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PORTUGUESE *CONVERSOS* AND THE MANUELINE IMPERIAL IDEA – A PRELIMINARY STUDY*

by
CLAUDE B. STUCZYNSKI**

Iberian *conversos*: victims, agents and thinkers of empire

In order to explain why Iberian *conversos* (along with Western Sephardim from *converso* descent) were so prominent in Early Modern world economies, Jonathan I. Israel depicted them as being “simultaneously agents and victims of empire”, as far as they were directly or indirectly interrelated with Sephardic-Jewish businessmen.¹ On the one hand, they were Catholic offspring of Sephardi Jews – often baptized through violence and mass coercion –, who lived under Inquisitorial suspicion and social exclusion. On the other hand, their Catholic genuine or feigned public religious identity enabled them to play a central role in far-reaching Sephardic economic networks that included the vast and rich Iberian imperial domains, which were mostly forbidden to official Jews. This paradoxical interdependence explains why the collapse of the Spanish and Portuguese empires and their replacement by other European powers in the second half of the 18th century, led to undermine the economic influence of Iberian *conversos* and Western Sephardim. I will argue that this was only one aspect of the intense relationship between Iberian *conversos* and Early Modern Iberian empires. Another one is that *conversos* were both objects and subjects of Iberian imperial ideological thinking. Among other, I will claim they were instrumental in the revival of King Manuel I’s imperial ideology, during the time of the Hapsburg

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¹ Jonathan I. ISRAEL, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550-1750*, Oxford, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998.

Iberian Union (1580-1640).² According to Luís Filipe Thomaz, from the end of the 15th century until the beginnings of the 16th century strong millenarian imperial ideologies were elaborated in the court of King D. Manuel I; similarly as those developed by Christopher Columbus in his maritime voyages on behalf of the Kingdom of Castile. Accordingly, this “Manueline imperial idea” endorsed the claim according to which the success of Portuguese discoveries and subsequent colonial wealth in Africa, India and Brazil were both signs of the coming End of Times and of Portugal’s election by God to fulfill a major role in spreading the Gospel around the Globe.³ A revival of this ideology occurred during Portugal’s dynastical union with Habsburg’s Spain (1580-1640), as both a way to stress Habsburg’s continuity as Portuguese kings and as a tool of expressing the need to revitalize Portugal’s falling economy and society through the model of King Manuel I’s imperial project.⁴ In this preliminary study, I will argue that some leading Portuguese *converso* businessmen played a major role in the revival of the “Manueline imperial idea” and that this was part of some attempts to be integrated into the Portuguese society and of being promoted within Old Christian elites. That said, I will add, these attempts finally failed due to anti-*converso* prejudice and to the corporative character of the Portuguese society, in which Catholics from Jewish origins were perceived either as hidden, potential and fuzzy “Jews” or, especially, as Catholic “Jewish non-Jews”. I believe that this last term, coined by Isaac Deutscher but employed here in a different way,⁵ will be particularly useful to understand why Portuguese *conversos* led the revival of the “Manueline imperial idea” and why they failed to convince that Portugal’s restoration to its past grandeur much depended on *converso* contribution as skilled and wealthy entrepreneurs.

Let us remind that, chronologically speaking, the formation of the *converso* phenomenon was immediately followed by the rapid transformation of the peripheral Christian kingdoms of Spain and Portugal into powerful colonial seaborne empires. In Portugal’s case, the two phenomena occurred almost synchronically.⁶ No wonder that some Iberian theologians and apologues

² On Portuguese ideologies of Early Modern empire, see the comprehensive study of: Giuseppe MARCOCCI, *A Consciência de Um Império. Portugal e o seu mundo (sécs. XV-XVIII)*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2012.

³ Luís Filipe F. R. THOMAZ, “L’idée imperiale manueline”, in Jean Aubin (ed.), *La découverte, le Portugal et l’Europe*, Paris, Centre Calouste Gulbenkian, 1990, pp. 35-103. Cf. Margarida Garcez VENTURA, *O Messias de Lisboa. Um estudo de mitologia política (1383-1415)*, Lisboa, Cosmos, 1992; Manuel J. GANDRA, *Joaquim de Fiore, Joaquimismo e Esperança Sebástica*, Lisboa, Fundação Lusíada, 1999.

⁴ Fernando BOUZA, *Felipe II y el Portugal dos Povos. Imágenes de esperanza y revuelta*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 2010.

⁵ Isaac DEUTSCHER, *Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, ed. Tamara Deutscher, London & New York, Oxford University Press, 1968.

⁶ Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History*, London and New York, Longman, 1993, esp. chapters 1-3.

made causal links, claiming that the discovery of America by Columbus or the constitution of a wealthy “Estado da Índia” from Eastern Africa to South-Eastern Asia, were rewards given by God to the Spanish Catholic monarchs and to the Portuguese king for having expelled and/or converted the Jews. Recent scholarship confirms that King Manuel I’s decision to forcibly baptize the Jews of his realms in 1497 had to do with a geopolitical strategy to appease frictions and differences with the eastern Castilian neighbor – including a similar end to the “Jewish problem” – in order to fully invest into the promising western maritime enterprises.⁷ Prominent ideological and political figures of the late 15th century, such as the confessor of Queen Isabel, Fray Hernando de Talavera, or members of the Portuguese Court including King Manuel I, perceived the mass conversion of Jews and Muslims, the rapid evangelical missions outside the peninsula, along with the successful transoceanic discoveries and conquests, as intertwined signs of God’s election of the Iberian kingdoms as leading competing forces aimed to enforce mankind’s Christian unity, according to the theological-political prophecy: “and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). These providential-confessional views were enriched by the “Ghibelline” imperialism of Charles V and by projects of consolidation of a Catholic “universal monarchy” under Philip II.⁸ They were further adapted to later Iberian restorative ideologies of empire (such as Portuguese “Barrism” and “Sebastianism”) created out of a deep self-perception of crisis and decline. Thus, imbued with strong “Joachimite” millenarian overtones and secular mercantile considerations, the Jesuit Father António Vieira subsumed the return of 17th century Portugal to its lost imperial and evangelical grandeur and to the social integration of the useful *conversos* who were unjustly treated by the Old Christian entourage and persecuted by the biased Inquisition. Claiming that, Vieira was facing a counter-claim: that the actual crisis was God’s punishment of the Iberian kingdoms for being so lenient towards the *converso* “heretic” minority. Late Medieval and Early Modern Iberian ideologies of empire, particularly those insisting on the providential role assigned to Catholic Spain and Portugal as “chosen peoples”, perceived the *converso* phenomenon as a trustful barometer for measuring success and failure of colonial enterprises.⁹ I will explore those writings and sources written by Catholic *conversos* in which they assigned themselves a fundamental positive role within Iberian projects of empire, mostly as successful Catholic businessmen from the “Hebrew nation”. In this

⁷ Claude B. STUCZYNSKI, “Providentialism in Early Modern Catholic Iberia: Competing Influences of Hebrew Political Traditions”, *Hebraic Political Studies*, Vol. 3, 2008, pp. 377-395; François SOYER, *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal: King Manuel I and the End of Religious Tolerance (1496-7)*, Leyden, Brill, 2007.

⁸ Thomas James DANDELET, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

⁹ C. B. STUCZYNSKI, “Iberian and Political Paulinism”, *Zemanim*, Vol. 118, 2012, pp. 74-81.

perspective I will reinterpret the writings of the Portuguese *converso* merchant Duarte Gomes Solis that until now were studied as mere byproducts of *converso* Mercantilism. I will relate Gomes Solis's writings to a specific sub-group of *converso* businessmen living in Lisbon at the beginning of the 17th century, who aimed to advance commerce in the "Estado da Índia" and in colonial Brazil as a way of contributing to the recovery of the Portuguese empire while advancing their own particular integration into the local Old Christian aristocratic elites. Doing that, they were also advancing an alternative way of perceiving an Iberian empire: much more meritocratic, inclusive, entrepreneurial, and pragmatic.

Catholic Portuguese New Christians as Early Modern "non-Jewish Jews"?

While Iberian *conversos* have been embraced in contemporary European and World-History historiographies as quintessential agents of Early Modernity,¹⁰ Jewish history, however, remains less accepting. Jonathan I. Israel's pioneering synthesis *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750* (1985) described *conversos* as constitutors of unique far-reaching international trade networks. Seen from the Iberian perspective of Daviken Studnicki Gizbert's book *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea*, however, *converso* entrepreneurship appears significantly less Judeo-centric.¹¹ As "potential Jews", Israel's *conversos* were potential or actual founders and members of the influential Western Sephardic communities, imbuing Early Modern Jewry with Iberian and Christian ideas and values. But what of Catholic *converso* families and groups that flourished in Italy, in the Spanish Low Countries or in Southwestern France, as well as exiled *conversos*, "Jews without Synagogue", who willingly sought the margins of Jewish communities?¹² In David B. Ruderman's recent *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (2010) Iberian *conversos* also took a major stage; this time, as a liminal group whose religious identities and boundaries were blurred.¹³ Current historiography perceives *conversos* not only as "potential Jews", but also as "potential Catholics" and, most particularly, as quintessential in-betweeners.¹⁴ But

¹⁰ E.g., Serge GRUZINSKI, *Les quatre parties du monde. Histoire d'une globalisation*, Paris, Éditions de la Martinière, 2004; Heinz SCHILING, *Early Modern European Civilization and its Political and Cultural Dynamism*, Hanover & London, Brandeis University Press – Historical Society of Israel, 2008; Charles H. PARKER, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

¹¹ Daviken Studnicki GIZBERT, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea. Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹² E.g. Lucia Frattarelli FISCHER, *Vivere fuori dal Ghetto. Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Torino, Silvio Zamorano, 2008.

¹³ David B. RUDERMAN, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History*, Princeton & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2010.

¹⁴ David L. GRAIZBORD, *Souls in Dispute. Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580-1700*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

what of the thousands of New Christians living as normative Catholics in Iberia, many of whom sincere, despite continued suspicion, segregation and persecution by the Inquisition and the “laws of purity of blood”? Could these men and women I call “non-Jewish Jews” – after Isaac Deutscher’s typology –,¹⁵ be fully integrated into the Early Modern Jewish experience? The aim of the last part of my argument will be to explore this historiographical avenue.

Let me make two clarifications. Though Jonathan Israel mentioned several Catholic *conversos* as harbingers of Mercantilism¹⁶ and Ruderman distinguished between *converso* identity and other contemporary Jewish cross-border groups,¹⁷ neither fully integrated the Iberian *converso* group *per se* in their narratives. The question is: why? An easy answer could be that the *conversos* were not entirely a part of Early Modern Jewry: they were also Iberian Catholics and sometimes only that. Both scholars adopted typological and disciplinary differentiation between New Christian, potential or fuzzy Jews, and Catholic-Iberian *conversos* to avoid “over-judaizing” the group by perpetuating romantic inaccuracies and endorsing chauvinistic narratives of Marrano crypto-Jewish ubiquities, including improbable self-indulging hypothesis concerning the “Jewishness” of great personalities in Early Modern Iberia, such as Miguel de Cervantes. Moreover, the very term “*conversos*” or “New Christians” is trapping. It is a tacit acceptance and integration of the essentialist human categories and discourses endorsed by the “laws of purity of law” and applied to these Iberian men and women. The problem is that, beyond the epistemic issue involving that differentiation (e.g. the reliability of Inquisition files *vis-a-vis* hidden *converso* identities), Iberian New Christians and, in particular, the Portuguese “*cristãos-novos*” (and Majorcan “*xuetas*” to a large extent)¹⁸ shared several functional commonalities with Early Modern Jews, religious allegiances notwithstanding. First, both groups were often identified as traders and bankers (in Portugal they were also known as “men of commerce”, (“*homens de negócios*”). New Christians were often instrumental in advancing Early Modern Iberian State building,¹⁹ becoming heavily dependent on the Ancient Regime’s political structures, as many Early Modern Jews.²⁰ In 17th century Portugal, several became personal bankers for monarchs, like contemporary Central-European

¹⁵ I. DEUTSCHER, op. cit. However, I employ Deutscher’s term with a functional connotation.

¹⁶ J. I. ISRAEL, op. cit., pp. 92-94.

¹⁷ D. B. RUDERMAN, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁸ FRANCESC RIERA MONTSERRAT, *Lluites antixuetes en el segle XVIII*, Palma de Mallorca, Moll, 1973.

¹⁹ E.g. Mauricio EBBEN, “Un triángulo imposible: la Corona española, el Santo Oficio y los banqueros portugueses (1627-1655)”, *Revista Hispania*, Vol. LIII, 1993, pp. 541-556; António A. Marques de ALMEIDA, “Dívida pública: técnicas do estado no período da União Ibérica”, in Maria de Graça M. Ventura (ed.), *A União Ibérica e o Mundo Atlântico*, Lisboa, Colibri, 1997, pp. 15-28.

²⁰ Cf. Hannah ARENDT, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Orlando, Austin & New York, Harvest, 1976, Chap. 2.

“Court-Jews” (“*HoffJuden*”).²¹ Second, similarly to Early Modern Jewish polities, sophisticated *converso* political networks of agents, lobbyists and leaders appeared. Their enemies viewed this as an intentional establishment of a separate “Mystical body”, “a Republic Apart”, in Isaac Cardoso’s words. Their leaders were, like Early Modern Jewish “*parnasim*” and “*shtadlanim*”, secular members and leaders of an economic oligarchy. Inclusion among them was ethnically based. They were members of a specific “nation”, “men of the Hebrew nation”, and as such often required to pay the Crown a specific collective tax negotiated by their leaders in exchange for Inquisitorial “amnesties”, “pardons”, and other juridical reliefs.²² Third, these New Christian political activities led to the articulation of a specific Catholic pro-*converso* discourse, strongly resembling Early Modern Jewish-Mercantilist apologies.²³ Fourth, *converso* membership was also vague and negotiated, but this time, concerning the promotion or the integration of the richest into the Old Christian elites.²⁴ Fifth, influenced by Enlightened Absolutism, Iberian kings and their favorites supported the end of juridical segregation, in the last quarter of the 18th century, of the Portuguese “*cristãos-novos*” by King José I and his favorite, the Marquis of Pombal, and of the Majorcan “*xuetas*” by King Carlos III and his minister, Campomanes. This process of what could be called “*converso* emancipation” was almost contemporaneous to first debates and deliberations concerning the political improvement of Western and Central-European Jews. Moreover, the arguments and aims employed

²¹ James C. BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese Bankers at the Court of Spain, 1625-1650*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1983; *Idem*, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640*, Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993; Leonor Freire COSTA, *Império e Grupos Mercantis. Entre o Oriente e o Atlântico (Século XVII)*, Lisboa, Livros Horizonte, 2002.

²² C. B. STUCZYNSKI, “New Christian Political Leadership in Times of Crisis: The Pardon Negotiations of 1605”, in Moisés Orfali (ed.), *Bar-Ilan Studies in History, V: Leadership in Times of Crisis*, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007, pp. 45-70; Juan Ignacio PULIDO SERRANO, “Perdoni generali”, in Adriano Prosperi, Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi (ed.), *Dizionario Storico dell’Inquisizione*, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, Vol. 3, 2010, pp. 1189-1190.

²³ C. B. STUCZYNSKI, “Harmonizing Identities: The Problem of Integration of the Portuguese Conversos in Early Modern Iberian Corporate Polities”, *Jewish History*, Vol. XXV, 2011, pp. 229-257.

²⁴ J. C. BOYAJIAN, “The New Christians Reconsidered: Evidence from Lisbon’s Portuguese Bankers, 1497-1647”, *Studia Rosenthaliana*, Vol. XIII, 1979, pp. 129-156; Fernanda OLIVAL, “A Família de Heitor Mendes de Brito: um percurso ascendente”, in Maria José Ferro Tavares (ed.), *Poder e Sociedade. Actas das Jornadas Interdisciplinares*, Lisboa, Universidade Aberta, Vol. 2, 1998, pp. 111-129; *Idem*, “Para um estudo da nobilitação no Antigo Regime: os cristãos-novos na Ordem de Cristo (1581-1621)”, in *Actas do I Encontro sobre Ordens Militares*, Palmela, Câmara Municipal de Palmela, 1991, pp. 233-244; *Idem*, “Juristas e mercadores à conquista das honras: quatro processos de nobilitação quinhentistas”, *Revista de História Económica e Social*, série 2, Vol. 4, 2002, pp. 7-53; C. B. STUCZYNSKI, “Anti-Rabbinic Texts and Converso Identities: Fernão Ximenes de Aragão’s ‘Doutrina Católica’”, in Kevin Ingram and Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano (ed.), *Conversos and Moriscos*, Leiden & Boston, Brill, Vol. 3 (forthcoming).

in all these discussions had much in common.²⁵ Thus, it will become clear that Iberian *conversos* were not known as “Hebrews” or “Jews” (“*judeus*”, “*judíos*”, “*jueus*”, etc.), only because they were potential or cross-border Jews. Rather, they reflected a combination of common ethnical origins, adjudicated stereotypes and functional *de facto* roles as “non-Jewish Jews”.

The revival of the Manueline imperial idea: between hope and failure



Fig. 1 – “Arch of Lisbon’s Merchants” (“*Arco dos Homens de Negócios de Lisboa*”) from João Baptista de Lavanha, *Viagem da Catholica Real Magestade del Rey D. Filipe II N.S. ao Reyno de Portvgal e rellação do solene recebimento que nelle se lhe fez S. Magestade a mandou escrever*, Madrid, Thomas Junti, 1622, fl. 15v.

The “Arch of Lisbon’s merchants” was one of the most impressive Spanish or Portuguese book engravings (Fig. 1). It was made by the king’s official cartographer João Baptista de Lavanha, a Portuguese *converso* promoted by the king as a member of the Order of Christ, to celebrate King Philip III’s visit to Lisbon in 1619, as King Philip II of Portugal. The long-awaited event,

²⁵ Paul J. HAUBEN, “The Enlightenment and Minorities: Two Spanish Discussions”, *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 65, 1979, pp. 1-19; Isaiás da Rosa PEREIRA, *Considerações em torno da Carta de Lei de D. José I, de 1773, relativa à abolição das designações de “Cristão-Velho” e “Cristão-Novo”*, Lisboa, Rádio Renascença, 1988; Lorenzo PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ (ed.), *La reivindicación de los judíos mallorquines*, Palma de Mallorca, Gráficas Miramar, 1983.

the first visit of a Habsburg monarch to Lisbon in four decades, aroused vivid expectations among Lisbon's nobles, churchmen and commoners, and most particularly its "men of commerce". They hoped that the visit would restore to the "lonely", "almost widowed" city, its deserved role as the epicenter of the once-prosperous colonial trade.²⁶ A magnificent and costly reception was prepared for the occasion and prominent *converso* businessmen such as Heitor Mendes de Brito were instrumental in financing the costly event.²⁷ Several of Lisbon's corporations and foreign "nations" erected arches of triumph to salute the King. These were decorated with classical and mythological themes, including episodes of Iberian history (mostly Portuguese), and with symbols, statues and texts denoting the expectations of each group. The first and the most luxurious was the "Arch of the Men of Commerce" (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 – The Arch of the Men of Commerce was placed in the docks, saluting the king's entrance to Lisbon.

²⁶ Pedro GAN GIMÉNEZ, "La jornada de Felipe III a Portugal (1619)", *Chronica Nova*, Vol. XIX, 1991, pp. 407-431; Francisco Ribeiro da SILVA, "A viagem de Filipe III a Portugal: itinerários e problemática", *Revista de Ciências Históricas*, Vol. II, 1987, pp. 223-260; Fernando BOUZA ÁLVAREZ, "Lisboa, Sozinha, quase viúva. A cidade e a mudança da corte no Portugal dos Filipes", in *Portugal no Tempo dos Filipes. Política, Cultura, Representações (1580-1668)*, Lisboa, Cosmos, 2000, pp. 159-183; Ana Paula Torres MEGIANI, *O Rei Ausente: festa e cultura política nas visitas dos Filipes a Portugal (1581 e 1619)*, São Paulo, Alameda, 2004; F. OLIVAL, *D. Filipe II de cognome "o Pio"*, Lisboa, Temas e Debates, 2008, pp. 277-317; Marica BENATTI, *Simulacri imperiali portoghesi: La "Entrada Real" di Lisbona del 1619 e la Monarchia Duale*, Bologna, PhD. dissertation, University of Bologna, 2008.

²⁷ Thus, being the general treasurer of King Philip III (II)'s visit to Portugal, the New Christian António Ximenes, in September, 1619 he received from the Inquisitor General

At the top of the arch stood some armillary globes, adopted by King Manuel I as a symbol of Portugal's heroic discoveries and successful overseas enterprises. Each side of the arch depicted a different continent decorated with an effigy of an appropriate Portuguese king and a deserved virtue. The gate of America welcomed the Habsburg king arriving from the docks. It was associated with "prudence" and with King Philip I of Portugal (Phillip II of Spain), known as: "*el prudente*". The gate of Asia faced the city.²⁸ On one of its sides, a female embodiment of "religion" raised her eyes over a nearby cross, while on the other a statue of King Manuel I bore the following inscription:

Look at Asia, conquered with my lucky courage, when my vessels opened a new way into the vast oceans. Let your power subdue what it is left to conquer in the East Orb. For your Portuguese captains shall overcome opulent kingdoms.²⁹

Lisbon's businessmen added an alley filling it with statues dedicated to illustrious Portuguese who'd performed heroically in "India, Africa and Portugal."³⁰ The message conveyed was subtle but nonetheless clear: the need to revive the neglected Portuguese "State of India" (*Estado da Índia*). Portugal was being called upon to fulfill a providential role as protector and propagator of Catholicism in the East aided by Lisbon's businessmen.

Significantly, Lisbon's "men of commerce" were an oligarchical group of mostly *converso* merchants and investors in the Indian spice trade. The call to revive Portugal's Eastern empire served to promote their own financial designs but also demonstrate their usefulness to the Crown and path their way into the Old Christian elites. This very argument was proposed three years later by Heitor Mendes de Brito's son-in-law Duarte Gomes Solis, himself an experienced *converso* trader with India, in *Discourses on the Commerce of the Two Indies*, as well as in his "*arbítrios*" (economical projects addressed to the king and the court). Misunderstood by recent scholarship, Solis was not a mere "Marrano mercantilist". While *nação* leaders and agents were seeking a collective "general pardon" at the Court in Madrid, with the ascension of Philip IV (Philip III) and his favorite, the Count-Duke of Olivares, to the throne, Solis sought acceptance into Old Christian aristocracy for the richest *converso* India traders. A limited and short-lived relief from the

Mascarenhas the sum of 16.000.000 *réis* from expropriated wealth to support the expenses of the travel [Ana Isabel LÓPEZ-SALAZAR CODES, *Inquisición y política. El gobierno del Santo Oficio en el Portugal de los Austrias (1578-1653)*, Lisboa, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2011, p. 70]. Already by 1612 Heitor Mendes de Brito had lent money for a potential royal visit. The merchant Manuel Ximenes also took an important role in this affair (F. OLIVAL, *D. Filipe II*, cit., pp. 290 e 295).

²⁸ João Baptista LAVANHA, *Viagem da Catholica Real Magestade del Rey D. Filipe II N. S. ao Reino de Portugal e Rellação do Solene Recebimento que nelle se lhe fez*, Madrid, Thomas Junti, 1622, fls. 15v, 20r.

²⁹ *Idem*, fl. 19r.

³⁰ Manuel Lopes de ALMEIDA (ed.), *Memorial de Pero Roiz Soares*, Coimbra, Acta Universitatis Conimbrigensis, 1953, p. 419.

Inquisition would finally be granted in 1627, when the king declared them as the bankers of the Crown; the leadership was comprised of rich “*parvenus*” who had little connection to Lisbon’s well-to-do spice traders. Gomes Solis’s writings expressed his disenchantment and that of his father-in-law and his peers, with the leadership and its chosen paths. From 1591 to the end of the century, Heitor Mendes de Brito and other rich *conversos* negotiated for a “general pardon” in exchange for money to maintain safe maritime routes to India. It was a well-established Portuguese *converso* political tradition among the leading spice traders, including the well know Mendes-Nasi, used initially to avoid the establishment of the Inquisition, and then to soften its impact. A similar arrangement helped finance King Sebastião’s disastrous 1578 north-African military campaign. By 1601, *converso* “*procuradores*” had regained freedom of movement for the *nação*, and in January 1605 all the *converso* detainees were finally released as part of a “general pardon”. The 1,700,000 *cruzados* necessary to complete the deal were raised (voluntarily and compulsory) as a proportional tax (“*finta*”) from nearly every member of the nation. Local *converso* agents prepared a database of *converso* families (“*rolos de fintas*”), which outlasted the short-lived “pardon”. By the beginning of the 17th century, Heitor Mendes de Brito and other *converso* spice traders opted to abandon this slow and painful process, and the collective *converso* leadership, in order to secure social advancement more quickly. Lending money to the Crown and founding commerce companies, Heitor Mendes de Brito and his sons (including Duarte Nunes Solis) were named as “*fidalgos* of the Royal House” and accepted to the exclusive Military Order of Christ, and married into low aristocracy Old Christian families. Now you will better understand the implicit social meanings of the Arch of Lisbon’s merchants. Simultaneously, Brito’s efforts charted two alternative paths to securing promotion-based *converso* integration: the appearance of personal *converso* bankers to the Portuguese Crown, such as Duarte da Silva under the new Bragança dynasty in the 1640’s, and the emergence of *converso*-managed trade companies, together with some Old Christian merchants: the short-lived Indian Trade Company (1628-1633) founded by Heitor Mendes de Brito’s first-born son Francisco, along with other wealthy New Christians,³¹ the General Trade Company of Brazil (1649), supported by Brazil’s Old and New Christian merchants,³² and the 1662 Junta do Comércio, reestablished in 1755 by the Marquis of Pombal.

³¹ J. C. BOYAJIAN, *Portuguese Trade*, cit., esp. pp. 194-196; Chandra Richard de SILVA, “The Portuguese East India Company 1628-1633”, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. XI, 1974, pp. 152-205; Anthony R. DISNEY, “The First Portuguese India Company, 1628-33”, *Economic History Review*, Vol. XXX, 1977, pp. 242-258.

³² Israël Salvator RÉVAH, “Les Jésuites portugais contre l’Inquisition: la campagne pour la fondation de la ‘Compagnie Générale du Commerce du Brésil’ (1649)”, *Études Portugaises*, ed. Charles Amiel, Paris, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1975, pp. 155-183; L. F. COSTA, *O Transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil (1580-1663)*, Lisboa, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2002, esp. pp. 515-528.

However, as Brito was registered as a tax payer in the *rol das fintas* of 1605, his distant descendants, the Coutinhos, were not easily accepted by Old Christian aristocracy seven decades later. Moreover, even success as the king's personal banker or heavy investment in trade companies could not guarantee immunity from Inquisitorial arrest and prosecution. It is therefore understandable why many powerful *conversos* did not completely abandon collective lobbying and leadership. With the help of the restless Father António Vieira and other Jesuits, they even secured a seven-year (1674-1681) suspension of the activities of the Holy Office from Pope Innocent XI. Thus, the final verse of a satirical sonnet written by António Lobo de Carvalho on the occasion of Pombal's law of May 25th 1773 suggested that the abolition of the distinctions between Old and New Christians was still obtained through *converso's* traditional lobbying:

Let nobody remember their sins anymore, / because they totally repented, / although they must pay for that five hundred thousand *cruzados*! (*Ninguém se lembre já de seus pecados, / que eles estão de todo arrependidos, / Mas é de dar quinhentos mil cruzados!*)³³

Like Solis's *arbítrios*, Martín González de Cellorigo's major pro-*converso* apologetic tract, "*Plea Founded on Justice and Mercy that some People in the Portuguese Kingdom, Living within and without Spanish Borders, are asking and begging His Catholic Majesty, Our Master King don Phillip the Third, to do and bestow upon them*", argued for the promotion of the wealthiest *conversos* into the ranks of nobility, thereby imbuing the Hispanic kingdoms with "mercantilistic ethics".³⁴ At the same time, he pleaded for an immediate new "general pardon" and the adaptation of the Portuguese Inquisition and "laws of purity of blood" to Spain's more "just" and "lenient" standards. In all likelihood, Cellorigo's tract was part of the New Christian political lobbying.³⁵

The importance of Cellorigo's prognosis of the Portuguese *converso* problem derives from his insightful structural diagnosis. *Converso* hatred, he argued, emanates from the jealousy of the "fourth" lowest social Portugal's class or "estate" (*estado*): the commoners, who created a "fifth estate" and called it "of the New Christians". The hostility displayed by the fourth estate

³³ João Lúcio de AZEVEDO, *História dos Cristãos-Novos Portugueses*, Lisboa, Clássica, 1921, pp. 356-357.

³⁴ *Alegación en que se funda la justicia y merced que algunos particulares del Reyno de Portugal, que están dentro y fuera de los confines de España, piden y suplican a la Católica y Real Magestad del Rey don Felipe Tercero nuestro señor, se les haga y conceda* (British Library, MS Egerton 343, fls. 291-338). I employ the modern edition published by Israël Salvator Révah, "Le plaidoyer en faveur des Nouveaux Chrétiens portugais du licencié Martín González de Cellorigo (Madrid 1619)", *Révue des études juives*, Vol. 122, 1963, pp. 279-398.

³⁵ "L'Alegación portrait donc être considérée comme un mémoire juridique normalement composé par un avocat à la requête de ses clients" (*Idem*, p. 296). On these contexts, see: J. I. PULIDO SERRANO, "Las negociaciones con los cristianos nuevos en tiempos de Felipe III a la luz de algunos documentos inéditos (1598-1607)", *Sefarad*, Vol. 66, 2006, pp. 345-375.

led the superior social echelons to adopt a similar discriminatory attitude. And so,

upon detachment and segregation of the fifth estate, the others began to view them as a different group: that is why the clergy did not want any of them to become monks and priests, whereas the *fidalgos* refused to acknowledge their titles, and the other estates objected to their appointment to public positions.³⁶

The establishment of a fifth *converso* “estate”, Cellorigo argued, shook the very foundations of the Portuguese corporate society: “one of the things we should pay attention to in particular in our Republic, in accordance with the laws, is to strive [...] as much as possible to tight and indivisible conformity”. This conformity relies on the mutual acknowledgement in the necessity of all estates, he said. In this conformity, the king should care for each part of society separately as well as collectively, and never intervene brutally without the accord of its parts.³⁷ At this point Cellorigo developed the musical metaphor in Alciato’s “Emblem” from “Alliances” (probably, from the 1549 Spanish version) to illustrate just how this relationship should work:

Just as the various notes, even when they contrast one another, create harmony together, so must the Christian ruler reconcile between his subjects’ contradictions and the various qualities by ruling over his state harmoniously, in order to coordinate between all subjects and between his subjects and him, to establish a peaceful, steady, long-lasting and harmonious state, thereby granting all who persevere in it under his Highness’ regime and Christian reign with eternity – a goal that guides our intentions and to which all earthly lives should aspire.³⁸

The significance of all social classes notwithstanding, Cellorigo acknowledged an inherent hierarchy within society: “for if all voices were equal, and there be no higher and lower ones, the concert of the Republic shall be ill-sounding”.³⁹ Here we discover the limitations of the musical metaphor: unlike noblemen, the New Christians were not “born to rule”. Why, then, should the people allow them to climb up the social ladder? Moreover, according to Cellorigo, the role of the king was that of a lute-player and not of a lute-maker. So, how might King Phillip III (II) persuade the same “estates”

³⁶ M. GONZÁLEZ DE CELLORIGO, op. cit., p. 369.

³⁷ *Idem*, p. 372.

³⁸ *Idem*, p. 393; Andrea ALCIATO, *Los emblematas de Alciato: traducidos en rhimas Españolas, añadidos de Figuras*, Lyon, Mathias Bonhome, 1540, pp. 19-20. See also Pierre MAGNARD, “Jean Bodin ou l’harmonie dans la cité”, *Cahiers de Philosophie Politique et Juridique de l’Université de Caen*, Vol. 2, 1982, pp. 57-68; Leo SPITZER, “Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word ‘Stimmung’”, *Traditio*, Vol. 2, 1944, pp. 409-464; and *Traditio*, Vol. 3, 1945, pp. 307-364; F. BOUZA ÁLVAREZ, “Dissonância na monarquia: Uma ficção musical barroca em torno do 1640 português”, in *Portugal no Tempo dos Filipes: Política, Cultura, Representações*, Lisboa, Cosmos, 2000, pp. 257-270, 345-349.

³⁹ M. GONZÁLEZ DE CELLORIGO, op. cit., p. 394.

or “strings” that created the outcast “fifth estate” in the first place, to agree to have *conversos* integrate into them? In Portugal’s Early Modern Parliament, or *Cortes*, *conversos* weren’t recognized as a *de iure* “estate”: they were seen as a *de facto* threatening enemy. Consequently, when Innocent XI suspended the Inquisition, the “estates” represented in the *Cortes* appealed the decision, for the sake of Portuguese social and political harmony. Like Cellorigo, Father António Vieira called upon the king to resolve the New Christian problem, but, unlike him, he recognized the limitations of Alciato’s emblem and the deeply corporate character of the Early Modern Portuguese society. Therefore, Vieira demanded that the matter of *conversos* remain strictly in the hands of the king.⁴⁰ But this suggestion could only be implemented after the Marquis of Pombal transformed Portugal’s traditional structures, subjugating nobles, priests and plebeians to the king, and abolishing juridical differences and barriers between Old and New Christian inhabitants.

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In fact, Portuguese *converso* revival of the “Manueline imperial idea” was an almost immediate failure for the entire *nação*, and a difficult and serpentine pathway of integration and social climbing to some successful individual and families of New Christian bankers and businessmen. Only a very specific sub-group of well-known *conversos*, such as the Gomes Elvas da Mata Coronel’s family, penetrated Old Christian aristocrats rapidly and successfully. They were untouched by the Inquisition, they didn’t join any *converso* leadership, “general pardon” or *rol das fintas* and they left commerce for more “nobler” activities. For the less prosperous *conversos*, the road to social integration was longer and more difficult: social integration is not synonymous with social promotion. Poorer New Christians who never sought to climb the social order, integrated more easily into the lowest social strata. In other words, a New Christian was anyone considered as such when he or she ceased to be a “non-Jewish Jew”. In such cases *converso* identities were largely byproducts of Portuguese *sui generis* confessionalism. Indeed, one should ask if these men and women deserve to be included with other New Christian judaizers and with *ex-conversos* “new Jews” living in the Sephardi Diaspora. For what I tried to suggest here transcends the comparisons between analogous groups. I endorsed some functional commonalities. This final reflection leads to some closing remarks. I transformed Isaac Deutscher’s “non-Jewish Jews” concept from a psychological to a functional representation, in a manner perhaps misleading but nevertheless telling and valid. The list of structural approaches discussed was by no means exhaustive and does not exclude additional approaches to the rich *converso* experience: being vague or potentially Jewish. Moreover, I also reject any organic

⁴⁰ Pedro CARDIM, *Cortes e Cultura Política no Portugal do Antigo Regime*, Lisboa, Cosmos, 1998, p. 128.

and undifferentiated integration of *converso* “non-Jewish Jews” into the Early Modern Jewish experience. Rather, it was an appeal for their careful inclusion as a tangential group in appended narratives: being one of the most idiosyncratic and intriguing outcomes of Early Modernity.

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