ergas

tre fratelli

Moisè Ergas

Iacob Isdrael Amnon

Isach Isdrael Amnon fratello

David Solema genero

Dottor [Moisè] Cordovero

Jacob Cordovero figlio

Leon Cordovero fratello

Samuel Cordovero nipote

Joseph Crespino consuocero

Juda Crespino genero

Isach di Soria

Mordachai Soria fratello

David Soria simile

Samuel Nunes cognato

Abram Mendes

Mosè Nunes

Rafael Faro

Moisè Faro fratelli

David Valensino cognato

Jacob Sadich

Abram di Costa

Dottor Abram Jesurum

David Bono

Dottor Samuel Uziel

Isach Faro Bono

Joseph Signore

Juda di Ancona

Elisse Galico genero

Jacob Franco Albuquerque

Jacob di Campos

Isach di Campos fratelli

Manuel Nunes Gomes

Salomon Baruch

Abram Ergas

Isach Ergas figlio

Jacob Camadio genero

Isach Toledo cognato

Dottor Mordachai Barochas

Isach Vigevano

Documento n.2.

Nota di quelli elettori che elessero li massari novi della sinangoga di Livorno sotto li 3 ottobre 1642

Abram CARDOSO

Michel DELA PEGNA suo genero

Abram VAIS DELA PEGNA suo fratello

Jacob PINHEIRO cognato del Cardoso

Isacq FONSECA comparo e parente del Pegna

David NUNES suo zio

Abram CARDOSO suo genero

David GALINDO suo cugino

Jacob TOLEDO compagno del Pegna

Isache LUXENA MORON cognato del Pegna

Jacob suo fratello pure cognato del Pegna

Abram LUSENA suo fratello

Joseph MORON suo cugino

David COELLO suo cognato

Aron BOCCARA cognato del Moron

Dottor Samuel PARDO medico salariato

Joseph SENIOR compagno di Michele Pegna

Moisè SENIOR suo cugino

in tutto sono n. 18 d un parentato e casata

Jacob ISRAEL ARUNORA

Abram suo figlio

Isache fratello e genero

David SULEMA suo genero

Jacob ERGAS cognato di tutti due

Isache ERGAS suo fratello

Mosè suo fratello

Rafael FARO suo cugino

in tutto sono n. 8 di una casata

Abram LEON

Isach ALCALAINO suo genero

Dottor UZIEL suo cugino

in tutto sono 3 di una casata

Isach PEGNA OLIVARES

Isache suo nipote

Aron suo fratello

David suo fratello

Salomon suo fratello

Joseph suo fratello

in tutto sono n. 6 di una casata

Jacob ISRAEL DE TUNIS

David	suo fratello
Abram LEVI	suo cugino
Moisè MEDINA	suo nipote
Isache	suo fratello
Abram ESPINOZA	nipote de di TUNIS
Isache BARUCH	nipote de LEVI

in tutto 7 di una casata

In tutti sono come si vede n. 42 e per più singolare di maniera che come havevano questi 42 tutti d'accordo elessero uno per casata a sapere

Dalla casa di Michele DELA PEGNA	MIGUEL DELA PEGNA
Dalla casa di JACOB ISRAEL ARUNORA	JACOB ISRAEL ARUNORA
Della casa di Abram de LEON	ABRAM DE LEON
De la casa di Jacob OLIVARES	DAVID PEGNA
De la casa Jacob ISRAEL DE TUNIS	IACOB ISRAEL DE TUNIS