

RiMe

Rivista dell'Istituto
di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea

ISBN 9788897317685

ISSN 2035-794X

numero 9/II n. s., dicembre 2021

The *Carreira da Índia* and the struggle for
supremacy in the European spice trade,
ca. 1550-1615

João Teles e Cunha

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7410/1508>

Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche
<http://rime.cnr.it>

Direttore responsabile | Editor-in-Chief

Luciano GALLINARI

Segreteria di redazione | Editorial Office Secretary

Idamaria FUSCO - Sebastiana NOCCO

Comitato scientifico | Editorial Advisory Board

Luis ADÃO DA FONSECA, Filomena BARROS, Sergio BELARDINELLI, Nora BEREND, Michele BRONDINO, Paolo CALCAGNO, Lucio CARACCILO, Dino COFRANCESCO, Daniela COLI, Miguel Ángel DE BUNES IBARRA, Antonio DONNO, Antonella EMINA, Vittoria FIORELLI, Blanca GARÌ, Isabella IANNUZZI, David IGUAL LUIS, Jose Javier RUIZ IBÁÑEZ, Giorgio ISRAEL, Juan Francisco JIMÉNEZ ALCÁZAR, Ada LONNI, Massimo MIGLIO, Anna Paola MOSSETTO, Michela NACCI, Germán NAVARRO ESPINACH, Francesco PANARELLI, Emilia PERASSI, Cosmin POPA-GORJANU, Adeline RUCQUOI, Flocel SABATÉ i CURULL, Eleni SAKELLARIU, Gianni VATTIMO, Cristina VERA DE FLACHS, Przemysław WISZEWSKI.

Comitato di redazione | Editorial Board

Anna BADINO, Grazia BIORCI, Maria Eugenia CADEDDU, Angelo CATTANEO, Isabella CECCHINI, Monica CINI, Alessandra CIOPPI, Riccardo CONDRÒ, Francesco D'ANGELO, Alberto GUASCO, Domenica LABANCA, Maurizio LUPO, Geltrude MACRÌ, Alberto MARTINENGO, Maria Grazia Rosaria MELE, Maria Giuseppina MELONI, Rosalba MENGONI, Michele M. RABÀ, Riccardo REGIS, Giampaolo SALICE, Giovanni SERRELI, Giovanni SINI, Luisa SPAGNOLI, Patrizia SPINATO BRUSCHI, Giulio VACCARO, Massimo VIGLIONE, Isabella Maria ZOPPI.

Responsabile del sito | Website Manager

Claudia FIRINO

© Copyright 2021: Author(s)

Gli autori che pubblicano con *RiMe* conservano i diritti d'autore e concedono alla rivista il diritto di prima pubblicazione con i lavori contemporaneamente autorizzati ai sensi della

Authors who publish with *RiMe* retain copyright and grant the Journal right of first publication with the works simultaneously licensed under the terms of the

“Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial 4.0 International License”.



RiMe. Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea (<http://rime.cnr.it>)

Direzione e Segreteria | Management and Editorial Offices: via G.B. Tuveri, 128- 09129 Cagliari (I).

Telefono | Telephone: +39 070403635 / 070403670.

Invio contributi | Submissions: rime@isem.cnr.it

Special Issue

Crossing Borders: The Social and Economic Impact of the Portuguese Maritime Empire in the early Modern Age

Edited by

Nunziatella Alessandrini and João Teles e Cunha

RiMe 9/II n.s. (December 2021)

Special Issue

Crossing Borders: The Social and Economic Impact of the Portuguese Maritime Empire in the early Modern Age

Edited by

Nunziatella Alessandrini and João Teles e Cunha

Table of Contents / Indice

Nunziatella Alessandrini and João Teles e Cunha <i>Introduction</i>	5-8
1) Commercial Routes and Commodities	
Jürgen Pohle <i>Sugar, Pepper, Precious Stones: The Economic Impact of the Portuguese Overseas Expansion in the German World around 1500</i>	9-34
Mark Häberlein <i>Connected Histories: South German Merchants and Portuguese Expansion in the Sixteenth Century</i>	35-53
Arlindo Manuel Caldeira <i>The Island Trade Route of São Tomé in the 16th Century: Ships, Products, Capitals</i>	55-76

João Teles e Cunha 77-103
The Carreira da Índia and the struggle for supremacy in the European spice trade, ca. 1550-1615

2) Mercantile Networks, its Agents, and Cross/Intra-Cultural Trade

Rui Manuel Loureiro 105-125
Searching the East by the West: Martin Behaim revisited

Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto 127-146
The casados of Melaka, 1511-1641: Strategies of Adaptation and Survival

Elsa Penalva 147-170
Imperative Minorities and Transoceanic Connections (c. 1572 - c. 1621)

Nunziatella Alessandrini 171-193
Italian Merchants in Habsburg Portugal (1580-1640)

Carla Vieira 195-229
Dislocating a Trade Network: New Christian and Jewish Merchants Between the Portuguese and the British Empires (1700-1730)

Margarida Vaz do Rego Machado 231-248
The General Contract of Tobacco and the Azorean Economy (17th and 18th Centuries)

Book Review / Recensione

Giuseppe Seche 251-254
Antoni Furió (ed.) (2020) *En torno a la economía mediterránea medieval. Estudios dedicados a Paulino Iradiel*. València: PUV.

The *Carreira da Índia* and the struggle for supremacy in the European spice trade, ca. 1550-1615

João Teles e Cunha¹
(University of Lisbon)

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2310-2056>

Date of receipt: 15/11/ 2021

Date of acceptance: 15/12/2021

Abstract

The study of the economic rivalry between the Cape and Mediterranean Routes in the Early Modern Era remains entrenched around two great theories, one defending the resurgence of Venice's distributing role to the European market in the middle of the sixteenth-century; and the other defending the Portuguese position as the main supplier of spices to Western Europe since 1500. By revisiting these two theories, we want to pay more attention to the quantitative side of the problem, despite the lack of complete series regarding European spice imports, and to look at forgotten aspects related with trade organisation and public finances which, as we contend, shed new light on an old issue. Though centred in Portugal and in the Cape Route, we aim to provide a global vision of the problem, namely by looking to Mediterranean and Asian players, and by using old works, revising known data and employing new sources.

Keywords

Spice Trade; Asia; Europe; Mediterranean; Cape Route.

Sumário

O estudo da rivalidade económica entre a Rota do Cabo e o Mediterrâneo no início da Idade Moderna permanece arraigado em torno de duas grandes teorias, uma defendendo o ressurgimento do papel de Veneza na distribuição de especiarias no mercado europeu em meados do século XVI; e o outro defendendo a posição de Portugal como principal fornecedor de especiarias para a Europa Ocidental desde 1500. Ao visitar estas duas teorias, queremos dar mais atenção ao lado quantitativo do problema, apesar da falta de séries completas no que diz respeito às importações de especiarias europeias, bem como aos aspectos relacionados com a organização do comércio e as finanças públicas que, como julgamos, lançam uma nova luz sobre uma velha questão. Embora centrados em Portugal e na Rota do Cabo, pretendemos dar uma visão global do problema, nomeadamente olhando para os actores mediterrânicos e asiáticos, mediante o uso de trabalhos antigos, revendo dados conhecidos e recorrendo a novas fontes.

Palavras-chave

Comércio de especiarias; Ásia; Europa; Mediterrâneo; Rota do Cabo.

¹ João Teles e Cunha belongs to the Centre for Classical Studies, School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, and is the post-PhD Investigator hired by the Project '*Res Sinicae*. A database of Latin and Portuguese sources on China (16th-18th-century). Survey, Edition, Translation and Studies' (PTDC/LLT-OUT/31941/2017), funded by National Funds through FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology, P.I.

1 *The supply side of the question.* - 2. *Distribution channels and consuming markets in Europe.* - 3. *Financing the Carreira da Índia and the spice trade.* - 4. *Bibliography.* - 5. *Curriculum vitae.*

The study of the economic rivalry between the Cape and Mediterranean Routes in the Early Modern Era remains entrenched around two great theories, one defending the resurgence of Venice's distributing role to the European market in the middle of the sixteenth-century; and the other defending the Portuguese position as the main supplier of spices to Western Europe since 1500. The assumption that the opening of the Cape Route by Vasco da Gama in 1497-1499 meant the definitive end for Venice as a purveyor of spices to Europe, along with the Mediterranean's ultimate decline, suffered a first setback in the 1930s when Frederic Chapin Lane (1933, pp. 228-229 and 1939-1940, pp. 581-590) proved the revival of the Levantine routes around the 1560s. In 1953, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho went one step further by signaling an earlier Venetian recovery in the 1530s (1953, pp. 581-590 and 1990, pp. 411-426).

Subsequent historians acknowledged Venice's commercial renaissance but failed to agree on its market share *vis-à-vis* Portugal's position as a spice distributor to Europe. A new boundary was established in 1974 by Niels Steensgaard (1974, pp. 155-171), who claimed that the Levantine route had not only competed vigorously with the Cape Route from the 1560s to the 1580s, but had supplanted the latter by the 1590s. While most historians preferred to emphasise Venice's recovered role as distributor in the sixteenth-century European spice trade, along with other Mediterranean players, such as Marseille, only C. H. H. Wake (1996, pp. 141-183) defended the overall importance of the Cape Route over its Levantine rival regarding the supply of spices to Europe in an article published in 1979.

The debate seems to have frozen in two opposite and irreconcilable sides, though a 'third' opinion tried to establish a bridge between the two. This third opinion maintains that Venice and the other Mediterranean players were, at best, secondary providers to the European market whenever the Portuguese *Carreira da Índia* (India Run) performed badly (Subrahmanyam - Thomas, 1991, pp. 303-316). Over the years the theme became more complex, not only due to the increasing number of works devoted to the subject, but also to the ever-changing historiographical flavour of the moment. Recently Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson (2009, pp. 655-684) revisited the subject by using real prices, and they contended that the opening of the Cape Route changed the Eurasian spice trade structure in place since the Middle Age as it led to a

decline in prices which ultimately benefited the European consumer². Until now all theories pay more attention to the quantitative side of the problem, despite the lack of complete time series regarding European spice imports, forgetting aspects related with trade organisation and public finances which, as we contend, shed new light on an old question. Though centred in Portugal and in the Cape Route, we aim to provide a global vision of the problem, namely by looking to Mediterranean and Asian players, and by using old works, revising known data and employing new sources.

1. The supply side of the question

We feel bound to start with the quantitative aspect of the question to understand its ultimate development. India and the Indonesian-Malayan world were the sole producers of spices (pepper, mace, nutmeg, clove and cinnamon) after Vasco da Gama's voyage. Western Africa, however, produced a spice called 'malagueta'³, which was a poor and cheaper substitute for the pepper consumed in the European market until the middle of the sixteenth-century. The 'malagueta' rivalled with the Asian spices in Europe, and was one of the great Portuguese exports to Flanders since 1450 until 1550; but its consumption declined with the arrival of the Indian spices, namely pepper and cardamom, in the sixteenth-century. The renewed interest in its trade around 1550 by the French and English represented a rival supply route, though the Portuguese continued to control the supply to the crucial Flemish market (Godinho, 1985, pp. 155-156)⁴. Asia continued to be the world's unique spice supplier until the eighteenth-century, when Europeans began to transplant cash-crop plants to other latitudes, namely to their American colonies. An earlier attempt to acclimatise Indian spices to recently discovered Brazil met with King D. Manuel's (r. 1495-1521) opposition, and all plants were uprooted and destroyed by royal command. Only ginger survived and thrived in Brazil and in the island of São Tomé, despite the attempts made to eradicate its cultivation (Thomaz, 2009, pp. 13-57).

² Both authors, paradoxically, made no use of time series for Portugal, nor do they have any for the crucially important French market, and the Mediterranean in the overall is poorly represented.

³ The *Aframomum melegueta* Schumman is a zingiberaceae like the ginger and the cardamom, whose taste it resembles somewhat, though it is not so fragrant. Ficalho, 1945.

⁴ In 1548, a French ship landed 12 tons of 'malagueta' at Honfleur; Miguel de Araújo to Pêro de Alcáçova Carneiro, Paris May 8, 1548. Matos, 1952, p. 185.

According to the estimates made by Tomé Pires at the beginning of the sixteenth-century (1512-1515), the global Asian production of spices varied between 185,160 and 204,730 quintals⁵ (9,500 to 10,500 metric tonnes).

Spice	Quintals	Percentage
Pepper	129,200-145,000	67.9-69.8
Ginger	6,000	2.8-3.2
Cinnamon (Sri Lanka)	3,000	1.4-1.6
Mace	2,040-2,450	1.1
Nutmeg	20,420-28,580	11-13.4
Total	185,160-204,730	100

Source: (Godinho, 1983, p. 196)

The available computation around 1600 doubles the figure known a century earlier if we consider the production growth rate registered for pepper and cinnamon, with the possible exception of Moluccan clove. The total production would have reached between 356,817 and 369,427 quintals per year (18-19,000 metric tonnes). Pepper was and remained the most sought after and traded spice during the Early Modern Age, and India was its major producer until the seventeenth century. The Indian production probably reached its peak around 1607, when Francisco da Costa, a scrivener in Cochin's factory, calculated its general output from Honnavar to Travancore in 258,000 quintals, 400% more than what Pires had estimated a century earlier. Growth in Kerala alone shifted between 200% and 275%, with an annual average increase of 1.6% (Rego, 1963, pp. 350-351).

The most dramatic expansion of pepper cultivation and output occurred in Sumatra and Java. Both islands replaced India as the world leading producer and exporter in the seventeenth-century, when the Indian production dropped. The annual growth rate in Southeast Asia was even bigger than in India: 2.5% from 1500 to 1549, and 2.3% from 1550 to 1599⁶. Sunda, in western Java, witnessed a spectacular increase in forty years, when it passed from the 1,000 bahars⁷ of pepper produced in 1512-1515 as recorded by Tomé Pires (Cortese, 1944, vol. I, p. 168), to a yearly average of 10,000 bahars by 1554, and twice as

⁵ The Portuguese quintal has 51.405 kg in the 'old system' (*peso velho*), used for the spice trade, and 58.752 kg in the 'new system' (*peso novo*).

⁶ Kieniewicz, 1986, pp. 7-9; O'Rourke - Williamson, 2002, pp. 419-420; Barendse, 2002, pp. 211-212, 247.

⁷ Sunda's bahar has 212.976 kg.

much in exceptional years (Felner, 1868a, p. 42). Rising demand led to the expansion of pepper cultivation to new places like Jambi, in Sumatra, where it supplanted the rice paddies. Not mentioned by Pires, Jambi was already frequented by Malacca's traders ca. 1545, and her importance grew after 1580, when Sunda became temporarily closed to the 'Franks'. In the beginning of the seventeenth-century, Jambi had a heterogeneous, cosmopolitan and seasonal merchant population composed of Chinese, Javanese, Portuguese and Malays, as well as the newly arrived English and Dutch (Andaya, 1993, pp. 97-99).

Sumatra became the alternative pepper supply centre for Europe after 1530, rivalling the Portuguese Cape Route (Boxer, 1969, pp. 415-428), whereas in the past the island sent its production to the Bay of Bengal and to East Asia. Aceh became Sumatra's main spice export emporium, and her sultans, beginning with 'Ala ad-Din Ri'ayat Syah (r. 1539-1571), inaugurated a 'pepper imperialism' to compete with Portugal's imperial project for the region. 'Ala ad-Din Ri'ayat Syah declared the commerce of pepper and foodstuffs a royal monopoly, and centred all trade in his capital to make it the most important redistributive port in the region. Fuelled by the income received from pepper exports, 'Ala ad-Din initiated an ambitious expansionist policy in the 1540s to capture all great spice producing centres in Sumatra and in the Malayan Peninsula. Portuguese Malacca was unsuccessfully besieged in 1547, but Perlis fell in 1548. In the 1560s, with Ottoman technical and military assistance, 'Ala ad-Din launched a second expansionist wave, whose climax was reached in 1564 with the conquest of Johor and Aru, though the sultan failed twice to take Malacca in 1564 and 1568. On his death the sultanate plunged into political chaos and Aceh only returned to its old imperial policy in the seventeenth-century under sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636) (Alves, 1999, pp. 174-177; Lombard, 1967, pp. 60-68).

2. Distribution channels and consuming markets in Europe

Despite the sustained growth of Asian spice production, Europe only consumed a very small amount, as Asia was, and would remain, its largest consumer. Surprisingly, average European annual pepper consumption from 1500 to 1625 maintained a level similar to that recorded before the opening of the Cape Route: somewhere around 28-30,000 quintals (1,439 to 1,542 metric tonnes) (Wake, 1996, pp. 141-167)⁸. This figure is relevant and must be taken into

⁸ For higher European consumption figures see Lane 1939-1940, 111-120; Steensgaard 1974, 155-158, 171.

account when the spice supply and redistribution to Europe is discussed for the Early Modern Age, because demand levels remained stable, despite occasional peaks and drops in real prices (O'Rourke - Williamson, 2009, pp. 667-669).

Available pepper consumption data for Europe is based on two different estimates, one made by the Swabian pepper contractor Konrad Rott in 1578-1580, and the other made in a report sent to King Filipe II of Portugal (r. 1598-1621) in 1611 (Kellenbenz, 1956, pp. 1-28). Both figures represent an estimate made by men with a good knowledge of the European pepper market, and therefore must be taken as reliable indicators.

Region	1578-1580	1611
Portugal	1,500 α	3,000 β
Spain	3,000	
France	2,500	3,000
British Isles	3,000	γ
Italy	6,000	2,000
Germany, Baltic, Poland, Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Silesia	12,000	20,000 δ
Flanders	ϵ	2,000
Total	28,000	30,000

Legend: Values expressed in Portuguese quintals; α including exports for Africa and Peru; β including Spain and Portugal; γ not mentioned in 1611; δ "and the remaining Septentrional provinces" as the document states, which should incorporate the same countries as in 1578-1580; ϵ not mentioned in 1578-1580. **Source:** (Kellenbenz, 1956, pp. 7-8)

By comparing these figures with pepper production, we see that in 1512-1515 Europe consumed, on average, 15.3% of what was produced in India, but only 8.2% in 1611. Europe's consumption is even smaller when Southeast Asia's production is added to that of India. Average European consumption did not exceed 28-30,000 quintals until the 1620s, when the Dutch and English East India Companies began flooding the market with large quantities of pepper, thus lowering its price and changing the level of consumption in place since the later Middle Age (Wake, 1996, pp. 169-172).

There were, however, occasional peaks that exceeded this average, which were more frequent during the reign of D. Manuel than in later times. Soon the monopolist King learnt that surpluses were not necessarily a good thing. Storage meant a loss in dividends as well as quantity and quality, with the consequent loss of value when the new spice arrived. D. Manuel, therefore, fixed an annual ceiling based on estimated European consumption.

Unsurprisingly the first extant pepper contract (1560) made reference to an annual maximum of 30-40,000 quintals⁹, subsequently fixed at 30,000 quintals by new contracts (Rego, 1963, p. 340), but both targets were never realised.

Notwithstanding limited market elasticity, there were peaks, as in 1508, when a cargo of 40,000 quintals of pepper was shipped to Lisbon¹⁰. In the late 1510s a number of successive records was registered: 44,032 quintals of pepper in 1517 (Godinho, 1987, p. 73), more than 41,477 quintals in 1518 (Bouchon, 1977, p. X); the zenith was reached in 1519 with the shipment of 56,000 quintals of pepper to Portugal, which according to Gaspar Correia was “the greatest cargo ever made, though the pepper was not very well chosen, which accounted for the great losses registered in Portugal, because it was shipped unripe and undried, and mixed with rocks” (Correia, 1923, p. 561). Afterwards volumes declined, and large shipments became more sporadic and smaller. The last great shipment known dates from 1558, with more than 30,000 quintals (Godinho, 1987, p. 75), but subsequently no such quantity was ever to land again in Lisbon, particularly after 1575.

Year	Outward bound		Homeward bound		Average	
	Departure	Arrival	Departure	Arrival	Ships year	Pepper decade
1500-09	152	124	80	67	6.7	18,825
1510-19	98	85	54	54	5.4	29,866
1520-29	84	62	25	23	2.3	18,102
1530-39	85	81	51	41	4.1	24,000
1540-49	65	57	43	41	4.1	24,000
1550-59	56	51	39	30	3	17,100
1560-69	49	46	37	30	3	17,100
1570-79	51	50	42	38	3.8	19,500
1580-89	54	45	43	34	3.4	20,800

⁹ Pepper contract, Lisbon January 10, 1560, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (henceforth BNP), *Fundo Geral*, cod.11410, ff. 6-14.

¹⁰ António de Sintra (?) to King, Cannanore December 8, 1508. Pato, 1903, p. 298.

Year	Outward bound		Homeward bound		Average	
	Departure	Arrival	Departure	Arrival	Ships year	Pepper decade
1590-99	52	37	36	21	2.1	9,300
1600-09	85	48	39	30	3	- - -
1610-19	54	42	26	30	3	8.290

The *Carreira da Índia* and pepper cargos, 1500-1619

Caption: The average of ships/year deals only with the homebound voyage. Pepper values expressed in quintals. The totals for 1500-1529 are tentative reconstructions, and the cargos for 1520-1529 should have been greater.

Source: Wake, 1979, pp. 157, 161-163; Guinote - Frutuoso - Lopes, 2000, pp. 67-70.

The two estimates also show how Central Europe, mainly Germany, was the continent's largest pepper consumer, and its overall market share grew between 1578-1580 (42,85%) and 1611 (66,66%). From 1578-1580 to 1611 European consumption dropped, except in Central Europe and France. And by 1611 the English and the Dutch had their own sources of supply and channels of distribution. Portugal remained the continent's main supplier until 1590, when the Mediterranean ports took over, only to be replaced after 1600 by the new Atlantic emporia. It is noteworthy that in 1611 Italy's consumption sank to a third of its previous recorded value, hinting that the Mediterranean markets were undergoing important changes.

	Portuguese supply	European consumption	Other European supply	Percentage
1530-39	24,000	28-30,000	4-6,000	14.28-20
1540-49	24,000	28-30,000	4-6,000	14.28-20
1550-59	17,100	28-30,000	10,900-12,900	38.92-43
1560-69	17,100	28-30,000	10,900-12,900	38.92-43
1570-79	19,500	28-30,000	8,500-10,500	30.35-35
1580-89	20,800	28-30,000	7,200-9,200	25.71-30.66
1590-99	9,300	28-30,000	18,700-20,700	66.78-69

	Portuguese supply	European consumption	Other European supply	Percentage
1600-09	---	28-30,000	---	---
1610-19	8,290	28-30,000	19,710-21,710	70.39-72.36

Note: Annual values expressed in quintals. **Source:** Wake, 1979, pp. 162-163; Cunha, 1995, pp. 458-459.

In short, the European market was supplied via different channels, hinting that it was far from being an integrated spice market until the seventeenth-century, with the advent of the East India Companies¹¹. Even before the opening of the Cape Route, Europe was already supplied by two major redistribution centres: Venice and Bursa. Whereas Venice dominated West and Central Europe, though there were other European players in the Mediterranean basin, Bursa commanded the supply to the Balkans and Eastern Europe through the route linking this Ottoman city to Brasov in Romania. The Ottoman route not only survived, but thrived, especially after Selim I (r. 1512-1520) had conquered the Mamluk sultanate in 1517, which gave him control over the traditional spice terminus in Alexandria and in the Levantine ports. In the middle of the sixteenth-century Istanbul replaced Bursa and Lviv became the new terminus redistributing spices and other Asian merchandise to Eastern Europe, including parts of the Baltic (Inalcik, 2000, pp. 300-303; Malowist, 1970, pp. 169-175). Around 1530 the Mediterranean recovered some of its distributive role in the European spice market, even though in 1531 the Venetians complained that the four galleys sent to Alexandria and Beirut had found few spices and those available were sold at “*precii excessive*”¹². Five years later, in 1536, both voyages were deemed important to Venice¹³, more so to Beirut whose supply line with the Persian Gulf had remained mostly unharmed since the Portuguese conquest of Hormuz in 1515. By contrast, the Red Sea route was beset by frequent Portuguese blockades, although these roles changed around 1550 with the beginning of the Portuguese-Ottoman conflict in the Gulf. In the mid-1540s, the Venetians sailed to both ports in search of spices and other Asian merchandise, especially ‘*robba*’¹⁴.

¹¹ For an opposing position see O'Rourke - Williamson, 2009, pp. 678-679.

¹² Senate deliberation, Venice March 28, 1531. Oliveira, 2000, p. 250.

¹³ Senate deliberation, Venice March 9, 1536; Senate deliberation, Venice March 13, 1536. Oliveira, 2000, respectively pp. 252-253.

¹⁴ Senate deliberation, Venice May 21, 1545; Senate deliberation, Venice March 17, 1547. Oliveira, 2000, respectively pp. 261-262.

In Antwerp, where the emblematic Portuguese factory stood until 1549, pepper from the Mediterranean sold by a Parisian merchant to a Castilian trader in 1536 signalled new times (Coornaert, 1961b, p. 103). The Western European spice market had become divided into two zones since the 1530s:

(i) the Atlantic countries and the Baltic supplied by Lisbon through Antwerp, and;

(ii) the Mediterranean basin supplied by Alexandria and the Levantine ports.

France was the best proof of this division, as the line running through Metz-Troyes-Paris-Rouen split the country in two, with the Atlantic side supplied by Antwerp and Lisbon, and the south by Marseilles and Lyon. Whenever one of the suppliers failed to provide its market, its rival would step in. Whereas in 1543-1544 1,387 pepper bales made their way by land from Antwerp to Venice and Ancona (Wee, 1963, p. 156), Lyon sent spices from Venice in the opposite direction in 1544, 1560 and 1577 (Coornaert, 1961a, vol. I, p. 291). The behaviour of Antwerp and Lyon financial markets had much to do with these spice transports.

The Ottoman Empire also consumed and distributed a considerable quantity of spices arriving in the Mediterranean. Consequently, the large figures given for the Red Sea route from the 1550s onwards must take into consideration its pivotal role, particularly after the state became an important player in the spice trade under grand-vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha from 1565 to 1579 (Casale, 2006, pp. 183-84). The total of 40,000 quintals reported by the Portuguese ambassador in Rome, Lourenço Pires de Távora, or the 50,000 quintals referred by the Jewish spy Matias Bicudo Furtado in the 1550s must be dismissed as they had ulterior political motives. Moreover, both men provided lower estimates during the 1550s, indicating how volatile Europe's supply was through the Red Sea route (Cruz, 1991, pp. 108, 114-116, 118-119, 126-127, 131). In 1564, during the height of the Red Sea recovery, two spies in Venice mentioned that at Jiddah only 1,800 quintals of pepper and 3,000 quintals of "other drugs" from Aceh and Bhatkal had arrived, but that was enough to cause the pepper price in Cairo to drop from 25 to 20 sequins¹⁵. So, the total provided by viceroy D. Antão de Noronha (1564-1568) in 1566 of 20-25,000 quintals of pepper shipped through the Red Sea is more realistic. Certainly, when taken together with his estimate of 10-12,000 quintals sent to Lisbon via the Cape Route that same year, which amounts to half the volume reaching the Mediterranean¹⁶. But how much pepper of the former route was really going to Europe?

¹⁵ Gaspar and João Ribeiro to King, Venice August 27, 1564, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (henceforth ANTT), *Corpo Cronológico*, I-107-9, ff. 1-1v

¹⁶ Viceroy to King, Goa December 16, 1566, ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, I-108-15, ff. 3v. 12.

There is no precise way to determine this given the lack of series, but the Ottoman Empire could have been the recipient of half the spice reaching Alexandria and Aleppo. Annual Ottoman consumption of pepper alone might represent 5,000 quintals. At least that was the total deemed acceptable to sell to the Turk when King D. João III (r. 1521-1557) negotiated a peace treaty with Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) in 1541; though he instructed his agent Duarte Catanho to lower the offer and to receive guarantees that no further quantity of pepper or other spices would cross Ottoman territory into Europe¹⁷. That figure, however, did not take into account the Ottoman role as a spice distributor to Eastern Europe, which must have been considerable. In 1572, for instance, the Venetian envoy Antonio Tiepolo informed Portugal's Regent, the Cardinal D. Henrique, that "in Constantinople flowed much of the same merchandise as in the marts of Alexandria and Beirut, which is consumed there, [and] great quantities are sent northwards"¹⁸. Lviv seemed to have been one of its destinations, if not the largest, and the Sephardim Jews established in Istanbul dominated that route during the second half of the sixteenth century (Nadel-Golobic, 1979, pp. 364, 373).

Despite estimates, there is some quantitative data to support Wake's figures for Lisbon in the 1560s in Venetian reports. The Venetian ambassador to Spain reported in 1560 that more than 17,000 quintals of pepper had been landed at Lisbon, while he mentioned only 11,500 quintals in 1562¹⁹. In 1568 one ship of the four of that year's fleet carried 5,000 'cantara di pevere'; and in 1569 a single ship out of four had a cargo of 12,000 'cantara', though a third of the pepper was lost because it was unripe²⁰, thus corroborating Wake's decennial average.

The unpredictability of the amount landed at Lisbon for the same period, coupled with changes occurring in the Crown's monopoly contracts and the low prices it paid for spices in Asia, made profits irresistible to traders operating from Constantinople, Cairo and Aleppo according to D. Antão de Noronha²¹. In 1569 the bishop of Goa, D. Jorge Themudo, wrote how he feared that the growing quantity of pepper from Kedah and Aceh supplying the Red Sea would "reduce the price of pepper in Flanders" (Wicki, 1961, p. 208), thus curtailing Portuguese profits. As both men advocated reforms in the spice

¹⁷ Instructions to Duarte Catanho, Almeirim February 15, 1541, ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, I-69-47, ff. 1, 2, 3-3v.

¹⁸ Antonio Tiepolo to the Senate, Almeirim January 19, 1572. Oliveira, 1997, pp. 64-65.

¹⁹ Paolo Tiepolo to the Senate, Toledo August 28, 1560; Paolo Tiepolo to the Senate, Madrid September 3, 1562. Oliveira, 2000, respectively pp. 270, 275.

²⁰ Sigismondi di Cavalli to the Senate, Madrid August 18, 1568; Sigismondi di Cavalli to the Senate, Madrid November 23, 1569. Oliveira, 1997, respectively pp. 25, 32.

²¹ Viceroy to King, Goa December 16, 1566. ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, I-108-15, ff. 3v-4.

trade, this may explain why such dark forecasts were used to describe the state of Portuguese commerce. However, real price indices show a small increase over Europe in 1550-1575, excepting Vienna and Andalusia (O'Rourke - Williamson, 2009, p. 667), thus proving how unfounded Themudo's fears were.

Spice supply to Europe remained uncertain. The Cape Route regained the upper hand from 1570 to 1590. This was due to a change in the royal monopoly by channelling operations to different syndicates (procurement, shipping, sales, duties) (Cunha, 2009, pp. 51-79). The Mediterranean supplied less than in the past due to intermittent warfare. As Venice's redistributive role suffered whenever the *Serenissima* was at war with the Turk, Marseille took her place during the 1570s (Billioud, 1951, pp. 444-46). The Portuguese benefitted from the Ottoman taxation of the Red Sea spice traffic, coupled with the Turk's role as spice distributor, particularly one who did not pay taxes and therefore had an advantage over private traders in his empire (Casale, 2006, p. 191). Even so Lisbon investors still looked to the Mediterranean because, as Fernando de Morais confessed to the financier Simón Ruiz in 1576, "I believe that from now on [pepper] won't have the same value, because it is known that a great sum has arrived in Venice and Italy by way of Cairo, and its price has dropped; and much more has arrived [in Lisbon] in these carracks"²². Though the amounts arriving in Europe changed annually, spice prices tended to decrease, again indicating the century's trend.

During the 1580s King Filipe I of Portugal (r. 1580-1598) even tried to make Venice the privileged distributor of Portuguese spices in the Mediterranean, but the prolonged negotiations never bore fruit because the *Serenissima's* interests lay elsewhere, and Filipe's offer was a political bait to get Venice to join him in an anti-Ottoman league. The pepper contractors also tried to lure Venice into the business. In 1586, for example, Giovanni Battista Rovelasca, Gerhard Paris and Marcus and Matthäus Welser invited the Venetians to participate in their European pepper activities, but to no avail²³. And in 1590 Rovellasca unsuccessfully tried to attract Venice again, offering to send 6,000 'cantara' of pepper there²⁴. As some contractors – men like Konrad Rott, the Welsers and Rovelasca – took double risks since they handled two segments of the Crown operations (procurement and sales), the spectre of bankruptcy became a reality if anything went wrong, especially in the shipping segment, the weakest link in the Portuguese commercial enterprise. Moreover, men like the Welsers, were also involved in other financial operations, namely in lending money to the

²² Fernando de Morais to Simón Ruiz, Lisbon August 13, 1576. Silva, 1961, p. 72.

²³ Gerhard Paris to Hieromano Lippomano, Madrid October 15, 1586. Oliveira, 1997, p. 528.

²⁴ Tomaso Contarini to the Senate, Madrid April 11, 1590. Oliveira, 1997, p. 601.

Spanish Crown and trading in the European credit market. Therefore, they were more vulnerable to short-term crises and susceptible to going bankrupt if anything went wrong, which in turn affected their capacity to invest in their Portuguese venture. By 1593 these international investors declared bankruptcy and abandoned the pepper contracts, and their place was taken by men such as Tomás Ximenes and Heitor Mendes, Portuguese New-Christians (Godinho, 1987, pp. 63-65).

The debacle of the *Carreira da Índia* in the 1590s meant the beginning of the end for the Portuguese commercial system in place since 1556. The Atlantic lost its dominant position to the Mediterranean in the European distribution of spices until 1600. In the Ottoman Empire, the dismembering of the state's role as distributor after 1580, saw the emergence of great merchants in Egypt in the 1590s, such as Ismail Abu Takiyya, who controlled all channels in close association with local Ottoman officials (Casale, 2006, pp. 194-96; Hanna, 1997). Significantly, Francesco Vindramin reported in 1594 that it was Brazil's trade that had saved Lisbon's market, not India, especially after the wreck of the Indiaman *São Pedro* off the coast of Pernambuco²⁵. As the Mediterranean, and Venice, regained momentarily the role of major spice supplier to Europe, fuelled by the injection of American silver, Lisbon was sometimes supplied by rivals, as in 1606 when a ship from Marseille landed indigo, nutmeg and incense, which led King Filipe II of Portugal (r. 1598-1621) to forbid the entry and sale of any spices and drugs in Portugal and its empire, except for those carried by Portuguese vessels²⁶. Around 1609, however, the Dutch began displacing the traditional players by selling 'Atlantic' pepper in the *Mare Nostrum* (Israel, 1991, pp. 97-101), thus inverting the pattern of an age-old commerce. Even Lisbon managed to send pepper to the Mediterranean through Genoa, whose merchants and financiers were deeply involved in the Portuguese economy.

During the sixteenth-century a third route, albeit an insignificant one, reappeared, providing spices to Europe's periphery, *i.e.*, Russia, by way of the Persian Gulf. Traditionally the Gulf had purveyed the Levantine ports rivalling with the Red Sea route in the same bulk products throughout the Mamluk period and afterwards under Ottoman rule. With the end of the Portuguese-Ottoman war in the Persian Gulf (Özbaran, 1994, pp. 119-157; Floor, 2006, pp. 170-190), there was a shift in the bulk products traded, from pepper to luxury spices and Indian textiles. This trade was bolstered by American silver flooding

²⁵ Francesco Vendramin to the Senate, Madrid November 3, 1594. Oliveira, 1997, p. 640.

²⁶ King to the Revenue Council, n/l November 20, 1606. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (henceforth AHU), *Índia*, box 1, doc. 60.

the Mediterranean, starting in the 1570s (Braudel, 1978, pp. 493-496) and which by the late 1590s was reckoned to be worth two million “in silver coined and broken” exchanged in Hormuz by a cosmopolitan group of traders for “clove, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom, textiles, and porcelain, and all this in large quantities, and lots of indigo [...], and even pepper despite all prohibitions”²⁷.

The Persian Gulf had also been linked sometimes with Lviv via the so-called *Via Tartarica*, but the town’s character changed in the sixteenth-century when it ceased to be a transit market to become a continuous fair for spices and silks, among other oriental merchandise, which were re-exported to nearby European regions (Nadel-Golobič, 1979, pp. 355-356). The easternmost route crossed Safavid Persia, bordered the Caspian Sea and arrived in Moscow through the Volga, a commercial way opened after Ivan IV (r. 1533-1584) had conquered Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1554) (Crummey, 1987, pp. 154-155). By 1567 two of Ivan’s commercial agents could be found in Hormuz trading (Matthee, 1999, p. 30), indicating its feasibility, although Russians and even Poles were known to trade in the island before that date²⁸. Though perilous, the route remained open to trade despite occasional closures due to the ongoing Safavid-Ottoman conflict (Carrère d’Encausse, 1970, pp. 391-422). The English Muscovy Company became interested in procuring spices through this route, but the itinerary proved too daunting to be economically competitive and was abandoned after 1581²⁹.

The decision to establish a route via the Persian Gulf to the spice sources was then taken by the Levant Company established in Aleppo after 1583. Though Ralph Fitch succeeded in returning to England by the overland route in 1591, the future lay with the Cape Route, as agents of the Levant Company recognised in 1599 in view of the success achieved by the early Dutch voyages to Asia (Marshall, 2001, pp. 267-268). Unsurprisingly, it was the stockholders of the Levant company who became involved in the Asian trade in the 1590s, and provided a substantial part of the capital, directors and governor of the East India Company upon its creation in 1600 (Brenner, 1993, pp. 21-22). As for the Dutch, they managed to send 65 ships to Asia from 1595 to 1602, when all the companies operating in the Cape Route were forced by the States General to merge into the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Gaastra, 2003, pp. 17-23). The

²⁷ The *Estado da Índia* and where it begins, Rego, 1960, pp. 200, 214-215.

²⁸ Fr. Gaspar Barzeaeus to his brethren in India and Europe, Hormuz December 10, 1549, Wicki, 1948, p. 647.

²⁹ “The Voyage of Christopher Burrough to Persia the sixth time Anno 1579”, Hakluyt, 1936, pp. 172-200.

maritime route to Asia became the main supplier of spices for Europe after 1600, when increasingly greater quantities were landed at Amsterdam and London, thus making spices cheap and accessible to more people. Furthermore, the creation of a single integrated market for the sale of spices across the continent made all other supply channels superfluous and economically unsustainable.

3. *Financing the Carreira da Índia and the spice trade*

The reason for the survival of the Mediterranean routes after the opening of the Cape Route by Vasco da Gama was due to D. Manuel's decision to monopolise all aspects of the Asian spice trade, to use its revenues to finance his policy of centralisation, continuing a strategy dating back to the reign of D. Afonso V (r. 1438-1481)³⁰. As D. Manuel lacked capital to finance all the necessary investments, including money for the annual Indian fleet and the purchase of spices in Asia, he had to borrow it domestically, and more often abroad from major Italian and German financiers, such as the Fugger and the Affaitati. To pay for his increasing expenditure and growing public debt, which around 1523 surpassed the kingdom's revenues in 57 million *réis*³¹, D. Manuel chose to maintain a low level of supply to obtain better prices and conditions from his financiers, but the outcome was disappointing. He ended up being hostage to his foreign lenders, especially the Germans, some of whom doubled as spice distributors in northern Europe exchanging it at the Crown factory in Antwerp for money, merchandises and copper. Furthermore, as pepper became widely used as a form of payment the king's bargaining power with his financiers weakened, as did the value of spices. In the closing years of D. Manuel's reign Portugal's spice trade and shipping to Asia were mainly determined by external factors which he failed to control, as indicated by the unsuccessful negotiations conducted by Rui Fernandes de Almada in Germany to obtain better agreements and establish a diversified financial syndicate in 1519-1521 (Barata, 1971, pp. 75-115).

As D. Manuel's answer to each financial crisis was to reinforce the monopoly, by the end of his reign the Crown had a pervasive presence in the Portuguese spice trade in Asia and Europe. He left his son and heir, D. João III, the ordeal of financing and managing the Cape Route as a royal monopoly,

³⁰ For an overview of the Portuguese royal monopoly see Godinho 1987, chapters 4 and 5; Dias, 1963; Dias, 1964.

³¹ Excluding the overseas revenues, *vide* Freire, 1908, p. 375.

coupled with an ever-growing public debt. Any bad result in the management of the *Carreira da Índia* impacted negatively in the royal finances, thus increasing the difficulties to raise more money to finance the State and the monopoly. Until 1549 most of the large loans were foreign, but increasingly the king raised money domestically, either by asking for it from the *Cortes*, as in 1525 (Torres Novas), 1535 (Évora) and 1544 (Almeirim), or more often by selling amortisable or perpetual bonds which paid fixed interest rates to its buyers, starting with 7.14% in D. Manuel's reign to descend to 6.20% during D. João III's rule. Portugal's revenues may have increased more than twofold in Garcia de Resende's lifetime (1470-1536) as he sung in his autobiographic poem *Miscellany* (ca. 1536), from 60 to 200 million *réis*, "India and Mina not counting", because if these two were included the total income would have doubled (Camões, 1999, p. 294), but so did the expenditure and at a rate higher than the Crown's available cash-flow. A budgetary document made for the King in 1534 corroborated Resende's versified figures, stressing that on average Portugal's revenue had an annual gross surplus of 32 million *réis*. However, the public debt amounted to more than 808 million *réis*, of which 160 million *réis* were due at Antwerp's factory alone³².

What had started as an expedient way to finance extraordinary expenses in D. Manuel's days, became a regular financial operation for D. João III to obtain funds to keep the Crown and its monopolies afloat, and especially to bankroll large expeditions sent to India, as in 1528, 1534, and 1537 (Gomes, 1883, pp. 27, 135-137, 140-141). In 1544 the structural cash-flow difficulties obliged D. João III to convene the *Cortes* again to ask for more money. The King's secretary, Pêro de Alcáçova Carneiro, summed up all the major extraordinary expenditures made since the beginning of the reign, and the total reached the staggering amount of 1,460 million *réis*, most of which was India related, though it did not include the cost of the annual fleets nor the money needed to buy spices. Alcáçova Carneiro added that "since much of this expenditure is paid with money in exchange [foreign loans], the sum of the interests already paid [until 1544] amounts to more than two million and two hundred thousand cruzados [880 million *réis*]"³³.

Although Portugal remained the best source for the Crown to obtain financing until the nineteenth-century, because it paid a handsome annual interest, it crippled the royal finances as the available revenue was used to pay

³² Revenue of the Kingdom, Isles, and trade, n/1 1534, Sanceau, 1973, pp. 38-42.

³³ Andrada, 1937, pp. 328-330. Alcáçova Carneiro calculated that the amount needed to pay the lenders if the King decided to repatriate the debt from Flanders to Portugal, amounted to more than 1,200 million *réis*, cf. Andrada, 1937, p. 330.

an ever-growing debt and its interests. As the debt grew, the Crown's income plus the borrowed money became insufficient to pay all interests, and so delays in payment were common until 1560, when the State decreed its suspension and negotiated its debt structure with the lenders. It was just the beginning of a succession of suspensions and debt restructuration that characterised Portuguese finances for the following decades (Gomes, 1883, pp. 69-75), one which crippled its capacity to invest, namely in the Cape Route and in India.

Letters of credit and bonds had usually been sent to India to pay for the acquisition of spices and settle other expenses. In 1533, for instance, 20% of the money sent to India represented amortisable bonds³⁴. As the debt burden increased over time, the more difficult it became to cash the letters of credit in India, since some people like Fernão Álvares da Cunha refused to redeem them in 1546. By 1548 it was obvious that the Crown sent far less money than needed to acquire spices in India. The accumulated deficit for 1546-1547 amounted to more than 53 million *réis*³⁵, and it was left for the *Estado da Índia* to pay.

The mounting financial crisis forced the Crown to change course and in 1549 an encumbered D. João III closed the symbol of his monopoly, the factory at Antwerp, and started dismantling the monopolistic edifice created by his father. The task was continued by his successors, though the Crown never relinquished all commercial control to contractors, in particular the control over prices and amounts traded, which eventually led the contractors to abandon their contracts. Understandably the Crown saw in the contracts a way to continue its old policies, while it foisted the economic burden of trading and shipping operations with their risks onto the contractors. Besides, this construction guaranteed a regular income to the King in exchange for commercial privileges. Such a hybrid system, in which the Crown continued to dictate policies, was too rigid to effectively compete with the trading world in Asia and in Europe, and so the first to feel the brunt of its effect were the contractors, most of whom went bankrupt with the contracts.

The system of spice procurement in Asia also constrained Portuguese commercial enterprise. Since 1500 the Crown had favoured the supply via the Cape Route, never trying to sell spices in Asia to finance its purchase and believing wrongly that such an endeavour would hinder its role of supplier to Europe because it would provide spices to rival trade routes. At the height of Portuguese pepper imperialism in 1521, Nuno de Castro suggested that D. Manuel halt all vessels carrying spices in Asia, even those bound to China, "so that the Moors will lose all hope of finding a hole through which they can

³⁴ King to the Earl of Castanheira, Évora February 16, 1533, Ford, 1931, p. 100.

³⁵ Certificate on 1546 and 1547 pepper cargos, Goa May 17, 1548, ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, I-80-114.

make it run”³⁶. Time and again the Crown debated the possibility of selling spices in Asia, as in 1545 during D. João de Castro’s government (1545-1548) (Thomaz, 1998), only to reject it always in favour of supplying solely via the Cape Route.

Such a one-dimensional approach to the supply side of the question, coupled with the *Carreira da Índia*’s structural financial problems and poor operational performance, made the rebirth of the Mediterranean routes a viable one. Moreover, as Portugal was never able to control the acquisition and commerce of all Asian spices, (something unattainable as the Dutch and the English would discover too), these continued to flow through the traditional maritime lanes. Paradoxically Portuguese policies in Asia helped to give renewed life to the old trade routes, either through the ineffective blockade of the Bab al-Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz; or by tactlessly alienating local producers, middlemen, and sovereigns. The spices also went to the Mediterranean with the unintentional help of Portuguese officials, who had to appease friends and allies.

In 1547, for instance, the controller of the exchequer Simão Botelho complained that Khwaja Shamsoddin Gilani, a great Persian merchant operating in the *Estado da Índia*, sent whatever number of ships he wanted to the Bab al-Mandab with the connivance of the governors³⁷. Diplomatic treaties granted sailing permits for a certain number of vessels to carry on their usual trade, even in ‘forbidden’ merchandise such as spices. For example, the treaty signed with Bijapur in 1571 gave passes (*cartazes*) to all shipping from the Konkani coast bound to Hormuz, besides conceding other six passports for wherever the ‘Adel Shahi wanted to send ships³⁸, which meant the Bab al-Mandab. As Bijapur’s Konkani ports experienced a boom due to their trade with the Persian Gulf, even Portuguese merchants took an active part in this commerce, which in 1619 amounted to 27 vessels that made three to four voyages annually³⁹. It became irresistible for the Portuguese to supply rival routes given the tantalising profits. Every social stratum participated in this commerce, as Simão Botelho reported, accusing high-ranking officials, for example two captains of Hormuz, Luís Falcão and D. António de Noronha, of trading illicitly in spices with the Ottomans⁴⁰. In the 1590s and early 1600s such

³⁶ Nuno de Castro to King, Cochin October 31, 1520, Mendonça, 1935, p. 173.

³⁷ Simão Botelho to King, Bassein November 30, 1547, Felner 1868b, p. 2.

³⁸ Treaty with Bijapur, Goa December 17, 1571, Rivara, 1865, pp. 825-831.

³⁹ Lopo Álvares Pereira to King, Goa February 14, 1619, AHU, *Índia*, box 9 [6], doc. 32.

⁴⁰ Simão Botelho to King, Bassein December 24, 1548; Simão Botelho to King, Cochin December 30, 1552, Felner, 1868b, respectively pp. 20, 30-31.

traffic from India to the Persian Gulf was normal, and the Crown's efforts to suppress it were ineffective, as were the judicial inquiries to judge the culprits (Disney, 1989, pp. 57-75).

To make things worse, when the Crown started dismantling the monopoly together with its control checks, the amount of spice coming to Europe through alternative routes soared. It all began in 1539 when the Crown relinquished the clove trade, and by the 1540s that of the luxury spices (clove, mace, nutmeg, and cinnamon), which was largely carried out privately and ended supplying rival routes. In 1552, Simão Botelho complained bitterly of how the liberalisation had disrupted the control and acquisition mechanisms established by the Crown in India, reduced the cargos sent to Lisbon, and highlighted the lack of funds to buy spices⁴¹. Given the Crown's financial shortcomings D. João III had no option but to liberalise it even more, and around 1555 he decided to contract the procurement and shipment of pepper to a syndicate of Portuguese-Italian investors (Diogo de Castro, Diogo Martins, Belchior Barreto, Luca Giraldi), thus inaugurating a new commercial stage in the history of the *Carreira da Índia* that would last until 1614.

What began as a single contract was eventually segmented into four separate ones (procurement, shipping, sales, duties) leased to different syndicates after 1565, though some financiers invested in more than one segment, as the Ximenes brothers did in procurement and sales, while others bid for the same contracts successively, as was the case of Jorge Rodrigues Solis in shipping Cunha, 2009, pp. 51-92). To these, one can add two related contracts, shipbuilding and supplying food for the *Carreira*, which continued well into the middle of the seventeenth-century, since in 1656 Afonso Álvares contracted with the Crown the building of the 877 tons ship *Natividade*⁴².

Thanks to the contracts, the Crown managed to improve the *Carreira's* results and the spice trade for a quarter of a century. However, its continuing interference with the fixation of prices, irrespective of market value, and the maintenance of privileges that violated the contracts, namely the *liberdades* given as rewards to sailors and officials (Silva, 1949, pp. 5-28), resulted in a steep decline in the cargos and in the number of ships after 1590. Ultimately, this forced capitalists into opting for safer investments, either in the Atlantic or later as bankers to the Spanish Crown. It also explains why after 1570 private merchants invested more in the commerce with China, or in textiles and precious stones than in pepper (Boyajian, 1993). By 1593 all foreigners had

⁴¹ Simão Botelho to King, Cochin December 30, 552, Felner, 1868b, pp. 27-30.

⁴² Calculation of what the Crown spend with an Indiaman, n/l [Lisbon] n/d [1655-56], ANTT, *Manuscritos da Livraria*, cod. 1138, f. 55.

ceded the contracts, and the leases were solely bought by Portuguese New-Christians, who were eventually targeted by the Inquisition and the Crown. In 1598 the procurement and sales contracts were discontinued, since the pepper carried by Portuguese vessels ceased to be competitive. Already in 1593 there was a loss of 8,789,238 *réis* in the pepper trade alone (Cunha, 2009, p. 81), and this trend grew as the years passed. Nonetheless, the Crown continued to use pepper as a means of paying indemnities to the contractors, or giving it as a security to get money, as it did in 1614 to secure the loan from Lisbon's municipality to operate the *Carreira* (Cunha, 2009, p. 90).

Furthermore, after 1592 the Crown disinvested in the Cape Route and made wide use of bonds to finance it. In 1606, however, Filipe II faced difficulties in selling bonds in order to get money to equip the next year's fleet after he had suspended and restructured payment of interests in 1605⁴³. Given this financial and commercial situation it was just a matter of time before the system in place since 1556 ended. This occurred in 1614, when the last great contract, that of the shipment handled by Rodrigues Solis, was abandoned and it was left for the Crown to carry alone again the trade and shipping to India. It was the end of an era at various levels, though it ultimately meant the victory of the Cape Route over the Mediterranean in the spice commerce, even at the expense of its discoverer: Portugal.

4. Bibliography

Manuscripts:

Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon - Portugal):

Corpo Cronológico, I-69-47, I-80-114, I-107-9, I-108-15.

Manuscritos da Livraria, códice 1138.

Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Lisbon - Portugal):

Índia, box 1, doc. 60.

Índia, box 9 [6], doc. 32.

⁴³ Letter-patent, Lisbon January 21, 1606; Letter-patent, Lisbon January 28, 1606. Gomes, 1883, pp. 187-189.

Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Lisbon - Portugal):

Fundo Geral, código 11410.

Printed works:

- Alves, Jorge Santos (1999) *O domínio no Norte de Samatra. A história dos sultanatos de Samudera-Pacém e de Achém, e das suas relações com os portugueses (1500-1580)*. Lisbon: Sociedade Histórica de Independência de Portugal.
- Andaya, Barbara Watson (1993) 'Cash Cropping and Upstream-Downstream Tensions: The Case of Jambi in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Reid, Anthony (ed.) *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era. Trade, Power, and Belief*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 91-122.
- Andrada, Ernesto de Campos de (1937) *Relações de Pêro de Alcáçova Carneiro conde da Idanha do tempo que ele e seu pai, António Carneiro, serviram de secretários (1515 a 1568)*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.
- Barata, Maria do Rosário de Sampaio Themudo (1971) *Rui Fernandes de Almada diplomata português do século XVI*. Lisbon: Instituto de Alta Cultura - Centro de Estudos Históricos.
- Barendse, Rene J. (2002) *The Arabian Seas. The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century*. Armonk - London: M. E. Sharpe.
- Billioud, Joseph (1951) 'Le commerce de Marseille de 1515 à 1599', in Rambert, Gaston (dir.), *Histoire du commerce de Marseille*, Billioud, Joseph (dir.) III, De 1480 à 1599. Paris: Plon, pp. 1-563.
- Bouchon, Geneviève (1977) *Navires et cargaisons retour de l'Inde en 1518. Caderno dos ofiçiaes da India da carreguaçam das naos que vieram o anno de bcxbiiij*. Paris: Société d'Histoire de l'Orient.
- Boxer, Charles Ralph (1969) 'A note on the Portuguese reactions to the revival of the Red Sea spice trade and the rise of Atjeh, 1540-1600', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, X, pp. 415-428.
- Boyajian, James C. (1993) *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Braudel, Fernand (1978) *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols, London: Fontana - Collins.

- Brenner, Robert (1993) *Merchants and Revolution. Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Camões, José (1999) *Poesia de Garcia de Resende*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses.
- Carrère d'Encausse, Hélène (1970) 'Les routes commerciales de l'Asie centrale et les tentatives de reconquête d'Astrakhan', *Cahiers do monde russe et soviétique*, 11 (39), pp. 391-422.
- Casale, Giancarlo (2006) 'The Ottoman Administration of the Spice Trade in the Sixteenth Century Red Sea and Persian Gulf', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 49 (2), pp. 170-198.
- Correia, Gaspar (1923) *Lendas da Índia*, (second edition). Lisbon: Academia das Ciências.
- Coornaert, Émile (1961a) *Les français et le commerce international a Anvers, fin du XV^e XVI^e siècle, I*. Paris: Marcel Rivière et Cie.
- (1961b) *Les français et le commerce international a Anvers, fin du XV^e XVI^e siècle, II*. Paris: Marcel Rivière et Cie.
- Cortesão, Armando (1944) *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires an account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues rutter of a voyage in the Red Sea, nautical rules, almanack and maps, written and drawn in the East before 1515*. 2 vols., London: Hakluyt Society.
- Crummey, Robert O. (1987) *The Formation of Muscovy 1304-1613*, in Shukman, Harold (gen. ed.) *Longman History of Russia, III*. London - New York: Longman.
- Cruz, Maria do Rosário de Sampaio Themudo Barata de Azevedo (1991) 'Os diplomatas portugueses em Roma no século XVI e as informações acerca do Turco e da Índia', *Portugaliæ Historica*, 1 (2nd series), pp. 103-138.
- Cunha, João Teles e (1995) *Economia de um império. Economia política do Estado da Índia em torno do golfo Pérsico e do mar Árábico, 1595-1635. Elementos estruturais*, MA dissertation presented at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa.
- (2009) *A Carreira da Índia e a criação do mercado intercolonial português, 1660-1750*, PhD dissertation presented at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon.

- Dias, Manuel Nunes (1963) *O capitalismo monárquico português (1415-1549). Contribuição para o estudo das origens do capitalismo moderno, I*. Coimbra: Faculdade de Letras - Instituto de Estudos Históricos Dr. António de Vasconcelos.
- (1964) *O capitalismo monárquico português (1415-1549). Contribuição para o estudo das origens do capitalismo moderno, II*. Coimbra: Faculdade de Letras - Instituto de Estudos Históricos Dr. António de Vasconcelos.
- Disney, Anthony R. (1989) 'Smugglers and smuggling in the Western half of the Estado da Índia in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century', *Indica*, 26 (1&2), pp. 57-75.
- Felner, Rodrigo José da Lima (1868a) 'O Lyvro dos pesos da Yndia e assy medidas e mohedas por António Nunes', in *Subsídios para a História da Índia Portuguesa*. Lisbon: Academia Real das Ciências, pp. 3-64.
- (1868b) 'O Tombo do Estado da Índia', in *Subsídios para a História da Índia Portuguesa*. Lisbon: Academia Real das Ciências, pp. 1-259.
- Ficalho, Conde de (1945) *Memórias sobre a influência dos descobrimentos dos portugueses no conhecimento das plantas, I - Memória sobre a malagueta*, (second edition reviewed with a preface by Ruy Telles Palhinha). Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias.
- Floor, Willem (2006) *The Persian Gulf. A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities 1500-1730*. Washington: Mage Publishers.
- Ford, J. D. M. (1931) *Letters of John III King of Portugal 1521-1557*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.
- Freire, Anselmo Braancamp (1908) 'Maria Brandoa a do Crisfal', *Arquivo Historico Portuguez*, VI, pp. 293-442.
- Gaastra, Femme S. (2003) *The Dutch East India Company. Expansion and Decline*. Zutphen: Walburg Press.
- Godinho, Vitorino Magalhães (1953) 'Le repli vénitien et la route du Cap, 1496-1533', in Braudel, Fernand (ed.) *Évantaill de l'histoire vivante: hommage à Lucien Fabvre, I*. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, pp. 581-590.
- (1985) *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial* (second edition), II. Lisbon: Editorial Presença.
- (1987) *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial* (second edition), III. Lisbon: Editorial Presença.

- (1990) *Mito e mercadoria, utopia e prática de navegar séculos XIII-XVIII*. Lisbon: Difel.
- Gomes, José da Costa (1883) *Collecção de leis da divida publica portugueza*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.
- Guinote, Paulo - Frutuoso, Eduardo - Lopes, António (2000) *As Armadas da Índia, 1497-1835*. Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses.
- Hanna, Nelly (1997) *Making big money in 1600: The life and times of Ismail Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian merchant*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Hakluyt, Richard (1936) *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation Made by Sea or Overland to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 years, II*. London - New York: J.M. Dent & Co. - E.P. Dutton & Co.
- Inalcik, Halil (2000) *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1600*, in Inalcik, Halil - Quataert, Donald (eds.) *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Israel, Jonathan I. (1991) *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kellenbenz, Hermann (1956) 'Autour de 1600: Le commerce du poivre des Fugger et le marché international du poivre', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 11 (1), pp. 1-28.
- Kieniewicz, Jan (1986) 'Pepper Gardens and Market in Precolonial Malabar', *Moyen Orient & Océan Indien*, 3, pp. 1-36.
- Lane, Frederic Chapin (1933) 'Venetian Shipping during the Commercial Revolution', *American Historical Review*, XXXVIII, pp. 219-239.
- (1939-1940) 'The Mediterranean Spice Trade: Further Evidence of its Revival in the Sixteenth Century', *American Historical Review*, XLV (3), pp. 581-590.
- Lombard, Denys (1967) *Le sultanat d'Atjéh au temps d'Iskandar Muda 1607-1636*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême Orient.
- Malowist, Marian (1970) 'Les routes du commerce et les marchandises du Levant dans la vie de la Pologne du Bas Moyen Âge au début de l'Époque Moderne', in Cortelazzo, Manlio (ed.) *Mediterraneo e Oceano Indiano*. Atti del Sesto Coloquio Internazionale di Storia Maritima, tenuto a Venezia dal 20 al 29 settembre 1962, Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, pp. 169-175.

- Marshall, P. J. (2001) 'The English in Asia to 1700', in Canny, Nicholas (ed.) *The Origins of Empire*, in Louis, William Roger (dir.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, I. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 264-285.
- Matos, Luís de (1952) *Les Portugais en France au XVI^e siècle: études et documents*. Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra.
- Matthee, Rudolph P. (1999) *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran. Silk for Silver 1600-1730*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mendonça, Henrique Lopes de (1935) *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de outros documentos que as elucidam, VII*. Lisbon: Academia das Ciências.
- Nadel-Golobic, Eleonora (1979) 'Armenians and Jews in medieval Lvov: Their role in Oriental trade, 1400-1600', *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 20 (3-4), pp. 345-388.
- Oliveira, Julieta Teixeira Marques de (1997) *Fontes documentais de Veneza referentes a Portugal*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses - Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda,
- (2000) *Veneza e Portugal no século XVI: subsídios para a sua história*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses - Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda.
- O'Rourke, Kevin H. - Williamson, Jeffrey G. (2002) 'After Columbus: Explaining Europe's Overseas Trade Boom, 1500-1800', *The Journal of Economic History*, 62 (2), pp. 417-456.
- (2009) 'Did Vasco da Gama matter for European Markets', *Economic History Review*, 62 (3), pp. 655-684.
- Özbaran, Salih (1994) *The Ottoman Response to European Expansion. Studies on Ottoman-Portuguese Relations in the Indian Ocean and Ottoman Administration in the Arab Lands during the Sixteenth Century*. Istanbul: The Isis Press.
- Pato, Raimundo António de Bulhão (1903) *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de outros documentos que as elucidam, III*. Lisbon: Academia Real das Ciências.
- Rego, António da Silva (1963) *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa, III*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos.
- Rivara, Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha (1865) *Archivo Portuguez Oriental, fasc. 5, part 2*. Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional.

- Sanceau, Elaine (1973) *Colecção de São Lourenço, I*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos.
- Silva, José Gentil da (1949) 'Contratos da trazida de drogas no século XVI. Subsídios e documentos. Fernão Lopes e Diogo Barreira contratadores da noz e do gengibre', *Revista da Faculdade de Letras*, (second series), XV (1-2), pp. 5-28.
- (1961) *Merchandises et finances. Lettres de Lisbonne 1563-1578, II*. Paris: SEVPEN.
- Steensgaard, Niels (1974) *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century. The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*. Chicago - London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay - Thomaz, Luís Filipe F. R. (1991) 'Evolution of empire: The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century', in Tracy, James D. (ed.) *The political economy of merchant empires. State power and world trade 1350-1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 306-316.
- Thomaz, Luís Filipe F. R. (1998) *A questão da pimenta em meados do século XVI. Um debate política do governo de D. João de Castro*. Lisbon: CEPCEP.
- (2009) 'D. Manuel, a Índia e o Brasil', *Revista de História* (São Paulo), 161-2, pp. 13-57.
- Wake, C. H. H. (1996) 'The changing pattern of Europe's pepper and spice imports, ca. 1400-1700', in Pearson, Michael N. (ed.), *Spices in the Indian Ocean World*, in Russell-Wood, A. J. R. (dir.) *An Expanding World. The European Impact on World History, XI*. Aldershot: Variorum, pp. 141-183.
- Wee, Hermann van der (1963) *The growth of the Antwerp market and the European economy (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries), II, Interpretation*. Leuven: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Wicki, José (1948) *Documenta Indica, I*. Rome: Apud 'Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu'.
- (1961) 'Duas relações sobre a situação da Índia Portuguesa nos anos de 1568 e 1569', *Studia*, 8 (July), pp. 133-220.

5. *Curriculum vitae*

João Teles e Cunha holds a PhD in Early Modern History (University of Lisbon, 2009) and is currently a research member at the Centre for Classical Studies (School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon), as part of the *Res Sinicae* research team. He is also an affiliated researcher at CHAM, based at the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, and a member of the Maritime Academy. His

research focuses on the economic, social, and cultural history of Asia, on its interaction between Asians and the Portuguese, particularly in the Persian Gulf, India, and the Indian Ocean. He has written several studies on tea, the evolution of its consumption in Asia and Europe in the Early Modern Age, with special emphasis on aspects related to its material culture. In 2012, he organised an exhibition about tea at the Orient Museum (Lisbon).

© Copyright: Author(s).

Gli autori che pubblicano con *RiMe* conservano i diritti d'autore e concedono alla rivista il diritto di prima pubblicazione con i lavori contemporaneamente autorizzati ai sensi della

Authors who publish with *RiMe* retain copyright and grant the Journal right of first publication with the works simultaneously licensed under the terms of the

“Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial 4.0 International License”



Il presente volume è stato pubblicato online il 31 dicembre 2021 in:

This volume has been published online on 31st December 2021 at:

<http://rime.cnr.it>

CNR - Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea
Via Giovanni Battista Tuveri, 128 - 09129 Cagliari (Italy).
Telefono | Telephone: +39 070403635 / 070403670.
Sito web | Website: www.isem.cnr.it

