

GREAT AND SMALL TRADE IN THE CROWN OF ARAGON. THE EXAMPLE OF VALENCIA IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses the historiographic debate about the relations between great and small trade during the later Middle Ages. It does so emphasising the social and economic role of the small trade, and the elements of integration and coordination between both categories of market. With this aim, the text takes the Crown of Aragon as its reference framework, especially the city and kingdom of Valencia, between the 13th and 15th centuries. Two types of maritime exchanges around the territory of Valencia are studied: one being short distance cabotage, between the ports in the kingdom and the capital; and the long-distance international trade that linked Valencia with such countries as Italy or Portugal.

KEY WORDS

Local trade, International trade, Crown of Aragon, Valencia, Later Middle Ages.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Res localis, Res nationibus communis, Corona Aragoniae, Valentia, Medium Aeuum inferius.

1. A historiographical debate and the case of Valencian maritime commerce

For a long time now, the debate about the relations between great and small trade has marked part of the historiography of the mercantile world in Europe and the Mediterranean in the Late Middle Ages¹. It is evident that, in principle, the differentiation between the two types of commerce can start from the physical distance —long or short— over which the trade was carried out. However, it is also known that, more or less consciously, research has used other elements to attribute a full meaning to both economic sectors.

Thus, although simplified, it is very habitual for the formula “great trade” to include the realities of foreign trade and the international economy (especially structured along the sea routes), European mercantile elites, great investments and most perfected business techniques, the capitalist dynamics and, in short, the most advanced fields that determined the growth and change in society. Meanwhile, “small trade” is more usually linked to domestic trade and the local economy (especially overland), the local agents who very often did not specialise in the traffic, lesser businesses, the feudal variable and fields of action considered most backward, normally linked to the rural and peasant universe².

Without entering into polemics, also promoted in this context, about the real impact that one sector or the other had on the evolution of the economic structures, the truth is that the radical expression of the separation between great and small trade has, on occasions, provoked a specific —historiographical and historical— “logic of confrontation” between both. Nevertheless, in recent years, different authors have proposed varying or downplaying this confrontation for reasons that derive from both empirical observation and theoretical reflection. Moreover, that has had a particular impact on the territories of the old Crown of Aragon.

1. This work is part of the studies done by the author in the “Migraciones, élites económicas e identidades culturales en la Corona de Aragón (1350-1500)”, research project directed from the University of Valencia by Dr. Paulino Iradiel Murugarren and financed between 2005 and 2008 by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (reference HUM2005-04804/HIST).

2. See the debate and historiographic characterisation of “great trade” and “small trade” in various articles by Dr. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “Ciudades, comercio y economía artesana”, *XXV Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella: “La historia medieval en España. Un balance historiográfico (1968-1998)”*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1999: 603-658; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “El comercio en el Mediterráneo entre 1490 y 1530”, *Congreso Internacional “De la unión de coronas al Imperio de Carlos V”*, Ernest Belenguier Cebriá, coord. Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2001: I, 85-116; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “Nápoles en el mercado mediterráneo de la Corona de Aragón”, *El reino de Nápoles y la monarquía de España. Entre agregación y conquista (1485-1535)*, Giuseppe Galasso, Carlos José Hernando Sánchez, eds. Madrid: Real Academia de España en Roma, 2004: 265-289; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “El comercio en el Mediterráneo catalano-aragonés: espacios y redes”, *Comercio y hombres de negocios en Castilla y Europa en tiempos de Isabel la Católica*, Hilaño Casado Alonso, Antonio García-Baquero, eds. Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2007: 123-150. The bibliographicaly cited in these works saves me the need to repeat it here, although it is perhaps worth remembering the prominence of leading specialists, such as Abulafia, Aymard, Epstein or Petralia, in this debate.

As I see it, this fact is related to at least two circumstances. The first could be summed up in what I believe is a certain recovery of the social and economic role of small trade. In all probability, this is less spectacular than international trade, presents bigger difficulties for studying for heuristic reasons, and has frequently been marginalised by research³. However, none of this can prevent observing that small trade was decisive for maintaining the Late Medieval economy, as it affected thousands of families who became ever more closely linked to the market⁴.

These latter affirmations implicitly include the perception, for example, that the initial base for some great commercial fortunes was found in the lesser currents of exchange⁵, or that, in general, the beginning and end of mercantile movement — even that which moved along sea routes — was seated in the rural world (agricultural and land-based) and the local and regional circuits, the characteristics of which had direct effects on the deepest behaviour of the economy⁶. Moreover, the ideas mentioned also implicitly include the verification of the progress that local commerce underwent from the mid-14th century and throughout the 1400s. Based on situations detected in Barcelona, Valencia, Sicily and Naples, among others, David Abulafia defined the mentioned progress as “expansion” or “growing intensification” of mid- or short-range relations, and this led the same author to call this period an authentic “golden age of the local market”⁷.

The second circumstance that allows the contrast between the two categories of commerce analysed to be downplayed is related to understanding not only of the interactions that occurred between them, but also the emergence of intermediate market networks, which were very consistent on a regional scale, such as those verified in areas where the production of food or raw materials for export was concentrated. Up to a point, these networks make the absolute dichotomy between the

3. Abulafia, David. “L’economia mercantile nel Mediterraneo Occidentale: commercio locale e commercio internazionale nell’età di Alfonso il Magnanimo”, *XVI Congresso Internazionale di Storia della Corona d’Aragona: “La Corona d’Aragona ai tempi di Alfonso il Magnanimo”*, Guido D’Agostino, Giulia Buffardi, eds. Naples: Paparo, 2000: II, 1027, 1034, 1043; Epstein, Stephan R. *Potere e mercati in Sicilia. Secoli XIII-XVI*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi Ed., 1996: 3-23.

4. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “El comercio en el Mediterráneo entre 1490 y 1530”...: 106-107; Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. “El comercio en la Edad Media (Reflexiones para abrir una Semana de Estudios Medievales)”, *XVI Semana de Estudios Medievales de Nájera: “El comercio en la Edad Media”*, José Ignacio de la Iglesia Duarte, coord. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2006: 15-38.

5. Riera Melis, Antoni. “El comerç català a la Baixa Edat Mitjana. I: El segle XIV”, *Annals de la Segona Universitat d’Estiu: La Baixa Edat Mitjana*. Andorra: Conselleria d’Educació i Cultura, 1984: 197.

6. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. “El comercio en la Edad Media...”: 19; Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. “Centros de producción y redes de distribución en los espacios interiores de la Corona de Aragón: materias primas y productos básicos”, *XVIII Congreso Internacional d’Història de la Corona d’Aragó: La Mediterrània de la Corona d’Aragó, segles XIII-XVI e VII Centenari de la Sentència Arbitral de Torrellas, 1304-2004*, Rafael Narbona Vizcaino, ed. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2005: I, 918.

7. Abulafia, David. “L’economia mercantile nel Mediterraneo...”: 1025; Abulafia, David. “Mercati e mercanti nella Corona d’Aragona: Il ruolo degli imprenditori stranieri”, *XVIII Congrès Internacional d’Història de la Corona d’Aragó...: I*, 803, 810-811.



great international traffic and the small local exchanges fictitious, in benefit of a more reticular and balanced vision of the commercial spaces⁸.

In this line, always within the Crown of Aragon, the studies have emphasised the greater or lesser weight of institutional factors (such as the creation of fairs, markets or coastal loading points) to reinforce the relations between the various commercial levels⁹. They have also underlined the functions, in this respect, of the different economic operators, among which there were foreign merchants, local merchants, large and medium-sized businessmen linked to industry, craftsmen, rural producers and small-scale local agents¹⁰. And these functions, linked to other material or political realities, could lead to a determined integration of the multiple activities that were developed around the market.

For example, if we only look at the itineraries of the maritime commerce, it is true that it is sometimes difficult to understand the link between the long and short circuits¹¹. Despite this, the diffusion and the characteristics of the shortest routes, as well as their relation to each other, are better understood if we hit upon some keys to their existence, as I have argued for Valencia: the deployment of subsidiary tasks with regard to the great convoys, with the intention of supplying these and favouring the distribution of the products carried; the concretion of economic hierarchies between main and secondary ports, accompanied on occasions by elements of productive specialisation on a regional or district scale, that led to the connection of the long and short routes becoming essential for reducing costs and avoiding lost time; and, finally, the infrastructure conditions of many Mediterranean ports, and the need to have small boats available for coastal trade to facilitate access to any type of navigation¹².

Heading inland from the coast, the image that Jose Ángel Sesma offers of the contacts between the kingdom of Aragon and the interior of Catalonia and Valencia

8. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "Ciudades, comercio y economía artesana"...: 646-647; Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. "Centros de producción y redes de distribución...": 918.

9. Among other possible references, see Cavaciocchi, Simonetta, ed. *Fiere e mercati nella integrazione delle economie europee, secc. XIII-XVIII: atti della Trentaduesima Settimana di Studi*, 8, 12 maggio 2000. Prato-Florence: Instituto Internazionale di Storia Economica 'F. Datini'-Le Monnier, 2001, especially the articles by María Dolores López Pérez about Catalonia (pages 309-333) and José Hinojosa Montalvo about Valencia (pages 597-607). See also Batlle, Carme. *Fires i mercats, factors de dinamisme econòmic i centres de sociabilitat (segles XI a XV)*. Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 2004; Igual Luis, David. "Política y economía durante la Baja Edad Media. El papel de la monarquía en el comercio exterior valenciano", *Los cimientos del Estado en la Edad Media. Cancillerías, notariado y privilegios reales en la construcción del Estado en la Edad Media*, Juan Antonio Barrio Barrio, ed. Alcoy: Editorial Marfil, 2004: 249-278.

10. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "Metrópolis y hombres de negocios (siglos XIV y XV)", *XXIX Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella: Las sociedades urbanas en la España medieval*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2003: 309-310; Igual Luis, David. "La difusión de productos en el Mediterráneo y en Europa occidental en el tránsito de la Edad Media a la Moderna", *Fiere e mercati nella integrazione delle economie europee, secc. XIII-XVIII: atti della trentaduesima Settimana di Studi...*: 489-490.

11. Abulafia, David. "L'economia mercantile nel Mediterraneo...": 1043.

12. Igual Luis, David. "Itinerarios comerciales en el espacio meridional mediterráneo de la Baja Edad Media", *Itinerarios medievales e identidad hispánica: XXVII Semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella, 17 a 21 de Julio de 2000*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2001: 150-158.



again becomes highly significant of the interaction (or “convergence”, as he calls it) of the large and small ambit, international and local, of trade. Based on traits of the economic development of these zones and the exchange between them of products, such as wool, wheat, saffron or leather, that were often destined for export to other places, Sesma concluded that, especially from the end of the 14th century, a stage began there which was defined by the complementary nature, competition and concurrence in the same place of mercantile movements. This was so because these movements did not include only the largest operations. In fact, beside these businesses, a large number of little merchants, even the rural producers, made frequent use of the elements that improved the links between Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia and made periodic expeditions along well-known itineraries, so that they could reach the coastal markets, taking products from the interior and returning with others. Thus, a constant traffic of merchandise in all directions was activated, thanks to which short-distance overland trade became interregional and, at most, connected with the necessities and effects of the maritime commerce up to even the international range¹³.

There is no need to prolong the casuistic. The situations that I have summarised illustrate that, beyond the “logic of confrontation” mentioned above, in the study of great and small trade it is possible to find factors of integration and coordination, which explain that the transformations in the intensity, objectives and nature of one influenced the development of the other, and that all the human, technical and geographic levels on which trade in general was structured, were decisive and important, each —clearly— on its own scale¹⁴. The result of all this could be the stratification of the various categories of exchange between the local and international environments or, also, as Paulino Iradiel has shown for 15th century Valencia, a superposition of circuits over structured territories with complex and hierarchical bases¹⁵.

It is precisely the interpretations about the organisation of Valencian commerce during the Late Middle Ages¹⁶ that insist on presenting a model that reinforced the opportunities offered by the evolution and rationalisation of the internal political and administrative institutions, and justified the rise of a structured economy on a regional scale. The internal and external demands contributed progressively to

13. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. “Centros de producción y redes de distribución...”: 915-919. See also Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. “Producción para el mercado, comercio y desarrollo mercantil en espacios interiores (1250-1350): el modelo del sur de Aragón”, *Europa en los umbrales de la crisis (1250-1350). XXI Semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella, 18 a 22 de Julio de 1994*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1995: 205-246.

14. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “Ciudades, comercio y economía artesana...”: 646-647; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “El comercio en el Mediterráneo entre 1490 y 1530...”: 106-107; Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. “El comercio en la Edad Media...”: 27-28, 35-37.

15. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “El comercio en el Mediterráneo catalano-aragonés: espacios y redes...”: 149.

16. Some of the latest interpretative syntheses about this late-medieval Valencian trade are: Abulafia, David. “Mercati e mercanti nella Corona d’Aragona...”: 805-811; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. “El siglo de oro del comercio valenciano”, *El comercio y el Mediterráneo. Valencia y la cultura del mar*, Inmaculada Aguilar Civera, coord. Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2006: 111-129.



developing trade relations, given the need to maintain both the supply of food and the local export specialisation. In this context, the short and medium range traffic of low-cost products and raw materials grew, and local or regional commerce could to compensate for the fluctuations in international trade. In any case, the growth of Valencia as a protagonist in the most varied flows of exchange was one of the most relevant new factors in the western Mediterranean in that period. And, as is well known, this phenomenon was reinforced in the 15th century, although on a previously established base.

After the 13th century Christian conquest, the Valencian area began a process of political, social and economic construction, where the central role of trade soon stood out, especially with regard to the movement of two sets of merchandise: on one hand, the agricultural harvests, that soon showed a high degree of commercialisation and even speculative dealing, and about which, for example, in the case of cereals, the little variation in prices throughout the kingdom had already shown in the same 13th century that there was a kind of integrated grain market; on the other hand, the local or imported textile products that, particularly from the first half of the 14th century, were fixed in a exchange at different levels (from local to regional), in accordance with the quality and the value of the articles traded and, also, according to the rhythm of the contemporary expansion of this industry in the city of Valencia¹⁷.

Before 1350, this situation was encouraged by the presence in the region (mainly in the capital) of home-grown or foreign mercantile groups, which were more or less consistent and specialised. At the same time, all this helped to spread mechanisms for contracting and financing, or forming commercial companies, such as the *comanda*¹⁸. The consequences of this sum of elements made itself felt on ever more consolidated transport routes. In fact, in reference to the naval itineraries, recent analysis of the first decades of the 14th century show that Valencia and other ports of the kingdom were by then already included on sea routes that not only linked up the Valencian coast, but that also extended to North Africa, Majorca, Sicily and Sardinia, Catalonia and the south of present-day France, even reaching the Atlantic coast of Andalusia¹⁹.

17. García Marsilla, Juan Vicente. *Vivir a crédito en la Valencia medieval. De los orígenes del sistema censal al endeudamiento del municipio*. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2002: 23-29; Bordes García, José. *Desarrollo industrial textil y artesanado en Valencia de la conquista a la crisis (1238-1350)*. Valencia: Comité Económico i Social de la Comunitat Valenciana, 2006: 248-254.

18. Mira Jódar, Antonio José. "Circuitos marítimos de intercambio y comandas mercantiles en Valencia durante la primera mitad del siglo XIV", *XVIII Congrés Internacional d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó...*: II, 1369-1393.

19. Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. *Métodos comerciales y redes mercantiles marítimas en Valencia durante la primera mitad del siglo XIV*. Alicante: Universitat d'Alacant (unpublish, research project), 2004; Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. "Relaciones comerciales entre Valencia y el Norte de África en la primera mitad del siglo XIV". *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana*, 27-28 (2003-2004): 125-127; Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. "Intercambiar y vincularse económicamente en el Mediterráneo Occidental: un ejemplo a través del estudio de las redes comerciales entre Valencia y Mallorca durante la primera mitad del siglo XIV", *III Simposio Internacional de Jóvenes Medievalistas: Lorca 2006*, Juan Francisco Jiménez Alcázar, Jorge Ortuño Molina, Juan Leonardo Soler Milla, eds. Lorca: Ayuntamiento de Lorca-Fundación Cajamurcia-Real Academia Alfonso X el

In this scheme of maritime relations, other contacts (such as those with Flanders, mainland Italy or the eastern Mediterranean) seem to have still been very sporadic at the beginning of the 14th century. However, by the end of the century, after the well-known critical circumstances of that century and the qualitative and quantitative impulse to urban commerce since 1375 that the historiography has shown, the inclusion of Valencia in the traffic to the north of Italy or the Atlantic countries, for example, accelerated²⁰. Thus, around 1400, the maintenance and growth of the traditional routes and the significant incorporation of other exchanges led to the kingdom of Valencia entering fully into a commercial maritime economy characterised by a wide diversification of initiatives, all of which fit within the superposition of mercantile circuits (from the largest to the smallest) mentioned above. Moreover, the characteristics of these initiatives, from those times on and during the rest of the 15th century, can be illustrated by the presentation of some specific cases.

2. Coastal loading points in the kingdom and routes to the city of Valencia

Despite the leadership of the port of the city of Valencia, the kingdom's maritime activity in reality also included the movements channelled through the rest of the embarking points in the territory. There were at least forty places for loading and unloading goods scattered along the Valencian coast between the 13th and 16th centuries, either constantly, or grouped together at specific moments, especially towards the end of this period. All of these, together with the capital's own port, made up something similar to a "port system", in the sense that the political and economic dynamics helped to establish hierarchies within this set of *carregadors* (loading points), as the documents call them, and between which situations of interdependence grew up²¹. However, apart from Valencia itself, the knowledge we have of this network of stopping points and its function with regard to maritime commerce is very unequal.

Beginning in the south, in the 15th century the coast of Alicante was well integrated into the medium and long distance itineraries. The trade carried out with North Africa, Majorca or other beaches in the Iberian Peninsula could stop there, as

Sabio-Lorcatour-Universidad de Murcia-Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2008: 177-195. See also Igual Luis, David; Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. "Una aproximació al comerç marítim de les comarques castellonenques (segles XIII-XV)". *Millars. Espai i Història*, 29 (2006): 93-132.

20. Igual Luis, David; Navarro Espinach, Germán. "Relazioni economiche tra Valenza e l'Italia nel Basso Medioevo". *Medioevo. Saggi e rassegne*, 20 (1995): 61-97.

21. Igual Luis, David. "Non ha porto alcuno, ma sola spiaggia". La actividad marítima valenciana en el siglo XV", *Seminario Internacional "Las ciudades portuarias en el proceso de desarrollo económico italiano y español entre la Edad Media y la Edad Moderna (1400-1600) (Valencia, noviembre 2002)"*. Valencia: Universitat de València, forthcoming.



did certain routes with greater geographical projection. To only mention some ports in this area, the famous fleets of Venetian or Florentine galleys that sailed more or less regularly around many parts of the Mediterranean, and then could sail towards the Atlantic, occasionally stopped in Denia, Jávea or Alicante²². For these voyages, or other more limited ones centred on the trade with Flanders or with the Italian areas, the role of the three above-mentioned places was very important for the export of local products, such as nuts or dried fruit (almonds or raisins, for example). And thus, not only because the harvests from the rural interior arrived there, but also because sometimes the shipping that anchored there established a specific relation with shorter routes that reached Valencia: the large ships *en route* to Flanders, especially, used to stop in Denia or Jávea while small boats could sail from Valencia to these ports in Alicante with loads for shipping overseas which the urban operators had stored for months²³.

This is a clear example of the interactions that sometimes occurred between the different types of traffic that sailed the Valencian sea. But it is also evidence for the functional links between the kingdom's loading points. In this sense, it is now some time since Jacqueline Guiral defined Denia and Alicante as a true "ante-ports" for Valencia from the moment that the transport contracts could stipulate that it was there that the orders for unloading the merchandise would be given²⁴. Cullera, a little further north, on the mouth of the river Júcar, has also received the same qualification by some authors, although for other reasons: during the Late Middle Ages it became a frequent anchorage and refuge for ships going to Valencia, probably because of the poor natural conditions of the capital's port at that time²⁵.

Whether similar definitions are more or less adequate, the truth is that, if we return to the situation of the loading points in Alicante in the 15th century, the relation between these and Valencia was important for the inclusion of the territory into international maritime routes, as shown above, an inclusion where Valencia used to make the most of its position as a nerve centre for business, while the southern districts reproduced operative missions²⁶. However, apart from this meaning the contact between these districts and the city of Valencia could also reflect a more

22. Guiral-Hadziiossif, Jacqueline. *Valencia, puerto mediterráneo en el siglo XV (1410-1525)*. Valencia: Edicions Alfons el Magnànim, 1989: 29; Hinojosa Montalvo, José. "Alicante: polo de crecimiento en el tránsito de los siglos XV al XVI", 1490, *en el umbral de la Modernidad. El Mediterráneo europeo y las ciudades en el tránsito de los siglos XV-XVI*, José Hinojosa Montalvo, Jesús Pradells Nadal, eds. Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 1994: 79.

23. Cruselles Gómez, Enrique. "La organización del transporte marítimo en la Valencia de la primera mitad del siglo XV". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 24 (1994): 172. About the trade in nuts and dried fruit, see also Ferrer i Mallol, Maria Teresa. "Fruita seca i fruita assecada, una especialitat de l'àrea econòmica catalana-valenciana-balear". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 31/2 (2001): 883-943.

24. Auffray, Yves; Guiral, Jacqueline. "Les péages du Royaume de Valence (1494)". *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 12 (1976): 147-149.

25. Díaz Borrás, Andrés; Pons i Pons, Anacleto; Serna Alonso, Justo. *La construcción del puerto de Valencia. Problemas y métodos (1283-1880)*. Valencia: Ajuntament de València, 1986: 11.

26. Igual Luis, David. *Valencia e Italia en el siglo XV. Rutas, mercados y hombres de negocios en el espacio económico del Mediterráneo occidental*. Castellón: Bancaixa-Comité Econòmic i Social de la Comunitat Valenciana, 1998: 316-317.



exclusively bilateral logic, especially dedicated to supplying foodstuffs, industrial and luxury goods to the urban groups, which was usually along short itineraries from the south of the kingdom with small vessels.

In 1494, the fiscal documentation of the *manifest* or *peatge de mar* —a kind of customs register of the ships that arrived in the port of Valencia every day— show up to thirty-three voyages from Denia. According to Guiral, nineteen of these arrivals were really coastal shipping and a direct and limited link between both places. In contrast, the remaining fourteen were on more complex and longer voyages²⁷. In reality, however, it is not always easy to separate some circuits from others with this source of information. The typology of the ships that are listed helps to distinguish them, as Jose Hinojosa does when, in reference to the voyages to Valencia from the port of Alicante, he differentiates between the small traffic that used *barques, llaguts* or *sagèties*, for example, from the great lines of navigation that preferentially used *naus*. However, the question becomes more complicated when we observe that, even on the shortest routes with smaller boats, the effects of international transactions can be noted. In accordance with the above-mentioned professor Hinojosa, who analysed the *manifests de mar* for 1488 and 1491, arrivals from Alicante to the capital declared that they carried almost thirty products from the southern part of the kingdom, among which cereals and the nuts and dried fruit stand out, beside a large number of small batches of other food and industrial products. Despite this, the small or medium sized ships also sometimes transported Italian or Flemish cargos (cloth, dyes, metals, etc.) that had first been unloaded in Alicante. Thus, this place acted as an export point, as an initial, final or intermediate stop on long journeys and as a redistribution centre, and the three functions affected the relations with Valencia at least at the end of the 15th century²⁸.

The variety of routes inside or outside the territory the ports on the northern half of the kingdom of Valencia were on has also already been emphasised. This was the case of Sagunto²⁹ or the loading points in Castellón, although the latter case is worth detailing. It is undeniable that, from the 13th to the 15th centuries, there was frequent news about trade between the districts of Castellón and other places on a regional or international level, normally limited to the Western Mediterranean. However, beside the problem of interpreting the weight that these connexions had —especially the longest— within the economy of Castellón, as a hypothesis and from a comparative perspective it seems unlikely that a stop at these places was essential for the major maritime circuits. With what is known to date, only the initiatives that affected ports such as Moncófar, Burriana, Castellón and Benicarló would break this tendency in certain periods with the aim of exporting, especially, local

27. Auffray, Yves; Guiral, Jacqueline. "Les péages du Royaume de Valence (1494)"...: 148.

28. Hinojosa Montalvo, José. "Alicante: polo de crecimiento en el tránsito de los siglos XV al XVI"...: 85-89.

29. Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. "Una villa medieval volcada al Mediterráneo: Morvedre en los itinerarios mercantiles locales e internacionales durante la Baja Edad Media (ss. XIII-XV)", *Catálogo de la exposición "De Murbiter a Morvedre"*. Valencia: Bancaixa, 2006: 171-185.



agricultural or livestock products. However, there is a marked exception, namely Peñíscola³⁰.

During the second half of the 13th century, Peñíscola was already integrated (although sporadically) into routes that linked the Iberian coast with the north of Italy. Nevertheless, from the same time and until the early decades of the 14th century, the available sources situate the basis of the maritime trade from Peñíscola in the export of the cereal surpluses from inland areas, such as the *Ports* of Morella, for the supply of relatively close urban markets, such as Barcelona. Later evolution confirmed this important regional function for Peñíscola in relation with both Catalonia and Majorca, or even Valencia itself³¹. Despite this, from the mid-14th century, the major novelty was the consolidation of the port's international role, with the export of Valencian wools from the Maestrazgo and the *Ports* that were just then beginning to penetrate the European market, particularly in Italy under the control of the same Italian mercantile companies. In fact, Melis thought that Peñíscola could be defined as the biggest export port for wool in the Mediterranean on the transition from the 14th to 15th centuries³².

This situation continued until around 1450, as Carles Rabassa has detailed recently. In that period, Peñíscola became a meeting point between the local and international ambits of trade, as the wool merchants from the villages in the interior converged there, and the agents of the large maritime traffic also collected their produce there. And as well as wool, other articles from the area entered in the mercantile channels as a complementary load (honey, leather or cloth, for example). However, none of this implies that Peñíscola ever became a large commercial centre or had a powerful merchant class. Rather, the town was normally a mere transit point for products, which did, however, favour the existence of a group of naval transport professionals (skippers or seamen), outside the control of the exchanges³³.

Beyond the importance of the activities around Peñíscola and the other initiatives mentioned in the ports of Castellón, the research reflects better the participation of all the coastal loading points in these districts in the domestic routes in the kingdom, especially those leading to the capital, Valencia, like almost always. Once again, the study of the *manifests de mar* offers very important data about this for the second half of the 15th century, the only medieval stage for which this source, which is fiscal in character, exists partially. Thus, in the *manifests* conserved for 1451, 1459, 1488, 1491 and 1494 there are ships reaching Valencia from thirteen points on the

30. Igual Luis, David; Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. "Una aproximació al comerç marítim de les comarques castellonenques (segles XIII-XV)". ...: 95-104.

31. Rabassa i Vaquer, Carles. "Funcions econòmiques del port de Peñíscola durant la Baixa Edat Mitjana". *XVIII Congrés Internacional d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó*. ...: II, 1271, 1277-1278, 1280, 1283.

32. Melis, Federigo. "La llana de l'Espanya mediterrània i de la Berberia occidental en els segles XIV-XV". *València, un mercat medieval*, Antoni Furió, ed. València: Diputació de València, 1985: 69-70; Melis, Federigo. "L'area catalano-aragonesa nel sistema economico del Mediterraneo occidentale", *I mercanti italiani nell'Europa medievale e rinascimentale*, Luciana Frangioni, ed. Prato: Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini", 1990: 228.

33. Rabassa i Vaquer, Carles. "Funcions econòmiques del port de Peñíscola durant la Baixa Edat Mitjana". ...: 1277-1278, 1283, 1285.



coast of Castellón. The global analysis of all the information derived allows various conclusions to be drawn³⁴.

The first is related to the quantity of movements shown by this documentation. In three discontinuous but relatively close (1488, 1491 and 1494) years, the source includes some three hundred movements of ships between the coast of Castellón and Valencia, one hundred and thirty-five of which corresponded to one year alone (1488). The numbers are high, but one must not forget that the density and frequency of a specific current of transactions does not always have a direct relation with its weight in the affected markets or, in general, within the system of exchanges. Moreover, these contacts were not evenly distributed around the different parts of Castellón, as there was always a predominance of customs inscriptions for ships sailing from the centre-north of Castellón (between Vinaroz and Cabanes) and, very especially, to the triad of ports made up of Vinaroz, Benicarló and Peñíscola.

The type of the fleet that sailed to Valencia would be the squadrons of small or medium tonnage that anchored then in the port of the capital of the kingdom. Again, according to the *manifests* for 1488, 1491 and 1494, the most common ship types were the *llaguts* (the majority), *barques* and a few skiffs. It was habitual for the same ships (or, at least, the same masters or skippers of ships) to reach Valencia many times during the year, and it sometimes also seems that various *llaguts* and *barques* made up convoys that allowed them to dock together, in a joint navigation that was not unusual in the Late Medieval Mediterranean and that can be judged as a defensive precaution against the numerous dangers on the sea. All together this ensured a periodicity of arrivals that, in the overall contemplation of the loading points in Castellón, accelerated during the final months of the each year or, at the most, during the winter season. A similar rhythm can be linked to the agricultural cycles and the urban supply needs, especially if we bear in mind that there was a great abundance of rural products among the merchandise transported to Valencia by ships from Castellón.

The list of this merchandise in the five *manifests* studied from 1451 to 1494 includes around a hundred items, which reproduce a catalogue very marked by the terminological details of the documents that place the emphasis on food articles, mainly agrarian (such as cereals, legumes, fruit and vegetables), but also in some derivatives of livestock, forest or mineral working. However, if we take the details from a specific example (1488), only six products were really mentioned very frequently: these are, in ascending order of mentions, oats, beans, honey, oil, barley and wheat. In any case, the majority of the objects were hypothetically from the area of Castellón or the zones further inland that sent the surplus to the coast. Those objects were taken to Valencia as small mercantile batches, which would appear to be far from any potential later commercialisation. The logic of exchange deduced from the data in the *manifests* usually comprises the simple transfer of merchandise between an exporter and an importer, traffic that stopped in Valencia in transit on

34. The analysis and conclusions of the news of the *manifests de mar* related to Castellón are presented in detail in Igual Luis, David; Soler Milla, Juan Leonardo. "Una aproximació al comerç marítim de les comarques castellonenques (segles XIII-XV)...": 104-116. I present a summary of these in the following lines.



its way to other destinations, or transactions that seem veritable redistributions of resources within a family, company or institution. In short, the logic that could be considered typical of a trade, as I have said, sustained by rural products and that was basically aimed at supplying an urban centre such as Valencia.

It is more difficult to determine the social and professional state of the large number of people that, always in line with the *manifests de mar* from the end of the 15th century, were in charge of arranging the carriage by sea of commercial loads between Castellón and Valencia. The source usually offers few details about this, except the mention of the names of those individuals that acted as owners of the cargoes at the loading point and as consignees for these in the port of arrival. However, the scarce information in the *manifests* and the comparative examination of other documents show the important role of privileged sectors or the elite of the communities (nobles, churchmen and local authorities), experts in naval transport, members of trades, even of an artisan type, and merchants who had very varied economic levels. It has to be supposed, at least as an average definition, that a merchant of rural or semi-urban origins, like many of the operators from the Castellón districts, would not be the same as a merchant from the great centre of Valencia. And besides all these groups, the participation in the itineraries cannot be ruled out of persons from other ambits who could be interested in these circuits in a most or less exceptional way. Thus, the maritime trade routes between Castellón and Valencia were run by a wide variety of actors, the majority of local Castellón or Valencian origin and many of them by no means specialised in the mercantile business.

If the arguments about the loading points in Alicante served to emphasise the occasional interactions and interferences between the great and small trade, the things that we have just seen when talking about the ports of Castellón are useful for illustrating at least two questions: that the naval routes were much denser and more heavily travelled near the coast than on the high seas, a situation that is widely corroborated by the set of voyages —from Castellón or not— that reached the city of Valencia from at least the second half of the 15th century on³⁵; and that routes such as those that set the relation between these ports and the capital were usually the scenario for the transport of humble merchandise, in general of limited volume and value, although contracted in quantities that would acquire considerable importance thanks to the stimulation of internal networks of the territory and the workings of the kingdom's extensive port network. All this was the result of the local specialisations in production and the urban supply needs, but could also be due to the increase in the capacity for consumption of the coastal populations and changes in the schemes of the demand³⁶.

35. Salvador Esteban, Emilia. "Valencia, puerto del Mediterráneo", *Catálogo de la exposición "Los Reyes Católicos y la monarquía de España"*. Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 2004: 147-148.

36. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "El comercio en el Mediterráneo catalano-aragonés: espacios y redes"....: 147-148.

3. The international traffic through the Italian and Portuguese examples

Apart from the characteristics of the small trade, always on a Valencian scale it has been emphasised in parallel that the working of the great routes facilitated the profitable insertion of agents and products from the kingdom in very busy and competitive mercantile places. The initiatives developed in these second routes were marked, more than by the volume of the trade, by the comparative advantages and profits generated, as well as the participation of local and foreign merchants, who were able to built trade networks based on a common model of strategies, which were usually structured around elements such as the family ties, geographic or ethnic origins, and even religious identity³⁷.

I have mentioned above how, around 1400, there was full integration of the Valencian territory into the maritime mercantile economy, within which the function of the capital's port then exceeded the simple exchange of locally produced goods and loads only destined for internal consumption³⁸. This integration remained solid (even with growing diversification) throughout the 15th century, although there were specific fluctuations and some differentiated evolution of the traffic³⁹. This solidity constantly expressed the double perspective of projection of the coast towards the Mediterranean on one hand, and to the Atlantic, on the other, areas for which Valencia came to play missions of convergence (or of economic closure) for various currents of maritime trade.

In the Mediterranean, some of the routes worth more attention were those to Italy, which were among the most fertile of those established by Valencia during the Late Middle Ages. In fact, with particular reference to the links with the centre and north of the Italian peninsula, I only indicate two historiographical milestones: from the thirties of the last century, when the wool traffic organised between the northern districts of Valencia and Tuscany from the end of the 14th century was emphasised⁴⁰, to the recent edition of a series of mercantile letters from the famous Datini company between 1395 and 1398 that has once again allowed the significance

37. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "El siglo de oro del comercio valenciano"...: 120-122, 125.

38. Orlandi, Angela. "Estudi introductorio", *Mercaderies i diners: La correspondència datiniana entre València i Mallorca (1395-1398)*, Angela Orlandi, ed. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2008: 42, 57.

39. Fluctuations and evolutions that I have emphasised in some specific cases through various publications. For example: Igual Luis, David. *Valencia e Italia...*: 31-76, 403-418; Igual Luis, David. "Navegación y comercio entre Valencia y el Norte de África durante el siglo XV", *Relaciones entre el Mediterráneo cristiano y el Norte de África en época medieval y moderna*, Carmen Trillo San José, ed. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2004: 227-286; and, in collaboration with Paulino Iradiel Murugarren: Igual Luis, David; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "Del Mediterráneo al Atlántico. Mercaderes, productos y empresas italianas entre Valencia y Portugal (1450-1520)", *Portogallo mediterraneo*, Luís Adão da Fonseca, Maria Eugenia Cadeddu, eds. Cagliari: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, 2001: 143-194.

40. Levi, Ezio. "I fiorentini nel Maestrazgo al tramonto del Medio Evo". *Boletín de la Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura*, 10 (1929): 17-29; Levi, Ezio. "Pittori e mercanti in terra di pastori". *Boletín de la Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura*, 13 (1932): 39-48.



and the operative modalities of foreign merchants in Valencia to be shown⁴¹, a wide tradition of studies has underlined the numerous effects that the Italian contacts had on the politics and economy of the city and kingdom of Valencia, but also on other very varied aspects of local daily life.

If the study of these contacts is focussed on those maintained by sea with central and northern Italy, the analysis from the second half of the 15th century provide images of interest⁴². To start with, with regard to the material structuring of the trade, it must be stated that this showed the situation of Valencia linked to three very specific zones: Liguria (that also included the overland routes to Lombardy and Piedmont), Tuscany and Lazio, and Veneto. With these, the transport routes not only touched in one sense or another the Valencian or Italian beaches directly affected, but also passed along other coasts. Thus, the itineraries localised from 1450 show the habitual circulation of the convoys to Murcia and Andalusia, Catalonia, the south of France, the Balearic Islands, Sicily and Sardinia, Naples, North Africa and, even, although more exceptionally, the Atlantic coasts of Portugal, France and the British Isles.

There were two consequences of this. First, that the Valencia-Italy connexions, far from acquiring an exclusive bilateral sense, were framed within a wider and integrating context that covered, at least, a good part of the Western Mediterranean thanks to the design of heterogeneous and multilateral routes on which, as is obvious, coastal navigation predominated. The second, that this phenomenon —that not only occurred in the above-mentioned connexions, but was also frequent in other international exchanges along the European and Mediterranean coasts— makes the distinction that has been sometimes established between coastal navigation and high seas navigation, in assimilating a differentiation between great and small trade under both concepts respectively, somewhat artificial. It must be remembered that the preferred methods of navigation during the Late Middle Ages, on both long and short voyages, were almost always to follow the coasts and pass from port to port⁴³.

In any case, the sea between Valencia and the centre-north of Italy was sailed by ships with an intensity we have some figures for, once again for the 1450-1500 period. With regard to the Valencian exports agreed in the capital through contracts of charter, an average maximum of between six and seven annual journeys from 1495 to 1499 have been shown, especially to Genoese, Tuscan and Roman ports. In the opposite direction, the sources of the *manifests de mar* for 1488, 1491 and 1494 allow an examination of twenty-five arrivals in Valencia of ships from Genoa, Savona, Pisa, Livorno, Piombino, Civitavecchia and Venice. The number is far from the almost three hundred movements that, as mentioned above, according to the

41. It is the edition by Angela Orlandi of the letters corresponding to the communication maintained by Datini's agents in Valencia and Majorca between the dates indicated (Orlandi, Angela, ed. *Mercaderies i diners...*).

42. Igual Luis, David. *Valencia e Italia...*: 319-418. Apart from some cases in which some other reference was noted down, see this quote for all the information that follows in the text about maritime trade between Valencia and north-central Italy between 1450 and 1500.

43. Igual Luis, David. "Itinerarios comerciales en el espacio...": 138.



same documentation were made in the same years between the loading points in Castellón and Valencia. Even so, the weight of the Italian traffic in the Valencian economy was way above what, given these quantities, it would seem at first sight.

With regard to this, the important fiscal repercussion of this traffic for the income of the royal tolls must be borne in mind—at least in its importing aspect. This helps to understand the constant preoccupation shown by the authorities from the 13th century for the customs treatment of the Italian trade (and of the Italians), in which economic, political and social logics were intertwined⁴⁴. Some other specific data is also highly symptomatic of that weight. According to the Valencian maritime insurances from between 1488 and 1520 investigated by Enrique Cruselles, those corresponding to centre-north Italy only covered between eight and twenty percent of all the annual trade studied, a magnitude below those of the contracts that referred to Naples, Sicily and Sardinia and the Iberian territories of the Crown of Aragon. However, if we analyse the price of these insurances, that is, the value assigned to the products transported that was related totally or partially to the commercial cost, the hierarchy is turned on its head and is now headed by the Ligurian, Tuscan, Roman and Venetian ports⁴⁵.

Undoubtedly, situations like this were the result of various factors. To start with, the fact that the vessels that worked the routes between Valencia and the centre-north of Italy were among the largest that could be found at the end of the 15th century in the port of Valencia. These were mainly *naus*, galleys and caravels. It is easy to imagine the greater cargo capacity of this fleet compared with other smaller ship types. However, it is almost more important to indicate the enormous heterogeneity, in typology and value, of the products that were carried on these same vessels. Thus, between 1451 and 1509, the analysis of the *manifests de mar* from the centre and north of Italy together with other Valencian fiscal documentation related to Genoese import and export trade has registered over six hundred different terms for the merchandise carried. Logically, among these there were all kinds of objects of very varied geographic origins, this being the result of the above-mentioned multilateral nature of the Valencia-Italy contacts and the fact that, on both one side and the other of the exchanges, they acted as redistributors of foreign articles. Despite this, among this accumulation of references, two elements can be emphasised: the first, that three typical groups of international commerce (wool, textile and dyes) still constituted, despite the diversification of the markets, an essential and vigorous business, highly adaptable to the changes in demand and the conjuncture and the second, that this happened while, in the Valencia of the period,

44. As is seen repeatedly in Igual Luis, David. *Valencia e Italia...: 31-175*, and also in Igual Luis, David. "Política y economía durante la Baja Edad Media...": 264-267.

45. Cruselles Gómez, Enrique. *Comercio y mercado en tiempo de crisis (Los mercaderes valencianos y su Mediterráneo frente a la época de los Descubrimientos)*. Valencia: Universitat de València (unpublished research project), 1991.



the Italian connexions and those with other places allowed a general increase in the circulation of manufactures and industrial raw materials and Atlantic products⁴⁶.

When I mention Atlantic products, I am not referring so much to those that were known in Valencia through trade with Flanders, for example. In 1450, this was a trade that could already be considered traditional and that had been characterised almost from its very beginning, and would continue to be so until 1500, by the fluidity of the links, the variety of mercantile and naval operators involved, and the weight of Valencian agriculture exports and the importation of finished European textiles⁴⁷. Atlantic products refers more to those that arrived from Portugal, Andalusia, the Canary Islands and Madeira, and West Africa, a world that, as is well known, would from the perspective of European commerce, take off from the mid-15th century. This rise would also provide opportunities for new and abundant trade, as indicated by particular cases, such as the economic relations established between Valencia and Portugal.

Like many other lines of transaction, apart from having a bilateral significance, this trade fitted into more complex mercantile networks that stretched to Western Andalusia, Galicia or the northern Atlantic and that, even at a certain moment, began to connect basically from Lisbon with African and Asian products that arrived there thanks to the successful opening of new routes to the southern ocean and India. Without forgetting that, the axes of maritime exchange between Valencia and Portugal until 1450 seemed to have been based on the transport of Portuguese leather and fish and medium and low quality Valencian cloth, which did not preclude the presence on these itineraries of a much wider range of merchandise, although quantitatively of little importance. The commercial structure described was also maintained later, beyond the influence of critical situations, such as the one provoked by the creation in Valencia of the so-called *dret portugués* in 1464. However, from the middle decades of the 15th century, the effects of the above-mentioned growth in trade in the central and southern Atlantic would make itself felt on this Valencian-Portuguese contact, especially with the penetration in the trade of products, such as sugar, gold, slaves and spices⁴⁸.

In fact, during the latter years of the 15th century, the comparative study of various Valencian fiscal and notary sources allows us to consider the possibility that relations between Valencia and Portugal split into a kind of double circuit of commerce for imports: one, traditional, around fish and leather controlled by

46. Igual Luis, David. "La difusión de productos en el Mediterráneo...": 479-489; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "El comercio en el Mediterráneo entre 1490 y 1530"...: 105.

47. Hinojosa Montalvo, José. "Intercambios y relaciones entre Valencia y las ciudades marítimas del norte europeo", *Poder y sociedad en la Baja Edad Media hispánica. Estudios en homenaje al profesor Luis Vicente Díaz Martín*, Carlos María Reglero de la Fuente, coord. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2002: II, 998-1003; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino. "El siglo de oro del comercio valenciano"...: 115, 121-122.

48. Hinojosa Montalvo, José. "De Valencia a Portugal y Flandes. Relaciones durante la Edad Media". *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 1 (1982): 149-168; Hinojosa Montalvo, José. "Intercambios comerciales entre Portugal y Valencia a fines del siglo XV: el 'Dret Portugués'", *II Jornadas Luso-Espanholas de História Medieval*. Porto: Instituto Nacional de Investigação, 1990: II, 759-779; Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino; Igual Luis, David. "Del Mediterráneo al Atlántico...": 143-169.



the Portuguese operators; and the other, more recent, developed around slaves and sugar and that, although Portuguese participation is also seen, seems to have been dominated in reality by Italian and, to a lesser degree, Valencian, mercantile companies. Sometimes it seems that this division also corresponded to a separation of economic strategies between the sectors where individual merchants and carriers predominated who had hardly anything but small short-lived easy to control businesses, in contrast with more evolved and stable forms of company⁴⁹.

Nevertheless, even if the full validity of this hypothesis is checked, the fragmentation described of the circuits should not be taken in an absolute sense. In fact, the general vision of the exchanges between Valencia and Portugal throughout the 15th century, with the multiple spatial implications and negotiating groups that they contained, shows that the elements of competition, inequality and hierarchical structuring coexisted with the factors of cooperation and integration at all levels. In his time, for example, Federigo Melis indicated the happy combination that occurred in the Late Middle Ages between Italians and Portuguese in the field of navigation. Because of their economic and transport necessities, these Italians (especially the Tuscans) contributed to increasing the number of Portuguese ships, their capacity and their use in specific activities⁵⁰. So, apart from the above-mentioned combination finding a micro-analytical reflection in Valencia, the actions of Italians, Portuguese and Valencians, always from the same Valencian outlook, drew up dense networks of traffic that, I insist, mixing competition and integration, allowed not only the processes of maritime exportation and importation, but also the interrelation of these processes with the projection from (or to) the interior of the territories⁵¹.

The latter does not mean anything more than the fact that, obviously, all external links from the kingdom of Valencia somehow needed to fit into the internal mercantile currents, to channel the articles for export towards the coast or to distribute the imports in the opposite direction. And what it is more important: this joining could be produced through a division of the work between different groups of operators or, on occasions, thanks to the assumption of part of the functions of the two aspects of the commerce (internal and external) by the same merchant or by a single mercantile company. With regard to this, and once again in the Valencia-Portugal relations, the career of a character who has merited various prosopographic approximations is very interesting: Cesare di Barzi⁵².

49. Muñoz Pomer, María Rosa; Navarro Espinach, Germán; Igual Luis, David. "El comercio de importación portugués en Valencia, 1487-1488", *Os Reinos Ibéricos na Idade Média. Livro de Homenagem ao Professor Doutor Humberto Carlos Baquero Moreno*, Luis Adão da Fonseca, Luís Carlos Amaral, Maria Fernanda Ferreira Santos, coords. Porto: Livraria Civilização, 2004: III, 1121-1131.

50. Melis, Federigo. "Di alcune figure di operatori economici fiorentini attivi nel Portogallo, nel XV secolo", *Fremde Kaufleute auf der Iberischen Halbinsel*, Hermann Kellenbenz, ed. Cologne: Böhlau, 1970: 66-67.

51. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino; Igual Luis, David. "Del Mediterráneo al Atlántico...": 154, 166, 192; Igual Luis, David. "La difusión de productos...": 489-490.

52. Hinojosa Montalvo, José. "Cesaro Barchi y otros mercaderes florentinos en la ciudad de Valencia en el tránsito del Medievo a la Modernidad", *Sardegna, Mediterraneo e Atlantico tra Medioevo ed età Moderna. Studi Storici in memoria di Alberto Boscolo*, Luisa D'Arienzo, ed. Cagliari: Bulzoni Editore, 1993: III, 231-249; Igual Luis, David. "De la tienda a la banca: Los agentes del comercio mediterráneo medieval",



He was a Florentine businessman living in the city of Valencia between 1473 and 1519. From there, Barzi joined a network of itineraries that first linked Florence with the Iberian peninsula, then, in the peninsula, Valencia with Seville and Lisbon, and from the latter, as a basic consequence of the Portuguese link, the peninsula with Africa and even India. This variety of areas of interest was the result of the incorporation of the Tuscan into a complex company that had its principal base in Lisbon, from where its influence extended to Andalusia and the other areas that I have mentioned. In any case, the opening of areas of commercial activity allowed Barzi to be present in the shipping that called at the port of Valencia and, thus, fulfil tasks as an exporter and importer. However, simultaneously, he and his company's delegates and employees also participated in Valencia in the large or small scale buying and selling of many products, either within the dynamics of exportation and importation, or hypothetically in simple local traffic. This is a portrait of a merchant well introduced into the Valencian circuits of exchange and moreover, well connected with others operating in the urban market as suppliers and/or consumers⁵³.

I believe that this specific case is a magnificent example of at least two situations that, in both Valencia and other places, has been shown to be very common at the end of the Middle Ages. The first, that the distinction between the retail and wholesale markets is normally only perceptible at the level of the smallest agents. In the case of commercial companies, such as Cesare di Barzi's, both activities were done by the same negotiators, which meant that the members of the companies, personally or with the help of middlemen, acted where they could and for any quantity of product⁵⁴. The second, that it is possible that the protagonists of the international transactions (even more so if they were foreigners in a place like Valencia) gave an essential weight to this great trade in their economic accounts, and that this reality led them to a preferential treatment for this sector of operations. But such a reality did not exclude the same actors from intervening more or less intensively in the local circuits, sometimes even partially or totally separated from the great mercantile networks⁵⁵. I also believe that this would again insist on the images of interaction and integration between great and small trade that I have mentioned throughout the article.

Los vendedores y las civilizaciones, Felip Masé Farrer, coord. Barcelona: Würth, 2007: 148-152. Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino; Igual Luis, David. "Del Mediterráneo al Atlántico...": 178-189.

53. In relation with what I have just indicated, it is symptomatic of Barzi's behaviour in the slave market. It is now well known that between 1489 and 1497, the Tuscan declared to the Valencian authorities the importing of over two thousand Black African slaves, which made him the most important slave trader in Valencia at the end of the 15th century. Once there, Barzi could re-export the captives to other places and distribute them around the city, according to the around fifty contracts that the Italian reproduced before two local notaries in 1488 and 1497, and with which he sold over seventy slaves to Hispanic and foreign merchants, artisans, nobles and churchmen.

54. Orlandi, Angela. "Estudi introductorio"...: 42.

55. Abulafia, David. "Gli italiani fuori d'Italia", *Eli orizzonti aperti. Profili del mercante medievale*, Gabriela Airaldi, ed. Turin: Scriptorum, 1997: 197-198.

