

José Antonio Mateos Royo

*Peaceful conquest or skilful adaptation?
The rise of Genoese merchants in Aragon (1580-1620)*¹

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the historical significance of migration has aroused considerable academic interest. This has resulted in the publication of numerous studies of the phenomenon in Europe between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, a period of transition between the migration caused by war and religious conflict typical of late medieval times and migration with economic causes, which grew increasingly important in the early Modern Age to become the chief driver of migration today (Dupaquier 1994; Page 1992). These studies address not only conventional demographic or economic issues but also new social and cultural questions, such as those concerning the integration or mobility of immigrants into their host community. The majority of them concentrate on towns and cities, and on immigrant communities displaying a marked ethnic, religious or occupational identity (François ed. 1996; Menjot and Pinol 1996; González-Bernaldo, Martini and Pelus-Kaplans, eds. 2008). Other studies explore the influence on migration policies of the emerging fiscal-military states' goals and even of new or revised political concepts such as citizenship, nation, state or empire which appeared in this period, especially as they applied to foreigners (Herzog 2003; Munck and Winter 2012).

As a regional case study of this social mobility of immigrant communities taking place in late medieval and early modern Europe, this paper explores the rise of the Genoese colony located in Saragossa between 1580 and 1620. Despite their previous limited activity, after the extinction of the regional mercantile bourgeoisie, this colony controlled the trade and short-term credit in Aragon during this period. This rapid and easy process was surprising in a society resistant to the economic power of foreigners and in a kingdom that preserved, under the Hapsburg monarchy ruling Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its laws and institutions developed since its creation in 1035, only suppressed by the more centralist Bourbon dynasty in 1707. This study analyses the thoughtful strategies adopted by the Genoese to obtain this economic position without significant social rejection. Their networks of information and financing with other Genoese merchants in Spain and Italy enabled them to take advantage of exceptional circumstances. The adaptation of their business to the political and economic context as well as to the legal and institutional framework of the kingdom allowed them to increase their efficiency and obtain the

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support of the regional elites in Aragon who used their services, such as nobles, clergy, citizens, and the representatives of the Spanish monarch: viceroy, governor, judges.

Given the lack of private documentation linked to the Genoese companies and families active in Aragon, the main source used has been the records of the notaries who worked for the Genoese between 1561 and 1620 in Saragossa which was the centre of this mercantile community. Various Aragonese public archives, both municipal and regional, have provided new data on their businesses and systems for moving their money. In contrast to the selective analysis of data on trade, leasing of feudal rents, marriage settlements and wills carried out in previous studies (Gómez Zorraquino 1987 and 1995), I have extended the research to include other economic and institutional subjects, ignored but well documented in the primary sources. Despite the predominance of economic information, this methodology allowed a better understanding of the family and company arrangements of the Genoese. Their strategies pursuing upward social mobility have been compared with those of French immigrants in Aragon and Genoese in other Spanish territories of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

With the Genoese population concentrated in Saragossa, the political and communication centre of Aragon, there is no local count that allows us to quantify it between 1561 and 1620. An exhaustive analysis of the notarial records mentioned above found 81 Genoese men considered as inhabitants, residents or with domicile in Saragossa in this period. Unlike Valencia between 1450 and 1550, where many Genoese worked in the silk industry, or Cartagena between 1590 and 1630, where they focused on different urban services (Salvador Esteban 1986, 180-86; Navarro Espinach 1994; Torres Sánchez 1990: 564), these immigrants did not provide qualified craftsmen to Saragossa. The only trade attributed to them or exercised by them is that of merchant or their representative. Their number is small compared to the 915 French with known trade who lived in Saragossa in 1642 among a population of 6,090 taxpaying households according to a local census. However, along with 40 small merchants (shopkeepers and hawkers), only 43 of these 915 (4.7%) are classified as actual merchants (Mateos Royo 2013, 356). The notarial records do not allow us to specify the permanence of these Genoese in Saragossa; but the rate of arrival is clear. If between 1561 and 1580, 19 Genoese are mentioned (23.46% of the total); this added up to 46 (56.79%) between 1581 and 1600. The rapid development of business in Saragossa in these two decades led to the greatest number of stays for a few years and temporary visits by compatriot traders. Only 16 new Genoese (19.75%) are registered between 1601 and 1620, some being offspring or family members of merchants who arrived in the previous period and remained in Aragon. Nine Genoese wives of these merchants are cited as residents in Saragossa between 1581 and 1620, but only three signed documents before a notary from 1615 onwards.

2. The preliminary phase (1561-80). Economy

In these two decades, the Genoese explored the economic possibilities of Aragon, whose trade had grown strongly during the second third of the sixteenth

century, facilitated by certain reforms. After decades of leading negotiations with royal or regional authorities ruling in Béarn and Catalonia, the public institutions of Aragon achieved in the middle of this century the final eradication of the reprisals or legal seizures of goods which had been applied since the late Middle Ages by merchants to foreign counterparts in their territory in order to collect debts unpaid by their compatriots. These agreements brought security to the transit of merchandise: the transport of wool belonging to Aragonese traders through the Ebro river towards the Mediterranean sea became safer after being the main commodity seized in Catalan ports by native merchants in the past. The mutual reduction of tariffs on the exit of gold and silver coins agreed in 1564 between the Aragonese and Catalan *Cortes* or parliaments favoured their export from Aragon to France and Italy via Catalonia, taking advantage of the Aragonese policy of free monetary circulation (Mateos Royo 2021, 153-62). Domiciliation in Saragossa valued its political importance as the capital of the kingdom and its strategic location in the centre of the Ebro river valley, which facilitated communication and transactions with the surrounding kingdoms. The Genoese used the privileges granted by the kings of Aragon in the Middle Ages to Saragossa that exempted its residents from paying tolls to the king and private individuals when transporting their goods through Aragon. This right persisted, even if the goods were transported by their servants or hired carriers if their owners made them their legal representatives.²

Aragon had been a traditional axis of trade with Italy since the late Middle Ages due to its substantial sheep population, and just as the regional merchants did in the sixteenth century, the Genoese bought unwashed or washed wool in Aragon to export it to Genoa. Between 1562 and 1567, this was the main undertaking of the company formed by Luis Espínola and Vicencio Lercaro.³ They either purchased the sheared wool from regional nobles, merchants or farmers at the main fairs and markets or agreed with the farmers before shearing to deliver it on a fixed date, advancing part of the money as a down payment. In February 1579 Vicencio Lercaro obtained 11,524 *arrobas* of wool in this way in south-west Aragon.⁴ Their purchases considered not only the quality of the wool (that coming from the Community of villages of Teruel and Albarracín was the highest valued), but also the transport costs from the collection point to Saragossa and Escatrón, from where they went down the Ebro river in canoes to Tortosa for transport from the ports of Ampolla or Mataró towards Livorno and Genoa.⁵ Agustín Guirardí and Borbón Centurión even tried – unsuccessfully due to lack of water – to construct a wool scour in two

² Historical Archive of Notarial Records of Saragossa (HANRS), Mateos Solorzano (MS), 1568, f.454v-55v, 1572, f.785r-89r, 800r-01r, 1578, f.420v-21v. This exemption did not apply to tolls under lordship ownership. AHNS, Diego Fecet (DF), 1598, f.503v-05r, 517r-23v.

³ HANRS, MS, 1570, f.350r-73r.

⁴ HANRS, MS, 1579, fo. 190r-92v. The Aragonese *arroba* weighed 12.6 kilograms.

⁵ HANRS, Martín de Gurrea (MG), 1566, f.36r-41r; Diego Casales (DC), 1591, f.627v-34r; DF, 1586, f.484r-86r, 1591, f.765r-70v, 1595, f.702v-09r, 1601, f. 1828r-31v.

municipalities in south-western Aragon during the 1580s in order to increase the amount of washed wool sent to Genoa.⁶

In addition to wool, the Genoese merchants were able to trade other commodities for the domestic market, such as leather, or items for export, such as the valuable saffron. Along with its export to Genoa through the Catalan ports, the Genoese traders sent saffron from Saragossa to Seville and even to Lyon in France, for the fairs.⁷ The main product imported from Genoa were the quality fabrics not manufactured in Saragossa: velvet, rascia, Milanese stametto, fabrics with gold and silver thread.⁸

In order to pool efforts and capital, the most active Genoese merchants grouped themselves into companies made up of two or three people, often relatives, with legal capacity to act autonomously on behalf of all the members if some were absent. The incorporation of Aragonese into these companies was scarce, often due to their status as leather or wool craftsmen, which gave them a good knowledge of the acquired raw material or grounds to use it to manufacture products.⁹ Without being partners, the Genoese could represent their compatriots to close deals or collect debts outside Saragossa, taking advantage of their travels to other territories or stays in other cities. The small number of Genoese residing in Saragossa in this period induced some of them to trust these tasks to their Aragonese servants, after probably contributing to their necessary mercantile training.¹⁰

Competition from local traders in Aragon led the Genoese to maintain important commercial activities in Castile and Navarre, especially the purchase of wool.¹¹ Francisco Ossago exceptionally extended his business of trading wool and other goods between 1569 and 1574 to the north-east of Castile, Navarre, Basque Country, Béarn and the west coast of France.¹² The connections of these Genoese with compatriots settled in Madrid, Toledo or even Seville facilitated the commercial deals, as reflected in the designating of procurators to collect pending debts, including *juros* (government bonds) or loans from the Spanish monarchy.¹³ After forming a company with Francisco Ossago, Jerónimo Espínola moved to Toledo, where he resided between 1568 and 1571, to close business deals on behalf of both.¹⁴

From 1566, the Genoese were very active in the use of *cédulas* or bills of exchange to speed up the mobility of the transactions, helping to make Saragossa a centre of exchange with the cities of Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid and the fairs of Medina

⁶ Historical Archive of Notarial Records of Daroca (HANRD), Miguel Domingo Latorre (MDL), 1582, f.35v-39v., 1588, f.203r-15v; AHNRS MS, 1582, f.733r-34r, DF, 1587, f.604v-06r, 1001r-03v.

⁷ HANRS, MS, 1571, f.640r-42r, 1574, f.132v-33r; DF, 1591, f.997r-98v.

⁸ HANRS, MS, 1571, f.339r-40r, 1574, f.956r-57r, 1575, f.234v-35v, 1576, f.785v, 836v-37r.

⁹ HANRS, MG, 1551, f.108r-16v; HANRD, MDL, 1583, f.154r-56r.

¹⁰ HANRS, MS, 1573, f.28v-30v, 39r.

¹¹ On the purchase of wool in Castile by the Genoese traders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Girón Pascual 2018, 116-66; Rodríguez de Gracia 2003, 599-606.

¹² HANRS, MS, 1569, f.1013r-14r, 1573, f.28v-30v, 1574, f.398r-90v, 892v-93v.

¹³ HANRS, MS, 1568, f.344r-45r, 371v-75r, 1569, f.960v-62r, 1570, f.648v-50r, 692r-96v, 1571, f.323r-24r, 1572, f.339r-40v, 1573, f.216v-18v, 1579, f.536r-38v.

¹⁴ HANRS, MS, 1568, f.373v-75r, 1569, f.881v-82v, 1570, f.425v-26v, 1571, f.288v-89v, 337r-39r.

del Campo and Lyon, in France. Still used on occasion in the 1560s, the resort to exchange in the fairs of Villalón and Medina de Rioseco declined in Saragossa from 1570 onwards.¹⁵ In addition to the essential role performed by the fairs of Medina del Campo, the use of these bills reinforced commercial and financial links with Madrid, capital of the Spanish monarchy.¹⁶ The sharp decline of the number of protests of bills of exchange presented to the Genoese in Saragossa since 1580 confirms the consolidation of the exchange system.¹⁷ Those who had more money at their disposal could store their capital or that of their company in the table of deposits created by the town of Saragossa in the mid sixteenth century to store sums from private individuals and withdraw it from there at will. Six merchants proceeded in this way in 1565 and 1574.¹⁸ As an expression of their limited liquidity, the Genoese made fewer short- and long-term loans to the Aragonese than later on.

3. The rise of the Genoese (1581-1620). Economy

3.1. Feudal rent leases and cereal trade

As a new and lucrative line of action, the Genovese initiated the leasing of feudal rents in Aragon, exercised until 1580 exclusively by the local merchant bourgeoisie. The lordships owned by the high lay nobility were the first option considered, given their extension and the indebtedness of their owners. From the middle of the sixteenth century, the Duke of Villahermosa and the Marquis of Camarasa contracted long-term credits with Aragonese merchants, purchased in the decade of 1580 by large Genoese traders – Espínola, Negro, Centurión – at a lower price, becoming creditors of these nobles.¹⁹ The important sums invested between 1582 and 1592 by large Genoese traders are evidence of their interest (Graph 1). After Daniel Espínola had leased the rents of the Duchy of Villahermosa for three years from April 1582 for 291,000 *sueldos* a year, he shared his rights with Juan Bautista de Negro once he had recovered them after having sold them to Borbón Centurión in 1582 and the latter to Juan Bautista Espínola in 1583.²⁰ Juan Bautista de Negro managed to lease the rents of this duchy for 320,000 *sueldos* a year for eight years from April 1586 and those of the barony of Osera and Figueruelas for 120,000 *sueldos* for six years from April 1588: 43.75% and 39.58% of this annual income was dedicated to pay pensions to these two noblemen's creditors. His brother Felipe de Negro leased the rents of the Marquisate of Aytona for 190,000 *sueldos* for three years from April 1589; but he

¹⁵ HANRS, Jacobo Secanilla (JS), 1563, f.279r-80r, MS, 1567, f. 388r-v.

¹⁶ About these fairs, Casado Alonso, ed. 2017, 139-91, 219-35.

¹⁷ HANRS, MS, 1566-80.

¹⁸ Municipal Archive of Saragossa (MAS), Administration Books (AD), 1601 and 1602.

¹⁹ HANRS, MS, 1583, f.333v-49r.

²⁰ HANRS, MS, 1582, f.220r-v, 1583, f.591r-94r, 1591, f.688r-92r; Miguel Diaz de Alarriba (MDA), 1585, f.442r-43r.

sold them in February 1590 to Juan Bautista de Negro and the latter to Juan Bautista Espínola for 200,000 *sueldos* in October 1591.²¹

Although the Duke of Villahermosa renegotiated in 1590 with Juan Bautista de Negro the terms of payment of the lease to satisfy his lenders, the Royal Governor of Aragon ordered in 1592 the seizure of the rents – in particular, cereal stored in granaries – by the *Real Audiencia* or the supreme royal tribunal of justice in Aragon, as a result of the duke's involvement in a regional rebellion against Philip II in 1591. He also ordained Juan Bautista to fulfil the terms of the lease as administrative commissioner of the lordship revenues, responsible to the king, the duke and his creditors. His management was hampered by the *Real Audiencia*, which withheld part of his income until 1595.²² As shown by the return of their lease rights to their owners or their sale to Aragonese merchants by Juan Bautista de Negro in 1592, the financial insolvency of these lay lordships induced the Genoese merchants from 1593 to give up this business (Graph 1).²³ Their decision was reinforced by the expulsion from Aragon in 1610 of the *moriscos* or Muslims forced in 1526 to convert to Christianity ordered by King Philip III, which affected around 14,000 families (just under 19% of the kingdom's inhabitants) and depopulated many lay lordships. As an exception, between April 1607 and March 1616, Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero and the Aragonese merchant Domingo Sanz de Cortes leased for 54,000 *sueldos* per year rents belonging to the Barons of Alfajarín after loaning them money at 6.66% in 1606. With the lease being assumed by Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero in August 1610, they submitted to arbitration between 1611 and 1614 to settle accounts and distribute the annual price among the barons and their lenders. With the baroness having inherited these rents through usufruct during her widowhood according to the laws of Aragon, an agreement with her creditors in 1618 led her to lease them to Alexandre Gualtero in 1619 for 50,000 *sueldos* per year to ensure the collection of their annual pensions.²⁴

The Genoese also leased feudal rights linked to *encomiendas* – commissioned feudal domains – or lordships of military orders (San Juan de Jerusalén, Santiago, Calatrava). These rents were assigned in usufruct to a noble and influential member of the order, designated by the grand master and approved by the Council of Military Orders located in Madrid. Both sometimes had to ratify the leases of the *encomiendas* agreed by their usufructuary, particularly if certain terms were in breach of the order's constitutions.²⁵ Perhaps to overcome their reluctance, between 1586 and 1602 the Genoese collaborated with Aragonese merchants or purchased their lease right to obtain these rents.²⁶ These leases lasted until 1621 and generated assumable and variable costs – between 11,200 and 60,000 annual *sueldos* – according to size,

²¹ HANRS, MDA, 1585, f.382v-441v, DF, 1588, f.323r-36v, 1376r-85v; 1589, f.5v-15r; Jerónimo Andrés (JA), 1592, f.450r-73v.

²² HANRS, DF, 1590, f.116v-18r, 1592, f.179r-81v, 1595, f.1320v-27r.

²³ HANRS, JA, 1592, f.450r-73v, DF, 1593, f.294r-96r.

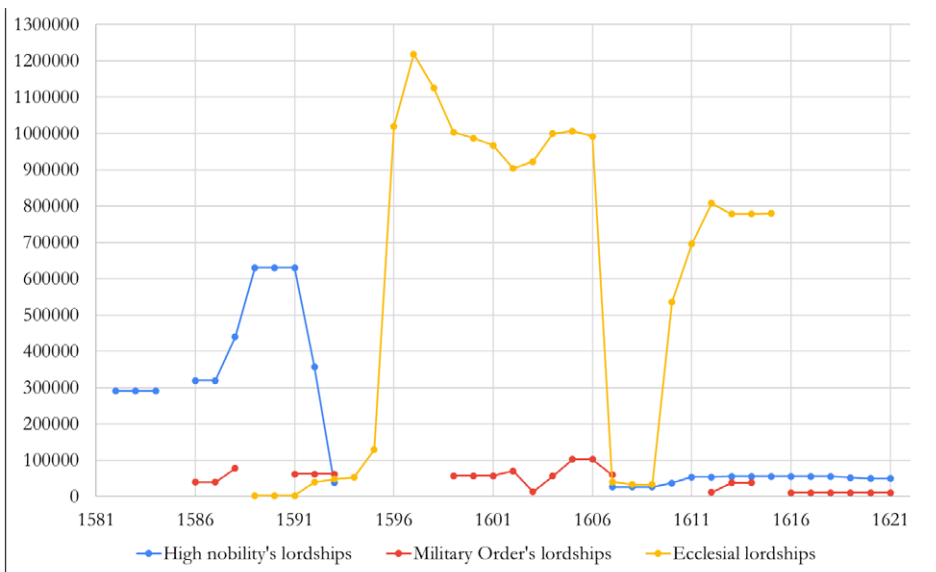
²⁴ HANRS, DF, 1606, f.1861v-73v, 1607, f.568r-605r, 1610, f.1140v-60r, 1611, f.1523r-35v, 1614, f.344v-97r, 1619, f.882v-910v.

²⁵ HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1696r-1700v, 1615, f.187v-88r.

²⁶ HANRS, DF, 1586, f.577v-80r, 1588, f.267v-72v, 1589, f.541r-54v, 1602, f.1556r-60v, 1605, f.1965v-69v

population and rents of the *encomiendas* (Graph 1). Their choice of the lordships took advantage of the influence of compatriots residing in Madrid on the Council of Military Orders or the cession of usufructs to nobles with dealings with Genoese such as Gastón de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona, Viceroy of Aragon between 1604 and 1610 and Commander of La Fresneda in 1613.²⁷ These rights were acquired by the large lessees of lay and ecclesiastical feudal rents such as Juan Bautista de Negro, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli and Pedro Jéronimo and Alexandre Gualtero.²⁸

Graph 1. Costs of feudal rent leasing in Aragon by Genoese traders, depending on types of lordships (1582-1621), *in sueldos*



Sources: Gómez Zorraquino 1995, 408-11 and HANRS, MS, 1582, f.220r-v, 1583, f.591r-94r, 1591, f.688r-92r; MDA, 1585, f.382v-443r; DF, 1588, f.267v-72v, 323r-36v, 1589, f.541r-44v, 682v-86r, 1596, f. 1423r-24v 1598, f.232v-46r, 1606, f.1542v-49r, 1607, f.568r-605r; 1616, f.290r-302v, 1621, f.73v-82r; JA, 1592, f.450r-58r; DC, 1593, f.302v-308r, 1597, f.100r-103r, 1604, f.530r-534v.

Note: The *sueldo* was a unit of account used in Aragon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After the Castilian system of weight and purity was adopted for all issues of silver coinage in 1519 and 1528, one *sueldo* was equal to half a *real*, the main silver coin minted in both centuries in Aragon.

The most important feudal rents available to the Genoese in Aragon belonged to the secular clergy, particularly to the Archbishopric of Saragossa (that included

²⁷ HANRS, Juan Escartún (JE), 1591, f.420v-31r, DF, 1613, f.414v-23v, 1615, f.182r-97r, 1617, f.87v-100r.

²⁸ See notes 24, 25, 26 and HANRS, DF, 1603, f.488r-97v, 1604, f.2169v-73r.

subordinate administrative districts with their own rents such as the archpriesthoods of Saragossa, Daroca and Belchite), whose lands extended from the capital towards the south-west and south-east of Aragon to the borders with Castile, Catalonia and Valencia. Rents owned by the Bishoprics of Teruel and Albarraçín, located in the extreme south of the kingdom, the treasury and alms-house of the Cathedral of Saragossa or parishes of nearby villages were leased on occasion. Due to their elevated costs, their exploitation only became relevant in 1596 after ruling out the noble lordships (Graph 1). The leases of the archbishopric's rents cost between 900,000 and 960,000 annual *sueldos* during twelve years from April 1596, to then descend to 660,000 *sueldos* in September 1610 and 770,000 *sueldos* in April 1612, partially affected by the expulsion of the *moriscos*. As evidence of their interest, the Genoese leased these rents for at least seventeen years and three months between August 1592 and March 1616, when they passed to the Florentine merchants Octavio Bartolini and Florentino Dini.²⁹ Unlike the nobility, the highest ranking members of the secular clergy of Aragon was not in debt thanks to their many rents and they demanded harsher terms when renting them.³⁰ Regular lessees of their feudal right, Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero negotiated particular terms with each new archbishop of Saragossa after his designation. They even accepted Tomás Borja's imposing his participation as partner with 50% of the capital and profits on the lease initiated in April 1604, and Pedro Manrique that of his sister Ana, Countess of Puñoenrostro, with 33.33% of the lease that began in April 1612. Although these partners contributed their part of the capital, the Gualtero brothers took on the management of the business. Despite the acceptance of arbitration, the disputes between them and Tomás Borja in 1607 on the subject impeded the renewal of the lease until his death in September 1610.³¹

The management of all these leases of feudal rents posed a challenge. Firstly, they involved not only the collection of different agricultural products, but also the utilisation of pastures and woodlands, feudal monopolies such as the local mill or kiln and sometimes taxes and court fines. The lessees had to receive their rights according to the agreed rules and maintain the buildings and infrastructures – mills, granaries, wineries, irrigation canals – used. Given that these rights varied in each manor belonging to nobles or military orders, the lease of the rents of the Archbishopric of Saragossa was more profitable because it allowed a more homogeneous management on a larger territory. In the ecclesiastical lordships and those of military order, in addition to the price of the lease, the lessees had to pay the

²⁹ HANRS, JE, 1595, f.615r-24v, DF, 1598, f.1269v-84v, 1600, f. 652v-68r, 1604, f.1333r-52v, 1612, f.2785r-20r, 1616, f.517r-40r. The Gualtero brothers leased the rents of the bishoprics of Teruel and Albarraçín between April 1596 and March 1599.

³⁰ Only bishops who governed reduced bishoprics requested credits from the Genoese. When Lucas Durán, Bishop of Albarraçín, delayed returning the loan of 50,000 *sueldos* to Benedicto Espínola and Juan Tomás Confredi, arbitration in 1612 consigned his rents of 1611 and 1612 to both merchants as guarantee and in 1613 imposed on him 10% monthly interest on one third of this total amount to be returned in one year. See HANRS, DF, 1612, f.1340r-48r, 1613, f.380r-84r.

³¹ HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1349v-50r, 1356v-67r, 1607, f.52v-57v, 261v-79r, 304v-27r, 1612, f.2799r-v, 2823r-35r, 1614, f.29v-44r. In January 1614 Ana Manrique transferred her part of this business to Juan Bautista Espínola.

pensions in kind and money received each year by some vicars working there as salary. If the commander of the military order or the archbishop of Saragossa were Castilian, he could demand to be paid the annual payment for the lease totally or partially in Valladolid or Madrid.³² Certain Aragonese clerics who moved to Rome demanded that it be sent to them there.³³ As the temporary owner until a replacement was appointed, the Apostolic Chamber or financial body of the Papacy in Rome entrusted the management of the assets of the deceased archbishop belonging to the Church and leased the rents of his office to Juan Jacobo Grillo between August 1592 and March 1593 and to the Gualtero brothers between September 1610 and April 1612.³⁴ Lacking the money to collect rents and pay back pensions to ecclesiastic officials, Grillo transferred the business to Octavio Marín and the Gualtero brothers transferred two-thirds to Juan Lucas Palavesino, Juan María Cabana and Carlos Strata, all bankers residing in Madrid.³⁵

As a result of this management, some large Genoese merchants had access to many agricultural products taxed with tithes and rents: lambs, grain (wheat, rye, oat, barley), grapes, oil, flax, hemp... and installations that permitted their processing and storage. This advantage reduced the need for these buildings to a few granaries and houses equipped with courtyards or pastures for scouring wool, which they leased or acquired in Saragossa or nearby villages.³⁶ The Genoese usually sold to Aragonese merchants their right to charge for certain agricultural products in the Archbishopric of Saragossa – wine, oil, flax, hemp – in exchange for a sum per unit of weight or capacity.³⁷ They reserved those products – wool, grain, saffron – whose sale on the domestic or external market was more profitable due to the high prices reached at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth. Their purchase of wool and saffron from nobles, merchants, livestock breeders and farmers in Aragon continued and included wheat and rye.³⁸ These cereals were also obtained by charging in kind royalties on lands or mills under the lordship they had leased.³⁹ Already in 1585, they leased to some municipalities the portion of the cereal harvest – and sometimes other crops – that they levied on their *vecinos* (true lay members of the

³² HANRS, DF, 1599, f.88v-95v, 1612, f.182r-97r, 2801v-02r, 1614, f.747v-48r, 1617, f.87v-100r.

³³ HANRS, DF, 1599, f.583v-84v.

³⁴ HANRS, MS, 1578, f.399r-401v, DF, 1594, f.256r-60v, 594v-96r, 1611, f.1592v-661r. Already in 1578, the Apostolic Chamber leased the Archdeaconry of Belchite to Antonio Palavesino.

³⁵ HANRS, DF, 1598, f.556v-64v, 1613, f.454r-68v. Upon leasing the rents of the Archbishop of Saragossa in 1596 for three years, the Bargalli brothers transferred 8% of the business to the Madrid banker Cristóbal Rodríguez Muñoz, who transferred it in 1598 to Mucio Palavesino, a Milanese settled in Madrid. On the Genoese bankers in Madrid during the first half of the seventeenth century, Sanz Ayán, 2015 and Álvarez del Nogal 2005 and 2022.

³⁶ HANRS, DF, 1591, f.87v-90r, 1599, f.1239r-42v, 1602, f.1598v-602r, 1618, f.635v-37r, 1114r-15r.

³⁷ HANRS, DF, 1597, f.565r-568r, 648v-651v, 1355v-1359r, 1599, f.187v-93v, 213v-20r, 1600, f.1156v-58v, 1601, f.348r-55v, 1691r-97v, 1604, f.1979r-88r, 1611, f.255r-64r.

³⁸ HANRS, DF, 1584, f.628v-30r, 1586, f.584v-86r, 1589, f.371r, 737r, 1595, f.702v, 752v-54r, 1599, f.1715v-21v; DC, 1596, f.360r-61r. This wool was also acquired in the east of Castile in the 1580s. See HANRS, MS, 1581, f.1211r-13r, Juan de Lurbe (JL), 1587, f. 1286r and on.

³⁹ HANRS, DF, 1601, f. 878v-80r, 889r-90r, 1606, f. 1534r-36r, 1612, f. 8r-15r, 145v-48r.

local community with political and economic rights) to pay the annual pensions of the *censoles* or long-term loans which burdened the municipal treasury. Or they paid these pensions for several years to the lenders in exchange for receiving wheat from the municipality on agreed date.⁴⁰ In 1617, the Gualtero brothers unsuccessfully offered the council of Barbastro to cancel 131,000 *escudos* of its debt in *censoles* in exchange for managing all the monopolies of food supply and other municipal revenues for thirty years, including the eleventh of the oil harvest collected from *vecinos*.⁴¹

The management of the cereal trade by the Genoese shows the fulfilment or avoidance of the laws of the kingdom according to political circumstances, taking advantage of the different jurisdictions and existing legal loopholes. They obeyed, therefore, the frequent restrictions that were imposed on the export of grain between 1580 and 1620 by the *Diputación* or permanent government in charge of representing the kingdom and defending its laws, formed since 1436 by two members for each state – citizens, petty nobility, high nobility, clergy – who had delegates in the *Cortes* or Parliament of Aragon. They collaborated with the municipal officials of Saragossa when they were ordered to declare the inventories of wheat obtained from leasing of rents, purchases or debt collections which were stored in their granaries and to sell them to the municipality at a fixed price to facilitate the supply of the population in view of the shortages suffered in 1584, 1593, 1595 and 1614.⁴² However, they took advantage of the political weakness of the *Diputación* after the failure of the rebellion against the power of Philip II that broke out in Aragon in 1591, the special licences of the viceroy and the privileges confirmed by Philip III to the Communities of villages of Teruel and Albarracín in 1599 on the sale of their cereal and livestock to export wheat through the east or south of the kingdom and supply needy cities such as Valencia in 1592 and 1605, Lisbon in 1598, Seville in 1603 and Madrid in 1605.⁴³ Juan Bautista de Negro even supplied Valencia in 1584 with wheat imported by sea from Sicily.⁴⁴

3.2. Credit, company, representation and arbitration

Being more numerous, active and with more capital, the Genoese, between 1581 and 1600, delved deeper into the exploration of the institutional advantages and obstacles that Aragon offered them. From 1570, these merchants usually turned to insurers residing in Madrid and Barcelona to insure the saffron, wool or the cereal which they loaded on their ships, a fact that could sometimes delay collection for a

⁴⁰ HANRS, MS, 1585, f.69r-77v, 622v-37r; DF, 1598, f.907r-17r, 1608, f.603v-18v, 1619, f. 1141v-49v, LA, 1612, f.577r-78r.

⁴¹ Municipal Archive of Barbastro, Records, 1616-17, f.56r-v.

⁴² MAS, Serie Facticia, 130-7, 131-3, 131-6, 131-14; AHNS, MS, 1584, f.732r-v.

⁴³ HANRS, DF, 1592, f.33v-34v, 63v-67r, 117r-18r, 1598, f.86r-87r, 503v-06r, 1603, f.1097r-103v, 1604, f.8r-9r, 1605, f.279r-88v, 1868r-78v. In April 1598 alone, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli brought 12,711 *cabices* of wheat down the River Ebro for its transport to Lisbon from Catalonia. The Aragonese *cabice* weighed 140 kilograms and measured 179.36 litres.

⁴⁴ HANRS, MS, 1584, f.165r-66r.

long time.⁴⁵ As of 1591 they realised that it was the custom in Saragossa to insure all the goods at an agreed price as there were no laws limiting its amount. The insurance premium varied according to volume and quality of goods and other factors: that year, one insurance on four bales of saffron meant a cost of 4.45% of their value and two others on 672 and around 10,000 *arrobas* of wool reached 8% and 6%, respectively.⁴⁶ Despite securing the endorsement of wealthy Aragonese nobles as guarantors, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli failed in 1596 and 1599 to lease the collection of customs tariffs on the borders of Aragon.⁴⁷ Like the French who controlled trade in Aragon between 1620 and 1707, the Genoese were excluded from this business. Either to favour the natives of the kingdom or to avoid fraud committed by foreigners, the *Diputación* leased rights to Aragonese merchants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 98-101, 276-77).⁴⁸ The Genoese continued importing quality silks from Milan, Genoa or Florence without social opposition as Saragossa lacked a silk guild until 1615⁴⁹. However, faced with lower profits due to the decline of the Italian manufacturers, they did not import woollen fabrics to compete with Aragonese textile production facing difficulties gradually from the early seventeenth century onwards after its peak during the sixteenth. In this way they avoided the criticism of broad social groups that French merchants suffered in Aragon during the second half of the seventeenth century, accused of ruining regional merchants and craftsmen with their textiles, encouraging depopulation and exporting silver and gold coins (Mateos Royo 2013, 360-69).

The Genoese provided good services to the regional nobles by collecting the money coming from their feudal rents in their domains in Naples or Sicily or pensions paid there by the royal treasury as a privilege granted by the Aragonese or Spanish monarchs, sending bills of exchange to their compatriots established in Naples or Palermo⁵⁰. In the case of nobles indebted to Genoese merchants, such as the Duke of Villahermosa, these rents in Italy were included in the leasing of those obtained on their lands in Aragon between 1590 and 1593.⁵¹ Already in the 1570s, as banditry grew on the road between Saragossa and Barcelona, the Genoese were able to send gold *escudos* by means of credits and exchanges to Rome.⁵² In addition to lay individuals and municipalities that financed stays or businesses, their most dependable clients were the secular clergy, such as the prior, canon and archbishop

⁴⁵ HANRS, MS, 1573, f.520r-21v, 833r-35r, DF, 1589, f.1170v-72v, 1602, f.721v-23r, 1609, f.1276r-78r. The insurance on 1,207 *cabices* of wheat embarked in Los Alfaques in 1598 heading to Lisbon generated a lengthy lawsuit in Barcelona, still unresolved in 1609.

⁴⁶ HANRS, DC, 1591, f.632r-v; DF, 1591, f.765r-70v, 997r-98v.

⁴⁷ HANRS, DF, 1596, f.404v-408r, 1599, f.413r-14r.

⁴⁸ Historical Provincial Archive of Saragossa (HPAS), *Diputación's* Records (DR) Manuscript 280, f.5r, 203r-04r, 241r. At the end of the sixteenth century different lessees of customs rights complained to the *Diputación* that Genoese and other foreign merchants bought false licences from royal officials to export their gold *escudos* as royal property, free of customs duties in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon.

⁴⁹ HANRS, JL, 1587, f.1286r and on, DF, 1589, f.1173r-75v.

⁵⁰ HANRS, MS, 1583, f.397v-400v, 1585, f.301r-02r, 350v-52v, DF, 1590, f.120v-21r, 1591, f.246v-50r.

⁵¹ HANRS, DF, 1590, f.120v-24v, 1591, f.1200v-02r.

⁵² HANRS, MS, 1570, f.253v-54v, 1574, f.2v-3r.

of the Cathedral of Saragossa, who promoted – like so many others in the Spanish and Italian territories under the Spanish monarchy (Díaz Rodríguez 2020)– the obtaining of bulls and other privileges from the Holy See.⁵³ From the end of the sixteenth century, they extended their credits to western Catalonia and north-eastern Aragon. Nicolás Negro, Aurelio Espínola and Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero established agreements in 1592, 1594 and 1598 with Jerónimo Cescases, Canon of the Cathedral of Lérida. In exchange for part of the profits or a margin on the appreciation of the *escudo* in Rome, Cescases would arrange bills of exchange and credits with individuals in his bishopric paid in cash in Rome by merchants who negotiated with these Genoese. Both parties would be accountable for failure to perform their duties and would submit records every three or six months.⁵⁴ In view of the profitability, their Florentine competitors in Saragossa imitated them in the second decade of the seventeenth century.⁵⁵

The Genoese merchants of Saragossa also offered useful fiscal and financial services to the kings Philip II and III, often in cooperation with their main lenders: the Genoese settled in Madrid and Valladolid as capitals of the Spanish Empire and seats of the Royal Court. Between 1584 and 1589 Antonio Palavesino and Juan Baptista de Negro administered and collected in Aragon taxes transferred by the Papacy to the Spanish monarchy throughout its Empire, such as the subsidy, which taxed the lands and rents owned by the church, or the bulls of the crusade, which granted their purchaser spiritual graces for the living or deceased.⁵⁶ Between 1592 and 1594 whereas Juan Jacobo Grillo supplied wheat to the royal army quartered in Aragon after subduing the rebellion against the royal authority of 1591, Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli provided the money for the soldiers' salary and maintenance sent by Felipe Centurión and Julio Espínola from Madrid using bills of exchange after negotiating their loan with Philip II.⁵⁷ In 1601 Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero paid Lupericio Leonardo de Argensola, an Aragonese scholar and secretary to Queen Margaret of Austria, 134,200 *sueldos* from two credits signed that year in Madrid and Valladolid by Philip III with Ambrosio Espínola. In 1603 both brothers delivered to Cardinal Ascanio Colonna, Viceroy of Aragon, 200,000 *sueldos* to cover the expenses of the Princes of Savoy in Saragossa during their trip to Madrid, sent from Valladolid with a bill of exchange by Juan Baptista Justiniano and Sinibaldo Fresco.⁵⁸

Given the scant income that the royal treasury obtained in Aragon, a fact that limited the salaries and resources of the royal officials, the Genoese merchants loaned money to the viceroys of Aragon. Nicolás de Negro provided 167,328 *sueldos* in 1596 to Viceroy Beltrán de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque «for things in his Majesty's service» in exchange for pensions in money receivable from the royal treasury of the

⁵³ HANRS, DF, 1589, f.386r-87v, 1591, f.50r-51r, 1603, f.239v-41v, 1604, f.174r-v, 1606, f.1155v-57r, 1607, f.519v-22v, 1612, f. 329v-30v.

⁵⁴ HANRS, DF, 1592, f.821v-24v, 1594, f.463r-71r, 1595, f.183v-84v, 1598, f.1639v-45v, 1649r-50r.

⁵⁵ HANRS, DF, 1613, f.362v-65v, 1616, f. 845v-47v.

⁵⁶ HANRS, MS, 1584, f.572v-78r, 1586, f. 340v-43r; DF, 1588, f. 572v-78r.

⁵⁷ HANRS, MS, 1592, f.478v-79v; DF, 1593, f.348r-51v, 391v-92v, 1594, f.265r-66v, 538v-41v.

⁵⁸ HANRS, DF, 1601, f.406r-08r, 1603, f.1052v-53r.

kingdom of Valencia that formed part of his salary.⁵⁹ In December 1610, the Gualtero brothers agreed with Gastón de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona and Viceroy of Aragon, a credit of 10,000 monthly *sueldos* for one year from that month with the authority to take it in exchange in Saragossa for its repayment at the Medina del Campo fairs at the Marquis' expense if the interest rate did not exceed 16%. As a guarantee, the Marquis would give them 1,000 *cabices* of wheat, consign pensions in money associated with his salary from the royal treasuries of Valencia and Aragon plus other private ones received in Naples and Madrid, and would recognise a debt of 120,000 *sueldos* with them.⁶⁰

The Genoese adapted traditional forms of credit in Aragon to their business, such as the *censal* or long-term credit granted by the wealthy elites to individuals or institutions in exchange for an annual pension governed by a fixed interest rate: 5% was the usual rate during the sixteenth century. These *censales* were managed as stable rents linked to the family, distributed as dowry and inheritance among its members. The Genoese purchased these *censales* from 1580 onwards from their lay owners – citizens, petty nobles and nobles – maintaining the same pension as the original *censal*. Due to the indebtedness of the owner of the *censal* or the institution or individual who paid the pension each year, they were often able to acquire them by reducing the amount of the loan or *principal*. In this way the interest rate charged rose from the initial 5% to 5.55%, 6% and 6.66% or to 8%, 9.5% and 9.8% if the owner needed money urgently. Alexandre Gualtero thus raised the interest rate on a *censal* acquired in 1621 from 6.66% to 16.66%.⁶¹ From the end of the sixteenth century, the Genoese avoided acquiring *censales* on councils under lay lordship, the reliability of which deteriorated for the reasons already mentioned. Despite accumulating the most profitable credits, the Genoese also sold *censales* at 5% for the same *principal* to Genoese and Aragonese merchants as payment for goods, loans or services when they lacked liquidity.⁶²

The increased expectations for business modified the management of the Genoese companies in Aragon. If between 1561 and 1580 they were formed by traders settled in Saragossa who contributed their money and that of their partners in Genoa, between 1580 and 1595 quite a few Genoese moved from Madrid and Genoa (and to a lesser extent, Barcelona) in order to trade there for some years. Some acted on behalf of their companies; but others associated with local Genoese merchants, taking advantage of family or professional ties.⁶³ These made it easier for the large merchants to cancel their business and obtain liquidity. In 1583 Borbón Centurión sold to Juan Bautista Espínola for 1,441,000 *sueldos* the rents of the Duchy of Villahermosa and debts pending collection before abandoning Aragon in 1584. Juan Bautista de Negro's assets in Aragon were transferred for their sale to his father-in-law, Nicolás Espínola in 1592 and to Nicolás Lerize and Nicolás de Negro in 1593.

⁵⁹ HANRS, DF, 1596, f.1054r-55r.

⁶⁰ HANRS, DF, 1610, f.1808v-14r.

⁶¹ HANRS, MS, 1583, f.333v-49r, 693r-95r; DF, 1602, f.901v-14r, 1264v-77r, 1603, f.291v-93r, 1604, f.702r-07r, 1608, f.1526r-28r, 1621, f.73v-81r.

⁶² HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1267r-70r, 1725v-34v, 1605, f.1606v-14v, 1608, f.560v-66r.

⁶³ HANRS, MS, 1580, f.80r-96r, 1581, f.693r-98r, 1594, f.381r-96r, 1606, f.1375v-86v.

It was only in 1598 that Nicolás, son of Juan Bautista, could close with his father their final acquisition for 600,000 *sueldos*.⁶⁴ Upon terminating the company, those traders domiciled in Saragossa who had received significant financing from their partners in Genoa sent the accounting ledger there via Barcelona for examination and safekeeping.⁶⁵

Endowed with more capital, from Saragossa the Genoese increased their business in Castile from 1580, arranging exchanges and credits in Madrid, Medina del Campo, Lyon and Besançon and from 1590 in Plasencia, which became the main international fair.⁶⁶ Daniel Espínola negotiated in Madrid in 1578 and 1579 the purchase of all the business of the company of Esteban and Jerónimo Grillo, absorbed in 1581. Cornelio de Negro participated in a company with Horacio Costa and other partners in Granada, with accounts pending in 1592.⁶⁷ Proof of their financial autonomy, when Agustín Cataño and Nicolas Guirardí formed a company in Saragossa in 1589, they invited Franco Espínola and Angelo Ricio, residents of Genoa, to participate, but under worse conditions. In return for each contributing 25% of the capital and taking 25% of the losses, they would only receive 20% of the profits. The company founded in 1606 by Juan María Judice, Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero had business houses in 1610 in Genoa, Plasencia, Medina del Campo and Saragossa, closed deals with traders in Madrid, Genoa, Milan, Venice, Pisa and Naples and went to fairs in Medina del Campo, Plasencia and Besançon.⁶⁸ Despite the regular creation and termination of companies until 1615, a few, such as those formed by the Bargalli and Gualtero families, monopolised the most lucrative trade and credit in Aragon from 1596 onwards. With better access to the regional raw materials thanks to the leasing of feudal rents, they used the table of deposits of Saragossa more frequently to receive, give and remit money.⁶⁹ Very active between 1585 and 1593, Juan Bautista de Negro liquidated part of his *censoales*, houses and land in Saragossa between 1604 and 1606 to return to Genoa in 1607 where he died in 1608.⁷⁰ The sale of credits and debts receivable from merchants who left for their native Genoa or other Italian cities and the increased activity of the Florentine merchants from 1616 foreshadowed the decline of the Genoese, which gave way to the denser French mercantile networks from 1620 onwards.⁷¹

The duration of these companies varied as their members preferred an early separation by mutual agreement if the circumstances made it advisable, as stipulated in the establishing contracts. The association of Juan María Judice with Tobias de Negro in 1590 lasted a whole triennium while that agreed in 1609 with Juan Pablo

⁶⁴ HANRS, MS, 1583, f.591r-94r, DF, 1598, f.1012v-15v.

⁶⁵ HANRS, DF, 1592, f.756v-58r, 1602, f.720r-21r.

⁶⁶ HANRS, JL, 1587, f.1286r and on, MS, 1587, f.335v-38r, 1592, f.643v-55r, DF, 1594, f.321v-22r, 1284r. The fairs of Burgos were only used at the beginning of the seventeenth century. See HANRS, DF, 1601, f.1561r-63r, 1605, f.1932v-35r.

⁶⁷ HANRS, MS, 1581, f.746v-49r, 1583, f.811r-14r, 1592, f.655v-59r.

⁶⁸ HANRS, DC, 1589, f.351v-53v, DF, 1606, f.1375v-86v, 1610, f.489v-509r.

⁶⁹ MAS, AD, 1603.

⁷⁰ HANRS, DF, 1604, f.1705v-34r, 1605, f.1683v-89r, 1606, f.1096r-97r, 1608, f.2256r-63v.

⁷¹ HANRS, DF, 1618, f.1444r-47v, 1620, f.376v-82r.

Torrilla exceeded the three years agreed at the start to reach five.⁷² The longest-lived companies were established by two brothers, one of which at least had roots in Aragon. Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli collaborated from 1590 to 1602. That year in April Jorge sold to his brother-in-law Jacobo Vitali the debts receivable and in May both brothers entrusted him with the company's ledger for him to take to Genoa – where Vitali would settle in 1603 – and entrust it to their partners. After the Gualtero brothers had been working together since 1599 and mutually ceded to each other the assets of the company of the one who died without a will in 1600, Pedro Jerónimo bequeathed his half of these assets to his widow and children in his will in 1615; but he stipulated that the company would continue as long as Alexandre wished.⁷³ These associations could withstand prolonged absences of one member by the other becoming his procurator: Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero represented his brother Alexandre between February 1606 and June 1608 while the latter resided in Genoa. After Jorge Bargalli's departure in 1602 to Madrid, Juan Benito managed the affairs of their already terminated company until 1609.⁷⁴

The closure of the companies reveals the participation of people with no management capacity. They could be Aragonese traders or administrators with whom the Genoese did business, such as Hernando de Paredes, treasurer of the crusade tax, to whom Juan María Judice and Juan Pablo Torrilla returned 10,000 *sueldos* in 1612 with which he entered into their association.⁷⁵ Genoese wives, daughters and daughters-in-law of partners contributed their dowries to the company's capital. Only in his will in 1582 did Daniel Espínola consider returning to his wife, María de Negro, the 16,000 *escudos* of her dowry that he took in 1560. After cancelling their association with Juan María Judice, the Gualtero brothers delivered to Juan Pablo Torrilla in 1613 the 26,000 *sueldos* loaned in 1611 at 5% annually by Isabel Mojardín, widow of Juan Bautista Torrilla and resident of Genoa. On the same day this credit with identical interest rate was entrusted to the new company formed by Judice and Torrilla, his son-in-law after marrying Mariana Judice. As Porcia Cataño wanted to return to Genoa with her children after her husband, Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero, died in 1615, arbitration confirmed in 1619 her right to withdraw the 180,000 *sueldos* of her dowry placed in his company, as her husband had stated in his will. But this ruling imposed a delay in its receipt of two or three years from her arrival in Genoa to allow Alexandre Gualtero to raise this money without hardship by selling the company's assets. Until it was paid, Porcia received 9,000 *sueldos* – 5% of the total – deducted annually from the total amount of her dowry except for those paid in the third year, plus an annuity of 4,000 *sueldos* to support her children until they reached the age of sixteen. This arbitration recognised the right of Tomasina Lercaro, wife of Alexandre

⁷² HANRS, DF, 1590, f.718r-33r, 1609, f.1950v-62r, 1614, f.1608r-17v.

⁷³ HANRS, DF, 1600, f.934v-37v, 1602, f.472r-502v, 720v-21r, 1604, f.1998v-2004v, 1615, f.662v-64v.

⁷⁴ HANRS, DF, 1603, f.152r-55r, 1606, f.289v-90v, 1607, f.542r-v, 1608, f.238v-42r, 1464v-65v 1609, f. 1276r-78v.

⁷⁵ HANRS, DF, 1612, f.913v-14r.

Gualtero, to withdraw the 300,000 *sueldos* of her dowry from this company when Porcia Cataño did so.⁷⁶

The expansion of business and the creation of companies was strengthened by a broad system of representation by means of procuratorships that allowed the Genoese merchants settled in Saragossa to receive and transmit information, money and goods to other towns and cities located in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon, as well as in Italy. By means of documents written in Latin, they could send representatives to Genoa and other Italian cities to settle disputes related to inheritances of family members or to sell movable and immovable property they had there.⁷⁷ These connections allowed merchants residing in Genoa to participate in good business in Aragon without the need to move or to participate in a company. In 1603, Juan Jacobo Grimaldo, Horacio de Negro and Pedro María Gentil purchased *vensales* from delegates of King Philip III that the *Diputación* during the *Cortes* of 1592 and the Community of villages of Teruel in 1598 charged on their estates and offered to King Philip II as a service. These long-term credits at 5% were desirable because they were backed by solvent institutions. As procurator for their owners or heirs endorsed with powers sent from Genoa, Pedro Jerónimo Gualtero collected these annual pensions between 1605 and 1610, remitting them to Genoa and other Italian cities in cash or bills of exchange.⁷⁸ This delegated representation allowed widows and children of merchants already installed in Genoa to preserve pensions on *vensales* or landed property they owned in Aragon or western Catalonia several years after their death.⁷⁹

Although foreign merchant communities living at Saragossa could not designate a *cónsul* or representative to defend their trade interests before public authorities and the city lacked a commercial court to deal with legal conflicts regarding them, the efficiency of the Genoese colony increased from 1585 through the use of arbitration, a traditional method in Aragon that allowed for the omission of long and costly court cases. The conflicting parties designated one, two or three arbitrators with power to examine the evidence during an extendable time and to render either a definitive or a temporary and revisable decision by these arbitrators in a short period. If the dispute was between merchants due to differences regarding payments, credits, company accounts and inheritances, the arbitrators were named from among their Genoese or Aragonese colleagues, whether citizens or petty nobility. If other social groups were affected by the dispute, the arbitrators could include clerics, carriers or craftsmen.⁸⁰ When the assets in dispute were more substantial or there was greater distrust between the parties, as was sometimes the case with the leasing of feudal

⁷⁶ HANRS, MS, 1582, f.222v-28v, DF, 1613, f.625v-30r, 1614, f.1606v-18v, 1615, f.664v-65r, 1619, f.1099v-113v. This investment of money in exchange for one steady annual interest, involving often relatives, was also used to secure funding by Genoese merchants working in Castile during this period. See Rodríguez de Gracia, 2005, 169-70.

⁷⁷ HANRS, DF, 1591-95.

⁷⁸ HANRS, DF, 1604, f.975r-1012r, 1606, f.375r-76v, 1841v-42v, 1607, f.739r-40r, 1608, f.630r-34r, 1609, f.199r-200r, 1610, f.360r-70r,

⁷⁹ HANRS, DF, 1618, f.374v-78v.

⁸⁰ HANRS, DF, 1588, f.1005v-18v, 1594, f.232r-43r, 1600, f.1074v-79r, 1602, f.789v-796r, 1603, f.132v-50r, 1620v-47v, 1612, f.332r-42v.

rents, jurists or members of the *Real Audiencia* and the *Corte del Justicia de Aragón* or a tribunal in charge of preserving the *fueros* (the kingdom's essential laws formed from local rights granted by the king to municipalities since the eleventh century and laws voted by the *Cortes* since 1247) could be appointed.⁸¹ The majority of the arbitrators accepted a modest gift – two lemons – for their services to show their disinterest and impartiality, but the judges and jurists demanded substantial payments. The sentence was always indisputable and enforceable, subject to heavy fines.

The settlement of these disputes required the examination of notarial and legal documents deposited in Spain and Italy. Along with letters or accounting extracts held by their partners in Genoa, upon examining the company's accounts, the arbitrators could impose the presentation of declarations signed by businessmen in Italian cities to clarify commercial or credit customs foreign to Spain and Genoa.⁸² A relevant decision made in 1594 by Beltrán de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque and Viceroy of Aragon as arbitrator in a long dispute between Juan Bautista de Negro and the heirs of Juan Bautista Espínola reveal the interest of the Spanish monarchy in making it easier and cheaper for the Genoese to settle disputes brought before the regional courts. He accepted the legal validity of copies of notarial documents signed in Genoa – including rulings of the tribunal of the Rota in civil disputes – if they were certified there by the chancellor of the College of Notaries.⁸³ This innovative policy was introduced by this viceroy from a position of strength after the royal army had quelled a rebellion against Philip II in 1591. As this uprising was caused by repeated attempts of the king's officials to circumvent the *fueros* in order to impose his orders in Aragon, public advocates for strict application of these essential laws in all matters were weaker at this time than in the recent past.

4. The rise of the Genoese (1581-1620). Social behaviour

As Genoese merchant communities tended to do in other Spanish towns and cities, their members preserved their identity and reinforced their bonds of trust and solidarity through endogamous marriages (Velasco Hernández 2001, 428-30; Miralles 2003, 496-99; Girón Pascual 2018, 81-84). In some cases, unions like those between Juan Bautista de Negro and Jerónima Espínola or Juan Pablo Torrilla and Mariana Judice brought together assets and business, generating companies between members of different families. In others, they facilitated procuratorial tasks: Jacobo Vitali represented Jorge and Juan Benito Bargalli, his brothers-in-law, and Agustín Cataño represented Antonio Palavesino, his uncle. However, the marriages of Pedro Jerónimo and Alexandre Gualtero with Porcia Cataño and Paula Serra did not generate these activities among the two families in Aragon, although perhaps they facilitated financing from Genoa. Unlike the French immigrants, on whom the *Cortes* of 1677-78 and 1684-86 imposed, as foreigners, matrimony with Spanish women and residence in Aragon if they wanted to carry out trade in order to encourage them to

⁸¹ HANRS, DF, 1595, f.934v-42v, 1175v-80r, 1600, f.1213v-24r, 1612, f.332r-42v.

⁸² HANRS, DF, 1589, f.734v-40v, 1166r-85v, 1349r-60v; 1594, f.324r-25r.

⁸³ HANRS, MS, 1594, f.651v-52r, 655r-56r; DF, 1594, f.1284r, 1287v-89r.

settle in Aragon, the Genoese were not restricted in this way as it was considered that their activities were not so detrimental to the kingdom (Mateos Royo 2013, 366-67). No signs of animosity towards the Genoese were noted like those unleashed by the municipal authorities of Valencia in 1547 and Barcelona in 1591 as a result of complaints coming from textile artisans or merchants in view of Genoese's commercial and financial activities, favoured by the Spanish monarchy (Salvador Esteban 1996, 1148-49; Dantí i Riu 2019, 649-50).⁸⁴

The scant interest of the Genoese merchants living in Saragossa in promoting marriages with Aragonese women resembles the habits of their compatriots in Barcelona (Dantí i Riu 2019, 643-44). This common behaviour contrasts sharply with the attitude of other fellow countrymen residing in Castilian towns between 1580 and 1620, where they sought access to *vecindad* and naturalisation after marrying native women or making prolonged stays there in order to obtain commercial advantages or tax reductions, to access to the ranks of petty nobility or to buy municipal and judicial posts to the Spanish monarchy (Torres Sánchez 1990: 563-68; Velasco Hernández 2003, 685-93; Martínez Miralles 2003, 493-503; Montojo Montojo 2007, 99-102; Rodríguez de Gracia 2005: 172-87; Andujar Castillo 1996, 369-71; Soria Mesa 2011, 28-46; Girón Pascual 2018, 78-79, 264). Genoese's fast progress in some Castilian towns provoked sometimes the rejection of local elites, as several municipal attempts to stop their promotion to the condition of *vecino* show (Andujar Castillo 1999, 371-72).⁸⁵ On the contrary, Genoese merchants staying in Saragossa considered that their residence there exempted them from paying royal and private tolls in Aragon without needing the status of *vecino*. Their preference for commercial activity and mobility reduced any aspiration to occupying posts in the *Cortes*, the *Diputación* or the municipality of Saragossa, which could hinder the exercise of the businesses or impose a more sedentary lifestyle on them.⁸⁶ For this reason, during this period, the regional elites did not veto foreigners or their descendants from access to honorary offices, rents from public or private institutions and political, administrative or judicial positions in Aragon by means of parliamentary laws such as those in effect between 1626 and 1678 or the local statutes that many municipalities applied between the mid and late seventeenth century, both designed against French immigrants (Mateos Royo 2013, 363-66). Genoese residing in Aragon even neglected the access to some prestigious positions open to them as Catholic believers such as members of the high secular clergy, Spanish Inquisition or religious

⁸⁴ In 1547 the Valencia city council unsuccessfully proposed before the Parliament of Valencia that the Italian immigrants not married or domiciled in the city or the kingdom should not be allowed to trade. The Barcelona council expelled Genoese residents from the city in 1591, but they returned and resumed their activities several years later.

⁸⁵ The Granada council obtained from Philip II in 1576 a privilege that prohibited the access to the condition of *vecino* of those Genoese who had not married native women from the kingdom of Granada. This local act was extended to several coastal villages in 1578. Huescar obtained in 1564 from his lord, the duke of Alba, the banning of this social promotion to any foreigner living there, although it became possible with the duke's permission in 1589. These laws did not prevent the settlement and rise of Genoese in this kingdom between 1580 and 1630.

⁸⁶ The only known exception is that of Luis Antonio Palavesino, a candidate to officer of the *Diputación* in 1595 and councillor of the municipality of Saragossa in 1616 (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 322, 327).

confraternities, a common way used by their compatriots in Castile to climb the social ladder (Rodríguez de Gracia 2005, 181-87; Soria Mesa 2011, 35-36, Girón Pascual 2018, 264-68). Their skilful adaptation to the laws when carrying out transactions and their financial services to the Aragonese elites earned for the major Genoese merchants some support when facing litigation inside and outside the kingdom. Thus, in 1582, the *Diputación* qualified Borbón Centurión as a *vecino* of Saragossa even though he actually wasn't, in order to facilitate the return of 240,000 *sueldos* in silver seized from his servant by the customs guards of Lérida, as they were not subject to tariffs according to the agreement signed in 1564 between Aragon and Catalonia.⁸⁷

By contrast to bigger and more firmly settled Genoese communities living in southeastern Castilian towns such as Cartagena or Granada, whose members signed marriage contracts before local notaries when either they did wed Genoese or Castilian spouses (Velasco Hernández, 2001, 443-47; Soria Mesa 2011, 36-46), all nuptial agreements involving Genoese residents in Saragossa were negotiated in Genoa for two main reasons. Firstly, the terms of the marriage contracts -which used to include the amount and delivery periods of the dowry- considered the commercial and financial relationships established between Genoese families and companies working in Aragon in the medium term from the perspective of a temporary stay in Saragossa and later return to Genoa either of the husband alone or both spouses together.⁸⁸ Secondly, terms of these agreements were governed by the laws and customs of Genoa, a fact that made it easier for both spouses or their heirs to manage their assets in Genoa or solve disputes before the Rota court by designating representatives domiciled there from Saragossa. The gradual recognition of notary documents and court verdicts generated in Genoa by the Aragonese tribunals facilitated this decision. Genoese families were free in this way from being governed by the *fueros* of Aragon that regulated tightly the rights of the married couple regarding their assets and those of their spouse during and after marriage.

The partial avoidance of these laws was proved necessary in the few marriage agreements that joined Genoese with *infanzón* (petty nobles with limited jurisdictional power in their feudal domain) families from Aragon not only because of the distinct legal tradition but also due to the different social and economic positions of the contracting parties. This is reflected in the contracts signed by Antonio Palavesino, a Genoese nobleman already settled in Saragossa in 1572. Despite being involved in trade and finance, as early as 1580 he acquired livestock, properties in Saragossa and nearby lands providing him with a stable income to resemble the lifestyle of the petty nobility.⁸⁹ After strengthening his estate in 1595 with the inheritance of Beatriz Moreno, his second wife, in 1599 he arranged the marriage of his daughter Isabel to Gregorio Lacabra, a petty noble dedicated to trade and in 1603 that of his son Luis

⁸⁷ HPAS, DR, Manuscript 245, f.232r-v.

⁸⁸ Nicolás Espínola paid Juan Bautista de Negro, his son-in-law, 10,000 *escudos* as dowry for Jerónima Espínola, his daughter, in cash and bills of exchange between 1587 and 1597. Arbitration in Saragossa confirmed in 1612 the restitution of her dowry, estimated at 260,000 *sueldos*. This was partially obtained through the sale of houses, lands and credits in Aragon still owned by the couple. See HANRS, DF, 1590, f. 668v-69r, 1592, f.1002v-05r, 1612, f.1357r-77r.

⁸⁹ HANRS, MS, 1583, f.394v-95r, DF, 1608, f.3011v-19v, 1610, f.146v-54r, 1615, f.339v-51r, 1617, f. 907v-09v.

Antonio to Polonia Mendoza, the daughter of Pedro Mendoza, Baron of Sangarrén. Both future husbands contributed real estate in Saragossa and olive groves and terrains nearby, but the position of Gregorio Lacabra was much more solid. In addition to having 832,000 *sueldos* in *censales* at 5% and 5.55%, assets worth another 20,000, 1,600 *cabices* of wheat and an *escrex* or increase in dowry for his wife of 40,000 *sueldos*, Gregorio had already inherited these assets from his parents. Luis Antonio would do the same in the future, he could only dispose of movable assets for 40,000 *sueldos* plus some livestock and could ensure for his wife an *escrex* of 20,000 *sueldos*. Isabel Palavesino would enjoy 140,000 *sueldos* as dowry provided by her father thanks to the legacy of Beatriz Moreno: 80,000 *sueldos* in *censales* at 5% and 60,000 *sueldos* in cash.⁹⁰ The 140,000 *sueldos* in *censales* at 5% available to Polonia Mendoza were a more precarious dowry. As these credits were charged to the municipalities of the Barony of Sangarrén and the county of Ribagorza, the collection of these pensions was conditioned by litigation, prior rights of usufruct and agreements between the municipalities that paid these rents and their creditors. In view of their lack of assets, Antonio Palavesino agreed to allow Luis Antonio and Polonia to live in his house after the wedding.⁹¹

These two marriage contracts regulated widowhood rights with extreme care because the *fueros* of Aragon established as custom as early as 1247 the *viudedad foral* or the survivor's right to enjoy half of the common property of the marriage (movable assets and acquired or inherited real assets) and the usufruct over the private property (usually real assets) of the deceased spouse until death or further marriage (García Herrero, 1993). In both cases, the assets inherited or acquired by a spouse during the marriage were their exclusive property; but Polonia would not have debts as they were all assumed by Luis Antonio. If the wife died, both husbands would acquire all the dowry of his wife and the *escrex* as a right of *viudedad foral*. As a concession, Gregorio accepted that, if he had one or more children with Isabel and remarried, he would reserve 160,000 or 240,000 *sueldos* as dowry for the wedding. A clause present in other marriage contracts,⁹² if the husband died, the wife would reside in the common home with her own bed, furniture and jewellery, as well as would receive an annual pension by restricting the *viudedad foral* to the preservation of a worthy patrimony: 20,000 *sueldos* Isabel, 12,000 *sueldos* Polonia, reduced to 8,000 while Antonio Palavesino was alive to help her. As a sign of her inferior status to her husband, Isabella lost her dowry (which she could not bequeath to her relatives, even though it came from Beatriz Moreno) and the *escrex* while she maintained her widow's condition and rights. As proof of her better position, Polonia did recover her dowry and only had to renounce the *escrex*, which she could bequeath to her descendants. If

⁹⁰ In 1603 and 1619 the family of Isabel Palavesino recognised they owed her 60,000 *sueldos* of her dowry. See HANRS, DF, 1603, f.1757-58v, DF, 1619, f.89v-90v.

⁹¹ HANRS, JE, 1595, f.641r, Bartolomé Malo (BM), 1599, f.606v-34r, DF, 1603, f.1752r-68v.

⁹² Juan Benito Bargalli granted in 1611 in his marriage contract to Ana María Cosida, a petty noble, 6,000 *sueldos* of annual pension during her widowhood, plus her clothes, jewels and a furnished room. In return, she waived the *viudedad foral*, joint assets and other rights over her husband's properties that the *fueros* and customs stated in Aragon. If Ana María died, Juan Benito would possess the usufruct of her assets as widower, as the *viudedad foral* dictated. See HANRS, Juan Lorenzo Escartín (JLE), 1611, f.456r-59v.

Polonia died without children or if these were minors, the *censales* valued at 120,000 *sueldos* on the Barony of Sangarrén would revert to her father or his heirs. Both agreements stipulated that the signed terms prevailed over the *fueros* and customs in effect in Aragon.⁹³

Always conditioned by status, the terms of the wills signed by the Genoese residing in Saragossa ended up adapting to the civil laws of Aragon. Those drawn up in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, mostly for single men, sometimes recounted the pending deals and debts as aid for their heirs. They gave their assets to brothers active in Saragossa, as several members of the Lercaro family did between 1574 and 1580. Nicolás Guirardí came from Genoa in 1587 to take over the business of his brother Agustín and to assess their company project with José María Uso de Mar. The only sisters who received modest donations became nuns in the Genoese convents. The care of illegitimate children born in Saragossa or the provision of aid to their mothers for their social insertion was entrusted to relatives.⁹⁴ The wills signed between 1615 and 1620 by Genoese after long stays and marriage in Aragon show clear differences between men and women. Husbands such as Pedro Jéronimo Gualtero bequeathed to his children in 1615 and only granted his wife the return of the dowry used in his company, the right to stay in the family home and an annual income. Married women donated their assets to their husbands during their widowhood or natural life and then to their children domiciled in Saragossa or relatives in Genoa. The widows bequeathed directly to their children and relatives. In both cases, the inheritance was distributed in equal parts without distinctions of gender; but it excluded those joining a religious order, who received a perpetual annuity for their maintenance. Consorts and relatives domiciled in Saragossa or Genoa were appointed as guardians. Better adapted to the civil laws of Aragon, from around 1590 onwards, wills included a minimum donation – either ten *sueldos* or five *sueldos* and an *arroba* of land in the Saragossa hillsides were the common standards – to their descendants to comply with the *legítima* or right to inherit immediately part of the deceased's assets and thus avoid the document being challenged before the courts of Aragon.⁹⁵

Married to Genoese or Aragonese women, the Genoese merchants who remained in Aragon bought houses, land, livestock and *censales* in Saragossa that provided them with a fixed income and brought their way of life closer to that of the petty nobility with whom the Palavesino family or Juan Benito Bargalli were related. As an owner of sheep, Juan Bautista de Negro was a member between 1589 and 1591 of the *Casa de Ganaderos* of Saragossa, a guild of livestock owners created in 1218 and endowed with important grazing and jurisdictional rights in Aragon. Alexandre Gualtero imitated him between 1615 and 1626, owning cattle along with sheep from 1620 (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 222). As their commercial activity declined from

⁹³ HANRS, BM, 1599, f.634r-40v, DF, 1603, f.1769r-77v.

⁹⁴ HANRS, MS, 1574, f.613r-15r, 1577, f.1012r-14r, 1580, f.670r-v; JL, 1587, f.1286r and on; DF, 1589, f.400r-v; DC, 1596, f.259v-62v.

⁹⁵ HANRS, JE, 1589, f.640r-v; DC, 1596, f. 260v, 1599, f.704v; 1603, f.1278v; DF, 1589, f.399v, 1615, f.661r-v, 698v-99r, 1619, f.56r-58r, 1620, f.363v-64r.

1616, the acquisition of land and houses extended to the countryside.⁹⁶ Unlike their wealthiest compatriots living in Castilian towns, who could access to nobility through the purchase of manors to nobles and titles or jurisdictions to the Spanish monarchy (Velasco Hernández 2001, 446-49; Soria Mesa 2011, 33-35; Girón Pascual 2018, 278-83), this social promotion was more difficult for the Genoese staying in Saragossa. The key reason was their limited financial services to this monarchy, the only institution able to grant the title and lordship jurisdiction to individuals in Aragon. Even if certain immigrants such as Antonio Palavesino enhanced in notarial records the noble condition of their families as publicly accepted in the city of Genoa, they did not seek its validation for Aragon before regional courts. As a partial solution, some Genoese imitated on a lesser scale the large Aragonese merchants who bought manor lands with their rights from lay nobles in the sixteenth century (Gómez Zorraquino 1987, 147-48). Taking advantage of the indebtedness of the Barony of Alfajarín, whose rents he leased, Alexandre Gualtero was the lord of Castillizuelo in 1621. Already established in the village of Loarre in 1630, Juan Tomás Confredi founded in 1637 an entailed estate after granting the usufruct of his property to his wife for life. If his son Nicolás did not have male descendants, the inheritance would pass – as it did – to the sons of Agustín Confredi, brother of Juan Tomás, if they moved from Genoa to Saragossa within two years of being notified.⁹⁷

Circumstances such as the limited number and usual temporary residence of Genoese immigrants living at Saragossa hindered any attempt to found one religious fraternity and holy place to preserve their identity through the organisation of Catholic rituals, charities and burials of community members, such as the chapels their compatriots built in Valencia and Cadiz in the late fifteenth century or the church they erected in Cartagena by the early seventeenth century (Igual Luis and Navarro Espinach 1997: 282-83; Morand 2013: 254-62; Velasco Hernández, 2001, 415). However, some clauses of the testaments provide information on the emotional ties of the Genoese with their native and host city. Unmarried men, certain of their approaching death by illness, decided to be buried during the last quarter of the sixteenth century in the Church of Jesus or the parish where they lived. Only Daniel Espínola, married and a temporary resident, opted in 1582 for the cemetery of his lineage if he died in Genoa. With formed families and a better economic position, the men and women who made their wills between 1615 and 1620 preferred burial in Genoa, even if they died in Saragossa before moving there. The most desired place was the convent of the Discalced Augustinians, founded by the Gualtero brothers, who since 1600 had been paying masses for their relatives in churches in Genoa. Along with the celebration of a funeral mass, an anniversary mass and a novena, they all ordered hundreds or thousands of masses to be said according to their means. As a sign of their attachment to the city where they had lived and would be buried, as early as 1574 the testators used to donate alms to the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace, the main hospital of Saragossa, and to two others dedicated to the care of orphans. When burial in Genoa was considered between 1615 and 1620, widows and married

⁹⁶ HANRS, DF, 1614, f.974v-75v, 1618, f.606v-16v, 1619, f.1372v-75v.

⁹⁷ HANRS, 1621, f.368v-79v, 446v-47r, JLE, 1630, f.227r-v, Diego Francisco Moles (DFM), 1637, f.710r-13r, Bernardo de Ziordia, 1731, f.195r-96r.

women alternated alms to the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace with donations and mass payments to charitable and religious institutions in Genoa, especially to the convent of the Discalced Augustinians. Only men with roots in Aragon after marrying native women arranged for their burial, masses and donations in churches in Saragossa and other places in the kingdom, as did Juan Nicolás Confredi in 1637.⁹⁸

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the establishment of the Genoese merchants in Aragon passed through different phases. Between 1561 and 1580, they acquired the most accessible exportable raw materials and designed financial activities that facilitated the consolidation of Saragossa as a trading post, as well as exploiting the tax advantages provided by Aragonese laws. The extinction of the merchant bourgeoisie of Aragon opened up new business opportunities for the Genoese between 1581 and 1600 that attracted merchants from Madrid and Genoa. Together with the exploitation of favourable political circumstances such as the celebration of the *Cortes* in 1585 and 1592 or the accommodation of the Castilian army in Aragon between 1592 and 1594, the Genoese designed a new commercial method: the leasing of feudal rents, begun around 1582. It became the most efficient method of acquiring raw materials such as wool, cereal and saffron as opposed to buying them directly. After the leasing of rents from lay lordships in 1593 declined due to their insolvency, the Genoese dedicated their largest investments of money in leasing the extensive and profitable lordship of the Archbishopric of Saragossa from 1596 onwards. The few merchants who monopolised this business, such as the Bargalli and Gualtero brothers, led the trade and finances of this community from the end of the sixteenth century until its decay before the Florentine merchants in 1616 and the final decline before the French from 1620.

The rise of the Genoese in Aragon was marked by decisions in accordance with the best exploration of the advantages and difficulties of the political and economic context and the legal and institutional framework. Their adaptation to the environment earned them tax exemptions and commercial opportunities, as well as minimising court cases by taking advantage of the different jurisdictions and legal loopholes existing in Aragon for their business. The regional elites – nobility, clergy, citizens – and the royal representatives in Aragon appreciated their financial and management services, especially those carried out in Italy. The Genoese relegated fiscal and commercial activities (leasing of customs duties, importing woollen fabrics) that could arouse the opposition of the elites and institutions of the kingdom and popular groups with political and social influence, such as the textile artisans. They waived political posts and honorary offices in order to enhance their professional mobility and gain public acceptance. For this reason, unlike the French in the seventeenth century, they did not generate strong currents of adverse opinion among

⁹⁸ HANRS, MS, 1574, f. 613v; DC, 1599, f. 704r, 1603, f. 1278r; DF, 1592, f. 222v, 1600, 845r-52r, 1615, f. 660v-61r, 698v, 1619, f.55r-v, 1620, f.362r-v; DFM, 1637, f.707r-v. Some donations and the choice of a burial place in 1615 reveal the Marian devotion to the Church of the Pilar in Saragossa developed among the Genoese community.

the population or discriminatory measures on the part of the *Cortes*, *Diputación* or municipalities.

The social organisation of this mercantile community promoted endogamous marriage to underpin family estates and networks of information and solidarity among its members and with other compatriots in Spanish and Italian towns and cities. To benefit business, some wealthy merchants relegated a wife's right to her dowry until her husband's death. The systems of representation and arbitration facilitated the development of business in Aragon and the management of individual and family assets in Genoa. The costs and delays due to legal disputes were reduced, especially from 1594, when the viceroy introduced as legal practice that Genoese notarial documents and judicial decisions would be accepted by the courts of Aragon. As evidence of their adaptation, few Genoese who made long or permanent stays in Aragon considered its civil legislation for conducting private matters before a notary. From the beginning of the seventeenth century the desire of some wealthy merchants to establish roots led to betrothals with members of the native petty nobility and the partial relegation of trade in favour of the purchase of houses, land, livestock and public debt. With the occasional acquisition of lordships and the creation of entailed estates, this group culminated, around 1620, the social transformation begun by the Aragonese merchant bourgeoisie which had been displaced by the Genoese in 1580.

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