



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

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

Ribeiro da Silva, F.I.

### **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)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13867>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

PART II:

WEST AFRICA IN

THE DUTCH AND THE PORTUGUESE ATLANTIC ECONOMIES



In the second part of this study we will examine the economic role of West Africa in the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic economies and the Atlantic system in general. However, to surmount some of the methodological concerns associated with the concept of ‘Atlantic system’, we will adopt a three-dimensional perspective. The standpoint of the European States and State-sponsored companies, the European businessmen and the settlers as well as the viewpoint of officials of the States/Companies serving in the different Atlantic posts and settlements will be taken into consideration in the analysis of the economic activities of these two empires and in their struggle for the control of the Atlantic economy.

Based on original evidence, this study aims to give a few contributions to the debates regarding the ‘Atlantic system’. Firstly, by examining the intra-continental trade in West Africa, Chapter 4 will exemplify how the coastal and hinterland commercial activities had a chief function in the formation of the Atlantic system and how the access to and the control over supply and consumption markets in Europe, Africa and the Americas were vital for the success or the failure of the Europeans in the Atlantic economy.

Secondly, Chapters 5 and 6 will point out that until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century the Atlantic was not divided in various systems or sub-systems. On the one hand, the borders of the Atlantic ‘national clusters’ such as the Dutch Atlantic or the Portuguese Atlantic were defined artificially by the European states and the State-sponsored companies. The settlers, the entrepreneurs, the businessmen and their agents operating in the Atlantic system often moved beyond these ‘national clusters’. The businesses and investments of these men encompassed multiple regions in the Atlantic, namely West Africa, Brazil, Spanish America (South and Central), the Caribbean and North America, traditionally classified as sub-systems within the Atlantic system.

Since the 1990s, the term ‘system’ has been recurrently used in the field of Atlantic History. The so-called ‘Atlantic system’ has been an important tool on studies of the Atlantic

Early Modern economy. This scholarship has stimulated an intense debate regarding the existence of the Atlantic system and its sub-division into several sub-systems.<sup>1</sup>

This discussion derived from the use of the 'system theory' imported from the Social Sciences and the different categories and classifications it implies. According to this methodological approach, there are at least two types of systems: open and closed systems. Within each category, one might identify different levels of openness and closeness. The use of the aforementioned categories led the scholars to divide the Atlantic system in various sub-systems using 'national' labels such as Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

This approach raised several problems. The first was, naturally, the definition of these 'national' clusters of the Atlantic. How can one define Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, English, etc, when the notion of nation-state was not yet defined? One could use elements like place of birth or residence, among others. However, given the high levels of mobility in the Early Modern Atlantic, especially in the coastal societies of Western Europe, West Africa and the Americas, they cannot be safely used. Can we classify the Sephardic Jews and the Southern Netherlands' merchants living in the Dutch Republic as 'Dutch'? Or how do we classify the businessmen living at the Court of the Habsburgs? According to their place of birth many of them were Portuguese, but regarding their place of residence, they might be labelled as Spanish! For the case of the Spanish and the Portuguese, recent scholarship is trying to overcome these problems by calling these merchants Iberian. However, they did not see themselves as such. In fact, the primary sources show the clear distinction they made between each other. The same is also true for the Dutch, the Flemish and the Sephardic Jews in the Dutch Republic.

A 'national' approach to the study of the Atlantic system and its sub-systems also created practical inconveniences regarding the delimitation of the borderlines of these 'sub-systems'. Which were the geographical boundaries of the so-called 'Dutch' sub-system or the

---

<sup>1</sup> Horst Pietschmann, 'Geschichte des atlantischen Systems, 1580-1830. Ein historischer Versuch zur Erklärung der 'Globalisierung' jenseits nationalgeschichtlicher Perspektiven' in *Berichte aus den Sitzungen der Joachim-Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften E. V. Hamburg*, 16/2 (1998); *idem*, 'Introduction: Atlantic History – History between European History and Global History' in *idem* (Hrsg.), *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System: 1580-1830* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance: Stanley J. Stein & Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), especially Chapter 1; P. C. Emmer, 'The Dutch and the marking of the second Atlantic system' in Barbara L. Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 75-96; *idem*, 'In Search of a System: The Atlantic Economy, 1500-1800' in Horst Pietschmann (Hrsg.), *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System: 1580-1830* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 169-178.

'Portuguese' sub-system? And how can these boundaries be defined? Which criteria should one use? Different criteria will reveal distinct borderlines.

In the Dutch case, for example, if we adopt the commercial routes and networks of the businessmen operating from the Dutch Republic, the so-called 'Dutch' sub-system included not only the WIC possessions in the Atlantic, but also various other areas where these merchants had business, including the Portuguese and the Spanish Atlantic Empires, which are usually classified as separate sub-systems. In contrast, if the criterion would be the jurisdiction of the Company over the Atlantic, the 'Dutch' sub-system should be limited to the possessions of the WIC. Furthermore, if we consider that the category of 'Dutch' merchants is artificial since it encompasses several groups of foreign traders, how Dutch was then the 'Dutch' sub-system.

The definition of the geographical borders of the so-called 'Atlantic system' and its sub-systems raised another set of questions concerning the role of marginal or peripheral areas. From an economic point of view, several scholars have argued that the Atlantic system only encompassed a small number of coastal regions in Western Europe, West Africa and the Americas, a reduced number of economic activities and a limited quantity and type of commodities. However, in Europe, West Africa and in the Americas, the Atlantic system mobilized people and goods that were not located/produced in the coastal areas. In many cases, they came from or were brought from the hinterland at many kilometres or miles distance from the coast. For example, a significant number of the labour migrants recruited by the WIC were not from the Netherlands or from the coastal areas. The African slaves transported to the New World also came from distant regions into the African continent. The same is also true for products. The African gold and the American precious metals and stones and even sometimes the cash-crops were not often available in the coastal areas. They travelled several miles inland before reaching the coast and being loaded into the European vessels. The production and the transport of people and commodities generated local economic activities in the different Atlantic posts and settlements like cattle breeding, textile manufacturing, subsistence agriculture, construction building, shipbuilding, etc. These activities are not often taking into account when describing the Atlantic system, since most of the studies argue that the basis of the system was just mining extraction and cash-crops production. However, without the abovementioned activities the latter would not have been

successfully accomplished. Obviously, the role of hinterland and intra-continental trades in the Atlantic system has been neglected by the historiography.

On the other hand, the division of the Atlantic World and the Atlantic system in 'national' clusters and sub-systems has shown its limitations concerning the study of the relationship between the different groups of people and their mother countries. By giving a 'national' label to the different groups of people operating in the Atlantic system, scholars have initially presumed that due to their 'nationality' these men and women would have a certain level of loyalty towards their homelands. Whenever this was not the case, their practises were often classified as 'corruption'.

The use of this concept raises multiple questions: how do we define corruption and why? By using the term 'corruption' scholars were often taking the side of the mother countries and the central institutions of Early Modern Europe, who have classified certain behaviour as 'corruptive'. For example, whenever the activities of the businessmen from the Republic and Portugal affected the monopolies imposed by the WIC and the Portuguese Crown, this behaviour was classified by the latter as corruptive, while in the eyes of the merchants, they were just safeguarding their commercial and financial activities. For similar reasons, these merchants often chose their partners regardless of their 'nationality', but based on their ability to generate profit, success and growth of the business. Despite the conflicts between the Dutch and the Portuguese states, we will easily find Portuguese, Flemish and Dutch businessmen engaged in commercial and financial partnerships.

Identical troubles might be found when analysing the relationship between the settlers in the various Atlantic posts and settlements and the mother countries. In spite of the fact that they came from the same country or region, settlers showed a low level of loyalty towards the homeland and the policies of the States or the State-sponsored organizations. Given the hostile environment they lived in as well as the distance between the overseas posts and settlements and the mother country, the settlers' main priority was to guarantee their survival either at the simplest level by assuring the supply of basic foodstuff or at a more complex level by protecting the interests of their economic activities on a local, regional and international scale. For example, to guarantee an intermediary role in the West African-Atlantic trade, the settlers of Cape Verde strongly opposed the decisions of the Portuguese Crown to grant direct access to the coastal areas of Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau region to the businessmen from the Kingdom in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Similar forms of settlers' resistance towards the decisions of the European States and the State-sponsored companies can be found in other Portuguese settlements as well as in the Dutch commercial posts in West Africa and other Atlantic areas.

To overcome the various methodological problems of this 'national' approach in the study of the Atlantic system and sub-systems, in recent years several scholars adopted the concept of 'networks', the distinction between open and close networks as well as the hierarchical relations between nodal points in these networks.<sup>3</sup>

This approach has favoured a trans-national or supra-national analysis. Most of these studies focus mainly on the relationship between the networks built by groups of merchants and settlers in the defence of their interests often against the policies of the mother countries. Therefore, the vertical relations between different points of the networks have received prime attention.

In contrast, the direct relationship between Atlantic regions and groups of people in the periphery, which often excluded the interests of the centre, has been disregarded. Only recently, historians have paid attention to these direct interactions between different colonial areas such as the intra-Caribbean connections or the commercial axis linking Brazil to Angola, which acquired a key function on the economic growth of the settlements during the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For example, in the Portuguese Atlantic Empire the direct commerce between Brazil and Angola acquired a chief role comparatively to the connections between these areas and Portugal.

The study of these direct contacts brought to light the autonomous behaviour adopted by the settlements over time towards the mother countries and exposed the conflict of interests between the rulers of the European States, the State-sponsored companies, the settlers and even the officials of the States or the companies serving in the various Atlantic colonial areas. These parties played a key role in the formation of the Atlantic system. However, given their different goals and strategies, they conceived and perceived the Atlantic World in different ways. Often their interests opposed and their means of action showed the priority given to the defence of the aims of the group and the reduce loyalty towards the policies of the mother countries.

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: Claudia Schnurman, 'Atlantic Trade and Regional Identities: The Creation of Surpanational Atlantic Systems in the 17<sup>th</sup> century' in Horst Pietschmann (Hrsg.), *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System: 1580-1830* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 179-198; *idem*, *Atlantische Welten. Engländer und Niederländer im amerikanischen atlantischen Raum 1648-1713* (Köln: Böhlau, 1998).



In the following chapters, we will look at the interests and strategies of these three parties in the West African trade and the Atlantic economy in general.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SAILING IN AFRICAN WATERS: COASTAL AREAS AND HINTERLAND

The West African intra-continental trade was crucial for the long-distance trade conducted by the Dutch and the Portuguese between this continent, the Americas and Europe.

The areas of West Africa where the Dutch and the Portuguese developed their coastal circuits were more or less the same. Both coastal circuits changed over time in order to reduce time and costs of the long-distance routes and consequently make them more efficient and competitive. In the Portuguese case, such evolution caused the collapse of some coastal trading circuits, while in the Dutch case the coastal routes were separated from the long-distance circuits.

However, the organization and the goals of the coastal circuits were different. For the Dutch, the coastal routes were mainly regarded as a way to obtain African goods for the international markets. Only after the establishment of the WIC did the coastal trade increased in order to guarantee the supply of the Dutch posts on the African coast. In the Portuguese case, the development was inverse; the coastal circuits, the waterways and land routes in the Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau regions, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Angola were created to supply the posts and settlements and promote their development. In addition, they were used to obtain profits from the African coastal trade and to supply the inter-continental circuits.

In the following pages we will examine these differences and emphasize the key role of the intra-continental trade in the success of the Dutch and the Portuguese in the Atlantic system and its impact on their survival in West Africa.

### 1. Routes

In order to supply the inter-continental trade circuits and to guarantee the survival of the people based at the West African posts and settlements, the Dutch and the Portuguese

developed various coastal routes along the West Coast of Africa. These coastal circuits were implemented more or less in the same areas of West Africa, i.e. Cape Verde, Senegambia, the Gulf of Guinea and the West-Central Africa, since the products these areas had to offer were in high demand in Europe as well as in the Americas.

These intra-continental routes were organized differently and changed in order to better achieve their goals throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The coastal commercial circuits developed by the merchants from the Republic were not efficiently articulated with the inter-continental routes and completely fixed until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The ships freighted in the Dutch ports to conduct trade between the Republic and West Africa were the same that carried out the coastal trade in a system of port-to-port commerce. These ships or fleets followed several coastal routes such as: a) the Cape Verde and Senegambia circuits; b) the Gulf of Guinea circuits; and c) the West-Central Africa circuits. Each of these coastal circuits included several routes.

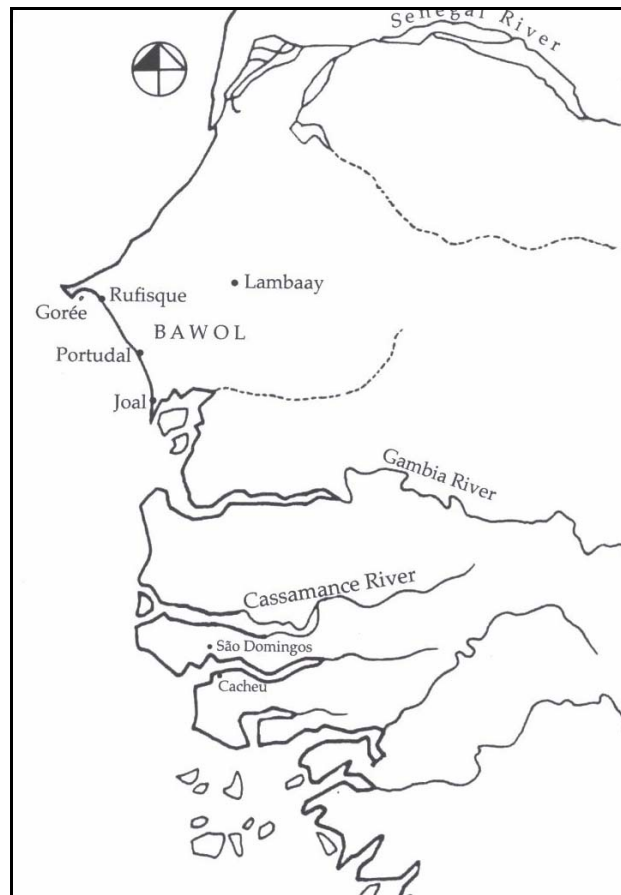
The Cape Verde and Senegambia regions comprised the routes between the island of Gorée, the Petite Côte of Senegal and the Cape Verde islands (see Maps 1 and 4). For example, a vessel operating in the route Republic–Cape Verde would approach the coast at the latitude of Gorée. From there on the ship would proceed further south sailing port-to-port along the Petite Côte and stopping at places such as Portudal, Rufisque, and Joal. For instance, the ship *Roode Hart*, freighted by Elias Trip<sup>4</sup> for a trading voyage between Holland and Cape Verde, departed from Dordrecht in November 1605 under the command of Paulus Theunissen of Rotterdam. Once the Cape Verde was in sight the vessel approached the island of Gorée and from this point onwards started to navigate port-to-port in order to trade along the shore with the local people. The vessel conducted trade in Gorée, Portudal, Rufisque and Joal.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> All names of merchants quoted throughout the book were made uniform.

<sup>5</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 23-42. See also, as examples: GAA, NA 117/22: 1609-09-19; 62/217v: 1610-01-14; 253/476v: 1612-04-13.

Map 1: The Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau regions



Source<sup>6</sup>

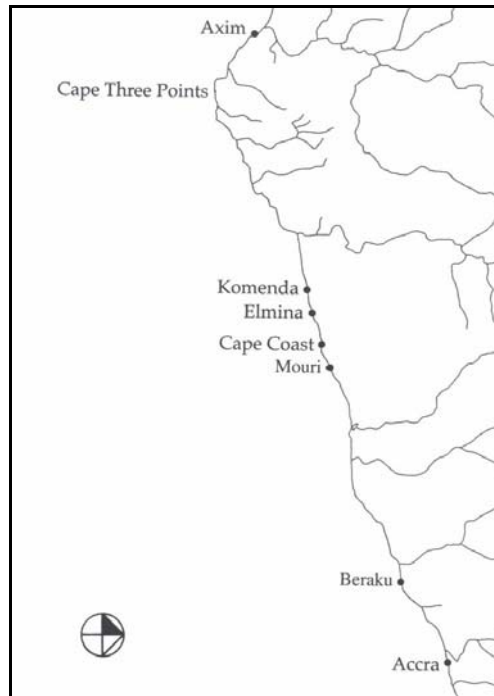
The Gulf of Guinea circuits encompassed all the routes in the areas between the Grain Coast and Cape Lopez. A commercial trip to the Gold Coast would also approach the continent at the latitude of Cape Verde, and there start the port-to-port navigation, anchoring at Komenda, Cape Coast, Accra, Ardra, Lagos River, Benin, Cameroon, Corisco Bay and Cape Lopez (see Maps 2 and 3). For example, Captain Cornelius Hansen, skipper of two vessels in the service of the Amsterdam-based Guinea Company, departed from Amsterdam in 1603 to ‘Guinea on the Gold Coast’ and began his port-to-port trade in Cape Verde continuing trading along the coast until he reached Cape Lopez, at the extreme southeast of the Gulf of Guinea. In its way towards the south, this vessel anchored at several

---

<sup>6</sup> J. de La Fleur, *Pieter van den Broecke’s journal*, p. 120.

places along the coast, such as at Komenda, Cape Coast, Accra, Ardra, Lagos (River), Benin, Cameroon, Corisco Bay and Cape Lopez.<sup>7</sup>

Map 2: The Gold Coast



Source<sup>8</sup>

As the traders from the Republic became more acquainted with the Gulf of Guinea, other places were also visited, such as Cape Mount, the Sess River, Axim, Mori, Kormantin, Rio del Rey and Gabon. For instance, the ship *De Weisse Hund*, which departed from Texel on March 1614 to the Gulf of Guinea, started its coastal trading circuit at the Ivory Coast and from there kept sailing along the coast trading with the Africans at Cape Mount, the Sess River, Axim, Komenda, Mori, Kormantin, Accra, Benin, Cameroon, Corisco Bay, Rio del Rey, Gabon, Ollibatta and Cape Lopez.<sup>9</sup>

The West-Central Africa circuits covered the areas between Cape Lopez and the north of present-day Angola. Most of the ships destined to the Loango Coast (present-day

---

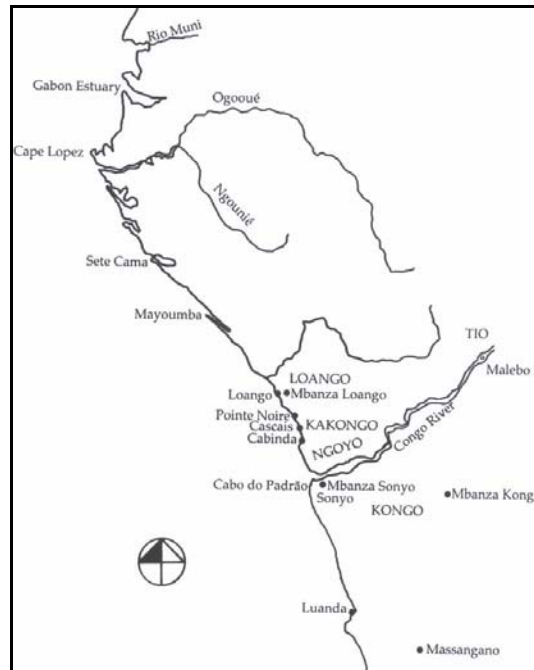
<sup>7</sup> 'Andreas Josua Ulsheimer's voyage of 1603-4' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 18-42. See also, as examples: GAA, NA 747/160-165: 1621-06-25; 1364/51v: 1661-04-16; 2299 I/30: 1670-02-10.

<sup>8</sup> J. de La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German Sources*, pp. 64-78.

Congo - Brazzaville) and the Congo River only approached the coast at the latitude of Cape Lopez; there they would start navigating from port to port southwards calling at Mayumba (present-day Gabon), Loango, Congo River, Cabinda (present-day Angola) and Padron (see Map 3).

Map 3: The West-Central Africa



Source<sup>10</sup>

For example, 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, only came close to the West African Coast at Cape Lopez to start following the coastal trading circuit stopping at Mayumba, Loango, Congo River, Cabinda and Padron.<sup>11</sup>

The Dutch coastal circuits were not exclusively used by fleets destined for these three areas. For instance, the ships travelling to West-Central Africa could also approach the coast at the latitude of the Cape Verde Archipelago and call at one of the islands (usually the least populated, i.e. Maio, Sal, Santo Antão or São Vicente) to provision the ships with

<sup>10</sup> J. de La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 83-102. See also, as example: GAA, NA 376/114-115: 1613-03-06; 201/137: 1622-07-10.

foodstuffs, fresh water and firewood, before they started their coastal circuits from Cape Lopez further south. For example, the ship *Meermann* under the command of the skipper Jan Pieterssen departed from Texel in December 1611 for Angola, called at the Cape Verde islands of Sal, Maio and Brava and only at the latitude of Mayumba began its coastal circuit.<sup>12</sup>

The same voyage could include several coastal circuits. Some commercial trips to Angola included two coastal circuits: a first tour of the Petite Côte of Senegal and a second of the West-Central African route. For instance, the ship *Mauritius Nassau*, departing from Texel on September 1609 under the command of master/skipper Pieter Cornelissen Mannis followed the aforementioned route: after calling at the ports of Dover and Falmouth the vessel sailed towards the Petite Côte, stopping at Rufisque and Portudal, sailed again on open waters towards Cape Lopez, and there commenced its second coastal circuit conducting trade with the Africans in Mayumba, Loango, Congo River and Cacongo (present-day Angola, Cabinda enclave).<sup>13</sup>

The trips to the Gold Coast could also approach the continent more than once to conduct port-to-port trade. The first coastal circuit would start at the latitude of Cape Blanco or Cape Verde and call at the ports of the Petite Côte, while a second coastal circuit would begin at Cape Palmas and end at Cape Lopez. On the way, the vessels would stop at places like Cape Appolonia, Cape Three Points, Komenda, and Cape Coast. From Cape Lopez they could start a third coastal circuit anchoring at Loango, the Congo River and other places. This route was followed for instance by the ship *Neptunnis*, which departed from Texel on November 1607 under the command of Master Aris Janssen from Schans. At Cape Blanco the vessel approached the coast and conducted trade at Rufisque and Portudal; from here the crew set sail towards the south coming closer to the coast at the latitude of Cape Palmas, and thereafter sailed in cabotage, anchoring at the roadsteads of Cape Appolonia, Cape Three Points, Komenda, Cape Coast, Cape Lopez, Loango, and the Congo River.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the limited quantity of products traded at each port of call, at the end of the coastal circuits the merchants often ended up with products left over from the original load brought from Europe. Therefore, sometimes, the fleets circulated more than once on the

---

<sup>12</sup> 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 46-63; See also, as example: GAA, NA 950/406/409: 1636-08-27.

<sup>13</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 69-81.

<sup>14</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 43-67. See also, as example: GAA, NA 138/7: 1614-09-04.

same route. For example, in the Gulf of Guinea, after conducting trade along the Grain, Ivory, Gold and Slave Coasts and after reaching Cape Lopez, the ships would set sail again to Cape Mount and re-start navigating port-to-port at the Grain Coast, stopping at the Sess River, Cape Palmas, and Mori. For example, the aforementioned ship *De Weisse Hund*, after conducting trade along the various coasts of the Gulf of Guinea, starting at the Grain Coast and ending at Cape Lopez sailed again to Cape Mount and recommenced port-to-port trade until the crew reached Mori.<sup>15</sup> This evidence tells us much about the controlling role of the African dealers over the hinterland supply markets and coastal transactions.

The multiple coastal circuits had an exclusive function: to acquire or purchase African products in order to supply the consumption markets in Northern Europe. During these early years, the 'Dutch' merchants also traded in slaves.<sup>16</sup> The few cargoes of slaves for this period were shipped to the Portuguese and the Spanish American colonies in the Caribbean islands and Central American mainland. However, the number of slaves transported was low and, therefore, this commerce did not stimulate the opening of very specialized routes, at least not before the 1630s.<sup>17</sup>

Combining long-distance routes and coastal circuits was a common practice among 'Dutch' traders in the Atlantic. They applied the expertise acquired in the 'mother trade' in the Baltic as well as in the Mediterranean trade in developing their West African commerce. However, in West Africa, timing became of the essence and therefore a major logistic problem. A journey combining long-distance and coastal circuits could last up to 27 months, increasing the costs of wages, victuals and insurance, and reducing or postponing the return-profit (see Table 17).<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>16</sup> The mercantile elite of the Dutch Republic included not only Dutchmen, but also foreigners, such as Flemish, German, and Sephardim merchants. However, for convenience, we will refer to them as 'Dutch' merchants or traders.

<sup>17</sup> Johannes Postma, 'A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade' in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce. Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 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.

<sup>18</sup> D. C. North, *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).



Table 1: Length of the voyages of Dutch ships operating in the West African trading routes: some examples

Departure	Arrival	Nr. months	Ship	Route
11-1600	03-1602	17	...	Amsterdam – Cape Verde* – Guinea**
11-1605	10-1606	12	<i>Roode Hart</i>	Amsterdam – Cape Verde*
11-1607	06-1609	20	<i>Neptunnis</i>	Amsterdam – Cape Verde* – Guinea** – Angola***
09-1609	07-1611	23	<i>Mauritius Nassau</i>	Amsterdam – Angola***
10-1611	10-1612	13	<i>Son</i>	Amsterdam – Angola***
12-1611	09-1613	22	<i>Meermann</i>	Amsterdam – Angola***
03-1614	05-1616	27	<i>Weisse Hund</i>	Amsterdam – Guinea**

Sources and Observations<sup>19</sup>

To overcome the problem posed by the length of the voyages to Africa, the ‘Dutch’ trading companies needed to artificially split the inter- and intra-continental routes. To achieve this they used different strategies. The companies recruited factors or merchants as their permanent representatives in different coastal areas of West Africa for terms lasting from one to three years. This practice was implemented in the Petite Côte of Senegal, Cape Mount, Loango and Soyo (present-day Angola, near the effluent of the Zaire River). Here, several factors of the trading companies had small lodges or cottages where they lived and traded. For instance, in his second voyage to the West Coast of Africa, Van den Broecke met Hans de Haese (or De Hase) at Portudal, who had a contract to live and trade there for a three-year period. In the Loango Coast, for example, Van den Broecke went to ‘the house of the factor Jacques van der Voorde, who had come here [Loango] with a barque [probably the *Mercurius*] and traded on account of two different companies.’<sup>20</sup> Usually they were also equipped with a small sloop<sup>21</sup> of 12 *last*<sup>22</sup> to sail along the rivers and collect products from the surrounding villages.

In addition, the companies also kept floating trading posts on the coast, so-called *leggers*, where the factors and assistants lived and traded with the Africans. These small yachts or barges with a capacity of 20 *last* would stay anchored on the coast for a certain period of

<sup>19</sup> Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description and historical account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)* (Oxford: The British Academy, Oxford University Press, 1987); J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*; ‘Samuel Brun’s voyages of 1611-20’ in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 44-96. Observations: \* Cape Verde = Petite Côte of Senegal; \*\* Guinea = Grain, Ivory, and Gold Coasts; \*\*\* Angola = Loango Coast, Congo River and Soyo.

<sup>20</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 47 & 74. See also, as examples: GAA, NA 151/207v: 1618-04-04; 215/107: 1620-02-18; 836/17e reg.: 1632-10-08.

<sup>21</sup> Sloop (translation from the Dutch *sloop*). In this context it refers to barges: ships especially designed to navigate in rivers, canals and shallows waters.

<sup>22</sup> *Last* = 2.000 kilograms.

time, which could last from a few weeks to a year or longer. For instance, in 1612, when the chief factor Pieter van den Broecke reached the Loango Coast, he met the junior factor Adam Vermeulen who has been trading near Loango for 13 months. Vermeulen had arrived in Loango on 18 February 1611, aboard the barque *Mercurius* under the command of Master Gerrit Dirckxssen Os and the senior factors Jacques van der Voorde and Jacop Segerssen. At the time of Van den Broecke's arrival the barque *Mercurius* was trading in the Congo River, and was later sent to Benin, Gabon and the Corisco Bay. In 1612, the merchant Gerret Veen sent another yacht from Holland, *De Maen*, to be used in the coastal trade by the factor Joost Gerretssen Lijnbaen under the command of the chief factor Pieter van den Broecke.<sup>23</sup> This practice gave the commercial firms the chance to stockpile African products that could be later loaded on board of the main ships operating in the inter-continental circuits.

Furthermore, the companies tried to reduce the time spent on the African coast of their main fleets and to improve the coordination between the intra- and the inter-continental routes. To accomplish this, the companies used two main strategies. The ships departing from the Republic carried on board one or two prefabricated sloops that could be assembled and equipped with muskets and heavy guns at Cape Verde or Cape Lopez. These small vessels were used to trade in the shallow waters along the coast and the estuaries of the rivers as well as to go ashore in order to get fresh provisions for the larger ships. For example, in 1603, the two vessels in the service of the Guinea Company, which had departed from Amsterdam to Cape Verde and the Gulf of Guinea, carried on board a prefabricated sloop which was put together near Cape Verde [on the continent].<sup>24</sup>

The trade conducted by these sloops was coordinated with that of the main vessels. In fact, the articulation between the larger and the smaller ships was essential for the success of the commercial trips. In general, the larger vessels would stay anchored trading at the most important ports, while the junior factors would be sent on board the sloops to conduct trade and collect merchandise further along the coast. These sloops would conduct trade until the arrival of the larger ships or until they had bartered all of their goods. For instance, on the Gold Coast, the main vessel would anchor at Cape Coast or Mori, while the sloops

---

<sup>23</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 79 & 88-89.

<sup>24</sup> 'Andreas Josua Ulsheimer's voyage of 1603-4' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, p. 20. As early as 1602 Pieter de Marees had mentioned the use of sloops in the coastal circuits of the West African coast. Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description*, pp. 8 & 10.

would be sent further east to places like Accra and Benin. After these journeys the small vessels would return to Mori, to load the products onto the larger ship.

In the Loango Coast and the Congo River, the scheme was even more complex. Once the main vessel had reached Cape Lopez, a smaller yacht included in the fleet or a sloop would be sent immediately to Loango to conduct trade there until the arrival of the main ship. Meanwhile, the larger vessel would travel to Loango; there the goods purchased by the lighter vessels would be loaded. The main ship would anchor there for a few weeks trading, while the yachts and the sloops would be once again sent further south to the Congo River. The goods purchased would be later collected by the main ship. Pieter van den Broecke gives us a glimpse of this complex scheme to coordinate the coastal trade carried out along the coast by the larger and the smaller ships on the service of the same trading company in some passages of his journal.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the merchants in the Republic instructed their chief factors to place the factors and junior factors on shore with merchandise to conduct trade for a certain number of weeks or months. To stay on shore, the traders rented a house from an African, where the factor or junior factor and his helper could live and store the merchandise used as barter for African goods as well as the products bought until the arrival of the main fleet and of the sloops and the yachts employed in the coastal trade. For example, Pieter van den Broecke, on his first voyage to Cape Verde (1605-1606), was placed ashore in Portudal with the constable Jan Pieterssen van Sweden to trade from a house rented from an African woman for a period of five months. He was dropped there on 20 January 1606 and collected on 6 June; while on his fourth voyage to Loango and Kongo as chief-merchant, Van den Broecke placed the junior factor Marten van Colck ashore in Mayumba to live and trade there as from 18 February 1612. The factor was left in West Africa while Pieter van den Broecke returned to Holland on board *de Son* in the same year.<sup>26</sup>

The 'Dutch' trading companies also tried to control the departures of their fleets from the Republic and West Africa in order to ensure a permanent presence of their representatives on the coast and to guarantee a regular supply of African goods to the consumption markets in Northern Europe. For instance, between November 1607 and June 1609, the company for whom Pieter van den Broecke worked managed to send several ships

---

<sup>25</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 87-91.

<sup>26</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 28 & 88.

in order to trade along the Loango Coast and in the Gulf of Guinea: the yacht *Merminne* and the ships *Neptunnis* and *Merman*. On 22 April 1608 when the *Neptunnis* arrived in the Loango Coast the yacht *Merminne* had already been trading there for quite some time: both completed their return cargoes within a few months and returned in convoy to the Republic. However, the ship *Merman* remained on the coast trading. In 1609-1611, when Pieter van den Broecke returned for the third time to West Africa another two barques named *Mauritius* and *Mercurius*, were trading at Cacongo. The former was freighted by the same trading company and the latter was from Amsterdam. When Pieter van den Broecke returned to the Loango Coast in 1611-1612 he met the barque *Mercurius* in the Congo River and during his stay another vessel sent by the same company reached the coast: the yacht the *Maen* with factor Joost Gerretssen Lijnbaen on board.<sup>27</sup>

These were techniques also used in the European routes by the Dutch. Their adaptation to the West African trade was based on the knowledge of the Portuguese experience gained by direct observation in the West Coast of Africa or via the Portuguese Sephardic Jews established in Amsterdam, who were deeply involved in the commerce with these regions.

These strategies implemented by the 'Dutch' merchants were quite successful in the areas where the Portuguese did not have a military presence, such as on the Petite Côte of Senegal, Cape Mount, Loango and Soyo. However, on the Grain, Ivory, Gold and Slave Coasts, they had to face the commercial competition and the military presence of the Portuguese fortified factories and that of the traders and colonists of São Tomé. Even after building Fort Nassau at Mori, 'Dutch' merchants still had to fight the opposition of the Portuguese. Therefore, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, some 'Dutch' traders argued that if they would have permanent trading posts, lodges and forts along the coast of West Africa allowing them to conduct coastal trade they could generate much higher profits, by organizing the coastal trade separately from the long-distance routes, and thus reducing the time consumed in voyages. Pieter de Marees, in his *Description* dating from 1602, already argued that 'nowadays Dutch ships take at least ten, twelve or even eighteen months [on the voyages to West Africa] and often have to spend as much time trading there on the Coast as the Portuguese used to need for their entire voyages (thither and back). This is because the Dutch do not have any Houses or Castles where they can unload their merchandise there, as

---

<sup>27</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 53, 76, 79 & 91.

the Portuguese did and still do. He also advocated that 'if the Dutch had the Castle d'Mina in their power, they would be as powerful Masters there and have even greater authority in the Country than the Portuguese ever had.'<sup>28</sup> Similar arguments would be used to support the establishment of the WIC in 1621-1624.

However, the establishment of the WIC did not bring about major changes in the organization of the Dutch coastal circuits. In the areas where the private commercial companies had permanent trading posts and where the coastal circuits were autonomous from the long-distance routes, such as the Petite Côte of Senegal, Cape Mount, Loango and Soyo, the newly founded WIC adopted the commercial organization already in place, keeping the trading posts and factories used by the private companies. In the Gulf of Guinea, the Company only managed to split the coastal and the long-distance circuits after the takeover of the Portuguese possessions on the Gold Coast in the late 1630s and early 1640s. For example, between 1645 and 1647, the Company held four forts at Nassau, Elmina, Axim and Shama; four lodges at Cape Coast, Komenda, Accra and Arbo; a warehouse at Ardra; two trading posts at Cape Appolonia and Cape Mount and two floating trading posts – *leggers* – anchored at the roadsteads of the Kormentin and the Calabar River.<sup>29</sup> Here, the WIC implemented a system identical to the one described earlier for the private trading companies. The goods purchased at the several forts, lodges, warehouses and floating trading posts were to be sent regularly to Elmina.

In this coastal trade the Company used canoes, sloops and small yachts. In order to transport the products and the correspondence and the passengers between the different posts a few small yachts were used. In the 1640s, the WIC had four yachts permanently stationed at Elmina for this purpose. The three larger yachts were used for the transport of products between Elmina and the different posts and for conducting trade in the mouth of the rivers on the Slave Coast, while the smaller yacht was mainly used to carry firewood and water. A journey along the Company forts, lodges and entrepôts in the Gulf of Guinea would take between two and three months. Usually, these voyages took place during the dry season.<sup>30</sup>

In São Tomé and Angola, the Company took over the commercial routes that had been in use by the Portuguese since the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively. In São Tomé,

---

<sup>28</sup> Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description*, pp. 213-214 & 216.

<sup>29</sup> Klaas Ratelband (ed.), *Vijf dagregisters*, pp. Lvii-xci.

<sup>30</sup> Klaas Ratelband (ed.), *Vijf dagregisters*, pp. lvii-cx.

the Company employees partly took control of the circuits linking the island with the Slave Coast and the bights of Benin and Biafra, while in Angola the WIC took over the coastal circuits linking Luanda with Loango and Pinda in the north and the port of Benguela in the south. However, the Company was never able to control the river and land routes connecting the coast to the hinterland, where the most important fairs took place, as we will show in the following pages.<sup>31</sup>

To sum up, the major change brought about by the WIC concerned the functions of the coastal circuits. Although their main function was still the stockpiling of products for the European markets, they also started to cater to the demands of the American colonies and meet the needs of the WIC settlements in West Africa. As we have seen earlier, after the 1590s the 'Dutch' merchants (and later the WIC) made multiple efforts to separate the intra- and inter-continental routes in order to reduce the transportation costs and therefore transactions costs. However, the Dutch coastal routes only became autonomous from the long-distance routes by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. This separation was reached during the rule of the WIC by appropriation of the coastal circuits used by the Dutch private trading companies along the Petite Côte of Senegal, the Grain, Ivory, Gold and Slave Coasts, Loango and Soyo. The same happened when the Company took control of the Portuguese coastal routes in the Gulf of Guinea linking the São Tomé islands to the Slave and Gold Coast and along the Angolan Coast connecting Luanda to Loango, Soyo, Kongo and Benguela. Despite the growing complexity of the Dutch coastal routes, these circuits remained means of obtaining those African goods that were in demand in the international consumption markets. Only over time would the coastal trade be regarded by the WIC as profitable in its own right and as a way to fulfil the needs of the Company posts in West Africa.

The Portuguese also used port-to-port navigation on their first journeys to West Africa.<sup>32</sup> However, since the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the intra-continental circuits were separated

---

<sup>31</sup> Louis Jadin (ed.), *L'Ancien Congo et l'Angola*, I-III.

<sup>32</sup> The main destinations of the Portuguese vessels engaged in this cabotage trade during the second half of the fifteenth century were the Grain, the Ivory, the Gold, and the Slave Coasts. Usually, these ships anchored at Axim, Shama, the village of Torto Akataky, Aldeia das Duas Parte (present-day Elmina), Cape Coast, Mori, Kormantin, Accra, and the Volta River. In fact, the Dutch visited the same sites in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. J. Bato'Ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, 'A instalação de fortalezas na costa Africana: Os casos de Arguim e da Mina: Comércio e contactos culturais' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo* II, pp. 137-149;

from the inter-continental routes. This division came about due to the length of the voyages, the high investment required and the delay in obtaining profits, as was the case with the Dutch.

Between the late 15<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese used three different coastal routes alone: a) Cape Verde and Senegambia; b) Gulf of Guinea; and c) West-Central Africa. In the following pages we will analysed separately each of these routes .

The Cape Verde and Senegambia circuits included the Cape Verdean intra-insular routes, the connections between this Archipelago and Senegambia and the port-to-port trade along the coast of Senegambia.

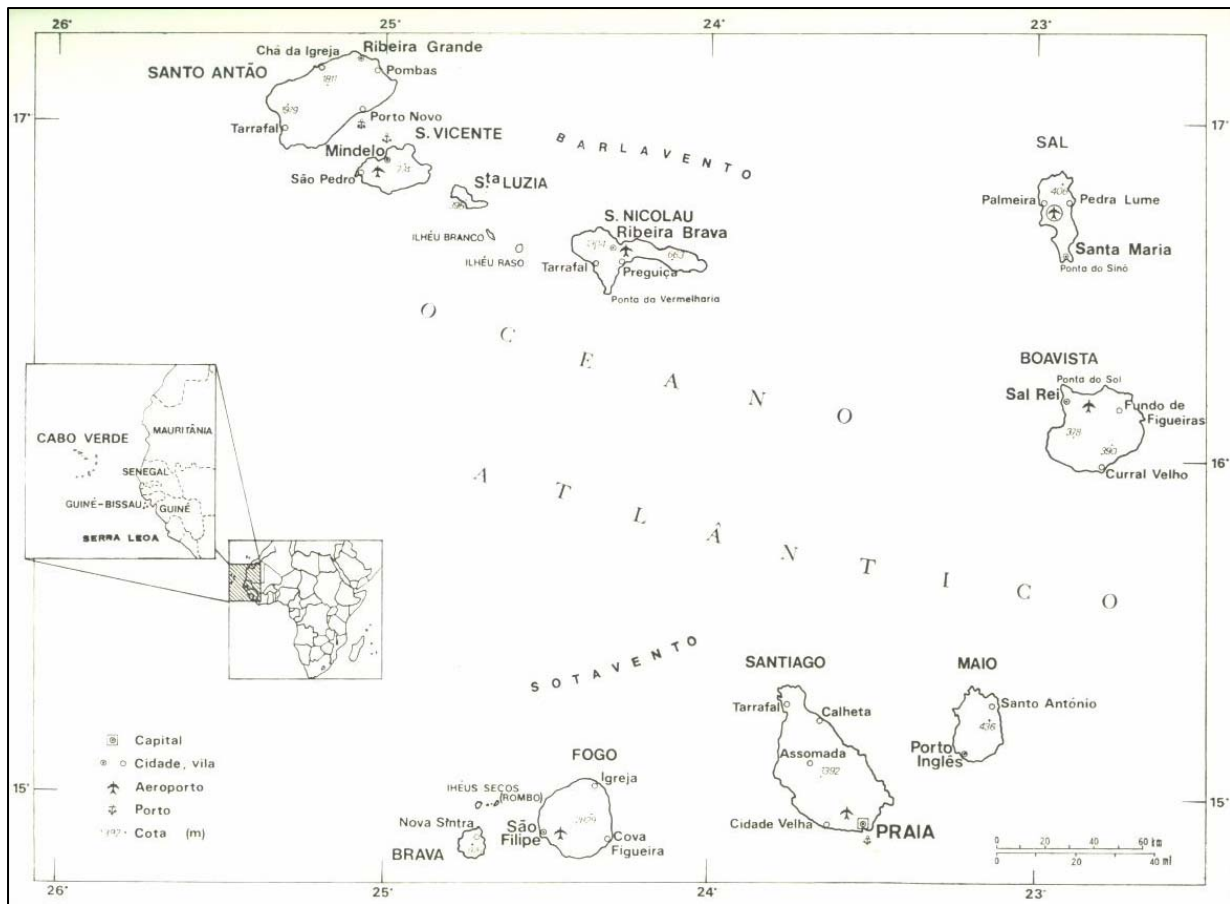
The Cape Verdean islands had a very particular economic standing. Some islands like Santiago and Fogo were more suitable for agriculture, while others such as Maio and Sal were more adequate for cattle breeding and salt production (see Map 4). Therefore, from the early times of settlement several intra-insular commercial circuits were developed by the settlers in order to collect the various goods produced in the different islands. The two most important intra-insular routes were: a) Santiago–Fogo–Santiago and b) Santiago–Maio or Sal– Santiago. These circuits had three main functions, namely to purchase goods for the daily supply of the islands and to trade with the coast of Senegambia, as well as to supply products for the long-distance circuits connecting the Archipelago with Portugal and Spain. Thus, the Cape Verdean intra-insular routes had an important role in the supply of the regional circuits linking the Archipelago to Senegambia, and on the inter-continental routes connecting the islands with Europe and the Americas.<sup>33</sup>

---

*idem*, 'Os entrepostos móveis e as relações com os povos circunvizinhos' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo* II, pp. 99-111; Jill Dias, 'As primeiras penetrações portuguesas em África' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo* I, pp. 281-289; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, chapters 3 & 9; Marília Lopes, 'A exploração económica da Guiné e de Cabo Verde nos séculos XV e XVI' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo* I, pp. 250-263.

<sup>33</sup> Maria Manuel Ferraz Torrão, '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*, 'Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento' in Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* II, pp. 17-123; *idem*, 'Actividade comercial externa de Cabo Verde: Organização, funcionamento, evolução', Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* I, pp. 237-345; *idem*, 'Colonização de Cabo Verde: meios e objectivos' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo* II, pp. 150-170.

Map 4: The Cape Verde Archipelago



Source<sup>34</sup>

In order to promote the economic development of the islands, the Crown granted the settlers trading privileges for the African coast. After that, the Portuguese merchants, the colonists and the *contratadores* of royal monopolies were the only ones allowed to trade with Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau region. However, the *contratadores* were forced by law to dispatch the ships for the long-distance routes from the island of Santiago. Therefore, by controlling the trade between the Archipelago and the coast, the Cape Verdean traders tried to impose themselves as middlemen between the African supply markets on the coast and the merchants operating the long-distance routes. According to the Portuguese historian Torrão this coastal route was quite successful until the 1550s.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* I, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Maria Manuel Ferraz Torrão, 'Formas de participação dos portugueses no comércio de escravos com as Índias de Castela' in *II Reunião Internacional de História de África*, p. 209; *idem*, 'Actividade comercial externa de



However, the Cape Verdean settlers also shipped goods to other coastal areas, connecting Santiago to the Sierra Leone estuary and back to Cape Verde; Santiago to the Sierra Leone estuary and the Gambia River, or Santiago to the Sierra Leone estuary and from there to the Petite Côte, Guinea-Bissau region and back to Cape Verde.<sup>36</sup>

The Cape Verdean merchants were not alone in operating these coastal circuits. Portuguese who had settled in the coastal regions between Senegambia and Sierra Leone were also operating along these routes. From the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese *lançados* and later their Eurafrican descendents were actively engaged in this coastal trade.<sup>37</sup> The coastal routes used by the *lançados* were not much different from the ones mentioned earlier for the Cape Verdean traders. The main difference was that the *lançados* departed from a port on the African continent, such as the Gambia River, the Petite Côte, the Guinea-Bissau region or the Sierra Leone estuary. They concentrated their business in the Sierra Leone estuary–Gambia River route, and in the Sierra Leone estuary–Petite Côte circuit.<sup>38</sup> In both cases, these coastal routes were linked to the trade circuits linking the coast and the rivers to the interior of the continent, which were controlled by African traders.<sup>39</sup>

The Gulf of Guinea circuits comprised the routes linking the São Tomé Archipelago with the Slave Coast, Loango and the Congo River, as well as the circuits connecting the islands with the Portuguese fortress-factories on the Gold Coast (see Map 5).<sup>40</sup>

In order to promote the economic growth of São Tomé, the Portuguese Crown also granted colonists and royal *contratadores* the exclusive right to trade on the African coast. However, as in the case of Cape Verde, the *contratadores* of São Tomé were forced to pay the royal duties and dispatch their ships for the long-distance routes from the island. Therefore,

---

Cabo Verde' in Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde I*, pp. 294, 296 & 298-300.

<sup>36</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, pp. 60-63; *idem*, 'Historical perspectives on the Guinea-Bissau region' in Carlos Lopes (dir.), *Mansas, Escravos, Grumetes e Gentio*, pp. 34-40; *idem*, *Landlords and strangers*; *idem*, *Luso-African commerce and settlement in the Gambia and the Guinea-Bissau region*.

<sup>37</sup> For further information on the *lançados*, *tangomaos* and their Eurafrican offspring see Chapter 3.

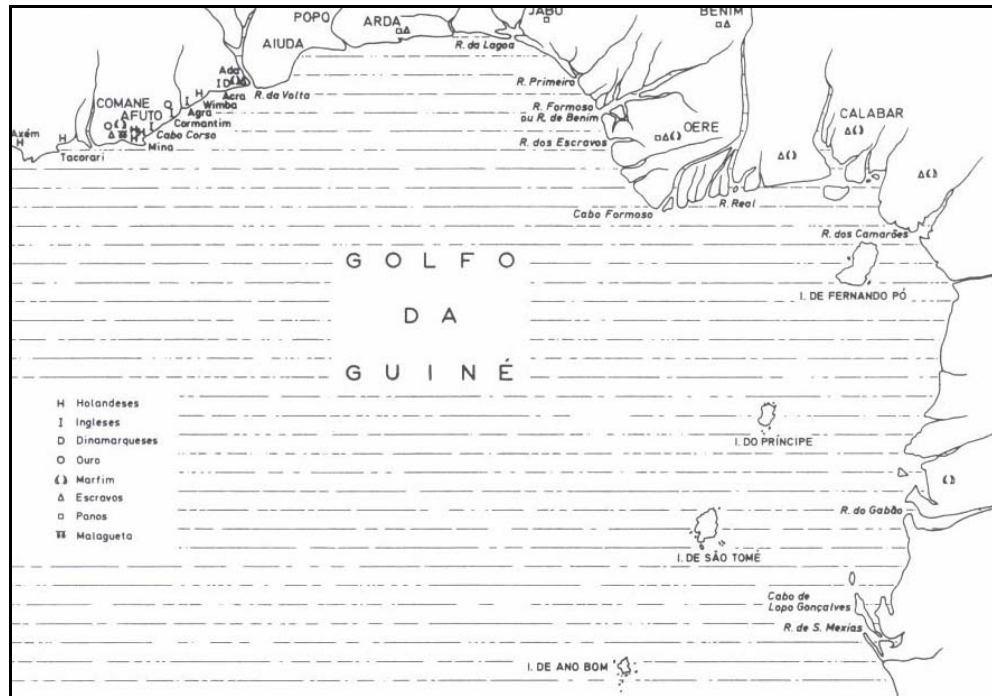
<sup>38</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, pp. 60-63; *idem*, 'Historical perspectives on the Guinea-Bissau region' in Carlos Lopes (dir.), *Mansas, Escravos, Grumetes e Gentio*, pp. 34-40; *idem*, *Landlords and strangers*; *idem*, *Luso-African commerce and settlement in the Gambia and the Guinea-Bissau region*.

<sup>39</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, pp. 37-67.

<sup>40</sup> J. Bato'Ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina I*, pp. 302-394; J. L. Vogt, *Portuguese rule on the Gold Coast 1469-1682* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1979); *idem*, 'Notes on the Portuguese cloth trade in West Africa, 1480-1540', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 8/4 (1975), pp. 623-651; *idem*, 'The early São Tomé-Príncipe Slave Trade with Mina, 1500-1540', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6/3 (1973), pp. 453-467.

the São Tomé merchants and colonists emerged as brokers of African goods and main suppliers of several intra- and inter-continental routes.

Map 5: The Gulf of Guinea and the São Tomé Archipelago



Source<sup>41</sup>

The colonists were in control of several circuits connecting the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe with different places in the Gulf. From the early times of settlement, there were routes linking São Tomé to the Slave and Loango Coasts and to the Congo River. Initially, the main goal of the Portuguese settlers and merchants was to acquire a sufficient number of slaves to use in the development of agricultural and sugar cane production. However, by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century they had started to re-export slaves and other African products to the Portuguese fortress-factories on the Gold Coast. The most important route was São Tomé–Slave Coast–São Tomé–Mina. Simultaneously, the São Tomé traders and settlers also became the main suppliers of the long-distance routes linking the Archipelago to Iberia and the Spanish American colonies. Their role of middlemen lasted until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>41</sup> Cristina Maria Seuanes Serafim, *As ilhas de São Tomé*, p. 220.

For example, in 1605, the coastal circuits linking the island of São Tomé and the various trading posts on the coast accounted for 37% of the total income of the Royal Treasury of the island, though the Portuguese royal officers in charge of the government were already alerting the Crown to the decline of this commerce (see Table 18).

Table 2: Revenues and expenditure of the Portuguese Royal Treasury of São Tomé and Príncipe (1605): estimated values

		Revenue ( <i>réis</i> )	Revenue (%)
Sugar Production	São Tomé	3.675.000	56.1
	Príncipe	25.000	0.4
Subtotal		3.700.000	56.5
Coastal Trade	At Ardra	800.000	12.2
	At Jabu	200.000	3.1
	At Bebin and Popó	400.000	6.1
	At Oere	200.000	3.1
	At the Gabon River, S. Mexias and Cape Lopez	200.000	3.1
	At Loango and Pinda	600.000	9.2
Subtotal		2.400.000	36.6
Property	Landed assets – <i>Fazendas de raiz</i>	90.000	1.4
	Landed assets of the Cape Verde – <i>Fazenda do Cabo Verde</i>	40.000	0.6
Subtotal		130.000	2.0
Taxes	10% of the cottons – <i>Dízimo dos algodões</i>	40.000	0.6
	10% for Church & King – <i>Dízimos eclesiásticos e chancelaria – São Tomé</i>	250.000	3.8
	10% for Church & King – <i>Dízimos eclesiásticos e chancelaria – Príncipe</i>	30.000	0.5
Subtotal		320.000	4.9
Total		6.550.000	100.0

Source<sup>42</sup>

In the Gulf of Guinea there was still another set of coastal routes connecting the Portuguese fortress-factories on the Gold Coast. From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Portuguese royal officers in Mina used the coastal circuits linking the fortress to Axim and Shama.<sup>43</sup> These routes were used mainly to supply the trading posts, and later the fortresses, with soldiers, provisions and ammunition, as well as European merchandise to be exchanged for African goods, especially gold. On the return voyage to Elmina, the ships would be

<sup>42</sup> 'Relatório de receitas e despesas de São Tomé de 13.10.1605' in Artur Teodoro de Matos, 'Os donos do poder e a economia de São Tomé e Príncipe no início de Seiscentos' *Mare Liberum*, 6 (1993), pp. 184-186.

<sup>43</sup> J. Bato'Ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina II*, pp. 458-490; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial I* (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1991), pp. 139-182.

carrying African products, bought at the fortress-factories, to be loaded onto ships operating the long-distance routes between the Gold Coast and Portugal.

Until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the island of São Tomé played a key role in the coastal trade in the Gulf of Guinea by importing African goods from the Slave Coast, Loango and the Congo River and re-exporting these to the Portuguese fortresses on the Gold Coast and to the long-distance routes connecting the Archipelago with Europe and the Americas.

As for the West-Central Africa coastal circuits, they encompassed the routes connecting Angola with the Congo River, the Loango Coast and the São Tomé islands as well as the port-to-port navigation along the Angolan Coast and the Angolan Rivers (see Maps 5 and 6). Luanda was the starting point of several commercial routes. Northwards, there were circuits connecting the town with Pinda, Loango, São Tomé, Príncipe, the Slave Coast and even the Gold Coast. The southern circuits linked Luanda to Benguela and Maniquicombo. The ships sailing in the Kwanza, the Dande, the Bengo and the Lucala Rivers all departed from Luanda.<sup>44</sup>

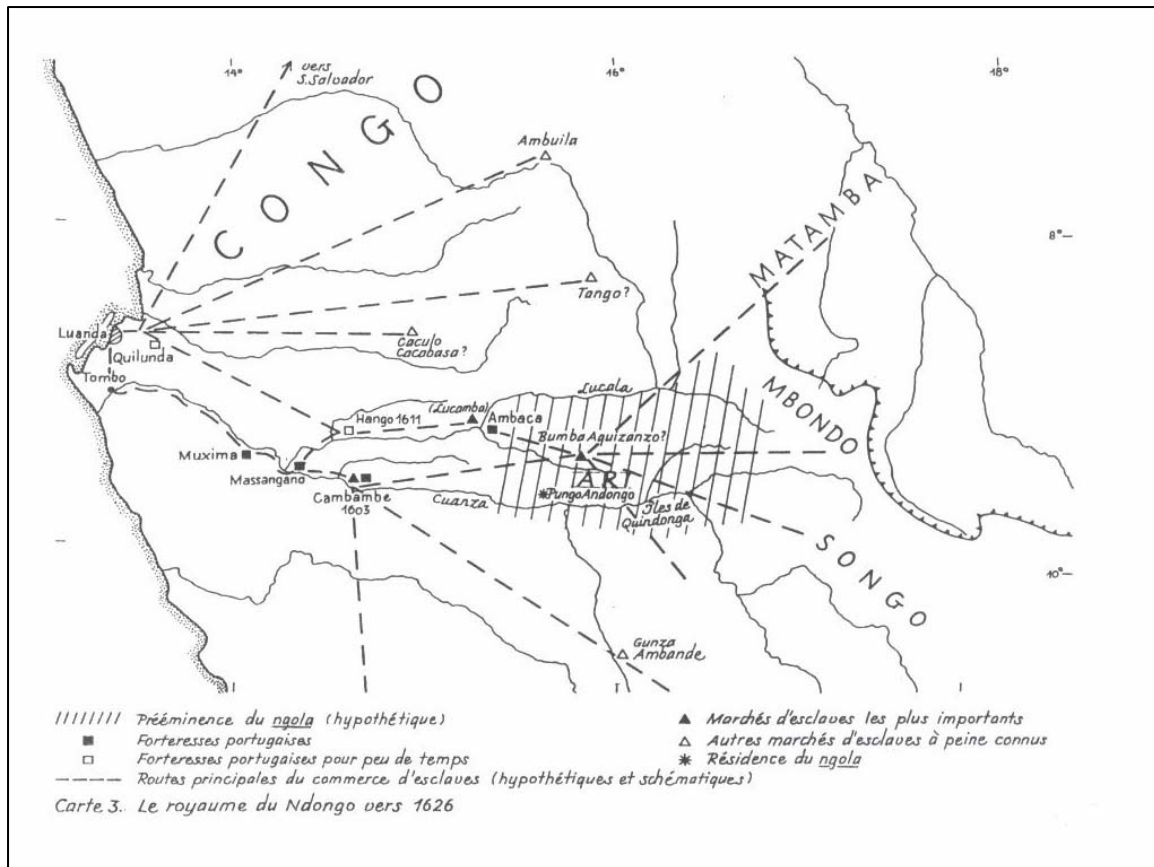
The Portuguese merchants and colonists as well as their Eurafrican offspring, with the aid of free Africans, used water and land routes to link the coast of Angola to the hinterland markets, and by doing so, kept Luanda and the surrounding region directly connected to the fairs in the interior. These fairs took place in the territory of the African rulers who recognised the sovereignty of the Portuguese Crown and considered themselves servants of the Portuguese King. Many fairs were located in villages near the Portuguese forts. The forts were supposed to guarantee military protection to the commercial routes leading to the fairs and organize the transport of the slaves and other products purchased at the fairs and destined for the coastal and the town markets.

---

<sup>44</sup> António de Oliveira Cadornega, *História geral das guerras angolanas* III (Lisboa: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1972), pp. 32-33. An interesting report written by a Jesuit missionary in Angola also has multiple references to the commercial connections between the Portuguese New Christians established in Angola, Congo and São Tomé between 1596 and 1598. Pieter van den Broecke also gives some information on the routes connecting the Portuguese settlement of Angola with other trading posts in the Congo River and Loango Coast, where many Portuguese traders lived and did business. IAN/TT, *Inquisição de Lisboa*, book 776; José da Silva Horta, 'Africanos e Portugueses na documentação inquisitorial, de Luanda a Mbanza Kongo (1596-1598)' in *Actas do Seminário Encontro de Povos e Culturas em Angola (Luanda, 3 a 6 de Abril de 1995)* (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997), pp. 301-321; *idem*, 'A Inquisição em Angola e Congo: o inquérito de 1596-98 e o papel mediador das justiças locais' in *Arqueologia de Estado. Primeiras jornadas sobre formas de organização e exercício dos poderes na Europa do Sul, séculos XIII-XVIII I* (Lisboa: História & Crítica, 1988), pp. 387-415; J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 73-75.

Despite the temporary presence of the Dutch in Angola and Congo, the Portuguese seem to be the single European sea power with direct access to these fairs during the period under study.

Map 6: The Fairs and the land routes in the Angolan hinterland



Source<sup>45</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the main fairs were at Samba (in the region of Encoge), Lucumba (in Ambaca), Trombeta (in Golungo), Dondo (in Cambambe), Beja (in Pundo-Andongo) and Quilengues (in the region of Benguela). There were also fairs at Ndongo, Ambuila, Bumba Aquizango and Masanga Caita. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, new fairs had been established in Caluco, Bondo, Massangano, Cassanje and Samba Angombe. During this

<sup>45</sup> Beatrix Heintze, 'L'Arrivée des Portugais a-t-elle sonné le glas du Royaume du Ndongo? La marge de manœuvre du *ngola* 1575-1671', *Studia*, 56/57 (2000), p. 139.

period, the *sobados*<sup>46</sup> of Haco, Libolo, Sumbe and Caconda (hinterland of Benguela) also participated in the growing number of fair sites in the hinterland of Angola (see Map 6).<sup>47</sup>

Most of the fairs were located not far from waterways. Like this, the African slaves and products could be easily transported to the coast in order to supply the inter-continental trade circuits. The Kwanza and the Lucala rivers were the main waterways for accessing the chief fairs taking place near the Portuguese fortresses of Massangano, Cambambe and Ambaca. Ambuíla and Samba Angombe were near the Loge, Lucala, and Dande rivers. The fairs in the territories of Libolo and Haco were accessible via the Longa and the Gango Rivers (the latter was a tributary of the Kwanza River and the former accessible from the coast). The fairs in the areas of Mbondo such as Andala Quisua were more difficult to access by waterway, but it was possible to do most of the travelling by way of the river.<sup>48</sup>

The trade conducted in these circuits partially supplied the Portuguese settlements in Angola, the African coastal markets and the long-distance routes. However, during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the coastal circuits to Loango and the Congo River lost most of their importance to both the Portuguese coastal and long-distance routes due to the increasing presence of the 'Dutch' merchants in the area and their participation in this coastal trade.

In brief, between the 1580s and the 1670s, the Portuguese coastal circuits underwent several transformations in order to improve their connection with the long-distance routes and to better serve the needs of the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa. As European competition in West Africa increased, the Portuguese businessmen operating in the inter-continental circuits tried to avoid the middlemen from the Cape Verde and the São Tomé Archipelagos. For example, after 1560 the *contratadores* of the royal monopoly over Cape Verde and Guinea demanded from the Crown permission to trade directly with the coast without stopping at the Santiago Island to pay royal duties and without having to purchase African products from the Cape Verde merchants and settlers. After that, the long-distance routes to Portugal, Spain and especially to the Spanish Americas started to be supplied directly at several points along the coast of Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau

---

<sup>46</sup> For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary.

<sup>47</sup> Eunice R. J. P. L. Jorge da Silva, *A administração de Angola: século XVII* (unpublished MA thesis, Universidade de Lisboa, 1996), pp. 259-263; António Luís Alves Ferronha, *Angola: 10 anos de história (1666-1676)* I (unpublished MA thesis, Universidade de Lisboa), pp. 126-138; Beatrix Heintze, 'Angola nas garras do tráfico de escravos: as guerras do Ndongo (1611-1630)', *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 1 (1984), pp. 11-60.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

region. Therefore, the coastal routes linking the Archipelago with these areas lost their role as suppliers of the long-distance circuits.

To recapitulate, between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the Cape Verde/Senegambia coastal circuits worked as a single unit, catering to the demands of the African regional markets in the Gambia River, the Guinea-Bissau region and Sierra Leone, as well as the demands of the Cape Verde market and the long-distance routes connecting the Archipelago with Europe and the Americas. Santiago was the main gateway for African goods and played a key role in the inter-continental trade. After the 1560s this scenario changed drastically. The Portuguese traders started to sail directly to the coast in order to purchase African products allowing them to improve the efficiency of the long-distance circuits. As a result, the route Santiago–Guinea lost its link with the inter-continental trading routes and Cape Verde lost its international role in the Portuguese Atlantic system. However, the route Santiago–Guinea survived during the 17<sup>th</sup> century as it supplied Cape Verde with foodstuffs and as the result of the administrative system, since the coastal area was under the jurisdiction of the Archipelago.

A similar phenomenon occurred with the coastal circuits controlled by the traders and colonists of São Tomé. In order to avoid these middlemen, the Portuguese *contratadores* and traders promoted direct routes to the region of Luanda. The development of these circuits and the arrival of the ‘Dutch’ traders in the Bights of Benin and Biafra as well as the Slave Coast undermined São Tomé’s role as supplier of the inter-continental routes.

To review, from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the coastal commercial routes developed by the Portuguese settlers in the Archipelagoes of Cape Verde and São Tomé had two main goals. Firstly, the stimulation of the economic development of the Archipelagoes, by importing slaves, African products and foodstuffs, and allowing the settlers to operate as middlemen supplying the international circuits. Secondly, the routes connecting the island of São Tomé and the fortresses on the Gold Coast supplied to the factories soldiers, ammunitions, provisions, slaves and beads from the Slave Coast to barter for gold, and to stockpile the gold acquired at other trading posts on the Gold Coast, and, by doing so, the merchants operating along these routes avoided smuggling and optimized the timing of connections with the long-distance routes.

The coastal commercial circuits developed and controlled by the Portuguese settlers of Cape Verde, São Tomé and Angola played an important role in the maintenance of the

Portuguese settlements and in the development of the Portuguese inter-continental routes to and via West Africa until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This complex system catered to the demands of the local consumption markets of Cape Verde, São Tomé and Angola, and to the consumers in the Americas and Europe. After the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the trade routes linking the coastal areas to the Archipelagoes were gradually replaced by more competitive commercial circuits. In order to fight the competition of other European traders operating in West Africa, the Portuguese merchants involved in the inter-continental routes were forced to optimize the circuits. To achieve this goal they placed commercial agents in Senegambia, the Guinea-Bissau region and Angola, and started to trade directly with the coastal markets, avoiding the middlemen from the Archipelagoes.

Hence, from the point of view of the Portuguese settlers in West Africa, the coastal circuits were essential for their commercial prosperity and for the maintenance of the posts and settlements on the Coast, while from the viewpoint of the Portuguese merchants operating the long-distance circuits, the coastal routes only made economic sense when connected to the inter-continental routes, otherwise they stood to gain little or nothing.

The Portuguese Crown appeared often as a mediator in the conflict of interests between the settlers and the European businessmen and tried to safeguard the interests of both parties. However, over time, the Crown allowed the interests of the Portuguese merchants to prevail over the settlers and local traders, especially in Cape Verde and São Tomé. In the Guinea-Bissau region and Angola, the control of the African and traders of mixed-descent over the coastal circuits and the hinterland supply markets reduced the chances of the European merchants to exert any real power over this commerce. On the continent, the rules of the business were dictated by the African and Eurafrikan traders.

In brief, two of the most important difference between the Dutch and the Portuguese coastal circuits was the complexity of the routes and the level of penetration of the markets in the hinterland. The Portuguese coastal circuits included not only circuits along the coast, but also waterways and land routes linking these areas to the interior of the continent. In contrast, the Dutch coastal circuits were limited to the coastal areas. Furthermore, the Portuguese created a more complex network of coastal and inner routes, each of which had a specific function.



## 2. Coastal trade, miscegenation and settlement

The different economic attitudes of the Dutch and the Portuguese towards the West African hinterland markets and their inhabitants put them in a complete different position regarding the coastal trade. The Dutch trade, being exclusively based on the coast, relied on the supplies of products brought from the hinterland by the middlemen, among whom were, of course, the Portuguese and Eurafricans (especially in Senegambia, Loango and Congo), while the Portuguese via the *lançados* and their mixed-descent off-spring were able to have direct access to the supply markets located in the hinterland.

In fact, the Dutch and the Portuguese had different economic goals concerning the African hinterland. The ‘Dutch’ merchants were not interested in controlling the trade circuits in these areas. Their main goal was just to gain permission from local rulers to trade on the coast and to buy products for the long-distance routes. Therefore, their contact with the African hinterland in Senegambia, the Gulf of Guinea and West-Central Africa was mainly limited to sporadic visits to the African authorities. Pieter van den Broecke, for instance, reports two visits to local rulers: the former to the ‘count of Sonyo’ – the ruler of Soyo – in 1608 and the later to the ruler of Mbanza Ngoyo in 1612.<sup>49</sup>

In order to overcome their almost complete absence from the hinterland, the Dutch private companies gave instructions to their chief and junior factors about how to behave towards potential competitors on the coast. In general, they met their rivals on board their ships or trading lodges in an attempt to arrange a common price for the products, and to define the type and quantity of goods that were to be exchanged for African goods in order ‘not to spoil the market’. For instance, Pieter van den Broecke during his stay in Portudal as junior factor in 1606 ‘entered into a contract with a Rotterdammer, Pieter Cornelissen Spelman, and combined together [...] [their] trade-goods and cargoes so as to not spoil the market. It was also agreed that Pieter Cornelissen Spelman would sail home with all the hides that were traded in the next month.’<sup>50</sup> By making agreements among themselves to fix the

---

<sup>49</sup> Examples of such diplomatic embassies/courtesy visits may be found in several journals of voyages to the West Coast of Africa. J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's Journal*, pp. 58 & 89.

<sup>50</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, p. 29.

prices of the goods, they tried to control the prices of the products in the supply markets, keeping them as low as possible as to increase their profit margins.

This may sound like the formation of cartel behaviour or the building of monopolies, but it was never imposed systematically or regularly. Anyway, over time, this practice was abandoned. In the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when traders from the various Dutch ports started to trade in West Africa, and especially on the Gold Coast, they competed with each other in order to get the highest number of customers and sell as much merchandise as possible in the shortest period of time. In order to achieve this aim they gave gifts to the interpreters stimulating them to bring African traders on board their vessels, informed them that they were willing to trade small quantities of goods and in some cases even advanced products on credit to these interlopers. These were clear strategies to attract the African traders, gain their trust and create a commercial bond with them. Often, however, these practices ended in losses for the 'Dutch' merchants, since the Africans took the products but did not return with the corresponding quantity of African goods.

Apparently, none of these practices existed before the arrival of the Dutch. The royal servants of the Portuguese Crown conducting trade in Mina and Axim never advanced products on credit to the African traders or offered them substantial presents for every commercial transaction at the factories. Gifts, the so-called 'costume', were only given at special occasions, such as a visit to the castles of a local political and/or military chief, his close relatives or the most powerful merchants under his jurisdiction. In fact, these exchanges of gifts were a way to keep peaceful diplomatic relations and promote trade.<sup>51</sup>

The offer of credit and of an increasing number of gifts to the African traders, apparently introduced by the Dutch, had a significant impact on trade. Pieter de Marees, travelling in the West Coast of Africa in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (1600-1602) gives us a clear picture of such a situation: '[...] factors competed with each other, drawing one another's customers away through these gifts; and giving of presents has become so ingrained that nowadays these *Daches* amount to 6 or 7 percent. Through the rivalry of the factors (or their

---

<sup>51</sup> The detailed analysis of the list of gifts offered by the Portuguese royal servants at the Mina castel between 1517 and 1540 and published by Ballong-Men-Mewuda shows that the number of African merchants gratified by the Portuguese royal servants is minimal (three in total) comparatively to the African political and/or military chiefs and their relatives. This tell us much about the diplomatic and political function of the 'costume', though Ballong-Men-Mewuda claims that the gifts were 'a Portuguese political policy of seduction and corruption' of the African traders. For the list and a different approach to the subject see J. Bato'Ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina* II, pp. 400-455.

failure to reach a trading agreement), this *Dache* has come to stay and has turned into a *rente* [interest-rate], so that one knows how much of a *Dache* or gift should be given them when they buy a given quantity of linen, cloth, iron, basins or kettles; [...] On the other hand, these Interpreters and Brokers will often try to buy from the factors some goods on credit, [...]; once they have got them, they will not pay you [...] It is therefore not good to give them any credit, for factors suffer great losses and disadvantages when they give credit to the Blacks.<sup>52</sup>

The 'Dutch' merchants, therefore, did not have sufficient access to and control over the African supply markets allowing them to form cartels or build monopolies. In fact, these were strategies to defend their commercial interests in new markets where the African traders dictated the trading rules and held complete control of the quantities of products available, prices, types of exchange goods accepted, and ultimately the access to the African supply markets.

During the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, price agreements among merchants of the Republic also became common. On 4 March 1608, for example, the various ships anchored at Cape Coast had an agreement fixing the type and quantity of goods to barter for one *bende* of gold. On 19 March 1610 Pieter van den Broecke and Jacques van der Voorde, while trading in the Loango Coast and the Congo River, 'went aboard the ship the *Merman*, to see if we [they] could make a contract with the other, because the blacks had already begun to make trouble.'<sup>53</sup> After 1624, the system of price agreements was replaced by the WIC monopoly, which tried to control prices at the supply and consumption markets. However, given the control of the African traders over the supply markets and the patterns of local demand, this remained an impossible task for the Company employees to achieve.

The Portuguese traders had a completely different approach. Their aim was to obtain permission from the African authorities to trade and control the supply of products coming from the hinterland. Consequently, like the Dutch, they paid regular visits to the local rulers and, in addition, established family networks by marrying influential African women with connections to the local courts and trading clans. Hence, the access of the Portuguese to the

---

<sup>52</sup> Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description*, pp. 45, 50 & 214-216.

<sup>53</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 50 & 76.

routes linking the coast to the hinterland was achieved through a process of intermarriage between Portuguese traders and African women beginning in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. This phenomenon occurred mainly in the coastal areas between Senegambia and Sierra Leone. In the Gulf of Guinea and West-Central Africa intermarriages between Portuguese men and African women also occurred but, they were less common and had a minor impact on the trading circuits. In the areas between Senegambia and Sierra Leone, this process created Eurafrican communities that were to control the extensive regional trading networks.<sup>54</sup> These trading networks were linked to the transatlantic commercial web through marriages and commercial partnerships that linked African and Eurafrican women to Portuguese traders.<sup>55</sup>

In the Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau regions, *lançados* or *tangomaos* and *Grumetes* (or simply Christians) were the two most important groups of intermediaries between the hinterland, the coastal markets and the inter-continental routes.<sup>56</sup> The *tangomaos* lived not only in the ports, but also in the jungle or bush under the authority of the African rulers.<sup>57</sup> In some cases, the *tangomaos* had family ties with the African lords and 'kings'. For instance, João Ferreira, known as the 'Ganagoga', a New Christian from the Alentejo, lived on the Senegal River in the 1590s under the protection of the Gran-Fulo or Tekrur and the duke or *alcaide* of Kassan on the Gambia River, to whose daughter he was married. Gaspar Gonçalves, another *tangomao*, lived in the village of Pompetane on the shore of the Gambia River together with other *tangomaos* and several African women. These two men were of course, traders.<sup>58</sup>

In their penetration into the interior and its trading organization, Portuguese and Eurafricans depended on the cooperation of the local rulers and the African traders in

---

<sup>54</sup> Intermarriage of other Europeans with African women started only from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in West Africa*, chapters 9 & 10.

<sup>55</sup> Philip J. Havik, 'Women and trade in the Guinea-Bissau region: The role of African and Eurafrican women in trade networks from the early 16<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century' *Studia*, 52 (1994), pp. 83-120; *idem*, 'Comerciantes e Concubinas: sócios estratégicos no comércio Atlântico na costa da Guiné' in *II Reunião Internacional de História de África*, pp. 161-179; *idem*, 'Missionários e moradores na Costa da Guiné: Os padres da Companhia de Jesus e os tangomãos no princípio do século XVII', *Studia*, 56-57 (2000), pp. 223-262; *idem*, 'Parentesco e poder no feminino nos Rios de Guiné: a revolta de Bibiana Vaz de França (sec. XVII)', <http://www.desafio.ufba.br/gt3-004.html>: 26-1-2005.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Havik, 'Comerciantes e concubinas' in *II Reunião Internacional de História de África*, p. 167.

<sup>57</sup> For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary.

<sup>58</sup> André Álvares de Almada (1594), *Tratado breve dos rios de Guiné do Cabo Verde* (Lisboa: Editorial L. I. A. M., 1964), pp. 24-25; Isabel Castro Henriques, *Os pilares da diferença: Relações Portugal-África: Séculos XV-XX* (Lisboa: Calendoscópio, 2004), pp. 352-353; Philip Havik, 'Missionários e moradores', *Studia*, 56-57 (2000), pp. 225, 228, 230-232 & 249.

control of the markets and trade networks in the African interior states.<sup>59</sup> The *Grumetes* also cooperated regularly with the *lançados*. They were the strongest link between skippers, merchants of the transatlantic trade and the African leadership.<sup>60</sup>

African women also played a key role in the connection between the coastal ports and the hinterland.<sup>61</sup> These women had influence in commercial activities. Many African and Eurafrican women were partners in the trade that was conducted in the regional markets and that supplied the transatlantic routes.<sup>62</sup> In general, these women had family ties to Portuguese soldiers and Eurafrican *grumetes*, serving in the Portuguese forts or living in the vicinity, either as legal wives or as concubines. In general, these African and Eurafrican women took care of the business whenever their husbands were away and after they had died. Among those women one may mention as example the renowned cases of: Bibiana Vaz and Dona Catarina, the former living in the outskirts of Cacheu and the latter at the port of Rufisque, in the Petite Côte of Senegal, during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the trading activities of the Portuguese and Eurafricans in these areas depended partially on the commercial cooperation of the African and groups of mixed-descent and on their influence over the local rulers.<sup>64</sup>

In Angola, the access to the supply markets in the hinterland was opened through a process of settlement and intermarriage between Portuguese traders and African women after the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, Angola was probably the area of West Africa where the Portuguese entered the interior most thoroughly. Portuguese royal officers and colonists forced their way into the hinterland, establishing forts, promoting agriculture and taking part

---

<sup>59</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, especially chapter 2.

<sup>60</sup> Philip Havik, 'Missionários e moradores' *Studia*, 56-57 (2000), p. 251. For further information on this social group, see Chapter 3.

<sup>61</sup> They were usually called *tangomas* (feminine form of *tangomao*) as well as *signares* or *senoras* (Port.: *senhoras*), whenever they were quite wealthy and influent. They could also be known as *nbaras* or *nbanbas*. These expressions were usually used to address women traders of means with a Eurafrican lifestyle and associated with Europeans and Eurafricans on a par with the *senoras* in the Gambia, the *signares* in Senegal and the *kerio* women in Sierra Leone. Philip J. Havik, 'Women and trade', *Studia*, 52 (1994), p. 109.

<sup>62</sup> However, they did also act as mediators in military and political issues between the Portuguese forts – (*presídios*) and the African authorities. Philip J. Havik, 'Comerciantes e Concubinas' in *II Reunião Internacional de História de África*, pp. 164-170.

<sup>63</sup> Philip Havik, 'Parentesco e poder no feminino nos Rios de Guiné', <http://www.desafio.ufba.br/gt3-004.html>: 26-1-2005., pp. 6-7; Philip Havik, 'Women and trade', *Studia*, 52 (1994), p. 106; Souchu de Rennefort, *Relation du premier voyage de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales en l' isle de Madagascar ou Dauphine* (Paris, 1668); Isabel Castro Henriques, *Os pilares da diferença*, pp. 354-355 & 359.

<sup>64</sup> However, not all ethnic groups from the Guinea-Bissau region did allow European and Eurafricans to marry African and Eurafrican women with access to high positions in commercial and political leadership, such as, for instance, the Mandinga. Philip Havik, 'Women and trade', *Studia*, 52 (1994), pp. 108-109; *idem*, 'Missionários e Moradores', *Studia*, 56-57 (2000), p. 256.

in the hinterland fairs.<sup>65</sup> From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, African, European and *mestiço* traders were authorized by the *sovas* to do business at the fairs.<sup>66</sup> In general, the traders at Luanda and the forts would provide them with the European goods, usually named *fazendas*, to barter for African products in the fairs. Therefore, these men were the main connection between the hinterland markets and the coastal areas. The success of the long-distance routes also depended on the efficiency of these middlemen, most of whom were of African- or mixed-descent.

In addition, the development of agricultural production in Angola, Cape Verde and São Tomé provided the Portuguese and the traders and colonists of mixed-descent with an extra category of goods to be sold in the coastal markets. In the case of Cape Verde, the colonists even promoted the manufacturing of textiles similar to Senegalese cloth that they introduced into the coastal circuits of the Guinea-Bissau regions. Moreover, the settlement process stimulated the coastal trade that would meet the immediate needs of the settlers for foodstuffs and labour.

### 3. Trading practices

In order to trade in the West African coastal markets and hinterland, the Dutch and the Portuguese merchants had to adjust their business to the African trading practices. Commerce was conducted differently in the various regions along the coast, depending on local traditions and the interests of the African rulers.

In the island of Gorée and the Petite Côte ships could be anchored and the merchants could go ashore and trade. A fiscal agent of the local African ruler would come on board to collect duties. After payment, the chief and junior factors could go ashore and dispatch the smaller ships to Portudal, Rufisque and Joal. However, at each new port they

---

<sup>65</sup> Angolan *sova/soba(s)* had different types of slaves for sale: slaves by birth (*escravos de quisico*), slaves from the wars (*prisioneiros de guerra*) and slaves who had committed crimes (*escravos do fogo*). Eunice R. J. P. L. Jorge da Silva, *A administração de Angola*, pp. 162-171, 172-190 & 254-270; Maria Isabel Figueira Freire, *Memória da Rainha Janga: Portugal e Angola no século XVII* (unpublished MA thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa 1995), pp. 11-129; Maria Luisa Esteves, 'Para o estudo do tráfico de escravos de Angola (1640-1668)', *Studia*, 50 (1991), pp. 79-108; Beatrix Heintze, 'Ngonga a Mwiza: Um Sobado Angola sob Domínio Português no Século XVII', *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 8-9 (Jan.-Dez.), 1988, pp. 221-233; *idem*, 'Angola nas garras do tráfico de escravos: a guerra do Ndongo (1611-1630)', *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 1 (1984), pp. 11-60.

<sup>66</sup> The African merchants dealing in slaves in the hinterland fairs were named *pombeiros*, while the European traders were designated as *funantes* or *funidores*. For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary

had to pay local duties. These custom duties were paid in kind, using products such as iron bars, alcoholic beverages, glass beads, and so on. For example, in 1606, the chief factor of the *Roo de Hart*, Edwoudt Hendrickxssen, only obtained permission to trade on the island of Gorée after paying customs to the fiscal officer of the local ruler. On arrival at Joal, he again had to pay custom duties to the African authorities there.<sup>67</sup> These practices were imposed on the 'Dutch' and the Portuguese traders without exception.

In the area between the Sierra Leone and the Grain Coast most of the trade was conducted aboard ship. The Africans would bring the goods in their canoes and the transactions would take place on board.<sup>68</sup> The only place where the 'Dutch' traders were sometimes allowed to go ashore was Cape Mount, where in certain periods some chief factors were able to maintain good relations with the local ruler.<sup>69</sup> However, in all the other places along this coast, such as the Sess River and Cape Palmas, the Europeans were not allowed to go ashore.<sup>70</sup> The Portuguese and Eurafrican traders were in a similar situation.<sup>71</sup>

On the Gold Coast, in the early period of the Dutch and the Portuguese presence it was possible to anchor the ships in the vicinity of some coastal villages such as Komenda, Mori, Cape Coast and Kormantin. Here, the ships could lie at anchor for several weeks or months while trade was conducted with the Africans.<sup>72</sup> Later, after the establishment of forts and trading posts along the coast, trade was conducted in the fortresses and factories on land.

Further east, in places such as Accra, Cameroon, Corisco Bay and Rio del Rey, trade was conducted on board the ships.<sup>73</sup> On the Slave Coast, the vessels would enter the bay or the mouth of the river and fire cannons as a signal to the African traders to come on board. In general, 'Dutch' and Portuguese merchants did not go ashore.<sup>74</sup> Over time, the WIC employees were authorized by the African rulers to establish trading posts. The Company

---

<sup>67</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 26-27 & 29.

<sup>68</sup> 'Andreas Josua Ulsheimer's voyage of 1603-4' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 20-21; 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' *ibidem*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>69</sup> Samuel Brun makes references to such good relations on his second voyage to the Gulf of Guinea in 1614-1616. 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>70</sup> 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>71</sup> According to Brooks, the Eurafrican communities of Portuguese descent in control of coastal and hinterland trading networks could only be found up to the latitude of Sierra Leone. Further east in the Gulf of Guinea, the communities of Eurafricans at places like Mina were small in number and played a minor role in local commerce. George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, pp. 96-138.

<sup>72</sup> 'Andreas Josua Ulsheimer's voyage of 1603-4' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 21-23; 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' *ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> *Idem*, pp. 65-69.

<sup>74</sup> 'Andreas Josua Ulsheimer's voyage of 1603-4' *ibidem*, pp. 29-28; 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' *ibidem*, pp. 71-72.

personnel was then forced to pay duties and to follow local rules regarding trade, such as the royal monopolies over certain goods, the primacy of important African middlemen, etc.<sup>75</sup>

On the Loango Coast and the Congo River, before trading, merchants were escorted by locals to the court of the ruler to ask permission to engage in commerce and bring ashore crew members. In order to obtain these favours, the merchants would greet the ruler with gifts. A similar practice was followed on the Congo River by the Dutch, the Portuguese and the merchants of mixed-descent.<sup>76</sup> For instance, on September 1608, Pieter van den Broeck and the clerk Baltasaer Jacodt were sent by their superiors to the court of the ruler of Sonyo in order to request a trade permission.<sup>77</sup>

In the areas where traders were allowed to go ashore, commerce could be conducted in two different ways, either on board smaller vessels able to navigate the shallow waters and estuaries of the rivers, or ashore in a house or a small lodge.

In Angola, the trade was usually conducted at fairs.<sup>78</sup> These fairs already existed prior to the arrival of the Europeans. At these fairs, African traders sold different kinds of products and slaves, which were usually purchased by the wealthiest members of society – namely the *sovas*. They, as the local authority with jurisdiction over the region, taxed the movement of the traders in their lands and held a monopoly over the sale of certain products. The traders of Portuguese- and mixed-descent participating in these fairs also had to pay taxes to these local authorities.

In fact, after the Portuguese gained access to the hinterland fairs, the African rulers continued to collect taxes for the entry of merchants to their lands and to impose a monopoly over the acquisition of European merchandise and the bartering of slaves. To keep law and order at the fair and to avoid robbery, smuggling or tax evasion, the *sova* usually appointed a fiscal officer.<sup>79</sup>

However, the Portuguese royal officials in Angola also claimed the right to collect taxes at the fairs in the hinterland. The most important was a tax of 10% of the volume or value of the merchandise – that is to say, for each ten slaves traded, they were authorized to keep one slave for themselves, and these slaves were chosen before the fair started. In this

---

<sup>75</sup> Adam Jones (trans. & ed.), *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: An anonymous Dutch manuscript* (Atlanta, CA.: African Studies Association Press, 1995), pp. 197-200.

<sup>76</sup> 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German sources*, pp. 4-59.

<sup>77</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's Journal*, p. 58.

<sup>78</sup> For the Portuguese terminology on these fairs, see Glossary.

<sup>79</sup> For the African terminology, see Glossary.



way they supplied themselves with the best slaves available. In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, all Portuguese superior officers were authorized by the governor to have their own representatives at the fairs in order to collect their 10% tax. This conflict of interests did, of course, generate economic and military competition between the *sovas* and the Portuguese colonial authorities.<sup>80</sup> Usually, slaves and merchandise were carried from fair to fair, until they were loaded onto the ships destined for Luanda using the water- and land ways connecting the hinterland and the estuaries of the rivers with the coast.

The penetration of the Portuguese into the jungle and their access to the fairs was in many ways detrimental: in particular, the imposition of the 10% tax drove the African middlemen (*pombeiros*) away, since the representatives of the royal officers always collected the best slaves before the fair opened, and they could therefore only buy slaves of low quality. They themselves or the men hired by them (*camboladores*) therefore started to stop the caravans of slaves on their way to the fair and to steal the slaves. Another common abuse was the *reviro* – a process by which the trader would annul the first agreement regarding the sale of slaves established with the *pombeiro*, because meanwhile he had obtained a better price or deal.<sup>81</sup>

The increasing demand for slaves in Luanda and the limited supply drove the city's merchants, the royal *contratador* and his representatives to appoint their own middlemen (*comissários* or *aviados*) in order to promote their causes.<sup>82</sup> In general, the traders in Luanda would entrust the aforementioned agents, the European *fazendas*, with the job of bartering for slaves in the fairs.<sup>83</sup> The access of this second group of Portuguese and *mestiços* to the hinterland fairs also contributed to the disruption of the commercial organization of the hinterland, destroying the business of the African, European and *mestiço* traders living near the fairs and at the forts.

---

<sup>80</sup> Eunice R. J. P. L. Jorge da Silva, *A administração de Angola* I, pp. 259-263; António Luís Alves Ferronha, 'Angola: 10 anos de história' I, pp. 126-138; Beatrix Heintze, 'Angola nas garras do tráfico de escravos', *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 1 (1984), pp. 11-60.

<sup>81</sup> Form of the Portuguese verb *revirar*, meaning in this case 'change, turncoat, and back-off'. For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary.

<sup>82</sup> Form of the Portuguese verb *aviar*: to dispatch. For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary.

<sup>83</sup> For the Portuguese terminology, see Glossary.

In order to stop this disruption, African and Portuguese authorities agreed to disallow European, Portuguese, *mestiços* and 'dressed Blacks'<sup>84</sup> access to the fairs in the hinterland. However, the controls were not tight and disruptions continued over time.

To summarize, the Dutch, the Portuguese and the merchants of mixed-descent engaged in the coastal circuits and their hinterland were forced to adjust to the trading practices followed by the African traders and to the demands imposed by the local rulers. Angola was probably the place where both the Portuguese and the traders of mixed-descent implemented several strategies in order to disrupt the African commercial organization and to change the rules of the business. These practices generated conflicts between the Portuguese and the different African authorities, causing the disruption of the hinterland fairs, resulting in loss for all the partners engaged in the coastal and hinterland commerce and affecting the supply of the long-distance routes

#### 4. West African supply markets

The different goals of the Dutch and the Portuguese for the establishment of the coastal routes partly determined the supply markets they visited and the type of products acquired. The areas of West Africa where the Dutch and the Portuguese established their intra-continental circuits supplied different products.

The Senegambia and the Guinea-Bissau region supplied the coastal routes mainly with slaves, ivory and foodstuffs, especially maize and rice. African cloths, wax and slaves were also available at the Petite Côte of Senegal. In Sierra Leone the most important trading good was kola. This region also provided the traders with hides, elephant tusks, wax and ambergris. The Cape Verdean islands supplied varied products. Cotton cloth was manufactured at Fogo and Santiago, while salt was easily extracted at Maio and Sal. On the

---

<sup>84</sup> The expression 'dressed Black' (Portuguese: 'negro vestido'), referred to the wealthy African traders operating as middlemen between the hinterland and the coast. AHU, Angola: 1664-11-19: 'Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino' in António Brásio (comp.), *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, 1st séries, 12, pp. 508-513; BAHU (hereafter Biblioteca do Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino), 'Regimento do Governador do Reino de Angola, Trsitão da Cunha (10-4-1666)' in *Legislação Antiga*, 18, pp. 297-367; Eunice R. J. P. L. Jorge da Silva, *A administração de Angola I*, p. 259-263 & 309.

least populated islands, the colonists bred cattle for local, coastal and long-distance consumption.<sup>85</sup>

The variety of goods available in the Gulf of Guinea for both the intra- and inter-continental circuits was wider. The Gulf was divided into different regions: the Grain Coast; the Ivory and Gold Coasts; Allada ('Ardra'); the Slave Coast, including the Bights of Benin and Biafra; and the area between Corisco Bay and Cape Lopez. The Grain Coast was mainly a supplier of pepper – *malagueta* – and ivory, as well as some cloth; while the Ivory and the Gold Coasts were the chief providers of elephant tusks and gold. Salt was also an important product in this coastal trade. Allada (Ardra) supplied mainly slaves, cotton cloth and *akori* (a type of coral), while Benin produced a variety of cloth and elephant tails. At Rio Real (present-day New Calabar River), Rio del Rey and the Cameroon River (present-day Bight of Biafra), slaves were the main product available; although ivory, pepper, gold and *akori* were also made available to the traders. At Corisco Bay, the Gabon River and Cape Lopez the main product was ivory.<sup>86</sup>

The Archipelago of São Tomé was also an important supply market of the Gulf. São Tomé was a sugar production area. However, and contrary to what has been argued by Garfield, other goods were produced in the Archipelago.<sup>87</sup> Cotton, ginger, maize, rice, coconuts and orchards of orange, lemon, lime, banana and fig trees were cultivated. The settlers also grew different types of vegetables and beans, and kept cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry.<sup>88</sup> These products were used for local, coastal and long-distance consumption.

The coastal areas of West-Central Africa also supplied a wide range of products. This region comprised four distinct coastal areas: the region between Cape Lopez and Mayumba; the Congo River; the Loango Coast; and the Angolan Coast. These regions were mainly suppliers of slaves and ivory, as well as red dyewood (*tacola*) and beads (*zimbros*). The former

---

<sup>85</sup> Maria Manuel Torrão, 'Formas de participação dos Portugueses no comércio de escravos com as Índias de Castela' in *II Reunião Internacional de História de África*, pp. 203-222; *idem*, 'Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento' in Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* I, pp. 17-123; *idem*, 'Actividade comercial externa de Cabo Verde' in Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* II, pp. 237-345; *idem*, 'Subsídios para a História Geral de Cabo Verde. O algodão da Ilha do Fogo: uma matéria-prima de produção afro-europeia para uma manufactura africana', *Studia*, 50 (1991), pp. 157-176; *idem*, 'Colonização de Cabo Verde' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo* II, pp. 150-170.

<sup>86</sup> Adam Jones (trans. & ed.), *West Africa in the mid-seventeenth century*, p. 72.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Garfield, 'A history of São Tomé Islands, 1470-1655' (PhD Diss., Northwestern University, 1971); *idem*, 'Public Christians, secret Jews: religion and political conflict on São Tomé Island in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21/4 (1990), pp. 645-654.

<sup>88</sup> Cristina Maria Seuanes Serafim, *As ilhas de São Tomé*, pp. 195-210.

were mainly re-exported to the Americas and Europe, whilst the latter were re-sold in several African coastal markets.

To sum up, these three main regions of West Africa, namely Senegambia-Cape Verde, Gulf of Guinea and West-Central Africa, supplied the European traders with a wide variety of products for both their coastal and long-distance circuits.

Before the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, 'Dutch' traders visited these supply markets only to buy African products destined for the European consumption markets. At the Petite Côte of Senegal, the 'Dutch' merchants and, later, the WIC employees traded especially in hides, elephant tusks, wax, and ambergris.<sup>89</sup> On the Grain and the Ivory Coasts, the Dutch purchased pepper and some elephant tusks.<sup>90</sup> On the Gold and Slave Coasts, they bought mainly gold, ivory and pepper.<sup>91</sup> Trade was also conducted at Allada and on the Slave Coast, but on a small scale, since the main 'product' available was slaves and the 'Dutch' traders were not much involved in the slave trade before the 1630s.

Only in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century did 'Dutch' merchants start to trade in African goods to supply the local coastal markets. At Benin, they purchased blue striped cloth and elephant tails. They also got involved in the trade of *akori*, purchased at Ambrosy, Cameroon, Corisco Bay and Rio del Rey and re-sold on the Gold Coast. In Mayumba, Loango, and Congo, the Dutch traded mainly in elephant tusks. However, by the 1610s the Dutch private commercial companies were already trading in red dyewood bought at Mayumba.

After the establishment of the WIC (1621-1624), neither the list of goods nor the number of supply markets visited changed very much. In Elmina, Mori, Axim, Shama, Cape Coast and Komenda, gold was the main product purchased by the Company employees. On the Grain and Ivory Coasts, ivory, wax, slaves and different types of cloth were the chief acquisitions. In Allada, Benin and the Gabon Rivers they obtained slaves, ivory and African cloth.

In Angola, Loango and Congo, the Company employees purchased similar products at the coastal markets. Slaves, ivory and wax were the main acquisitions. However, the WIC

---

<sup>89</sup> J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 23-42.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 23-42.

<sup>91</sup> Albert van Dantzig & Adam Jones (trans. & eds.), *Pieter de Marees: Description*, pp. 51-53.

also bought foodstuffs to meet the daily needs of the Company personnel, especially when the WIC ships in charge of logistics did not reach the settlements.

To recapitulate, over time the 'Dutch' private traders and the WIC employees became more involved in the intra-continental trade of African goods to supply several coastal areas. However, their engagement in this commerce was mainly due to the merchants and the Company needing to supply the long-distance circuits with African products, mainly slaves, ivory and gold, which were in high demand in the European and the American markets. The coastal trade in African goods was also useful in order to supply the garrisons and trading posts of the Company with some provisions whenever European shipments failed.

The Portuguese traders, for their part, visited the African supply markets to cater the long-distance routes, to meet the needs of the settlements and to supply the African coastal markets. Therefore, the products exchanged were not always identical to those bought by the Dutch.

The Cape Verdean ships operating in the route Santiago–Senegambia imported mainly slaves, ivory, maize and rice. They also navigated the circuit Archipelago–Sierra Leone, where they acquired kola, while ships departing from the islands to the Gambia River bought mainly slaves and ivory. In the route Cape Verde–Sierra Leone–Petite Côte–Cape Verde, the Cape Verdean traders would purchase kola and iron bars at Sierra Leone and re-export them to the Petite Côte. Once there, these commodities would be exchanged for slaves, cloth and wax. These products would be then transported to the Guinea-Bissau region, where the cloth would be sold.

The trade conducted by the *lançados* in the Senegambia, the Guinea-Bissau region and the Sierra Leone estuary was not very different from the commercial activities carried out by the Cape Verdean settlers. In these circuits, they usually bartered kola and iron bars from Sierra Leone for slaves, hides, ivory, wax and some gold in the Gambia River and the Petite Côte. These products were frequently re-sold to the European traders present in several ports of present-day Senegal.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> George E. Brooks, 'Historical perspectives on the Guinea-Bissau region' in Carlos Lopes (dir.), *Mansas, Escravos, Grumetes e Gentio*, pp. 34-40; *idem*, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, pp. 60-63.

At Allada, Benin, the Gabon River and Cape Lopez, the Portuguese colonists and merchants of São Tomé purchased slaves, beads and other African products. These goods were used for local consumption on the islands, to be re-exported to other African regional markets in the Gulf of Guinea and to supply the long-distance routes.

In West-Central Africa (Loango, Kongo, and Angola), the Portuguese obtained a wide variety of products at several supply markets.<sup>93</sup> On the shores of the Kwanza River, the traders were able to buy foodstuffs, slaves, ivory, wood for different uses, African cloth, wax and salt, especially from Demba (present-day in the Huambo province, Angola). On the shore of the Bengo River, the merchants fetched water and obtained victuals of different kinds; on the Dande River, they acquired wood and firewood as well as clay and stones. Along the Lucala River, the merchants also obtained provisions and slaves.<sup>94</sup> The main products available at Benguela were beads, slaves and ivory, as well as foodstuffs.<sup>95</sup> In the Dembos, the chief goods available were slaves, ivory and African cloth.<sup>96</sup> At the hinterland fairs, the Portuguese, mixed-descent and African traders obtained slaves, ivory and all the provisions needed for the journey to the coast.

To summarize, in the three regions under study, the Portuguese and mixed-descent traders and colonists were deeply engaged in several intra-continental circuits, visiting several supply markets and meeting the demands of both the African and the Portuguese settlements' consumption markets.

---

<sup>93</sup> IAN/TT, *Inquisição de Lisboa*, book no. 776; J. D. La Fleur, (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>94</sup> Along the shores of the Angolan rivers, the settlers and their slaves were engaged in the agricultural production of various goods, such as maize, mandioca/manioc, beans, different types of fruit trees (orange, fig, pomegranate, lime and lemon trees), melons and watermelons, vegetables and some wheat. In addition, they raised cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry. These foodstuffs were sold to the vessels sailing on these rivers. António de Oliveira Cadornega, *História geral das guerras angolanas* III, pp. 30-256.

<sup>95</sup> In the surroundings of the main urban settlement – São Filipe de Benguela – there were several farms cultivating agricultural products and fruit, and raising cattle, sheep, goats, etc. The beads from Benguela were called *zimbro* and used as currency in the Congo River.

<sup>96</sup> António de Oliveira Cadornega, *História geral das guerras angolanas* III, pp. 30-256.

## 5. West African consumption markets

In order to purchase African goods at the several supply markets examined earlier, the Dutch and the Portuguese had to meet the demands of the different West African consumption markets.

Usually, the African products were bartered for European goods such as linen and woollen cloth, metalware (iron and copper) and Venetian beads.<sup>97</sup> Pins, fish-hooks, mirrors, milk jugs and knives were also in high demand. Over time, other products were introduced, such as alcoholic beverages, weapons and gunpowder. Alongside the European commodities, these coastal markets were also supplied with African goods purchased at different points along the continent.

In Senegambia, the Guinea-Bissau region and Cape Verde, there was a specific demand for kola and iron bars from Sierra Leone, cotton cloth from the Petite Côte of Senegal and Cape Verde, salt from the Cape Verde islands, and locally produced foodstuffs.

The coastal regions of the Gulf of Guinea consumed European textiles, metalware and Venetian beads. However, the markets on the Slave Coast and the area between the Corisco Bay and Cape Lopez only looked for African products such as slaves and cotton cloth.

The West-Central African markets were also importers of European cloth, copper and iron wares, beads, alcoholic beverages, weapons and gunpowder. These consumption markets also needed to be supplied with African products like red dyewood, beads, cotton cloth, salt, slaves and others.

To meet the specific consumption patterns of these markets and to obtain the goods to supply the long-distance routes, the Dutch and the Portuguese merchants engaged in the trade of African products.

In the Senegambia/Cape Verde, both the 'Dutch' private traders and later the Company employees used European textiles, metalware and Venetian beads as well as 'unusual' objects to purchase African goods. Only a limited volume of African products were used as barter in these coastal markets.

---

<sup>97</sup> Metalware comprised various objects such as basins, cauldrons, iron bars, etc.

The Gulf of Guinea markets were the ones where the Dutch were forced to supply African goods. The African cotton cloths purchased at the Grain and Ivory Coasts, Allada and Benin were supplied to the African traders on the Gold and the Slave Coasts as well as at Corisco Bay, the Gabon River, Cape Lopez and to the Portuguese colonists of São Tomé. The slaves obtained at Allada, Rio Real, Rio Del Rey and the Cameroon River (present-day Bight of Biafra) were sold to the indigenous traders on the Gold Coast, Corisco Bay, the Gabon River, Cape Lopez and to the Portuguese settlers of São Tomé. The *akori* acquired at Allada, Cameroon River, Corisco Bay and Rio del Rey was re-sold on the Gold Coast.<sup>98</sup> All these African products were bartered for gold, ivory, and later slaves.

Most of the African commodities acquired by the 'Dutch' private traders and later by the Company employees at Cape Lopez, Mayumba, the Congo River, the Loango Coast and Angola were bartered for European goods: mainly textiles, muskets and gunpowder.<sup>99</sup> However, from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Dutch private merchants operating in these regions also supplied the African traders on the Congo River with red dyewood imported from Mayumba.

The 'Dutch' merchants only started to trade in African goods to supply the local consumption markets in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Before that, they only purchased African goods to meet the needs of the European consumption markets. Nevertheless, the volume of the intra-continental trade in African goods was always low, both before and after the establishment of the WIC. However, under the rule of the Company, the number of references concerning the intra-continental trade increased. It seems that after a few years of settlement on the Coast, the Company realised how much it could profit from the regional trade of local products and, therefore, tried to gain from it. By then, the WIC had also realised how important this local trade was for the daily survival of the posts and settlements in West Africa.

Like the Dutch, the Portuguese merchants also supplied these African coastal markets with European commodities. Initially, textiles, metalware and beads were the prime

---

<sup>98</sup> Adam Jones (transl. & ed.), *West Africa in the mid-seventeenth century*, pp. 72, 77-127, 158-165, 176 & 233; Klaas Ratelband (ed.), *Vijf dagregisters*, pp. lxiii-cx; Albert van Dantzig and Adam Jones (trans. & ed.), *Pieter de Marees: Description*, pp. 51-53; J. D. La Fleur (trans. & ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's journal*, pp. 42-102; 'Samuel Brun's voyages of 1611-20' in Adam Jones (ed.), *German Sources*, pp. 45-96.

<sup>99</sup> Adam Jones, (trans. & ed.), *West-Africa in the mid-seventeenth century*, pp. 72-194; Louis Jadin (ed.), *L'Ancien Congo et l'Angola* I-III.



exchange goods, but, over time, alcoholic beverages were in high demand in these areas.<sup>100</sup> However, a substantial part of the business with the African and mixed-descent merchants in these regions was conducted with goods bought at the neighbouring coastal markets.

The Africans on the Gambia River were mainly supplied with alcoholic beverages, European merchandise and kola imported from Sierra Leone. The indigenous traders in Sierra Leone were provided primarily with salt and cotton textiles imported from the Cape Verde Archipelago.<sup>101</sup> The same cotton cloth was made available at the Guinea-Bissau markets; though these cotton textiles could also be brought from the Petite Côte of Senegal. The slaves, ivory, hides, wax and gold bought in these areas were re-exported to Europe, the Atlantic Archipelagoes and the American colonies via the long-distance routes. However, some of the slaves were kept on the islands to meet the needs of the local labour market.<sup>102</sup> The kola, the iron bars and the Senegalese and Cape Verdean textiles, however, were bartered in the coastal markets of the Gambia River, the Petite Côte of Senegal, and the Guinea-Bissau region for slaves, ivory, wax, etc. The provisions were used both for local consumption in the Archipelago and to supply the fleets operating in the inter-continental circuits.<sup>103</sup>

African goods purchased at Allada, Benin, Bight of Biafra, Corisco Bay, Gabon River and Cape Lopez or produced in São Tomé were also bartered for goods to meet the demands of the consumption markets in the Gulf of Guinea by the Portuguese merchants and colonists. The slaves, cloth and beads purchased on the coast were re-sold at the Portuguese fortress-factories of Mina, Axim and Shama. These products would be bartered for gold brought by the African merchants from the hinterland. In exchange for these goods

---

<sup>100</sup> José C. Curto, *Enslaving spirits: the Portuguese-Brazilian alcohol trade at Luanda and its hinterland, c. 1550-1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); *idem*, *Alcool e Escravos. O comércio luso-brasileiro do álcool em Mpinda, Luanda e Benguela durante o tráfico atlântico de escravos (c.1480-1830) e o seu impacto nas sociedades da África Central Ocidental* (Lisboa: Vulgata, 2002); *idem*, 'Vinho versus cachaça em Angola' in Selma Pantoja and José Flávio S. Saraiva (eds.), *Angola e Brasil nas rotas do Atlântico Sul* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Bertrand, 1998), pp. 69-97.

<sup>101</sup> Cotton cloth was in high demand both in the Sierra Leone and in the Guinea-Bissau region. To profit from this high demand the Portuguese traders and colonists of Cape Verde decided to grow cotton on Fogo Island and to manufacture similar textiles to be sold in these regions.

<sup>102</sup> For further information on the activities of the slaves in Cape Verde see Chapter 3.

<sup>103</sup> George E. Brooks, 'Historical perspectives on the Guinea-Bissau region' in Carlos Lopes (dir.), *Mansas, Escravos e Grumetes*, pp. 34-40; *idem*, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, pp. 60-63; Maria Manuel Torrão, 'Formas de participação dos portugueses no comércio de escravos com as Índias de Castela' in *II Reunião Intenacional de História de África*, pp. 203-222; *idem*, 'Rotas comerciais, agentes económicos, meios de pagamento', pp. 17-123; *idem*, 'Actividade comercial externa de Cabo Verde' in Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (coord.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde I*, pp. 237-345; *idem*, 'Colonização de Cabo Verde' in Luís de Albuquerque (dir.), *Portugal no Mundo II*, pp. 150-170.

the São Tomé traders probably received European goods. As the gold trade at the Mina started to decline in the 1530s and 1540s, this route also lost importance.<sup>104</sup>

In the West-Central African markets, the situation was identical. For instance, the *zimbro* beads bought at Benguela were used as currency in the trade on the Congo River. The red dyewood purchased at Mayumba, the Congo River and the Loango Coast was re-sold at Luanda both to meet the local consumption needs and to supply the long-distance circuits. In general, the foodstuffs, water, wood, stones, and clay obtained at different places along the estuaries of the Kwanza, Bengo, Dande and Lucala Rivers met both the needs of the settlers and their slaves in Luanda, the main fortresses along the Kwanza River and Benguela. The provisions were also used to supply the fleets operating on the long-distance routes. The slaves, ivory, and wax were re-exported via the inter-continental circuits to the American and European consumption markets, although the colonists also acquired a considerable number of slaves for agriculture, construction, shipbuilding and maintenance.<sup>105</sup>

To sum up, the relationship between Dutch, Portuguese, Eurafricans and Africans in the hinterland areas played a key role in their relationship in the coastal areas. The Portuguese were able to penetrate into the hinterland via the family ties established with local women and the straightforward relations with the African rulers, whereas the Dutch only interacted with the hinterland and their inhabitants sporadically for diplomatic and commercial purposes. Moreover, the settlement process of the Portuguese in Cape Verde, São Tomé and Angola stimulated the development of multiple coastal circuits to fulfil the needs of the colonists, the development of agriculture and production of products to introduce on these routes. These cross-cultural encounters will be analysed in detail in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, the intra-continental routes developed by the Portuguese merchants, the Cape Verdean and São Tomé settlers and the Eurafricans in these regions supplied both the coastal and long-distance routes with merchandise in demand on the African, European and American consumption markets. The 'Dutch' traders, in contrast, purchased the African products mainly to be re-exported to Europe and the Americas. Therefore, the Portuguese

---

<sup>104</sup> J. Bato'Ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina I*, pp. 302-394; J. L. Vogt, 'Notes on the Portuguese cloth trade in West Africa', *The International Journal of African Studies*, 8/4 (1975), pp. 623-651; *idem*, 'The early São Tomé-Príncipe Slave trade with Mina', *The International Journal of African Studies*, 6/3 (1973), pp. 453-467.

<sup>105</sup> António de Oliveira Cadornega, *História geral das guerras angolanas III*, pp. 20-256.

and the Eurafrican merchants seem to have been deeper engaged in the intra-West African trade than the Dutch were. Hence, from an economic point of view, the Portuguese were in an advantageous position, because they had more direct access to the supply markets. This privileged situation would have its impact on the coastal and the long-distance trade, since they had an easier access to the African slaves and products in demand in the African, the European and the American consumption market.

The West African coastal and hinterland trade played a key role in the formation of the Atlantic system. In addition, the access and control of the Europeans over the African supply markets was crucial for their success or failure in the Atlantic inter-continental commerce, which will be under analysis in the following chapter.