

Ana Crespo Solana, "The Iberian Peninsula in the First Global Trade. Geostrategy and Mercantile Network interests (XV to XVIII centuries)"¹

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Spanish expansion in the Atlantic is not an isolated occurrence. On the contrary, it is part of a single system of expansion that globalizes actions and interactions at economic, social, political and cultural levels. Originally, the Spanish expansion appears to be a single system in itself that, to a certain degree, has a significant impact on, and is perfectly linked to and interdependent on, other processes of expansion in which other European countries are involved. Moreover, it constitutes a two-way road that interacts with the newly colonized lands. As stated by Braudel, "there is no society without exchange": Spain's role in the Atlantic expansion is a game of those actions and interactions where past and future meet, under the influence of diverse cultures and the forming of new realities. Spain's position in the global trade has been depicted by a long historiographical tradition that has resulted in a wealth of information, however scattered. The discovery and colonization of America, the role played by Spanish travellers and merchants in the opening of new routes to diverse points on the planet and the impulse that accounts for the projection of the old European continent onto distant areas of America, Africa and Asia, have been analyzed from diverse theoretical-methodological perspectives tinged with different ideological visions. For the last decades, a great deal of this historiography has represented an important part of the latest research tendencies on the so-called History of the Atlantic System. Atlantic specialists have covered until now only certain parts of this Hispanic expansion, such as cultural encounters, the promotion of new economic interests by the settlers and the natives, the measures taken by private individuals and institutions in order to establish a Spanish empire or, at least, to integrate, at several levels, the colonists and the colonized. These studies follow an old line of research that stems from an intellectual

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² I am grateful for the permission granted by Federico Mayor Zaragoza and Javier de Salas to publish this online version.

tradition. However, in the Spanish case, that line of research opens new perspectives that are still far from being covered³.

Largely, emphasis has been placed on continuous revisions of the formation of empires and the dynamics of interdependence between the metropolis and the colonies from a socio-political standpoint. The role of Europe, of Portugal and Spain at first, is fundamental so as to articulate reasons and inherited attitudes of an old imperialistic tradition, highly tinged with territoriality, religiosity and a search for wealth. Nevertheless –as stated by Fernández Armesto– from the XVI to the XIX centuries, there happens a worldwide expansion, where the old Europe was only ‘a single thread of the hank’ in along and complex process of intercultural exchange⁴. Outside this framework, the study of the formation of a Spanish colonial empire has been followed by a more polemic debate on the impact on the formation and consolidation of an authentic, centralized and highly bureaucratized Spanish state in order to harness both fiscal and military efforts for the defence of the empire outside its borders. Paradoxically, it is the defence of the territories of the Hispanic Crown in Europe what attracts most economic and political efforts, which can have a decisive influence on the crisis and decadence of the ultramarine colonies throughout the XVII century. In the XVIII century, the economic issues have a stronger impact on the transformation of the Spanish state as the necessity to strengthen royal power (absolutism) becomes apparent, due to the interests of the new mercantile, aristocratic elites that bring pressure to bear on the governments to create new laws and a new institutional framework more in tune with the times⁵.

Comparatively, the case of Spain is very similar to those other colonial empires in the Modern Age.⁶ The economic issues, although thoroughly discussed despite the documentary deficiencies, still have many areas worthy of research. Nevertheless, it is also essential to increase our understanding of the other aspect of the Atlantic expansion and integration: the socio-cultural aspect.⁷ As a specialist, I plead to expand further the study of empires and colonies from a comparative perspective, although it is necessary to remember too that such a task will not be possible without a previous

³ Canny (2005): pp. 26-34; Céspedes del Castillo (2006): pp. 145-162; Emmer (1999): pp. 169-170; Braudel (1984).

⁴ Fernández-Armesto (2002): 27-45; p. 28.

⁵ González Enciso (2003); Bernal (2005).

⁶ Elliot (2006); Crouzet & Butel (1998): pp. 177-193.

⁷ Elliot (2001); Crespo Solana (2002): pp. 446-467.

and more thorough regional study that accepts a transnationalist perspective as well as –as stated by David Armitage- a cisatlantic viewpoint (that is, a national or regional viewpoint from a perspective of the Atlantic context).⁸ We are also in great need of, especially, deep studies of the connections among the places (towns, regions, economic spaces, states, etc.) in order to identify comparative cases and find the link between the types of collaboration and cooperation among actors and factors in the process of integration and globalization. A cultural and socio-economic vision is needed that transcends the essentially political and ideological aspects in an attempt to shed more light on the truly leading figures in this process of expansion.⁹

With regard to Spain's role in world trade, the studies have shown the main characteristics of the different processes in the formation of an empire, its ties with its colonies (whether close or otherwise) and the weaving across this Spanish Atlantic space of a complex network of both public and private interests. Both old and new works seem to underline (however differently in their theses and the issues studied) a major aspect that would somehow condition the fate of the empire: its enormous size and the high level of expansion reached in a relatively short time. From a political point of view, Spain comprises, when the empire is at its largest, a good part of the American continent from Alaska to Patagonia, including vast regions in North America, South America and the Caribbean. Spain also occupies territories on the Atlantic side of Africa. In Asia, it governed the Philippines, and it also ruled over the Mariana and the Carolina Islands. The vast size of the Spanish empire forces, at first, the other competitors in the colonial race (the Dutch, the English and the French) to begin an aggressive infiltration from the marginal areas of the Hispanic empire. This happens mainly in America, where the north-European powers begin to settle in areas sidelined by the Hispanic expansion, such as the Antillean islands and other marginal spaces of the Spanish Caribbean. Also, this conditions, to a great extent, the political and economic fate of Spain itself, which is centred on a 'composite state' and lacks an administrative centralization in spite of the efforts for an authentic institutional unfolding. This paves the way for many cities in diverse Spanish regions to become central nodes in a complex network of horizontal interests that causes the presence and intervention of foreign merchants. This is a decisive factor seen in several conjunctures, such as in the so-called Iberian Union between Portugal and Spain (1580-1640). Such a

⁸ Armitage (2004): pp. 7-28.

⁹ Frank (1998); Owens & Ciolek (2002): pp. 39-56.

factor, during several historical periods, perpetuates a multiple identity in the Hispanic Monarchy whose actions and intentions originates from diverse points and areas of the planet. The composite monarchy is, in fact, a truly global monarchy.¹⁰ But, from an economic point of view, Spain plays a major role in the emergence of a capitalist world economy, if we are to follow the classic lines set out by Wallerstein. The role of the Spanish trade, during the XVII and the XVIII centuries, in the emergence and consolidation of a global economic system begins before the institutionalization of the system of fleets and galleons. The overcoming of the challenges posed by the marine space, thus interrelating with distant production areas and creating large markets and strong links, can only happen thanks to the technological progress, the import of precious metals and the migratory flows.¹¹ The studies of the Spanish trade since the discovery and colonization of America have evolved from the lines of macro-economic investigation to the micro-history of companies and entrepreneurial families involved in the Atlantic commerce. For the last decade, thanks to a truly interdisciplinary effort, emphasis is being placed on perspectives that go beyond the classic theses of centre and periphery towards a broader context. It is necessary to state, nevertheless, that, methodologically speaking, such perspectives do not usually differ much from the Wallerstenian premises of world economy and even from the theses of centre and periphery. The difference lies in that the studies of economic changes, the institutional analysis and the studies of the colonial cultures are favoured.¹²

Although the economic impulse comes into conflict with both the social and the internal political system, the Hispanic expansion contributes to the formation of a first cycle of economic roles and shifting supremacy. The expeditions undertaken by Columbus and his successors open the routes that caused the economic axis to shift from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Partly, the increase of the Spanish commercial activity in this Atlantic axis that spread between Africa and America aims at neutralizing the advantages gained by the Portuguese seafaring merchants in their systematic occupation of diverse Atlantic enclaves and islands, and, especially, after

¹⁰ On the influence of the Portuguese Crown on the fate of the Spanish empire, see Valladares (1996): pp. 517-539. Some ideas towards a complete picture of the Spanish Empire in the Atlantic: Brotton (1997); Céspedes del Castillo (1986); Curtin (2000); García-Baquero González (1992); Thomas (2006); Lucena Giraldo (2004): pp. 191-194. About the term 'composite state' see Koenigsberger (1986): p. 12; Fagel (2002): pp. 513-533.

¹¹ Wallerstein (1984) and (1999); Martínez Torres (2005): pp. 4-13; Pietschmann (2002); Ball (1977).

¹² Benton (1996): pp. 261-295.

having achieved to circumnavigate the African continent, thus opening new possibilities for European trade in Asia. Nevertheless, the initial trips of colonization and trade, as well as the various subsequent companies, are greatly indebted to a previous maritime and technological tradition, inherited from the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Arabs. The conditions leading to this period of expansion exist before Christopher Columbus, especially those of a geographical nature, but also those that stem from the existing link with the Mediterranean maritime cultures that had previously strengthened the Hispanic colonising impulse.¹³ Moreover, the marks left by the Arab culture in large areas of the Iberian Peninsula (Andalusia or Valencia, for instance) cause these regions to become a kind of globalizing experiment. The Phoenicians, the Romans and, later, the Arabs, bring into these areas their customs, vocabulary, technology and products, which in turn find their way to the Atlantic. In fact, Spain takes to other areas of the planet products and technology that had been introduced in Spain by the Arabs, apart from the seafaring and trading traditions inherited from the ancient cultures in the Mediterranean. Those cultures somehow influence the globalization of the Mediterranean well before the axis is moved to the Atlantic.¹⁴ Such heritage is a factor (or historical event) so crucial and decisive to the role played by the Iberian Peninsula in this process.

Another factor to Spain's singular role throughout the XVI century is the fact that Spain has become the main drainage centre for silver and other precious metals towards the various international circles of commerce.¹⁵ As a consequence, several Spanish cities become trade centres engaged in re-exporting colonial products along various maritime routes, which also attract merchants from different European and Mediterranean countries that arrive and settle in those cities, thereby forming mercantile colonies where they, in turn, direct their economies to the Atlantic. The Spanish regions, especially those on the seaboard, witness a constant flow of capital and merchandise that turns their cities into cosmopolitan centres that attract many foreign merchants and travellers.¹⁶ If we momentarily disregard the research line on the formation and development of the colonial empires as well as Spain's role in this historical context, we must highlight the importance of the research along a line that

¹³ Fernández-Armesto (1987); Unali (2004); Phillips (1994).

¹⁴ Constable (1994).

¹⁵ Chaunu (1955-56); O' Flynn Giráldez & Von Glahn (2003); O' Flynn & Giraldiez (2002): pp. 391-427.

¹⁶ Marcos Martín (2000); Casado Alonso (1995).

provides us with more information on this complex and intricate cooperation network on which is based the consolidation of truly worldwide, large-scale commerce. This line will delve more deeply into the historical geosociology of the merchants and their associates as involved in the formation of the first worldwide economy.¹⁷ As regards this particular aspect, Spain offers a true scenario for such research as there can be found operating in it multiple commercial networks. The circuits of the Spanish colonial trade make it possible for the establishment in Spain of worldwide interests. Especially Andalusia and the coastal areas, usually port cities, become trade centres for both natives and foreigners. A constant exchange of ideas, cultures, productive activities and trade turned Seville, and later Cadiz, into a “Babylon with a hundred faces”.¹⁸ There is a school of historians that have analyzed from diverse points of view the merchant communities, and such studies have received special attention from late in the 1980s, when this historiographical line was enriched with socio-institutional, demographic, economic and cultural, all-embracing perspectives.¹⁹ These studies could well represent a fundamental chapter of what could be a global history formed by a number of interwoven regional studies where a global vision would mean a study based on regional economy or unit of analysis, that is, the economy of the various interrelated spaces in Europe with diverse Atlantic areas: “an interlocking network of trades shaped by public and private interests”.²⁰

The fast growth of the Spanish colonial trade with America is favoured by a series of factors such as the geostrategic position of the Iberian Peninsula. We also have to take into account the economic needs and the historic bonds with several economic spaces that go back to old links, maritime routes and political and cultural relationships, such as those with Flanders, with several Hanseatic cities and, on the other side, with the Mediterranean ports and Asia Minor, as well as with the Far East. This leads to some circumstances of a structural basis that characterize the nature of the Atlantic trade during the centuries of mercantilism. In fact, the achievements of some of the centres in modern Europe that become the driving force behind the European expansion in the world, such as Venice and other Italian cities, the Low Countries, the

¹⁷ Owens & Ciolek (2003): p. 42; Owens, Crespo & Bernabé (2006).

¹⁸ Cavillac (1994): pp. 427 quote in Vila Vilar (2005): pp. 280-296, p. 282.

¹⁹ Clear examples are: Pike, Alfayam & Mc Shane (1978); García Fernández (2006); Bustos Rodríguez (2005); Weber (2004) and Crespo Solana (2001).

²⁰ Ormrod (2003).

Hanseatic League and even England itself, can be accounted for by their relationships (either as allies or as enemies) with Spain.²¹

In regard to the world trade, Spain has several fronts, and the various Spanish regions are the keys to the relationships with diverse economic areas, especially during the XVII century, when the economic centres in Spain move to the seaboard, and regions such as Catalonia or Galicia joined in the Spanish foreign trade. One of the main European areas integrated with the Spanish Atlantic trade is the Baltic. I can only stress the importance of the ports in the Iberian Peninsula for the trade of other European countries such as England, France and the Low Countries. And this situation lasts until the structural changes in European economy take place well into the XVIII century. The route through The Sound (the strait between Denmark and Sweden) is one of the most important commercial maritime routes in the pre-industrial era, and several maritime powers trade in cereals and raw materials for construction, such as timber and iron, bound for the south and west of Europe. The return cargoes are produce from the south and the Mediterranean as well as colonial products in great demand due to the social and economic life in northern Europe. A great deal of such merchandise arrives indirectly from the warehouses in Cadiz. Mediterranean markets influence Atlantic expansion more than was previously thought, and their products are in high demand in the international markets. As Braudel claims, there is an investigation still pending into a great deal of products that arrive in Spanish cities from Asia Minor and Italy, and which are redirected to the Atlantic circuits. Certain goods, such as silk from Iran, fine cloths and glass as well as other merchandise from the East, dyes and spices that had traditionally arrived in Seville, begin, from the XVI century, to be paid with American gold and silver as these become an international currency.²² Not only do Genoese merchants settle in some Spanish port cities, but they also influence important political and financial processes within the Spanish Monarchy. Furthermore, the strategic position of the Iberian Peninsula as a link between the Mediterranean and the areas that had been strengthened since 1492 has a strong appeal for the commercial firms trading with the Mediterranean from other European regions. Dwindling Mediterranean trade in the XVI century ceases to draw the attention of historians, although the investigation on the role of the Mare Nostrum in the Atlantic expansion has gained currency in the last years. In that respect, it is highly relevant the

²¹ Bustos Rodríguez (1986-1987): pp. 215-228.

²² Chaunu (1983); Braudel (2005).

role as middlemen between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic played by Genoese and Maltese merchants settled in Cadiz.²³

From the outset of the Atlantic expansion, a great deal of the efforts of the Spanish foreign trade targets the American markets. Between 1492 and 1600, Spain plays a decisive role in the initial stages of the expansion, and consolidates, in these early years, its Atlantic position, and also has to face the first symptoms of its decline. This 'Spanish Atlantic system' and its colonial trade with America is called the 'Career of the Indies' ,(Carrera de las Indias) and has, from the outset, certain institutional and socio-political features that somehow determine the rest of European 'expansions'. Some of the main characteristics of the Spanish colonial trade are laid down during Columbus's first trips. The beginning and favourable evolution of the Atlantic traffic, which begins with the occupation of the Canaries and is later focused on the American continent, offers new, unsuspected possibilities to the Andalusia region in southern Spain. In a relatively short period of time, the rest of the Spanish regions are integrated, with varying degree of success. In these decades Seville becomes the focus of the activities that set in motion the dynamics of the Spanish empire.²⁴ Spanish colonial trade has been very well discussed and there have been significant historiographical contributions, mainly since the 1980s. Some topics, such as the structure of commercial capital and its functionality, the crucial connection between trade and production, the study of the market areas and the structure of the mercantile areas, as well as the analysis and the social structure of those that make trade possible and control commercial activities, have all been thoroughly described.²⁵ The quantification of such high commercial traffic has shown this aspect of the Spanish overseas trade characterized by a regular shipping flow both centralized and organized from a single port (first Seville, later Cadiz), as a colonial mercantile system shaped by the State through certain governing organs (namely the Spanish Board of Trade) although consistently broken by the private commercial firms (whether foreign or otherwise) involved. In a sense, the nature of the Spanish mistaken capitalism (or false mercantilism) conditions, since the times of the Catholic Kings, the economic structure of Spanish overseas trade biased to the export of raw materials in exchange for large amounts of gold and silver and other foreign products. Nevertheless, I agree with

²³ Vasallo (1997).

²⁴ Martínez Shaw & Oliva Melgar (2005).

²⁵ García-Baquero González (2002).

García-Baquero that there is a great difference between protectionism and other measures stipulated in Spanish laws, and the actual practices implemented since the intensification of Spanish foreign trade, which are totally different from the mercantilism implemented by other European countries.²⁶ In recent times, a new lease of life has been given to the mechanisms of the Spanish colonial trade with innovative perspectives by Oliva Melgar.²⁷ New ideas about the basic mechanisms have seen the light, which help to understand the complex operation of the Spanish monopolist system that, for more than three centuries, concentrates legal trade with the Indies on the axis Seville-Cadiz. The credit system, in the form of loans and policies of marine risk, is essential to maintaining trade, but the capitals that feed the system come mostly from foreign financial centres. Behind the scenes the true monopoly appears hidden below the legal structure, which supports the men, ships and merchandise in the geographical scenario of the legal monopoly. Discussions on the various elements, such as free trade, can but add reasons to confirm that, on the whole, the foreign financial conglomerate is able to control to its own advantage the exploitation of the American territories. As from the Spanish crises (both internal and external) due to the wars waged by the Spanish Crown in Europe, the internal uprisings (such as that in Catalonia) and even the loss of Portugal, a new era begins, characterized by a situation of general crisis in the heart of the Hispanic monopoly. Seville as an economic centre is displaced by Cadiz from an economic and social point of view since the 1640s.²⁸ There are also clear institutional changes that take place especially as Cadiz assumes its central role in the Spanish reform program in regard to America.²⁹ The relocation of the Board of Trade and the establishment of a *Consulado de Cargadores* (a body of registered merchants entitled to load their goods on the ships to Spanish America) in Cadiz that is regarded by its counterpart in Seville as a threatening competitor in favour of foreign interests in Spain, in 1717, is due to various reasons and has diverse economic and political consequences. In the first place, the reform of the institutional basis of the Career of the Indies and the revision of the Spanish mercantilist regulations responds, among other things, to the desires of centralization of the new dynasty: the reinforcement of centralization will be one of the new Bourbon government's maxims.

²⁶ García-Baquero González (1976); García Fuentes (1980): pp. 69-72

²⁷ Oliva Melgar (1995): pp. 261-283, y (1996): pp. 321-358. Idem (2005).

²⁸ Bustos Rodríguez (1998): pp. 487-498.

²⁹ García-Baquero González (1995): pp. 105-140, (1978): pp. 107-120, and (2003): pp. 345-376; Crespo Solana (1996); Vila Vilar & Kuethe (1999).

On the other hand, the idea of concentrating protectionist policies in an attempt to enrich the treasury, begin new industrial policies and protect colonial interests, is a widespread practice for statesmen and European thinkers from Colbert to Campomanes, which lead to the proliferation, in the whole of mercantilist Europe, of monopolistic commercial companies. With regard to Spain, the reforms to be implemented are a really complex issue since Cadiz has become a port city with a great scope in international marine trade as well as a strategic port of scale for navigation and for foreign commercial companies. This is the reason why Cadiz as a unique port for the trade with the Indies is the object of reforms that introduce some improvements as well as providing for the maintenance of the monopoly as the only way to save Spanish colonial trade. It is worth highlighting the intrinsic relationship between colonial trade as a State business and the formation of a navy. Some similarities can be found between the Bourbon reform programs and those carried out in other countries as regards commercial reforms and naval policies. However, Spanish rulemaking is able to develop a symbiosis between the European currents of the time and the Spanish politico-administrative tradition (as exemplified by the creation of the provincial Intendencies). Such symbiosis becomes apparent as regards three issues: permanent state financing of the navy, the politics of arsenals and the organization of authentic naval bases, such as those built in Cadiz, Cartagena, El Ferrol and various American port cities. In the case of Cadiz, the creation of a unique organism, i.e. the General Intendency for the Navy, and its functions as an administrative and fund-collecting agency, constitutes, in spite of the conflict with the Board of Trade due to some duplication of administrative duties, one of the most decisive episodes within the commercial and naval policies.

In the Atlantic context, as from late in the XVII century, Spain goes on to play second fiddle in the political and economic fields, although, paradoxically, its role seems to become more important as a centre that connecting Euro-American migratory flows (whether free or forced) and the spread of a Pan-Atlantic Hispanic culture. The relationship of Spain with its American colonies also shapes the expansion of its European competitors, mainly the Low Countries and England. Well before ships from the Low Countries venture into the Atlantic, Portuguese merchants had been carrying sugar, wood from Brazil, gold, ivory and other products, from the Atlantic to Antwerp, mainly via Lisbon. This practice changes drastically after the decline of Antwerp in 1585. The relocation of Flemish trade to northern cities and the prominence of Dutch

transport as the main connection with the Atlantic production centres, determines the close relationship between Spain and the north-European merchants that play a leading role in relation with their own colonies and in the Spanish America, mainly since the middle of the XVII century.³⁰ Late in the XVII century, four trading networks are operating in the Atlantic, and the degree of interrelation of the expansion carried out by diverse maritime powers competing with each other is very high.

This system is based on: First, the consolidation of a bilateral trade between Spain and its colonies based on a state monopoly imposed by the Spanish Crown. Second, Spain uses to its own advantage the Portuguese expansion, shared mainly during the years of the Iberian Union. In spite of this union in 1580, both systems operate separately. Trade between Portugal and Brazil, carried out on a free basis by merchants and ship owners rather than based on a monopoly, develops before and after this historic period. This development happens in combination with the local and regional internal processes that are taking place in different areas of America, such as the Caribbean. Third, Dutch, English and French become involved in this trade with America and integrate into the American markets. The fourth pillar of this system is represented by the Portuguese trade with the western African coast and the slave traffic initiated after 1550 from Africa to America. Slave trade is a key factor to the involvement of Dutch, English and French monopolistic companies in the so-called triangular trade.

In this context, Spanish foreign trade, and the might of the Hispanic empire itself, faces fierce competition in an ever increasingly belligerent scenario.³¹ During the XVIII century, European countries regard trade with the Antillean islands as essential since they are the main suppliers of certain tropical products in great demand that cannot be grown in Europe. Very often, other nation's colonies are more appealing than their own, as this plays a role in the political and diplomatic scenario, as they can be won as trophies and then used as bargaining tools. Unless they have a great strategic value, sooner or later they are returned³² as a result of the political pressure exercised by the colonial elites who are keener on keeping their own monopolies than on pursuing national interests.

³⁰ Postma & Enthoven (2003); Crespo Solana (2000).

³¹ Pulido Bueno (1993); García-Baquero González (2003); Andrews (1984); Tracy (1990).

³² Alonso & Flores (1998).

A global viewpoint on Spain's Atlantic role allows us to analyze these very factors from the perspective of space strategy of the networks of merchants, considering commercial exchange itself as an incentive for the growth of a region or economic space. From this point of view it is necessary to consider issues such as the influence of the expansion abroad in the economic development of the Spanish regions themselves and to what extent such expansion conditions the form of integration of the different regions into the spaces or international economic circuits. In relation to the first point, it is necessary to emphasize that the formation of this empire and its overseas trade does not have the same impact on all Spanish regions. In fact, just as stated by Marcos Martín in his outstanding work on Spain's socioeconomic system between the XVI and the XVIII century, Spain's uneven development influence the way in which Spain, after having been the first economic power, gradually loses ground until its obvious backwardness at the end of the XIX century.³³ Nevertheless, several areas open up to trade with the Atlantic since the XVI century and the economic poles fluctuate and shift throughout the centuries until the end of the XVIII century. The integration of the various Spanish regions is heavily conditioned by the activities carried out by foreign and native merchants. Certain Spanish regions stretch their links between the hinterland and the foreland, such as northern and eastern Spain areas. Other areas, such as Andalusia, are bound to open up to foreign markets, leaving no chance for the profits gained to be invested on the development of local industries. The Catalan case follows a completely different pattern. The economy of inland Spain remains always active thanks to old complementary routes such as those stretching between Castile and Flanders, in operation since the Middle Ages, as well as other areas of Aragon and Castile through fairs as an active financial world that is soon to connect to the main European financial centres, such as Genoa or Antwerp. Eastern Spain lives through great commercial activity, especially in the major port cities of the former kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia. Valencia still shows the Arab mark on the agricultural techniques and trading practice, on its fertile, irrigated areas and the growing of oranges, rice, etc.³⁴ Mediterranean cities are involved in coastal traffic, trebling the number of connections between ports, and they provide a link between some inland areas such as the southern parts of the former kingdom of Aragon and the

³³ Marcos Martín (2000).

³⁴ Giménez López (1986): pp. 193-206; Salvador Esteban (1994), vol II: pp. 13-46. See also the summary by Alberola Romá (2001): pp. 237-251.

rest of Europe;³⁵ ships coming from the Atlantic bound for Italian ports and Asia Minor put in at these ports, as well as ships heading for the prisons in northern Africa, they are the natural access way between Castile and the old Mare Nostrum.³⁶ In some of these cities such as Alicante, there are important colonies of merchants that engage in diverse activities aimed at overcoming the threat from Berber pirates and Ottoman expansionism. In short, in these Mediterranean ports very important, lucrative exchanges take place as they connect Mediterranean economy with the Atlantic routes. Most of these activities are carried out by foreign traders while influential groups of native merchants engage in the exploitation and commercialization of regional or intra-regional richness. Goods are imported, stored and sold by foreign merchants, such as British salted fish, cereal and manufactures, while local products are exported, such as wine from the Valencia region, nuts and dried fruit and esparto. Foreign ships are mostly used.

Both the Canary and the Balearic Islands are central to the connection between America and the Mediterranean. The Canaries become an ‘experiment’ where colonization and trade are tested. They are the target of important migratory waves as well as a geostrategic connection on the route to the Antilles and the rest of America. The merchants from the Canaries have to face, in the XVI and the XVII centuries, the monopoly of the Seville merchants, and fight to defend their interests because they are seen as a threat to peninsular trade and the islands regarded as an enclave of illicit trade. The economic activities of the island are very soon devoted to the production and commercialization of specialized agricultural produce. In spite of some opposition, the archipelago is granted a series of licenses of trade in certain years. In 1564, the Official Canarian Board of Trade to the Indies is created in Las Palmas and, during the XVII century, both foreign and Spanish ships are allowed to call at the Canaries on payment of the relevant duty. In northern Spain, the sea front location of cities such as Santander or Bilbao determines their commercial function as ports. In spite of the evident regional contrasts, these cities experience a population growth mainly due to the rise in the employment offer that attracts the inhabitants of the inland areas. The characteristics of this regional economy force its inhabitants, which are mostly rural, to travel long distances to exchange their surplus of products for consumer goods. There is a remarkable growth in this mobile population that starts in the middle of the XVIII

³⁵ Alberola Romá (2001): pp. 239

³⁶ Giménez López (1981).

century. In the second third of this century a cycle of economic growth begins, which is based on and driven by factors related with this population mobility and their agricultural activities.³⁷ In the case of Santander, it is originally a town with a long seafaring and trading tradition, although with a very small population in the XVI century, which experiences, in the XVIII century, a new cycle of population growth. Bilbao, on the other hand, is an important port linking with the rest of Europe, in which local commercial firms operate, in direct competition with other northern cities as well as with foreign traders, especially Dutch, which try to monopolize trade in iron and wool. The complexity of the trade along the mercantile routes between Castile and the Galician, Cantabrian and Basque ports until early in the XVII century has hindered investigation but the topic has been thoroughly studied.³⁸ Galician relationship with American trade greatly develops in the XVIII century.³⁹ The incorporation of Catalonia into the Atlantic routes is crucial to overcome the crisis of overseas trade, mainly with the colonies. Unlike what happens in Andalusia, the growth of the overseas trade in Catalonia does produce an acceleration of capital growth crucial to its internal economic development.⁴⁰

Andalusia, with its unmistakably Arab mark, and, above all, its commercial cities (mainly Seville and Cadiz), have been for centuries the base for the institutional monopoly despite being on the very edge of the Spanish State. The Arab mark has been felt in Andalusia for a very long time both in the type of products that are the object of exchange and in the production of certain products, just as it happens in eastern Spain. Gradually, new Atlantic influences enter Spain that enrich Spanish commercial structure and cause certain improvements as well as certain structural problems. Trade with the Indies attracts merchants from other Spanish provinces.⁴¹ Besides, there are foreign colonies in practically all Andalusian cities, even in those far removed from the American trade, such as Cordoba.⁴² Malaga, Seville and, especially Cadiz, enlarge their overseas economic activities and their demographic conditions due to the enormous growth in foreign population, largely temporary residents and floating

³⁷ Lanza (1991).

³⁸ Zavala Uriarte (1983).

³⁹ Alonso Alvarez (1986).

⁴⁰ Martínez Shaw (1981).

⁴¹ Fernández González (2000).

⁴² García Luján (1988).

population.⁴³ In these cities a form of mercantile life environment develops that is 'exported' to America where it duly adopts colonial features.⁴⁴

To what extent does expansion influence space integration into international economic circuits? And, how does it influence their strengthening? Apart from the measures taken by the Spanish regions and by the political and military institutional mechanisms that develop Spanish trade abroad and, especially, in its colonies, one of the most important aspects is the populating of those areas (through mechanisms of colonization, as well as trade and migration) that gives rise to a diversity of space structures created by different types of societies. In this respect, cultural extrapolation has always been an active factor to spatial economic processes, and it is rather obvious in the Spanish case. Spain's role is fundamental in consolidating mercantile capitalism.⁴⁵ Since the XVI century, there is a fast rise of the integration of the economic activities in many Spanish with different areas of the globe. Spatial economy helps us to understand this evolution, although the application of the models of spatial economic analysis has not been yet thoroughly developed for the study of the integration of spaces and societies before the XIX century.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the simplified theoretical model of spatial economy can be suitably applied to the period between 1492 and 1828 (when free trade in Spain comes to an end). This model consists of a set of consumers and a set of production settings within a specific space. Consumers—all the individuals—are mobile, while settings are fixed. Consumers move so as to consume goods and services, although on occasions it is the products that move from the production place to the consumer. However, both products and consumers usually meet at a fixed place: the marketplace.⁴⁷ The need to travel long distances to access products and markets, which is the norm in modern maritime economies, leads to a widening of the interrelations between production (always fixed) and trade.⁴⁸

Merchants and their various colonies in many of the Spanish cities were the main figures of the exchange. Commercial activities, and the invaluable opportunity to

⁴³ Oliva Melgar (2002): pp. 281-298.

⁴⁴ Hausberger & Ibarra (2003); Turiso Sebastián (2002); Mazzeo [et al] (1999); Booker (1993).

⁴⁵ Bustos Rodríguez (1996).

⁴⁶ Echevarria Bacigalupe (2002), pp. 491-513; Fujita, Krugman & Venables (2000); Ringrose (2001).

⁴⁷ Based on Johann Heinrich von Thiunen's theories (circa 1828). See Capel (1987); Chorley & Haggett (1967). About the choice of the year 1828 as the end of Spanish free trade see Alfonso Mola (2005): 312-349.

⁴⁸ vid. article of Pieter Emmer in Santos Pérez, J.M. y Cabral de Souza, G. (Eds.) (2006).

have access to different markets, attracts a series of mercantile interests of diverse communities of merchants (whether Spaniards or foreigners) settled in Spain. The settling in Spain of a number of merchant communities happens within a very confused political process, set in a context with long periods of war and conditioned by the diplomatic agreements between Spain and other European powers. Their presence in Spain has to do with Spain's interest in developing the logistics of international trade. The impact of their activities varies depending on the regions and the internal economy that develops in them. In eastern Spain cities, such as Murcia, Cartagena, Alicante or Valencia, foreign colonies gain complete control over trade in certain products, especially agricultural produce. Italians, Genoese and French in Alicante, and merchants from Béarn in Cartagena, seem to monopolize trade during the XVII century.⁴⁹ In Catalonia and in the Cantabrian and Basque cities, depending on the situation, there is fierce competition between foreigners and locals. In Andalusia (especially in port cities such as Malaga, Cadiz and Seville), there are significant foreign colonies of various nationalities (German, Flemish, Dutch, French, Genoese, English, Irish, etc.) that develop strong integration mechanisms and reach high levels of social cohesion. They control the export trade and a series of related activities, depending on the nature of the city itself. In Seville, the existence of many foreign communities lead to internal disagreements and social conflicts that explain some of the court cases raised in the XVIII century against foreigners and their offspring (the so-called *jenízaros*).⁵⁰ It is obvious that Spanish trade has a strong appeal for foreign merchants, as actively seeking new markets and seeing the Iberian Peninsula as a key to accessing different maritime routes. During the XVII and XVIII centuries, ongoing migration in some cities saves the commercial relationships as soon as the wars that interrupt trade in some historical conjunctures cease.⁵¹ The latest investigations have provided new, complementary viewpoints, of the constant migration of manpower from the economically developed areas in Europe that experience a constant process of demographic explosion in spite of the wars and political-religious conflicts that spread across Europe throughout the XVI and XVII centuries. These migratory waves affect mainly large territories of Atlantic and Mediterranean Europe, and these groups, of diverse geographical origins and different political tendencies and religious

⁴⁹ Montojo Montojo (1992): pp. 79-106; Montojo Montojo (1992-1995): pp. 143-202.

⁵⁰ Otte (1996); Torres Santana (1991); Guimerá Ravina (1985); Azcona Guerra (1996); Maruri Villanueva (1990); Gómez Zorraquino (1987).

⁵¹ Montojo Montojo (2005): pp. 215-228. Crespo Solana (2005).

confessions in the context of a troubled Europe choose as destinations port cities that are gateways to the maritime networks of the Hispano-Portuguese Empire. It is a proven fact that these communities play a leading role in the maintenance of the mercantile system of their respective origin regions. Of all these colonies, one of the most active is the French. We ignore whether they actually are the wealthiest and most powerful, but they have been most thoroughly studied by recent historiography. The reason could lie on the traditional relationship of Spanish historiography with the French school, and the wealth of available sources. As for the English, they settle in some Spanish port cities. Since the second half of the XVII century and during the early years of the War of Spanish Succession they are able to conquer certain places with a strategic value for their trade both with Spain and with other areas.

The colonies of foreign merchants thrive all over Spain, especially in Andalusia. And foreigners further engage in American trade as a business in which half Europe is involved. The interest in quantifying and controlling their involvement is a constant of the Spanish government, which enact several laws for the purpose that proves fruitless due to the fact that the best part of these merchants and craftsmen only stay for relatively short periods of time. This historical reality makes Andalusia an ever shifting frontier society of exchange and smuggling, a transit area for goods to be shipped to all other areas. Foreign colonies have a decisive impact on Andalusian idiosyncrasy, as they have always had from time immemorial.

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