

Genoese Entrepreneurship and the Asiento Slave Trade, 1650–1700

Alejandro García-Montón

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Chapter 6

Implementing the Asiento and Smuggling: A Perspective from the Isthmus of Panama and Pacific South America

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6 Implementing the Asiento and Smuggling

A Perspective from the Isthmus of Panama and Pacific South America*

Introduction

Spanish ambassadors in Amsterdam not only sent reports to Madrid concerning the asiento trade between Curaçao and Jamaica, but also expressed their opinion on how the asiento trade was channelled to Spanish America. As early as 1664, Esteban de Gamarra was of the opinion that the system of trans-imperial commerce embodied in the asiento, which combined the official slave trade with the contraband of goods towards Spanish America, made “the Grillos masters of the Indies.”¹ Certainly, Domenico Grillo’s company was able to capture a large slice of the trade in African slaves, European merchandise, and Asian goods that took place in the English and the Dutch Atlantic. But directing this trade to Spanish America was not something that could be done as easily as Esteban de Gamarra suggested. The Spanish Atlantic and the Spanish American colonies were populated by many different actors with vested interests in intra-imperial trade and willing to defend their markets ferociously against new competitors such as Domenico Grillo and his factors.

This chapter scrutinises how Grillo and Lomellino’s company competed against and cooperated with consulados, independent traders, local tax-farmers, royal officials, and colonial buyers to operate the intra-imperial branch of the asiento trade in Spanish America. While a focus on jurisdictional conflicts will allow us to illuminate who, how, and why certain actors opposed to the asiento trade and its factors, a deep analysis of the local contexts will shed light on how those other locales were indispensable to the functioning of the asiento trade in Spanish America.

Setting up the asiento on the ground involved exercising new monopolistic rights, tax exemptions, and jurisdictional powers. Therefore, it involved appropriating the African slave trade that had been taking place both officially and clandestinely in the Spanish Caribbean and untie the networks that local groups had woven around it. The conflicts caused by Grillo and Lomellino’s asiento heralded future clashes between local merchants and the many asiento and chartered companies that were to

emerge in the Spanish Atlantic during the late 17th century and throughout the 18th century, such as the *Compañía de Comercio de Barcelona* or the *Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas*.²

In addition to enforcing the privileges of the *asiento*, Grillo and Lomellino's firm tried very hard to trespass on the commercial privileges of other actors. Trading beyond the charter was a way to increase business. The two most direct ways to achieve this were: to diversify transactions, importing goods other than African slaves into Spanish America and entering the inter-American trade circuits; second, taking the slave trade outside the geographical boundaries imposed by the *asiento* charter. That merchants dealing with African slaves had more diversified businesses portfolios is widely known. While Fredrick Bowser was of the opinion that contraband in goods other than slaves played a key role in the business of Portuguese slave merchants in the first half of the 17th century, Enriqueta Vila Vilar argues that side-trades did not become relevant for slave traders until the mid-century.³ There is little doubt that when in 1713 the Crown authorised the English South Sea Company to send one good-laden ship a year to Spanish America, this was nothing but formalising the contraband activities in which all *asiento* companies participated actively in the second half of the 17th century.⁴ It is not my aim to assess how profitable these side-trades were for Grillo and Lomellino, but to illuminate the different dynamics of conflict in which the *asiento* trade was involved from a jurisdictional perspective.

While previous chapters analysed the *asiento* charter as an instrument to allow the Crown and metropolitan merchants like Domenico Grillo to capture profits generated by the colonies, this chapter will show how various local agents – traders, royal officials and buyers – also benefited in different ways, and to different extents, from the *asiento* trade. In order to operate the *asiento*, Domenico Grillo mobilised resources throughout the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, including professional merchants, relatives and friends, ships and skippers, and lines of credit. However, none of those efforts could meet with success without the cooperation of local agents in Spanish America.

Among the different port cities covered in the vast Spanish American geography of the *asiento* trade, the Isthmus of Panama serves as an excellent point of observation to tackle jurisdictional conflicts and to illuminate the cooperation between the Spanish American traders and Domenico Grillo's transnational network of agents. The Isthmus of Panama was a strategic hinge connecting the transatlantic and Caribbean trades with Pacific South America. The interests of many merchants, regardless of their origin, company size and field of specialisation, and also of local agents that tried to control the territory and channel trade, converged on this "artery of the empire."⁵ It was in this conflictive and disputed region where Domenico Grillo focused his company's efforts to maximise returns.⁶

The Isthmus of Panama in Grillo and Lomellino's Strategies

Domenico Grillo and Ambrosio Lomellino privileged the Isthmus of Panama as their company's main trading centre in the Spanish Caribbean. In Chapter 4, we saw how they deployed and organised a network of agents covering the whole Caribbean. However, since the very beginning, Grillo and Lomellino directed most of the flow of the trans-imperial trade in African slaves and global goods towards Portobelo's port. Initially, Grillo and Lomellino's company was entitled to unload slaves in Cartagena de Indias, Portobelo, and Veracruz. Although these three ports absorbed 86.2% of the company's known trade, the distribution of slaves among them was distinctly unequal. Around 11,403 captives were disembarked in Portobelo, which amounted to 53.7% of all the slaves unloaded. In contrast, Cartagena de Indias received only 22.6% of the trade – 4,811 slaves – and Veracruz a mere 9.9% – 2,100 slaves. The other 13.7% of the trade was directed to ports that from 1664 onward qualified to receive fixed quotas of slaves, including Havana, Santiago de Cuba, San Juan de Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Caracas, Cumaná, and La Guaira.⁷

The importance of Portobelo in Grillo and Lomellino's management of the asiento trade emerges more clearly when contextualised by the way their company made use of other Spanish Caribbean ports. The asiento ships made direct and indirect voyages from the Dutch and English Caribbean to Portobelo. The asiento ships conducted ten expeditions carrying around 4,937 slaves from Curaçao directly to Portobelo and another two voyages with 747 slaves from Jamaica to Portobelo. Slaves from Curaçao also reached Portobelo on 13 indirect asiento voyages that stopped in Cartagena de Indias, where around one-third of the slaves (2,528) were sold before the rest (4,961) were forced to continue to the Isthmus of Panama.⁸ Within Grillo and Lomellino's asiento structure, Cartagena de Indias was used more like a stopover for the refreshment of the slaves rather than as a market. What reasons did Grillo and Lomellino have to concentrate most of the asiento trade in the Isthmus of Panama?

The slave trade had paramount importance for the Panamanian business sector. By 1607, the president of the *Audiencia* of Panama regarded the slave trade as the region's leading commercial activity.⁹ The Panamanian demand for African slaves began with the colonisation of the isthmus. The population in the hinterland, composed mostly of free and enslaved Black people, had a central role in this colonisation. As "surrogate colonizers," Africans worked as farmers and ranchers, gold miners and pearl fishers, or operators of the mule trains supporting the trans-isthmian trades.¹⁰ Large maroon communities also grew on the Isthmus of Panama and became central actors in the everyday life of the territory,

both defying and negotiating terms of Spanish rule.¹¹ The presence of African communities in Panamanian towns and villages was equally important. While enslaved Africans were employed as domestic servants, free Black people acquired prominent roles as notaries, leaders of royal militias, or specialised workers. For example, by 1607 in Portobelo 316 African slaves lived with 450 free people of mostly European descent. Panama City hosted about 1,322 inhabitants of European descent, while the African population included 3,721 enslaved individuals in addition to another 742 free Black people.¹² As the decades passed, the number inhabitants of African origin in Panama City increased. By 1640, according to the Jesuits deployed in the Isthmus, 12,000 people of African descent populated the city.¹³

However, rather than representing a final destination for the African captives, the Isthmus of Panama was more a nexus for the slave trade, as it connected the transatlantic and the Caribbean routes with Pacific South America. Until the mid-18th century, when it was superseded by Puerto Rico and Cuba, Peru was one of the largest markets for African slaves in Spanish America.¹⁴ During the first half of the 17th century, approximately 1,000–1,500 slaves a year were dispatched from Portobelo and from there to Panama City and then on to Peru.¹⁵ From Panama City's port, Perico, a myriad of ships and barks departed to provide the expanding economy of Pacific South America with African slaves.¹⁶ The maritime slave trade that originated from Panama City affected the demographics of leading coastal cities like Guayaquil, Trujillo, and Lima, to the extent that already by the 1600s African slaves represented approximately one-third to one-half of their populations.¹⁷ According to Frederick Bowser, by 1640 around 30,000 people of African descent inhabited the Peruvian region, almost two-thirds of whom resided in Lima.¹⁸

As on the Isthmus of Panama, both free Africans and slaves were key for the economy of colonial Peru. They joined the indigenous labour force in rural estates, for instance, in the wine-producing valleys of Ica and Condor, or for the processing of sugar cane, grain milling in the valleys of Trujillo, and stock-breeding. Communication routes between villages, cities and harbours were manned by African seamen, pilots and mule drivers. In the cities, Africans worked in domestic service and retail, and in the workshops of Lima, the looms of Quito and the dockyards of Guayaquil.¹⁹

The Panamanian slave market attracted Peruvian buyers, who often preferred to acquire slaves on the Isthmus in person rather than relying on retailers. The notarial records from Lima show that small slave-owners bought African slaves from Grillo and Lomellino's agents in Panama City. The Lima-based Juan Benítez Murillo bought from factors in Panama at least four African slaves, whom he resold in Lima

in May 1671²⁰; Nicolás Astete de Ulloa, also from Lima, did the same with a 24-year-old African captive, whom he sold for 850 pesos.²¹ Many slave-owners in Lima appointed relatives or friends who were setting out for the Isthmus of Panama to buy African slaves on their behalf from Grillo and Lomellino's factors. For instance, in 1670 doña Paula Antonio Enríquez del Castillo, the wife of the most senior judge in the *Audiencia* of Lima, entrusted General don Juan de Urdanigui with buying a female African captive in Panama.²² In July of that same year, the cleric don Francisco Fernández de Quirós was given 700 pesos from his brother in law in Lima to buy a female slave in Panama City, to be delivered to Lima by a third party.²³

However, Grillo and Lomellino's ambitions were not limited to the Isthmus of Panama, and from the start they strived to link the trade in African captives with the commercial circuits of Pacific South America. From Madrid, in October 1664, Ambrosio Lomellino informed his partners in Genoa that, while slaves were being sold in Panama for 550 or 600 pesos, in Lima they were expected to fetch at least 850 pesos. Accordingly, Grillo and Lomellino had ordered 2,000 captives to be taken there.²⁴ It seems that, initially, the asiento factors used local middlemen to introduce African slaves to Peru. However, after the destruction of Panama City by Morgan in 1671, some factors settled in Lima to establish a branch of Domenico Grillo's company, which remained active until at least 1675.

Merchants operating in and from the Isthmus of Panama engaged in the slave trade to varying degrees, but all of them complemented their portfolios with other trades.²⁵ Grillo and Lomellino's agents were no exception to this practice. For traders, the Isthmus was an excellent place to diversify their investments due to the annual (subsequently biannual) fair that it hosted. At this fair, held in Nombre de Dios from 1544 to 1597 and then in Portobelo from 1598 to 1739, Spanish and Peruvian merchants met to exchange large sums of goods, merchandise, and silver.²⁶ According to Alfredo Castellero Calvo, at least 95 fairs were held, and the value of the merchandise exchanged may have been in excess of 2,000 million pesos.²⁷

However, the commercial reach of Portobelo's fairs during the 17th century was limited. In 1645, the president of the *Audiencia* of Panama expressed this in no uncertain terms: "Nobody brings goods [to Portobelo]. Everyone wants to send them to Lima."²⁸ According to Carlos Álvarez Noyal, merchants met at the fair to close ongoing deals and negotiate the exchange of goods to be delivered elsewhere.²⁹ The seasonal nature of the system, the rhythm of which depended on the sailing dates of Atlantic and Pacific convoys, brought transactions to a standstill between fairs. Grillo and Lomellino's factors filled this gap by using the asiento ships to import goods from Curaçao. While the asiento was in operation, there were fairs at Portobelo in 1663, 1665, 1667, 1670, and

1673, but the asiento ships continued arriving every year to the Caribbean coasts of the Isthmus of Panama.³⁰

The volume of trade being carried along the Portobelo-Lima route was much greater than the fair records suggest. Owing to the likely incidence of fraud – and the difficulties in quantifying it – the accounts of Peruvian merchants offer a glimpse of the importance of this commercial route. For instance, in 1664 Diego Dávila and Francisco Basurto Velosillo raised 160,000 pesos in Lima to purchase some merchandise on the Isthmus of Panama. Once in Panama City, Francisco Basurto also bought some African slaves from the asiento factors on credit. His reputation sufficed for the factors to sell him 26 women and a man for 8,580 pesos, to be paid in Lima eight months down the line.³¹ On their return to Lima, Dávila and Basurto sold the slaves and the rest of the merchandise they had acquired on the isthmus for 342,000 pesos. Certainly, to this sound operation, we should discount the cost of capital invested as well as other costs, like freight, insurance, or the captives' maintenance. However, it is worth noting that a single company operating on the Panama-Lima route was able to sell merchandise and African slaves for more money than the Crown was paid in exchange for the slave asiento (300,000 pesos) – and this is assuming that Grillo and Lomellino met their obligations with the Crown, which could hardly be taken for granted.³² In view of the buoyant trade circulating down the Panama-Lima axis, it is easy to understand Grillo and Lomellino's interest in the Isthmus of Panama.

On the Panama-Lima axis, Grillo and Lomellino's factors and the local merchants exchanged African slaves, Asian spices and European manufactures for Peruvian silver, colonial goods like clothing, wine, flour, sugar, indigo, or cocoa. His deals in the Isthmus of Panama earned Giustiniano Giustiniani at least 352,313 pesos in 1664.³³ In addition to bagging some silver, that same year Giustiniani exchanged a batch of 27 African slaves for 1,400 *botijas* (bottles) of pisco wine and 1,843 *varas* (1,540.7 metres) of blue and black cloth "from the valleys," that is, from the hinterland of Trujillo.³⁴ At the time of the embargo of the company branch in Panama City in 1667, royal officials found 102,165 pesos, but the amounts that Grillo and Lomellino's factors dealt with were in fact much larger.³⁵ In July 1673, the agents of the Lima consulado in Panama estimated that, between June 1671 and September 1672, the factors of the asiento had moved 722,399 pesos in ingots and coin between Panama City and Portobelo. As these agents pointed out, due to Henry Morgan's attack on Panama City, this was a bad year for business, so the volume of trade in a normal year would have been far greater for the asiento factors.³⁶

On the Isthmus of Panama, the factors did not limit themselves to shipping silver and other colonial products to Europe, but they also reinvested a significant proportion of trade returns in the local markets and regional commercial circuits. In 1667, Giustiniano Giustiniani bought

3,000 loads of cocoa from a Peruvian supplier in Panama City, which he later sold to other Spanish merchants in the Portobelo fair. The payment was also in silver, but mostly consisted in European clothing. Giustiniani sold these clothes to a Panamanian merchant for 53,000 or 54,000 pesos. Without accounting for transport costs, the transaction yielded returns of 43,000/44,000 pesos.³⁷

The factors' interest in colonial goods and merchandise was not contingent but structural. When in 1672 Agostino Grillo moved to Lima, he quickly shipped 1,500 sacks of flour, 1,179 barrels of wine and fine clothes and hats to the Isthmus of Panama, where they were exchanged, sold or shipped somewhere else.³⁸ For example, the factors operating in Portobelo used to send cocoa from Guayaquil to Mexico, where it was exchanged for blackwood.³⁹ In a similar fashion, the factors in Veracruz bought local products which they brought to Havana in order to purchase hides, indigo and cochineal.⁴⁰ All these examples bear witness to the factors' diversified trades and their efficiency in penetrating commercial circuits of different scope. However, a central aspect remains open: how did Grillo and Lomellino's factors, who were alien to the contexts in which they operated, secure and control all these transactions? An enquiry into their day-to-day activities on the Isthmus of Panama will provide some answers to this question.

Implementing the Asiento: The Opposition of Slave Traders, Royal Officials, and Tax-Farmers

One of the first challenges that Grillo and Lomellino's factors had to confront in the Caribbean was to enforce the *asiento* privileges and thus take control of the promising trade in African slaves that had crystallised in the preceding decade. The revival of the slave trade in the Spanish Caribbean during the 1650s brought an increase in the number of ships that transported African slaves to Portobelo. Slave ships, mostly of Dutch origin, began arriving regularly along Portobelo's coast from late 1657 onward. From then until 1662, a minimum of 12 slave ships offloaded 1,221 African captives in Portobelo. Another five slave ships were officially barred from mooring and unloading their cargoes there, although they probably did so elsewhere on the Isthmus. Although international merchants conducted most of the slave voyages to the Isthmus of Panama, Spanish American merchants also participated in the slave trade. The Panamanian authorities seized the slaves and the merchandise brought by three Spanish American ship captains who contended that they had sailed from Africa to Portobelo's coast.⁴¹ To summarise, as African slaves were once again being offloaded in Portobelo during the 1650s, the Panamanian slaving economy was likewise revived. Panamanian middlemen, royal officials, and traders benefitted in different ways from the renewed dynamism of the transisthmian African slave trade.

Local ship captains and merchants tried to bypass the asiento monopoly and continued bringing slaves to the Isthmus of Panama after the arrival of Grillo and Lomellino's factors. In 1664, don Diego de Gamarra unsuccessfully tried to smuggle between 80 and 120 slaves in the ship *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad*.⁴² The factors also frustrated the Panama-based Gaspar Alfonso's attempt aboard his ship *Nuestra Señora del Rosario y San Vicente*.⁴³ Gaspar Alfonso held a grudge against Grillo's factors for years. In February 1672, he had the opportunity to testify as a witness in proceedings initiated by the consulado in Lima to investigate the presence of Agostino Grillo and other factors in Lima to sell slaves. Gaspar Alfonso was by then about 60 years old. He stated that, for 20 years, he had trafficked slaves between Cartagena de Indias, the Isthmus of Panama and Lima. Gaspar Alfonso declared that the arrival of Grillo and Lomellino's factors had undermined the interests of local communities of slave traders that had flourished in the 1650s.⁴⁴ Like Gaspar Alfonso in Panama, the merchants of Cartagena de Indias also retaliated and developed their own illicit commerce by establishing reliable trans-imperial relationships with Caribbean slave traders. For instance, a sloop that had departed from Jamaica brought 69 slaves to Cartagena de Indias in May 1672, where the captives had a recipient waiting for them, a certain Pedro Barbanzo.⁴⁵

City governors and royal officials also resisted the asiento privileges. From Madrid, Domenico Grillo tried to support his agents by endless requests to the Council of the Indies, trying to force the colonial authorities to cooperate with the factors.⁴⁶ The resistance posed by royal officials and governors should not come as a surprise. As seen in Chapter 3, these actors had been among the greatest beneficiaries of the increase of trans-imperial intra-American slave trading during the 1650s, as well as from encouraging contraband. As soon as Grillo and Lomellino's agents reached Panama City, harsh disputes erupted between them and the royal officials over the profit from seized illegal slave cargoes. Shortly after his arrival on the Isthmus of Panama on 22 March 1663, Giustiniano Giustiniani clashed with the royal officials and the governor of the *Audiencia*, Fernando de la Riva Agüero, over the seizure of 122 slaves who had arrived illegally two days earlier aboard the ship *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad*.⁴⁷ Earlier, in January 1663, Giuseppe Bustanzo had also disputed the royal officials in Cartagena de Indias the seizing of the ship *Santo Rey Fernando* and the 77,442 pesos that had resulted from the sale of its cargo, which included both African slaves and other goods.⁴⁸

Local tax-farmers also offered great resistance to the asiento. As soon as Giustiniano Giustiniani, Marcelo García de las Cañas and Agostino Grillo disembarked on the Isthmus of Panama, they tried to enforce the asiento fiscal privileges that exempted them from paying the *alcabala* – sales tax – and the *sisá* – excise tax – among other duties. These privileges were a heavy blow for oligarchs and merchants who controlled the

tax-farming business as a means of wielding power locally.⁴⁹ In Panama City, the collection of the *alcabala* and the *sisá* was controlled by a consortium of merchants and officials that included leading characters like don Diego de Carcelén and Captain Alonso Rodríguez Búcaro.⁵⁰ The profile of *alcabala* collectors in other asiento harbours, such as Veracruz, was not very different. In this city, the main tax-farmers occupied top positions in the local government, like Alonso de Andrada, provincial of the *Santa Hermandad* and mayor, and Simón de Galdesada, *teniente de alférez mayor* in Veracruz.⁵¹

The *jueces conservadores* played a key role, mediating between tax-farmers, on the one hand, and Grillo and Lomellino's factors, on the other. The asiento *juez conservador* in Panama ruled in favour of Grillo and Lomellino's factors, but the beneficiaries of the *sisá* and *alcabalas* appealed to the Council of the Indies in Madrid, and later to the Council of Finances. The Panamanians demanded the fees payable to the Crown in exchange for the right to collect taxes being downgraded, since the slave trade could no longer be taxed. The tax-farmers from Veracruz also joined these complaints. In January 1662 they had agreed to pay 21,000 pesos annually for six years for "the collection of *alcabala* for all goods and merchandise sold in said harbour."⁵² Although the tax-farmers' arguments were not entirely baseless, the losses that the asiento tax exemptions would cause them were exaggerated. Ultimately, their bids for tax-farming rights had been made prior to the asiento, and thus before the official slave trade was a regular activity. As such, the official slave trade prior to the asiento on the Isthmus of Panama and Veracruz had been negligible, as the tax-farmers themselves used to claim.⁵³

The displeasure of the local Panamanian oligarchy after the arrival of Guistiniano Giustiniani, Marcelo García de las Cañas, and Agostino Grillo is illustrated by the complaint issued in February 1664 by one of the councillors of the city government, Amaro López de la Peña y Losada. In a memorandum addressed to Philip IV, he enquired whether it would not be "better for this profit in the Indies to go to Spaniards instead of foreigners, who are taking the fruit of the labour of [Spanish] vassals who are not benefitting as much as these aliens."⁵⁴ Other actors, whose influence upon the Council of the Indies and the Viceroy of Peru was much greater, made similar complaints, and even accused Grillo and Lomellino's factors of collaborating with the English attacks on Portobelo (1668) and Panama City (1671). These other voices came from the mighty consulados of Seville and Lima, which sided with the Panamanians and their grievances against the presence of the asiento traders.

Trading Beyond the Charter

The conflicts between the consulados of Seville and Lima and Grillo and Lomellino's organisation reveal another dynamic of friction related to

the asiento trade. Conflicts between the asiento factors and tax farmers, royal officials, and local slave traders showcase the tensions emerging from the overlapping of jurisdictions and exclusive privileges. The conflicts that I shall examine in this section were completely different; they can be understood as inter-jurisdictional in nature and as the struggle of merchants trying to extend their own privileges at the expense of others. From Madrid, Domenico Grillo encouraged his factors to work outside the limits of the privileges granted by the asiento charter. In a period in which the political economy of trade was framed as a one specifically of trade privileges, Domenico Grillo's policies were oriented to undermine the exclusive rights of other agents operating in the Spanish Atlantic and Pacific South America. His factors on the Isthmus of Panama went as far as to challenge the prerogatives of the powerful consulados of Seville and Lima.

Although the Sevilla and Lima consulados represented the interests of two different groups of merchants, their position concerning Grillo and Lomellino's monopoly was similar, insofar as none of them initially opposed it. During the 1662 negotiations between Grillo and Lomellino and the *Junta de Negros*, the consulado of Seville did not object, being of the opinion that the asiento would provide new ships for the navy and would help the colonial economy by supplying forced labour.⁵⁵ The consulado saw the slave trade as an economic activity that did not interfere with its own – i.e. the *Carrera de Indias* trade. As pointed out by the consulado's representatives on several occasions “whether *negros* are brought to the Indies or otherwise, this affects the consulado in no way, as this is not a merchandise that can be conveyed by fleet or galleon.”⁵⁶ Perhaps for this reason, the consulado did not oppose Grillo and Lomellino's asiento head on, as it did with various plans to create chartered companies to trade with other merchandise throughout the 17th century.⁵⁷

The fact that none of the consulados blocked Grillo and Lomellino's monopoly does not mean they were not reluctant about it, however. Consulados' representatives protested that the manner in which Grillo and Lomellino managed the slave asiento harmed the empire in several ways. For instance, by 1665 the Seville consulado was complaining about the Crown's decision to turn the slave trade into a monopoly in 1662, and recommended going back to the licencing system in operation in the period 1595–1640, allowing more merchants to take part. According to the consulados, Grillo and Lomellino's monopoly was also harming purchasers, because the African slaves supplied by the company proved unsatisfactory and they had intentionally cut supplies to push the prices up. The contraband in goods other than slaves practised by Grillo and Lomellino's agents in Spanish America also undermined the interests of the Crown, as this commerce went untaxed. Similar arguments applied to the silver and gold that the Genoese got in Spanish America, which

was shipped to Europe bypassing the Crown's mints. Naturally, the links between Grillo and Lomellino's factors and the "heretic" slave traders in Curaçao and Jamaica were also denounced. It was even claimed that the factors of the asiento in Panama had been instrumental in Morgan's destruction of Panama City.⁵⁸

However, these allegations, which ostensibly defended the interest of the empire and the Crown, were in reality aimed at defending the corporate interests of the members of the consulados, whose privileges were being undermined by Grillo and Lomellino's factors. The consulados' description of Grillo and Lomellino's fraud and smuggling activities were perfectly applicable to their own systematic practices of tax evasion and contraband.⁵⁹

The Seville consulado's aim was to stress the damage that smuggling practised unchecked by the asiento ships was causing to its own business model. As explained in Chapter 4, the asiento ships were free both to sail across the Atlantic and to ply the Caribbean. The Seville consulado, in contrast, used the regular fleets and galleons to organise its own trade. The fleets sailed across the Atlantic once or twice a year in order to sell European goods in the Caribbean, at the Portobelo fairs, and in Veracruz. The reasons to continue with this commercial model were multiple, from seeking safety in numbers to minimising commercial risk. Another important reason was to keep European imports under a certain threshold in order to push prices up and increase profit for metropolitan merchants. According to the consulado, with Grillo and Lomellino bringing imports to the Caribbean throughout the year, by the time the fleets arrived there was no demand for their products, or prices were low. For this reason, the consulado tried to delay the departure of Caribbean-bound asiento ships from Cadiz, especially before the *Carrera de Indias* fleet was about to set sail.⁶⁰

The Seville consulado always opposed merchants who did not belong to this organisation sailing freely. Obviously, the consulado always viewed slave traders as a threat. For instance, in 1611 it had repeatedly asked the Council of the Indies to prevent the free navigation of slave ships and instead force them to call at Seville after picking the slaves up in Africa and before sailing across the Atlantic.⁶¹ The consulado adopted a similar position vis-à-vis the negotiations between Grillo and Lomellino and the *Junta de Negros* in 1662, when it insisted that the asiento ships should set sail from Cadiz or Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and that they return from the Caribbean alongside the *Carrera de Indias* fleet.⁶² In March 1665, Philip IV cancelled all existing licences to sail outside the *Carrera de Indias*: permits for *navíos sueltos*, fleet *regazos* and *navíos de registro* were thus banned. On hearing the news, the Seville consulado hastened to write a letter to express its wholehearted support for the measure, not without criticising the fact that it did not extend to Grillo and Lomellino's asiento.⁶³

According to the Seville consulado, Domenico Grillo's company was flooding the Caribbean in goods, and this could lead to a drop of prices of as much as 50% in under half a year in some markets, such as Santa Fe, Colombia. In the consulado's opinion, the trade being mobilised by the asiento factors would cause prices in Spain and the Caribbean to converge, and it was likely that in the end "clothing will be as cheap [there] as it is in Spain." Based on the consulado's data, a *vara* (0.836 metres) of *Bretaña* (French fine linen) had dropped from 10 reales to 6, the *vara* of *Ruán de Florete* (printed cotton or linen cloth from France) from 12 reales to 7.5, a pound of pepper from 10 reales to 4–5 and even 2.5, and the pound of silk from Calabria to 15–16 reales to 8–9, all in under five months.⁶⁴ Could Grillo and Lomellino's smuggling operations have such a drastic effect on the supply and demand of European merchandise in the Caribbean?

In April 1669, the prosecutor of the Council of the Indies presented the latest accusations against the asiento factors' smuggling operations as "unlikely conjectures" on the part of the Seville consulado.⁶⁵ Although the information used by the consulado was often based on meticulous judicial and official investigations, the consulado's rhetoric and the way its demands were framed are a good illustration of the amount of pressure that this corporation put on the government to defend its privileges against Domenico Grillo's company's encroachment. This pressure took different forms. For instance, on 13 November 1665, as many as 25 major members of the consulado signed a letter addressed to the Council of the Indies to block the departure of an asiento ship from Cadiz to the Caribbean.⁶⁶ Often, the consulado's aggressive rhetoric exceeded the limits of what was considered acceptable in the political culture of the Spanish Empire. In fact, the prosecutors of the Council advised the consulado to use "more modesty . . . and to remember the respect and decency that the Council deserved."⁶⁷

What, on the other hand, were the interests of the Lima consulado vis-à-vis the asiento factors? The earliest tension between Grillo and Lomellino's factors and the Lima consulado's agents on the Isthmus of Panama had to do with the former's refusal to pay the taxes that were the latter's prerogative to collect at the pass of Boquerón, between Portobelo and Panama City. Like Grillo and Lomellino and the Seville consulado, the Lima consulado had taken advantage of the Crown's weak position in the late 1650s and early 1660s, and had negotiated substantial tax-farming asientos in Pacific South America, political power and commercial privileges. During the first half of the century, the Lima consulado already achieved a prominent position in terms of tax-farming, but during this latter half "the consulado merchants became the main source of royal revenue in America." According to Margarita Suárez, the Lima consulado filled the Crown's coffers with approximately 6 million pesos during this period, that is, 21 times more than in the first half of the century.⁶⁸

Among the many taxes and duties collected by the Lima consulado, the officials deployed at Boquerón requested from Marcelo García de las Cañas payment for the *avería del mar del norte* and the *avería del mar del sur*. Between 1662 and 1664, the Lima consulado had negotiated two asientos which included the management of these taxes for 350,000 and 102,500 pesos, respectively.⁶⁹ The asiento factors refused, invoking the tax exemption granted by their charter. The consulado officials were at a disadvantage vis-à-vis Grillo and Lomellino's agents, owing to the jurisdictional strength of the slave asiento and the operation of its *jueces conservadores*. These concerns led them to apply to the king for an exclusive jurisdiction of their own with which to square up to the factors, but this was not granted.⁷⁰ This conflict was similar to those involving the *alcabalas* and *sisas* in Panama City and Veracruz, although in this case the Lima consulado found the support of the courts of justice of the Council of the Indies.⁷¹

However, while the antagonism between Grillo and Lomellino's company and the Seville consulado reflects the tensions between two different business models competing for the trade in goods other than slaves, the rivalry with the Lima consulado was a struggle for spheres of trade. Once the lawsuit surrounding the payment of the *averías* was solved in favour of the consulado, and since this seems to have brought the matter to a conclusion, the Lima consulado refrained from complaining to the Council of the Indies about the presence of asiento factors in the Isthmus of Panama. Yet, this changed again in April 1672. The arrival of factors Agostino Grillo and Tomás de Llanos at El Callao, along with a cargo of African slaves, with the intention of opening a permanent branch of the asiento in Lima set the alarm bells ringing for the consulado.⁷²

The mobility of factors was not explicitly allowed by the asiento charter, and constituted a grey area open to interpretation. The charter established in what harbours the asiento factors were entitled to disembark and sell slaves, but no mention was made of the possibility of the factors driving the slaves further inland. As early as July 1663, Domenico Grillo had requested permission from the Council of the Indies for his factors not to be personally bound to the geographical limits of the charter and for the exemption from the *alcabala* to be of application beyond the official harbours, but the council's prosecutors rejected this idea.⁷³ However, the asiento factors found ways to circumvent limitations to trade beyond the limits of the charter without infringing them.

While Grillo and Lomellino's factors sold most slaves on the Isthmus to Panama, Trujillo or Lima merchants, they used front men to sell African captives in coastal Peru. This practice and the rationale behind it were not a secret to anyone. According to some Panamanian witnesses, until 1672 the asiento factors had operated in Peru directly from the Isthmus, using "Spanish [middlemen] in order not to be seen breaking the terms of their asiento."⁷⁴ The use of front men was common practice

in colonial trade, as it allowed many merchants to enter specific deals or markets that were in principle barred to them. However, the front men used by the asiento factors were not sheltered by the asiento privileges and therefore, they were subjected to the payment of taxes collected by the consulado in Lima.

The Lima consulado's loud complaints to the Viceroy of Peru and the Council of the Indies about the presence of the asiento factors in Lima by 1672 suggest that, with the removal of Grillo and Lomellino's factors, the consulado did not aim to undermine the asiento slave trade monopoly, but simply to counter a free rider attempting to penetrate Pacific South America. As long as the asiento factors limited themselves to selling African slaves on the Isthmus to the Panamanian and Peruvian retailers, that was a sound business for the consulado, which could benefit from taxing the latter upon their arrival to Lima. Under these terms, the consulado was interested in seeing the African slave trade to Pacific South America revived as much as possible. And the asiento organisation was the most capable means of doing so. Grillo and Lomellino proved their capacity to foster and channel the trans-imperial African slave trade from the Caribbean to the Isthmus of Panama, the gateway to Pacific South America. The presence of African slave traders on the Isthmus operating outside the asiento cannot be discarded, but they could hardly compete with the Genoese company in terms of trade volume and reliability. Additionally, since Buenos Aires attracted decreasing numbers of slave ships from the 1660s onwards, the relative importance of Grillo and Lomellino in fostering the flow of African captives into Pacific South America increased even more.⁷⁵

The physical presence of Domenico Grillo's factors in El Callao, Lima, and their insistence on operating under the umbrella of the asiento privileges, was a different thing altogether for the consulado. The Lima consulado objected to the presence of Grillo and Lomellino's factors in the city because they feared losing the chance to charge them the rights of *alcabala* there.⁷⁶ But a more veiled reason can explain the consulado's concerns too: the powerful Lima buyers would not hesitate to welcome the asiento factors in the city, as that would enhance the local markets for African slaves, whether they had paid taxes to consulado or not.

The Factors and the Local Slave Buyers

One of the consulados' recurrent complaints about the asiento concerned the high price of African slaves in Spanish America. According to Count Lemos, Viceroy of Peru, African slaves in Lima fetched prices in excess of 1,000 pesos, and this for a simple reason: "because of the harmful effects of the monopoly."⁷⁷ It is true that the asiento charter gave Grillo and Lomellino the monopoly for the introduction of African slaves and total liberty to set their prices. Yet, how true were these reports? Were

they part of the smear campaign orchestrated by the consulados against Domenico Grillo? What was the attitude of Spanish American buyers towards Grillo and Lomellino's factors?

While complaints about "defective" slaves are not difficult to come by in the records, the purchasers' perceptions of the price they were paying is harder to find.⁷⁸ However, comparing the prices fetched by slaves before and after the beginning of the *asiento*, can help us confirm whether, as the consulados claimed, Grillo's monopoly had a significant impact on slave prices. Let us see an example from the Isthmus. Between mid-October and mid-November 1656, the Panamanian notary Alonso Sánchez de Figueroa recorded 25 transactions involving the sale of 28 African captives. The average price of a healthy adult slave was 501 pesos for males and 564.5 for females, while children went for an average price of 300 pesos.⁷⁹ Eight years later, between January and March 1664, Giustiniano Giustiniani in Portobelo was selling adult males for 512 pesos, females for 460 and children for 353. Based on these examples, it seems that Grillo and Lomellino's monopoly did not significantly affect the market price of slaves.

It is even possible that in other markets such as Lima, Grillo and Lomellino's monopoly had the opposite effect, bringing prices down, at least occasionally. For instance, on 3 February 1660, Roque de Ormaechea sold a 26-year-old slave called Antonio Carabalí, whom he had previously acquired in Panama, to the master tailor Salvador López del Valle for 850 pesos.⁸⁰ Similarly, on 26 November 1661, Manuel Grande de los Cobos sold Diego Rico de Guinea a 20-year-old bozal slave called Juan Arara, whom he had brought from Panama, for 950 pesos.⁸¹ However, ten years later in Lima, between June 1671 and July 1672, the *asiento* factor Agostino Grillo sold 59 enslaved male Africans between 20 and 26 years old for an average of 778 pesos each.⁸² The prices at which other sellers sold their slaves did not differ substantially from those asked by Agostino Grillo.⁸³ There can be little doubt that the African slave trade to the Spanish Caribbean was reactivated during the 1650s. It was, however, still early in the days of this trade, costs for the merchants must have been high and the supply of African slaves limited in many Spanish American cities, like Lima. It seems plausible that the privileges and security provided by the *asiento* allowed Grillo and Lomellino to bring down transaction costs, while keeping the slave prices stable. Although market prices in Spanish America did not change significantly, the profit margin may have been greater for Grillo and Lomellino than for the slave merchants who conducted this business in the years prior to the establishment of the *asiento*, in a more volatile and riskier environment. In view of the larger, steadier supply of captives and certain price stability, perhaps the new *asiento* system was not bad news at all for those interested in acquiring African slaves.

In relation to sales, Grillo and Lomellino's factors exchanged African slaves for silver, and sometimes payment in kind, but the buyers also benefitted from purchasing captives on credit. The credit environment in which the factors operated in Spanish America was very different to the one that other chartered companies involved in the slave trade, such as the Royal Adventurers, faced in the English Caribbean at the time. Plantation owners in Jamaica and Barbados generally bought slaves on credit, paid late (when they paid) and with sugar.⁸⁴ Their debts to the Royal Adventurers were inherited by the Royal African Company. According to Kenneth Davies, by 1676, Barbados plantation owners owed the company "as much as £ 70,000, the equivalent of two-thirds of its share-capital."⁸⁵ Grillo and Lomellino's factors also sold slaves on credit from the start, but defaults from the buyers never became a major problem for the company or any of the factors.

The role of credit becomes clear from the first slave sales, for example, in Portobelo. The first asiento ship arrived to Portobelo in late January 1664. The *Santa Cruz* had left Cadiz for Curaçao on 8 June 1663. Under the supervision of Giustiniano Giustiniani, the ship unloaded 572 slaves on the Isthmus of Panama, 450 of whom were delivered to the factor Marcelo García de las Cañas in Panama City. Giustiniani sold 91 slaves in Portobelo, raising 39,680 pesos. Nearly 21% of these slaves were sold on credit.⁸⁶

Sales on credit illustrate the Panamanian everyday economic environment in which the asiento factors manoeuvred. For instance, Juan Castillo, a Castilian-born official based in Portobelo committed to pay Giustiniani the price of two slaves after he was paid his wages by the *Audiencia* of Panama.⁸⁷ Catalina Sánchez, Leonor María and Matías de Valdés promised to do so after the arrival of the galleons from Spain.⁸⁸ This example not only underscores how women played a key role in everyday transactions in the Isthmus of Panama.⁸⁹ More broadly, it also shows that, although the trans-imperial slave trade and the intra-imperial trade in other goods operated within different institutional spheres – the asiento and the *Carrera de Indias*, respectively –, their financial and commercial flows were interconnected, even at the level of personal transactions.⁹⁰

By selling on credit, the factors entered the trans-local credit networks of slave buyers. Factors accepted payment to be made in a different place to that where the slave had been purchased. For example, Matías Guerra de Lastra bought several slaves from Giuseppe Bustanzo in Cartagena de Indias, but sent a draft for the money to be made effective in Portobelo.⁹¹ It was also common for people who purchased slaves on credit in Portobelo and Panama City to pay later, sometimes months afterwards, in places such as Lima.⁹² This sort of operation reveals the credit networks in which the local slave buyers were already immersed before the asiento. Moreover, it also shows how, by accepting the conditions

proposed by the buyers, the asiento factors gained a platform from which to build their own credit networks between the Caribbean and Pacific South America. Collecting debts in different places certainly pushed the asiento factors to extend their reach, but at the same time it gave them an opportunity to penetrate credit and relational networks that pivoted on trading geographies, ports and urban economies that were often beyond the asiento charter's boundaries, like Trujillo or Lima.

Trade on Demand

The relevance of Spanish American buyers in shaping the asiento trade and the factors' market opportunities on the ground was far from being negligible. Domenico Grillo, his partners in Amsterdam and his factors in the Caribbean were not the only ones to shape the array of goods to be sent to Spanish America. The inhabitants of Panama used the asiento factors to satisfy demands that the *Carrera de Indias* convoys could not address on time. To a large extent, rather than unilaterally deciding what commodities to put on offer, the factors accommodated to meet the demand posed by Spanish American buyers. Some of these goods had a prominent meaning for the everyday life of the inhabitants of a Spanish colonial city like Panama, and also for the very defence of the colonies. Let us consider two examples: wax and gunpowder.

The asiento ship *San Vicente* arrived to Portobelo from Curaçao in December 1671. It was loaded with a crate full of white wax candles and two crates of worked or purified beeswax. These 15 *arrobas* and 53 pounds of wax (almost 197 kilos) had travelled alongside other goods and manufactured products and nearly 600 African slaves – 358 adult men, 118 adult women, 78 boys and 34 girls.⁹³ How to interpret the arrival of beeswax to the Isthmus of Panama? Wax was a luxury product that played a central place in Catholic piety, which was, in turn, one of the cornerstones providing cohesion to the dispersed territories of the Spanish Empire. Wax candles were used for lighting, but also had a fundamental role to play in Baroque ritual and liturgy, including masses, processions and funerals. The symbolic role of candles is sadly highlighted by their use by the factors in Panama in the burial of the African slaves who died during the voyage. Between 15 June and 21 September 1665, Giustiniano Giustiniani covered the burial costs (120 pesos, including the use of wax candles) of 18 men and 9 women described as *bozales*, who had died shortly after being disembarked in Portobelo.⁹⁴ Beeswax was not only highly in demand, but also a product for which few alternatives existed. Animal fat, for instance, could be used instead of beeswax for lighting, but the difference in quality between products could hardly be compared, especially because of the bad smell generated by animal fat. Wax also had medicinal uses.⁹⁵

According to the ship's captain, Pedro de Armendáriz, the wax had been brought to Portobelo at the request of the *mayordomo* of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament, Domingo de Gondra.⁹⁶ This brotherhood had a chapel and an altar in Panama Cathedral, and was one of the oldest lay religious associations in the Isthmus. It was also one of the most elitist and, alongside the brotherhoods of Our Lady of the Holy Souls and of Saint Joseph, also attached to the cathedral, was one of the main religious associations "for Spaniards." In total, 26 brotherhoods competed to get their hands on the wax they used in their liturgy.⁹⁷ Gondra was responsible for the supply of the necessary wax for the "adornment" of the brotherhood. Beeswax being a scarce resource, in June 1671 Gondra wrote a letter to Pedro de Armendáriz and the factor Francesco Maria Compiano, which he hoped were at Curaçao. Gondra sent the letter via the asiento ship *Santa Cruz*.⁹⁸

Beeswax was a frequent commodity for the asiento factors, and the demand for this product went beyond Panama City. The arrival of wax from Curaçao to the Spanish American ports in asiento ships continued while the charter was in force. In February 1674, the captain Francisco de Hoyos arrived in Cartagena de Indias from Curaçao with the ship *San Fortunato*. In addition to 344 African slaves and other commodities, the ship was loaded with "worked white beeswax."⁹⁹ Gondra and other buyers in Cartagena de Indias used the factors to access this African product to feed "our Holy Faith." Ironically, beeswax was commercialised in the Caribbean by Protestant and Sephardic middlemen.¹⁰⁰

In a similar way, the asiento factors also brought "heretic" gunpowder from Curaçao following the request of the governor of Panama. Gunpowder was key for the defence of the population and to keep the territorial cohesion of the Spanish Empire, and few would split hairs over its provenance. The only real concerns were price and quality. For instance, in 1669 the Governor of Panama, don Juan Pérez de Guzmán bought 1,300 pounds of Dutch gunpowder conveyed from Curaçao in an asiento ship. The amount of gunpowder involved makes it implausible that this was an operation on-the-hoof. It is much more reasonable to suppose that the governor commissioned the asiento factors to buy the gunpowder in Curaçao on his behalf. Such a large amount of a strategic product like gunpowder could hardly go unnoticed. It is perhaps for this reason that Pérez de Guzmán tried to justify his actions to the Queen, arguing that not only was the Dutch gunpowder supplied by the asiento factors cheaper than that produced in Peru (5 reales per pound instead of 8), but also better.¹⁰¹ As with wax, factors regularly traded in gunpowder on demand. During the early 1670s, the governors of Panama still relied for its defence on the gunpowder brought by the factors from Curaçao, who sold it for even lower prices than before at 2.5 reales per pound.¹⁰²

Cooperation with Local Traders

The Seville and Lima consulados had stood as the voice of Spanish American merchants against Grillo and Lomellino, but in fact they only represented some among them. The asiento trade channelled profits from the colonial setting into the metropolis, but many merchants from the colony also benefitted from this trade. Trade in slaves and contraband in Spanish America was only possible because of the cooperation of local merchants, authorities and royal officials. Who were these people on the Isthmus of Panama? How did they contribute to the operation of the asiento trade?

In the case of the Isthmus, the locals offered Grillo and Lomellino's agents crucial logistical support.¹⁰³ Any merchant who wished to send goods from the Caribbean to Peru, and vice versa, was compelled to cooperate with those in control of the transisthmian roads – mule drivers, royal officials, civil servants, and military officers – leading to high transaction costs. Any commercial venture that tried to bypass the locals would find itself in severe jeopardy. Tax farmers operating on the Isthmus, like the Lima consulado, were equally dependent on the locals' willingness to facilitate the enforcement of tax collection. As such, the Lima consulado was permanently in contact with the Panamanian authorities aiming for their cooperation to lessen systematic tax-evasion practices.¹⁰⁴ Although this fraud against the Crown's revenue and the tax farmers could only take place with the complicity of royal officials, and military and governmental authorities, this complicity was not free. In the mid-17th century, merchants were bribing local authorities in Portobelo, Boquerón and Panama City with 2% of the total value of their silver cargoes to avoid the payment of taxes.¹⁰⁵ Other players, like the Panamanian mule drivers also made life difficult for the Lima merchants by repeatedly increasing the price of their services, which eventually became the most expensive form of transport in Spanish America.¹⁰⁶ Far from being an exception, the asiento trade was largely dependent on the cooperation of the local actors. In February 1668, Domenico Grillo reported to his partners in Genoa that, in the previous year, he spent 35,000 pesos for the services of his factors and the collaboration of the Panamanians (often in the form of bribes) to organise the delivery of 539 slaves from Curaçao.¹⁰⁷

Many of those local actors to which Domenico Grillo referred in his letter concentrated in the fortresses around Portobelo and the Chagres River, where they acted as the veritable gatekeepers of the transisthmian routes. When Grillo and Lomellino's factors arrived to Portobelo, the key player on the Caribbean coast of the Isthmus was Jorge Calvo Minucho, who had been appointed *maestre de campo* at Portobelo shortly before, putting him in command of the military forces and the fortress.¹⁰⁸ But Calvo Minucho was no novice. His uncle Pedro Pablo, who was of

Genoese origin, had been a central personality in the political and economic life of Panama during the first half of the century.¹⁰⁹ By the late 1640s, Calvo Minucho was one of the leaders of the local community of Portobelo, where he was appointed mayor, and also possessed several barges and launches to bring in goods and slaves to the Isthmus.¹¹⁰ In the 1650s Calvo Minucho began receiving military appointments in the fortresses of Portobelo. The fact that all three presidents of the *Audiencia* during the 1650s appointed him suggests that his local connections were strong, and probably made him irreplaceable. By means of his post at the garrison, Calvo Minucho facilitated several operations to smuggle clothing, and also thwarted a few others, making a profit either way. For example, in 1657, Calvo Minucho bought the Dutch ship *León Negro* at a bargain price in an auction, having helped seize it when it tried to smuggle 56 slaves into Portobelo.¹¹¹

Cooperation between Grillo and Lomellino's agents and Calvo Minucho began as soon as the first asiento ship docked at Portobelo in January 1664, if not earlier. The unloaded slaves were housed in several houses and barracks owned by Calvo Minucho, for 700 pesos.¹¹² Naturally, Calvo Minucho used this opportunity to augment his own pool of slaves, and bought six boys, a woman and her daughter.¹¹³ Over the years, the asiento factors continued using Calvo Minucho's houses and warehouses to store the contraband goods being smuggled in and out of the Isthmus of Panama.¹¹⁴ The relationship between Calvo Minucho and the factors was common knowledge, and the former did not hesitate to testify in their favour in several lawsuits.¹¹⁵ The fact that the factors in Panama delegated a good deal of their powers to actors such as Calvo Minucho is revealing of the symbiotic relationship that the asiento maintained with some local power groups.¹¹⁶

Characters like Calvo Minucho allowed Giustiniano Giustiniani, Agostino Grillo, and Marcelo García de las Cañas to mobilise a host of local actors that helped to channel the slaves and contraband through Portobelo, Panama City, and down the Pacific route towards Lima.¹¹⁷ For instance, with the arrival of the asiento ship *San Vicente* in December 1670, a Jorge Pezero acted on behalf of the factors as "pawn and custodian" of 220 slaves in Portobelo. These slaves were led inland to the Venta de Chagres by a Spanish-born man called Antonio Pérez and one Luis Salazar. Pérez and Salazar had several assistants, including Mateo Benítez, a free mulatto. Once at the Venta de Chagres, the slaves were entrusted to one Pedro Díaz de Ibarra, who led them to Panama City, where an asiento factor received the human cargo.¹¹⁸

From Madrid, Domenico Grillo had carefully controlled the appointment of *jueces conservadores* in the Indies, a key piece in overseeing the privileges of the asiento. But the factors on the ground also had an important role to play in this regard by making sure that the office was

in the right hands. Grillo and Lomellino's factors put pressure on Rodrigo del Corro Carrascal, Bernardo Trigo Figueroa, and Pedro Casela to delegate their powers as *jueces conservadores* to Pedro Ladrón de Guevara, a member of Calvo Minucho's social circle.¹¹⁹ From as early as 1651, Ladrón de Guevara had been in command of the fortresses on the Chagres River and in Portobelo and, unsurprisingly, he was also involved in smuggling alongside Calvo Minucho.¹²⁰ As *juez conservador* in Portobelo, Ladrón de Guevara was personally in charge of inspecting the asiento ships on their arrival and departure, and did his best to avoid the intromission of royal officials.¹²¹

The knowledge of local Panamanians was fully exploited by Grillo and Lomellino's factors in those fields in which they were less experienced, like the practicalities of slavery. Again, Portobelo's fortresses proved to be a crucial source of know-how, as illustrated by the case of Antonio de Lara. Like Jorge Calvo Minucho and Pedro Ladrón de Guevara, Antonio de Lara was a soldier whose duties involved controlling the transisthmian roads.¹²² He had also taken a keen interest in the business of slavery. In June 1659, he bid successfully for a group of African slaves confiscated from a smuggler; he paid 275 pesos for 35 slaves who were in a bad way physically, hoping to restore them to health before reselling them.¹²³ Giustiniano Giustiniani described Antonio de Lara as a "capable and discerning person" in dealing with the African captives.¹²⁴ Unsurprisingly, de Lara's knowledge afforded him a position within the local framework of the asiento by evaluating the physical condition of the slaves brought to Portobelo.¹²⁵

Antonio de Lara's experience of slavery was far more complex and heterogeneous than Grillo and Lomellino's factors. While Grillo and Lomellino's company only traded in Bozal slaves, characters like Antonio de Lara were traffickers *tout court*. Antonio de Lara relied on the asiento factors to acquire African slaves recently brought to the isthmus, who had barely undergone any cultural assimilation. On 16, 17, 21, 22, and 28 May 1664, for example, de Lara bought from the asiento factors as many as 36 women and 17 men for 30,325 pesos.¹²⁶ When needed, de Lara turned to channels different from the asiento to find captives with other characteristics. Around 1669, he bought a mulatto slave called Catalina Mayoco, aged 20, in Portobelo, afterwards sending her to Lima to be sold. A 22-year-old Panama-born *zambo* slave – of African and American indigenous descent – named Leonardo met an identical fate.¹²⁷ Most probably, de Lara's interest in trading in captives of different backgrounds and origins was based on his up-to-date knowledge of Lima buyers' specific demands.

Indeed, many more of the African slaves brought by Grillo and Lomellino's factors from Jamaica and Curaçao to the Isthmus of Panama were forced to follow Catalina Mayoco and Leonardo to Lima. Apparently, Antonio de Lara's main business was to bring slaves to Pacific South

America, where he possessed a large and close commercial network based on kin and credit relations. In October 1669, for instance, Antonio de Lara purchased 300 slaves from Grillo and Lomellino's agents in Portobelo. The payment was made in hard cash after Antonio acquired a debt of 134,000 pesos from don Francisco Espinosa de los Monteros, a Lima trader affiliated with the city's consulado, who travelled to the Isthmus to acquire merchandise.¹²⁸ On 6 September 1670, Antonio's brother, Juan, honoured 79,125 pesos of the debt in Lima, where he was marketing the slaves and where the creditor resided.¹²⁹ That instalment was probably partially paid from the 16,078 pesos that Juan de Lara had obtained from the sale of 21 African slaves in Lima the previous month. While Lima buyers paid Juan de Lara an average of 765.6 pesos per slave, his brother Antonio had spent 446.6 pesos for each of them in Portobelo.¹³⁰ For the de Lara brothers, the business of slavery was a profitable full-time job. While Juan de Lara was selling those slaves in Lima, Antonio was in Trujillo, northern Peru, personally selling another group of 235 African slaves bought in the Isthmus of Panama.¹³¹

When in early 1671 Agostino Grillo and Tomás de Llanos went to Lima to open an asiento branch there, they used the combined support of the agent network designed by Domenico Grillo from Madrid and the network built on the ground around Portobelo's fortresses, which to a large extent revolved around the de Lara brothers. In 1664, Domenico Grillo's appointed Sebastián de la Cueva as the asiento's main agent in Lima.¹³² Patronage ties bounded de la Cueva to Domenico Grillo, as the latter had brokered de la Cueva's appointment in Lima as treasurer of the *bienes de difuntos* office that same year.¹³³ In this capacity, de la Cueva often had to transfer money from Lima to Seville, which put him in an ideal position to collect debts on behalf of Grillo and Lomellino's company, for instance those incurred by local buyers when acquiring slaves from the asiento factors on the Isthmus of Panama.¹³⁴ In addition, because of his official position, de la Cueva was well acquainted with the machinery of government and justice in Lima, something which soon proved to be of great value for Domenico Grillo's factors.

Sebastián de la Cueva advised Agostino Grillo to choose Alonso de Arcos Valencia as their attorney in their litigation against the Lima consulado, a matter of utmost importance. Juan de Lara backed this choice, featuring as a witness in the notarial record of the appointment.¹³⁵ The de Lara brothers' entourage of urban slave dealers in Lima supported the opening of the asiento's branch in the city. Some of these individuals were swiftly co-opted by Agostino Grillo, who delegated some of his authority to them. The example posed by Simón de Orcasitas is paradigmatic of these networks' entanglement with the asiento trade. While in 1670, Simón de Orcasitas marketed African slaves on behalf of Juan de Lara, by 1671 he was selling captives as a representative of Agostino Grillo.¹³⁶

Domenico Grillo's factors employed a wide set of strategies to secure the cooperation of these local networks and benefit from their expertise. In addition to incorporating local agents into the asiento businesses, sharing profits, or paying them directly for their services, the asiento factors also offered locals the chance to benefit from the patronage of Domenico Grillo in Madrid. At the end of the day, Domenico Grillo was one of the Crown's major bankers and an important personality in Madrid, where he was in a position to secure favours for his new friends in Spanish America, as he already did with Sebastián de la Cueva back in 1664. Antonio de Oliveros, the asiento factors' main clerk in Lima, soon enjoyed the manifold benefits of engaging with his new Genoese friends. Before returning to Panama Agostino Grillo gave Oliveros the job of supervising the new agents he had appointed in Lima, like Simón de Orcasitas, until the arrival of the new asiento factor, Esteban de Guillén Aroche. One way in which Agostino Grillo earned Oliveros' loyalty was by promising Domenico Grillo's help to buy a post as *escribano supernumerario* for him for 3,000 pesos. It seems that this strategy paid off, and years later Oliveros was given a position as public clerk of the council, royal mines and royal finances in the province of Huarachorí (near Lima) and the mines of Nuevo Potosí.¹³⁷

Conclusions

From a commercial perspective, the implementation of Grillo's asiento meant two different things. First, the creation of an official corridor coupling the trans-imperial and intra-Spanish American trades. Second, the establishment of a monopolistic system to be exploited by private companies which set the basis for the African slave trade to and in Spanish America until the 1730s. The experience of Domenico Grillo's factors in Spanish America, the way they had to navigate local conditions, was unique insofar as they had to craft the new competition and cooperation dynamics that were to prevail over the following decades.

The conflicts that resulted from the implementation of Grillo and Lomellino's asiento on the ground were to reappear every time a new slave asiento was granted. Something similar occurred when companies overstepped their charters to meddle with the privileges of other actors. The attempts of English South Sea Company factors to evade the payment of *alcabalas* to local tax-farmers or to trade beyond their factories reproduced the events that followed the arrival of Domenico Grillo's factors to the Isthmus of Panama and their expansion from Panama City to Lima, 40 years earlier. The contraband activities of the South Sea Company cannot be attributed to the ingenuity of its agents, as has often been done, or to the inexperience of royal officials, or to the negligence of Crown ministers.¹³⁸ It appears that using the asiento charter to conduct contraband operations was the default option for any merchant

operating within a given legal framework that compelled him to deal in a specific form of merchandise, like African slaves, in a particular geography. In the first half of the 18th century, these practices were part and parcel of Spanish America's everyday life, and the *modus operandi* of Grillo and Lomellino had contributed a great deal to make it so.

Portobelo's importance in Grillo and Lomellino's strategies extended to future monopolistic asiento companies, and it became the main Spanish American entry point for African slaves from the 1660s to the 1730s. Portobelo's rise as a centre of the trans-imperial intra-American slave trade undermined the mercantile primacy that Cartagena de Indias had enjoyed until about 1640. While Portuguese merchants who relied on transatlantic slave voyages spurred the rise of Cartagena de Indias as the leading wholesale market for African slaves in the Spanish Caribbean, the Genoese Grillo and Lomellino and other international companies operating monopolistic asientos and intra-American shipping favoured the Isthmus of Panama. The Isthmus of Panama's strategic location, which allowed it to act as a gateway for Peruvian markets, made Portobelo an attractive destination for the monopolistic asiento companies. However, all this was only possible because of the cooperation of certain local groups.

Domenico Grillo's delegation of power and functions on the factors played an essential role in extending the reach of the asiento networks and incorporating local agents. The Spanish American side of the network could only be created *in situ* through everyday interactions. Asiento factors shared the profits of their trade with local agents to reward their cooperation or buy their acquiescence. From the fortresses of Portobelo, actors such as Jorge Calvo Minucho and Antonio de Lara made their colonial knowledge, their local power, and their networks available for the asiento factors to bring their African slaves and their contraband goods across the Isthmus of Panama and into Pacific South America. They also mediated to help the asiento factors to penetrate regional markets elsewhere, for instance, with the export of Peruvian cocoa to the Caribbean.

The benefits that local actors derived from their cooperation with Domenico Grillo's factors were not only economic. It also allowed them to advance socially, perpetuate their local power, and increase their professional networks both geographically and over time. In the Isthmus of Panama, Domingo Gondra did much more than ordering wax from Grillo and Lomellino's factors in Curaçao. The rapport ran much deeper than that, and earned him a privileged position in the relational world of the trans-imperial asiento trade. Ultimately, Gondra's familiarity with the inner workings of the asiento trade allowed him to become a factor for future asiento companies, such as the Seville consulado or the Dutchman Balthasar Coymans.¹³⁹ Something similar happened with Juan de Oriamuno, one of Grillo's factors' supplier of Peruvian cocoa on the Isthmus of Panama. While becoming one of the main businessmen on the isthmus

in the 1670s and 1680s – he had investments in pearl hunting, gold mining, and shipping – Oriamuño also worked on behalf of Balthasar Coymans.¹⁴⁰ The asiento trade gave local producers and merchants a secure avenue to channel their goods towards the trans-imperial markets.

American buyers benefitted greatly from the asiento trade, at least on the Isthmus of Panama and Peru. The benefits in Panama were obvious. There, local demand determined the products that Grillo's factors brought from Curaçao. This was favoured by the regular traffic of slave ships within Caribbean trade routes. Regarding the African slave trade, compared with the 1650s, it does not seem that the creation of Domenico Grillo's monopolistic asiento increased the price of slaves in Panama and Lima. What seems obvious is that the number of coerced African migrants who were moved through the Isthmus of Panama into in Pacific South America increased.

Notes

- * Research for this chapter has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 and innovation programme, grant agreement ERC CoG 648535.
- 1 Esteban de Gamarra's reports, Amsterdam, 1664, AGI, IG, Leg. 1668, fol. 631v.
- 2 For the conflict between the factors of the Compañía de Barcelona and the Compañía de Caracas and local groups see Oliva Melgar, "Contrabandistas"; Cromwell, *The Smugglers' World*, chap. 8; for an overview on chartered companies in the Spanish Atlantic during the 18th century see Rodríguez García, *Compañías privilegiadas*.
- 3 Vila Vilar, "Los asientos portugueses," 20–21; Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 157–58, 181–82; Bowser, *African Slave*, 33–34.
- 4 According to Nelson's classic work, for the English South Sea Company trade in manufactured goods was more important than trade in slaves. See: Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento"; For a more recent and balanced perspective, see: O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 240–41.
- 5 For a perspective on the Isthmus of Panama as an artery of empire, see Aram, "Una arteria del imperio."
- 6 A complementary glance, combining historical and archaeological research on Grillo and Lomellino's factors in Panama City, is offered in Gaitán Ammann, "Besieged Genoese"; Gaitán Ammann, "Daring Trade."
- 7 Vega Franco, *El tráfico de esclavos*, 186–87, 194–202.
- 8 Vega Franco, 198–201.
- 9 President of the *Audiencia* of Panamá to the *Junta de Guerra*, Panama City, 25-VI-1607, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 15, ramo 8, n° 79.
- 10 Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 6, 168–69, 197–99.
- 11 Pike, "Black Rebels"; Tardieu, *Cimarrones de Panamá*, 71–105, 183–250; Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 53–66.
- 12 "Descripción de las Indias," BNE, mss. 3064, fols. 63r–64r, 136r–37v. These figures include male and female populations of all ages.
- 13 ARSI, *Novi Regni et Quit Histor.* 12, n° I – II, *Litterae Annuae*, 1604–1652, fol. 220v.

- 14 An overview of this process is provided in Lachance and Eltis, "Extending the Frontiers," 347–48; The rise of the routes running through Buenos Aires for furnishing Peru with slaves also undermined Portobelo's centrality. See O'Malley and Borucki, "Patterns," 317, 322–33.
- 15 Bowser, *African Slave*, 78.
- 16 For an overview of the maritime trade in this area, see Clayton, "Trade and Navigation."
- 17 Tardieu, *El negro*, 244; Bowser, *African Slave*, 92, 339–40.
- 18 Bowser, *African Slave*, 341.
- 19 For a general perspective about the role played by Africans in the Peruvian economy in the first half of the 17th century, see Bowser, 88–109. For the social world of Black craftspeople in Lima, see *ibid.* 125–46.
- 20 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 465r–v, 21-V-1671.
- 21 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 108r–v, 20-VIII-1670.
- 22 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fol. 123v, 2-IV-1670. The captive, an Arara woman, was bought and was eventually christened Catalina.
- 23 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 76v–78v, 30-VII-1670.
- 24 Ambrosio Lomellino, Madrid, to Francesco Maria Sauli, Genoa, 20-IX-1664, ADGG, Sauli, 1464, s.f.
- 25 Vila Vilar and Lohmann Villena, *Familia*, 43, 46, 49, 64–65; Bowser, *African Slave*, 60, 63–64; Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 193–95; Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía y cultura material*, 613, 621–22.
- 26 Ward, *Imperial Panama*, 67–98.
- 27 Castellero Calvo, *Economía terciaria*, 11.
- 28 Letter from the president of the *Audiencia* of Panamá, Panama City, 15-IX-1645, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 19, ramo 12, n° 113.
- 29 Álvarez-Nogal, "Mercados o redes."
- 30 Vega Franco, *El tráfico de esclavos*, 197–201; Ward, *Imperial Panama*, 149–51.
- 31 "Testimonio sobre la memoria de ventas de negros hechas en Portobelo y Panamá," AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 264-B, pieza 60, n° 39, fol. 52r.
- 32 "Autos seguidos por Diego Dávila, capitán, contra Francisco Bazurto Velloso," Lima, 1670, AGN, Tribunal del Consulado, Judicial 1, Leg. 150, exp. 56.
- 33 "Autos ejecutivos contra la persona y bienes de Domingo Grillo," AGI, IG, Leg. 2833, fols. 94r–v.
- 34 The *vara* of cloth cost 5.5 reales and the *botija* of pisco 7.5 pesos. See, "Testimonio sobre la memoria de ventas de negros hechas en Portobelo y Panamá y copias reconocimiento y otras facturas," AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 264-B, pieza 60, n° 39, fols. 51r–v.
- 35 Consultation of the Council of the Indies, Madrid, 19-I-1668, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f. The official's report is dated 22 June 1667.
- 36 Consultation of the Council of the Indies, Madrid, 11-VII-1673, AGI, IG, Leg. 2835, s.f.
- 37 "Traslado de los autos que los diputados del Comercio han seguido contra los asentistas," Lima, 1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2830, fols. 167r–75r.
- 38 "Auto de vista del pleito de Domingo Grillo sobre 1,179 botijas de vino y 3 canastos de sombreros," Madrid, 27-VII-1675, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 959, s.f.; "Traslado de los autos que los diputados del Comercio han seguido contra los asentistas," Lima, 1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2830, fol. 3r.
- 39 "Consulta del Consejo de Indias sobre la pretensión de Grillo y compañía para comerciar con Buenos Aires," Madrid, 12-III-1669, AGI, IG, Leg.

- 2834, s.f. This consultation includes three reports from the Seville consulado. The information was drawn from a report issued in Seville, on 3 March 1669.
- 40 Manuel de Lira, The Hague, to the Queen, Madrid, 27-XII-1672, BNE, mss. 13374, vol. 3, fols. 450r–53r. It includes a translation of a letter from Hamburg dated 26 September 1672 and addressed to Manuel de Lira.
- 41 For details on these operations, see García-Montón, “The Rise of Portobelo,” 415, n. 75.
- 42 Letter from the president of the *Audiencia* of Panamá, Panama City, 9-XI-1663, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 43 Letter of the royal officials to the king, Portobelo, 30-III-1665, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 24, ramo 2, n° 54, II.
- 44 “Traslado de los autos que los diputados del Comercio han seguido contra los asentistas,” Lima, 1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2830, fols. 175v–80v. Gaspar Alfonso gave his testimony on 16 February 1672.
- 45 Investigation on the sloop *Príncipe de Beston*, Cartagena de Indias, 1672, AGI, Santa Fe, Leg. 76, n° 23-A. The reference to Pedro Barbanzo appears in fol. 8v.
- 46 For these requests, see Chapter 3.
- 47 Letter of Fernando de la Riva Agüero to the Council of Indies, Portobelo, 8-IV-1663, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.; letter of the royal officials to the Council of the Indies, Portobelo, 4-VI-1663, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 48 “Domingo Grillo y Ambrosio Lomelín, factores del asiento de esclavos y el señor fiscal, sobre el comiso del navío nombrado el *Santo Rey Fernando*,” Cartagena de Indias, 1663, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 575-A, fols. 1r, 16r–20r.
- 49 For New Spain see Celaya Nández, “La cesión de un derecho.”
- 50 Ruling concerning the lawsuit between Diego Carcelén and Domingo Grillo, 1666; the lessees of the *alcabalas* of Panama and Domingo Grillo, 1667; the lessees of the *sisas* of Panamá and Domingo Grillo, Madrid, 1667; and the lessees of the *alcabalas* of Panama and the prosecutor of the Council of the Indies, 1671, Madrid, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 958, s.f. The lessees of the *sisas* were Pedro de Mercado and Francisco de Arinaga. About Diego Carcelén see Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía y cultura material*, 814–15.
- 51 “Los administradores del derecho de alcabalas de Veracruz,” 1665, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 292-A, fols. 1r–7r; for further information about the factors’ conflicts in Veracruz, see Sierra Silva, “Portuguese ‘Encomenderos.’”
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía y cultura material*, 585 note 123.
- 54 Letter from Amaro López de la Peña y Losada to the Council of the Indies, Panama, 28-II-1664, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 55 Memorandum of the Seville consulado, Seville, 9-V-1662, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 56 Memorandum of the Seville consulado, Seville, 3-III-1669, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 57 García Fuentes, “Oposición del consulado.”
- 58 Letter from Count Santiesteban, Viceroy of Peru concerning a report by the Lima consulado, Lima, 25-VII-1663, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834; memorandum by the Seville consulado and the *Casa de la Contratación*, Seville, 13-I-1665, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.; memorandum by the Lima consulado for the Viceroy of Peru, Lima, 1672, AGI, Consulados, Leg. 1598, s.f.
- 59 Andrien, *Crisis and Decline*, 58; Oliva Melgar, *El monopolio de Indias*, 54–73.

- 60 Consultation of the Council of the Indies regarding a request by the Seville consulado, Madrid, 9-XII-1665, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f. The original request is dated to 13 November.
- 61 Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 42–47.
- 62 Memorandum of the Seville consulado, Seville, 9-V-1662, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 63 “El prior y cónsules. Da las gracias por la resolución que se tomó de que se retengan las licencias de navíos para navegar,” Seville, 7-III-1665, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 64 “Contra los Grillos, año de 73. Memorial para el Consejo por el abogado del Consulado en Madrid,” Madrid, 1673, AGI, Consulados, Leg. 1599, s.f.
- 65 Consultation of the Council of the Indies, based on a report by *Casa de la Contratación* and the Seville consulado, Madrid, 11-IV-1669, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 66 Consultation by the Council of the Indies regarding a request by the Seville consulado, Madrid, 9-XII-1665, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f. The original request is dated to 13 November.
- 67 Consultation by the Council of the Indies, based on a report by *Casa de la Contratación* and the Seville consulado, Madrid, 11-IV-1669, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 68 Suárez, *Desafíos Transatlánticos*, 312.
- 69 Suárez, 309–12.
- 70 Request of a *juez conservador* by the agents of the Lima consulado, Portobelo, 5-IV-1663, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 50, n. 58.
- 71 *Cédula* from the Queen to the president of the *Audiencia* of Panamá, Madrid, 7-IX-1674, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 231, Lib. 7, fols. 144r–45v.
- 72 Although all the slaves aboard the ship had been registered by the asiento factors in Panamá, only 120 of them belonged to Agostino Grillo and Tomás de Llanos, while the rest belonged to local merchants, for instance, don Juan Ceballos, who owned 72 of these slaves. “El cabildo, justicia y regimiento de la ciudad de Lima, con Domingo Grillo,” Lima, 1672, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 517-A, fols. 2r, 18r, 20r, 21v, 22v.
- 73 Consultation of the Council of the Indies, Madrid, 12-VII-1663, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 74 “Traslado de los autos que los diputados del Comercio han seguido contra los asentistas,” Lima, 1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2830, 2830, fol. 147v.
- 75 Moutoukias, *Contrabando*, 126–33; Freeman, *A Silver River*, 181.
- 76 Letter from the Viceroy Count Lemos conveying the Lima consulado’s complaints, Lima, 22-II-1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2835, s.f.; memoranda issued by the Lima consulado to the Viceroy of Peru, Lima, 1672, AGI, Consulados, Leg. 1598, s.f.
- 77 Letter from Count Lemos, Portobelo, 7-VI-1667, AGI, IG, Leg. 2835, s.f.
- 78 For instance, the lawsuit between doña Juana de Guardiola and the factor don Esteban de Guillén about the sale of defective slaves, Lima, 1673, AGI, IG, Leg. 2831, s.f.; lawsuit between don Pedro de la Cueva Navarrete and the factor don Esteban de Guillén, Lima, 1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2832; lawsuit between Esteban Chillón and Agostino Grillo, Lima 1673, AGI, IG, Leg. 2832, s.f. For an interesting examination of this sort of lawsuit in 17th-century Lima, see McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms*, 203–38.
- 79 Investigation by the licenciado don Miguel Francisco de Marichalar into Francisco Terán de los Ríos, Panama City, 20-V-1672, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 490-B, pieza 7, fols. 28r–30r.

- 80 AGN, PN, 1099 Medina, 1660, fols. 55r-v.
- 81 AGN, PN, 1100 Medina, 1661, fols. 453r-v. Other examples also recorded in this bundle pointed in the same direction. On 3 November 1661, a 12-year-old boy called Pablo Angola, who had been previously sold in Panama, was sold again for 700 pesos. On 6 December, a woman called María Angola was sold for 500 pesos. See fols. 420r-24v and 467r-v.
- 82 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, 1671, fols. 519-20; AGN, PN, 1303 Oliveros, 1672, fols. 8v-9r, 27r-v, 34r-v, 50r-52rv, 60v-61r, 66v-67r, 74r-v, 91r-v, 92r-v, 111v-12r, 118r-v, 119r-v, 144r-v.
- 83 A Bartolomé de Orbegoso sold a 25-year-old slave of Congolese origin for 830 pesos, and another slave of the same age, of Arara origin for 850 pesos. Similarly, the captain Manuel Pantoja sold two Bozal slaves aged 20 for 800 pesos each. These transactions are recorded in AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 546r-v, 552r-v; and 1303 Oliveros, fol. 15v.
- 84 Zook, *Royal Adventurers*, 72-75; Svalastog, *Mastering the Worst*, 158, 187, 196-97, 209.
- 85 Davies, *Royal African Company*, 316-25.
- 86 "Testimonio sobre la memoria de ventas de negros hechas en Portobelo y Panamá," AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 264-B, pieza 60, n° 39, fols. 1r-5v.
- 87 *Ibid.*, fol. 3v.
- 88 *Ibid.*, fol. 4r.
- 89 Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía y cultura material*, 647-64; Ireton, "They Are Blacks," 596-97, 600-4.
- 90 Álvarez-Nogal, "Mercados o redes."
- 91 "Cuaderno de los embargos hechos en Panamá, Cartagena y Portobelo," 1666, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 262, ramo 5, fols. 71r-83v.
- 92 "Testimonio sobre la memoria de ventas de negros hechas en Portobelo y Panamá," AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 264-B, pieza 60, n° 39, fol. 52r; AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 570v, 30-IX-1671; 572v, 3-X-1671; 573r-v, 5-X-1671.
- 93 "Testimonio de los autos fulminados sobre las mercaderías que se hallaron en el navío *San Vicente*," Portobelo, 1671, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 490-A, fols. 233r-39r.
- 94 "Información de las 30 cabezas de negros que se murieron," Portobelo, 1667, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 263, n° 3, s.f.
- 95 For a general perspective on the commercialisation of beeswax and its role in the commercial portfolios of Portuguese merchants in the first half of the 17th century, see Newson, "Piety"; For the wax exports through the *Carrera de Indias* in 1650-1700, see García Fuentes, *El comercio español*, 311-17.
- 96 "Testimonio de los autos fulminados sobre las mercaderías que se hallaron en el navío *San Vicente*," Portobelo, 1671, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 490-A, fol. 242v.
- 97 For a description of devotional life in Panama City and the role played by religious brotherhoods, see "Relación sobre Panamá de don Juan Requejo Salcedo," 1640, BNE, Mss. 19245, fols. 7v-8v.
- 98 "Testimonio de los autos fulminados sobre las mercaderías que se hallaron en el navío *San Vicente*," Portobelo, 1671, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 490-A, fols. 264r-65r. The letter was sent from Portobelo on 25 June 1671.
- 99 "Testimonio de los autos sobre la aprehensión de las 105 frascas," Cartagena de Indias, 20-II-1674, AGI, IG, Leg. 2831, fols. 2r, 78r.
- 100 "Testimonio de los autos fulminados sobre las mercaderías que se hallaron en el navío *San Vicente*," Portobelo, 1671, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 490-A, fol. 264v.
- 101 Reply by Mariana of Austria to a letter from don Juan Pérez de Guzmán, Madrid, 20-IX-1670, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 230, Lib. 6, fols. 248v-49r.

- 102 Letter from Mariana of Austria to the Viceroy of Peru, Madrid, 15-VI-1673, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 231, Lib. 7, fols. 72r–73v.
- 103 For a detailed account on the complex, expensive, and drawn-out process of moving enslaved people across the Isthmus of Panama, see Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 187–209.
- 104 Suárez, *Desafíos transatlánticos*, 356–70.
- 105 Suárez, 304.
- 106 For the disputes between Panamanian mule drivers and the Lima consulado, see Suárez, 317–51; for an analysis of the cost of overland transport in the Isthmus of Panama, see Castellero Calvo, *Economía terciaria*, 21–33.
- 107 Domenico Grillo, Madrid, to Francesco Maria Sauli, Genoa, 6-II-1668, ADGG-Sauli, 1467, s.f.
- 108 “Informaciones: Jorge Calvo Minucho,” Panamá, 1663, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 66, n° 19.
- 109 On Pedro Pablo Minucho, see Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía y cultura material*, 573, 581, 598, 603, 605–8, 790, 792.
- 110 Report on Portobelo by Tomás de Fonseca, Portobelo, 13-V-1649, AGI, Panamá, Leg. 50, n° 9, fol. 1r.
- 111 “Sumaria hecha en la ciudad de Cartagena y Portobelo en virtud de la Real Cédula de Su Majestad,” Portobelo, 1661, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 489-B, pieza 88, fols. 165v–66v; “Cargos y descargos de los tenientes de oficiales reales de Portobelo,” Portobelo, 1652-61, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 487-A, pieza 11, fol. 12v.
- 112 “Testimonio sobre la memoria de ventas de negros hechas en Portobelo y Panamá,” AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 264-B, pieza 60, n° 39, fol. 14r.
- 113 *Ibid.*, fols. 1r–v.
- 114 “Traslado de los autos que los diputados del Comercio han seguido contra los asentistas,” Lima, 1672, AGI, IG, Leg. 2830, fols. 165r–67r.
- 115 “Domingo Grillo y Ambrosio Lomelín con el señor fiscal del consejo real de las indias,” 6-VII-1667, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 262, ramo 8, fols. 103v–4v.
- 116 Agostino Grillo, Saña, to unknown recipient, unknown location, 28-III-1671, ASG, FF, G, 28, s.f.
- 117 “Año de 1674. Traslado de los cinco testimonios. Los tres de las cabezas de esclavos que el asiento ha introducido por Portobelo. Los dos de los negros que se han muerto en Portobelo y Panamá en el camino de una ciudad a otra,” AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 263, s.f.
- 118 “Testimonios sobre el traslado de esclavos muertos en su traslado entre Portobelo y Panamá,” 1674, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 263, s.f.
- 119 Ladrón de Guevara does not feature in the petitions submitted by Domenico Grillo to the Council of the Indies. In April 1664, Ladrón de Guevara is described as “assistant” *juez conservador* in Portobelo. See, investigation about the ship *Santa Cruz*, Cartagena de Indias, 1664, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 262, ramo 1, fols. 102r–3r.
- 120 In 1651, Ladrón de Guevara’s salary as commander of the fortress was 219 pesos, see AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 1479, fol. 74r; AGI, Panama, Leg. 22, ramo 6, n° 97; “Sumaria hecha en la ciudad de Cartagena y Portobelo en virtud de la real cédula de Su Majestad,” Portobelo, 1661, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 489-B, pieza 88, fol. 169r.
- 121 For example: “El señor fiscal. Cuaderno de algunos contratos ajustados,” Madrid, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 262, ramo 1, fols. 45r–46v; Consultation of the Council of the Indies, Madrid, 16-XI-1668, AGI, IG, Leg. 2834, s.f.
- 122 In 1668 he was appointed provincial of the *Santa Hermandad* of Panama. “Pleitos de competencias entre el Tribunal de la Inquisición de Cartagena de Indias,” AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 1597, Exp. 9.

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- 123 “Autos sobre la entrada y descamino del navío nombrado *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*,” Portobelo, 1659, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 486-C, pieza 67, fols. 33v–37r. In this document, Antonio de Lara is described as “maestro armero.”
- 124 “Traslado de los cinco testimonios. Los tres de las cabezas de esclavos que el asiento ha introducido por Portobelo,” 1674, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 263, s.f.
- 125 For instance, on 27 January 1664, Antonio de Lara supervised 345 African slaves brought by the ship *Santa Cruz*. See: “El señor fiscal. Cuaderno de algunos contratos ajustados,” AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 262, ramo 1, fols. 48v–57v.
- 126 “Testimonio sobre la memoria de ventas de negros hechas en Portobelo y Panamá y copias reconocimiento y otras facturas,” AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 264-B, pieza 60, n° 39, fol. 51v.
- 127 Slaves sold by Jacoba Maldonado and Matías de Matamoros in Lima, provided by Antonio de Lara, 30-I-1671 and 12-II-1671, AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 341v–42r, 360r–v.
- 128 “Caja de Lima,” Lima, 1660–62, AGI, Contaduría, Leg. 1749, fol. 93r.
- 129 Payment made by Juan de Lara to Francisco de Espinosa de los Monteros, Lima, 6-IX-1670, AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 129r–v.
- 130 Slaves sold by Juan de Lara and his associate Simón de Orcasitas, Lima, Aug. 1670, AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 85r–91r, 92r–94v, 105r–7v, 110r–v, 113r–15v.
- 131 On 28 September 1670, Antonio de Lara paid 280 pesos in respect of *almojarifazgo* for the sale of the slaves. The human cargo he sold comprised “Bozales, Congos, Minas and Arares, men, women, adults and children.” (Our translation.) The ship in which they travelled also carried other products supplied in Panama City by Domenico Grillo’s agents. The ship’s master, Francisco de Peralta, paid 253 pesos in tax for the sale of “some wax loads,” see, AGN, Cajas Reales, Trujillo, Leg. 1296, doc. 3. fols. 12v–13r.
- 132 Power of attorney by Domenico Grillo and Ambrosio Lomellino in favour of Giuseppe Bustanzo, Sebastián de la Cueva, Giustiniano Giustiniani and Marcelo García de las Cañas, Madrid, 15-XII-1664, AHPM, 7356 Muñoz, s.f.
- 133 Appointment of Sebastián de la Cueva as treasurer of the *Juzgado de bienes de difuntos de Lima*, Madrid, 15-VIII-1664, AGI, Contratación, Leg. 5794, Lib. 2, fols. 225r–33v; Travelling permit for Sebastián de la Cueva, Seville, 9-IX-1664, AGI, Contratación, Leg. 5434, n° 1, ramo 69.
- 134 Established in 1550, the *bienes de difuntos* office was responsible of safeguarding the inheritance of Europeans who died in Spanish America, but whose heirs where in the other side of the Atlantic. Most of the deceased properties were sold in public auctions to transform their patrimony into cash that was latter shipped to the *Casa de la Contratación*, in Seville. Later, the *Casa de la Contratación* officials contacted the heirs to transfer them the inheritance. For further details, see García-Montón, “Comercio local.”
- 135 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fol. 521v, 18-VII-1671.
- 136 AGN, PN, 1302 Oliveros, fols. 110r–v, 22-VIII-1670; 240r–v, 12-XI-1670; fols. 417r–v, 28-IV-1671.
- 137 See respectively: power of attorney from Agostino Grillo to Antonio de Oliveros, El Callao, 10-VI-1672, and power of attorney from Antonio de Oliveros to Agostino Grillo, El Callao, 10-VI-1672, AGN, PN, 1303 Oliveros, fols. 31r–v, 34r–v; Appointment as public clerk, Madrid, 2-VI-1683, AGI, Charcas, Leg. 420, Lib. 9, fols. 97v–99r.

- 138 Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento."
- 139 Gondra's activity as factor for these two companies is attested in: lawsuit between Domingo de Gondra and the prosecutor of the Council of the Indies, Madrid, 1681, AGI, ECJ, Leg. 456-B, pieza 1; Van Belle, *Pertinent en waarachtig verhaal*, 37–38, 40, 48; For the role of the Seville consulado as lessee of the slave asiento see: Vila Vilar, "El Consulado de Sevilla"; Before Coymans assumed the slave asiento between 1685 and 1689, he had been one of the main shareholders of the asiento of Nicolás Porcio and Juan Barroso del Pozo (1682–85). See: Wright, "The Coymans Asiento"; Klooster, "Slavenvaart."
- 140 Van Belle, *Pertinent en waarachtig verhaal*, 48, 65; Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía y cultura material*, 634, 818.

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