Reprinted from

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY · 178

Brokers of Change

Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in
Precolonial Western Africa

Dutch Trade with Senegambia, Guinea, and Cape Verde, c.1590–1674

FILIPA RIBEIRO DA SILVA*

THE DUTCH TRADE in the Atlantic is, traditionally, associated with the monopoly of the Dutch West India Company (*West-Indische Compagnie* [WIC]) established in 1621. However, private entrepreneurship was vital for the functioning of the Dutch Atlantic economy both before and after 1621. The inter- and intra-continental trade demanded high investments in insurance, freight, purchase of cargos, and payment of seamen and commercial agents. The articulation of the coastal and long-distance circuits required high commercial expertise and wide trading networks covering several geographical areas. The European entrepreneurs and businessmen in the Dutch Republic as well as their agents overseas were on the genesis and at the basis of this complex system of interactions.

Since the 1590s, the Dutch Republic was home to a wide mercantile community including not only Dutchmen, but also foreigners, such as Flemish and German merchants. However, for convenience, we will refer to them as 'Dutch' businessmen. The Dutch mercantile community also comprised an active group of Portuguese Sephardic merchants. The group had taken refuge in the Republic after the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal (1536) and the blockade of Antwerp (1584–85) by the Dutch insurgents as a consequence of the city's economic decline.

For the past twenty years, several scholars have studied these mercantile groups.¹ Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the economic activities

* I would like to acknowledge the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia) for sponsoring the research for this chapter, as part of a Ph.D. dissertation entitled 'The Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa: Empire Building and Atlantic System, 1580–1674'. Leiden University, June 2009. Recently published by Brill with the title *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: States, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580–1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011, Atlantic World Series, no. 22).

On the mercantile groups in the Republic, see Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period: The Economic Relationship between Amsterdam and Lisbon, 1640–1705* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2004);

of these private investors in the early trade with the western coast of Africa. This chapter sheds some light on this subject by analysing the interests of the private businessmen from the Republic in Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde, and their conflicts and forms of cooperation with the WIC. It also looks into the conflicts opposing these entities and their impact on commerce. Transactions involving Dutch, Sephardim, Portuguese, and Euro-African merchants are explored as well.

First, we pay attention to the entrepreneurs based in the Republic financing the insurance of ships and cargos for Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde. To understand the origin of the capital covering the risks of this trade, we also briefly look at their other economic activities. Secondly, we focus on the businessmen operating in the long-distance circuits connecting the regions mentioned above with Europe and the Americas. Here, we aim to identify the most important European merchants investing in this trade and to enumerate their main business interests. To achieve these goals we check areas of investment and commodities traded. In the final section of the chapter, we look at the commercial agents of the European merchants controlling the trade in the Dutch posts in Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde.

C. Lesger, *Handel in Amsterdam Ten Tjide Van de Opstand: Kooplieden, Commerciële Expansie en Verandering in de Ruimtelijke Economie van de Nederlanden ca. 1550–ca. 1630* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001); O. Gelderbloom, *Zuid-Nederlandse Kooplieden en de Opkomst van de Amsterdamse Stapelmarkt (1578–1600)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000); C. Lesger and L. Noordegraaf (eds), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: Merchants and Industrialists Within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market* (Den Haag: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1995); P. W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e Eeuw: Een Studie Over het Ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse Stapelmarkt* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965). On the Portuguese Sephardim in the Republic, Western Europe, and the Atlantic in general, see Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); idem, 'La "Nation" Portugaise: Réseaux Marchands dans l'Espace Atlantique à la Époque Moderne', *Annales HSS* 58/3 (2003): 627–48; Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period*; Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within A Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires (1540–1740)* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2002); idem, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (London: Clarendon Press, 1998); Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (eds), *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800* (New York: Berghahn, 2001); Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2000); O. Vlessing, 'The Portuguese Jewish Merchant Community in 17th-Century Amsterdam', in C. Lesger and L. Noordegraaf (eds), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times*, 223–4; Daniel Swetschinski and L. Schönduue, *De Familie Lopes Suasso: Financiers van Willem III/The Lopes Suasso Family, Bankers to Willem III* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1988); Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of 17th-Century Amsterdam* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2000); idem, 'Kinship and Commerce: The Foundation of Portuguese Jewish life in 17th-century Holland', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15/1 (1981): 52–74; idem, 'The Portuguese Jewish Merchants of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: A Social Profile' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1980).

The study of the entrepreneurs, businessmen, and agents operating from the Republic is based on a set of 341 notarial contracts collected from the Municipal Archive of Amsterdam (*Gemeente Archief van Amsterdam, Notariale Archieven* [GAA Not Arch]). This set comprises all notarial contracts regarding the business activities of the merchants of this Dutch port with the western coast of Africa for the period 1580 to 1674. This selection includes various types of notarial contracts such as insurance and commercial partnerships as well as commercial agreements, labour contracts, and powers of attorney. In geographical terms, this set includes all contracts for Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Grain, Gold, Ivory and Slave Coasts, São Tomé and Príncipe, Loango, Kongo, and Angola. In this chapter we analyse only the contracts for the first three areas mentioned.²

Our analysis of the entrepreneurs, businessmen, and agents is based on case studies of the economic activities of certain individuals. The selection of these merchants has been made with regard to the number and quality of primary sources available.

The chapter covers three different periods: (1) c.1590–1623; (2) 1624–38; and (3) 1639–74. These chronological boundaries are essential because the juridical framework regulating commercial activities in the so-called Dutch Atlantic in general, and the western coast of Africa in particular, changed over time. While the first period corresponded to an era of free trade, after the establishment of the WIC (1621–24), private merchants were prohibited from trading with the western coast of Africa and other areas in the Atlantic, and were forced to remove their assets and personnel from the commercial posts within a period of two years (1623).³ These commercial restrictions were in use until 1638 for Brazil and 1648 for North America and the western coast of Africa. However, from the early 1640s onwards, the signs of economic decline started to emerge and the WIC's incapacity to conduct trade and guarantee the shipping of goods in the intercontinental routes led to a gradual opening up of the commercial monopolies to private businessmen.⁴ Therefore, after the

² This set of contracts is part of a bigger sample comprising c.17,000 notarial contracts covering the Atlantic, the Baltic, and the Mediterranean between 1580 and 1750. Work in progress by Cátia Antunes and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva.

³ A. Schiltoorn, 'Legislation, Jurisprudence, and Law in the Dutch West Indian Colonies: The Order of government of 1629', *Pro Memoria* 5/2 (2003): 320–1; H. den Heijer, 'Directores, Stadhouderes e Conselhos de Administração', in M. Wiesebron (ed.), *O Brasil em Arquivos Neerlandeses (1624–1654)* [*Brazil in de Nederlandse archieven (1624–1654)*] (Leiden: CNWS, 2005), 17–43.

⁴ From 1642, the Gentiemen Nineteen had been discussing the possibility of opening up the monopoly of the slave trade in Luanda to private merchants from the Republic, since the WIC employees had proved to be incapable of stopping the decline of the trade, and the various chambers of the company were unable to send regular cargoes of exchange commodities without the cooperation of private

1640s, and especially in the 1650s and 1660s, there was a revival of private investment from the Republic into the western coast of Africa.

Thus, in the first period we focus on the economic activities of the private entrepreneurs, businessmen, and agents operating in Senegambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, whereas in the second period we examine the commercial organization of the WIC and its activities. In this period, we also look at the activities of the interlopers whenever the primary sources make this possible.⁵ In the latter period, we analyse the activities of the WIC and the private insurers, merchants, and agents authorized to operate in the areas controlled by the WIC and within certain branches of the monopoly.

Entrepreneurs

The regions of Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde became part of the financial and commercial activities of the entrepreneurs and businessmen of the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth century. Since the 1590s, 'Dutch' entrepreneurs had been backing the risks of the ships freighted in the Republic to operate in two main intercontinental circuits connecting the Seven Provinces to Senegambia and the Cape Verde Islands,⁶ as well as in the port-to-port navigation in these two regions.⁷ However, only a few European entrepreneurs had enough capital to be insurers.

merchants. This discussion resulted in a regulation that granted the private merchants from the Republic permission to send vessels to Luanda to buy slaves and to transport them preferably to New Holland (Brazil) and the West Indies. This regulation was only printed in pamphlet form and approved by the States General in 1648. However, given the multiple references to independent colonists and independent merchants in Luanda from the mid-1640s, it is likely that this regulation was put into practice before it had been approved by the States General. G[emeente]a[rchieff van] A[msterdam], 54: Reglement [...] over the openstellen van de handel op S. Paulo de Loanda. The Hague, 1648; K. Ratelband, *Os Holandeses no Brasil e na Costa Africana. Angola, Kongo e São Tomé (1600–1650)* (Lisboa: Vega, 2003), 310–15.

⁵ Between 1624 and 1648 the number of notarial contracts concerning the commercial activities of private merchants is lower. Nevertheless, there are multiple examples of notarial acts by the WIC and private businessmen, as well as between entrepreneurs, in deliberate attempts to evade the company monopoly. After the mid-1650s, the number of notarial contracts increased again, making it possible to follow in detail the economic activities of the several mercantile groups of the Dutch Republic investing in the western coast of Africa.

⁶ Whereas the first route linked the Republic to Senegambia and the Guinea Bissau region, the second route connected the Dutch ports to the Cape Verde islands: Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, 'Dutch Vessels in African Waters: Coastal Routes and Intra-Continental Trade (c.1590–1674)', *Tijdschrift voor Zeege-schiedenis* 1 (2010), 19–38. For examples, see GAA Not[arial] Arch[ive] 124/125–126: 16 March 1611; Not Arch 160/28–29v: 4 October 1619.

⁷ Until the early seventeenth century, the ships freighted in Dutch ports to conduct trade between the Republic and the western coast of Africa were often the same that carried out the coastal trade in Africa

Among those who could afford to be insurers in the Dutch Republic were several important merchants of Amsterdam, namely: Jan Jansz Smits, Claes Andriesz. Albert Schuijt, Barent Sweets, and Jan de Clerck. Less prominent in the insurance business with Senegambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, but still fairly active were: Pelgrom van Dronckelaer, Anthoni van Diemen, Hans van Soldt, Hans van Geel, Hendrick Voet, Willem Pauw, Van den Bogaert, Wijbrand Warwijck, and Salomon Voerknecht.⁸ As an example of the insurance activities developed by these businessmen with regard to the regions just mentioned, we will look into the activities of Jan Jansz Smits and his associates.

Jan Jansz Smits, businessman in Amsterdam, started his insurance activities in 1612 with ships destined to the western coast of Africa and other areas in the Atlantic, namely Brazil, the West Indies, Portugal, and Spain. In general, Jan Jansz Smits worked in partnership with Claes Adriaesz, Barent Sweets, and Albert Schuijt.⁹ Claes Andriesz and Barent Sweets were two powerful merchants from Amsterdam, especially active in the trade between Portugal, the Republic, and the Baltic. However, they also operated as insurers of vessels sailing from the Republic and Portugal to Cape Verde and Guinea, and the Southern Atlantic waters, to both Angola and Brazil.¹⁰ As for Albert Schuijt, he was a trader in Amsterdam, specializing in the insurance business, mainly with the western coast of Africa and Brazil. Schuijt started his insurance activities in 1614 and remained active until 1623. In the early years of his business, he mainly insured ships operating the routes connecting Europe, the western coast of Africa, and the Americas. However, later Schuijt almost exclusively safeguarded vessels involved in the Brazilian trade. His highest

in a system of port-to-port commerce. These ships followed several coastal circuits, for example: (a) the Cape Verde and Senegambia circuits; (b) the Gulf of Guinea circuits; and (c) the West-Central African circuits. Each of these coastal circuits included several routes. The Cape Verde and Senegambia routes, under scrutiny here, comprised the routes between the island of Gorée, the Petite Côte of Senegal, and the Cape Verde islands: Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, 'Dutch Vessels in African Waters'. For examples, see J. D. Le Fleur (ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's Journal of Voyages to Cape Verde, Guinea, and Angola, 1605–1612* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2000), 23–42; GAA Not Arch 117/22: 19 September 1606; Not Arch 62/217v: 14 January 1610; Not Arch 253/476v: 13 April 1612.

⁹ GAA Not Arch 196/199–200v: 21 March 1609; Not Arch 258/83: 28 January 1614; Not Arch 138/18–19: 12 May 1614; Not Arch 253/476v: 13 April 1612; Not Arch 138/210v–211v: 25 March 1615.

¹⁰ GAA Not Arch 129/163–164: 4 December 1612; Not Arch 130/13–14v: 14 December 1612; Not Arch 130/13v–14: 14 December 1612; Not Arch 130/18–19: 17 December 1612; Not Arch 138/210v–211v: 25 March 1615.

¹¹ GAA Not Arch 210/93v–94: 9 June 1611; Not Arch 130/13–14v: 14 December 1612; Not Arch 138/18–19: 17 December 1612; Not Arch 130/18–19: 17 December 1612.

volume of insurance business was in the routes linking Brazil to Portugal, namely Lisbon, Viana do Castelo, and Porto.¹¹

Like Schuijt, Jan Jansz Smit expanded his insurance business to the commercial routes linking Brazil and Europe.¹² However, as with the western coast of Africa, in the insurance activities concerning Brazil Jansz Smit operated mainly in partnership with other merchants to lower the risks. Among his partners one should be mentioned in particular, Hans van Soldt de Jonge, who also participated in the insurance business for the western coast of Africa, as well as men such as Bartholomeus and Abraham Bisschop, and Wijbrant Warwijck.¹³

Many of the ships, cargoes, and return goods insured by these merchants were the property of Portuguese Sephardic merchants living either in Portugal or in the Republic. For instance, in 1612, Jan Jansz Smit, in association with Claes Adriaesz, Jan de Clerk, and Jasper Grevenraet, insured several goods for Diogo da Silva, such as hides, elephant tusks, gold, and other merchandise loaded on board the *St Jacob*, skippered by Harpert Martens from Rotterdam, for a trip from Cape Verde to the Republic.¹⁴

The Dutch entrepreneurs insured not only the ships and cargoes of the Dutch merchants and the Portuguese Sephardic Jews established in Amsterdam, but also most of the vessels sailing the long-distance routes of the Portuguese Atlantic. The Portuguese historian Costa has emphasized that the majority of the businessmen operating in the Portuguese Atlantic had their ships and commodities insured in Amsterdam.¹⁵ This option could have been a solution for a possible lack of capital in Portugal. However, it is more likely that it was a well-thought-out strategy to spread risk and avoid major losses within the same mercantile group. In fact, the members of the Portuguese Jewish Nation of Amsterdam, some of them renowned as very wealthy businessmen, used a similar commercial strategy.

Usually, the Portuguese Sephardim in Amsterdam acted as contacts for the mercantile groups in Portugal to obtain their insurance in the Republic. Often, they were the commercial partners of businessmen operating from

Portugal and the Portuguese Empire. For instance, João Soeiro, *contratador* of the Cape Verde and the Guinea royal monopoly between 1608 and 1614, made use of his factors' connections with the Sephardic Jews to freight and insure vessels in Amsterdam.¹⁶ In addition, by conducting direct trade between the Republic, the Petite Côte of Senegal (also included in the aforementioned monopoly), and the Republic, the ships could avoid calling at the ports of Ribeira Grande (Santiago, Cape Verde) and Lisbon, where several taxes had to be paid to the royal treasury. Soeiro's main contacts in Amsterdam were Gaspar Fernandes, Gaspar Nunes, Duarte Fernandes, Pedro Rodrigues da Vega, and others. For example, on 5 August 1611, Gaspar Fernandes transported goods for Duarte Fernandes, on board *Het Vliegende Hert* sailing from Rotterdam to Portudal (present-day Saly-Portudal, Petite Cote, Senegal), under the command of skipper Alewijn Jansen from Rotterdam. The value of the merchandise transported to Portudal and the insurance premium was 'Duss pond. 10 schellingen, 10 groten vl.', while the value of the return goods and the insurance premium for the return voyages amounted to 2,552 Flemish pounds. Duarte Fernandes was probably a holder of a commercial licence issued by João Soeiro to conduct trade within the area of the monopoly.¹⁷

Two other important associates of João Soeiro were Diogo da Silva and Diogo Dias Querido, both merchants in Amsterdam and connected to Soeiro as their common agents in Senegambia and the Guinea Bissau region: Simão Rodrigues Pinel and Estêvão Rodrigues, factors of the *contratador* on the coast. For example, on 19 January 1611, Diogo da Silva and Diogo Dias Querido sent some goods in the ship *Santiago*, skippered by Herbert Marselssen from Rotterdam, sailing from Rotterdam to Portudal and Joal (present-day Joal-Fadiouth, Petite Cote, Senegal). The value of the cargo amounted to 3,120 Flemish pounds. Simão Rodrigues Pinel and Estêvão Rodrigues were responsible for the trade on the coast. Hides, ivory, and other African goods were to be bartered for European cargo. They planned to stay six months in the area. Barent Adriaen Andriesz, Wijbrant Warwijck, and Anthoni van Diemen insured ship and cargo. The ship sailed from Portugal to several places on the coast of Guinea and returned to the Republic. Claes Andriesz, Jaspas Grevenraet, Barent Sweerts, and Jan Jansz Smits, all merchants in Amsterdam, insured the return cargo.¹⁸

¹¹ *Contratadores*—private entrepreneurs and businessmen who leased out the monopolies of the Portuguese Crown.

¹² GAA Not Arch 125/27v–28v; 27 April 1611; Not Arch 124/131–131v; 5 August 1611.

¹³ GAA Not Arch 62/218v; 19 January 1611; Not Arch 253/476v; 13 April 1612; Not Arch 129/163–164; 4 December 1612; Not Arch 130/13v–14; 14 December 1612; Not Arch 130/13–14v; 14 December 1612; Not Arch 130/18–19; 17 December 1612.

¹¹ GAA Not Arch 258/83; 28 January 1614; Not Arch 254/188–189; 22 May 1614; Not Arch 317/339; 29 May 1615; Not Arch 378A/339; 29 May 1615; Not Arch 379/606; 17 November 1616; Not Arch 379/614; 25 November 1616; Not Arch 379/618; 2 December 1616; Not Arch 379/633–633v; 9 December 1616; Not Arch 379/633; 9 December 1616; Not Arch 385/202; 20 August 1622.

¹² GAA Not Arch 376/229; 26 April 1613.

¹³ GAA Not Arch 377/74; 1 March 1614; Not Arch 377A/74; 1 March 1614.

¹⁴ GAA Not Arch 129/163–164; 4 December 1612; Not Arch 130/13–14v; 14 December 1612; Not Arch 130/13v–14; 14 December 1612; Not Arch 130/18–19; 17 December 1612.

¹⁵ L. F. Costa, *Impérios e Grupos Mercantis: Entre o Oriente e o Atlântico (Século XVII)* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2002), 79.

After 1640, the businessmen operating in Portugal continued to freight and insure their ships and cargoes in Amsterdam, especially those used in the European trade.¹⁹ The data available for the trade with the western coast of Africa does not give detailed information regarding the insurance in this chronology.

During the strict monopoly of the WIC over the Atlantic (1621–37) information on the insurance activities of the aforementioned entrepreneurs is very scarce. The limited number and the nature of the primary sources concerning the WIC do not allow an identification of the insurers of the company. Nevertheless, after the WIC started to open up its monopoly to private investment, the insurance activities of the entrepreneurs of the Republic reappear in the notarial contracts.

Businessmen

Whereas the entrepreneurs held the capital required to cover the risks, the businessmen had the commercial knowledge and connections to shipping and trade. Between c. 1590 and 1623, there were two different groups of merchants in the Republic with economic interests in the western coast of Africa: the 'Dutch' merchants and the Portuguese Sephardic Jews established in Amsterdam and other Dutch cities.

The 'Dutch' businessmen started their economic activities in the Atlantic in the late 1580s, often organized in small private commercial companies.²⁰ They invested mainly in two commercial branches: the sugar and the dyewood trade from Brazil; and the gold, ivory, and leather trade from the western coast of Africa. The slave trade was a minor commercial activity for most of these merchants, at least until the takeover of the Brazilian north-eastern captaincies.

¹⁹ Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period*, 91–122, 123–40.

²⁰ Among those companies were, for example, the Compagnie van Guinea, represented by Gerrit van Schoonhoven, Jan Gerritsen Meerman, and Elias Trip; the company of Nicolaes Balestel; the company of Philips Thijssen; the company of Adriaen, Marten, and Guillaume Papenbroeck; and the company of Hans Willemsen Elbinck. In addition, there were many other Dutch and Flemish individual private merchants involved in the trade with the western coast of Africa, such as Frans Jacobsen Hinloopen, Samuel Bloemert, Lucas van de Venne, Frans Steenhuijsen, Hans Franx, Hans Rombouts, and Pieter Sijmonsz Snellinck, all merchants in Amsterdam. Abraham de Velaer, Michiel Pauw, Melchior van de Kerckhoven, Guillaume van de Perre, Pieter van der Hagen, Pieter de Vlamingh, Jan Verlou, Steven Groulaert, Jan du Bois, Philip van der Beeck, and Willem Brasser were also among the merchants investing in the trade with the western coast of Africa. GAA Not Arch.

During this early period, the majority of the notarial contracts in our sample concerning the trade with the western coast of Africa, in general, and the commerce with the Senegambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, in particular, were signed between 'Dutch' private traders. As a representative case study of 'Dutch' commercial activities in the regions just mentioned, we have selected the businesses of Gerrit van Schoonhoven, merchant of Middleburg.

Van Schoonhoven was one of the most active traders in the western coast of Africa until the establishment of the Dutch West India Company (1621–24). His main areas of investment were Guinea and Cape Verde, and his economic activities can be traced between 1604 and 1621.

Gerrit van Schoonhoven apparently started trading in Guinea and Cape Verde as an individual merchant around the year 1604.²¹ However, by 1613 Van Schoonhoven declared that he had been doing business on the coast of Guinea in partnership with Cornelis Munnickx, also a merchant from Middleburg with commercial interests in Brazil. At the end of the partnership he received from Munnickx more than 2,500 Flemish pounds.²² By 1621, Van Schoonhoven appeared as one of the directors of the Compagnie van Guinea, together with Jan Gerritsen Meerman and Elias Trip.²³ This company was one of the most active in Western African trade in the period prior to the establishment of the WIC.

Sporadically, Van Schoonhoven also appeared together with other Dutch traders from Amsterdam as insurers of vessels and cargoes of Portuguese Jewish merchants established in the Republic, like Diogo Nunes Belmonte, and Portuguese traders from the Portuguese northern port cities like Viana, such as Francisco Gomes Pinto.²⁴

The Portuguese Sephardic Jews established in Amsterdam formed the second group of merchants in the Republic investing in Western Africa. Among them were Gaspar Sanches, Gaspar Nunes, Pedro Rodrigues da Veiga, Duarte Fernandes, Diogo da Silva, the Belmonte family, Diogo Vaz de Sousa, and Estevão Rodrigues Penso.²⁵ Based on the notarial contracts, we have selected the economic activities of Gaspar Sanches and his associates as a representative case study.

²¹ GAA Not Arch 97/126v, 30 August 1604.

²² GAA Not Arch 734/41–42, 29 November 1613.

²³ GAA Not Arch 747/160–165, 25 June 1621.

²⁴ GAA Not Arch 254/188–188v, 22 May 1614; Not Arch 164/162, 7 November 1620.

²⁵ GAA Not Arch 62/206f, 22 November 1610; Not Arch 62/209, 8 December 1610; GAA Not Arch 160/24–26, 4 October 1619.

Gaspar Sanches, a Portuguese merchant resident in Rotterdam, and Gaspar Nunes, a merchant in Amsterdam, were probably the most dynamic Sephardic businessmen in Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Sanches and Nunes together organized several commercial trips to these areas. Their main areas of business were the ports of Portudal, Joal, and Rufisque (present-day in the Petite Côte, Senegal), and the islands of Cape Verde. For example, on 19 September 1609, the two Portuguese merchants together freighted the *St Jacob*, of 80 *last*,²⁶ to sail from Rotterdam to Portudal, under the command of skipper Govert Jansen from Rotterdam. Rotterdam was the port of departure and the final destination. The cargo cost was 7,000 guilders. In 1610, Gaspar Sanches and Gaspar Nunes freighted the same vessel and skipper to sail to the same destination. This may be a sign of specialization. However, the contracts do not give further details on the price of the cargoes.²⁷

Gaspar Sanches and Gaspar Nunes also participated in the trade in hides with Cape Verde. On 14 January 1611, Paulus Claesz declared that a cargo of hides from the Cape Verde producers had arrived in Rotterdam on board the vessel of Govert Jansen with Gaspar Fernandes, probably the supercargo put on board the vessel to conduct the business in Cape Verde. Paul Claesz, in fact, bought part of the cargo—500 pieces at a price of 50 stuivers per piece. On 31 January of the following year, the same duo of traders hired the skipper Govert Jansen to travel once again to Cape Verde.²⁸

Sanches and Nunes were also associates of other Portuguese Sephardic merchants of Amsterdam doing business in the same areas of Western Africa. Gaspar Sanches had occasional partnerships in his commercial enterprises to Portudal and Cape Verde with Pedro Rodrigues da Veiga and Duarte Fernandes. For instance, on 24 December 1610, Gaspar Sanches and Pedro Rodrigues da Veiga freighted the ship *Het Vliegende Hert*, skippered by Heyns Claessen, to sail from Amsterdam to Portudal.²⁹

Gaspar Nunes joined in business with João Lopes da Costa and Antonio Nobre, as well as with Pierre Thonen and Pierre Bacquelarot, merchants in

Amsterdam.³⁰ The trade with Guinea conducted by Gaspar Nunes in partnership with the abovementioned merchants connected the Republic to the Petite Côte of Senegal and the port of Dieppe (Normandy, France), where Luis Fernandes, the son-in-law of Gaspar Nunes, was the main contact person. On 20 September 1612, Gaspar Nunes had a total debt of 2,622 guilders and 33 stuivers in three bills of exchange issued by Pierre Thonen and Pierre Bacquelarot.³¹ These commercial partnerships tell us much about the wide network of the Sephardic merchants throughout Europe and the European Atlantic possessions.

After the establishment of the WIC (1621–24), the private traders in the Netherlands officially had to suspend their activities in Western Africa. However, many continued to freight ships to these areas. Therefore, private businessmen kept devising strategies to purchase forbidden commodities and evade taxation by avoiding paying the company for commercial licences.

Their presence in the areas under the jurisdiction of the WIC increased even more after the company decided to open up the commercial monopolies regarding the trade to Brazil and the New Netherland (present-day New York), in 1638 and 1648, respectively.³² Both Dutch and Sephardic merchants decided to establish partnerships and cooperative relations with the WIC. For example, in the 1660s, Joost van Wickevoort, Pieter van Uffelen, Adriaan Brugman, and Joost Glimmer, merchants in Amsterdam, appear to have been associated with the WIC, more precisely with the Chamber of 'City and Surrounding Land', that is, Groningen, for the Gambia River trade.³³ In fact, the directors of the WIC Chamber of Groningen granted them permission to equip ships and supply cargoes to the Gambia River,

²⁶ GAA Not Arch 117/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 117/22: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 117/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 62/195v: 30 September 1610.

²⁷ Not Arch 62/195v: 30 September 1610.

²⁸ Not Arch 62/195v: 30 September 1610. However, the company forbade private merchants to trade in slaves and other African goods included in the monopoly in all other areas of the western coast of Africa.

²⁹ The other structure of the WIC reflected the political and administrative frameworks of the Republic. Five chambers were established: Amsterdam, Zealand, Northern Quarter, Maas, and the Chamber of City and 'Surrounding land'. The Chamber of Amsterdam safeguarded the interests of Amsterdam; the Chamber of Zealand represented Middelburg, Vlissingen, Veere, and Tholen; the Chamber of the Northern Quarter represented the cities of Rotterdam, Delft, and Dordrecht; and the Chamber of City and the 'Surrounding land' Groningen and its hinterland. The influence of each Chamber within the territory was determined by the capital invested and the political and economic power held by the provinces and the cities it represented. The difference in capital and prestige of the provinces and cities determined the influence of each Chamber on the decision-making process within the WIC, since they decided the number of directors. H. den Heijer, 'Directores, Stadhouders e Conselhos de Administração'; idem, *Gracht: Proen en Slaven: Scheepvaart en Handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op 1648* (1997) (Zurphen: Walburg Pers, 1997); idem, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zurphen: Walburg Pers, 1994); Pieter Emmer, 'The West India Company, 1621–1791: Dutch or Atlantic?', in L. Blussé and F. González eds., *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies During the Ancient Regime* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1981), 71–95.

²⁶ *Last* was an old measure of weight used in the Dutch Republic. One *last* equaled 2,000 kilograms or two tonnes.

²⁷ GAA Not Arch 117/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 117/22: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 117/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 62/195v: 30 September 1610.

²⁸ GAA Not Arch 62/217v: 14 January 1611; Not Arch 62/219: 19 January 1611; Not Arch 62/421: 2 January 1612; Not Arch 62/589: 31 January 1612.

²⁹ GAA Not Arch 62/210v: 24 December 1610; Not Arch 125/27v–28v: 27 April 1611; Not Arch 124/131–131v: 5 August 1611.

after 12 August 1657. In order to gather all the required ships they gave power of attorney to Pieter van Wickevoort to freight the ship *De Vrede*, skippered by Frans Jansz Backer from Burgerdam, and load the required cargo in Zealand on 3 March 1660. The following month, these merchants freighted the ship *De Gouden Burgh*, under the command of skipper Jacob Cley from Middleburgh, to sail with goods and provisions for eight to nine months from Amsterdam to the Gambia River and back to Amsterdam or elsewhere in the Republic. The freight would amount to 1,400 guilders per month.³⁴ However, Johan van Wickevoort and Joost Glimmer claimed that persons of the Chamber of Amsterdam considered them to be lacking in experience, and had treated them as enemies and inexperienced merchants. This accusation was probably true for Joost Glimmer, but not for the other businessmen. Pieter van Uffelen, a member of the Van Uffelen family, started his economic activities in Western Africa, more precisely Cape Verde, Gambia, and Sierra Leone, as early as 1614 in partnership with Michiel Block.³⁵ Johan van Wickevoort had business connections with the Spanish-American colonies, the West Indies, and the Caribbean Islands, especially Jamaica. His main partner in this business was Henrico Matias, an influential German merchant based in Amsterdam with wide commercial interests in the western coast of Africa, the Spanish-American colonies, Brazil, Spain, and Portugal. These disputes may also have been due to the commercial jurisdictions of the chambers over the different regions of the western coast of Africa.

Commercial agents

To conduct trade in the western coast of Africa, the 'Dutch' and the Sephardic businessmen needed either to live at the posts, take part in the commercial journeys, or place their economic agents at key points in the commercial circuits. These men needed to establish cooperative relations with other economic agents already settled on the Western African coast, namely Portuguese, other Europeans, Euro-Africans, and Africans.

During the early period of Dutch presence in the western coast of Africa, the merchants of the Republic did not have any formal commercial organization. Therefore, the different private companies had businessmen and

³⁴ GAA Not Arch 1132/21–22: 30 January 1660; Not Arch 1132/229: 3 March 1660; Not Arch 1540/138: 7 April 1660.

³⁵ The Van Uffelen family under Matheus and Hans van Uffelen had commercial activities in Madeira, Bahia, and Guinea from 1600. GAA Not Arch 1133/133v–134v: 29 April 1660; Not Arch 1131/67–68: 21 October 1659; Not Arch 97/76: 5 August 1604; Not Arch 102/212: 9 March 1606; Not Arch 138/7: 4 September 1614–09–04.

accountants travelling on board the ships or placed on shore and on board floating trading posts—*leggers*. These commercial personnel were organized hierarchically, the leader being a chief merchant or chief factor, with several junior merchants, sub-factors, accountants, and bookkeepers working under his leadership (see Figure 5.1).³⁶

Figure 5.1 Commercial organization of private commercial companies (1590s–1623).
Source: GAA Not Arch.

The supercargoes sent to Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde on board the ships to conduct trade on the coast could either be one of the businessmen investing in the commercial venture or commercial staff hired by the merchant freighting the ship and investing in the trip. Both the Dutch and the Portuguese Sephardic merchants did this. For example, on 24 December 1610, Gaspar Sanches and Pedro Rodrigues da Veiga freighted the ship *Het Vliegende Hert*, skippered by Heyns Claessen, to sail from Amsterdam to Portudal. Pedro da Veiga and his brother Gaspar Fernandes travelled on board the ship to trade the merchandise on the coast.³⁷

In most cases, the main investors in these commercial journeys stayed at home and hired other supercargoes to go on board the vessels and trade the commodities on the coast. Both the Dutch and the Portuguese Sephardim hired supercargoes to do business on their behalf in Senegambia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde. For instance, on 19 September 1609, Gaspar Nunes and Gaspar Sanches hired Luís Fernandes and Gaspar Fernandes, respectively. These two supercargoes went on board the *St Jacob*, with all costs and voyage paid for. In the Petite Côte of Senegal, they conducted trade at Portudal, Joal, and Rufisque. Another good example was the team of supercargoes of Diogo

³⁶ D. La Plante ed., *Pieter van den Broecke's Journal*, 28, 47, and 83–103.

³⁷ GAA Not Arch 62/216v: 24 December 1610; Not Arch 160/28–29v: 4 October 1619.

da Silva; Simão Rodrigues Pinel and Estevão Rodrigues were among them. They had to travel several times on board vessels freighted by Diogo da Silva and his partners for these commercial ventures to conduct trade on the Petite Côte of Senegal on their behalf.³⁸

The different commercial firms operating in the Senegambian, Guinean and Cape Verdean trade also contracted factors to be their permanent agents on the coast. For instance, Gerrit van Schoonhoven, partner in the Compagnie van Guinea, together with Elias Trips and Jan Gerritsen Meermaan, hired several men. In 1613, Van Schoonhoven and his partner Cornelis Munnickx already had factors in Guinea. Later, Van Schoonhoven hired other men, namely Rombout Pils, Hendrick van Domselaer, Carel Tresel, and Gerrit Laurens Rijser. The former two were in his service in Guinea in 1617. Carel Tresel was hired a second time in 1618 to be the senior factor—*oudere commis*—to conduct trade in the same area for a period of two years, receiving a monthly wage of thirty-six guilders. The latter, Gerrit Laurens Rijser, was hired in the same year to travel on board the ship *Jupiter*, also trading in Guinea for a similar period of time, with a monthly salary of thirty guilders.³⁹ Van Schoonhoven's factors conducted trade mainly in gold and elephant tusks; such products were bartered for oil, alcoholic beverages, and beans.⁴⁰

The Sephardic merchants also signed labour contracts with several traders to be their factors in Senegambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. For instance, Diogo da Silva and partners kept factors permanently on the Petite Côte of Senegal. Simão Rodrigues de Noe and Diogo Vaz (de Sousa) were two of those men. Another good example is Diogo Dias Querido, also a Portuguese Sephardic Jew in Amsterdam. In 1612, he freighted the ship *Jonas* under the command of skipper Douwe Annes of Enkhuizen, for a trip from Amsterdam to Senegambia stopping at Cape Verde (on the continent), Portudal, Joal, and Rufisque. The skipper and crew were supposed to receive an open letter from his factor on the coast, Jacob Peregrino or Pelegrino, stating that he had fulfilled his obligations.⁴¹

The businessmen operating in the Petite Côte of Senegal as factors of the Sephardic businessmen in Amsterdam, as well as those on board their vessels,

were classified by the Portuguese Crown as *lançados*. In fact, some of these men even had institutional ties with the *contratadores* of the royal monopolies of the economic areas of Senegambia and Guinea Bissau under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese Crown. For example, Luís Fernandes, supercargo of Gaspar Nunes, and Simão Rodrigues Pinel and Estêvão Rodrigues (Penso), supercargoes of Diogo da Silva, as well as Jacob Peregrino, factor of Diogo Dias Querido, were also factors of the Portuguese *contratador* of the monopoly of Cape Verde and Guinea between 1608 and 1614, João Soeiro. Pedro Rodrigues da Veiga, partner and supercargo of Gaspar Sanches, was also among Soeiro's factors.⁴² Jacob Peregrino, factor of Diogo Dias Querido, had business connections with Duarte Fernandes, a Jewish merchant in Amsterdam, and Duarte Dias Henriques, the *contratador* of Angola in the period 1607–14.⁴³ Moreover, other Portuguese Jewish merchants in Amsterdam operating in the commercial circuits linking the Republic to Senegambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde as well as other regions of the western coast of Africa, were also included in the list, namely Diogo Vaz (de Sousa) and Gaspar Nunes.⁴⁴

After the establishment of the WIC (1621), the private merchants were forced to remove their economic agents from these areas within a period of two years (by 1623). The WIC commercial agents replaced them. The establishment of a commercial monopoly with the WIC required a formal commercial and bureaucratic framework to organize and control trade. For those reasons, the western coast of Africa was divided into different commercial regions, namely: Gambia, Cape Verde, Arguin, Sierra Leone, Grain Coast, and the Gold Coast. The trading activities in each area were granted to specific chambers of the company.⁴⁵ The Chamber of Groningen was responsible for the trade in the Gambia, while the commerce in the Cape Verde region, comprising the island of Gorée and several trading posts in the Petite Côte of Senegal, was under the control of the Chamber of Amsterdam. The Chamber of Zealand was in charge of the trade in Arguin and the surrounding area of Cape Blanco, whilst trade in Sierra Leone was organized by the Chamber of the Maas (i.e. Rotterdam),

³⁸ Maria Manuel Ferraz, 'Rotas Comerciais, Agentes Económicos, Meios de Pagamento', in Maria Emília Madeira Santos (ed.), *História Geral de Cabo Verde* (Lisbon and Praia (Cabo Verde): Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga, Instituto Nacional da Cultura de Cabo Verde, 1995 [vol. 2]), 44.

³⁹ GAA Not Arch 624/155v: 3 November 1617; Not Arch 611A/421: 20 June 1618; Not Arch 34/115–116: 8 December 1601.

⁴⁰ For Diogo Vaz (de Sousa): GAA Not Arch 62/206: 22 November 1610; Not Arch 160/28–29v: 4 October 1619. For Gaspar Nunes: GAA Not Arch 117/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 62/201v: 1 November 1610; Not Arch 62/206: 22 November 1610; Not Arch 62/589: 31 January 1612; Not Arch 375/516–516v: 20 September 1612.

⁴¹ See note 30.

³⁸ GAA Not Arch 115/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 117/22: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 117/22–23: 19 September 1609; Not Arch 62/206: 22 November 1610; Not Arch 62/209: 8 December 1610; Not Arch 62/218v: 19 January 1611.

³⁹ GAA Not Arch 645/29–30v: 28 July 1617; Not Arch 151/207v: 4 April 1618; Not Arch 151/208: 4 April 1618.

⁴⁰ GAA Not Arch 645/29–30v: 28 July 1617.

⁴¹ GAA Not Arch 62/218v: 19 January 1611; Not Arch 128/182–183: 19 September 1612; Not Arch 645/887: 22 January 1620.

and the commerce in the Grain Coast by the Chamber of the Northern Quarter (see Figure 5.2).⁴⁶

The most profitable commercial areas of the western coast of Africa—the Gold and Slave Coasts, and the Loango Coast—were under the direct administration of the Board of Directors of the WIC, also known as Gentlemen Nineteen.⁴⁷ Later, the regions of Angola and São Tomé also came under the direct rule of the Board (see Figure 5.3).

These areas were put under the direct administration of the Gentlemen Nineteen not only because they were the wealthiest, but also because they were the places in the western coast of Africa where the company and the States General had political and military interests to defend against the Portuguese. On the other hand, it is likely that the division of the western coast of Africa into different commercial areas was the best option found by the company in order to satisfy the interests of the private businessmen investing in these regions before the establishment of the WIC.

In the areas under the direct commercial administration of the chambers, these were responsible for the commercial personnel and the transport of goods, provisions, and ammunition. In the areas controlled by the Gentlemen Nineteen, the transport of employees, goods, victuals, and weaponry was provided by all the chambers proportionally to the capital invested in the company.⁴⁸ In return, the chambers would have part of the profits obtained by the WIC in these areas.

⁴⁶ G[eemeente] A[rchief] R[otterdam], Handel no. 83. A van Dantzig (ed.), *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674–1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague* (Accra: GAAS, 1978), doc. 1, 10–12.

⁴⁷ The direction of the WIC was given to an assembly—the Board of Directors—formed by nineteen directors—Gentlemen Nineteen—from the different chambers. Once again, the number of directors per chamber depended on the capital and the political and economic powers of the provinces and cities. Amsterdam and Zealand each had four directors on the Board, while the other three chambers had two each. Also, a member of the States General had a chair in this assembly. The Board was chaired by the chamber of either Amsterdam or Zealand. Amsterdam held the presidency during six consecutive years and Zealand for two. H. den Heijer, 'Directores, Stadhouders e Conselhos de Administração,' 17–43; idem, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*, chapters 1, 2, and 3; idem, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC*, chapters 1 and 2; Pieter Emmer, 'The West India Company, 1621–1791: Dutch or Atlantic,' 71–95.

⁴⁸ For instance, in a report of the commission formed by the Gentlemen Nineteen to study the separation of the government of Angola from Brazil, dated 6 February 1642, the members of the commission explain clearly how the chambers should supply the establishment. Each chamber should send a vessel of 120 to 140 lasts (1 last = 2 tonnes) every six weeks. Each ship should be equipped with 30 to 36 men, 16 to 18 pieces of light and heavy artillery, victuals for an entire year, and a cargo of merchandise worth up to 50,000 florins/guilders. The merchandise to be sent was listed in an enrolment provided to the chambers by the Board of Directors. N[ational] A[rchief], State Generaal no. 5773: 6 February 1642: Rapport de la commission formé par les XIX pour étudier de pro et le contre de la separation de Loanda avec le Brésil. This document is published in Louis Jadin (ed.), *L'Ancien Congo et l'Angola,*

The commercial staff of the WIC followed a hierarchical order similar to the one described earlier for the commercial agents serving the private companies. In the Cape Verde region, the Chamber of Amsterdam kept one chief merchant, two to three sub-factors, and three to four assistants. For instance, in 1669, Jan van Dilsen and Carel le Coote were assistants at the Petite Côte of Senegal.⁴⁹ Therefore, it is likely that the chambers used the informal structures put in place by the private companies in the early years, since they had proved to be well organized and worked efficiently for the success of trade.

Besides the company employees responsible for the organization of trade, the WIC also appointed officials to supervise the commercial monopoly. These officials, called fiscals, were placed in the most profitable areas—the Gold Coast, Angola, and São Tomé—as well as on board the vessels conducting trade in the coastal areas. The fiscals were judicial officials who worked under the command and in straight collaboration with the director or director-general. They had the power to inspect the cargoes on arrival at and departure from the WIC posts and settlements. They also had the right to make inventories and tax the cargoes of any smuggler ship caught by the WIC cruisers patrolling the coast. These officials also had permission to confiscate smuggled goods and to arrest, try, and punish smuggling crews. In order to fulfil all their duties, the fiscals were always supported by sub fiscals.

Between 1624 and 1642, the WIC had only one fiscal in Elmina, with jurisdiction over all ships anchored at this port, as well as at the other company forts, entrepôts, and lodges on the Gold and Slave Coasts. The establishment of WIC governments in Angola and São Tomé (1641) increased the number of fiscals in the western coast of Africa to three. The geographical areas under their jurisdiction became defined with the division of the western coast of Africa into three regions. After the loss of Angola and São Tomé (1648), the fiscal of Elmina remained as the single company fiscal for the whole coast until 1674. As for the regions of Senegambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde we could not find references in the primary sources to any fiscals or sub fiscals operating in the region. These functions were most certainly assumed by the highest officer of the company in the region.

1639–1655, d'Après les Archives Romaines, Portugaises, Néerlandaises et Espagnoles (Bruxelles and Rome: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1975 [vol. 1]), doc. 76, 200–2.

⁴⁹ GAR Handel no. 83. Also in A. van Dantzig (ed.), *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast*, doc. 1, 10–12. GAA Not Arch 2791/549: 11 October 1669; Not Arch 2791/709: 24 October 1669.

Figure 5.2 Jurisdiction of the chambers of the WIC over the different areas of the western coast of Africa

Sources: G[emeente] A[rchief] R[otterdam] Handel no. 83; A. van Dantzig (ed.), *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674–1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague*. (Accra: GAAS, 1978), doc 1, 10–12.

Figure 5.3 Jurisdiction of the Board of Directors and the Central Government of the Dutch West Indies over the different areas of the western coast of Africa (1624–74). Sources: NA Oude West Indische Compagnie (OWIC). GAR Handel no. 83; A. van Dantzig (ed.), *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674–1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague* (Accra: GAAS, 1978), doc. 1, 10–12; doc 3, 13–20; NA, Rademacker Archief no. 587: Heerman Abramsz to the Assembly of Ten: 23 November 1679.

Notes: Fort Nassau: Mori; Fort Crèvecoeur: Accra; Fort Batensteyn: Boutry; Fort Amsterdam: Kormantin; Fort at Igura: Dwira. Other lodges comprised: Comany, Anomaboe (1638–39), Ardra, city of Benin, Cape Coast (1638–48), Little Cormany (from 1638), Sekondi, Taccorary, Sacconde.

Due to financial problems and limited shipping capacity, the WIC opened up its monopoly to private traders from the Republic. In 1638 the company allowed the participation of private businessmen in the Brazilian and Caribbean trades, and in 1648 granted them access to North America. This relaxing of its monopoly did not change the functions of company employees in charge of the trade organization, since they continued to conduct commerce with the African middlemen. The opening of some branches of the company monopoly to private merchants from the Dutch Republic, however, changed the functions of the fiscal and the auditor. Private traders were to pay commercial fees of 2.5 per cent over the value of the imports and exports—*handelsrecognitie*.⁵⁰ The fiscal and the auditor were in charge of the collection of this fee.⁵¹ In the Senegambia region this fee was probably paid to the highest WIC official based at Gorée. This practice fuelled multiple conflicts between the WIC and private merchants. A good example of these clashes can be found in the 1660s. Isaac Hoechepeid Senior and Gillis Hoornbeeck, merchants in Amsterdam, had an established trading network with the island of *Goeree* (Gorée). In order to keep a register of the goods traded there they hired Lammert Claesz as their junior clerk. He was supposed to work under the authority of Pieter van Asperen, the highest representative of the WIC in the region in 1666. Lammert Claesz served these merchants in this post from 28 March 1666 until September 1667. During his stay, he traded the commodities of these private businessmen at the fort. However, the coexistence of this agent and the WIC high officers seems to have been quite difficult. Lammert Claesz, Isaac Hoechepeid Senior, and Gillis van Hoornbeeck were accused of smuggling goods at the fort.⁵²

As a consequence of the opening of the WIC monopoly over Brazil and New Netherland, in 1638 and 1648, respectively, an increasing number of ships freighted by private investors were to be found operating the intercontinental

⁵⁰ In the Dutch plantations colonies in Brazil, the Wild Coast, and the Caribbean Islands the fiscal also collected land taxes (*akkergeld*), as well as a head tax per colonist and per slave (*hoofdgeld*).

⁵¹ Between the 1590s and 1612, the traders of the Dutch Republic operating in the western coast of Africa had to pay taxes only in the Republic. Upon arrival the loadings paid the tariffs levied on the foreign trade—the so-called *Convooien en Licenten*. These were collected by the admiralties of each province on behalf of the States General. The *convooien* were a tax imposed by the States General upon the circulation of goods, on the sale of salt, stamp duties, and several temporary taxes on beer and soap. The revenues from these taxes were to be spent on war fleets to protect the international trade and to support expenses of maritime conflicts. The main purpose of this tax imposition was in fact what gave it the name – *convooien* or *convoys*. The *licenten*—licences—, on the other hand, were duties imposed on trade with the enemy, i.e., Spain and Portugal.

⁵² GAA Not Arch 2296 I/63–65: 16 February 1668; Not Arch 2297/13–14: 6 March 1669; Not Arch 2297 IV/13–14: 6 March 1669. For further information on the economic activities of these merchants: GAA Not Arch 2226/994–997: 28 April 1668; Not Arch 2229/855: 29 March 1669.

circuits to and from the western coast of Africa. Therefore, supercargoes continued to be put on board vessels to conduct trade at the various ports of call. These supercargoes were not only in charge of selling the products sent from the Republic, and of purchasing new goods and putting them up for sale elsewhere, but they also had the autonomy to buy ships and engage in coastal trade in the various areas they were supposed to visit on behalf of their European employers.⁵³

All the economic agents under analysis so far made the connection between the African ports and the international trading circuits linking these ports with the Americas and Europe. Behind these commercial agents was another layer of economic actors: those establishing a connection between the African coastal areas and the supply markets of African goods located deeper in the continent. Free Africans, Euro-Africans, and more rarely Europeans, the latter usually named *tangomaos* by the Portuguese authorities, were the connections between these two worlds. These *tangomaos* lived not only in the ports, but also in the interior under the authority of the local African rulers, and, in some cases, they even had family ties with these authorities.⁵⁴

Given the circumstances of their settlement and the shortage of primary sources, it is extremely difficult to identify who these men were.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in most cases they were traders and their main concern was to do business and make as much profit as possible in order to guarantee their own survival. Therefore they would trade with all European merchants settled on the coastal areas, be they Portuguese, Dutch, French, or English.

The private traders from the Republic did business with Portuguese and Euro-Africans in several points along the coast of Senegambia, namely at the ports of Rufisque, Portudal, and Joal on the Petite Côte of Senegal.⁵⁶ These

⁵³ GAA Not Arch 2757/133: 8 April 1661; Not Arch 2757A/153: 9 April 1661; Not Arch 2757A/149: 8 April 1661; Not Arch 2757A/165: 9 April 1661; Not Arch 3586/235: 21 March 1670. For other examples: GAA Not Arch 1555B/1453: 8 October 1641; Not Arch 1611/52–53: 23 July 1639; Not Arch 420/536: 20 December 1639.

⁵⁴ André Alvares de Almada, *Tratado Breve dos Rios de Guiné do Cabo Verde* (Lisboa: Editorial L. I. & M., 1964), 24–25; Isabel Castro Henriques, *Os Pilares da Diferença: Relações Portugal-África: Séculos XV–XX* (Lisbon: Calendoscópio, 2004), 352–3; Philip J. Havik, 'Missionários e Moradores da Costa da Guiné: Os Padres da Companhia de Jesus e os Tangomãos no Princípio do Século XVII', *Síntese* 56–57 (2000): 225, 228, 230–2, 249.

⁵⁵ Among the merchants and citizens of Ribeira Grande (Santiago, Cape Verde) between 1560 and 1648, we could only identify two men who had lived for many years in the Guinea Bissau region: Vicente Ribeiro and Luís Lopes Rabelo. The latter was engaged on the coastal trading circuits between the islands and the Nuno and Gambia rivers, together with two other merchants, skippers, and citizens of Ribeira Grande: Francisco Ricalde or Francisco Recalde and Diogo Ximenes Vargas; Iva Cabral, 'Vizinhos da Cidade da Ribeira Grande de 1560 a 1648', in Maria Emilia Madeira Santos (ed.), *História Geral do Cabo Verde*, 515–47.

⁵⁶ J. D. La Fleur (ed.), *Pieter van den Broecke's Journal* 28, 87–91.

commercial transactions continued under the rule of the WIC in this region. In fact, in none of the territories taken over by the WIC did the company employees dare to penetrate much into the interior.

Taking these aspects into account makes it easier to understand and explain how these commercial agents served the interests of the WIC and the private merchants of the Republic simultaneously, while still pursuing their own ambitions. It also becomes easier to clarify how these economic agents trading within the commercial areas under Portuguese rule (at least nominally) could and did have commercial partnerships with merchants from an 'enemy state' of the Portuguese and Spanish kingdoms—such as the Dutch Republic. Finally, it becomes possible to explain how the Portuguese or people of mixed descent could supply African products to merchants from an 'enemy state', especially in the coastal areas.

Conclusion

In brief, during the period under review, the Dutch entrepreneurs were not just insurers of ships and cargoes transported by the 'Dutch', Sephardic, and Portuguese merchants in the Atlantic world. Most of these entrepreneurs retained an indirect connection with the trade with the western coast of Africa by insuring ships and commodities for other traders operating the commercial circuits linking Europe to Africa and the Americas.

The case studies presented here also show that the 'Dutch' and the Portuguese Sephardic merchants of the Republic operated in areas of the western coast of Africa that were situated on the margins of the Portuguese presence in Africa, such as the Petite Côte of Senegal and the less-populated islands of Cape Verde. Whereas for the 'Dutch' this was a strategy to avoid naval and military conflicts with the representatives of the Portuguese Crown, which always increased costs and reduced profits, for the Sephardim this was also a strategy to avoid the payment of taxes to the fiscal officers of the Portuguese Crown in Ribeira Grande, São Tomé, and Luanda. In this way, they were able to operate their business without the control of the commercial agents of the Portuguese Crown, who supervised the transactions and made sure that the Crown did not lose money.

To complement their business in the western coast of Africa, Dutch private merchants also engaged in the Brazilian sugar and dyewood trade. These facts may help us to understand the reasons why the private merchants of Amsterdam were so reluctant to invest in the WIC and to support the attacks against the Portuguese Atlantic territories. For them the trade with the western coast of

Africa and Brazil were profitable enough without a commercial monopoly, territorial possessions, and a formal military apparatus. In fact during the WIC monopoly over trade with the western coast of Africa, the two groups used various strategies to overcome the commercial restrictions imposed on the Atlantic trade.

To operate their business, both the Dutch and the Sephardic merchants made use of similar agents on the western coast of Africa and recruited them in the same ways. Interestingly, the agents hired to be the supercargoes and factors of the Portuguese Jews had connections with Portuguese merchants conducting trade in the Portuguese settlements of Senegambia and Guinea Bissau on their behalf or on behalf of the *contratadores* of the royal monopolies.

Hence, this complex scheme of interconnections between the various economic actors demonstrates clearly that the commercial interests of the businessmen living in Europe and in the various Atlantic colonial areas, whether under Portuguese or Dutch rule, transcended the political and geographical borders of the European Atlantic empires and the monopolistic ambitions of these early modern European states and their state-sponsored commercial companies.