

Louis Sicking

*Fundūq, Fondaco, Feitoria*  
*The Portuguese Contribution to the Globalisation*  
*of an Institution of Overseas trade\**

INTRODUCTION

In many pre-modern commercial centres, communities of foreign merchants sharing the same background, that is sovereign, (city)state and/or language, which became known as nations (*nazione, naçad*), would operate from establishments or trading stations known under a variety of names like *fundūq, fondaco, feitoria* or factory. These establishments, can be considered as the logistic embodiment of nations.<sup>1</sup> Olivia Remie Constable has considered these trading stations as a ‘family of institutions’. She has traced the complex evolution, or genealogy, of this institutional family from the Greek *pandocheion* in Late Antiquity to the appearance of the *fundūq* throughout the Muslim Mediterranean following the rise of Islam.<sup>2</sup> With the appearance of European merchants at Islamic markets, the *fundūq* evolved into the *fondaco*, merchant colonies which facilitated trade and travel between Muslim and

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<sup>1</sup> I. ELBL, *Nation, Bolsa, and Factory: Three Institutions of Late-Medieval Portuguese Trade with Flanders*, in “The International History Review”, 14, 1992, n. 1, pp. 1-22.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the ancient Greek word *πανδοχείο*, still existing in the present Greek language, is the same as that of *FONDACO*. *FUNDUQ* is an Arabic word. Both words are of Greek origin. The latin transliteration of the word *πανδοχείο* to latin guides to *FONDACO*. The words *πράκτωρ* and *πράκτορείο* are ancient Greek words, but the new meaning of the *πράκτορείο* as an agency or factory is a neologism. Kind remark of Olga Katsiardi-Hering. See P. MOUKARZEL, *The Latin Traders in Egypt and Syria during the XIV<sup>th</sup> and the XV<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Privileged Communities under a Strict Control*, in *Mediterraneos An interdisciplinary approach to the cultures of the Mediterranean Sea*, S. CARRO MARTIN et al eds., Newcastle upon Tyne 2013, pp. 339-354, 341-342.

Christian regions.<sup>3</sup> In the thirteenth century the *fondaco* also appeared in Italian overseas territories, such as the Venetian holdings in Byzantine lands, and in European cities like the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* in Venice.<sup>4</sup>

The *funduq* originated in part from the *caravanserai*:<sup>5</sup> refreshment stations along caravan routes. *Funduqs* and *fondacos* existed around the Mediterranean throughout the Middle Ages, serving the ‘universal needs’ of travelers and cross-cultural long-distance traders. The names and functions of these institutions changed over time, yet some basic elements remained of continuous importance: the lodging of travelers, the provision of space for both commerce and storage, and the intervention of local governments in maintaining the functions of these facilities, including their administration and fiscal policies.<sup>6</sup>

Constable sees coherence and continuity from Late Antiquity throughout the Middle Ages, from the evolution of the *pandocheion* to the *funduq* and *fondaco*. However, she considers the start of the early modern era as a breach, or caesura, announcing ‘more rigid conceptions of self and ‘other’ in terms of both politics and religion, [...] and diminish[ed] [...] relevance of longstanding Mediterranean ideas and institutions.’<sup>7</sup> Constable reasoned that

“The *fondacos* were western colonies in Islamic cities, but they were colonies without the apparatus and assumptions of colonialism. Although their presence benefited both foreign Christians and local Muslims, and facilitated commercial interaction between the two, the physical buildings were usually under the control of indigenous authorities and western traders could only reside and do business in the *fondacos* at the pleasure of local rulers. Overall, this was not a relationship shaped by European military and technological dominance. Even in the Crusader states – a region often cited as an early expression of European colonial ambitions – *fondacos* did not take a form consistent with what could be dubbed ‘colonial.’”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> O. CONSTABLE, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World. Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2003. See also G. JEHEL, *L’Italie et le Maghreb au Moyen Âge. Conflits et échanges du VII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 2001, p. 120. Compare P. HORDEN, N. PURCELL, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford and Malden MA 2000, pp. 397, 399 and R.S. LOPEZ, *Du marché temporaire à la colonie permanente: l’évolution de la politique commerciale au moyen âge*, in “Annales. Économies – Sociétés – Civilisations”, 4, 1949, n. 4, pp. 389-405, 404-405.

<sup>4</sup> O. CONSTABLE, *Housing*, cit., pp. 153-157. P. SPUFFORD, *Power and Profit. The Merchant in Medieval Europe*, London 2002, p. 352.

<sup>5</sup> *Caravanserai*, representing an oriental notion, is the term most used in Italian sources concerning the medieval settlements around the Black Sea. The other term used in these sources is *castrum*, which emphasizes the importance of defense. The term *funduq* or *fondaco*, representing a juridical notion, appears relatively late in these sources. Kind remark of S.P. Karpov. See for example S.P. KARPOV, *Grecs et Latins à Trébizonde (XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle) Collaboration économique, rapports politiques in État et colonisation au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*, ed. M. BALARD, Lyon 1989, pp. 413-424, 415.

<sup>6</sup> O. CONSTABLE, *Housing*, cit., pp. 6-7. For an example of the fiscal intervention in case of the *fondaco* for the Germans in Venice: *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World. Illustrative Documents* R.S. LOPEZ, I.W. RAYMOND eds., New York 2001, pp. 85-86.

<sup>7</sup> O. CONSTABLE, *Housing*, cit., p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357.

Constable concluded that ‘these two models [– the medieval model of *funduqs* and *fondacos* and early modern colonialism –] of economic and political mediation between locals and foreigners may, in fact, have been largely incompatible.’<sup>9</sup>

Before Constable, historians such as Philip D. Curtin and David Abulafia did not question the continuity between the medieval *funduq* and *fondaco* and the early modern factory. According to Curtin the first factories were founded in Flanders, mostly by foreign communities, like Catalans, Genoese, Venetians and the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup> According to Abulafia, ‘The Catalan model for the creation of trading stations (*feitórias*) (under the authority of a Crown appointee) was adopted by the Portuguese as they sailed down the coast of Africa, creating trading stations in Arguin and Elmina (1481-1482).’ Abulafia concluded that ‘the *consulate* was not a medieval institution that withered away: it continued to provide a model for those who sought to make contact with new worlds around 1500’.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Curtin’s focus is on the southern European communities in Bruges, whereas Abulafia establishes a connection between the Catalans and the Portuguese with a particular focus on the role of consuls and consulates.

This begs the question whether or not continuity existed between the medieval *funduq* and *fondaco* on the one hand, and the early modern European factories overseas on the other.<sup>12</sup> Did the *funduqs* and *fondacos* remain a Mediterranean phenomenon that died out after a long tradition originating in Late Antiquity, or did the medieval Mediterranean model of *funduqs* and *fondacos* continue in the early modern era through its exportation or diaspora in the wake of European overseas expansion? In order to answer this question, the possible connections between the medieval *funduqs* and *fondacos* and the Portuguese *feitoria* in Bruges, and the later ones overseas will be investigated.<sup>13</sup> The aim of this contribution is to test whether Con-

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111, 357.

<sup>10</sup> P.D. CURTIN, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 4, 38. See for instance on the Genoese nation in Bruges B. LAMBERT, *De Genuese aanwezigheid in laatmiddeleeuws Brugge (1435-1495) Een laboratorium voor de studie van instellingen en hun rol in de economische geschiedenis*, PhD Gent University 2011, pp. 25-30.

<sup>11</sup> ‘It was probably with the same idea in mind, of creating a trading station perched on the edge of an alien empire, that Ferdinand and Isabella provided Christopher Columbus with letters addressed to the Great Khan, whom he hoped to find on his voyage across the Atlantic in 1492.’ D. ABULAFIA, *The Consular Networks in the Mediterranean: Function, Origins and Development in Mediterraneanum. Splendour of the Medieval Mediterranean, 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Barcelona 2004, pp. 339-351, 351.

<sup>12</sup> Examples of literature stressing continuity: G.V. SCAMMELL, *The World Encompassed. The first European Maritime Empires, c. 800-1650*, London 1981. F. FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO, *Pathfinders. A Global History of Exploration*, New York and London 2006.

<sup>13</sup> The possible Italian and Catalan contributions to the transfer of the Mediterranean institutions to the Atlantic will not be discussed within the limited space of this paper. The Italian and wider Mediterranean contribution to Portuguese and Spanish overseas expansion is widely accepted. Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders*, cit., p. 119. V. M. GODINHO, *La Méditerranée dans l’horizon des Européens de l’Atlantique*, in ‘Revista de História Económica e Social’, 17, 1986, pp. 21-51, 29, 31-33, 46. P. RUSSELL, *Prince Henry ‘the Navigator’. A life*, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 58-59. For the transfer of the Portuguese fiscal system see Filipa RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Transferring European Fiscal System Overseas: A Comparison between the Portuguese Home and Colonial Fiscal Systems in La fiscalità nell’economia europea secc. XIII-XVIII = Fiscal systems in the European economy from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: atti della “Trentanovesima settimana di studi”*, 22- 26 aprile 2007, ed. S. Cavaciocchi, 2008, pp. 545-567.

stable's model of 'institutional genealogy' can be applied to the Portuguese *feitoria* or whether some institutional connection can be detected between the Mediterranean *funduqs* and *fondacos* on the one hand and the Portuguese *feitorias* on the other.

#### A FEITORIA IN FLANDERS

To determine whether the Portuguese *feitoria* represents 'a missing link' between the medieval *funduqs* and *fondacos* and the early modern factories overseas, the focus will first be on Flanders: a region in which Portuguese merchants had conducted trade since the twelfth century.<sup>14</sup> The county became one of Portugal's main trading partners till the end of the Middle Ages. In the wake of the presence of other foreign nations in Flanders' 'international' metropole, Bruges, the Portuguese gradually developed institutions to support this trade.<sup>15</sup>

Ivana Elbl has convincingly reconstructed the development of these institutions. She distinguished the *bolsa*, the 'nation' and the *feitoria* or 'factory'.<sup>16</sup> Since the divergent views on the relevance of these medieval institutions for the early modern factories overseas may be partly due to misunderstandings about their meaning, it is important to properly clarify the distinctions between these institutions. The *bolsa* was a voluntary association of merchants involved in foreign trade, which was established under the patronage of the Portuguese Crown to serve the individual needs of the Portuguese trading community. The merchant nation comprised merchants from a geographical area speaking a common language. They were often subjects of the same political entity, in this case Portugal. The nation represented the corporate body to the host country's authorities. According to Elbl 'bolsa and nation were thus closely connected in their functions as representative bodies of the Portuguese merchants in Flanders. The *bolsa*, as an internal executive organ of the nation, received legal sanction from the Portuguese Crown; the nation was sanctioned by the host political authority.' The latter recognized the Portuguese nation in 1411. In 1438 the Burgundian Count of Flanders, Duke Philip the Good, granted the Portuguese nation the right to elect consuls – which represented the consulate of the nation – amongst the members of the community.<sup>17</sup>

Other foreign trading communities in Flanders (and elsewhere) were organized similarly, but the Portuguese case holds an original characteristic: the Crown became involved in foreign trade both as protector and regulator on the one hand, and as a direct participant on the other. The regulatory role of the king in the trade

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<sup>14</sup> F. MIRANDA, *Before the empire: Portugal and the Atlantic trade in the late Middle Ages*, in "Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies", 5, 2013, pp. 1-17, 6, 9.

<sup>15</sup> A convenient schematic diagram of their presence is offered by O. GELDERBLON, *Cities of Commerce. The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250-1650*, Princeton 2013, pp. 110.

<sup>16</sup> I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 12-15, 20-21 (citation). J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais à Bruges in International Trade in the Low Countries (14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries). Merchants, Organisation, Infrastructure. Proceedings of the International Conference Ghent-Antwerp, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> January 1997*, P. STABEL, B. BLONDÉ, A. GREVE eds., Leuven-Apeldoorn 1997, pp. 55-74, 56-58.

with Flanders was carried out by a so-called *feitor*, or royal factor, who acted as a business agent of the king. The use of the terms *feitor*, its plural form *feitores*, and *feitoria*, which is derived from *feitor*, has led to confusion amongst Portuguese historians like Oliveira Marques and Nunes Dias, as well as foreign historians like Philip Curtin, Bailey Diffie and George Winius. So as to avoid wading into this confusion, suffice it to say it resulted in an overestimation of the role of the Portuguese king in the Portuguese trade with Flanders. Elbl, whose vision is shared by most historians, including Sajay Subrahmanyam<sup>18</sup>, who convincingly unraveled this confusion by showing that the factor of the Portuguese king in Flanders was nothing else than the factor or agent of a company branch abroad, distinct from the main office. In other words, the *feitoria* in Flanders put the Portuguese Crown's direct involvement in the trade with Flanders 'on a formal business footing'.<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between the various Portuguese institutions in Bruges is furthermore supported by the location of these institutions in time. Contrary to what some historians, including Elbl, thought, there is no evidence of the existence of a house of the Portuguese nation prior to 1493.<sup>20</sup> This corresponds perfectly with the historical reality that Portuguese merchants preferred to stay in their usual local hostels.<sup>21</sup> Private brokers-hostelers offered several advantages such as greater flexibility, stronger motivation to provide good service and insider familiarity with the prevailing market conditions.<sup>22</sup> If a 'House of the Portuguese nation' did exist before 1493, which would not have been exceptional<sup>23</sup>, Elbl may be right in concluding that it never 'fully acquired the function of a funduk or even a merchant hall'.<sup>24</sup>

The political turmoil in Flanders at the end of the fifteenth century allows us to distinguish more clearly between the Portuguese nation and the royal *feitor*. As a consequence of the Flemish Revolt against Maximilian of Austria who was not recognized by the States of Flanders as regent of the young Philip the Fair, most for-

<sup>18</sup> S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700*, Chichester 2012, pp. 49-50.

<sup>19</sup> See I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., pp. 3-6 for further details.

<sup>20</sup> A. VANDEWALLE, *Het natiebuis van de Portugezen te Brugge op het einde van de vijftiende eeuw in Getuigen in de polderklei. Huldeboek dr. Hist. Godgaf Dalle*, J. HERREGAT, F. BECUWE, J. VAN ACKER eds., Veurne 1990, pp. 171-180, 171, 173, 176. Former municipal archivist of Bruges, Vandewalle is most familiar with the sources relating to Bruges' local topography.

<sup>21</sup> Some of the older literature has wrongly related houses of private Portuguese individuals in Bruges with institutions like the Portuguese nation or *feitor*. I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., pp. 16-18 based her arguments concerning the successive locations of 'the Portuguese House' partly on this literature and therefore is incorrect on this point. On these legendary locations see A. Vandewalle, *Het natiebuis*, cit., 171-180, 177-178. J. EVERAERT, *De Portugese factorijen in Vlaanderen in Feitorias. Kunst in Portugal ten tijde van de Grote Ontdekkingen (eind 14<sup>de</sup> eeuw tot 1548)*, Antwerp 1991, pp. 42-52, 43. See also A. VANDEWALLE, *Introduction au colloque Flandre-Portugal 15<sup>e</sup>-18<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in "Handelingen voor het genootschap voor geschiedenis gesticht onder de benaming 'Société d'Émulation te Brugge'", 132, 1995, n. 3, pp. 221-230, 227-229 and A. VANDEWALLE, *De huizen "Poorteghale" en "den Schilt van Portugael"*, in "Archiefleven", 2, 1995, n. 4, pp. 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., pp. 16-17.

<sup>23</sup> Most Italian nations (Venice, Genoa, Lucca, Florence) did have proper houses in Bruges in the fourteenth century. P. STABEL, *De gewenste vreemdeling*, in "Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse Geschiedenis", 4, 2001, pp. 189-221, 212-213.

<sup>24</sup> I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., pp. 16-17.

eign nations left Bruges for Antwerp, which was to become the new international metropole of the Netherlands. This development was stimulated by Maximilian of Austria, who supported Antwerp in attracting the foreign nations with extensive privileges.<sup>25</sup> Some nations, amongst whom were the Portuguese, were invited to return to Bruges. To attract the Portuguese, Bruges offered them privileges and a residence that the city had bought for them in 1493 in the Ridderstraat to hold their meetings and to stock their merchandise. Interestingly the royal *feitoria* moved from Bruges to Antwerp in 1499, while the small Portuguese nation split up in 1510-1511. Following which, most of the Portuguese merchants also moved to Antwerp leaving but a few families to remain in Bruges until 1518.<sup>26</sup> All this points to the *feitoria* and the nation being different institutions.

A recent suggestion that the *feitoria* and the nation merged into one was based on the fact that in 1470, Álvaro Dinis, who appears as Portugal's most important merchant in Bruges, combined the functions of royal *feitor* and consul.<sup>27</sup> As in 1470, no less than four consuls were active<sup>28</sup>, making it hard to believe that Dinis was able to control the nation on behalf of the king. This may have been the first time these functions were combined, but not the last. Around the middle of the sixteenth century the *feitor* occasionally acted as one of the consuls of the Portuguese nation, which was then based in Antwerp, but this did not imply that the royal factor controlled the nation.<sup>29</sup> In light of this, the idea that the *feitor* and the nation became one and the same must be dismissed.

Three phases can be distinguished in the interference of the kings of Portugal in the trade with Flanders. First, at least as early as the thirteenth century, the Portuguese kings stimulated and protected the trade of their subjects in Flanders. Second, in the late fourteenth century the Crown began trading with Flanders directly. This trade was carried out by the 1390's by royal envoys, shipmasters or agents on a

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<sup>25</sup> J. MARÉCHAL, *Le départ de Bruges des marchands étrangers (XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)* in IDEM, *Europese aanwezigheid te Brugge. De vreemde kolonies (XIV<sup>de</sup>-XVI<sup>de</sup> eeuw)*. Vlaamse historische studies 3, Bruges 1985, pp. 180-210. W.P. BLOCKMANS, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee. De geschiedenis van Nederland, 1100-1560*, Amsterdam 2010, p. 555-556. O. GELDERBLOM, *Cities of Commerce*, cit., pp. 28-29. B. WILLEMS, *Militaire organisatie en staatsvorming aan de vooravond van de Nieuwe Tijd. Een analyse van het conflict tussen Brabant en Maximiliaan van Oostenrijk (1488-1489)*, in "Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis", 1, 1998, pp. 260-286, 265. For the wider context see J. HAEMERS, *For the Common Good. State Power and Urban Revolts in the Reign of Mary of Burgundy (1477-1482)*, Turnhout 2009, and IDEM, *De strijd om het regentschap over Filips de Schone. Opstand, facties en geweld in Brugge, Gent en Ieper (1482-1488)*, Turnhout 2015.

<sup>26</sup> J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit., pp. 55-74, 57. A. VANDEWALLE, *Het natiehuis*, cit., pp. 173, 177.

<sup>27</sup> F. MIRANDA, *Portugal and the medieval Atlantic. Commercial Diplomacy, Merchants, and Trade, 1143-1488*, PhD Porto 2012, p. 196. Compare J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit., pp. 69, 71, 73-74 who does indicate Álvaro Dinis as consul and *feitor* in 1470, but considers both as separate institutions and doubts whether the latter played a role as protector of the Portuguese nation. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., p. 19, was thus incorrect that a royal factor never served as elected consul of the Portuguese in Bruges, but her argument that they were separate institutions remains valid.

<sup>28</sup> F. MIRANDA, *Portugal*, cit., p. 191.

<sup>29</sup> J.A. GORIS, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567 Contribution à l'histoire des débuts du capitalisme moderne*, Leuven 1925, pp. 39, 41-42, 49, 51, 53-54. L. SICKING, *Los grupos de intereses marítimos de la Península Ibérica en la ciudad de Amberes: la gestión de riesgos y la navegación en el siglo XVI*, in *Gentes de mar en la ciudad Atlántica medieval*, J. SOLORZANO TELECHEA, M. BOCHACA, A. AGUIAR ANDRADE eds., Logroño 2012, pp. 167-199, 175-176.

venture basis. Third, in the fifteenth century, as the Portuguese expanded along the coast of Africa, the involvement of the Crown with the Portuguese trade in Flanders increased dramatically. African gold and valuable African commodities like ivory and sugar from Madeira were sold in Flanders.<sup>30</sup>

How does the development of the Portuguese *feitoria* in Flanders fit into these phases? As the royal trade grew in the first half of the fifteenth century, the need for permanent representation became acute. The first *feitor* or royal factor in Bruges, Vasco Afonso, is mentioned in 1416-1417, who, according to Paviot – having more refined data at this disposal than Elbl<sup>31</sup> – resided there permanently, which corresponds with the start of the third phase.<sup>32</sup> As Flavio Miranda observed, in 1415 not a single merchant or ship from Portugal was recorded in Flanders, a result of all the ships being chartered to transport troops to Africa for the assault on Ceuta in that year.<sup>33</sup> Is it a coincidence that a *feitor* was appointed in Flanders in 1416? He may have been appointed to relaunch the Portuguese trade with Flanders, which, evidently, had come to a standstill.

Pedro Eanes, who had been responsible for delivering the dowry of Isabel of Portugal to Philip the Good after their marriage in 1430, was appointed *feitor* in 1441. Despite leaving office in 1443, possibly due to internal political problems in Portugal, he was involved in several business and financial transactions of the king. Besides acquiring luxury goods for the Portuguese court, he became involved in massive purchases of war materials, which could reflect a shift in the orientation of the Crown's interest in the trade with Flanders.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps from 1451, but certainly from 1456 onwards, a royal *feitor* permanently resided in Bruges once more.<sup>35</sup> From the middle of the fifteenth century onwards the rise of the African overseas trade changed the nature of the Crown's trade with Flanders. It became strongly oriented towards the purchase of products for the manufacture of armaments and merchandise for the African trade.<sup>36</sup> This increased the importance of the *feitoria* in Flanders in the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., pp. 2, 6. F. MIRANDA, *Before the empire*, cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> See the source publication *Portugal et Bourgogne au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Recueil de documents extraits des archives bourguignonnes (1384-1482)*, ed J. PAVIOT, Lisbon and Paris 1995, doc. n. 52 p. 181.

<sup>32</sup> J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit., p. 71.

<sup>33</sup> F. MIRANDA, *Before the empire*, cit. p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., p. 7. J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit., p. 71. Pedro Eanes also acted as secretary in the household of Isabel of Portugal. M. SOMMÉ, *Isabelle de Portugal, duchesse de Bourgogne. Une femme au pouvoir au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 1998, pp. 30, 102.

<sup>35</sup> J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit., p. 71. I. ELBL, *Nation*, cit., p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9. J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit., pp. 70-71. IDEM, *Bruges et le Portugal*, in *Les marchands de la Hanse et la banque des Médicis. Bruges, marché d'échanges culturels en Europe*, ed. A. VANDEWALLE, Bruges 2002, pp. 45-49, 45.

<sup>37</sup> J. PAVIOT, *Les Portugais*, cit. pp. 70-71.

## FEITORIAS IN AFRICA AND ASIA

It was this institution, the *feitoria*, that was exported to Africa. The first one was located at Arguin island, off the coast of present day Mauretania, where the Portuguese went as early as 1441 or 1442.<sup>38</sup> Between 1445 and 1455 a fortress was built, which is considered the starting point of the *feitoria*.<sup>39</sup> In 1433, Prince Henry ‘the Navigator’ was granted a monopoly over the trade and territories in West-Africa, including the Atlantic islands, that remained in his hands until his death in 1460.<sup>40</sup> By the 1450’s the management of commercial monopolies was leased to private companies, like Prince Henry had done in 1455 with the trade at the Arguin *feitoria* over a ten year period. The factors of the leaseholders of the Arguin trade resided in the fortress and traded with Arabs and Africans from the African mainland,<sup>41</sup> which implies that the trading station originally must have had some of the characteristics of a Mediterranean *fondaco*. After Prince Henry’s death in 1460 the Portuguese *feitoria* was brought under direct or indirect control of the Crown.<sup>42</sup> The main ‘commodity’ traded at Arguin were slaves from Guinea imported by the trans-Saharan caravans. After attempts to acquire slaves by seaborne *raças* yielded meagre results, peaceful trading soon turned the island into the main center for the Portuguese slave trade between 1450-1464, and was responsible for several hundred slaves annually in the fifteenth century and up to 1340 per year in the 1517-1520 period.<sup>43</sup>

A second *feitoria* in Africa was founded in 1482 at São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) on the Gold Coast. By now, the new king, João II (1481-1495), who, while still a prince, had taken control of the entire African enterprise by 1474, and combined ‘the Crown as business entity [that is the *feitoria*], and the Crown as imperial monopolist.’ The new installation was housed in a castle built partially from stones precut in Portugal, and its walls served both to protect the *feitoria* from native at-

<sup>38</sup> *Chronique de Guinée (1453) de Gomes Eanes de Zurara*, L. BOURDON, J. PAVIOT eds., Dijon 1994, p. 304, 310, n.1. On the importance of the island and its *feitoria* for the Portuguese A.R. DISNEY, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire. 2. The Portuguese Empire*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 31-32, 45-47. I. ARMENTEROS MARTINEZ, *Cataluña en la primera economía atlántica (c. 1470-1540)*, Barcelona and Lleida 2012, 69 n. 132.

<sup>39</sup> *Chronique de Guinée*, cit., pp. 295, 310 n.12. F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa. Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674*, Leiden and Boston 2011, p. 84. P. RUSSELL, *Prince Henry*, cit., pp. 206-207, 210. J.A.M. TORRES, *Politics and Colonial Discourse in the Spanish Empire: The African Atlantic Possessions, 1575-1630*, in “Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas – Anuario de Historia de America Latina”, 51, 2014, pp. 113-149, 122. Godinho dated the beginning of the *feitoria* between 1455 and 1461. See B.W. DIFFIE, G.D. WINIUS, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580*, Minneapolis 1977, p. 98, n.7. An example of a reference to ‘feitoria de Arguim’ in a primary source to in 1508: I. ELBL, *The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade, 1450-1521*, in “Journal of African History”, 38, 1997, pp. 31-75, 36, n. 15.

<sup>40</sup> By his brother Duarte I according to B.W. DIFFIE, G.D. WINIUS, *Foundations*, cit., p. 65 and P. RUSSELL, *Prince Henry*, cit., pp. 92-93. By his father, King João I (1385-1433) according to F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese*, cit., p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85 n.139. P. RUSSELL, *Prince Henry*, cit., pp. 206-207.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>43</sup> A.R. DISNEY, *A History of Portugal*, cit., p. 46. For a detailed analysis I. ELBL, *The volume*, cit., pp. 42-44, 63-66. P. RUSSELL, *Prince Henry*, cit., pp. 210-211.



tacks and ‘to serve notice on would-be traders’.<sup>44</sup> The king’s own employees were the only personnel authorized to trade there (until the late sixteenth century), which supports the argument in favor of the continuity between the *feitoria* in Flanders and those in Africa and Asia. The king also took control of the *feitoria* at Arguin.<sup>45</sup> While the first *feitoria* founded in Africa, the one in Arguin, resembled the Mediterranean *fondaco*, after 1460 the Crown took over control and it was thus the *feitoria* in its narrow ‘royal’ sense that was to multiply and further develop in Africa and Asia. In this respect one can agree with Diffie and Winius that these first African *feitorias* were ‘modeled to a large degree upon the one at Bruges’.<sup>46</sup>

The government of both Arguin and Elmina had a similar structure: a captain, appointed by the king, who was responsible for all matters, including administration, defense, justice, trade and finance. His duties extended to diplomatic responsibilities; namely, the establishing and maintaining of relations with local rulers and serving as an intermediary in conflicts. Some of the captain’s functions are comparable to those carried out by consuls of merchant nations. In West Africa the captain often held the posts of *feitor* and *ouvidor* or high judicial official. The *feitor* was not only responsible for the trade on behalf of the Crown, but for controlling the private merchants who possessed royal licenses allowing them to trade. The royal monopoly was thus not completely closed to private entrepreneurship.<sup>47</sup>

As the Portuguese moved down the African coast and rounded the Cape of Good Hope, they founded *feitorias* in São Tomé in 1509, and in the Cape Verde Islands of Santiago and Fogo in 1520 and 1535 respectively. The Guinea-Bissau region got a floating *feitória* at the mouth of the São Domingos River in 1534. *Feitorias* were opened on the Swahili coast (at Sofala, Mozambique and Malindi), and in India at Calicut in 1500 (although the latter turned out to be short-lived), at Cochin in 1503 and later on at several trading centres like Goa, Malacca, Ormuze, Ceylon and Ternate.<sup>48</sup> Filipa Ribeiro da Silva has argued that from the late fifteenth century onward, ‘the commercial and fiscal organization of the Portuguese Atlantic Empire shifted from a monopoly operated by commercial agents of the Portuguese Crown [i.e. *feitores*] to a trading framework controlled by private merchants and supervised by royal officials.’<sup>49</sup> The Crown gave highest priority to India, although even here

<sup>44</sup> B.W. DIFFIE, G.D. WINIUS, *Foundations*, cit., pp. 314-315 (citations). A.R. DISNEY, *A History of Portugal*, cit., p. 57. For the construction and its local context J. BATO’ORA BALLONG-WEN-MEWUDA, *São Jorge da Mina, 1482-1637 I*, Lisbon and Paris 1993, pp. 64-70.

<sup>45</sup> I. ELBL, *The volume*, cit., p. 62. I. ARMENTEROS MARTÍNEZ, *Cataluña*, cit., p. 100.

<sup>46</sup> B.W. DIFFIE, G.D. WINIUS, *Foundations*, cit., pp. 314-315.

<sup>47</sup> F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese*, cit., pp. 39-40, 82-83, 85 n. 139. B.W. DIFFIE, G.D. WINIUS, *Foundations*, cit., p. 310. I. ELBL, *The volume*, cit., pp. 55-56. J. BATO’ORA BALLONG-WEN-MEWUDA, *São Jorge da Mina*, cit., pp. 163, 170-171, 174.

<sup>48</sup> B.W. DIFFIE, G.D. WINIUS, *Foundations*, cit., p. 315. F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese*, cit., pp. 82, 85, n. 141. F. BETHENCOURT, *Political Configurations and Local Powers in Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800*, F. BETHENCOURT, D.R. CURTO eds., Cambridge 2007, pp. 197-254, 200-201. A.R. DISNEY, *A History of Portugal*, cit., p. 127. See for an example of the composition of the staff of a *feitória* that of Sofala which counted fifteen persons in 1506: V. RAU, *Feitores e feitorias – “Instrumentos” do comércio internacional português no século XVI*, in “Brotéria”, 81, 1965, pp. 458-478, 463-464.

<sup>49</sup> F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese*, cit., pp. 85, 92 (citation).

the royal monopoly was somewhat relaxed with regard to the trade of some spices in the course of the sixteenth century. In all the Crown transformed from a 'mercantile monarchy to a bureaucratic entity'.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time the *feitoria* was adapted to fit African and Asian circumstances which were different from those in Europe: a different climate and environment, different peoples and cultures and related problems, conflicts and hostilities. In order to create conditions to foster trade and to acquire local riches and products and to sell European products, military and naval support was often indispensable. Furthermore the *feitorias* differed according to local society. In my view, this does not contradict Constable's approach of institutional genealogy as she recognized that alongside common features, the institutional group she investigated is also 'filled with diversity and variation'.<sup>51</sup>

In the more advanced markets, in India for example, *feitorias* resembled their Mediterranean predecessors, the *fundacos*, but in remote or hostile places, additional safety measures were necessary.<sup>52</sup> For example, the conditions under which the Portuguese constructed Elmina castle clearly indicate that its walls were constructed with a mind to protect its inhabitants against local resistance. The combination of a factory and a fortress – J. Bato'ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda uses the expression 'factorerie-forteresse' for Elmina<sup>53</sup> – does not represent something new. Christian *fundacos* in Muslim territories were often surrounded by walls. Fortification of factories also took place in the Greek world. The Venetians and Genoese for example each fortified their *fundacos* in Trebizond on the Black Sea in the fourteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

An indirect argument in favor of continuity is also offered by Elbl's more recent observation that many historians tend to consider 'the overseas enterprise of the Portuguese Crown as a substantial innovation in commercial capitalism.' She argues instead that, in connection with its African enterprise, the decisions and strategies of the Crown 'were based on continuity with pre-existing practices and administrative methods, rather than on innovation and change.'<sup>55</sup> This evidence, alongside Constable's point<sup>56</sup> on the use of the term *feitoria* – derived from *feitor* in the Portuguese language and context and used in other languages like Dutch (*fac-*

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<sup>50</sup> F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese*, cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>51</sup> O. CONSTABLE, *Housing*, cit., p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> V. RAU, *Feitores e feitorias*, cit., pp. 458-478, 465-466. For a detailed description of the Portuguese administration of the settlements in West-Africa in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and sixteenth centuries see F. RIBEIRO DA SILVA, *Dutch and Portuguese*, cit., pp. 38-69, 82-93.

<sup>53</sup> J. BATO'ORA BALLONG-WEN-MEWUDA, *São Jorge da Mina*, cit., p. 65.

<sup>54</sup> S. KARPOV, *Grecs et Latins*, cit., p. 415.

<sup>55</sup> I. ELBL, *The Kings Business in Africa: Decisions and Strategies of the Portuguese Crown in Money, Markets and Trade in Late Medieval Europe*, L. ARMSTRONG, I. ELBL, M.M. ELBL eds., Leiden-Boston 2007, pp. 89-118, 90.

<sup>56</sup> 'The use of a particular word – and especially the adoption of a word from one language and context into another – demonstrates its utility and relevance as reference.' O. CONSTABLE, *Housing*, cit., pp. 5-6.

torij)<sup>57</sup> and English (*factory*) for overseas factories – does imply that an institution was meant with some functional continuity.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to determine whether or not a continuity existed between the medieval institutional family of *funduqs* and *fondacos* found in the Mediterranean, and overseas factories characteristic of the early modern period. Using Constable's model of institutional genealogy, I argued that the Portuguese *feitoria* should be considered the link between these institutions, thus confirming the visions expressed by Curtin, Diffie and Winius and others. The participation of the Portuguese Crown in long-distance or overseas trade, both with Flanders and West Africa, via *feitores*, complicated the argument. The royal *feitor* in Bruges was after all distinct from the Portuguese nation and consuls there. Nevertheless, it is clear that in the time of Henry the Navigator, the *feitoria* at Arguin possessed the characteristics of a *fondaco*, because private merchants used the *feitoria* to trade with locals from the African mainland. Following Constable's method, the use of the term *feitoria* further supports the argument of continuity. The Portuguese *feitorias* subsequently founded in Africa and Asia developed further according to diverse circumstances. In Asia, several resembled the *funduqs* and *fondacos* of the Mediterranean, that is they shared more or less the same functions. Furthermore, it is evident that the interference of the Portuguese Crown with long-distance or overseas trade is of medieval origin while medieval methods continued to be used overseas.

To what extent the Portuguese were inspired by the Catalans in the Mediterranean – as suggested by Abulafia<sup>58</sup> – has not been discussed here but remains an intriguing question. The Italians may also have served as inspiration for the Portuguese in the numerous locations where Italian nations could be found, Bruges not being the least example. Italians present in Portugal may also have been of importance in this respect.<sup>59</sup>

Merchants operating at long-distances from their hometown or country, their rulers, and the rulers of the places where they traded, pursued their own interests in the trading stations known under a variety of names, including *funduq*, *fondaco*, *feitoria* and *factory*. In most cases at least two – the foreign merchants or companies and the local ruler – and in many cases all three parties benefited from these stations. These stations together represent the globalisation of institutions of overseas trade, a process to which the Portuguese made a significant contribution.

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<sup>57</sup> The Dutch word 'factorij' is derived from the French 'factorie'. *Woordenboek der Nederlandse taal*. Although nowadays the French word is 'comptoir', in seventeenth-century French sources the word 'factorerie' was used.

<sup>58</sup> D. ABULAFIA, *The Consular Networks*, cit., p. 351.

<sup>59</sup> J. SEQUEIRA, F. MIRANDA, 'A Port of Two Seas' *Lisbon and European Maritime Networks in the Fifteenth Century*, in this volume.