Decay or defeat ? : an inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia 1580-1645

Veen, Ernst van

CHAPTER VI

THE COMING OUT OF THE DUTCH

The Dutch-Portuguese linkage

It was in the spirit of the time that towards the end of the sixteenth century Europeans were reconsidering the justification for monopolies at sea in general[1] and the Portuguese monopoly of the trade on the Indies in particular. English privateers had already given the example: Drake had been in the Moluccas in 1579, Cavendish in Java in 1587 and Lancaster in Sumatra in 1592.[2]

The Dutch began to show their first interest in 1592, when, due to the lack of arrivals in Lisbon in 1591, the supplies of Portuguese pepper to the North dwindled to zero. In that year the publisher Cornelis Claesz obtained a licence from the States-General for the printing or drawing of twenty-five sea maps, which he had bought through mediation of Plancius from Bartholomeo de Laso, cartographer of the king of Spain[3] and on 8 October 1594 a licence was given to Jan Huygen van Linschoten for his three volumes thick *Itinerario*.[4] Besides being a navigation and travel guide, this edition also served to evoke curiosity about the many, sometimes also forbidden, fruits and richnesses of the tropics.

Nevertheless, there was still hesitation to challenge the Portuguese-Spanish military and naval power that was supposedly defending the royal monopoly and in 1594 Cornelisz, Barentsz and IJsbertsz of Enkhuizen received their first instruction to find a passage to China, via the North, the costs being paid by the States of Holland and Zealand.[5] The preparations for the first Dutch expedition around the Cape began in 1593, and Cornelis de Houtman, who had spent two years as an agent in Portugal, where he had been able to gather information on the Portuguese trade in Asia,[6] departed from Texel in 1595, with the first issue of Van Linschoten's route

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[1] The French ambassador Buzanval wrote to Van Oldenbarnevelt:'la mer est un élément commun et l'usage presque aussi libre que celuy de l'air' [J.A. van der Chijs, *Geschiedenis der stichting van de Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie en der maatregelen van de Nederlandsche regering betreffende de vaart op Oost-Indië, welke aan deze stichting voorafgingen* (Leyden 1857) 291].

[2] *Van der Chijs* 1857: 16. The French were the first who dared to challenge the papal bulls of the 1450s. Whether Paulmier de Gonville from Honfleur has indeed reached Madagascar in 1503 is not absolutely certain, but it is a fact that the brothers Parmentier from Dieppe arrived in Sumatra in 1526 [François Pyrard, Albert Gray, H.C.P. Bell (ed.tr.), *The voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Molucas and Brazil* (London 1887-1890) I, x]. The first attempts of the English to reach Asia around the North date from 1553. A quarter of a century later Magalhães' achievement was repeated by Francis Drake, who returned in England in 1580.

[3] Plancius himself received out of the extraordinary revenues of the States-General three hundred guilders, because in November 1591 he had dedicated a large map of the world to them [*RSG*: volume 7, 743-745], whereas in 1594 once again he received a licence for the printing of maps.

[4] *RSG*: volume 8, 362-363.

[5] *RSG*: volume 8, 337, 547, 631-634 and *Van der Chijs* 1857: 21-28.

[6] *Van Dillen* 1958: 6.

descriptions and a few Portuguese maps on board.

Many paradigms have been built and broken down again around the question why the Dutch became involved in the Asian trade in the first place and why they were so late. Some authors have suggested that they took this initiative because, as a consequence of the unification of the two Iberian crowns in 1580 and the embargoes of the 1580s and 1590s, the Dutch were cut off from their supplies, or that the fall of Antwerp in 1585 had such an effect. The answer to the question why they were so late has included suggestions like: there was no money, they had no ships and they lacked the knowledge.

In fact, until 1591, there was no justification whatsoever for the Dutch to engage in such an adventurous enterprise. After all, there had been a two-hundred years' tradition of Dutch-Portuguese trade and the free flow of pepper and spices to Holland and Zealand had almost always been guaranteed.

From the early time that a Portuguese nation was established in Bruges and later in Antwerp,[7] the greater part of the navigation and trade between Portugal and Flanders had been in Portuguese hands. Unger's research shows that at least from 1497, Portuguese ships arrived in Middelburg and Arnemuiden, the *emporia* for the rich trade, which included the sugar from Madeira, the Canaries and São Tomé, and the cloves, ginger and pepper from Asia.[8] In 1550, because of the high losses of ships to French pirates and to eliminate Breton competition, Charles V prohibited the use of small ships to and from Antwerp and made the navigation in convoys compulsory.[9] The new legislation on the size of the ships worked out advantageously for the Dutch shipowners, who, with an adapted form of the *karveel*,[10] took over the Antwerp Iberian shipping route almost completely. The geographical position of Antwerp, with its inland connections, made it an ideal base for the integration of the shipments of salt, wines, spices, olive oil, sugar, pearls and brazil wood from Portugal to the North with that of Baltic wheat, iron, masts, ropes, tackles and rigging and Dutch or Flemish textiles to the South. The new type of ship enabled them to complete the whole triangle, from the Netherlands to the Bay of Biscay and from there to the Baltic ports in one season.[11] As a result the harbour of Antwerp became dominated

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[7] The first privileges to the Portuguese in Bruges date from 26 December 1411 [João Martins da Silva Marques, *Descobrimentos Portugueses* (Lisbon 1988) Vol.I supl. 82-88, no. 62].

[8] W.S. Unger, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van Middelburg in den landsheerlijken tijd* (The Hague 1923) Vol.III.

[9] J.A. Goris, *Etude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567* (Louvain 1925) 146-148. Placard of 19 January 1550 concerning the size of ships carrying valuable cargo. Vessels to and from France, England, Norway, Sweden and Denmark and the East of the Baltic had to be at least 40 tons, those to Spain, Portugal, Andalucia, Levant, Canarians, Madeira, S.Tomé etc. 80 tons [Cornelis Cau,*Groot Placaetboek* vol.IV 1219]. The latter figure was later increased to 200 tons [*Goris* 1925: 159].

[10] Jan de Vries, Ad van der Woude, *Nederland 1500-1815. De eerste ronde van moderne economische groei* (Amsterdam 1995) 417-418.

[11] As far as spices were concerned, the direct trade between Lisbon and the Baltic had a great disadvantage in that ships from India would normally arrive in Lisbon by the end of August. At that time there were no ships willing to go to Danzig because of the risk to get caught in the ice later in the year, so that the merchandise had

by Dutch ships,[12] which were hired by the Portuguese, Flemish and Dutch merchants and their representatives in Lisbon, Antwerp, Middelburg and Amsterdam.

For the Dutch skippers the ports of Oporto, Viana, Aveiro, Lisbon, Cascais and Setúbal were well-known destinations and many of the Dutch staying in Portugal had special privileges such as guarantees for the security of persons and merchandise, the right of free indoor religious services, their own jurisdiction to resolve mutual problems, and the use of royal judges in case there were differences with the Portuguese. All this under one condition: that they would not trade with Spain and only with the Portuguese.[13] For the Dutch skippers their good connections with the Portuguese merchant communities were an important factor in surviving the Habsburg 'embargoes' and confiscations of the 1580s and 1590s.

The 'embargoes' of the 1580s

One of the paradigms, apparently still standing, is that the embargoes on Dutch shipping into Spain or Portugal would have prevented Dutch access to the pepper and spices from the East.

For a long time the hostilities between the Castilians and the Dutch rebels, which began in 1572, and the Castilian annexation of Portugal in 1580 were of limited consequence for the Dutch-Iberian trade. The Dutch merchants, shipowners and skippers and even the municipalities and provinces did not always feel that they should draw one line against the 'common enemy'and certainly not against Portugal. IJzerman's publication of Amsterdam freight contracts[14] and Kernkamp's 'The trade with the enemy'.[15] have confirmed this. The fact that the trade was interrupted from time to time by the confiscation of ships is also well known, but the effects of the embargoes before 1621 have been largely exaggerated.[16]

In the first place, the confiscation of ships was not an invention of the Habsburgs: for centuries it had been a regular practice to use foreign ships for military transport, simply seizing them and, if the owners were lucky, paying the skippers afterwards for their services. For instance in April 1578, when Portugal was still independent, king Sebastião confiscated the ships that were bringing

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to stay in Lisbon until spring, and one could not expect the return voyage from there until the spring the year thereafter, so that the capital invested in the merchandise remained committed for at least one and half year [Letter from Cunertorf in Lisbon, dated 4/11/1579 in J. Nanninga Uitterdijk, *Een Kamper handelshuis te Lissabon 1572-1594. Handelscorrespondentie, rekeningen en bescheiden* (Zwolle 1904) LXXI, 260-261].

[12] *Goris* 1925: 158-162.

[13] *Van der Chijs* 1857: 3.

[14] J.W. IJzerman, 'Amsterdamsche bevrachtingscontracten, 1591-1602' in *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek* 17 (1931) 163-291.

[15] J.H. Kernkamp, *De handel op den vijand 1572-1609, Volume I 1572-1588* (Utrecht 1931).

[16] Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch primacy in world trade 1585-1740* (Oxford 1989) 30-31 has suggested delaying factors such as economic recession, the embargoes on Dutch ships and goods in Spain and Portugal by Philip II (1585-1589) and the retaliatory prohibition on trade with Spain, Portugal and the Southern Netherlands by the Earl of Leicester in April 1586.

corn to Lisbon, to serve him for his disastrous attack on Africa.[17]

Nor were the embargoes on the Dutch-Iberian trade, as is often suggested, the exclusive prerogative of the Castilian king. In the Dutch Republic the political events in Portugal after the death of king Sebastião were followed with great interest. Already in 1578 the States of Holland and Zealand issued a placard, restricting the trade on Spain: only a few ships at a time were allowed to leave, which had to return first before the next batch would obtain permission to go.[18] In 1579 Portugal was included in that prohibition because of rumours that the Castilians might take foreign vessels to use them in their war against Portugal.[19]

As from 1580 the navigation and trade to the Iberian peninsula were subject of repeated discussions in the States- General and the councils of the provinces. Fear to lose ships with their crews and artillery, which were scarce and difficult to replace, competed with the need to receive public revenues from the licences and with the wish of the traders to make a profit. Agreement was reached on allowing the navigation to France as a safe alternative, e.g. to Brouage or the port of Saint Jean de Luz, but most of the representatives preferred to maintain a direct link with the peninsula.[20]

Whatever was decided had little to do with what happened in reality. The States-General had only limited possibilities to actually control the destinations of the ships that were departing for Portugal or Spain. In January 1581 the traffic to Spain and Portugal was prohibited because of the risk of confiscation,[21] but in June 1581 a correspondent of a Kamper trading house in Antwerp reported that on one day in May more than 200 ships had left Zealand for France, Spain and Portugal to buy salt.[22] In that same year the Portuguese 'nation' in Amsterdam obtained renewal of their safe conduct for their trade on the Iberian peninsula,[23] so that also that route to the Portuguese pepper and spices was kept open.

One year later the Duke of Anjou and William of Orange together issued a placard, prohibiting trade with the enemy, even under licence. Four months later the prohibition was lifted again, to be immediately reinstated by the States-General.[24] Nevertheless, in their meetings it was repeatedly reported that Dutch ships had run through the blockade of Treslong, in order 'to trade with the enemy'.[25] In November 1583 trade with the enemy was openly permitted to licensees, who would thus be paying for the costs of war.[26] From thereon, when the trade was allowed, the sale of licences brought

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[17] *Nanninga Uitterdijk* 1904: L.

[18] *Kernkamp* 1931: 101, *Nanninga Uitterdijk 1904:* 104.

[19] A few days later this measure was relaxed, allowing ships to go and find out first what was going on before entering a Portuguese harbour, but a month later the prohibition was in full force again. In January 1580 Dutch ships were indeed confiscated by the Castilians to be used against Portugal [*Kernkamp* 1931: 108, *Nanninga Uitterdijk* 1904: 286-293].

[20] *Kernkamp* 1931: 116-121.

[21] *RSG*: volume 3, 305.

[22] *Nanninga Uitterdijk* 1904: LXXXIV, 345.

[23] *RSG*: volume 3, 305-306. The first safe conduct was issued in 1577.

[24] *Kernkamp* 1931: 125-128.

[25] *RSG*: volume 4, 337-342.

[26] *Kernkamp* 1931: 140-155.

the necessary revenues and when the political situation asked for it, the issue of licences was stopped.

In 1585 the Dutch initiative in prohibiting the Iberian trade was taken over by Philip II. According to Geoffrey Parker, who published the latest on this issue,[27] Philip acted upon the advice from Granvelle to hit the Dutch rebels in their trade, but under the pretext that he needed the ships for his naval operations, just like the confiscations that had taken place in 1582 and 1583 or would take place in the years 1586-1588. The effect of Philip's embargo would further have been reinforced by a placard issued in April 1586 by Leicester,[28] prohibiting residents and foreigners to bring merchandise from the United Provinces or from other countries to territories under the king of Spain or to trade with them. Even special permission was required for bringing food, war and ship's materials to neutral countries. Other goods could only be exported or brought along the coast, if they were registered and convoy money had been paid. The ruling met strong opposition from Amsterdam and Holland, which grew when in May 1586 twenty-five Hanze ships were found to be carrying wheat from Hamburg to Spain and Portugal. It is also interesting to note that at the same time, the skippers from Holland and Zealand were using false passports, which enabled them to carry English goods to the Iberian peninsula.[29]

It is regrettable that the larger part of the notarial archives of Amsterdam from before 1590 got lost. This has created the impression that there was hardly any commercial activity between the northern Netherlands and Lisbon before that time and that therefore Philip's 'embargo' of 1585 was effective.[30] In fact, because the Dutch skippers had learned to approach the Iberian ports with apprehension, their losses remained limited so that a few months later the Iberian trade could be taken up again. From 1575 to 1621 the number of ships coming from Portugal and passing through the Sound fluctuated year by year. The dip caused in 1585 was maybe exceptional, but very short. It lasted exactly three years and was compensated by a peak in 1590:[31] eighty-four per cent of the export and seventy-three per cent of the imports of Danzig went through Dutch hands and Philip II had to lift his embargo in that year, in order to combat the Iberian famine.[32]

From the freighting documents still left it is also abundantly

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[27] Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven/London 1998) 173-174, notes 93-98.

[28] *Israel* 1989: 31 has made a special point of Leicester's prohibition, because it would have enhanced the effectiveness of the Castilian embargo of 1585.

[29] *Kernkamp* 1931: 188-205, 221-229. For a discussion about Leicester's motives see Victor Enthoven, *Zeeland en de opkomst van de Republiek. Handel en strijd in de Scheldedelta c. 1550-1621* (Leiden 1996) 114-119.

[30] *Israel* 1989: 31. Or was it 1584? [*De Vries* 1995: 435].

[31] Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal, le Brésil et l'Atlantique au XVIIe siècle (1570-1670)* (Paris 1983) 603, Virgínia Rau, *Estudos sobre a história do sal Português* (Lisbon 1984) 208, 222. For a full discussion of the westerly trade after 1585 see Hans de Haan, *Moedernegotie en grote vaart. Een studie over de expansie van het Hollandse handelskapitaal in de 16e en 17e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1977) 46-55.

[32] *De Vries* 1995: 430. It is even doubtful whether the length of the dip was caused by the embargo or simply because the skippers did not want to run the risk of their ships being seized. See Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (New Haven/London 1998) 263.

clear that amongst the confusion created by the threats of confiscation and by the embargoes from both sides, the Dutch freighters, shipowners and skippers quite simply went their own way. Signed by Dutch freighters, the documents of that time continued to order skippers to sail from Amsterdam via Danzig, Koenigsberg or Riga to Lisbon or other destinations in Portugal, where they would get their money, and, in some cases, to proceed from there to Italy, Africa or Brazil.[33]

The 'embargoes' of the 1590s

For the Dutch merchants the supply of wheat to Portugal and Spain remained profitable, even if the ships had to go around Scotland.[34] The English objected to this half-hearted approach and from time to time intercepted the Dutch ships returning from the Iberian peninsula. In 1590 the States-General lodged protest and complained because they were just at the point of formally approving the trade on Spain.[35] As the States-General informed the French ambassador Buzanval, annually hundreds of Dutch ships departed for Spain or Portugal, often provided with passports from the Baltic towns or France. Spain needed the wheat and the trade paid for the war.[36] Furthermore, although in 1591 Philip prohibited all foreign navigation to the various parts of his empire,[37] it was not unusual in the 1590s for Dutch skippers or Dutch insurers to become involved in the Portuguese trade with India, the West Indies or the slave trade from Africa.[38] From the Dutch side, only the export of powder, saltpetre and weapons to Spain and Portugal remained officially prohibited.[39]

In March 1595 it was the competition in the person of Konrad Rott, the consul of the Germans and the Flemish, who proposed to the Spanish administration to put an embargo on the one-hundred Dutch ships, which were at that time in the ports of Lisbon and Setúbal. A few weeks later the embargo was put in effect and eighty-three ships from Holland and Zealand were caught, leaving fifty-three Dutch vessels cruising before the port of Setúbal, until they diverted to Brouage. A month later ninety-four ships were caught in Setúbal, whereas eighty others were still cruising in front of the estuary.[40] Of course, the news of the possibility of confiscation caused unrest amongst the shipowners in Holland. Some of them demanded cancellation of their contracts, deviation to a French harbour or appropriate financial guarantees, whereas some skippers refused to depart with the cargo they had on board for Portuguese

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[33] See *GAA*, Not.arch. Card index Lisbon/freighting as from 14th July 1586.

[34] *RSG*: volume 6, 276 and 633.

[35] *RSG*: volume 7, 78 and 85-101.

[36] *Van der Chijs* 1857: 17.

[37] *Biker* 1883: Vol.IV, 73.

[38] SR 1, vol 2 (1967) 116-117, nr. 17 dated 24/11/1597; SR 2 (1968) 116, nr 53 dated 17/1/1599; GAA Not.arch. 24 fo 274, Not. Jacob Ghysbertsz, dated 1/10/1598; GAA, Not.arch. 83 fo 165-165v, Not. JF Bruyningh, dated 6/5/1599.

[39] *RSG*: volume 7, 482.

[40] J. Gentil da Silva, *Stratégie des affaires à Lisbonne entre 1595 et 1607. Lettres marchandes des Rodrigues d'Evora et Veiga* (Paris 1956), 35-36, citing letters from the count of Portalegre to the king in Simancas.

ports.[41]

On 27 May 1595 the States-General discussed their own version of these events: Philip had struck again and more than four hundred Dutch ships would have been 'arrested'.[42] Consequently, they in turn prohibited the direct trade and navigation on Portugal, Spain and Italy (with the exception of Venice) and Bayonne and Rochelle now became the official endpoints for the Dutch ships coming from the Baltic.[43] However, many freight documents of that period suggest that the trade with Setúbal simply continued. 'General arrests' were never 'general' and the freighters quickly adapted to that situation when they concluded their contracts. Skippers would still go to Lisbon to receive the money to buy the salt, and were ordered, if they heard about confiscations in Setúbal, to buy it in Aveiro or otherwise in Brouage. The scope of the contracts in terms of cargoes and destinations was kept as wide as possible. The skippers would receive their final instructions from the agents in the different ports or make their own decisions, depending on the circumstances.[44] For obvious reasons, the local merchants in the Iberian ports did not support the confiscations either. In November 1595 Konrad Rott was sent to Setúbal to put an embargo on four Dutch ships. The local people of the town tried to prevent this and hoisted the sails, but the ships were nevertheless taken. The whole affair

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[41] GAA, Not.arch. 70 fo 70v, dated 11/5/1595; 69 fo 133, dated 20/5/1595; 73 fo 68v, dated 2/4/1596; 74 fo 157v, dated 15/6/1596; Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh.

[42] This information was probably an exaggeration if we compare the numbers quoted above. In the States-General an extensive discussion was held on the possibility that such an arrest might be repeated, in particular because of the lack of money in Spain due to the delay of the fleet from the West Indies (*RSG*: Volume 8, 619 and 623). A Dutch prohibition of the navigation on Iberian ports therefore appeared a sensible measure.

[43] *RSG*: Volume 9, 188, 278-279, 328, 461 and Volume 10, 780. A number of merchants preferred to use ships from Lübeck and Hamburg, which gave them the liberty to carry weapons, powder and ammunition [*RSG*: Volume 9, 332-333 and Volume 10, 350-351, 801-802]. The States-General considered that they were justified 'according to natural and other laws of all people' to prevent this trade and from that time the complaints of the Hanze towns about the 'impediments they were suffering in their free navigation to Spain' became a phenomena that repeated itself quite regularly [*RSG*: Volume 13, 625].

[44] A typical example of a voyage, demonstrating the Dutch approach to the Iberian embargoes can be found in a freighting document of 12 March 1596. Skipper Andries Jacopsen, with a ship of 100 last, had to sail from Zealand to Setúbal, to load salt which had to be brought to Danzig, Koenigsberg or Riga. After reloading with merchandise, he would return to Amsterdam or Emden. To obtain the cargo of salt in Setúbal the skipper had to contact commissioner Cornelis Matelieff in Lisbon. If the skipper received information that there was a General Arrest in Setúbal he had to load salt in Aveiro. If there was also an arrest in Aveiro he was to proceed and load salt in Brouage. Same instructions applied to a second voyage. If on the second voyage the skipper arrived at Texel later than fourteen days before All Saints day (1 November) he would not continue to the Baltic, but to Emden, Zealand or Amsterdam. In Emden the freighter would then load merchandise for Rochelle, where the skipper would discharge and reload with salt to be brought to Riga, where he would discharge and reload again with merchandise for Emden or Amsterdam. Alternatively, the skipper could also be sent to La Rochelle, instead of Emden, or with wheat to Lisbon, where he would discharge and reload with salt for Riga. [*GAA*, Not.Arch. 74 fo 23, dated 12/3/1596; Not.J.Fr.Bruyningh].

brought Konrad Rott into discredit amongst the Portuguese merchant community.[45]

The effect of the 'embargo' of 1595 was more or less the same as in 1585.[46] The situation was however greatly confused by the interference of the English privateers and the fleet of the Admiralty of the United Provinces and not in the least, by the many rumours that went around. In May 1596 the merchants in Lisbon reported that only two German ships had arrived out of a total of forty, because the English were keeping the Channel under control. At the same time the rumour went that a fleet of one-hundred-fifty English, Scottish, Dutch and Danish ships were on their way to attack Lisbon so that the merchants were leaving the city.[47] In September of that year came the news that the harvest in Algarve was forecast to be very bad, so that it would be necessary to obtain wheat from Germany.[48] It will be obvious that for a keen and daring Dutch ship owner or trader lots of money were to be made.

Contrary to the generally accepted idea that the Spanish prohibitions only became really effective after the end of the Twelve Years' Truce, Jonathan Israel has been suggesting that the impact of Philip's III measures against Dutch trade from 1598 onwards was very great. Using the freight contracts published by IJzerman and the tables of Bang, he concluded that both the number of freight contracts from Amsterdam to the Iberian peninsula and the number of Dutch voyages directly from there to the Baltic showed a sharp drop, which would last for many years.[49]

His findings are not confirmed by the data of Mauro or Rau,[50] which indirectly are also based on the tables of Bang. Considering the ineffectiveness of the previous embargoes, it is also hard to believe that the embargo of 1598, without any further strong and effective measures being taken, would have suddenly hit its target.[51] The explanation maybe a wrong use of statistics.

If one runs through the card index itself one cannot avoid the impression that in particular for the years 1586-1593 and 1599 and thereafter, the documents are not complete. This is not an exception; there are many more obvious *lacunae* in the card index, simply because the notarial documents got lost. For this reason, Vlessing has already noted earlier that the index to the Amsterdam notarial deeds (and that includes IJzerman's data) should not be used for quantitative research because it is incomplete.[52]

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[45] *Gentil da Silva* 1956: 42. A similar case occurred in 1625: attempts by the central authorities to confiscate foreign ships and their money were thwarted by the local *cameras* and courts. [Vitórino Magalhães Godinho,'1580 e a Restauração' in *Ensaios sobre história de Portugal* II (Lisbon 1968) 274-275].

[46] *Mauro* 1983: 603, *Rau* 1984: 208, 222.

[47] *Da Silva* 1956: 45, citing Simancas, Estado 434, fo 19 and 20, 23.

[48] *Da Silva* 1956: 48.

[49] *Israel* 1989: 56-57.

[50] Virgínia Rau, *Estudos sobre a história do sal Português* (Lisbon 1984) 222-223 uses the data from Aksel E. Christensen, *Dutch trade to the Baltic about 1600. Studies in the Sound Toll Register and Dutch shipping records* (Copenhagen/The Hague 1941).

[51] See also *Den Haan* 1977: 52.

[52] Odette Vlessing, 'The Portuguese jewish merchant community in seventeeth century Amsterdam' in C. Lesger, L. Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in early modern times. Merchants and industrialists within the orbit of the Dutch staple market* (The Hague 1995) 236 note 56. Her observation is certainly

According to Den Haan's data (also taken from Bang), as from 1599 there was a general reduction in the number of ships passing through the Sound, with a short dip in the Dutch share in these numbers in 1600.[53] At the same time however there was a shift towards a larger tonnage amongst the Dutch vessels.[54]

In April 1598 a fleet of 180 sails from Holland and Zealand prevented the navigation to Spain, whereas from their side the southern Netherlands prohibited the trade with Holland and Zealand.[55] In November of the same year high wheat prices were reported in Hamburg and Danzig, due to a bad harvest in Poland. As a result, even the wheat from Antwerp became competitive in Lisbon. In order to avoid famine it was announced that the Spanish embargo would not apply to the ships from Holland and Zealand bringing wheat.[56] One of the regular suppliers of that wheat to Oporto became one, Manuel Rodrigues Vega, Portuguese merchant in Amsterdam, who will be discussed hereafter.[57]

In January 1599 a placard of Archduke Albert prohibited once again the trade with Holland and Zealand. In April this was followed by a new prohibition by the States-General on the trade with Spain. At the same time, Dutch ships were getting rid of the competition by preventing any shipping from Germany into Spain.[58]

The Dutch community in Lisbon continued to exist until 1605. In that year the Dutch and all other foreigners who had relatives in the rebellious provinces and could be suspected of maintaining contacts with them, were forced to move at least twelve miles inland, away from the Iberian harbours. They were forbidden to trade, have any business or correspond with anybody in the rebellious countries.[59] From Sevilla most Dutchmen had already fled, but the measure had considerable repercussions in Lisbon, where twenty-four merchants were banned.[60] It may have been one of the most effective ways to undermine the Iberian trade of the Dutch and of the Flemish merchants who stayed in the northern Netherlands. Their agents in Lisbon were the people responsible for receipt and dispatch of ships and cargoes, payment of the duties, the provision of purchasing money and last but least, giving the final sailing instructions to the skippers. Banishment to places outside Lisbon, even if it was only twelve miles away, made their presence in Portugal totally ineffective. As a result, the measure put the Portuguese merchants in Lisbon, with their diffuse connections in Amsterdam, in an advantageous position.

The fall of Antwerp

A somewhat outmoded paradigm to explain the direct Dutch

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right as far as a quantitative comparison between years is concerned.

[53] *Den Haan* 1977: 195-198 appendix 3 and 4.

[54] *Den Haan* 1977: 203, appendix 7.

[55] *Da Silva* 1956: 58.

[56] *Da Silva* 1956: 61.

[57] *SR* 2 (1968) 115, nr 50 dated 12/10/1598. Many more freight documents for wheat on behalf of Vega can be found in GAA under entry 'Porto'.

[58] *Da Silva* 1956: 62-63.

[59] See placard from the King of Spain in Dutch translation, *Dutch Pamphlets ca. 1486-1648*, Royal Dutch Library The Hague, Knuttel Catalogue 1290/1291.

[60] Eddy Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders of de Handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld 1598-1648* (Brussels 1971) 11-12.

participation in the navigation to the Indies is that they would have been cut off from their nearest point of supply for pepper and spices by the loss of the port of Antwerp.

As is well known, the capture of Antwerp by Parma on 17th August 1585 was countered by the Dutch authorities with the so-called 'blockade' of the Scheldt, which would last until 1795. Ships coming to or from Antwerp via the Scheldt were forced to tranship their cargoes in Zealand ports, against payment of a licence fee to the States-General.[61] Although the 'blockade of Antwerp' became an important issue during the discussions around the Truce, it was hardly effective. In 1590 something like 1200 to 1500 voyages were undertaken from Middelburg, Flushing and Veere to destinations in the South Netherlands other than Antwerp.[62] Besides, the Scheldt and the Dutch licences could be avoided by making use of Calais and Dover.[63] When in 1605 the blockade was extended to the Flemish ports along the coast, Calais, Rouen and other French harbours took over, albeit at higher costs and with recurring difficulties with the French authorities.[64] The blockade caused the costs of transport between the Iberian peninsula and Antwerp to rise somewhat. Maybe not the bulk trade, but certainly the 'rich trade' could easily bear these additional costs.

For the Dutch economy and the revenues of the Republic the loss of Antwerp, which led to an inflow of people and capital, came as a godsend.

The immigrants from Antwerp

The fall of Antwerp in 1585 caused an immediate increase in the number of burghers (*poorters*) settling in Middelburg. Their arrival was followed, with a delay of about five years, by a short boom in the Middelburg trade, as can be deduced from the revenues from convoy money and licences,[65] but another five years later everything was back to 'normal' again.

The fugitives from Antwerp who could afford it, or had their contacts in the North or further inland, moved to Hamburg, Bremen, Emden, Stade or Frankfurt. Most of the Portuguese merchants who left Antwerp went to Cologne.[66] As shown in chapter 2 the Portuguese merchants who had high stakes in the financial world of Antwerp stayed where they were to attend to their affairs. Numerous Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and South Netherlands' firms continued to use the town as the administrative and financial headquarters for their

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[61] *De Vries* 1995: 436, *Israel* 1989: 30. According to De Vries the damage that Antwerp incurred due to the blockade was not worse than what was inflicted on them by the tax policies of their administration. Besides, the flow of trade was diverted to the coastal towns, like Ostend. See also, besides Enthoven's thesis, V. Enthoven, 'The closure of the Scheldt: closure, what closure?' in P. Holm, J. Edwards (eds.) *North Sea ports and harbours - adaptation to change.* Second North Sea History Conference in Esbjerg 1991 (Esbjerg 1992) 11-37.

[62] *Enthoven* 1996: 109-112, 328-329.

[63] *Enthoven* 1996: 327.

[64] *Stols* 1971: 13.

[65] *De Vries* 1995: 432.

[66] *Israel* 1989: 33-34.

commerce with England, North Germany and the Baltic.[67]

Furthermore, the Portuguese community of Amsterdam regularly obtained renewal of their safe-conduct from the States-General. In 1588 under the condition that they would not be allowed to exchange correspondence with the King of Spain or those who carried arms against Dutch subjects.[68] In 1592, they received a further interpretation of their safe-conduct: it also applied to goods and merchandise belonging to people of the Portuguese community living in Antwerp or other hostile places.[69] In August 1600 the States-General decided that the Portuguese nation would be allowed to trade with Brazil, but via Lisbon or Portugal.[70]

In other words, in principle the route for pepper, spices and other merchandise from Lisbon, directly or via Antwerp, was kept fully open. If, during the 1590s, they did not get into Amsterdam it was due to the lack of supplies or a too low price difference between the Amsterdam and Lisbon markets.

In terms of total immigration, after 1595, Middelburg was surpassed by Amsterdam as a point of attraction. After 1605 it lost its second place to Leiden, where the textile industry had become one of the strong pillars of the Dutch trade.[71] Amsterdam continued to attract migrants from many directions,[72] but in first instance from other towns in Holland and Zealand. Amongst them were the people from Antwerp who had first opted for Middelburg, but also from the German towns just mentioned.

Another side effect of the immigration was that Dutch skippers became more and more involved in the Atlantic trade. Their freight contracts of the 1590s sent them to Tangier, Ceuta, Cádiz, Madeira, the Azores, Africa, São Tomé and even to the Brazilian ports of Pernambuco or Bahia and from there back to Lisbon. The freight from Portugal to Brazil would normally consist of olive oil and wine, while the cargoes from Africa to Brazil were slaves. The return cargoes to Lisbon consisted of sugar and brazilwood.[73] On the exports

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[67] Herman van der Wee, *The growth of the Antwerp market and the European economy (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries)* (Louvain 1963) Vol. II, 278, 282.

[68] *RSG*:volume 6, 276.

[69] *RSG*: volume 7, 722. This ruling was to be given a wide interpretation by the Portuguese. One of the early Dutch voyages to the East brought back the cargo of the Portuguese ship *Santiago*, which was captured on 16 March 1602 near the island of St Helena,[See *Dutch Pamphlets ca 1486-1648*, Royal Dutch Library in The Hague, Knuttel catalogue nr 1181] carrying pepper, precious stones, silk, cotton and other valuable merchandise. The Portuguese living in the Netherlands who had invested in the cargo endeavoured in vain to obtain restitution of their shares. After the Admiralty of Zealand had forfeited the ship and its contents, the States-General decided that the letters of safe-conduct granted to the Portuguese did not apply to the trade between Brazil and São Tomé and Lisbon or other enemy ports and vice-versa, and that consequently the Portuguese could not reckon on their protection in this matter [*SR* 3 (1969) 239 note 22].

[70] *RSG*: volume 11, 341.

[71] *De Vries* 1995: 334-335.

[72] *De Vries* 1995: 432-433.

[73] GAA. Not.arch. 42 fo 84v, Not. L. Heylinc, dated 30/1/1592; Not.arch. 32 catern 2 fo 176, Not. Jacob Gijsberts, dated 15/2/1595; Not.arch. 76 fo 167v, 187v, 205, 208; 77 fo 68v, 69, Not. J.Fr.Bruyningh, all during the first half of 1597; Not.arch. 53 fo 422, L. Heylinc, dated 14/7/1599.

from the peninsula to Latin America and on the imports into Portugal the skippers or merchants had to pay 20 per cent duties and return cargoes from Brazil to Europe were supposed to pass through Lisbon so that duties could be paid. To make sure that the ships would return to Lisbon, skippers had to leave a deposit there before their departure to the other side of the Atlantic.[74]

One Dutch skipper declared he had made three voyages to Brazil and one to the West Indies,[75] and another contract included the conditions for calls at the Spanish Indies, Rio de la Plata and Rio de Janeiro.[76] Willem IJsbrantsen Dommer, skipper of the ship *Het Roode Meer*, transported soldiers in the service of the king of Spain, returning from Brazil. The fact that they also used his cabin suggests that either his voyage was not completely voluntary or that he made some extra money on the side by giving up his own comfort.[77] Apparently the risks for the voyages to Brazil were considered to be high: bottomry on the voyage from Zealand via Lisbon to Brazil and back to Lisbon yielded 50 per cent interest to the lender.[78]

Amongst the merchant immigrants involved in the Atlantic trade was a Hans de Schot,[79] who, from January 1594 until December 1598, could be found in Amsterdam, signing freighting contracts for the shipment of wheat, wood and other merchandise from Danzig, Koenigsberg or Amsterdam to Lisbon or Oporto and of southern merchandise back to Amsterdam or Hamburg. More adventurous were the big contracts, on his own behalf or that of the family of his Portuguese wife,[80] for voyages such as the one from Amsterdam to Danzig to load wheat for Tangier, from whence the voyage would continue to the Canary islands, Madeira or Cadiz, where wine had to be loaded for Brazil, from which the ship would return to Lisbon with brazil wood.[81] On one of the voyages the ship he had hired returned in Zealand instead of to Lisbon, but this case was not to remain unique...[82]

One of the occasional business contacts of Hans de Schot was Manuel Rodrigues Vega, a Portuguese most probably born in Antwerp in 1575,[83] who from 1595 or maybe earlier,[84] established himself

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[74] GAA, Not.arch. 79 fo 8v-12, Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 10/1/1598.

[75] *GAA* Not.Arch. 73, fo 5, J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 26/11/1595.

[76] *GAA*, Not.arch.78 fo 155-156v, Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 6/11/1597.

[77] *GAA*, Not.arch. 78 fo 168v, Not. J.Fr.Bruyningh, dated 12/11/1597.

[78] *GAA*, Not.arch. 76 fo 187v and 208, Not. J.F. Bruyningh, dated 4/4/1597.

[79] Hermann Kellenbenz, *Unternehmerkräfte im Hamburger Portugal- und Spanienhandel 1590-1625* (Hamburg 1954) 222-223.

[80] De Schot's brother-in-law António Ancelmo was a Portuguese born in Aachen, who joined the protestant colony in Hamburg [*SR* 2 (1968) 113 note 47].

[81] See *IJzerman* 1931: 163-291.

[82] *GAA*, Not. arch. 51 fo 88, Not. L. Heylinc, dated 8/5/1597. In 1601 a number of merchants, amongst them Manuel Rodrigues Vega and Cornelis Snellinck, stated that at various occasions different ships had loaded sugar and brazilwood in Brazil, without calling at Lisbon, which had been given as the ships' destination. Consequently, no duties had been paid to the king of Portugal and Spain, although a surety had been paid before the departure of the ships [*SR* 2 (1968), 257-258, nr. 87, dated 20/7/1601].

[83] Daniel M. Swetschinski, *The Portuguese merchants of seventeenth century Amsterdam: a social profile* (Ann Arbor, Mich.1979) 152-160.

[84] J.G. van Dillen, 'Vreemdelingen te Amsterdam in de eerste helft der zeventiende

as a 'merchant in Amsterdam'. In the early years of his career his basic trade was that of grains to Lisbon, Oporto or even Madeira, with textiles, fish, figs and other fruits as a sideline.[85] But the notarial archives of Amsterdam also mention ginger, cloves, nutmeg, ship ropes, and iron[86] and sugar and brazil wood from Brazil,[87] sometimes with destination Hamburg.[88] In 1596 he invested in the return cargoes of two ships of the *Carreira da Índia*, which he declared lost by the end of 1597.[89] Around the turn of the century he took shares in the early Dutch voyages to the East.[90]

After 1603 Manuel Rodrigues Vega invested more and more heavily in the Brazil trade, a fact which brought him in contact and sometimes in conflict with Cornelis Snellinck, who will be discussed hereafter. In 1610 Vega acquired a sugarmill in Bahia, with sixty-two slaves and about forty oxen, two boats, copperware and further necessities for making sugar.[91] Vega obviously 'grew' from being a European trader in wheat and textiles into an investor in overseas exotic businesses. Another Portuguese, García Pimentel, who came to Amsterdam at about the same time and around 1598 signed most of his contracts with voyages from Hamburg to Barbery and Livorno or to Marocco, thereafter never seems to have expanded his business beyond that of a grain trader between the Baltic and Portugal.[92]

The merchant who probably became most involved in the Brazil trade was of Flemish descent: Cornelis Snellinck, whose business activities were strongly connected with the Portuguese commercial worlds in Portugal and Antwerp.[93] In 1591 he appears for the first time in IJzerman's shipping contracts and in 1593 one could see

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eeuw. I. *De Portugeesche Joden*' in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 50 (1935) 6.

[85] *SR* 2 (1968) 115, nr. 50, dated 12/10/1598; nr.51, dated 30/10/1598.

[86] *SR* 1 (1967) 118-119, nr. 24, dated 1/4/1598.

[87] *SR* 2 (1968) 257-258, nr. 87, dated 20/7/1601; *SR* 3 (1969) 114-115, nr. 125, dated 29/3/1604.

[88] *SR* 2 (1968) 263, nr. 98, dated 7/8/1602.

[89] *SR* 1 vol.2 (1967) 116-117, nr. 17, dated 24/11/1597; *SR* 2 (1968) 116, nr. 53, dated 17/1/1599.

[90] *SR* 2 1968) 264-265, nr. 101, dated 16/8/1602; 266-267, nr. 105, dated 3/2/1603; 269-270, nr. 110, dated 19/4/1601; *SR* 3 (1969) 117-118, nr. 132, dated 14/4/1604. Vega's deposits amounted to 1200 pounds Flemish and 400 guilders in the 8 ships of Jacob van Heemskerck, leaving on 23 April 1601, 1600 pounds Flemish deposited with Dirck van Os and another 1250 pounds deposited with Laurens Baeck for the 14 ships of Wijbrandt Warwijck, departed in 1602; 550 pounds in 4 ships sailing in 1601 under different captains; 800 guilders in the voyage of 10 vessels, of which 4 under Wilkens, sailing in December 1599 and 5 under Jacob van Neck, who departed in May 1600 and another 400 guilders in 5 ships of Wolfert Harmensz. who departed Eastern 1601. Most of these shares he used to pay off outstanding commitments to Dirck van Os, but the fleet of 4 ships which left in 1601 yielded a profit: 160 % in cash plus 1/3 of the invested capital in pepper.[*SR* 3 (1969) 239, nr. 170, dated 5/1/1605].Another Portuguese merchant who invested in Warwijck's fleet of 14 ships and in the VOC was Diego Dias Querido [*SR* 5 (1971) 107, nr. 350, dated 18/5/1609].

[91] *SR* 5 (1971) 225-226, nr. 449, dated 27/2/1610; *SR* 6 (1972) 111, nrs. 553, 554, dated 25/6/1612.

[92] *SR* 1 vol.2 (1967) 110, nr. 7, dated 22/7/1596; 119-122, nrs. 25, 30, 32, 36, all in the year 1598; *SR* 2 (1968) 112, nrs. 40-43, dated 8/1598.

[93] Information on Cornelis Snellinck's background was kindly made available by Oscar Gelderblom of the University of Utrecht.

him acting as a successful proxy for Duarte Ximenez in Antwerp and a few merchants in Lisbon, getting another Portuguese merchant, Simon de Cordes, to pay his debts.[94] Five years later he was involved, amongst others together with Hans de Schot and, for many years to come with Manuel Rodrigues Vega, in the sugar and brazilwood trade in Lisbon, Antwerp and Amsterdam.[95] In 1600 he entered into a companionship with a few Flemish and Dutch merchants in Lisbon, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, to trade in Brazil, appointing a merchant from Antwerp as their representative in Bahia de todos os Santos.[96] In 1604 Cornelis Snellinck acted as a factor for the contractors of brazil wood, covering their interests in Hamburg as well.[97]

Another member of the 'Antwerp trust' was Dirck van Os, who had come to Amsterdam via Middelburg. He was to become a director of the *Compagnie van Verre* and of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC and the first subscription for the founding of the VOC took place in his house. He was also the initiator of the northern Netherlands' trade with Russia.[98] Van Os was very well connected with Rodrigues Vega and was even appointed as a sub-guarantor for the Admiral of Aragon[99] for the sum of 30,000 guilders.[100] Other southern names that would be coming to the fore in the later expansion of the Dutch trade include Isaacq Le Maire,[101] in 1595 a merchant in Amsterdam and Cornelis Matelieff, in 1596 still a commissioner in Lisbon but in 1598 also a merchant in Amsterdam.

The Atlantic-Asian divide

In the years 1595-1620 the number of Portuguese in Amsterdam grew slowly but steadily. Around 1602 there were probably not more than forty, but in 1612 there were about 200 male Jews.[102] The total number

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[94] *GAA* Not. arch. 61 fo 42v and 43v. Not.David Mostart, dated 14/10/1593.

[95] *GAA* Not.arch. 81 fo 108 Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 28/7/1598; 53 fo 422 Not. L. Heylinc, dated 14/7/1599; *SR* 3 (1969) 118-119, nrs. 133-138, dated April/May 1604; 87 fo 140-140v Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 1/8/1600; *SR* 2 (1968) 257-258, nr. 87, dated 20/7/1601; 34 fo 184-187 Not. J. Gijsbertsz., dated 15/5/1602; *SR* 3 (1969) 120, nr. 142, dated 11/5/1604; *SR* 3 (1969) 251-253, nr. 210, dated 10/4/1606; nr. 217, dated 17/5/1606; *SR* 4 (1970) 115, nr. 225 dated 22/7/1606.

[96] *GAA* Not. arch. 33 cover 14 fo 390v-392 Not. L. Heylinc and Jac. Gijsbertsz, dated 30/4/1600.

[97] *SR* 2 (1969) 119, nr. 138, dated 4/5/1604. In 1631 he was assessed for the two-hundredth *penning* to the amount of 40,000 guilders.

[98] J.G. van Dillen, *Het oudste aandeelhoudersregister van de Kamer Amsterdam der Oost-Indische Compagnie* (The Hague 1958) 110-111.

[99] This detail sheds also an interesting light on the connections of Vega with the 'arch enemy'. The Almirante de Aragon, Don Francisco de Mendoça, commander of the Spanish cavalry, was taken prisoner during the battle of Nieuwpoort in 1600. He was released in exchange for the Dutch prisoners of war in the Spanish lands. In order to ensure that the Spaniards would adhere to their part of the deal after the Almirante was released, Manuel Rodrigues Vega bound himself and his father for a surety of 50,000 guilders. The States-General in turn requested the burgomasters of Amsterdam to appoint amongst others Dirk van Os as a counter-guarantor for Vega to the amount of 30,000 guilders. [*SR* 2 (1968) 264, note 29].

[100] *SR* 2 (1968) 264-267, nrs. 100-101, dated 16/8/1602; nr. 105, dated 3/2/1603; *SR* 3 (1969) 117-118, nr. 132, dated 14/4/1604.

[101] *Van Dillen* 1958: 111-113.

[102] A.M. Vaz Dias, 'De deelname der Marranen in het oprichtingskapitaal der

of Portuguese migrating directly from Antwerp to the Dutch Republic remained however relatively small. Of those who married in Amsterdam during the years 1598-1690, more than 30 per cent were born in Portugal, 17 per cent came from Spain, another 17 per cent from France and only 7 per cent from the South Netherlands.[103]

Although the merchants amongst them sometimes had a stake in the Portuguese *Carreira da Índia*, they increasingly concentrated on the Atlantic trade. Rather than going further into other names of merchants, their background and the type of business they were involved in, a general review of the card systems of the Notarial Archives in Amsterdam will suffice to obtain a general impression.

From the years 1586-1597, there are still 188 Amsterdam freighting contracts left, which are concerned with the shipment, either directly or via Amsterdam, of cereals, wood or 'merchandise' to Lisbon or Oporto and of salt or other 'merchandise' from the South to the Scandinavian countries, Danzig or Koenigsberg. Of those 188, there is only one signed by a Portuguese. All the other contracts were undertaken by merchants of Dutch or Flemish background. During the year 1598, of the 152 contracts nineteen were undertaken by Portuguese, in particular by people mentioned earlier.

Many of these contracts mention as freight 'merchandise' (*koopmanschappen*), which causes some uncertainty: this could be salt, wheat, herring, textiles, or anything else. Money, diamonds, jewels or pearls, coming from Portugal were referred to separately; the extra profits resulting from the transport of these items were normally shared between the freighter and the skipper. Pepper and spices are not mentioned anywhere as freight, but they appear in the insurance claims for cargoes that were lost, or in claims because of bad quality. Apparently, in the freight contracts these commodities were supposed to be included in the *koopmanschappen*, and it is therefore a sure bet that the Dutch also had access to these products directly from Portugal.

Nevertheless, in terms of freight contracts, until 1600 bulk trade formed the major part of the Amsterdam based shipping business, with a certain involvement (say up to 12,5 per cent) of Portuguese.

Amongst the much smaller number of notarial documents pertaining to Brazil, São Tomé, Guinea, Angola or Madeira, during the years 1595-1600, twelve refer to Dutch/Flemish involvement and only one to a Portuguese. During the years 1601-1605 merchants of mainly Flemish background were involved in nine documents, Portuguese living in Amsterdam in eight documents, whereas seven reflect co-operation between Dutch, Flemish and Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam. This creates at least the impression that from 1600 the Portuguese were indeed slowly intruding into the Amsterdam-Lisbon-Brazil business, with Manuel Rodrigues Vega bearing the brunt, but followed by many others.

The reasons for this are not difficult to imagine. The Portuguese in Amsterdam had the choice between three lines of trade or combinations thereof. In the first place, as some of them did, they could step on the band waggon of the Portugal-Baltic trade. The development of the Dutch *fluit* ship, for the first time produced in 1595, with larger carrying capacity and smaller crew than the modified *karveel* and a higher speed, made it possible to make in

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Oost-Indische Compagnie' in *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 33 (1936) appendix III, 58.

[103] *Swetschinski* 1979: 80, table 1.

one year three to four voyages to the Baltic instead of two[104] and this had made the use of Dutch bulk transport highly competitive. Nevertheless, 30 to 40 per cent of the price of the salt laid down in the Baltic still consisted of transportation costs, because of its relatively low value. On the trip between Portugal and Amsterdam, two hundred ships carrying salt represented a wholesale value of about four ships of sugar and the profit made on sugar could therefore be higher.[105] The Portuguese of Amsterdam therefore had a strong preference for the Atlantic trade with sugar and brazilwood,[106] and thus followed the general trend amongst the merchants in Portugal. Furthermore, after 1605, when the Dutch and Flemish merchants and shipping agents were banned from the Iberian ports, the Portuguese of Amsterdam had easier access to the Brazil trade.

The third trade the Portuguese of Amsterdam were to remain active in for a long time to come was that of the Asian produce which the Dutch could not lay their hands on. Until the time that the Dutch were able to control the production of cinnamon,[107] the Portuguese continued to supply the Amsterdam market.

As far as pepper was concerned, after 1586, when its distribution in Europe was split off from the Asian contract, the *Casa da India* could dictate its price to the distributors, with the result, as suggested in chapter 3, that during the years 1593-1597 they were frequently making a loss. But also before that time fluctuating supplies or no supplies at all, as during the year 1591 when no ships arrived, made it an unpredictable business and for the Portuguese in Amsterdam the Atlantic trade was by far more reliable and profitable. Consequently, the Flemish and Dutch merchants living in Amsterdam or Hamburg tried to get the pepper and spices directly from Lisbon, albeit on a relatively small scale: as late as 1597 notarial documents confirm this.[108] But of course, the demand in the Netherlands itself would never have been high enough to justify an undertaking like the navigation all the way to the Indies. With Hamburg and Lübeck being cut short as well, the Amsterdam merchants may have seen opportunities in taking over the North European pepper and spice markets from the Portuguese distributors, but as a process of motivation and decision making, this sounds much more straight forward than it really can have been.

As long as the Portuguese supplies from around the Cape and the pepper and spices coming via the caravan route to Alexandria and from there to Venice, were able to satisfy the still limited demand in Europe, the merchants and skippers in the northern Netherlands had little justification for ignoring the royal Portuguese monopoly on the navigation to the Indies. It meant an investment in ships that would have to go mainly in ballast all the way to India and in return cargoes that would be exposed to unknown dangers on unknown routes and that would produce a return

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[104] *De Vries* 1995: 351.

[105] *Vlessing* 1995: 238-239.

[106] According to *Mauro* 1983: 161-162 Amsterdam was the main distribution centre for brazilwood, coming directly from Pernambuco or, via Lisbon, from Rio and Bahia.

[107] Until 1638 the notarial papers of Amsterdam refer to cinnamon as a product supplied by the Portuguese merchants.

[108] *GAA* Not.arch. 76 fo 118, Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 3/3/1597; 51 fo 50, Not. L. Heylinc, dated 9/4/1597; 76 fo 218v-219v, 229v, 230, Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 25/4/1597.

only after a very long time. One of those dangers was the ever-present possibility of being apprehended by the Portuguese, thus incurring the risk of confiscation of ships and merchandise and of the penalty of death for the crews.[109]

In that sense, the integrated Portuguese-Baltic trade was a much safer investment: it made relative quick returns in both directions. If entrepreneurs felt any need for a more profitable, but more risky business, they could find it in the Brazil trade, which officially was subject to duties, but was at least allowed by the Iberian crown. This was the direction followed by some of the southern immigrants, although, as discussed before, by the end of the 1590s the Portuguese who had come to Amsterdam gradually overtook them.

Finally, the question the merchants must have asked themselves is, how could they ever make the pepper business profitable, when the Portuguese had apparently failed?

One consideration may explain the first Dutch initiatives towards the Indies on strategic grounds. The ability to supply pepper and spices on the back of the bulk trade must have been an important factor in defending one's position in the Baltic and in gaining ground in the Levant trade.[110] When the Portuguese supplies to northern Europe began to falter, some English merchants had been very quick to take the initiative and send Captain Lancaster to the East Indies. He departed in 1591 and returned in 1594. His privateering *cum* trading expedition became a commercial and maritime disaster[111] and the Dutch must have been aware of this before their first expedition left, but that was no reason to believe that the English would not try again to get direct access to the pepper and spices in the Indies. Besides, the Hanseatic link between the Iberians and the Baltic was never to be underestimated. Therefore, the Dutch initiative should probably be seen as defensive: if they had not done it, somebody else would. The merchants supporting the enterprise were very careful indeed: nine participants were necessary to get the four small ships and 120,000 guilders together for the voyage of Cornelis de Houtman.[112] Only two of them were Southern Netherlanders living in Amsterdam and one of them was a German immigrant.[113]

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[109] J.A. van der Chijs, *Geschiedenis der stichting van de Vereenigde O.I. Compagnie en der maatregelen van de Nederlandsche regering betreffende de vaart op Oost-Indië, welke aan deze stichting voorafgingen* (Leyden 1857) 8.

[110] Amongst the participants of the early voyages and amongst the *bewindhebbers* of the VOC there were several who had an interest in the Levant trade [*Gaastra* 1982: 29; A.H. de Groot, 'The organisation of Western European trade in the Levant, 1500-1800' in Leonard Blussé, Femme Gaastra (eds.), *Companies and trade. Essays on overseas trading companies during the Ancient Régime* (Leiden 1981) 231-241. See also, for the Dutch and English participation in the Levant trade, Jonathan I. Israel, 'The phases of the Dutch Straatvaert, 1590-1713. A chapter in the economic history of the Mediterranean' in Pieter Emmer, Femme Gaastra (eds.) *The organisation of interoceanic trade in European expansion 1450-1800* (Variorum, Aldershot 1996) 157-186.

[111] K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and civilisation in the Indian Ocean. An economic history from the rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge 1999) 81.

[112] F.S. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (Bussum 1982) 22, table 2.

[113] Jan Jansz. Kaerel and Dirck van Os, the German was Jan Poppen [J.G. van Dillen, *Het oudste aandeelhouders register van de Kamer Amsterdam der Oost-Indische Compagnie*

The Amsterdam Portuguese after 1599

The entry of the Dutch into the European pepper and spice market came about with the return of Van Neck's fleet in 1599. Of course, this did not mean that the Portuguese of Amsterdam gave up their participation in the India trade. Bottomry and insurance documents reveal that, besides the Atlantic trade, they maintained a considerable interest in the private trade of the *Carreira da Índia*.

Bottomry and insurance were important activities undertaken by the Flemish and Dutch merchants of Amsterdam. Bottomry was largely related to the trade originating from Amsterdam. Insurance became world wide, in particular during the Twelve Years' Truce, including many of the cargoes on the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* and from Africa or Brazil ending up in Lisbon.

The Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam, or the people they represented, were often the owners of the money and merchandise on board the ships. The cargoes were insured in Amsterdam and consequently, after a ship was suspected to be lost the cargo was abandoned to the insurers, in front of a notary in Amsterdam or in Hamburg.[114] Settlement of these claims could take many years, because it was not always certain whether ships were lost, had been hibernating, or had not even departed.[115] The claims reflect of course only a part of the India trade the Portuguese in Amsterdam were involved in, because they only refer to damaged or lost goods and they were only the tip of the iceberg, but they confirm the importance of the private trade on the *Carreira da Índia*. Other notarial documents relate to their shares in the return freight of the *Carreira da Índia* or to transfer, dispatch or receipt of goods in Goa, Cochin or Lisbon in which Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam had an interest.[116] One can only guess at the volume of goods that went

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(The Hague 1958) 5, 50-51; *Gaastra* 1982: 26].

[114] *SR* 1 vol.2 (1967) 117, nr. 17, dated 24/11/1597; *SR* 2 (1968) 116, nr. 53, dated 17/1/1599; *SR* 6 (1972) 229, nr. 603, dated 18/1/1613; *GAA* Not.arch. 143 fo 21v-22v, Not. J.Fr. Bruyningh, dated 15/2/1616; *SR* 11 (1977) 222, nr. 1213, dated 2/8/1617; *SR* 11 (1977) 22`1, nr. 1222, dated 9/8/1617; *SR* 13 (1979) 110-111, nrs. 1446-1453, dated 4/7/1618; *SR* 19 (1985) 180, nr. 2477, dated 16/8/1621; *GAA* Not.arch. 664 (18) fo 216-216v, Not.J. Warnaerts, dated 2/10/1630; *GAA* Not.arch. 942 fo 148, Not. D. Bredan, dated 15/2/1633.

[115] On 24/11/1597 the goods on *Nossa Senhora da Vitória* and *Nossa Senhora da Luz* (I) were abandoned. The first ship does not appear in *Disney* 1978: Appendix 3, 170-174, the second got lost on the outgoing voyage in early 1596. A notarial act of 18/1/1613 creates confusion about the identity of the *Santa Helena* which, according to the insured, in the insurance policy was called *Nossa Senhora da Piedade*. In fact, around April 1613 the first ship was probably withdrawn as unseaworthy, whereas the second one disappeared around August 1612. The claims of 15/2/1616 for the loss of the *Senhora da Luz* (II) in November 1615 and the *São Boaventura* in March 1615 and of 2/8/1617 for the *São Julião* on the outgoing voyage after a battle with the English in August 1616 are straight forward.

[116] *SR* 11 (1977) 221, nr. 1221, dated 9/8/1617; *GAA* Not. arch. 643 fo 145-146, Not. Sibrant Cornelisz., dated 20/12/1633 SR 12 (1978) 178, nr. 1374, dated 23/3/1618; *SR* 13 (1979) 108, nr 1431, dated 24/12/1620; *GAA* Not.arch. 645 fo 720, Not. Sibrant Cornelisz., dated 12/6/1619; *SR* 18 (1984) 69, nr. 2290, dated 24/12/1620; *SR* 19 (1985) 88, nr 2440, dated 25/6/1621; 176-179, nr. 2458, dated 14/7/1621; nr. 2467, dated 30/7/1621; nr 2476, dated 13/8/1621.

'unnoticed' because they arrived on time and within specification and did not give rise to any complaints or claims.

Insurance was a high-risk business; considerable profits could be made but sometimes it could also lead to bankruptcy of the insurer. People like Wijbrandt van Warwijck and Antonio van Diemen (the former after he made his voyages to the Indies, the latter before he joined the VOC after his bankruptcy in 1616)[117] were amongst many others who were active in this field.

Besides Vega's participation in the early Dutch voyages to the Indies mentioned earlier, the notarial documents related to the Portuguese carry few references to the Dutch-East Indies trade. The first two Portuguese shareholders in the VOC were Estevão Cardozo and Francisco Pinto de Britto on behalf of his daughter Elisabeth.[118] Diogo Dias Querido had a share in the voyage of Wijbrant van Warwijck and in 1604, together with Manuel Carvalho and Manuel Thomas, in the first ten years' account of the VOC.[119] In the 1610's García Gomes Vitoria[120] and Miguel de Castro still had shares in the VOC, although part of them they had already sold in 1607.[121] Until the middle of the century Portuguese interest in the VOC remained limited,[122] if they had any shares at all, they belonged to the first ones to sell them or use them for payment of their debts.

The reason for this is no doubt the fact that the Dutch enterprises were mainly interested in pepper and spices. Compared to the price levels of the 1580s and earlier, the prices of pepper in Lisbon during the 1590s had been abysmal (see appendix 3.4) and, predictably, the entry of the Dutch on that same market was not going to make things any better. For the Portuguese in Amsterdam the Dutch enterprises were nothing but a bad copy of the *Carreira da Índia*, turning out only a dividend, if any at all, rather than silk, cottons, diamonds, rubies and other precious stones which they themselves could lay their hands on.

As discussed in chapter 2, the Spanish embargo of 1621 against the Dutch ships and their cargoes was very effective and lasted until the end of the war, i.e. in Portugal until 1641 and in Spain until 1648. Although Olivares' 'Great Project' failed, his final objective was reached: the Portuguese trade of Amsterdam relocated to Hamburg; about a quarter of the Portuguese in Amsterdam moved to the mouth of the Elbe, the number of Portuguese accounts at the Amsterdam Exchange Bank dropped from one-hundred-six in 1620 to seventy-six in 1625, whereas the number of accounts in Hamburg increased from twenty-eight in 1619 to forty-three in 1623. Nevertheless, also after 1621, a limited trade with the northern Netherlands continued to exist, albeit against high transport and

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[117] *SR* 6 (1972) 107, nr.537, dated 13/4/1612; 108, nr. 542, dated 10/5/1612; 115, nr. 572, dated 11/9/1612; 229, nr. 603, dated 18/1/1613. *SR* 7 (1973) 266-267, nrs. 734-736, dated 22/5/1614 and 4/6/1614. Many more documents referring to the insurance of Portuguese cargoes can be found in the Amsterdam notarial archives, until 1621. For Van Diemen's bankruptcy see *SR* 10 (1976) 224,nr. 1027, dated 14/11/1616; 228-229, nrs. 1053-1066, dated 13/12/1616.

[118] See *Vaz Dias* 1936: 58, appendix III.

[119] *SR* 4 (1970) 244, nr. 273, dated 22/3/1608; *SR* 5 (1971) 107, nr. 350, dated 18/5/1609. See also *Vaz Dias* 1936: 58, appendix III.

[120] *SR* 6 (1972) 111, nr. 557, dated 12/7/1612.

[121] *SR* 8 (1974) 138-139, nr. 802, dated 16/1/1615.

[122] *Vlessing* 1995: 231, *Vaz Dias* 1936: 43-48, *Van Dillen* 1935: 10-11.

insurance costs, with falsified papers and stamps or by using ships from Hamburg or the other Hanseatic towns.[123] At the same time, the colonial produce from Iberia, such as cinnamon, could also find its way overland to Bayonne, from where the Dutch ships would fetch it.[124]

For the Portuguese in the Netherlands the Dutch 'Golden Century' began only after 1640. After Portugal had become independent from the Castilian throne, the Portuguese who had moved somewhere else returned very quickly to their old places in Amsterdam. Their biggest contract was that for the delivery of muskets, powder, shot, siege-equipment and ships' materials to Portugal. It was signed in Amsterdam in 1641 by the newly appointed Portuguese ambassador and a Portuguese merchant who in 1611 had fled the country from the Inquisition and who had arrived in Amsterdam in 1614.[125] As from 1649 the increasing social pressure in Castile and the activities of the Inquisition resulting therefrom, again caused increasing numbers of Portuguese *conversos* to flee to Amsterdam.[126]

Summary

Around 1580 Antwerp and the smaller Zealand towns along the Scheldt were the node points for the carrying-trades with the Iberian peninsula and the Baltic, which were dominated by Dutch ships. On the 'Westerly' route, their freight contracts brought them not only to Lisbon, but sometimes also far into the Atlantic to Madeira, Africa, the West Indies and Brazil.

Until 1621, the unification of Portugal with the rest of Iberia and the war of the Dutch rebels with Spain did very little to disturb this relationship. Freight contracts, ports of departure, destinations, passports and ship's papers were adapted in order to circumvent the confiscations and the embargoes and prohibitions from either the States-General or the Castilians. In fact, the Dutch Republic needed the revenues coming from the Iberian and Baltic trades and the Iberians needed the wheat. The most serious threats to the trade came from the English privateers in the Channel and the Hanseatic competition.

The so-called 'blockade' of the river Scheldt, after the fall of Antwerp had little effect on the 'rich trade' of this town and on its position as a financial centre, but more so on its bulk trade, which moved to Middelburg and Amsterdam.

The fall of Antwerp had its greatest effect in the emigration of many of the Antwerp merchants, people from Flanders or Brabant and some Portuguese, some of whom ended up in the Dutch Republic. It was in the first instance the South Netherlanders with Portuguese business contacts, who, as from the early 1590s, contracted Dutch ships, not only to involve themselves in the Baltic and Iberian trade, but also to take up a share in the Atlantic business, now initiated from Middelburg or Amsterdam. Five years later Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam followed suit. The Portuguese with high stakes in the Antwerp financial world stayed where they were.

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[123] *Israel* 1982: 136-137 and 1985: 91-92.
[124] *Israel* 1982: 107.
[125] *Israel* 1982: 108.
[126] See chapter 2.

The Portuguese merchants in the northern Netherlands had two distinct advantages: they had a safe-conduct, issued by the States-General, for their ships and merchandise in and out of Antwerp and other 'hostile places' and in 1605 the Dutch and Flemish merchants, who acted as agents for the merchants and shipowners in the Dutch Republic, were banned from keeping residence in Lisbon. As a result, the Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam were able to take over the 'rich trade' from the South Netherlands' merchants, which supplied the raw materials for their sugar, tobacco and diamond industries.

Fluctuating Portuguese supplies of pepper and spices during the late 1580s and the early 1590s, combined with the withdrawal of the Portuguese distribution contractors from the North European markets were the incentive for the Dutch and South Netherlanders to undertake their early voyages to the Indies. The conclusion of this chapter is that at least the first voyage was more of a defensive nature. If they did not undertake it, somebody else might, such as the English, to reinforce their position in the Baltic and Levant trades, whereas the Hanze still had strong links with the Iberian empire.

Besides the Iberian and Atlantic trades, the Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam kept their interests in the private trade of the *Carreira da Índia* and in the capital brought back from Asia in the form of diamonds, pearls and precious stones. The Dutch and Flemish merchant-bankers benefited from the almost world-wide Portuguese trade by means of bottomry contracts and insurances.

Very few of the Portuguese merchants in Amsterdam invested in the Dutch-East Indies trade. Some of them, in particular Manuel Rodrigues Vega, took a share in the early voyages and only two subscribed to the VOC. The network of Portuguese merchants was clearly no longer interested in pepper and spices and their main emphasis would remain on the Atlantic trade and other commodities of the *Carreira da Índia*.

As from 1621 the Castilian embargo on Dutch trade became really effective, due to the support of the renewed *Armada de Flandres*. The Portuguese love for Amsterdam came to an abrupt end and the merchants moved to Hamburg and Bremen, only to return after Portuguese independence in 1640.