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The Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa : empire building and Atlantic system (1580-1674)

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Citation

Ribeiro da Silva, F. I. (2009, June 24). *The Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa : empire building and Atlantic system (1580-1674)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13867>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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CHAPTER FIVE: STRUGGLING FOR THE ATLANTIC: THE INTER-CONTINENTAL TRADE

The struggle between the Dutch and the Portuguese for the control of the Atlantic inter-continental trade has been debated in the international historiography for the past fifty years.

Chapter 5 offers a re-exam of this conflict from a West African perspective. On the one hand, we will argue that the Dutch and the Portuguese developed different inter-continental circuits to and via West Africa and sailed in completely distinct ways in the Atlantic. The Portuguese trading circuits via West Africa were highly specialized with one or two main areas of embarkation. Initially, the Dutch tried a similar strategy: to use one or two main areas of supply in West Africa and one main area of disembarkation in the Americas: north-east Brazil. However, after the loss of Brazil and Angola, the Dutch tendency was to have a more diversified set of commercial circuits linking different regions of West Africa with several areas in the Americas. The Portuguese trading routes, in contrast did not become more diversified after the decline of the routes connecting Iberia to West African and the Spanish American colonies. The Portuguese trading system was in fact unable to adapt to the new international context after 1640.

On the other hand, we will demonstrate that until the mid-17th century Brazil was not the main destination of the slaves transported from Africa to the Americas. During this period the most important routes connected Iberia and West Africa to the Spanish American colonies, especially to the Central America mainland. The detailed analysis of the transatlantic trade between the 1580s and the 1670s will also have some input in the discussion on the rise of the plantation complex and the key role of the Spanish American mining economy for the Atlantic system. In this Chapter, we will also put in evidence that between the 1580s and the 1630s, the main stimulus for the growth of the transatlantic slave trade came from the Spanish American colonies, where production of export crops was a minor economic activity. The plantation complex in general only started to be the engine of the transatlantic slave trade after its transfer to the Caribbean Islands, the Guianas and North America.

Our analysis of the impact of the Dutch arrival on the Southern Atlantic circuits, former Portuguese grounds, will pay special attention to political, economic and military affairs in Europe affecting the relations between the Republic and the Habsburg Empire and, consequently, the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic territories and inter-continental shipping.

In following pages, we will be looking at inter-continental routes and fluctuations of the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa as well as at the control over the supply and the consumption markets for African slaves and products in the New World and Europe.

1. Routes

Between the 1590s and 1623, the merchants from the Republic freighted ships to operate in four inter-continental circuits connecting the Seven Provinces to West Africa. The first route linked the Republic to Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau region. For example on 16 March 1611, Gaspar Nunes, João Lopes and António Nobre, Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam, freighted in partnership the ship *Die Fortuijn en Die Hoop* of 90 *last*, property of Pieter Bodaen, Gillis du Pluis and Claes Claesen, to travel from Amsterdam to Portudal and Rufisque in the Petite Côte of Senegal.¹

A second circuit connected the Dutch ports to the Cape Verde Islands. For instance, in 1619, Diogo Vaz de Sousa, a Portuguese Jewish merchant in Amsterdam, together with Adriaen Rijsen and Pieter and Jacques de Bary freighted *De Swarte Beer*, under the command of skipper Adriaen Claessen, for a trip from Amsterdam to Cape Verde.²

The Republic was also in contact with the Gulf of Guinea, more precisely the Grain, Ivory and Gold Coasts. Finally, a fourth route connected the Dutch ports to West-Central Africa, i.e. Loango, Congo and Angola. A good example is the ship *De Son*, which set sail from Texel to Angola in October 1611.³

During these early years, the Dutch long-distance circuits via West Africa brought Africa and the New World into contact. The Notarial Contracts of the GAA give several

¹ GAA, NA 124/25-26: 1611-03-16.

² GAA, NA 160/28-29v: 1619-10-04.

³ J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 23-42 & 83-102.

examples of ships travelling back to Europe via Brazil, the Spanish West Indies, the Caribbean Islands of Jamaica and Martinique, Guiana, or sailing further north towards Newfoundland.⁴

The ships departed mainly from the provinces of Holland and Zeeland. Amsterdam (Texel), Middleburgh, Flushing (Vlissingen) and the estuary of the Maas River (Rotterdam) were the most active ports in the trade with West Africa.

The vessels sailing to the Southern Atlantic usually travelled in convoy for security reasons.⁵ These convoys comprised several ships. For example, in November 1605 the *Roode Haart* set sail from Dordrecht to Cape Verde in convoy with two other vessels: one under the command of Pieter Cornelissen of Rotterdam, also travelling to Cape Verde; and the ship of the skipper Pieter Cornelissen Uil sailing to the West Indies.⁶

On their return voyage from West Africa to Europe the ships also sailed in convoy. The convoys were organized at certain strategic points along the West African Coast such as the island of Gorée, Mori, Cape Lopez and Mayomba. The choice of the place to form the convoys depended on the route followed by the ships. The vessels sailing to Cape Verde and the Petite Côte of Senegal usually formed the convoy at Gorée.⁷ The ships travelling from the Gulf of Guinea to the Republic formed the convoy at Mori. In May 1609 a convoy of three ships freighted by Elias Trip: the *Jagher*, the *Hasewindt* and the *Brack* departed from Mori under the leadership of Master Doesen Florissen. During the same year the *Neptunnis* departed from Mori as the vice-admiral ship of a convoy which included, among other vessels, the yacht *Mermine*: the Admiral ship of this convoy was the ship of Jan Pieterssen, whose master was Gerret Pieterssen, and the third in command was the *Jonghen Tobias*, under

⁴ See, for example: GAA, NA 62/563: 1612-10-29; 258/81V: 1613-03-19; 138/7: 1614-09-04; 625/67-69: 1618-09-22; 98/133V-134: 1604-08-04; 53/505: 1599-10-02.

⁵ Captain Cornelius Hansen, for instance, departed from Amsterdam to the Gulf of Guinea in 1603 with a convoy of two ships from the Guinea Company. 'Andreas Josua Ulsheimer's voyage of 1603-4' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, p. 20.

⁶ J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 23-42 & 83-102.

⁷ For example, in 1606, the ship *Roode Haart* and the vessels of Master Pieter Cornelissen Spelman from Rotterdam departed in convoy from the island of Gorée after fetching water and victuals. J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, p. 34

Master Jan Jochumssen.⁸ This practice was in use since the early 17th century, even before the construction of Fort Nassau (at Mori) by the States General in 1612.⁹

The ships operating in these commercial circuits usually had a capacity of about 100 *last* and were armed with heavy and light artillery. On board, they carried a crew of 20 to 30 men (see Table 19).

Table 1: Vessels operating in the West African trade: some examples (before 1621)

Date	Ship	Capacity (<i>last</i>)	Crew	Iron pieces (<i>Gotelingen</i>)	Stone pieces (<i>Steenstukken</i>)
11/1607 – 06/1609	<i>Neptunnis</i>	90	30	10	6
09/1609 – 07/1611	<i>Mauritius Nassau</i>	50	21	8	6
10/1611 – 10/1612	<i>De Son</i>	90	30	10	6

Sources¹⁰

On the way to West Africa, the Dutch ships called at different ports either in Europe or the open Atlantic. In Europe, the ships would call at places like Marseille, St. Malo, La Rochelle and Montpellier on the French coast. They also called at several Portuguese ports such as Lisbon, Setúbal, Viana do Castelo, Porto and Sesimbra. The ports of Seville, Alicante and Málaga were also possible ports of call for the Dutch ships. In general, at French, Portuguese and Spanish ports, including the Atlantic archipelagoes, the ships would load commodities such as wine and salt to complete the cargo of exchange goods to be traded in West Africa. These products could be easily exchanged for African goods in Senegambia, the Guinea-Bissau region and Angola.

In the open Atlantic, the ships usually called at Madeira and the Canary islands as well as at the least populated Cape Verde islands, i.e. Maio, Santo Antão and São Vicente. On the Canary Islands the ships usually called at the ports of Tenerife and Palma de

⁸ J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 43-67 & 72; P.W. Klein, *De Trippen in the 17e. Eennr: een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965), pp. 141-3; J. L. Vogt, *Portuguese rule on the Gold Coast 1469-1682* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), pp. 160-161.

⁹ As early as 1602, Pieter de Marees stated that 'when the ships want to leave this coast [Gold Coast], they come here [Mouri] to take ballast, fetch water and cut wood; and from here they set out for Capo Lopo Gonsalves [Cape Lopez].' Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description and historical account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)* (Oxford: British Academy, Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 82-3. The same idea is reinforced on page 223.

¹⁰ J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 43-45, 69-71 & 83-85.

Maiorca.¹¹ The stop at Madeira, the Canaries and Cape Verde was also used to load the ships with fresh water and foodstuffs, and to store extra reserves of firewood. For example, the ship *Meermann* under the command of the skipper Jan Pieterssen, which departed from Texel in December 1611 to Angola, called at the Cape Verde islands of Sal, Maio and Brava to furnish stock up on foodstuffs, fresh water and firewood.¹²

On the return voyage, the ships would call at the Azores. These islands functioned as a refreshing station to recover from the long journey across the Atlantic and to gain strength to face the last miles of harshness of the North Atlantic. For example, the ship *Roode Haart*, freighted by Elias Trip for a trading voyage between Holland and Cape Verde, departed from Dordrecht in November 1605 and on its return voyage called the Azores Islands.¹³ However, the analysis of the notarial contracts points to the fact that many of these voyages had a return port in Europe, but not necessarily in the Republic. Several ships anchored at Italian cities such as Venice, Pisa, Genoa and Livorno, at Portuguese ports such as Lisbon, Porto and Viana do Castelo. The ships also ended their journeys in London as well as Hamburg and Dunkirk.¹⁴

The routes via the New World called at similar ports, but the whole voyage included the loading and unloading of commodities in different regions. Usually, the ships would depart from the Republic with a cargo of European products to be exchanged for African goods and slaves, who would be shipped to the New World, either to the Portuguese or the Spanish colonies.¹⁵ There, the slaves would be sold and the payment would be received in sugar, dyewood, tobacco or bills of exchange. Once the ships arrived in Europe, either in the Republic or one of the other aforementioned final ports, the merchandise would be sold and the bills of exchange paid; finally the merchants would be able to carry out the accounting of the whole endeavour.

¹¹ For instance the ship *De Son* freighted by Gerret Veen, which departed from Texel in October 1611 to Angola under the command of Jan Janssen Backer from Amsterdam, called at the port of Tenerife to purchase victuals. J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 83-102.

¹² 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 46-63.

¹³ J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 23-42.

¹⁴ For example: GAA, NA 76/193v-196: 1597-04-09; 51/88: 1597-05-08; 54/140-140v: 1601-01-29; 129/163-164: 1612-12-04; 128/182-183: 1612-09-19; 138/210v-211v: 1615-06-25.

¹⁵ For examples of transatlantic slave trade on Dutch ships prior to 1623 see, for instance: GAA, NA 376/114-115: 1613-03-06; 258/81v: 1613-03-19; 254/188-188v: 1614-05-22; 138/7: 1614-09-04; 625/67-69: 1618-09-22. See also: Jelmer Vos, David Eltis and David Richardson, 'The Dutch in the Atlantic World: New Perspectives from the Slave Trade with Particular reference to the African Origins of the Traffic', paper presented at the Workshop: *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: new data and new interpretations*, Emory University, 10-11 December 2004, and www.slavevoyages.com

In brief, during the early years of the ‘Dutch’ trade with West Africa, the most important connections between the Republic and the West African Coast were direct long-distance routes, making use of several ports of call and navigation in convoy. The circuits via the New World had a minor role at this stage.

The creation of the WIC by the States General (1621-1624) did not cause major changes in the Dutch inter-continental circuits to and via West Africa. In general, the Company ships departed mainly from Amsterdam (Texel) and Middleburgh, where the two most important Chambers of the WIC were located: the Chambers of Amsterdam and Zealand, respectively.

Until the takeover of the North-eastern Brazilian captaincies in 1630, the most important circuits connected the Republic to the Company settlements in West Africa, more precisely the forts of Gorée and Mori, as well as the lodges at the Sierra Leone and the Grain and Ivory Coasts. The routes linking the Dutch ports and the so-called ‘Angola Coast’, i.e. Loango and Kongo, where the Company had a few commercial agents, are not well documented during these early years. However, it is likely that there was a circuit connecting these regions directly to the Republic.

The ships heading for Elmina anchored temporarily at several ports along the West African Coast before reaching the fort of Elmina on the Gold Coast. Between the Republic and Cape Verde [on the continent] the vessels would sail in open waters calling at the ports of the Canary Islands. At the island of Gorée, the Company vessels would unload soldiers, provisions and ammunition to supply the garrison living in the fort, as well as products to barter with African goods. At the same time, the African commodities purchased in the meantime by the Company employees would be loaded.

From Gorée the ships would sail further south port-to-port touching at several places in Sierra Leone and on the Grain Coast, before anchoring at Elmina. At these trading posts, where a merchant and an assistant resided and traded, the ships would unload merchandise and load African goods, mainly ivory. Before reaching Elmina, the ships would still stop at the forts of Axim and Shama. Once again, they would unload soldiers, ammunition and victuals, and unload and load commodities. At Elmina, the ships would stay for eight to ten weeks in order to unload and load the vessels. During their stay on the Gold Coast, these vessels participated in trips to Shama, Mori and Accra to deliver soldiers,

workers and sailors, as well as ammunition, foodstuffs and medical supplies. In general, the Company ships operating in these circuits had between 160 and 200 *last* (see Table 20). For instance, the ship *De Haarlem*, 200 *last* and 26 cannons, under the command of captain Sijmon Hoen left Elmina on 19 January 1645 with a cargo of ‘1.702 marks, 2 ounces 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ Engels of gold, 19.550 lb. of ivory and 55 people on board, including 15 soldiers and 2 sergeants who had completed their term of service’ and sailed to the Republic via São Tomé and Brazil.¹⁶

Table 2: Company vessels sailing in the route Holland–Elmina (1645-1647)

Ship	Capacity (<i>lasts</i>)
<i>Endracht van Amsterdam</i>	180
<i>Endracht van Enkhuizen</i>	180
<i>Zeelandia</i>	200
<i>Reegenboogh</i>	160
<i>Deventer</i>	200
<i>Utrecht</i>	200
<i>Princesse</i>	200
<i>Haerlem</i>	200

Source¹⁷

After the WIC came in control of Brazil, new long-distance routes were established. The Gentlemen Nineteen advocated that trade with Loango and Congo should be done via Brazil. This situation promoted two main routes: a circuit connecting the Republic with Brazil and a route linking Dutch Brazil to the ‘Angola Coast’. In the former circuit provisions, ammunitions, personnel and exchange goods were sent from the Republic to Brazil and sugar, dyewood, tobacco, as well as Company employees and a few passengers transported back home. The latter route connecting the ports of Pernambuco to West Africa had several functions: i) supply the Company employees at Loango and Kongo with exchange goods, foodstuffs, weapons, etc.; ii) load the slaves needed for the sugar planters in Brazil; iii) transport ivory and dyewood to be re-exported to Europe via Brazil; and iv) to ensure the communication between the local governments of the Company in the different posts and settlements.¹⁸

¹⁶ ‘Michael Hermmersam’s description of the Gold Coast, 1639-45’ in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 97-133.

¹⁷ Klaas Ratelband (ed.), *Vijf dagregisters*, p. lxxxvii, note 1.

¹⁸ For further information on the Company governments in West Africa and Brazil see Chapter 1, section 1.

Besides the aforementioned routes, several other circuits linked New Holland (present-day North-eastern Brazil) to the Company settlements in West Africa. In the 1630s, the main routes were: i) Pernambuco–Senegambia (Gorée)–Pernambuco, and ii) Pernambuco–Gold Coast (Mori, later on Elmina)–Pernambuco. There was also an important route connecting Pernambuco to Cape Lopez and back to Pernambuco. Cape Lopez was usually the location on the West Coast of Africa where the Company vessels operating in the coastal trade in the Bight of Biafra and on the Slave Coast awaited the Brazilian fleets with slaves to ship off to the colony.¹⁹

During the WIC rule over Angola and São Tomé (1641-1648), Luanda became the main supplier of slaves to meet the needs of the Portuguese-Brazilian, Jewish, Dutch and Flemish sugar-planters in Brazil. In the 1640s, the most important route linked Pernambuco to Luanda. The connections between Brazil and Senegambia, as well as Elmina and Cape Lopez, therefore diminished in importance. Despite having a minor role, these circuits remained active.

Between 1641 and 1648, the Company also promoted direct routes linking the Republic to Angola and São Tomé. The most important circuits linked the Republic to Luanda and the port of São Tomé. These routes had two main functions: i) to supply provisions, ammunition and foodstuffs to the military and civilian staff of the Company and ii) to ship the African products purchased at these coastal areas to the Republic, namely São Tomé sugar and Angolan ivory and red dyewood. However, given the fact that the main ‘product’ available – slaves – was for the Brazil consumption market, the routes to Europe never became intense. In fact, the return-voyages to Europe were often done via Brazil, where the slaves would be unloaded and the cargoes completed with Brazilian sugar, dyewood, and tobacco. The same practice was adopted for the routes connecting the Republic to Elmina.

To sum up, from 1630 onwards, Brazil was used as an entrepôt of the Company for the trade with West Africa, especially in the areas south of Cape Lopez, such as Loango, Kongo and Angola. Like this the supply of European exchange products, provisions and ammunitions as of African goods purchased in these regions were guaranteed to the consumption markets in Europe and the Americas via Brazil. Military and civilian personnel of the Company serving in West-Central Africa were also transported via Brazil. Hence, the

¹⁹ For the Dutch terminology on these fleets, see Glossary.

Company did not open and maintain separate inter-continental circuits to connect the Republic with the different WIC settlements in the Southern Atlantic.

After the loss of Brazil (1654), the Gentlemen Nineteen did their best to promote the development of plantation colonies in Guiana and the Caribbean Islands by making use of the private initiative (*patroonschappen*) and the expertise of the Portuguese Sephardic Jews and the Dutch and Flemish sugar planters from Brazil, who abandoned the colony together with the Company personnel. On the other hand, the Company also sponsored the occupation of New Netherland (present-day New York) and economic development of the colony under the initiative of private patrons. This shifting in the policies of the WIC had effects on the inter-continental circuits. The loss of Brazil brought to an end the circuits linking that colony to the Republic as well as the routes connecting it to West Africa operated by ships sailing under Dutch contract. On the other hand, the circuits linking Brazil to Angola and the Gulf of Guinea were reactivated in the 1650s by Portuguese-Brazilian traders. These traders took alcoholic beverages, tobacco and some gold to purchase African slaves at the trading posts of the different European powers installed on the West African Coast. These circuits would become of special importance during the second WIC (1674-1791).²⁰

The development of the Dutch Guiana, the Dutch Caribbean and the colony of the New Netherland stimulated the opening of new trading circuits and the reinforcement of routes already in use. During the 1650s and 1660s, the most important inter-continental routes controlled by the Dutch were:

- a) Netherlands–Bight of Benin–Dutch Caribbean–Netherlands;
- b) Netherlands–West-Central Africa–Dutch Caribbean–Netherlands;
- c) Netherlands–Bight of Biafra–Dutch Guiana–Netherlands.

For example, on 23 November 1656, a cargo of slaves was sent from the West Coast of Africa to Curaçao in the ship *De Bontekoe* freighted by Henrico Matias, merchant in Amsterdam.²¹

Dutch ships also operated on a route connecting the Netherlands, the Bight of Benin and the Spanish American colonies. However, this circuit had a minor role. In fact, the

²⁰ H. J. den Heijer, 'The West African Trade of the Dutch West India Company, 1674-1740' in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce. Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 77-114.

²¹ GAA, NA 2117/161: 1656-11-23.

cancelling of the Spanish *asiento* in 1640, which supplied the Spanish American colonies with African slaves transported in Portuguese ships, forced the buyers and brokers in Spanish America to look for other sources of supply in the region of La Plata, the basin of the Amazons and in the Caribbean intra-continental trade. Therefore, during the 1650s several intra-continental routes emerged connecting the North of Brazil to the Caribbean Sea as well as linking the coast of the Spanish American mainland colonies to several Caribbean islands such as Curaçao, Barbados and Jamaica.

The aforementioned routes were mainly used to supply slave labour to the 'Dutch' plantations²² and the plantation colonies of the other European powers in the Caribbean islands and in North America as well as to supply Europe with the export crops produced in those areas including sugar, tobacco, cotton, cacao, etc.

The African products brought by the Dutch to the Caribbean, mainly to Curaçao, entered the intra-continental circuits of the Caribbean Sea connecting that island with the coast of the Spanish American mainland, especially to Cartagena and Vera Cruz, and to other Caribbean islands controlled by the English, the French and the Danish. On the other hand, the African slaves brought to Dutch Guiana were to be used on the plantations.²³ Direct inter-continental circuits connecting the Caribbean islands and North America to West Africa were also attempted, but their importance remained small.

However, many of the ships operating on the long-distance routes were not controlled by the WIC. For instance, on 16 April 1648, Isaac Carvalho, the Amsterdam-based proxy of Anthonio Mendes and Pedro Dias, merchants in Rouen (France), freighted *De Eendracht* under the command of the skipper Pieter Meijnertsen of Hoorn, to travel from Amsterdam to Calabar and the Americas, with a passport from the King of France.²⁴

In fact, in 1638, the Company opened the trade with Brazil and the Caribbean Islands to all shareholders on the condition of the payment of a fee, with an exception made for the slave trade between West Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean and the gold trade. A decade later, the commerce to Brazil and New Netherland was opened to all merchants from

²² The plantations in the WIC settlements in the New World were property of people from different geographical regions in Europe, as well as various cultural and religious backgrounds. In this sense, the label 'Dutch' must be applied with caution.

²³ Wim Klooster, 'Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade' in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, pp. 203-218; Han Jordaan, 'The Curaçao Slave Market: From *Asiento* trade to Free trade, 1700-1730' in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, pp. 219-258.

²⁴ GAA, NA 1690/599: 1648-04-16.

the Republic upon the payment of a fee to the Company. These decisions were partially a consequence of the disputes between the different Chambers of the WIC, especially Amsterdam and Zeeland: the former was in favour of free trade and the latter in favour of a strict monopoly over these branches of the Atlantic trade. On the other hand, this change of policy was also due to the impossibility of the WIC's controlling the areas of sugar production in the New World and the consumption markets in Europe. These factors reduced the profitability of the business substantially, since the Company had to compete with other merchants, including the Portuguese, who controlled areas of production in Brazil and supplied the European markets, either legally or illegally. Thus, the monopoly of the Company was only nominal and, in practice, ineffective.²⁵

To recapitulate, in the 1650s and 1660s, the WIC and the private merchants investing in the West African trade readjusted the commercial circuits established in the 1630s and 1640s to supply Brazil and the Republic. The transfer of the WIC headquarters to the Caribbean and the Guiana, and the reinforcement of Dutch presence in North America stimulated the opening up of new circuits. We should stress that the success of these routes was also highly dependent on the African supply of labour to the new plantation colonies created by the English, the French and the Danish in the Caribbean as well as on the labour needs of the Spanish American economy met via the entrepôt of Curaçao.

The Portuguese Crown and the private merchants, on their part, initiated their inter-continental circuits to West Africa during the 15th century. In the period pre-1580, the ships sailing to West Africa departed mainly from Portugal and Madeira. The main routes were:

- a) Portugal–Elmina–Portugal;
- b) Portugal–São Tomé–Portugal;
- c) Portugal–Cape Verde–Portugal.

Most of the vessels operating in these commercial circuits set sail from Lisbon and Porto, although several smaller ports in the north and south of the Kingdom were also used, such as Viana do Castelo, Vila do Conde, Aveiro, Lagos and Portimão. These ships called at Madeira and the Canary islands on their way to West Africa and stopped at the Azores on their return voyages. At these ports, especially on the way to West Africa, the vessels would

²⁵ P. C. Emmer, 'The West India Company' in Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra (ed.), *Companies and Trade*, pp. 79-81; Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971), p. 110; J. G. van Dillen, *Van rijkdom en regenten*, p. 169.

unload Portuguese and other European goods and reload the ships with wine to be sold along the African Coast.²⁶ The ports of embarkation in West Africa were the fortress-town of Elmina and the port-cities of São Tomé and Ribeira Grande (Santiago Island, Cape Verde). For instance, Belchior Martins, Salvador Dias and Diogo Dias Ilhoa, traders in Lisbon, established commercial partnerships with Gonçalo de Araújo, Manuel Nunes Petrarca, and Afonso Antunes, all of whom were merchants and *vizinhos* of Ribeira Grande (Santiago, Cape Verde), for commercial trips on the route Lisbon–Cape Verde–Lisbon, in 1576, 1579, 1596 and 1605 respectively. The partners in Lisbon would invest the capital (in either money or commodities) and their partners in Cape Verde would barter the merchandise for African goods in the Cape Verde supply market.²⁷

In the first aforementioned route, provisions, ammunition, soldiers and royal officers were shipped to Elmina and cargoes of gold and some slaves were sent back to Portugal. The second and the third circuits supplied the Portuguese consumption markets with slaves, sugar, hides and African spices. However, the Portuguese urban consumption markets were small and the supply exceeded the demand. Consequently, the Crown allowed the establishment of commercial routes linking Lisbon and Oporto with the Northern European consumption centres. Hence, a large quantity of the African products arriving in Lisbon, especially spices and sugar, were re-exported to Antwerp either in Portuguese or foreign ships – the financial and commercial heart of the European trading system at the time.

However, the shipments of African goods via Lisbon were insufficient to fulfil the demands of the Northern European markets. Therefore, direct routes connecting the African sugar production centres and these consumption areas were established. The two main routes were: i) Antwerp–São Tomé–Antwerp; and ii) Antwerp–Cape Verde–Antwerp. The importance of these routes was determined by the demand of the products in the consumption areas. In fact, the route supplying São Tomé sugar to Antwerp was more active

²⁶ Concerning the role of wine and other spirits in the Portuguese Atlantic trade in the 16th and 17th centuries see: José C. Curto, *Enslaving spirits. The Portuguese-Brazilian Alcohol trade at Luanda and its hinterland, c. 1550-1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 53-88.

²⁷ Maria Manuel Ferraz Torráo, 'As ilhas de Cabo Verde e o espaço comercial atlântico: participações e ligações das pequenas e médias associações comerciais', in *IV Colóquio Internacional de História das Ilhas Atlânticas* (Canárias: Gran Canaria, Tenerife, 9-14 October 1995). See Tables 1, 2 and 3. http://www.ceha_madeira.et/canarias/hia.html

than the circuit linking Cape Verde to this Northern European city. The circuits were operated by Portuguese based in Antwerp.²⁸

The African goods that arrived in Portugal, especially on the Algarve, were also re-exported to the south of Spain. Slaves were the most important merchandise in these transactions. Initially, this labour force was used all over Spain.²⁹ However, since the early times of colonization of the Spanish West Indies and Central America, slaves were exported by the Portuguese from the West Coast of Africa to Seville and Cadiz and re-exported to the Americas in the *carrera de las Indias*. The Canary Islands, used as a port of call by the Spanish royal fleets, were also the final destination of many Portuguese slave vessels. The slaves would then be loaded onto the royal fleet sailing to the New World. Most of these slaves were purchased by the Cape Verde and São Tomé settlers and traders in the coastal regions of Senegambia, Guinea-Bissau and the Bights of Benin and Biafra, respectively.³⁰ Thus, in the early stage of the Portuguese shipping to West Africa there were mainly direct routes linking the European and the African continent.

After the 1580s this scenario changed. New routes emerged and replaced the initial circuits dating from the 15th and early 16th centuries, mirroring wider changes in the Atlantic shipping network. The direct routes linking Portugal to Elmina remained important until 1637: the date of the Dutch takeover. However, in relation to the total of the Portuguese shipping to Africa its importance was minimal. The other routes mentioned earlier also lost their importance in the overall Portuguese Atlantic trading system.

The development of sugar production in Brazil and the high quality of the output drove the African sugar produced in Cape Verde and São Tomé from the international consumption markets. Consequently, the routes linking these production areas with Antwerp and other Northern European ports disappeared almost completely. Only the commercial

²⁸ For further information on the routes linking Portugal–São Tomé–Antwerp, and Portugal–Cape Verde–Antwerp, see: Virginia Rau, ‘Estatística da carga e dos barcos portugueses entrados com avarias no porto de Antuérpia, de 1535-1551’ in Virginia Rau, *Estudos sobre a história do sal português* (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1984), pp. 211-220.

²⁹ Concerning the re-exportation of African goods to the south of Spain and the Spanish American colonies see: Consuelo Varela, ‘La saca de caballos entre Sevilla y Portugal a finales del siglo XV’, *Cadernos Históricos*, 5 (1993), pp. 117-121; A. Franco Silva, ‘El comercio de esclavos entre el Algarve y Andalucía en el siglo XV’, *Cadernos Históricos*, 3 (1992), pp. 94-97; Maria Manuel Torrão, ‘Actividade comercial externa de Cabo Verde: Organização, funcionamento, evolução’ in Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (eds.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* I, pp. 287-305.

³⁰ For further information on the activities of the Cape Verde and São Tomé settlers and traders in these coastal circuits see Chapter 4.

circuits connecting these settlements to Portugal were kept active, although their importance diminished.

The old circuits were replaced by two new routes: i) Portugal–West-Central Africa–Brazil; and ii) Portugal–Senegambia–Brazil. Both circuits supplied Portuguese and European goods to the African consumption markets, provided slave labour force to the Brazilian sugar plantations and brought several colonial goods to fulfil the demands of the European consumers, such as sugar, Brazil wood and tobacco.

The routes re-exporting African commodities from Lisbon and the Algarve to Spain also lost their importance. These circuits were replaced by several new routes linking either Portugal or Spain to West Africa and the Spanish American colonies both on the mainland and the West Indies. The three most important circuits were:

- a) Portugal or Spain–West-Central Africa–Spanish America mainland;
- b) Portugal or Spain–Senegambia–Spanish America mainland;
- c) Portugal or Spain–West-Central Africa–Spanish West Indies.

For instance, Diogo Ximenes Vargas, a powerful merchant, skipper and landlord in Santiago Island, operated in the routes linking the Cape Verde Archipelago to the Spanish American colonies. The slaves, bartered in the Guinea-Bissau region by his representatives on the ground, were shipped to Cartagena. The payment either in money, or silver, gold and pearls would be sent to Seville via the Spanish royal fleet and from there transferred to Lisbon by bill of exchange. A supply of all kinds of goods would be sent back to him on the island from Lisbon annually.³¹

The changes on the Portuguese long-distance routes were the consequence of several political events and economic dynamics taking place in Iberia and in the Spanish American colonies. In fact, 1580-1640 was the period of the Union of the Portuguese and the Spanish Crowns under the rule of the Habsburgs. During these six decades the Court was in Madrid and the contracts to farm out the royal monopolies over the Portuguese colonial trade were negotiated and signed in the Spanish capital. Thus, the Portuguese commercial elite that had previously leased out the contracts of the Portuguese monopolies in the Kingdom and the overseas areas moved to the Court in Madrid.

³¹ Maria Manuel Torção, 'Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento' in Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História geral de Cabo Verde* II, pp. 51 & 92.

At the same time, Philip II of Spain (I of Portugal) decided to reform the system of licences for the supply the Spanish American colonies with slave labour force (*asientos*) that had been in use since the 1540s.³² This change was made necessary by the inefficiency of the system and its inability to supply the Spanish colonies with the necessary number of African slaves as well as the incapacity of the Spanish authorities to control the smuggling of slaves into the colonies directly from West Africa, especially from Senegambia and São Tomé.³³ Consequently between 1586 and 1640, the Habsburg Kings negotiated contracts for the regular supply of African slaves to the Spanish American colonies – the so-called *asientos de negros*.³⁴

This transfer of the Portuguese commercial and financial elite to the Habsburg Court gave them access to the Spanish *asientos*.³⁵ Consequently, these merchants were no longer interested in leasing out exclusively the royal monopolies over the trading areas in West Africa, but also farming out the *asiento*. By controlling the Portuguese commercial monopolies over the West Coast of Africa and the Spanish *asiento* they would have access to a new consumption market and would become the main suppliers of slave labour force to the Spanish American colonies. Since they were now in control of both monopolies it was no longer illegal to send ships from the Spanish territory to the West Coast of Africa to buy slaves and then transport them to the Spanish Americas. The Spanish period also gave the Portuguese businessmen access to the Spanish merchant fleets, resulting in a higher shipping capacity.

³² For the Spanish terminology, see Glossary.

³³ Cristina Maria Seuanes Serafim, *As Ilhas de São Tomé*, pp. 215-231; Maria Manuel Ferraz Torráo, 'Formas de participação dos portugueses no comércio de escravos com as Índias de Castela: abastecimento e transporte' in *A dimensão atlântica da África*, pp. 203-222; *idem*, 'As ilhas de Cabo Verde e o espaço comercial atlântico: participações e ligações das pequenas e médias associações comerciais', Paper presented at the *IV Colóquio Internacional de História das Ilhas Atlânticas* (Canárias, 1995) <http://www.ceha-madeira.net/canarias/hia.html>; *idem*, 'Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento' in Maria Emília Madeira Santos (ed.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde II*, pp. 17-123; *idem*, 'Actividade comercial externa de Cabo Verde: Organização, funcionamento, evolução' in Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (eds.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde I*, pp. 237-345; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1977); *idem*, 'Los asientos portugueses y el contrabando de negros', *Anuário de Estudos Americanos*, 30 (1973), pp. 557-599.

³⁴ Concerning the evolution of the supply system of slaves to the Spanish Americas see, for instance: L. B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 37-61; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos*, pp. 23-59.

³⁵ For further information on the role of the Portuguese bankers in the Court of the Habsburgs see: M. A. Ebben, *Zilver, broed en kogels voor de koning: kredietverlening door Portugese bankiers aan de Spaanse kroon, 1621-1665* (Leiden: Centrum voor Moderne Geschiedenis, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1996).

Moreover, by leasing out simultaneously the Spanish *asiento* and the Portuguese royal monopolies over the West Coast of Africa, these merchants managed to control simultaneously the largest supply and consumption markets for slaves (see Table 21). In addition, the permission to grant commercial licenses to third parties gave them the possibility of profiting indirectly from the business. For example, on 23 October 1599, Diogo Nunes Caldeira, *contratador* of the Cape Verde and Guinea royal monopoly (1595-1599), established an agreement with Gaspar Cadena, allowing him to load 180 slaves in the Guinea-Bissau region and ship them to Cartagena. The taxes on the slaves, 27 *ducados* per slave, should be paid in silver or gold in Cartagena to the brother of Diogo Nunes Caldeira.³⁶

During the 1630s and 1640s, the Portuguese long-distance circuits also underwent several changes. The naval conflicts between the Dutch, the Spanish and the Portuguese, as well as the Dutch takeover of several Portuguese possessions in the Atlantic, namely the north-eastern Brazilian captaincies and Angola, forced the Portuguese traders to develop alternative circuits.

Table 3: A list of the merchants who accumulated several contracts to conduct the Iberian slave trade

Merchants' Names (Portuguese spelling)	Cape Verde & Guinea Contract	Angola Contract	Spanish <i>asiento</i>
Pedro Gomes Reinél		1593-1603	1595-1600
João & Gonçalo Rodrigues Coutinho		1593-1606	1601-1609
António Rodrigues d' Elvas	1615* / 1616-1623	1615-1624	1615-1622
Manuel Rodrigues Lamego		1623-1624	1623-1631
Belchior Gomes Angel & Cristóvão Mendes de Sousa			1631-1639

Sources and Observations³⁷

After the Dutch conquest of Pernambuco, the Portuguese-Brazilian planters were forced to grow the crops further south in Bahia and the surroundings of Rio de Janeiro.³⁸ In

³⁶ Jácome Fixer, *contratador* of the Cape Verde and Guinea royal monopoly (c. 1601-1607), adopted the same procedure. On 17 March 1603, he signed a contract with Fernandes Rolão, granting him permission to purchase slaves in the Guinea-Bissau region and transport them to Cartagena. Two hundred and fifty more commercial licences of the same kind were given to Luís Godim, Luís Fernandes Gramaxo and Jerónimo Rodrigues, merchants of Lisbon. Maria Manuel Torrão, 'Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento' in Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde II*, p. 79.

³⁷ Sources: for the Portuguese contracts: Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico I* (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1997), pp. 215-218; José Gonçalves Salvador, *Os Magnatas do tráfico negreiro*, (S. Paulo: Pioneira Editora, 1981), pp. 15, 19-29; 32-5 & 39-48; for the Spanish *asientos*: L. B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976), pp. 37-61; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, pp. 23-59. Observations: * in this period the monopoly contract for the Cape Verde & Guinea slave trade was held by another member of the family: Duarte Pinto d' Elvas.

addition, due to the Dutch takeover of Angola and São Tomé, they were also forced to find new supply markets in order to meet the labour demand of the sugar planters in Brazil. The development of local production in Brazil provided the traders with goods, such as spirits and later gold, which could be exchanged for African products.³⁹ Besides, the merchants' knowledge concerning the demands of the African consumption markets played an important role in the establishment of these new trading routes. The most important ports of departure for these routes were Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Some authors, such as David Eltis, argue that there were several attempts to ship slaves from Mozambique to Brazil, and there are indeed some references to a few voyages.⁴⁰ However, the time consumed and all the logistic aspects required by these voyages made them unprofitable. After the re-capture of the north-eastern Brazilian captaincies and Angola, the Portuguese merchants once again gained control of the circuits connecting Portugal to Brazil via West Africa. However, the direct routes linking Brazil to West Africa, and in particular Angola, remained of a key importance – the so-called 'Angola-Brazil complex'.⁴¹ From the 1670s and 1680s onwards, they had a key role for the supply of slaves to meet the high labour demands of the mining in Minas Gerais.

In the 1640s, there were still more important changes to the Portuguese long-distance routes to and via West Africa. After 1640, the commercial routes linking Iberia (both Portugal and Spain) to the Spanish West Indies and the Spanish American colonies via West Africa were suspended. The end of these circuits was related to the Portuguese Restoration in Europe in 1640 that put an end to the Union of the Iberian Crowns. This political event separated the Portuguese merchants from the Spanish *asientos* and the Spanish

³⁸ Patrícia Verónica Pereira dos Santos, 'A grande construção: Trabalhar e morar na cidade do Salvador no século XVI' in *Actas do Congresso Internacional Atlântico de Antigo Regime: poderes e sociedades*. http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/cvc/conhecer/biblioteca-digital-camoes/cat_view/75-coloquios-e-congressos/76-espaco-atlantico-de-antigo-regime.html; Maurício de Abreu, 'Um quebra-cabeças (quase) resolvido: Os engenhos da Capitania do Rio de Janeiro – séculos XVI e XVII' in *Actas do Congresso Internacional Atlântico de Antigo Regime: poderes e sociedades*. http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/cvc/conhecer/biblioteca-digital-camoes/cat_view/75-coloquios-e-congressos/76-espaco-atlantico-de-antigo-regime.html; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Segredos internos: Engenhos e escravos na sociedade colonial* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988); Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico*.

³⁹ José C. Curto, *Enslaving spirits*.

⁴⁰ D. G. Smith, 'Old Christian Merchants and the Foundation of the Brazil Company, 1649', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 54/2 (May, 1974), pp. 233-259; C. R. Boxer, 'Padre António Vieira, S. J., and the Institution of the Brazil Company in 1649', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 29/4 (Nov., 1949), pp. 474-497.

⁴¹ Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, 'The economic network of Portugal's Atlantic World' in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (ed.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*, pp. 118-119; *idem*, *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, séculos XVI e XVII* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000).

fleets. Moreover, the Spanish and the Portuguese embargoes imposed on each other's vessels due to the War of Independence (1640-1668), and the Dutch takeover of Angola and São Tomé in 1641 made the maintenance of these commercial routes impossible, even on an 'illegal' basis.

Furthermore, the massive persecution of the Portuguese New Christian merchants both in the Spanish American colonies and Iberia forced these men to go on the run and broke a wide network of circuits. This commercial web comprised not only the transatlantic slave routes, but also the circuits linking the main Spanish American ports (Cartagena and Vera Cruz) to the mining centres in the hinterland, and to the ports on the Pacific Coast. The Pacific routes linking present-day Panamá to Peru and Bolivia as well as the Plata circuits connecting Buenos Aires to the mining centres in the aforementioned regions were also partly controlled by these men. All these circuits became inactive because of this persecution.⁴² As a consequence, the slave circuits that supplied the Spanish American colonies had to be redefined. Until the mid-1650s this role was taken over by Brazil. The Southern Brazilian captaincies worked as a re-distribution centre to supply the Plata region; while Dutch Brazil functioned as re-distribution centre for the Spanish Central American mainland and West Indies.

To summarize, between the 1580s and the 1670s, the Portuguese inter-continental routes to and via West Africa underwent a process of profound transformation. From a simple schema of direct circuits connecting Europe to the West Coast of Africa, the shipping system became a wide network of routes encompassing Europe, West Africa and the American continent. This transformation process took almost a century and created a highly specialized trading web of circuits connecting different markets of supply and consumption with highly specific demands. These high levels of specialization became problematic in the 1630s and 1640s, when the loss of certain supply and demand areas made the readjustment to new circumstances difficult.

In brief, a comparative analysis shows clearly that the Dutch did not move the Portuguese away from their initial commercial circuits. In fact, the Dutch private traders and the WIC created new routes connecting the Netherlands directly to West Africa. The different West African supply markets visited regularly by all these Europeans had a

⁴² Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A nation upon the ocean sea*, pp. 15-174.

surprising elasticity. The various supply markets proved capable of catering the Dutch and the Portuguese, as well as the English, French, Swedish and Danish.

The Portuguese and the Dutch commercial circuits did not depart from the same region, did not load the African goods in the same ports and did not unload those products onto identical consumption markets. Only during the Dutch takeover of the north-eastern captaincies of Brazil and the settlements of Angola and São Tomé did the Dutch made use of routes similar to the ones implemented earlier by the Portuguese. In that period, the Dutch controlled the supply of slaves to Brazil and the supply of Brazilian goods, especially sugar and dyewood, to Europe. However, the Portuguese continued to control part of the sugar production and shipping to Europe via the port of Salvador (Bahia) and Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, they were able to find alternative markets to meet the labour needs of the sugar planters in Brazil.⁴³

The only route completely taken away from the Portuguese by the Dutch was the circuit Portugal–Elmina–Portugal, which supplied the Kingdom with African gold. However, at the time of the Dutch takeover, the gold exports were no longer at a high level. Consequently, the conquest of this route seems to have had a minor impact on the Portuguese shipping system and Atlantic economy. However, even in this specific chronology the circuits were operated in two completely different ways by the Dutch and the Portuguese. The Dutch used Brazil as an entrepôt for the trade between West Africa and Europe, while the Portuguese remained connecting Europe and the Americas via the settlements and possessions in West Africa.

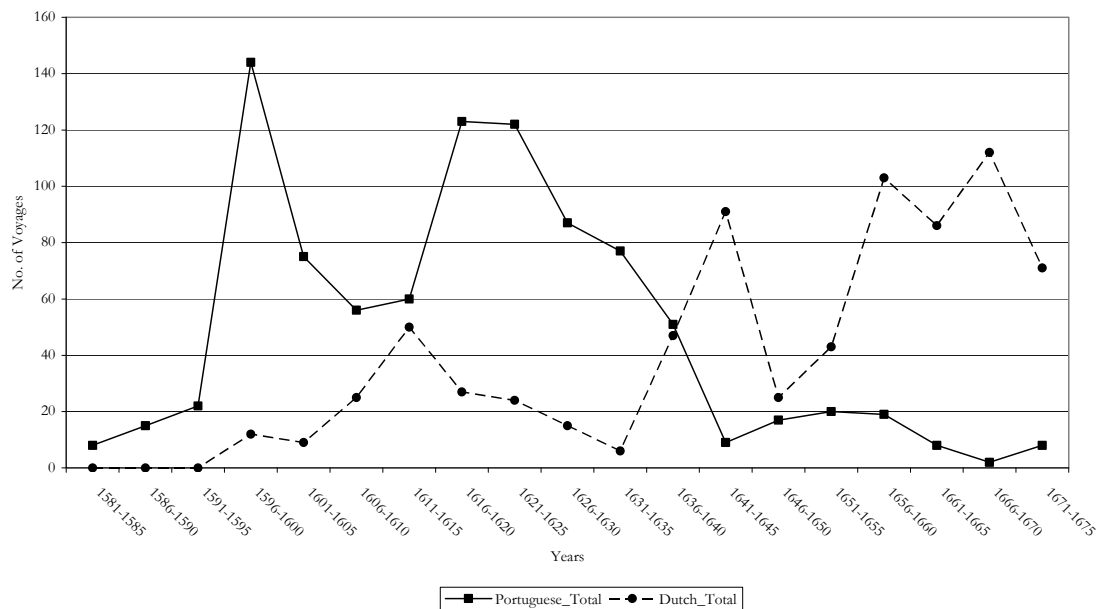
If, therefore, the Dutch did not take over the inter-continental circuits developed by the Portuguese during the 15th and 16th centuries, other factors such as international and internal politics, warfare, economic embargoes, diplomacy and control over supply and consumption markets need to be taken into account to explain the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic routes via West Africa and the Dutch triumph between the 1630s and 1670s. These factors will be analysed in the following pages.

⁴³ See www.slavevoyages.com.

2. Shipping

The comparative analysis of the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping via West Africa between 1581 and 1675 shows that the periods of decrease in Portuguese shipping correspond to the years of growth in the shipping of the Republic (see Graph 1).

Graph 1: Dutch and Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa (1581-1675)



Sources⁴⁴

⁴⁴ As explained in the introduction, the chronological boundaries were defined taking in account specific events in Dutch and Portuguese history with a direct impact on the two Atlantic Empires. To follow the same methodological criterium throughout the book, our graphs cover the period 1581-1676. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that Dutch shipping to and via West Africa only started in 1593. Between 1581 and 1593, the graphs only contain information regarding the Portuguese shipping activities.

The volume of Dutch shipping is based on the Notarial Contracts from the Municipal Archive of Amsterdam (GAA), since it is one of the most representative collections of Notarial acts for the study of the European trade in the Early Modern Period. Our sample comprises a wide range of notarial acts such as freight contracts, commercial credit, bills of exchange, bottomries and powers of attorney. It covers various regions of West Africa, namely Senegambia, Guinea-Bissau region, Cape Verde Islands, Sierra Leone, Grain, Gold, Ivory and Slave Coasts, São Tomé and Príncipe, Loango, Congo and Angola. The sample encompasses Notarial acts concerning to direct commercial circuits between the Republic and West Africa as well as transatlantic routes connecting the Europe, West Africa and the America. These contracts comprise not only ventures organized by private businessmen and entrepreneurs, but also the shipping activities of the WIC in collaboration with private initiative. For the study of the Dutch shipping to and via West Africa we also made use of the most updated slave trade database, organized by David Eltis *et al*, which includes the Notarial Contracts of the GAA, and the

The Dutch shipping via West Africa started to grow from 1600 onwards. The number of voyages increased visibly until 1610. This period of rapid increase was followed by a decreasing trend lasting until 1631. The 1630s and 1640s were the first golden age of the Dutch shipping via West Africa. However, after two decades of impressive growth, the volume of Dutch shipping returned to the same values as the 1620s. The recovery only started in the 1650s and this growing trend continued in the next decade. The 1660s were the second golden period of Dutch shipping via West Africa. However, the crisis returned in the 1670s.

The trends in the volume of the Portuguese shipping did the opposite. 1596-1610 and 1621-1645 were periods of decline. During the decades of the 1650s a slight recovery occurred, but the shipping never reached the higher peaks of the 1590s and 1620s. In fact, the volume of the shipping via West Africa in the 1650s remained at more or less the same level as in the last decades of the 16th century. True recovery only started in the 1670s, and only achieved a steady pace in the 1680s and 1690s, stimulated especially by the gold mining in Brazil.

Based on these trends, Boxer has assumed that the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic shipping system in the 1640s and 1650s was caused by the arrival of the Dutch in the commercial circuits of the Southern Atlantic and their occupation of several Portuguese possessions both in America and West Africa.⁴⁵ However, more recently, Emmer, Rahn Philips, Schwartz, and Van den Boogaart have demonstrated that the Dutch entrance into the South Atlantic did not cause much harm to the economic activities of the Iberians.⁴⁶

sources of the WIC collection related to the Dutch transatlantic slave trade. See: <http://www.slavevoyages.com>.

The Portuguese shipping is based on the Portuguese Notarial Contracts from the District Archive of Porto (Arquivo Distrital do Porto, hereafter ADP) and the National Archives at Lisbon (Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo, hereafter IAN/TT), used and listed in several PhD theses published in Portugal recently, namely: Amandio Jorge Morais Barros, *Vinhos de escala e negócios das ilhas. Para uma história das relações do Porto com os arquipélagos atlânticos no século XVI* (unpublished PhD Diss., Universidade do Porto, 2004); *idem*, 'Porto: a construção de um espaço marítimo nos alvares dos tempos modernos' II (Porto: GEHVID – Grupo de Estudos de História da Viticultura Duriense e do Vinho do Porto, 2004); Leonor Freire Costa, *O transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil (1580-1663)* II (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2002); Amelia Polónia, *Vila do Conde: Um porto nortenbo na expansão ultramarina quinhentista* II (unpublished PhD Diss., Universidade do Porto, 1999).

⁴⁵ C. R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá and the struggle for Brazil and Angola*, pp. 125-127.

⁴⁶ P. C. Emmer, 'The First Global War: The Dutch versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590-1609', *e-JPH*, 1 (Summer, 2003), pp. 10-12; E. van den Boogaart 'Los Neerlandeses en el Mundo Comercial Atlántico de la Doble Monarquía Ibérica, 1590-1621' in E. van den Boogaart *et al*, *La Expansión Holandesa en*

Therefore, factors such as politics, warfare, economic embargoes, diplomacy, and control over supply and consumption markets should be taken into account in the understanding of the Portuguese decline and the Dutch success in the Southern Atlantic inter-continental circuits between 1580 and 1674. Here, we will look at the volume of the Portuguese and the Dutch shipping to and via West Africa and check the validity of the assumption made in the international historiography for the past 50 years regarding the rise of the Dutch and collapse of the Portuguese in the Atlantic shipping.

To fully understand the fluctuations of the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa we must consider the political context in Europe and the European possessions in the Atlantic.

The first political event to affect the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa was the annexation of Portugal and its overseas possessions by the Habsburg Empire in 1580. The event gave the Portuguese merchants access to the Spanish Court and to the business and monopoly contracts in the Spanish Kingdom and its overseas empire, as mentioned earlier. In addition, this new political situation gave the Portuguese businessmen the chance to use the naval resources of the Habsburgs. These political circumstances together with the legal reforms of the system of slave labour supply to the Spanish American colonies as explained earlier, and the new laws regarding the presence of foreigners in these areas, which now gave privileges to the Portuguese, provided the Portuguese merchants the opportunity to penetrate into a new consumption market.⁴⁷ Simultaneously, this period corresponded with the growth of sugar production in Brazil.⁴⁸ These two events may explain the tremendous growth of the Portuguese shipping between 1591 and 1598.

The annexation of Portugal to the Habsburg Empire also had disadvantages. This event dragged Portugal and its empire in the Atlantic into the conflicts between Spain and

el Atlántico, 1580-1800 (Madrid: MAPFRE, 1992), pp. 126-127; Carla Rahn Philips, 'The Growth and Composition of Trade in the Iberian Empires, 1450-1750' in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires. Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 58-64, 70-74 & 80-81; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 168.

⁴⁷ Daviken Studinick-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea*, pp. 42-66.

⁴⁸ Maurício de Abreu, 'Um quebra-cabeças (quase) resolvido: Os engenhos da Capitania do Rio de Janeiro – séculos XVI e XVII' in *Actas do Congresso Internacional Espaço Atlântico de Antigo Regime: poderes e sociedade* http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/cvc/conhecer/biblioteca-digital-camoes/cat_view/75-coloquios-e-congressos/76-espaco-atlantico-de-antigo-regime.html; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Segredos internos; idem, Sugar plantations and the formation of Brazilian Society. Bahia, 1550-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985), pp. 15-27, 65-72 & 160-201; Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico*.

the seven rebellious Provinces of the Northern Netherlands. This conflict resulted from the Dutch revolt (1568) against the taxation and centralization policies implemented by Philip II.

The first effects of these conflicts on the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping became visible between 1598 and 1608. In 1598, Philip II imposed a total embargo on all Dutch ships sailing to Iberia. The embargo aimed to weaken the economy of the rebellious Dutch Republic. As a consequence, the Dutch vessels could no longer conduct trade in the Iberian ports and purchase colonial products. On the other hand, Portuguese ships were also prevented from anchoring at Dutch ports by a reciprocal embargo decreed by the States General. Therefore, the Dutch traders operating in these commercial branches were forced to organize inter-continental routes to the Southern Atlantic directly from the Republic. Consequently, the Dutch started to navigate to Venezuela and the Caribbean Sea to purchase salt, to Brazil to buy sugar and dyewood, to West Africa to obtain ivory and gold and to Asia for spices, precious stone and textiles. As a result, the colonial products imported into Spain and Portugal remained stockpiled and unsold since the major consumption markets were located in Northern Europe. The overabundance of products in Iberia caused a decrease in the prices of those goods.

Without access to the Northern European ports, some of the colonial goods were of limited use, since the Northern European and Baltic cities were the major consumption markets for these goods and the Portuguese internal markets were very small.⁴⁹ In addition, the Iberian population was deprived of regular supplies of grain and other goods shipped from the Baltic Sea by the Dutch fleets.

Besides, the economic embargoes, these two decades were also a period of warfare with multiple naval encounters between the three European sea powers involved in the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), i.e. the Republic, Portugal and Spain. The mutual attacks had a disruptive effect on the trade in both the Northern and Southern Atlantic, as well as in Asia.

The arrival of the Dutch in the Southern Atlantic triggered naval encounters between Dutch and Portuguese merchant ships, as well as naval attacks by the Portuguese coastal fleet at Mina on the Dutch merchants. Besides, between 1598 and 1608, several assaults against the Portuguese possessions in West Africa, namely São Tomé and Príncipe and the

⁴⁹ Cátia Antunes, 'Sea and Land: the Integration of the Dutch and the Portuguese Urban Hinterland in the European Maritime System during the Seventeenth century' in Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Ricchezza del Mare. Ricchezza dal mare. Seci. XIII-XVIII* (Firenze: Istituti F. Datini, 2006), pp. 115-146.

fortresses of the Gold Coast, were organized by the Dutch and Flemish merchants and sponsored by the States General.⁵⁰ These events had, naturally, effects on the shipping. Thus, 1598-1608 was the first period of decline for the Portuguese shipping and growth for the Dutch shipping.

After two decades of violence and economic loss for the three powers involved in the conflict, Spain and the Dutch Republic negotiated a ceasefire. During the 'Twelve Years' Truce' (1609-1621) and with the end of the embargoes, the Dutch ships recommenced visiting the Iberian ports and were therefore able to obtain African and New World products there. This fact may explain a steady decrease in the Dutch voyages to the Southern Atlantic. The ceasefire also reduced the naval encounters between Dutch and Portuguese ships in the Southern Atlantic. Consequently, the Portuguese ships could safely sail, which may explain the recovery of their shipping.

In fact, however, the Truce was used by the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg Empire to strengthen their military positions both in Europe and overseas. In the Atlantic, both Philip II and the States General tried to consolidate their positions. The Habsburgs ordered the repair and the reinforcement of the defensive structures of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and tried to re-equip the navy in the best way possible. The States General, on the other hand, strengthened their naval power and tried to establish a more solid position overseas. In fact, Fort Nassau at Mori, the first Dutch settlement in the Southern Atlantic, was built and equipped by the States General during the 'Twelve Years' Truce, more precisely in 1612.

Naturally, the end of the Truce gave way again to open conflict and to the imposition of new mutual economic embargoes. The first move of the States General was chartering the Dutch WIC (1621) with a monopoly over the Dutch trade in both the Northern and Southern Atlantic, as this Company could be used as a military weapon against the overseas possessions of the Habsburg Emperor in the Atlantic, including the Spanish American colonies as well as the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa and Brazil. The WIC started to operate in 1624 and the effects of its privateering are visible in the downward

⁵⁰ Victor Enthoven, 'Early Dutch Expansion in the Atlantic Region, 1585-1621' in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic commerce*, pp. 17-48; Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description*, pp. 202-222; 'Johann von Lübeliding's voyage of 1599-1600' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 9-17; J. H. De Stoppelaar, *Balthasar de Moucheron: een bladzijde uit de Nederlandsche Handelgeschiedenis tijdens den Tachtigjarige Oorlog* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1901); J. K. J. de Jonge, *De Oorsprong van Neerland's Bezittingen op de Kust van Guinea* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1871), pp. 7-13.

curve of Portuguese shipping.⁵¹ From 1625 onwards, the number of Portuguese voyages via West Africa decreased continuously until 1645, with an extremely accentuated decline in the 1630s and 1640s. However, privateering by the WIC was not the main reason for the decline of the Portuguese shipping during these two decades.⁵²

The decades between 1630 and 1640 were the golden period of Dutch naval power in the Atlantic. During these 20 years, the WIC took over considerable areas of the most important Portuguese possessions in the Southern Atlantic, Brazil and Angola. In fact, it was only after the conquest of these two settlements that WIC shipping via West Africa began its rapid growth. This increase stopped abruptly in 1648 as a consequence of the Portuguese re-occupation of Angola and the re-opening of hostilities in north-east Brazil.

The fluctuations of the Portuguese shipping were also affected by other political events. No doubt, the continuous decline of the number of voyages between 1631 and 1648 was caused by the Dutch attacks and takeover of the possessions in the Atlantic, both in Brazil and West Africa. However, the difficulties of the Portuguese in recovering their volume of shipping after the re-capture of Angola, São Tomé and Brazil must be traced back to other factors.

In 1640, Portugal proclaimed independence from the Habsburg Empire and started a conflict with Spain, the so-called War of Independence (1640-1668). This conflict had a serious impact on Portuguese trade, since Portuguese merchants lost their access to the Spanish American colonies, the ports, the fleets and *asientos de negros*. The loss of the Spanish *asiento* after 1640 represented the disappearance of a major consumption market for the African labour force. Moreover, the Spanish and the Portuguese embargoes in Europe and the colonial areas had a tremendous impact on the volume of Portuguese shipping.

Immediately after the Portuguese Restoration on 1 December 1640, the new King João IV (1640-1656) tried to re-establish peaceful relations with the Dutch Republic. Tristão de Mendonça Furtado was appointed ambassador and sent to the Republic to negotiate the immediate suspension of the hostilities, in Europe, to prepare the ground for a ceasefire valid in all overseas territories, and to enable the negotiation of the restitution of the

⁵¹ For the number of Portuguese ships seized by the WIC up to 1636 see Joannes de Laet, *Iaerlyck van de Vernichtinghen der Geotroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie in diertien boeken* 4 ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1931), pp. 282-285.

⁵² For Dutch seizing activities in Asia over the *Estado da Índia*, see: E. van Veen, *Decay or defeat?: an inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia, 1580-1645* (Leiden: CNWS, 2000).

Portuguese possessions taken over by the WIC and the VOC during the Union of the Crowns.⁵³

In this first round of negotiations the main aim of the Portuguese king was to settle a truce for a period of 10 years, in order to temporarily stop the war between the two States and be able to negotiate the terms of a definitive peace in both Europe and the overseas areas. The suspension of hostilities was essential for Portugal, since the Kingdom did not have enough military resources to be at war with the Republic and Spain, in Europe and the Empire. Moreover, peace with the Republic was vital to re-establish normal trade and revitalize the Portuguese economy. In addition, the re-establishment of commercial relations would give the Portuguese Crown access to the most important production centre and outlet of military and shipbuilding materials, as well as the best labour market to hire mercenaries and military specialists. These elements were crucial for the War of Independence against Spain and would become fundamental for the recovery of several Portuguese possessions, especially in the Southern Atlantic in the coming decades: Angola in 1648 and Brazil in 1654.⁵⁴

On 12 June 1641 a Truce Treaty valid for a period of 10 years was signed in The Hague between the Dutch Republic and Portugal and ratified by the Portuguese king in Lisbon on 12 November 1641. According to this treaty, the Dutch Republic and Portugal would observe a truce, starting in Europe immediately after the document had been ratified, one year afterwards in India and six months after the arrival of the news in Brazil. In Asia and Europe the Dutch were allowed freedom of navigation and commerce; however, the Portuguese ships did not have access to the Dutch Brazilian ports.

Due to the slow way in which such information travelled to other parts of the world in the Early Modern Period, information regarding the Truce Treaty only arrived at the Dutch and the Portuguese overseas posts and settlements several months later. Therefore, the Truce Treaty signed in 1641 did not interrupt the Dutch-Portuguese military competition

⁵³ Duarte P. de Lima, 'A política brasileira de El-Rei D. João IV' in *Congresso do Mundo Português IV* (Lisboa: Comissão Executiva dos Centenários, 1940), pp. 337-378; *idem*, 'A colaboração dos governos de Lisboa e de Madrid perante a agressão holandesa no Brasil', *Congresso do Mundo Português IV*, pp. 369-399. For detailed information on the Tristão de Mendonça Furtado embassy to the Dutch Republic see: Virginia Rau, *A embaixada de Tristão de Mendonça Furtado e os arquivos notariais holandeses* (Lisboa: Academia Portuguesa de História, 1958); Edgar Prestage, *A embaixada de Tristão de Mendonça Furtado à Holanda em 1641: primeiras embaixadas de el-rei D. João IV com documentos elucidativos* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1920).

⁵⁴ For an overview of the peace negotiations between the Dutch Republic and Portugal see: Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the early modern period*, pp. 141-182; Eduardo Brazão, *A diplomacia portuguesa I*; Jorge Borges de Macedo, *História Diplomática Portuguesa*.

in the Empire immediately, especially in the Southern Atlantic and on the West Coast of Africa. In fact, one may argue that the Portuguese embassy to the States General in 1641, with its claims concerning the restitution of the posts and settlements taken over by the Companies, probably put the Board of Directors of both Companies (the Gentlemen Seventeen and the Gentlemen Nineteen) on the alert.

In spite of the Truce, the troops of the Company and the Portuguese had the most bloody military encounters between 1645 and 1654, both in Angola and Brazil. These military events had a tremendous impact on trade, since Angola was the major market of supply of slave labour and Brazil was, at the time, the major producer of sugar for Northern Europe. These events help us to understand the difficulties that obstructed the recovery of the Portuguese shipping, and that caused the volume of Dutch shipping via West Africa to decline to its lowest level at the time.

After the loss of Angola and Brazil, one would expect to see a decline in the volume of the Dutch shipping and a recovery in the number of the Portuguese voyages. However, the two curves show a different trend. From the 1650s onwards, Dutch shipping via West Africa grew continuously and rapidly until the 1670s and only then started to decrease, while the total of Portuguese voyages remained at a very low level (see Graph 1).

To fully comprehend the Dutch success and the Portuguese difficulties, we must look at the policies of the WIC and the Portuguese Crown regarding the trade in the Southern Atlantic.

Between c.1590 and 1623, the Dutch shipping to and via West Africa was controlled by private traders from the Republic. The creation of the WIC (1621) by the States General brought to an end the era of free trade. The Company was granted a monopoly over all the Atlantic commerce. The decision met with great opposition from the merchants of Amsterdam and the northern port-cities of the Republic, who had important investments in the North Atlantic fisheries and the salt trade with present-day Venezuela.⁵⁵

Soon after they had been included in its charter, the Company lost its monopoly over the Atlantic fisheries. However, the Dutch commercial interests in the Southern Atlantic,

⁵⁵ P. C. Emmer, 'The Struggle over Sugar. The abortive attack of the Dutch on Portugal in the South Atlantic', *Mare Liberum*, 13 (June, 1997), p. 63; *idem*, 'The West India Company' in Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra (eds.), *Companies and trade*, pp. 71-75; E. van den Boogaart, P. C. Emmer, P. Klein and K. Zandvliet, *La expansion holandesa en el Atlántico*, pp. 106-108.

including the sugar trade with Brazil, the gold and ivory trade with West Africa and the salt trade with present-day Venezuela continued under the monopoly of the Company. However, the military character of the WIC caused the disruption of these commercial branches. The first problems arose in Brazil after the capture of the north-eastern captaincies, the major regions of sugar production. Many sugar mills and plantations were destroyed either during the Dutch takeover or by the Portuguese planters themselves before they abandoned the territories to re-settle in the captaincies of Bahia and Rio. For several years after the takeover, the sugar production in north-eastern Brazil decreased, causing major losses for the owners of sugar refineries in Amsterdam, at least until the end of the 1630s.⁵⁶

In order to increase the sugar imports from the Dutch Brazil, the Company granted the shareholders permission to participate in the trade with Brazil and the Caribbean in 1638, and, in 1648, opened those branches of the monopoly as well as the trade with North America, including the slave trade, to private businessmen from the Republic. The only commercial branch that remains part of the monopoly was the trade in gold. This shift in the policies of the Company was caused by the difficulty of controlling the supply markets in West Africa and the Americas and the consumption markets for colonial products such as sugar, gold, ivory in Europe.

The huge military offensives against the Portuguese possessions in Brazil, on the Gold Coast, and in Angola increased the military expenditure of the WIC. After 1640, the Company did not have the financial means to support the war effort in Brazil and had to rely on extra-ordinary subsidies from the States General to pay its war fleets and armies.⁵⁷ Furthermore, after 1640 the Company did not have enough cash flow to operate the businesses either with Brazil or the settlements in West Africa, the Caribbean and North America.

This change in the policies of the Company helps us to understand the growth of the Dutch shipping to and via West Africa between the 1650s and the 1670s and the bankruptcy of the Company in 1674. In fact, the success of the Dutch shipping in these decades was due to private initiatives of merchants from the Republic and not to the WIC. This private entrepreneurship was in fact responsible for the Dutch dominance in the Atlantic and for the growth of the volume of the Dutch shipping between the 1650s and 1670s. The

⁵⁶ A. Poelwijk, *'In dienst vant suikerbacken'. De Amsterdamse suikernijverheid en haar ondernemers, 1580-1630* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003), pp. 258-262.

⁵⁷ M. de Jong, *'Staat van oorlog'*, pp. 107, 114-115, 127 & 234.

monopoly system of the WIC carried high costs, since the Company was single-handedly paying for the maintenance of the WIC civilian and military personnel. In fact, often the WIC had to rely on the extraordinary subsidies of the States General to meet these growing expenses.

The Portuguese Crown took measures that achieved exactly the opposite of those taken by the Dutch, by shifting from royal monopolies operated by free merchants to chartered trading companies. Between 1580 and 1640, the Crown leased the monopolies over the West African trade out to private businessmen. After the Portuguese Restoration, King João IV (1640-1656) decided to charter several trading companies and grant them the monopolies over the trade with Brazil and various areas of West Africa. The Company of Brazil – *Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil* – instituted in 1649 held a monopoly over the commerce with Brazil, including the supply of slaves shipped from West Africa, mainly Angola. The main aim was to promote commercial recovery and guarantee naval protection to the fleets operating in these inter-continental circuits. However, these measures met with strong opposition from the merchants investing in these commercial routes. In practice, the creation of the companies in the 1640s and 1650s did not result in any improvement of Portuguese shipping via West Africa, as the curve of the Portuguese shipping shows (see Graph 1).

In 1662, Portugal signed a Peace Treaty with the Republic. According to the settlement, the Portuguese Crown allowed Dutch ships to buy goods at the Portuguese ports in the settlements of the West Coast of Africa. Dutch businessmen also gained permission to export weapons to Portugal and the Portuguese posts and settlements. Nevertheless, the Crown limited to the commercial freedom of the Dutch and the Portuguese merchants: these groups were not allowed to trade in products that were part of the monopoly of the Company of Brazil. In addition, they had to pay taxes on all products traded and were forced to sail in convoys organized by the aforementioned Company. Despite these favourable circumstances, Portuguese shipping continued to decline, while Dutch shipping increased (see Graph 1). In fact, the Company of Brazil never had sufficient capital either to freight or equip the ships to operate the monopoly or to guarantee any military protection for the ships of Portuguese private businessmen sailing to Brazil and West Africa.⁵⁸ Besides, the

⁵⁸ Leonor Freire Costa, *O Transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil I*, pp. 208-236 & 537-558.

Portuguese merchants had to face the direct competition of the Angolan and Portuguese-Brazilian traders who had started to operate direct routes linking Luanda to Rio and Bahia.⁵⁹ This topic will be discussed in detail in the next chapter

3. Supply markets

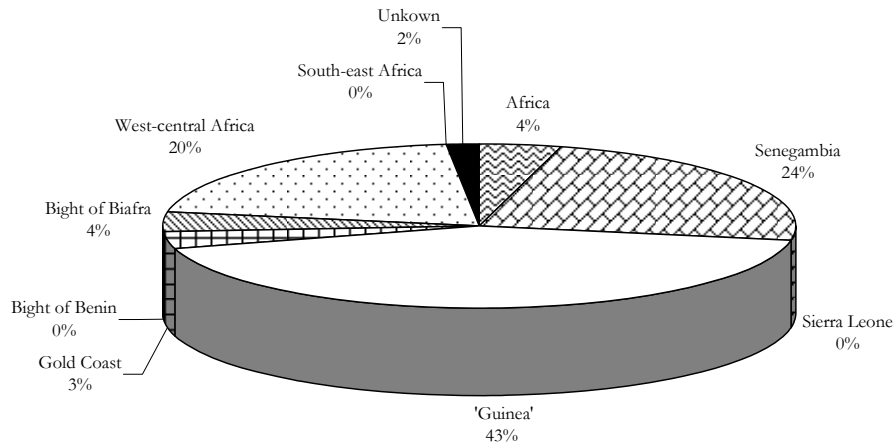
From an economic point of view, the fluctuations of the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa reflected the struggle of these two powers to take hold of the supply markets of African goods and slaves.

During the early years of Dutch trade with West Africa (c.1590-1623), the merchants from the Republic tried to access several West African markets of supply located on the coastal areas. In these years, the main areas of embarkation were the 'Coast of Guinea', i.e. Lower Guinea or the Gulf of Guinea, followed by Senegambia and the West-Central Africa. In practice, the Dutch merchants had access to several markets.(see Graph 2).

In these three areas, the Portuguese military presence was very limited. In Senegambia, the first Portuguese forts were built in the 1640s; while in West-Central Africa, the Portuguese only possessed a few forts in the bay of Luanda and along the Kwanza River. There was therefore enough room for the Dutch to settle and conduct trade without being disturbed by the Portuguese. Only on the Gold Coast did the Dutch merchants suffer several military attacks from the Portuguese, due to the concentration of fortresses. In the Gulf of Guinea, the Portuguese had three fortresses on the Gold Coast and a few defensive structures in São Tomé.

⁵⁹ Stuart B. Schwartz, 'The economy of the Portuguese Empire' in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*, pp. 30-34; Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, 'The Economic Network of Portugal's Atlantic World' in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*, pp. 118-123.

Graph 2: Dutch shipping per region of embarkation in West Africa (1581-1620)

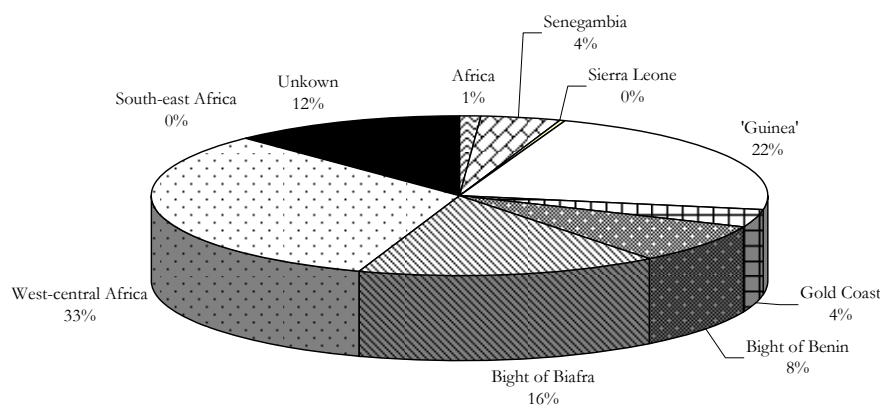


Sources⁶⁰

The WIC adopted a new strategy. The Company wanted not only to preserve the sources of supply controlled by the Dutch private traders, but they also aimed at consolidating the control over the Gulf of Guinea, especially over the Gold Coast and the Bights of Benin and Biafra. In the 1630s and 1640s, several naval attacks were launched against the Portuguese posts on the Gold Coast, which the Portuguese could not withstand, due to their old-fashioned military structures and their insufficient weaponry, ammunition and soldiers. These military initiatives granted the Company control over these coastal markets. The Gulf became an important area of embarkation for Dutch ships operating in the inter-continental circuits to and via West Africa. During those two decades, the Company tried to strengthen its position in Angola. At the time, Angola was the major supply market of African slaves and goods, especially ivory. The military offensives against Angola and São Tomé granted the WIC access to these areas and spurred on the Dutch shipping via West Africa. In fact, the control over Angola was a key factor for this increase, which stopped abruptly after the Portuguese re-conquest of the settlement (see Graph 3).

⁶⁰ See sources quoted for the Dutch shipping in the legend of Graph 1.

Graph 3: Dutch shipping per region of embarkation in West Africa (1621-1655)



Sources⁶¹

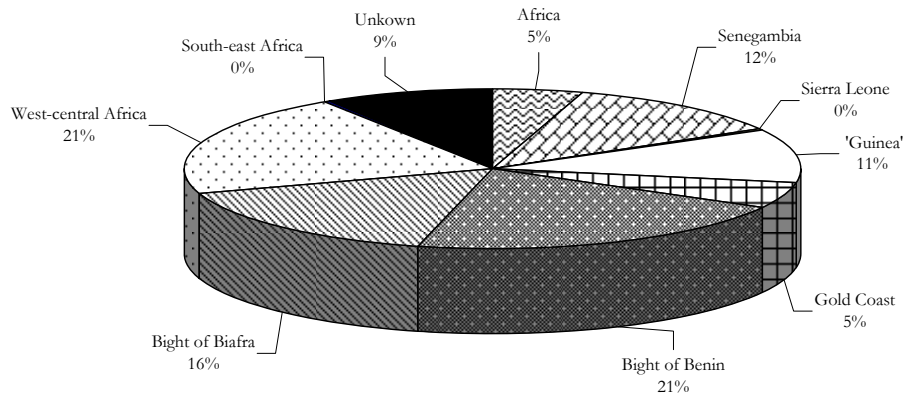
After the loss of Angola and São Tomé, the Company abandoned the idea of having one or two specialized supply markets of African slaves and goods and invested instead in diversifying the markets, although to obtain the same slaves and commodities. From 1650 onwards, the WIC and the Dutch private traders loaded their ships in multiple markets, the most important of which were those in the Bight of Biafra, West-Central Africa (i.e. Loango and Kongo), the Bight of Benin and Senegambia (see Graph 4).

In brief, the loss of Angola and São Tomé forced the Company and the Dutch private traders to make use of different supply markets located in areas not controlled by the Portuguese Crown. Only then did the Gold Coast fortresses and the lodges in Loango and Congo acquired a chief role in Dutch shipping. The takeover of Angola and São Tomé only played a key role in the increase of the Dutch shipping during the 1640s.

The growth of Dutch shipping via West Africa between the 1650s and 1670s can be understood as the development of trade with markets in Senegambia, the Bights of Benin and Biafra, as well as the region of Loango and Congo, areas that had never been under effective control of the Portuguese.

⁶¹ See sources quoted for the Dutch shipping in the legend of Graph 1.

Graph 4: Dutch shipping per region of embarkation in West Africa (1656-1675)

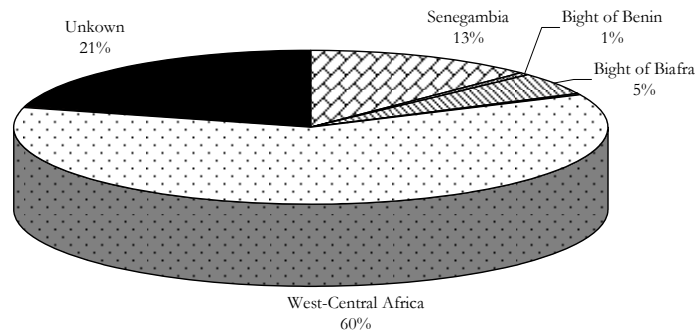


Sources⁶²

The analysis of the regions of embarkation of the Portuguese shipping gives us a completely different picture. Under the Habsburgs (1580-1640) and after the independence, 60% of the Portuguese ships were loaded in West-Central Africa, more precisely in Angola. This region of West Africa appears as a highly specialized market able to supply more than half of the Portuguese ships sailing via West Africa with ivory, slaves and dyewood. All other markets, namely Senegambia, and the Bights of Benin and Biafra played a minor role in the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa in the period under analysis. Even during the Dutch rule over Angola (1641-1648), West-Central Africa remained the main supplier of African goods to the Portuguese ships. As an alternative to the Angolan market taken by the Dutch, the Portuguese used Senegambia increasingly as an embarkation region. After 1640, this region received twice as many ships. In addition, the Portuguese made use of the South-east African coast, namely Mozambique. However, this option had too many inconveniences, such as the time consumed, the oceanic streams, the wind patterns and the high mortality rates on board the ships – a major problem in the slave trade. After a few attempts this idea was abandoned by the Portuguese, as mentioned earlier (see Graphs 5 and 6).

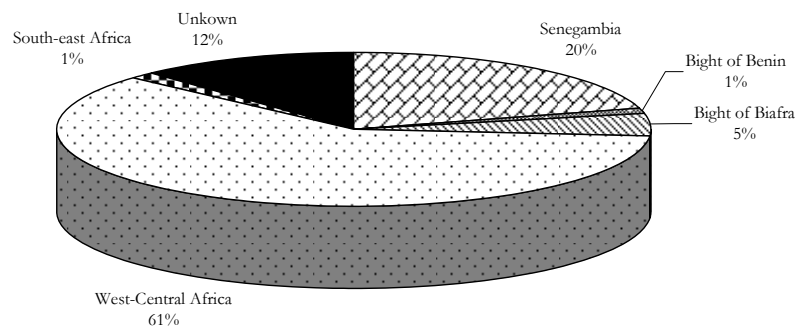
⁶² See sources quoted for the Dutch shipping in the legend of Graph 1.

Graph 5: Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa per region of embarkation (1581-1640)



Sources⁶³

Graph 6: Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa per region of embarkation (1641-1675)



Sources⁶⁴

⁶³ See sources quoted for the Portuguese shipping in the legend of Graph 1.

⁶⁴ See sources quoted for the Portuguese shipping in the legend of Graph 1.

When Angola was occupied by the Dutch (1641-1648), the Portuguese had serious difficulties in finding an equivalent source of supply. The high level of specialization of the markets was an obstacle in this crisis and needed readjustment, whereas the Dutch lack of a specialized market rendered them more flexible.

On the other hand, the access of the Portuguese and traders of mixed-descent to the Angolan supply markets in the hinterland was, in principle, a great advantage. However, during this period it was not of much use. Given the multiple military conflicts between the Portuguese and the African authorities and the cooperation of the latter with the Dutch, many land routes and waterways with the hinterland were unusable.

In comparison, one of the most striking aspects evident in the Dutch relations with the supply markets is the diversity and non-specialization of one supply area, which contrasts with the high specialization we find for the Portuguese in both periods. In fact, between 1580 and 1674, the Portuguese lost their main areas of supply of African goods in West Africa and were unable to get access to the new emerging markets of supply, such as the Bights of Biafra and Benin.⁶⁵ This inability on the part of the Portuguese to adapt to the more competitive environment that emerged in the early 17th century was probably caused by the level of specialization in the regions and ports of supply. The Dutch, in contrast, were able to take over the major areas of supply from the Portuguese and stimulated the opening of new markets of supply in the coast. This situation was probably due to the flexibility of the Dutch trading system, which used several regions and ports of embarkation in West Africa simultaneously.

However, the Portuguese specialization and the Dutch non-specialization may also be linked to the process of capitalization of the West African trade. This business involved a complex system of direct exchange of goods not only in Africa but also in the American consumption markets, and the circulation of bills of exchange that could only be transformed into capital in Europe. Such a complex system could not easily adapt itself to new circumstances.

⁶⁵ In fact, the Bights of Benin and Biafra were used early on by the Portuguese settlers and traders from São Tomé, but these markets never gained a prominent role as a supply area for the inter-continental routes. These areas mainly supplied the coastal trade to São Tomé and the Gold Coast. For further information, see Chapter 4.

4. Products

These African markets supplied the Dutch and the Portuguese merchants with a specific set of goods, which integrated the African continent in the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic economies. This integration was based on the trade of three main commodities: gold, slaves and ivory; though other goods were imported from West Africa to Europe and the Americas, such as several varieties of tropical wood and spices.⁶⁶

4.1. Gold

Gold and grain were the products that drove the Portuguese to the North of Africa in the early 15th century.⁶⁷ The failed attempt to access the gold supplies of the Sub-Saharan region through the fortress-cities of Ceuta and Tangier led the Portuguese Crown to pursue its goal further south along the West African Coast by sailing in search of other areas of supply.

The arrival of the Europeans in the area of Salé and Arguin and their demand for gold stimulated the opening of new supply markets. A similar mechanism worked on the Gold Coast. Both in Arguin and Mina (present-day Elmina, Ghana), two fortresses were built by the Portuguese to impose a monopoly over the gold trade. Later, other small fortresses were built on the Gold Coast, such as Axim and Shama. Mina was the most important source of gold for the Portuguese.⁶⁸ The gold imports reached their zenith during the first half of the 16th century, more precisely between the 1520s and 1530s. After the 1540s the gold imports decreased continuously. During the 1550s there was a slight recovery, but in the following decade the imports started to drop again. In the early 17th century, the

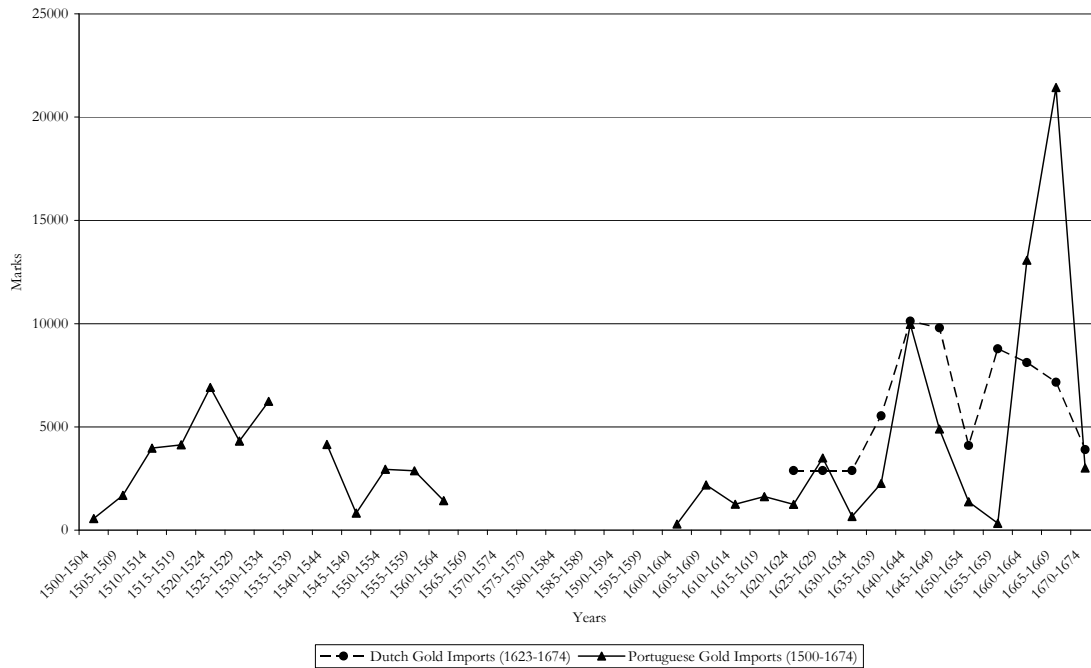
⁶⁶ Ivory was an important commodity in the Dutch and the Portuguese trade with West Africa from the time of the first commercial transactions. However, the lack of quantitative data makes it impossible to undertake comparative analysis in the Atlantic system.

⁶⁷ Stuart B. Schwartz, 'The economy of the Portuguese Empire' in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*, pp. 22-25; Joaquim Romero de Magalhães, 'A procura de cereais' in Francisco Bethencourt and K. N. Chaudhuri (dir.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa I* (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1998), pp. 284-290; Joaquim Romero de Magalhães, 'Os metais preciosos' in Francisco Bethencourt and K. N. Chaudhuri (dir.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa I*, pp. 291-294; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a economia mundial I*, pp. 65-174.

⁶⁸ Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a economia mundial I*, pp. 163-175.

Portuguese gold imports were at the same level as in the 1560s. The quantity of gold registered at the *Casa da Moeda*⁶⁹ in Lisbon never went beyond 2,5000 marks, reaching its lowest value in the 1630s. This decrease was related to the growing competition of other Europeans (see Graph 7).

Graph 7: Dutch and Portuguese Gold imports (1500-1674)



Sources⁷⁰

The interest in precious metals was shared by other Europeans. From the 1590s, traders operating from Amsterdam freighted ships to purchase gold in West Africa, especially on the coast of present-day Mauritania.⁷¹ The scramble for gold drove the WIC to take over the Portuguese fortresses in Arguin, Elmina, Axim and Shama during the 1630s and 1640s. In fact, the Dutch imports of gold into the Republic started to increase significantly in the second half of the 1630s, reaching its highest peak in 1640-1644. Between

⁶⁹ For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary.

⁷⁰ The Portuguese gold imports between 1504 and 1561 are based on data given by Vitorino Magalhaes Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial* I, pp. 163, 172-173 & 175; the Portuguese gold imports between 1570 and 1674 are based on data given by Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico, 1570-1670* II (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1997), p. 182; the Dutch gold imports are based on data given by H. J. den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, p. 20.

⁷¹ See, for example: GAA, NA 632/86-87: 1626-05-04; 371B/10: 1630-01-08; 1525/107-109: 1639-05-20.

1645 and 1654 and from 1660 onwards, the Dutch gold imports alternated between periods of decrease and increase (see Graph 7). These fluctuations were related, on the one hand, to the warfare in Angola and Brazil between the Company and the Portuguese Crown, and on the other hand, to the small WIC shipping capacity in the 1660s and 1670s, due to its financial problems. During these decades, the transport of gold between West Africa and the Republic was done mainly by private ships.

The Portuguese gold importation, on the other hand, reached its first zenith with the arrival of 10,000 marks of gold at the *Casa da Moeda* in Lisbon between 1640 and 1644. Between 1645 and the early 1660s there was a total collapse of the imports, but in the following decade the volume of exported gold increased quickly. During the second half of the 1660s, more than 20,000 marks of gold arrived in Lisbon.

Thus, surprisingly, after the Dutch takeover of the areas that supplied gold, the Portuguese gold imports started to increase rapidly reaching values never registered before. According to Mauro, after 1640 the fluctuations on the entry of gold and silver in the *Casa da Moeda* do not reflect economic growth. The author argued that these fluctuations were the result of the debasement of the currency. Thus, this increase did not reflect a growth in the volume of the Portuguese gold imports from West Africa.

However, it might reflect a growing importation of gold from alternative gold supplying market. In fact, since the 1590s, onwards an increasing volume of gold as well as silver from Spanish America entered Portugal, both legally and illegally. Small quantities of gold were also sent from Brazil as the mining prospecting progressed in the south of the colony throughout the 17th century.⁷² Thus, after the loss of the Portuguese fortresses on the Gold Coast, Iberian colonies in the Americas would become the major gold supplying markets for Portugal.

To sum up, the Europeans obtained gold in different areas in Africa namely: i) the North of Africa (present-day Morocco and Algeria); ii) the coast between Salé and Arguin (present-day Mauritania); and iii) the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon). During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Portuguese Crown was in control of the main gold-supplying areas in West Africa. However, in the early 17th century the situation

⁷² Stuart Schwartz, 'De ouro a algodão: a economia brasileira no século XVII' in Francisco Bethencourt and K. N. Chaudhuri (dir.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa* 3, pp. 86-103; Frédéric Mauro (coord.), *Nova História da Expansão Portuguesa* VII (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1991), pp. 74-88; Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico* II, pp. 133-154.

changed. The arrival of other Europeans such as the Dutch, the English and the French threatened the Portuguese dominance and moved them away from these areas. The present-day coast of Mauritania and Senegal came first under Dutch control and after 1677 under French dominance, while the Gold Coast was mainly under the influence of the Dutch and the English. Therefore, after the 1630s, the Portuguese lost their supply markets of gold in West Africa, while the Dutch gained access to the chief areas of supply: the Gold Coast. From the 1630s onwards, the gold trade played a minor role in the Portuguese trade via West Africa. For the Dutch, the gold acquired a key role in the 1630s, 1640s and 1660s, but started to decline afterwards.

Since the gold trade remained a monopoly of the Company, this decline may have been due to the financial difficulties of the WIC in operating the business, namely the lack of cash flow for the freightage of ships, purchasing of exchange products, etc.

4.2. Slaves

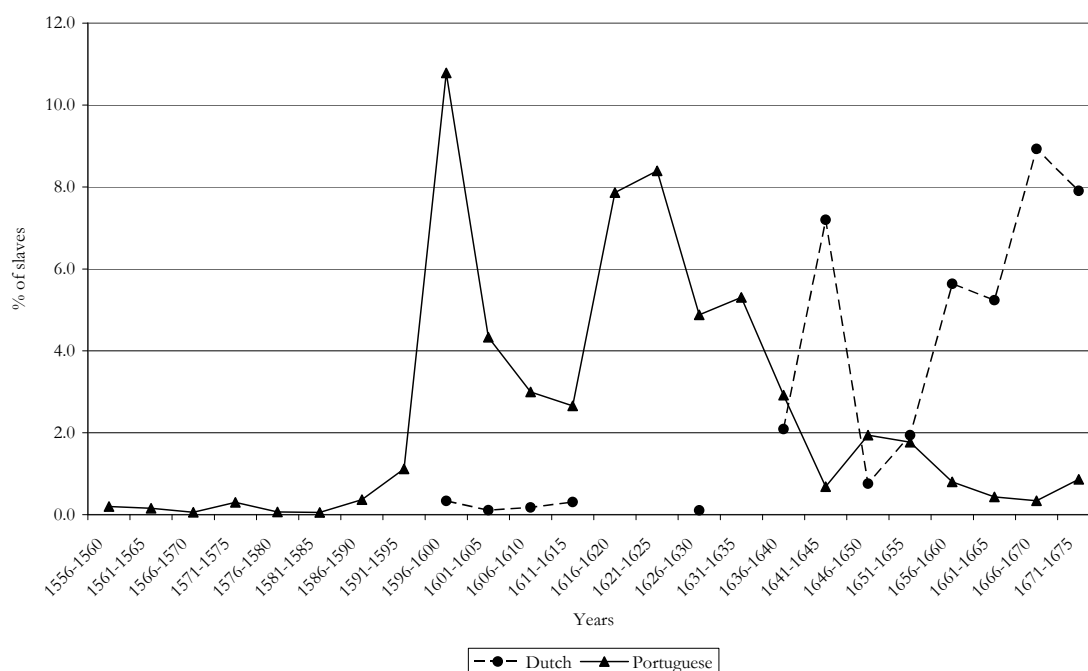
Between the 1580s and 1670s several areas in West Africa functioned as supply markets of slaves for the Portuguese and the Dutch slave traders. There were at least six different regions of supply: i) Senegambia, including not only the coastal region between the Senegal and the Gambia rivers, but also the actual Guinea-Bissau region and the Cape Verde Archipelago; ii) Sierra Leone; iii) Gold Coast; iv) Bights of Benin and Biafra; v) West-Central Africa; and vi) Windward Coast.

The comparative analysis of the shipping of slaves embarked by the Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa shows similar trends to shipping in general. Therefore, scholars have argued that the Dutch replaced the Portuguese on the transport of slaves to the New World.⁷³ However, in recent years, the data gathered in the slave trade database organized by David Eltis *et al* and the most recent publication has put the Dutch and the Portuguese slave trade into different perspective. This scholarship stresses that in the overall period of the

⁷³ Johannes M. Postma, 'The dimension of the Dutch Slave Trade from Western Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 13/2 (1972), p. 239; P. C. Emmer, 'The History of the Dutch Slave trade: a bibliographical survey', *Journal of Economic History*, (1972), p. 737; E. van den Boogaart and P. Emmer, 'The Dutch participation in the Atlantic slave trade, 1596-1650' in Henry A. Gemery & Jan S. Hogendorn (eds.), *Uncommon market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 353.

Atlantic slave trade the Dutch had a minor role in comparison to other European sea powers.⁷⁴ To this argument we should add that in the period under analysis the Dutch slave trade only shows a visible growth between 1636 and 1645 and later from the 1650s onwards. As we have explained earlier, the growth during the first period was due to the takeover of the areas supplying slaves in Angola and São Tomé and to the capture of the consumption areas located in the North-eastern Brazilian captaincies. Thus, we may argue that the Dutch replaced the Portuguese during this period (see Graph 8).

Graph 8: Percentage of slaves embarked by the Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa (1556-1675)



Sources⁷⁵

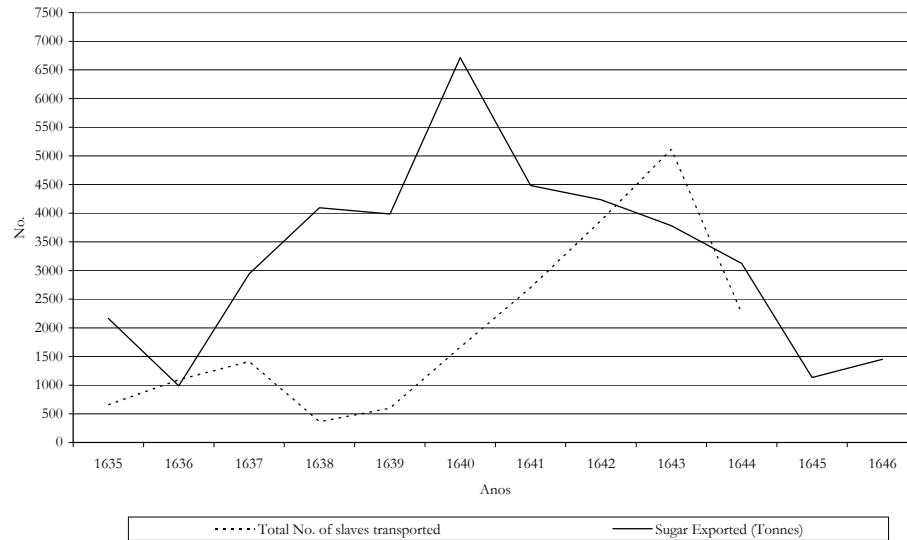
In the 1640s, the volume of slaves shipped by the Dutch to Brazil increased drastically. However, from 1641 onwards the sugar exports from Dutch Brazil started to decrease continuously due to the warfare between the Portuguese and the Dutch. Besides,

⁷⁴ J. Postma, 'A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade' in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, pp. 158-138; Jelmer Vos, David Eltis and David Richardson, 'The Dutch in the Atlantic World: New Perspectives from the Slave Trade with Particular reference to the African Origins of the Traffic', paper presented at the Workshop: *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: new data and new interpretations*, Emory University, 10-11 December 2004.

⁷⁵ www.slavevoyages.com.

the number of sugar mills in Brazil, especially in the North-east area of Pernambuco under Dutch control shows only a slight increase (see Graph 9).

Graph 9: Sugar exports versus slave imports in Dutch Brazil (1635-1646)



Sources⁷⁶

The increase on the volume of slaves shipped to Dutch Brazil could have been caused by an augment of the slave mortality rate, either due to diseases or any other exceptional circumstances. However, the reports sent from the colony to the Board of Directors and the Chambers of the WIC have no reference to such phenomena.⁷⁷ In this sense, this increase in slave imports was not to compensate a growing slave mortality.

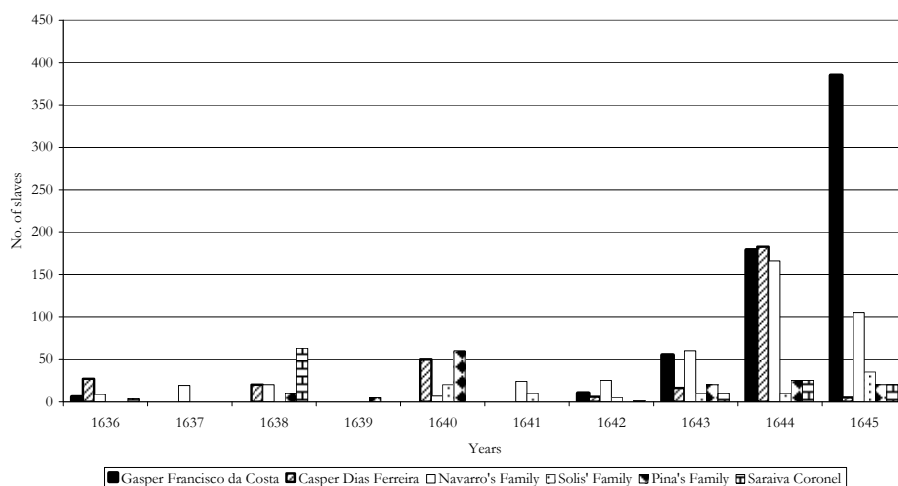
Therefore, the quantity of slaves disembarked in North-east Brazil exceeded the needs of the local consumption markets. In Brazil the number of sugar mills did not increase enough to absorb all the slave labour force shipped by the Dutch ships. Hence, the slaves were not destined to the sugar production. Thus, it is likely that this area became a re-distribution centre of labour force to neighbouring regions.

⁷⁶ The number of imported slaves is based on primary sources from the NA, *Archief van de Oude Westindische Compagnie (O.WIC)*, Overgekomen brieven en papieren van Brazilië, 1630-1654, No. 49-67. The number of sugar mills (*Engenhos*) in Dutch Brazil is based on data from: Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico* I, p. 262. The sugar Exported (Tonnes) includes sugar exported by the WIC and private traders from the Dutch Brazil. The calculations were made based on data published by Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico* I, appendices.

⁷⁷ NA, OWIC, 49-67.

A careful analysis of the lists of slaves sold at Recife by the WIC between 1642 and 1645 shows that several sugar planters and businessmen were buying annually a high number of slaves; clearly more than would be necessary to make up for the mortality among the workforce in the sugar mills or to reinforce the plantation work capacity. Gaspar Francisco da Costa, Gaspar Dias Ferreira, and the Navarro family are three good examples of this phenomenon.⁷⁸ All bought an increasing number of slaves between 1642 and 1645 (see Graph 10).

Graph 10: Slaves bought annually by sugar planters in Dutch Brazil (some examples)



Sources⁷⁹

Based on this evidence it is likely that the growth of the Brazilian market for slaves was partially artificial. In fact, the African slaves shipped to Brazil by the Dutch were bought by Portuguese planters/settlers to be re-exported via land and sea routes to other markets either in the Brazilian hinterland or the Spanish American colonies, which had been deprived of regular supplies of slave labour since 1640. Therefore, New Holland (present-day North-eastern Brazil) functioned as a re-distribution centre for the Central American mainland and

⁷⁸ Stuart B. Schwartz, 'Panic in the Indies: The Portuguese Threat to the Spanish Empire, 1640-1650' in Werner Thomas and Bart De Groof (eds.), *Rebelión Y Resistencia en el Mundo Hispánico del Siglo XVII: Actas del Coloquio Internacional: Lovaina, 20/23 de Noviembre de 1991* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), pp. 206-226; *idem*, 'Prata, Açúcar e Escravos: De como o Império Restaurou Portugal', unpublished article kindly supplied by the author (forthcoming); *idem*, 'La necesidad no tiene patria: Azúcar, plata y esclavos en la rebelión portuguesa', unpublished article kindly supplied by the author (forthcoming).

⁷⁹ NA, *Archief van de Oude Westindische Compagnie (O.WIC)*, Overgekomen brieven en papieren van Brazilië, 1630-1654, No. 49-67.

the West Indies. The ships departing from Dutch Brazil would sail either towards the North using the favourable wind patterns to reach the Caribbean islands and the ports of Cartagena and Vera Cruz, or using the Amazon estuary to reach the Andes hinterland.⁸⁰

In addition, we should emphasize that most of these slave buyers were Portuguese Sephardic Jews connected to other Portuguese Jewish communities settled in the Spanish American colonies and in control of the networks of re-distribution of slaves in these areas. According to the secondary literature on the role of the Portuguese New Christians in the Spanish American colonies and in the slave trade, the aforementioned middlemen operated in the commercial circuits linking the main ports of Cartagena and Vera Cruz to the hinterland. They controlled land routes in Mexico and Peru and sea routes linking present-day Panama to the Spanish colonies in the South Pacific.⁸¹ It is therefore likely that due to the lack of slaves in the ports of Cartagena and Vera Cruz these middlemen started coming to the North-eastern Brazilian ports in order to buy slaves and then to re-export them to the mining centres, as they did previously from the Spanish-American ports.⁸²

A similar process may explain the development of the La Plata market and the growth of Buenos Aires as a port of disembarkation of slaves, especially from the 1630s onwards and mainly under Portuguese dominance. Until then, the supply of African slaves to the Peruvian coast was made possible by coastal routes linking Portobello and/or Panama with Callao and Arica. However, once this circuit stopped being regularly supplied, alternative routes had to be found. Consequently, the supply of slaves to the La Plata region and their shipment to the Spanish colonies by inland routes and waterways developed – the

⁸⁰ For the Dutch activities in the Amazon from the early 17th century onwards, see: George Edmundson, 'Early Relations of the Manoas with the Dutch, 1606-1732', *The English Historical Review* 21/82 (Apr., 1906), pp. 229-253; *idem*, 'The Dutch on the Amazon and Negro in the Seventeenth Century. Part I. – Dutch Trade on the Amazon', *The English Historical Review* 18/72 (Oct., 1903), pp. 642-663; *idem*, 'The Dutch on the Amazon and Negro in the Seventeenth Century. Part II. Dutch Trade in the Basin of the Rio Negro', *The English Historical Review* 19/73 (Jan., 1904), pp. 1-25. For the inland navigation in Brazil, see for instance: R. M. Delson, 'Inland Navigation in Colonial Brazil: Using canoes on the Amazon', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 7 (1995), pp. 1-28.

⁸¹ Jonathan I. Israel, 'Portuguese Crypto-Judaism in New Spain (1569-1649)' in *idem*, *Diasporas within a diaspora. Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540-1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 97-124; Maria da Graca A. M. Ventura, 'Los judeoconversos portugueses en el Perú del siglo XVII. Redes de complicidad' in Jaime Contreras, Bernardo J. García García & Ignacio Pulido (eds.), *Familia, Religión y Negocio* (Madrid: Villaverde, 2002), pp. 391-406; *idem*, *Os Portugueses no Peru ao tempo da União Ibérica: mobilidade, complicitade e vivências*, 2 vols., (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2005).

⁸² The role of these brokers will be analysed in more detail in the chapter 6.

so-called clandestine ‘Tucumán-Potosi-Brazil triangle’.⁸³ The Southern Brazilian captaincies became a re-distribution centre of slaves for the La Plata region. There were two main routes: one that connected Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires and another that linked São Paulo to present-day Paraguay.⁸⁴ Thus, the period of 1641-1655 corresponded to a phase of readjustment of markets and circuits of supply of African slaves to the Spanish colonies.

Thus, we would argue that after the Spanish *asiento* was cancelled in 1640, Dutch Brazil was used as a re-distribution platform for slaves heading for the Spanish Americas, either sailing north using the favourable winds to access the Caribbean islands, or even possibly via the Amazon estuary to access the Andes.

Between 1645 and 1655, the Dutch slave trade suffered a serious decline, mainly due to the loss of the supply markets of Angola and São Tomé (1648), as well as to the war in the Brazilian captaincies. The war also hampered the circulation of people and commodities via the land and sea routes, creating serious difficulties for the use of Brazil as a re-distribution centre of slaves to the Spanish American colonies. After 1655 the new shipping system was redefined and the Caribbean island of Curaçao emerged as commercial entrepôt. Curaçao was used as a re-distribution centre for slaves to supply the Caribbean islands controlled by other European sea powers, as well as the Spanish American colonies on the mainland and North America under English dominance. Curaçao kept this key position until the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713).⁸⁵

In the Portuguese case, the number of slaves embarked increased during the Union of the Portuguese and the Spanish Crowns. This was particularly accentuated in the period of the ‘Twelve Years’ Truce between Spain and the Northern Netherlands (1609-1621). The end of the Truce caused a drastic decrease in the embarkation of slaves, which reached its

⁸³ Maria da Graça A. M. Ventura, ‘A participação dos Portugueses no Comércio regional e inter-regional Hispano-Americano, a partir do Rio da Prata (1580-1640)’, paper presented at the *Colóquio Internacional Território e Povoamento – a presença portuguesa na região platina* Colónia del Sacramento, Uruguay, 23 to 26 de March 2004; Jonathan I. Israel, ‘Buenos Aires, Tucumán and the River Plate Route: Portuguese *conversos* and the ‘commercial subversion’ of the Spanish Indies (1580-1640)’ in *idem*, *Diasporas within a diaspora*, pp. 125-150; Fernando Serrano Mangas, *La encrucijada portuguesa: Explendor y quiebra de la Unión Ibérica en las Indias de Castilla (1600-1668)* (Badajoz: Diputación Provincial, 1994); Aan Canabrava, *O comércio português no Rio da Prata: 1580-1640* (São Paulo, Brasil: Universidade de São Paulo, 1944); Lafuente Machaín, *Los portugueses en Buenos Aires (siglo XVII)* (Madrid: Tip de Archivos, 1931).

⁸⁴ Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, ‘The economic Network of Portugal’s Atlantic World’ in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*, pp. 116-118.

⁸⁵ Wim Klooster, ‘Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit trade’ in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, pp. 203-218; Han jordaán, ‘The Curaçao Slave Market: From *Asiento* Trade to Free Trade, 1700-1730’ in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, pp. 219-258.

lowest point in the mid- 1630s and 1640s. Only in the 1650s, after the re-occupation of Angola, did the Portuguese slave trade increase slightly. The levels of the Portuguese slave trade before 1590 and after 1640 were, in fact, quite similar, and contrasted with the boom that occurred in the 1590s and 1620s (see Graph 8).

The growth of the number of slaves embarked by the Portuguese in the 1590s and 1620s was stimulated by access to the Spanish American colonies and the expansion of the sugar production in Brazil; while the collapse of the Portuguese slave trade between the 1630s and 1670s seems to have been related to: i) the persecution of the Portuguese New Christian merchants in the Spanish American colonies, Spain and Portugal during the 1630s which destroyed many of their trading networks;⁸⁶ as well as ii) the Portuguese Restoration in Europe (1640), which put an end to the Union of the Iberian Crowns and cut the Portuguese traders off from their access to the *asientos*.⁸⁷ For the Portuguese, the loss of the Spanish *asiento* after 1640 represented a heavy blow in providing slaves to the major consumption market for African labour.

Furthermore, the Dutch takeover of Angola between 1641 and 1648 meant the loss of the major Portuguese market for buying slaves. Finally, the depreciation of silver in the European financial markets and the consequent collapse of silver imports to Seville and its production in the Spanish American mining fields reduced the demand for labour in the Spanish American economy in general. The decline in the volume of the Portuguese slave shipping in the post-1640 period show that it was unable to recover after the loss of the *asiento*. This recovery would not start until the 1690s driven by the growing demand for slave labour force in the Brazilian gold mines.

5. Consumption markets

As shown previously, the consumption areas had a key role in the evolution of the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping of African slaves and commodities in the Atlantic. Europe and the Americas were the main importers of African slaves and goods. However, these consumption markets were different. The European market demanded mainly gold and ivory,

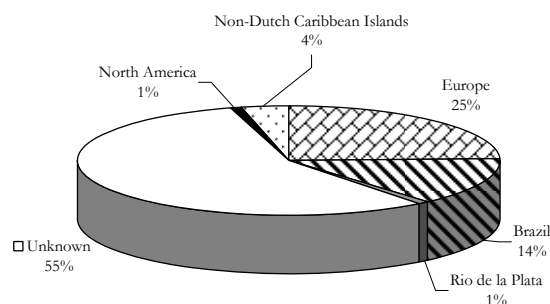
⁸⁶ Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A nation upon the ocean sea*, pp. 90-121.

⁸⁷ Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Aspectos sociales en América colonial. De extranjeros, contrabando y esclavos* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro Y Cuervo, Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano, 2001), pp. 116-160.

together with other tropical goods, while the demand for slaves was small and was concentrated only in Iberia. The main markets of import of slave labour were located in the Americas, first in the Portuguese and Spanish settlements and later on in the Dutch, English, French and Danish plantation colonies in the Caribbean, Wild Coast and North America.

During the early years of Dutch trade with West Africa, the major part of the African goods was destined for Europe. The Americas, namely Brazil, La Plata River, the Caribbean islands and North America, received only 20% of the Dutch ships travelling via West Africa. The cargoes transported consisted mainly of gold, ivory, wax and ambergris (see Graph 11).

Graph 11: The destination of Dutch shipping per region (1581-1620)



Sources⁸⁸

Under the WIC this scenario changed, especially after the takeover of the North-eastern Brazilian captaincies. Brazil, more precisely Recife in Pernambuco, became the major region of disembarkation of the Dutch shipping to and via West Africa. In the same period, the Company also increased the number of voyages to the Caribbean islands and the Spanish Central American colonies via West Africa. Between 1630 and 1654, the Dutch (both the WIC and the private businessmen) expanded its commercial scope in the Americas, mainly

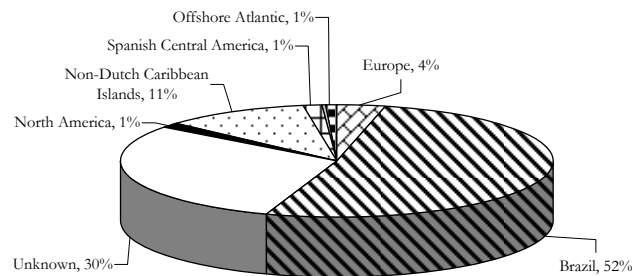
⁸⁸ See sources quoted for Dutch shipping in legend of Graph 1.

by taking over areas of consumption previously supplied by the Portuguese, namely Brazil, the Caribbean Islands and Spanish Central America, as we will explain later (see Graph 12).

The key role of Brazil in the Dutch shipping via West Africa was based on its status as an entrepôt for the Dutch Atlantic trade with West Africa and between West Africa and Europe. The nature of the Dutch trade also changed substantially. The slave trade became the major concern of the Company, given the need of slave labour for the sugar plantations in New Holland. The African products, namely gold and ivory, remained in high demand in Europe. However, the shipping to Europe was often done via Brazil, which explains the low number of direct trips to Europe. In fact, Europe was the second region of disembarkation for the ships sailing from West Africa via Brazil. In the end, most of the ships finished their journey in the ports of the Republic.

Therefore, the Dutch takeover of the Brazilian captaincies and the Caribbean consumption markets from the Portuguese was the main reason for the growth of the Dutch shipping in the decades of the 1630s and 1640s.

Graph 12: The destination of Dutch shipping per region (1621-1655)



Sources⁸⁹

⁸⁹ See sources quoted for Dutch shipping in legend of Graph 1.

After the loss of Brazil (1654), this scenario changed completely. On the one hand, the arrival of the English, the French, and the Danish in the Caribbean, where the development of cash-crop plantations, exporting sugar, cotton, tobacco and cacao, promoted the formation of a new consumption market for African slaves and European products. Given the weak presence of these European powers in West Africa and their limited shipping capacity at the time, the Dutch became the natural suppliers of African slaves to these new markets. This supply was guaranteed by using Curaçao as an entrepôt. The Dutch Caribbean received 39% of the Dutch ships travelling via West Africa. The Island of Curaçao was often visited by English, French and Danish vessels in order to purchase African slaves, as well as European goods, shipped from the Dutch Republic. However, Dutch ships also sailed directly to the main ports in these colonies. Between 1656 and 1675, 17% of the Dutch shipping unloaded their cargoes on non-Dutch Caribbean islands (see Graph 13). In the 1670s, the protective commercial policies implemented by the English and the French and the subsequent warfare between these states prevented the Dutch from visiting the English and the French islands, which were to be supplied only by ships sailing under the flag of their own country and, therefore, contraband and illegal trade was the result.

In the early 1650s, the WIC sponsored the settlement and economic development of Curaçao and Dutch Guiana. The transfer of sugar planters, either of Portuguese, Jewish or Dutch descent, from Brazil, first to the Caribbean and later to Guiana stimulated the development of sugar plantations, especially in Suriname, since the climate and the soil of Curaçao were not suitable for these crops. By creating new plantation colonies in the Caribbean, the Dutch opened a new market of consumption for African slaves, as well as European products. Dutch Guiana received 8% of the total Dutch shipping via West Africa between 1656 and 1675 (see Graph 13).⁹⁰

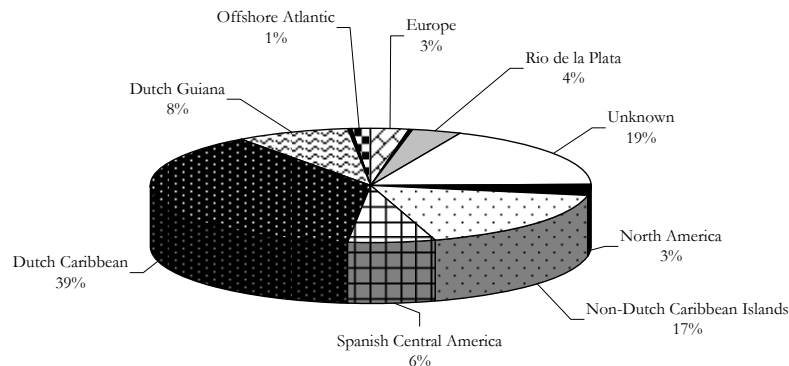
In addition, from the 1650s onwards, the WIC also sponsored the occupation of New Netherland (present-day New York). The incentives for attacking Europeans settlers promoted the expansion of the colony's consumption market and increased the demand for labour. That need was partially met by importing African slaves to North America, using

⁹⁰ Until 1667, Dutch Guiana comprised only colonies of Berbice, Essequibo and Pomeroon. Suriname was under English dominance until the aforementioned year. Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 191, Table 8.3.

Curaçao as a re-exportation centre.⁹¹ The direct routes between West Africa and North America were rarely used. Only 3% of the Dutch ships sailing via West Africa disembarked their cargoes directly in New Netherland (see Graph 13).

Moreover, the Company also profited from the absence of an *asiento* between 1640 and 1668. In fact, the end of the Portuguese control over the Spanish *asiento* left the biggest consumption market for African slaves in the New World without regular supply. The lack of normal supplies of African slaves, led the Spaniards to look for them in the closest area : the Caribbean. During this period Spanish ships would come regularly to Curaçao to purchase European products and African slaves. Therefore, from 1641 onwards, both the Dutch and the English started shipping slaves to the Caribbean Sea and from there supplied the Spanish Caribbean Islands and the Spanish Central America colonies⁹² (see Graph 13).

Graph 13: Dutch shipping per region of disembarkation (1656-1675)



Sources⁹³

⁹¹ The Notarial contracts from the GAA give good examples of the use of Curaçao as an entrepôt in the trade between West Africa and North America. GAA, NA 2117/161: 1656-11-23; 2118/137: 1657-08-01; 2226/994-999: 1668-04-28.

⁹² A. P. Thornton, 'Spanish Slave-Ships in the English West Indies, 1660-85', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 35/3 (Aug., 1955), pp. 374-385.

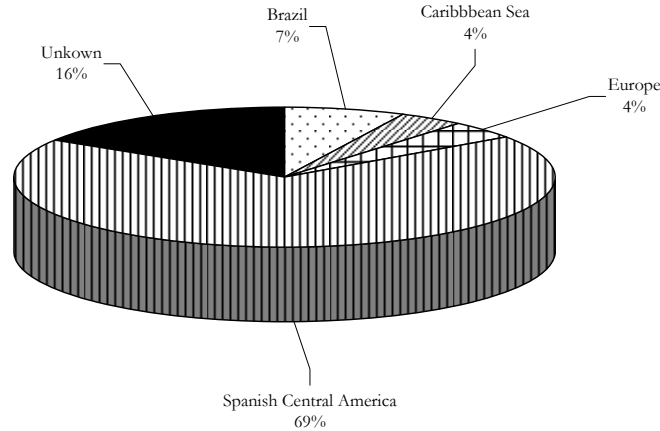
⁹³ See sources quoted for the Dutch shipping in legend of Graph 1.

However, it should be emphasized that the patterns of forced labour migration in these Spanish American colonies started to change in the mid-17th century, due to the natural growth of the indigenous population and the crises in the Spanish American mining economy. Therefore, from the since early 1650s the volume of slaves sold in Curaçao to the Spanish American colonies was not comparable to the period period of the *asiento*. Despite this decrease in the demand for slave labour force, given the limited participation of the Dutch in the transatlantic slave trade, the Spanish consumption markets both in Central America and the Caribbean Islands played a role in the growth of the Dutch shipping to and via West Africa.

To sum up, over time the Dutch had several regions of disembarkation, but they shipped the African slaves mainly to their own colonies. In Brazil the major port of disembarkation was Pernambuco (Recife), between 1636 and 1650, while in the Dutch Caribbean, Curaçao was the most important port for unloading African slaves, especially during 1660-1675. Thus, the increase of the Dutch shipping between the 1650s and 1670s was due to the readjustment of the Spanish consumption markets and the development of new markets of consumption in the Caribbean Islands and North America with the expansion of the plantation complex.

In contrast to the Dutch, the African slaves transported by the Portuguese across the Atlantic were unloaded mainly in non-Portuguese colonies. Between 1580 and 1640, the African slaves traded by the Portuguese were mainly landed in the Spanish Central American colonies and the Caribbean Islands. 73% of the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa was destined to these two regions. Brazil and Europe received only 7% and 4% of the shipping, respectively (see Graph 14). To supply the Spanish Central American markets the Portuguese used two main ports of disembarkation: Cartagena and Vera Cruz; while Brazil was regularly supplied via the ports of Recife and Bahia. The La Plata region was supplied through the port of Buenos Aires.

Graph 14: Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa per region of disembarkation (1581-1640)



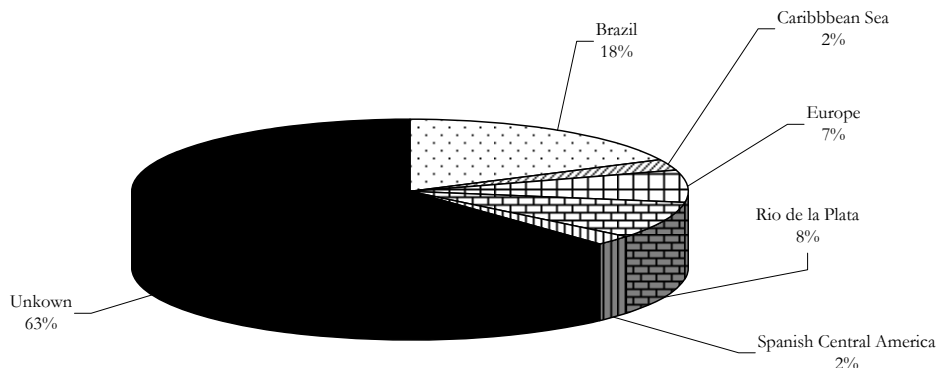
Sources⁹⁴

In brief, between 1580 and 1640, the Portuguese had two main regions of disembarkation in America: the Spanish American mainland and Brazil. In both regions, there were ports specializing in the receiving of African slaves. However, Spanish America was more important than Brazil. Therefore, the Portuguese shipping via West Africa was not limited to the geographic boundaries of the Portuguese Atlantic Empire. In fact, during this period the Portuguese and the Spanish Atlantic empires operated as a unit. The Union of the Crowns was not only a political but also an economic unit.

From 1640 onwards, the Portuguese lost their largest selling market – Spanish Central America and the Spanish West Indies. In addition, they were unable to obtain a share in the new markets emerging in Guiana, the Caribbean Islands and North America, caused by the expansion of the plantation complex (see Graph 15).

⁹⁴ See sources quoted for the Portuguese shipping in legend of Graph 1.

Graph 15: The destination of Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa per region (1641-1675)



Sources⁹⁵

To summarize, a comparison between the main selling markets of the Portuguese shipping mentioned in graphs 12 and 13 shows clearly that the Spanish American mainland was the core of the Portuguese Atlantic shipping system between the 1580s and 1640s, while Brazil played a minor role. An analysis of the same selling markets in the longer term demonstrates this yet more clearly. In fact, after the end of the Spanish *asiento* in 1640, Portuguese shipping never reached the high values of the 1590s, despite the re-capture of the North-eastern captaincies of Brazil in 1654. Hence, Brazil clearly played only a minor role. This situation would not change until the 1680s and 1690s with the beginning of mining activities.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic shipping via West Africa was caused mainly by the loss of the Spanish *asiento* and the Spanish Central American and Caribbean markets, and not by the Dutch takeover of Brazil. The loss of North-east Brazil between 1630 and 1654 had a minor impact, because Brazil only received 7% of the Portuguese shipping via the West Coast of Africa. The initial success of

⁹⁵ See sources quoted for the Portuguese shipping in legend of Graph 1.

the Dutch shipping via the West Coast of Africa, in contrast, was a consequence of the takeover of both Brazil and Angola, especially the latter. However, the second growth spurt of Dutch shipping via West Africa was a consequence of the development of new markets for African slaves in the Dutch Caribbean, Dutch Guiana and North America. However, this increase was due especially to the Dutch capacity to develop a new shipping circuit in order to supply the Spanish Central American market lost by the Portuguese in 1640, using the Caribbean Sea and especially Curaçao as a re-exporting region. Furthermore, this success for Dutch shipping also reflects a change in the monopoly of the WIC, since in 1638 the Company allowed the participation of private businessmen in the Brazilian and the Caribbean trades and 1648 granted them access to North America. Besides, it was only after the loss of Angola (1648) and the first serious defeats in Brazil (Guararapes 1648 & 1649), the Company started to promote the systematic occupation of its Caribbean Islands as well as the development of plantations in Guiana.

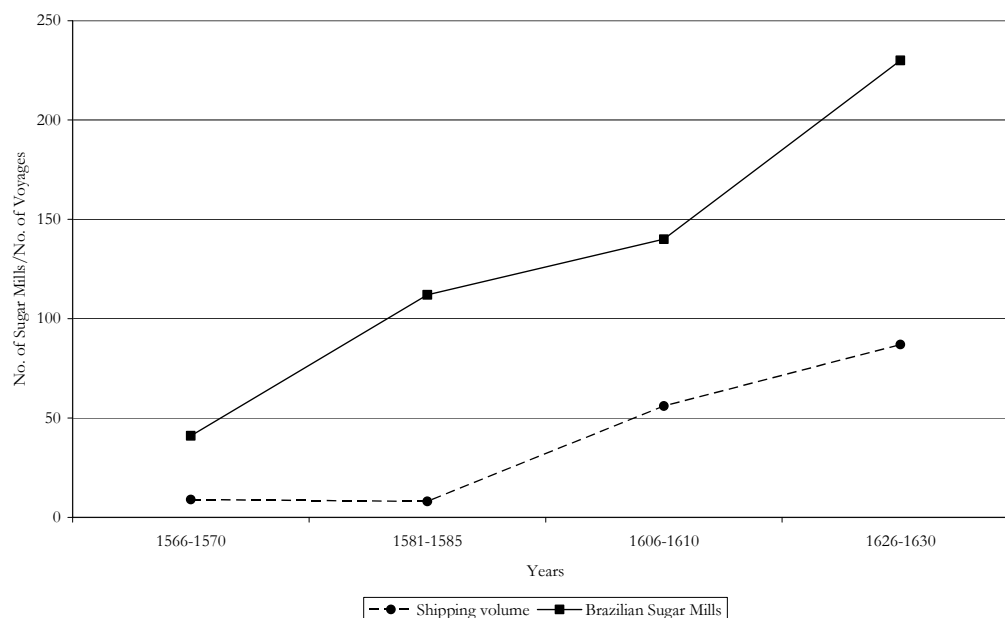
The Dutch success in the Atlantic between 1650s and 1670s was mainly a consequence of the change of policies inside the Dutch WIC, the re-admission of private traders to the Atlantic, and the Dutch capacity to organize and re-adjust commercial circuits – a process already essayed many times in the Baltic, the Mediterranean and the Northern Atlantic. On the other hand, the collapse of the Portuguese-Spanish–American shipping circuit in 1640 released the largest consumption market of African slaves – the Spanish American colonies – for other European sea powers. During the second half of the 17th century, the Dutch had to compete with the English and the French to retain their share of this market. In the end, this battle was clearly won by the English already before the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713).

6. Integration of the markets

The integration of West Africa into the inter-continental shipping system of the European sea powers has until now been strictly connected to the development of the plantation complex in the Americas. An examination of the development of the plantation complex and the growth of the Portuguese shipping via West Africa show a clear correlation. Both variables follow similar trends (see Graph 16). Apparently, the increase in the number of

sugar mills and plantations was able to absorb the rise in volume of Dutch and Portuguese shipping via West Africa.

Graph 16: Development of the plantation complex versus the growth of the Portuguese shipping via the West Coast of Africa to Brazil (1566-1630)



Sources⁹⁶

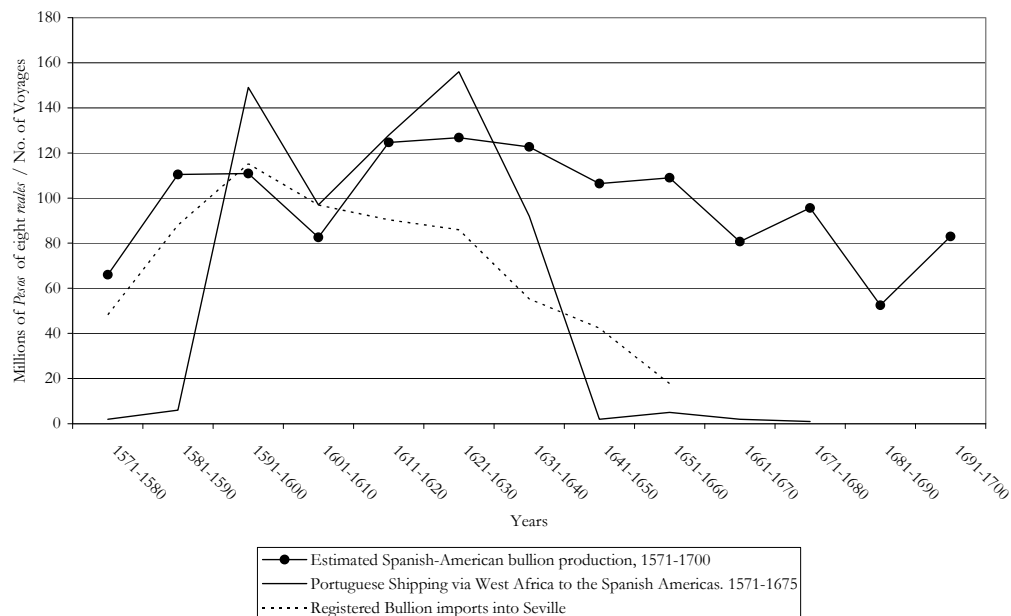
In the previous section we have concluded that the major destinations for Portuguese shipping via West Africa between 1580 and the late 1620s was not a plantation colony like Brazil, but Spanish Central America with its mining economy. Thus, although the development of the plantation complex in Brazil stimulated the growth of Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa, it was not its key motor between the 1590s and 1630s. In fact, the main stimulus for this growth came from the Spanish Central American colonies.

The economic driving force of the Spanish Empire was the mining system and the intensive extraction of silver from the multiple mining fields in the Spanish American mainland. The exploitation of the mines started in the 1550s after the discovery of the first gold treasures in 1545. An analysis of the estimated production of Spanish-American bullion between the 1570s and 1640s and the growth of the Portuguese shipping via West Africa show similar trends. The production of silver bullion was followed by the rise in shipping.

⁹⁶ The number of sugar mills in Brazil is from Frédéric Mauro, *Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico I*, p. 258. The volume of the Portuguese shipping is based on the sources quoted for Graph 1.

Thus, the development of the Spanish mining system was a key factor for the growth of the Portuguese shipping via West Africa, as well as an essential factor for the integration of this area in the inter-continental routes of the Portuguese (see Graph 17).

Graph 17: Estimated Minimum Spanish-American Bullion production; Registered Bullion imports into Seville; Portuguese shipping via West Africa to the Spanish Americas



Sources⁹⁷

This correlation raises a problem: what was the role of African slaves in the Spanish American economy? The Spanish West Indies and the American mainland were not consumption areas for gold, since this metal was also available in these areas. Ivory was not in demand either. The Spanish American markets only consumed two main African 'products': wax and slaves.

In fact, from the earliest times of Spanish settlement on the Caribbean islands and the American mainland there was a great need for labour. The depopulation of Spanish Central America, due to the violence of the conquest and the impact of European diseases on the natives, limited the human resources at the disposal of the Spanish allowing them to

⁹⁷ The estimated Spanish-American bullion production, 1571-1700 is based on data published by John R. Fisher, *The economic aspects of the Spanish Imperialism in America, 1492-1810* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 100. The registered bullion imports into Seville are based on data published by D. A. Brading; H. E. Cross, 'Colonial silver Mining: Mexico and Peru', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 52/4 (Nov., 1972), p. 579. The volume of the Portuguese shipping is based the sources already coated in Graph 1.

build and keep urban centres and to develop agriculture and mining. After the 1570s, the intensive exploitation of the mines and the increase of foodstuff production as well as the construction of urban centres, fortification and the establishment of a royal bureaucratic apparatus with the viceroalties, generated an extra demand for both skilled and unskilled labour that could not be fulfilled by a sick and declining indigenous population or massive immigration from Iberia. This growing demand coincides with the growth of the Portuguese shipping of African labour to the Spanish American colonies.

To compensate for the native depopulation, slaves were exported by the Portuguese from West Africa to Seville, Cadiz and the Canary islands to be re-exported to the Americas via the *carrera de las Indias* from the earliest times of the colonization of the Spanish West Indies and mainland onwards, as explained earlier.⁹⁸

However, since the 1980s, the historiography on the development of the Spanish-American mining system has stressed that one of the reasons for the prosperity of Potosí (present-day Bolivia) – the biggest mining centre of Spanish America – was the use of paid and forced native South American labour on the mines. Unskilled adult males from the surrounding provinces were regularly gathered to work in the mines through a process known as *mitra*, implemented since 1573.⁹⁹ The Spanish considered that African slaves were not suitable for this work due to the climate and altitude of the Andes. Slaves only worked in the mills and *lavaderos* of the mines.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, slave labour was not dominating in the actual mining of the silver ore.

Nevertheless, in a recent study, Martínez-Montiel argued that in the mining areas where the indigenous population was almost extinct, the Spanish made intensive use of slave labour in the silver, copper and gold mines. The author argues that slaves were essential for the exploitation of the gold fields of the Spanish Caribbean islands, Mexico and Chile. Slaves

⁹⁸ Maria Manuel Torrão, 'Actividade commercial externa de Cabo Verde' in Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* I, pp. 287-305.

⁹⁹ John R. Fisher, *The economic aspects of Spanish Imperialism in America*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁰ Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos*; Leslie Brennan Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America. 1502 to the present day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976); F. P. Bowser, 'The African in Colonial Spanish America: reflections on research achievements and priorities', *Latin American Research Review*, 7/1 (Spring, 1972), pp. 77-94; J. F. King, 'Negro history in Continental Spanish America', *The Journal of Negro History*, 29/1 (Jan., 1944), pp. 7-23.

also played a key role in the gold mines in Ecuador and the copper mines in Venezuela.¹⁰¹ The same was also true for the mines in Popayán, district of New Granada, and in Peru.¹⁰²

The development of the mining system and the establishment of a bureaucratic apparatus stimulated the construction of urban centres. In the Spanish American cities and towns, slaves were employed in a wide range of activities. They served their masters as domestic servants, performing tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, etc. The household of a member of the Spanish urban elite could include up to 20 slaves. The convents of the main cities as well as the main royal and municipal institutions also employed high numbers of slaves. In the urban centres such as Cartagena, Lima, Quito, Bogotá, and Mexico, slaves were also to be found as artisans: tailors, carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, cobblers etc. Slaves were also employed for the public works of the cities, namely the construction of royal buildings, churches, convents, streets, roads, shipyards, warehouses, factories, etc. Slave labour was also used for the manufacturing of woollen cloth in most of the Spanish American towns.¹⁰³

The development of the cities, towns and mining centres stimulated a high demand for foodstuffs and, therefore, the development of intensive agriculture. In order to fulfil these demands the Spanish created a system of *haciendas* and *encomiendas*, farms for foodstuff production to feed the labour force working in the mines and the population of the new

¹⁰¹ Luz María Martínez-Montiel, 'The influence of Blacks in the Americas' in Doudou Diène (ed.), *From Chins to Bonds. The slave trade revisited* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), pp. 376-394.

¹⁰² Carmen Bernand, *Negros esclavos y libres en las ciudades hispanoamericanas* (Madrid: Fundación Histórica Tavera, 2001), p. 53.

¹⁰³ María Cristina Navarrete, *Génesis y desarrollo de la esclavitud en Columbia siglos XVI y XVII* (Columbia: Progamma Editorial del Universidad del Valle, Cali, 2005); Carmen Bernand, *Negros esclavos y libres en las ciudades hispanoamericanas*, pp. 11-99; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Aspectos sociales en América Central*; L. Mondragón Barrios, *Esclavos africanos en la Ciudad de México. El servicio doméstico durante el siglo XVI* (México: Ediciones Euroamericanas, 1999), pp. 20-71; M. Guadalupe, 'La gran negritud en Michoacán, época colonial' in Luz María Martínez Montiel (coord.), *Presencia Africana en México* (México: Consejo Nacional, 1994); María Guadalupe Chávez Carvajal, *Proprietarios y esclavos negros en Valladolid de Michoacán, 1600-1650* (Michoacán, México: Universidad Michiocana de San Nicolas de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1994); H. Gutiérrez and J. M. Monteiro (comps.), *A escravidão na América Latina e no Caribe* (São Paulo, Brasil: Universidade de São Paulo, 1990); H. W. Konrad, *Una hacienda de los Jesuitas en el México colonial: Snata Lúcia, 1576-1767* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989); C. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Colonial México, 1570-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976); M. Acosta Saignes, *Vida de los negros en Venezuela* (Cuba: Casa de Las Américas, 1978); F. P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1974); *idem*, 'The African in Colonial Spanish America: Reflections on Research Achievements and Priorities', *Latin American Research Review*, 7/1 (Spring, 1972), pp. 77-94; M. del C. Borrego Plá, *Palenques de negros en Cartagena de Indias a finales del siglo XVII* (Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1973); G. Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de Mexico* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972); P. J. Bakewell, *Minería y sociedad en el México colonial: Zacatecas: 1546-1700* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970); D. P. Manis & M. Cowley, *Historia de la trata de negros* (Madrid: Alianza, 1970).

urban centres.¹⁰⁴ The scholarship on the development of these farms states that the system was quite similar to the one used in Spain during the Middle Ages. This work was done mainly by indigenous people. However, in the areas where the indigenous population was not sufficiently numerous, this work was done by African slaves. Slaves were also employed in cattle breeding.¹⁰⁵ During the 1640s and 1650s, we find the highest numbers of Africans in the most important mining areas of the Andes and Colombia, as Vila Vilar stressed in the 1970s¹⁰⁶ (see Table 22).

Table 4: Slave population in Spanish American colonies in 1640 and 1650

Region / No. slaves per year	No. Slaves in 1640	No. Slaves in 1650
Andes' Region	147500	165000
Columbia	44000	60000
Mexico	80000	30000
America Central	27000	20000
Antilles	16000	-
Venezuela	12000	30000
Paraguay	-	10000
Total	327000	315000

Sources¹⁰⁷

Crops such as sugar, tobacco and some cotton were also grown in some areas of Spanish America, but the quantities produced were low and the exports to the international markets were insignificant. However, slaves were, of course, employed in these economic activities too.

The core of the Brazilian economy in the 17th century, in contrast, was the production of export crops. Sugar was the most important, though other crops such as tobacco were also grown in the colony.

The harvest of sugar cane and the production of sugar were very labour intensive, and demanded a high number of workers in a good physical condition. The previous experience of the Portuguese in the production of sugar on Madeira and São Tomé had showed that Africans were better suited for this heavy work than Europeans. In Brazil, the

¹⁰⁴ R. G. Keith, 'Encomienda, hacienda and corregimiento in Spanish America: A structural analysis', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 51/3 (Aug., 1971), pp. 431-446.

¹⁰⁵ Maria Guadalupe Chávez Carbajal, *Proprietarios y esclavos negros en Valladolid de Michoacán*, pp. 85-100.

¹⁰⁶ See also the most recent works such as: Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Aspectos sociales en America colonial*.

¹⁰⁷ Based on data published by Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamerica y el comercio de esclavos*, pp. 226-227.

Portuguese planters tried to use natives, but they soon realized that the indigenous population was not suitable for these tasks. On the plantations and in the sugar mills the slaves performed almost all the activities under the supervision of overseers. Hence, the sugar planters became the main buyers for slaves.

The sugar trade together with the establishment of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Central government of the Portuguese Crown stimulated the construction of urban centres such as Olinda, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. In these cities, slaves performed identical tasks to the ones mentioned earlier for the Spanish American urban centres.

The formation of cities and towns and the establishment of sugar plantations in the neighbouring areas generated a high demand for foodstuffs. Similar phenomena occurred in Europe and the European posts and settlements in West Africa. The system of supply of foodstuffs to the Brazilian cities, towns and plantations in the 17th century is not well known.

Port cities such as Olinda (via Recife), Salvador and Rio received some foodstuffs via the sea. However, these products were usually European commodities for the consumption of the wealthier settlers and the royal officials living in the colony. Olive oil, wheat flour and dried cod were among the most common food imports in Brazil during the 17th century.¹⁰⁸ The fresh products for daily consumption in the urban centres must have been produced locally in the neighbouring areas. However, the plantations were highly specialized units of production and therefore did not produce foodstuffs to feed the labour force, with the exception of maize.

Based on the examples from the literature regarding the development of mining and that of the Brazilian urban centres in the interior of the colony in the 18th century, it is likely that in the neighbouring areas of the main cities and towns, small farms for the production of foodstuffs and cattle breeding were established in order to feed the population of the urban centres. A similar practice existed in Portugal, the West African settlements and the Spanish Americas.¹⁰⁹ Slaves were certainly used in these activities.

Hence, slaves were used for identical activities in the Portuguese and the Spanish American colonies, excluding, of course, mining and the large-scale production of sugar.

¹⁰⁸ Leonor Freire Costa, *O transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil I*, pp. 276-290.

¹⁰⁹ Dick Geary, 'The Limited Impact of 1808 on Brazil', paper presented at the conference: *The Abolition of the Slave Trade: Long-term Consequences*, 30 June-2 July 2008, at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The different level of the demand for slave labour in the Portuguese and the Spanish American colonies must have been related to the dynamics of these two colonial economies.

On the one hand, we may argue that the different levels of slave consumption were caused by the different effects of European penetration on the demography of the indigenous population in these two sets of colonies. In Brazil there was no military conquest and the effect of the European diseases on the indigenous population was much less severe than in the Spanish American colonies.

On the other hand, the Spanish American economy based on mining activities and intensive agriculture for internal consumption seems to have been more dynamic than the Brazilian one, which was centred on the production of export crops, mainly sugar and the collection of dyewood to supply the external markets.

The different demand for slave labour by the Brazilian and the Spanish American colonial economies may also be caused by urban growth. The construction of sizeable Spanish American cities such as Cartagena could not be compared to the small Brazilian cities of Olinda and Salvador.¹¹⁰ This was not only true in terms of number and size of buildings, but also in terms of the number of inhabitants. The construction of these cities, their maintenance work as well as all the activities taking place in these urban centres generated different demands of labour force in general and slave labour in particular.

Another important aspect to consider is the populations living in these two groups of colonies, either of European, American or African descent. The numbers were proportionally higher in the Spanish American colonies. More people required the production of foodstuffs, and consequently more labour was needed to work the fields.

This evidence lead us to conclude that the development of the Spanish mining system in the Americas seems to have been the driving force behind the growth of the Portuguese shipping via West Africa between the 1580s and 1630s and the integration of this overseas area into the Portuguese Atlantic transport system. During this period, the Atlantic system integrated the European consumption markets for silver, sugar, gold and ivory, as

¹¹⁰ Manuel Lucena Giraldo, 'Empire of cities. Urban models in Spanish America' in L. Nilsson (ed.), *Urban Europe in comparative perspective* (Stockholm: Institute of Urban History, Stockholm University, 2006). CD-ROM; Stuart B. Schwartz, 'Cities of Empire: Mexico and Bahia in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, 11/4 (Oct., 1969), pp. 616-637. .

well as the African, Brazilian and Spanish-American supply markets of slave labour force, gold, ivory, sugar and silver bullion.

On the other hand, the establishment of the Dutch WIC in Brazil and West Africa and later in the Caribbean and the extension of the production of export-crops from Brazil to the Caribbean islands and North America, as well as the settlement of the English, the French and the Danish, were the key stimuli for the expansion of the plantation complex and for the integration of the European, the West African and the American markets of supply and consumption from the mid-17th century onwards.

To conclude, the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic system from the 1630s onwards is usually seen in the historiography as a consequence of the takeover of the Portuguese possessions of Brazil, Elmina and Angola by the Dutch WIC and of Dutch commercial competition in the Atlantic. However, the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa increased enormously when the Dutch traders started to compete in the same commercial circuits during the 1590s. On the other hand, the Portuguese Atlantic shipping system reached its climax when the WIC was already operating in the Southern Atlantic (see Graph 1). Besides, the argument that the Dutch takeover of Northeast Brazil in 1630 was one of the causes for the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic system also seems to be exaggerated, because as we have pointed out before, Brazil received only 7% of the Portuguese shipping via West Africa (see Graph 3). Therefore, the impact of the 'Dutch' traders operating from Amsterdam and Zealand and the establishment of the Dutch WIC cannot be seen as the main cause for the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic system in the 1640s and 1650s.

The explanation for such failure must be found elsewhere. Five events played a special role in the collapse of the Portuguese: i) the persecution of the Portuguese merchants in control of the inter-continental trade both in Iberia and the Americas by the Habsburg authorities; ii) the Portuguese Restoration in 1640, proclaiming Portugal's independence from Spain; iii) the loss of the Spanish *asiento* after 1640, which represented the loss of the major consumption markets of African slaves shipped by the Portuguese; iv) the Dutch takeover of Angola, which meant the loss of the major supply market of African goods and slaves, between 1641 and 1648; v) the expenditure on the war of independence against Spain in Europe and the naval and territorial conflicts overseas with the Dutch, especially in Brazil and Angola.

A comparison between the volume of Portuguese shipping via West Africa and the imports of silver bullion into Seville makes it clear that they are related. The decrease in imports of bullion is closely followed by a decline in the Portuguese shipping via the West Coast of Africa. Thus, from an economic point of view, the collapse of the Portuguese Atlantic shipping system seems to be connected with the ruin of the Spanish-American silver circuit to Seville.

On the other hand, the success of the Dutch in the Atlantic being attributable to the takeover of the Portuguese fortresses on the Gold Coast and in the North-eastern Brazilian captaincies also seem to be a myth. The establishment of the Dutch in Curaçao and Guiana was the key factor for the success of the Dutch shipping in the Atlantic in the second half of the 17th century.

Thus, the struggle between the Dutch Republic and Portugal for the control of the Southern Atlantic only ended when it became clear that the scramble for the supply and consumption markets in both the West Coast of Africa and the Americas was at an end. By the late 1650s, the Dutch WIC had made Elmina and the Gulf of Guinea its headquarters in West Africa; while the Portuguese Crown had recovered control over the settlements of São Tomé, and Angola. The latter became the most important market for the supply of slave labour force. In the Americas, the Portuguese had recovered their main supply market for sugar, but lost their privileged position as the main supplier of slave labour to the Spanish American colonies. The Dutch, on the other hand, lost Brazil, but had started to claim their share in the Caribbean export economy from the 1650s onwards and became the indirect suppliers of slave labour to the Spanish American colonies via Curaçao.

In order to succeed in these production areas the Dutch had to fight new competitors: the French, the English and the Danish. In the Gulf of Guinea the Dutch WIC had to face a similar situation, since these new competitors also wanted a share in the African markets to supply their American colonies with slave labour.

This struggle involved not only the various European States and State-sponsored companies, but also numerous private entrepreneurs and businessmen in the Republic, Portugal and other areas with investments in the Atlantic. They will be the main focus of the following Chapter.