

# A Trail of Trials

*A 'Flemish' Merchant Community in Sixteenth-century Valladolid and Medina del Campo\**

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## Abstract

This article explores whether or not Flemish commercial networks reached the interior of the Iberian Peninsula and if so, how they functioned. By analysing the case of the Valladolid region through hitherto unexplored sources, this study shows that the economic opportunities offered by this region did not pass unnoticed by the Flemish merchants. While previous research focused on the conceptual dichotomy between ambulant and sedentary migration, this article shows that in practice, the Flemish merchant community in the Valladolid region covered the whole spectrum between these two positions. In fact, the hybrid nature of this Flemish merchant community seem to have been its strength as it connected different trade networks to each other and permitted the transfer of commercial expertise.

## 1 Introduction

In 1556, Jorge Tulaimé, a nineteen-year-old from Tournai, had to appear before the *Real Chancillería de Valladolid* (hereafter *Chancillería*), one of the two high courts of appeal in Castile, representing his two employers, the Flemish merchants Guillermo Rubin and Antonio Fermaute. Both men were accused of the embezzlement of trade goods of a deceased French

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merchant, Juan Saboya, citizen of Medina del Campo.<sup>1</sup> One year later, Jorge Tulaime had to reappear before the *Chancillería*. This time his employers had a dispute concerning the payment of certain goods with a Milanese merchant, Bautista Vertori, again a citizen of the market town of Medina del Campo.<sup>2</sup> As the fairs of Medina del Campo had become an important commercial hub in the sixteenth century, the town was attractive as a place of residence for merchants from France and the Italian peninsula, and the legal adventures of young Jorge Tulaime indicates that at least some Flemish merchants too, had set up a foothold here. It is not difficult to imagine why.<sup>3</sup> As many Flemish centres for textile production shifted from using English to Spanish merino wool, trade relations between the Low Countries and the interior of the Iberian Peninsula bloomed in the course of the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Yet, to this day, our understanding of this economic rapprochement is somewhat skewed.

Many historians have researched the influx of Iberian merchants into Bruges and Antwerp as the two main hubs of this trade, but the role of 'Flemish' – as contemporaries called the inhabitants of the Low Countries – merchants in this long-distance trade has received much less attention.<sup>5</sup> In his important article on the diaspora of the Antwerp merchants, Wilfrid Brulez already complained about the lack of concrete case studies on Flemish commercial activities in Spain, speculating that the Dutch hege-

1 Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid (further ARCV) Registro de ejecutorias (further RDE) caja (further c.) 856,44.

2 ARCV, RDE, c. 888,8.

3 For more information on the most important fairs in sixteenth-century Europe, see Pierre Jeannin, *Les marchands au XVIe siècle* (Paris 1957) 47-48.

4 John H. Munro, 'Spanish Merino Wools and the Nouvelles Draperies: An Industrial Transformation in the Late Medieval Low Countries', *Economic History Review* 58 (2005) 431-484.

5 Bruges was the commercial gateway of northwest Europe in the fourteenth and the fifteenth century. Antwerp took over this function at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. See Oscar Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce: The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250-1650* (Princeton 2013) 26-32; For more information on the Iberian merchants in the Low Countries see Raymond Fagel, 'Stabilitas Loci or Peregrinatio?', in: Bruno Blondé and Anke Greve (eds.), *International Trade in the Low Countries (14th-16th Centuries) Merchants, Organisation, Infrastructure* (Leuven 2000) 87-104; Jan-Albert Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567* (Leuven 1925); Hilario Casado Alonso, 'La nation et le quartier des Castillans de Bruges XVe-XVIe siècle', in: Jacques Bottin and Donatella Calabi (eds.), *Les étrangers dans la ville. Minorités et espace urbain du bas Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne* (Paris 1999) 365-376. Since I prefer to use the same terminology as the sources, I will also use the terms 'Flemish' and 'Flemings' to describe all inhabitants of the Low Countries. For more information on the use of the term 'Flemish' see Alastair Duke, 'The Elusive Netherlands. The Question of National Identity in the Early Modern Low Countries on the Eve of Revolt', *The Low Countries Historical Review* 119 (2004) 19-20.

mony in global trade in the seventeenth century was rooted in earlier experiments of Flemish merchant communities across Europe and certainly those in Spain and Portugal.<sup>6</sup>

Since the publication of this provocative thesis in 1960, several studies have been conducted on the Flemish merchant guilds and 'nations' that were established in the main transatlantic ports, such as Seville, Cadiz and Lisbon, but the presence of Flemish merchants in the interior of the Iberian Peninsula, where most of the Spanish wool was sold, is still virgin territory.<sup>7</sup> The main reason for this hiatus is that, in inland Spain, formal institutions such as nations or confraternities were absent. This makes it difficult to track Flemish immigrants.<sup>8</sup> While challenging, this issue has grown in importance in the light of recent research that showed that as of the sixteenth century Flemish merchants were increasingly active in long-distance trade.<sup>9</sup> This begs the question whether or not these growing Flemish trade networks reached the interior of the Iberian Peninsula and if so, how they functioned.

To date, the few attempts of historians to trace Flemish merchants had surprisingly little success, up to the point that some scholars have speculated that merchants had a different migration trajectory than other professional groups.<sup>10</sup> Whereas artisans, for example, would settle permanent-

6 Wilfrid Brulez, 'De diaspora der Antwerpse kooplui op het einde van de 16e eeuw', *Bijdragen voor de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 15 (1960) 284, 296.

7 Ana Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz Y Los Países Bajos. Una Comunidad Mercantil En La Cádiz de La Ilustración* (Cádiz 2001); Ana Crespo Solana, 'Nación extranjera y cofradía de mercaderes: el rostro piadoso del integración social', in: María Begoña Villar García and Pilar Pezzi Cristóbal (eds.), *Los extranjeros en la España moderna*, II (Málaga 2003) 175-187; Carolina Abadía Flores, 'La comunidad flamenco en Sevilla en el siglo XVI', *Revista Archivo Hispalense* (2010) 282-284; Jean-Pierre Berthe, 'Les Flamands à Séville au XVIe siècle', in: Hermann Kellenbenz (ed.), *Fremde Kaufleute auf der Iberischen Halbinsel* (Köln 1970) 239-251; Eddy Stols, 'A 'nação' flamenga em Lisboa', in: John Everaert and Eddy Stols (ed.), *Flandes e Portugal, na Confluência de duas Culturas* (Antwerpen 1991) 119-142. For more information on the wool trade see Patrick O'Flanagan, *Port Cities of Atlantic Iberia, c. 1500-1900* (Aldershot 2008) 180-185.

8 A nation was a guild of foreign merchants that could also include persons of the same origin with other professions. See Sheilagh Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade. Merchant Guilds, 1000-1800* (Cambridge, 2011).

9 Jeroen Puttevils, *Merchants and Trading in the Sixteenth Century. The Golden Age of Antwerp* (London 2015).

10 Raymond Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld. De contacten tussen Spanjaarden en Nederlanders 1496-1555* (Brussel 1996); Bartolomé Bennassar, 'Marchands Flamands et Italiens a Valladolid au XVIe siècle', in: Hermann Kellenbenz (ed.), *Fremde Kaufleute auf der Iberischen Halbinsel* (Köln 1970) 48-55; Werner Thomas, *In de klauwen van de inquisitie: protestanten in Spanje, 1517-1648* (Amsterdam 2003); Eddy Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld, 1598-1648*, II (Brussel 1971).

ly, merchants would remain footloose. Individuals such as Jorge Tulaime are understood as ambulant merchants traveling through the region. Using hitherto unexplored sources, I will revisit this view by exploring the case of Valladolid and Medina del Campo. A long-term analysis of the registers of judicial sentences of the *Chancillería* for the Valladolid region and summaries of the notarial acts of the Medina fairs, sheds new light on the Flemish commercial activities in this region. The aim of this paper is not so much to engage with the discussion whether merchants were predominantly sedentary or ambulant, but to explore how this specific trading community was organized in absence of formalized trade organisations that are known for the nearby Atlantic ports.

A discussion how this community of commerce ‘worked’ contributes to the debate on the role of merchant communities in early modern globalisation. This field of study has received much attention since the seminal work of Philip Curtin on cross-cultural trade. Curtin defined a ‘trade diaspora’ as an ‘interrelated net of commercial communities’ or trade settlements by merchants of the same origin.<sup>11</sup> Frederic Mauro studied such settlements of foreign merchants and coined them ‘merchant communities’. He defined them as groups of merchants with a similar background living in a foreign environment and providing each other with aid. These communities were characterised by solidarity, kinship and had a similar commercial organisation based on ‘sufficient capital, credit or connections, and adequate commercial experience’.<sup>12</sup> While detailed information on its economic activities are sadly lacking, it is possible to investigate the social basis of Flemish commerce in the Valladolid region.

The region of Valladolid makes an excellent test case to investigate the role of Flemish merchants in inland Spain because of its economic and political importance. The region was famous for its Castilian fairs which were founded in the fifteenth century and formed a cycle of fairs in Medina del Campo (May and October), Medina del Rioseco (March/April and August), and Villalón (Lent).<sup>13</sup> During the first half of the sixteenth century, the importance of the Castilian fairs grew considerably as a result of their transition towards fairs of exchange and the increasing demand for Spanish

11 Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge 1984) 2.

12 Frederic Mauro, ‘Merchant Communities, 1350-1750’, in: J.D. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires. Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World (1350-1750)* (Cambridge 1990) 255-286.

13 Hilario Casado Alonso, ‘Medina Del Campo Fairs and the Integration of Castile into 15th and 16th Century European Economy’, in: *Fiere E Mercati Nella Integrazione Delle Economie Europee. Secc. XIII-XVIII* (Firenze 2001) 500-501.



Illustration 1: View on Valladolid. Detail from *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, 1582 (University Library Heidelberg, no. VD 16 B 7188).

wool by the Netherlandish textile industry.<sup>14</sup> Medina del Campo, the most important of the three fair towns, became the largest commercial centre in Northern Castile, attracting at least 2,000 foreign merchants.<sup>15</sup> However, the Castilian fairs were not the only centre of attraction in the region. The region's capital, Valladolid, near Medina del Campo, hosted its own fairs in September and during Lent but this city was better known for its administrative functions.<sup>16</sup> Until Madrid became the official capital in 1561, Valladolid was the city where the itinerant court of Charles V spent most of its time and it was thus considered the de facto capital of Castile. It was in Valladolid that the Cortes held most of its meetings and where Charles' heirs – his brother Ferdinand and his son Philip – were raised.<sup>17</sup> Many institutions were established in the city, such as the aforementioned Chancillería, an inquisition court, and several monasteries. In addition, one of the three Castilian universities was located in Valladolid, providing lawyers for the

14 Herman Van der Wee, *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy*, II (Den Haag 1963) 179-180; Casado Alonso, 'Medina Del Campo Fairs', 501.

15 Falah Hassan Abed Al-Hussein, 'Los mercaderes de Medina: personalidad, actividades y hacienda', in: *Historia de Medina del Campo y su tierra*, II (Valladolid 1986) 129; Paola Subacchi, 'Italians in Antwerp in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', in: *Minderheden in Westeuropese Steden (16de-20ste Eeuw)* (Brussel 1995) 73.

16 Burgos was the second largest trade center in northern Castile. Henri Lapeyre, *El comercio exterior de Castilla a través de las aduanas de Felipe II* (Valladolid 1981) 129; Casado Alonso, 'Medina Del Campo Fairs', 500.

17 The Cortes was an advisory body which, in theory, represented the three orders in society. Yet, in practice, the oldest cities of Castile were represented. Raymond Fagel and Eric Storm, *Het land van Don Quichot. De Spanjaarden en hun geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2011) 68.

courts and boosting Medina del Campo's famous book trade. Many nobles, magistrates, and bureaucrats, and academics had a residence in Valladolid, thereby providing a market for luxury goods and other commodities.<sup>18</sup>

In what follows, I will first discuss the arguments and sources that were used in the debate both on the Flemish presence in the Iberian Peninsula in general as more specifically on the presence of Flemish merchants in the region of Valladolid since both debates are strongly intertwined. The second section discusses my own methodology and sources. The third section presents the quantitative data of the Flemish appearances before the *Chancillería*, their professional profile and their place of residence and marriage patterns. Section four focuses more specifically on the Flemish merchants, their organisation, and their mutual contact through a qualitative and a quantitative analysis. Finally, I will summarize these findings in the conclusion.

## 2 Historiographical overview

The literature on medieval and early modern immigration tends to proceed from a distinction between immigrants *en passage* and sedentary immigrants. The former stayed only a few months at best before returning to their home country. The latter settled down in their new hometown for several years, occasionally travelling back to their country of origin for a short period. Hence, they often obtained citizenship of this new town, married a local bride, and acquired property in the region.<sup>19</sup> Both the debate on the Flemish presence in the Valladolid region in general and on the Flemish merchant in particular builds on this dichotomy between ambulant and sedentary immigrants.

Around 1970, two scholars claimed that the absence of references in the sources suggests that few Flemish immigrants settled permanently in the region of Valladolid. Bartolomé Bennassar argued that while Italians in sixteenth-century Valladolid opted for a sedentary lifestyle and assim-

18 Bartolomé Bennassar, *Valladolid au siècle d'or: une ville de Castille et sa campagne au XVIe siècle*, I (Paris 1967) 110, 122-133; Werner Thomas, *In de klauwen van de inquisitie: protestanten in Spanje, 1517-1648* (Amsterdam 2003) 22-23.

19 In some regions, like the Low Countries, it was more profitable for foreign merchants to keep their status as foreigner. For more information see Peter Stabel, 'De gewenste vreemdeling. Italiaanse kooplieden en stedelijke maatschappij in het laat-middeleeuwse Brugge', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse geschiedenis* 4 (2001) 189-221. For more information on early modern migration see Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 58-59.

lated with Castilian families, the Flemings only passed by to trade and led an itinerant life. He based his claims on the Valladolid census of 1561 and a sample analysis of the town's notarial acts. For the first half of the sixteenth century he only found one Fleming. For the second half of the sixteenth century he discovered eight Flemings of which most were ambulant merchants active in the textile and fur trade.<sup>20</sup> Eddy Stols came to the same conclusion by investigating a great variety of sources including documents from the *Insolvente Boedelkamer* of Antwerp for the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>21</sup>

More recent scholarship contradicts Barrassar's and Stols' position. In his major study on the Hispano-Flemish relations during the first half of the sixteenth century, Raymond Fagel claimed that many Flemish immigrants lived in Valladolid under the reign of Charles V (1516-1555). He based his idea on a sample study of the city's notarial acts, parish registers, accounts, and juridical conflicts. Because he found more artisans than merchants, with artisans marrying local brides and acquiring citizenship while merchants did not, he stated that the former were sedentary immigrants, while the latter were ambulant.<sup>22</sup> The issue whether or not Flemish immigrants settled permanently in the region of Valladolid was thus fused with the question whether or not there existed a different immigration trajectory between artisans and merchants.

Fully aware of the difficulties with tracing Flemings in the records – the translation of Dutch names in Spanish being the most important – Fagel called for follow-up research to settle the debate. Often researchers have nothing more to go on than surnames with a Flemish ring to it, or which refer to a Flemish toponym such as '*Juan de Flandes*' (John of Flanders) or '*Pedro de Amberes*' (Peter of Antwerp). However, this method is problematic, since Flemish toponyms do not necessarily reveal Flemish origins. Contemporaries used the term '*flamenco*' when referring to the entire Low

20 Bartolomé Barrassar, 'Marchands Flamands et Italiens a Valladolid au XVIe siècle', in: Hermann Kellenbenz (ed.), *Fremde Kaufleute auf der Iberischen Halbinsel* (Köln 1970) 48-55; Bartolomé Barrassar, *Valladolid au siècle d'or: une ville de Castille et sa campagne au XVIe siècle*, II (Paris 1967) 353-356, 579.

21 This archive contains the documents of merchants and companies which went bankrupt in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Eddy Stols, 'Les marchands flamands dans la péninsule ibérique a la fin du seizieme siècle et pendant la première moitié du dix-septième siècle', in: Hermann Kellenbenz (ed.), *Fremde Kaufleute auf der Iberischen Halbinsel* (Köln 1970) 226-238; Eddy Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld, 1598-1648*, II (Brussel 1971) 31, 61, 77.

22 Raymond Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld. De contacten tussen Spanjaarden en Nederlanders 1496-1555* (Brussel 1996) 228-242, 443-451.

Countries (i.e. roughly present-day Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxemburg and parts of Northern France). Fagel found, for instance, a sculptor who was described in the sixteenth-century records as a '*natural de la villa de Holanda, que es en Flandes*'.<sup>23</sup> Last but not least, there is the very definition of 'immigrant': to what extent are the children and grandchildren of immigrants to be considered as 'Flemish' or 'Castilian'? It is suggestive that some of these descendants took over the surname of their Spanish parent, making them untraceable.<sup>24</sup> These descendants with a Spanish surname had often lost touch with their Flemish roots.<sup>25</sup> As a result, second- and third-generation-immigrants who were not explicitly called a '*flamenco*' or had no Flemish toponym as surname were left out in this research. In spite of all the methodological problems, the surnames are often the only available proxy for Flemish origins.

Fortunately, some records do mention foreign origins, such as legal records and these proved to be fruitful in the research on Flemish immigrants. In the 1980s, Adeline Rucquoi was able to reconstruct the history of two Flemish families – de la Corte and de Bruselas – who lived in Valladolid at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, thanks to a lawsuit before the *Chancillería* in which they were involved. The members of these two Flemish families were engaged in different kinds of professions including trade. As these were not the only Flemish immigrants she found, Rucquoi subsequently speculated that the Flemish were, after the French, the biggest group of foreigners in the city and that they often obtained citizenship and contracted local marriages.<sup>26</sup> More recently, Fagel returned to the debate with an in-depth reconstruction of a small group of Flemish merchants in Medina del Campo through a particularly revealing court case. The case concerns Juan Bautista de Olanda, who kept his account books in Dutch, which was forbidden in Castile. In this lawsuit (1567) and in the preserved account books (1565-1566), Fagel discovered a group of about 20 Flemings who either acted as witnesses during the trial or traded with Juan Bautista, which reinforced his earlier impression about a substantial, if ambulant, presence of merchants in inland Spain.<sup>27</sup>

23 'original inhabitant of the city Holland, which lays in Flanders'. Raymond Fagel, 'De verovering van de Spaanse markt: kunst uit de Lage Landen in Spanje', *Kunsttijdschrift Vlaanderen* 55 (2006) 212.

24 Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 440-441.

25 Adeline Rucquoi, 'Valladolid, pôle d'immigration au XVe siècle', in: *Les Communications dans la Péninsule Iberique au Moyen Ages. Actes du I colloque de Pau* (Paris 1981) 181.

26 Rucquoi, 'Valladolid, pôle d'immigration', 188; Adeline Rucquoi, *Valladolid en la Edad Media. El mundo abreviado (1367-1474)*, II (Valladolid 1987) 98-104.

27 R. Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken van Juan Bautista de Olanda: een Nederlandse koopman in

These case-studies of legal sources are important, as they revealed the potential of legal sources to trace Flemish merchants in the sources. In what follows, I will expand on these casuistic experiments with a systematic survey of legal sources from the Valladolid region that covers the entire sixteenth century. This provides a sufficiently broad basis to explore if and how those merchants worked together as a commercial community, and how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis the local communities of Valladolid and Medina del Campo.

### 3 Methodology: searching for 'Flemish' immigrants

The registers of judicial sentences or *cartas ejecutorias* (hereafter *cartas*) of the *Chancillería* constitute the key source for a systematic survey of Flemish merchants. As mentioned earlier, the *Chancillería* was one of the two courts of appeal in Castile and dealt with all civil cases in appeal above the *Tagus*. This implies that the litigants had already obtained a judgement in first instance. If one of the parties was not satisfied with this judgement, he could reopen the case in appeal. Most lawsuits before the *Chancillería* concerned civil law and thus pertained to conflicts about business deals, real estate or inheritance issues.<sup>28</sup> The *cartas* are the only intact archival series for the *Chancillería* and they provide information on the litigants, a summary of the lawsuit and the given testimony, and finally, the sentence of the court itself. While the actual dossiers of each trial, including detailed information on the matter at hand, have often not been preserved, the sentences are sufficiently informative to sketch an outline of the activities and the social ties of the litigants, including merchants of Flemish origin.

The obvious disadvantage of these *cartas* is that these sources are skewed in favour of well-to-do Flemings. Reopening a case in appeal was a time- and money-consuming affair. Only ten percent of the appeal cases came to judgement. In all other cases the litigants found a solution outside of court or had to withdraw due to shortage of money.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the Flemish immigrants mentioned in the *cartas* were rich and that the stakes were high. Lower social groups, such as modest traders and artisans, will stay out of the picture.<sup>30</sup> Yet, for

Medina del Campo 1565-1566', *Archief- en Bibliotheekwezen in België* 68 (1997) 225-237.

28 For more information on the *Chancillería* and Castilian justice, see Richard L. Kagan, *Lawsuits and Litigants in Castile, 1500-1700* (Chapel Hill 1981).

29 Kagan, *Lawsuits*, 93.

30 In theory, litigation was free for the 'poor', but in practice, even they had to pay certain court

all its limitations, the cases serve as a reliable proxy to find Flemish elite immigrants. As merchants who worked abroad needed substantial credit to be successful, it stands to reason that they belonged to the opulent milieu that often pursued its legal interests before the *Chancillería*. Even though merchants preferred to solve conflicts through arbitration in first instance, they were generally more represented in the courts than any other social groups – apart from the aristocracy.<sup>31</sup> This was certainly the case in Castile, a region that historians consider to be more litigious than other regions in Europe in this era.<sup>32</sup> The merchants active at the Castilian fairs preferred to bring their lawsuit to the *Chancillería* as the guild courts – the *consulados* of Burgos and Bilbao – were much too limited in competence and scope to handle all the complex transactions and lawsuits generated by the Castilian fairs. As a royal court, the *Chancillería* also ensured better enforcement and impartial judgement.<sup>33</sup>

For the purposes of this article, it is important to note that the *cartas* contain, as a rule, basic information on foreign descent, citizenship, profession, marital status and family situation.<sup>34</sup> As a result, a longitudinal analysis of the *cartas* will generate a rough estimation of the number, the evolution, and the activities of an elite Flemish presence, including merchants, in the region. In order to conduct this research, all *cartas* were investigated which were drawn up between 1501 and 1600 and in which at least one of the litigants was a Fleming living in the region of Valladolid. In total, 57 *cartas* met these requirements. All Flemings mentioned in these 57 *cartas* and living in the region of Valladolid – 30 Flemings in total, since several Flemings were involved in multiple court cases – were integrated in the quantitative analysis of this research (see Appendix 1).<sup>35</sup> Once this list of Flemish immigrants was compiled, additional information from the pub-

fees. Only ca. 10 percent of the lawsuits brought to court were *pleitos de pobre* (lawsuits of the poor). Kagan, *Lawsuits*, 13.

31 Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (London 2009) 272-273; Kagan, *Lawsuits*, 106-107.

32 Kagan, *Lawsuits*, 3-16.

33 Ogilvie, *Institutions*, 263; Kagan, *Lawsuits*, 18-19 and 221.

34 If the foreign descent was not explicitly mentioned, but the individual was already identified as Flemish by previous research or had a Flemish toponym as surname, he/she was considered a Flemish immigrant.

35 I excluded the Flemish immigrants who worked as servants at one of the royal courts, because they had different motives to migrate as their activities were tied to the court, rather than to the urban community. For more information on Flemish immigrants connected to the royal court such as the princely court of Philips II in Valladolid or the court of Joanna of Castile in Tordesillas see Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 281-352.

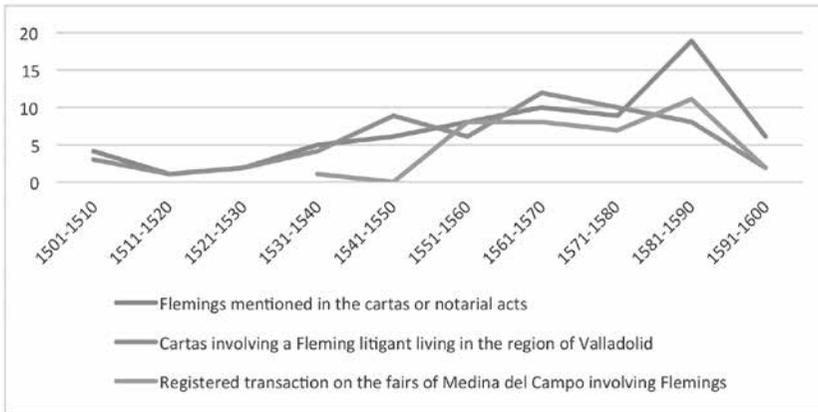


Figure 1: Chronological spread of Flemings and the *cartas* and registered transactions in which they are mentioned.

lished inventory of the notarial acts of Medina del Campo was added (this provides a short summary of c. 2,000 notarial acts concerning the fairs in Medina del Campo between 1530 and 1590).<sup>36</sup> Next to eleven Flemings who are mentioned both in the *cartas* and in the notarial acts, this brought thirteen Flemings more to light (see Appendix 2).<sup>37</sup> The combination of these two sources allows an assessment of the social organization and activities of Flemish immigrants on the fairs of Medina del Campo.

When mapping on a time line all the references to the thirty Flemings that appear as litigants in the *cartas* and the thirteen Flemings that appear only in the notary records, this reveals a rise in the number of Flemings since the 1530s, with rapid decline setting in in the 1590s. Possibly, this trend is caused by the unequal distribution of sources over time, as the increase in the number of *cartas* involving a Flemish litigant runs parallel to the increase in the total number of *cartas* issued by the *Chancillería* as recorded by Richard Kagan. He noticed a rise in the number of *cartas* from the 1520s onwards and a decline as from the 1580s.<sup>38</sup> A similar trend is observed in the number of registered transactions at the fairs of Medina del Campo. Yet, Kagan, for one, has argued that the rise and fall in the number of *cartas* actually mirrors the growth and decline of the Castilian fairs and the num-

36 Each summary has received its own number and paragraph in the guide. I will refer to that number instead of the page number. Anastasio Rojo Vega, *Guía de mercaderes y mercaderías en las ferias de Medina del Campo. Siglo XVI* (Valladolid 2004).

37 As the information on these thirteen Flemings is more limited, they were not included in the quantitative analysis of section three. They will be discussed separately.

38 Kagan, *Lawsuits*, 7.

ber of foreign merchants they could attract. If this holds, it is possible that the chart reflects the respective rise and decline in the number of Flemings that found it worth their while to spend time in the Valladolid region. This is certainly plausible, as the observed trends matches with economic and political shifts. With the increasing turmoil in the Low Countries because of the rise of Protestantism since the 1520s, several Flemings sought their fortune abroad, and Castile may have been an increasingly attractive destination, as this region was on its way to enjoy a remarkable economic efflorescence in the latter half of the sixteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Next to this, the increasing number of references to Flemings since the 1530s matches with the increasing number of Flemings involved in long-distance trade as recently demonstrated by Jeroen Puttevils.<sup>40</sup> Changes in the Flemish cloth industry might explain why these Flemish merchants were lured to the region of Valladolid. While smaller Netherlandish textile centres had already shifted from English wool to Spanish wool in the fifteenth century, the larger cloth-producing towns only followed suit by the mid-sixteenth century, a time in which Spanish wool was improved in quality while that of English wool deteriorated.<sup>41</sup> This rising demand for Spanish wool in the Low Countries and the increasing demand for Netherlandish cheap linens in Spain must have proven a very inviting business opportunity, which will be discussed later on.

Inversely, the sharp decline of the number of references in the source corpus to Flemings in the 1590s also appears to match larger trends. During this period, the bankruptcies of the Spanish Crown (1557, 1560, 1575 and 1596) and a general agrarian crisis resulted in an economic downturn.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the important Medina del Campo-Burgos-Bilbao-Antwerp trade route was disrupted because of the Dutch Revolt and the closure of the Scheldt.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, the new capital, Madrid, was replacing Medina del

39 Crespo Solana, 'Diasporas', 15; Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*, 32; Herman Van der Wee, *The Growth*, I, 222-224.

40 Puttevils, *Merchants and Trading*, passim.

41 For more information on the cloth industry in the Low Countries and the use of Spanish merino wool see Munro, 'Spanish Merino Wool'; John H. Munro, 'Medieval Woollens: The Western European Woollen Industries and Their Struggle for International Markets, C. 1000-1500', in: David Jenkins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles* (Cambridge 2003) 228-324; Herman Van der Wee, 'The Western European Woollen Industries, 1500-1750', in: David Jenkins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles* (Cambridge 2003) 397-472.

42 I. A. A. Thompson, 'Castile: Polity, Fiscality, and Fiscal Crisis', in: Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg (ed.), *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450-1789* (Stanford 1994) 160.

43 The Scheldt formed the life line to Antwerp, which was the trade centre within the Habsburg Netherlands.

Campo as financial centre.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, several Flemish merchants – and other foreign merchants – relocated to Madrid. Carlos de Late, for example, moved to the new capital in the 1590s.<sup>45</sup> So, the Flemish merchants appear to have moved to another place which offered better economic opportunities. In sum, it appears that the source corpus of *cartas* and notary records mirrors actual trends in the community of Flemings in the region of Valladolid and Medina del Campo. This suggests that while my surveying of the sixteenth-century legal evidence only reveals a limited segment of all Flemish activities in this part of Spain, it does provide a sufficiently reliable source basis to explore how Flemings positioned themselves socially and economically vis-à-vis each other and vis-à-vis the host society.

#### 4 Flemings before the *Chancillería*

First of all, the lawsuits before the *Chancillería* shed a light on the people with whom the 30 Flemings came into contact with and why. While these lawsuits do not give an exhaustive overview of all contacts, they do reveal (ex-)business partners, employees, landlords and/or family members. The more people worked together or were in contact, the greater the possibility that they came into conflict. In thirty-seven of the fifty-seven *cartas* the opposite party consisted of one or more Spaniards (65 per cent) (see Table 1). Most of these cases concerned commercial conflicts and debts. Adrian de Amberes, for example, had bought moulds and other tinsmith equipment from a Castilian merchant at the Medina fairs, but refused to pay him.<sup>46</sup> The second biggest group of opponents were other Flemings (18 per cent). If we think of legal conflicts as an attempt to cooperation that has gone sour, this considerable percentage of inter-Flemish lawsuits suggests that wealthy foreigners from the Low Countries tended to band together in a community of merchants. Indeed, the majority of these cases, which will be discussed in greater detail later on, concerned conflicts between Flemish merchants and their (former) factors. In most cases where the opposite party consisted of both Spaniards and Flemings, the object of litigation was the inheritance of a person who had married into Castilian society. Lastly, there were four cases in which the opposing party was the Castilian state. These cases mainly dealt with taxes. Luis de la Haya, for instance, had to

44 Thompson, 'Fiscal Crises', 150-152; Casado Alonso, 'Medina Del Campo Fairs', 514-517.

45 ARCV, RDE, c. 1681,69; Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders*, II, 42.

46 ARCV, RDE, c. 836,12.

prove his noble status before the *Chancillería*, before he could enjoy certain privileges such as exemption of certain taxes.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the profile of the opposing parties in the lawsuits reveals that the Flemish immigrants had intense contacts with Spaniards.

**Table 1. Origin of the (group of) opponents at the 57 trails involving Flemish litigants in the region of Valladolid, 1501-1600**

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Spanish                        | 31        |
| Flemish                        | 10        |
| Spanish and Flemish            | 5         |
| Local authorities              | 4         |
| Unclear                        | 4         |
| Other foreigner(s)             | 2         |
| Spanish and other foreigner(s) | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>57</b> |

If we turn from the cases to the profile of the involved Flemings, the first conclusion must be that it usually concerned merchants: the fifty-seven relevant *cartas* list thirty Flemish immigrants – four women and twenty-six men – who lived in the region of Valladolid between 1501 and 1600.<sup>48</sup> At least half of these Flemings were merchants (see Table 2), including one woman who ran a trading enterprise together with her husband. Commerce was not the only profession of the litigants. Two men were merchant-bankers, and another combined commerce with tax farming.<sup>49</sup> One man, Rodrigo de la Corte, was not only a merchant, but also a jeweller.<sup>50</sup> Next to Rodrigo de la Corte, only one other man was an artisan: a tinsmith. For nine of the immigrants – including three women – the occupation is unknown. So, while neither Bennisar nor Fagel found many merchants in their sources, the *cartas* make clear that this professional group did find its way to the region of Valladolid.

47 ARCV, RDE, c. 779,24; Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 229.

48 The thirty Flemish immigrants on which the quantitative analysis is based are listed in Appendix 1.

49 ARCV, RDE, c. 236,20; 412,13.

50 ARCV, RDE, c. 155,42; Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 229-33.

**Table 2. Occupation of the Flemish immigrants in the region of Valladolid, 1501-1600**

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Merchant              | 16        |
| Unknown               | 9         |
| Merchant-banker       | 2         |
| Merchant and jeweller | 1         |
| Tinsmith              | 1         |
| Tax farmer            | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>30</b> |

While the surviving sentences do not provide us with extensive information of the commercial activities of the litigants, they do reveal that most of these Flemish merchants were drawn to Medina del Campo and Valladolid because of the burgeoning wool and textile trade between Spain and the Low Countries. Arnao de Amberes, for example, sold mercery goods, while Pedro Esquilfe and Pedro de Flandes traded in linen.<sup>51</sup> This tallies well with the observation that linen prices in Spain increased considerably during the sixteenth century, provoking ever-larger foreign imports of this type of textile. As the linen production in the Low Countries was rapidly expanding in the sixteenth century, this proved a real business opportunity for Flemish merchants.<sup>52</sup> Juan Bautista de Olanda and Jorge Tulaime both grabbed this opportunity and sold large amounts of linen in Medina del Campo.<sup>53</sup> So, Flemish merchant had found a niche market, namely the linen trade, in which large profits could be made.

Yet, it would be a mistake to assume that the commercial activities of Flemings were limited to textiles. The evidence reveals that large quantities of Baltic wax and German copper were also shipped from the Low Countries to Spain and Portugal.<sup>54</sup> Jorge Tulaime, for example, also traded in copper next to other commodities such as textiles.<sup>55</sup> Some Flemish merchants also sold luxury goods such as Flemish devotional paintings or amber.<sup>56</sup> It stands to reason that this diverse array of commercial exploits had emerged

51 ARCV, RDE, c. 349,33; PLC, Fernando Alonso (F) (further FAF), c. 89,5; Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 257.

52 Bas Van Bavel, *Manors and Markets: Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 500-1600* (Oxford 2010) 361; Puttevels, *Merchants and Trading*, 38.

53 Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 235, 239-240.

54 Jeroen Puttevels, 'Eating the Bread out of Their Mouth': Antwerp's Export Trade and Generalized Institutions, 1544-5', *Economic History Review* 68 (2015) 1350; Louis Bril, 'De handel tussen de Nederlanden en het Iberisch Schiereiland (midden XVIe eeuw). Een kwantitatieve peiling' (master's thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1962), 48-49.

55 Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 236.

56 Rojo Vega, *Guía*, para. 1087.

by piggybacking on the increasingly large imports of wool from Spain from the fifteenth century onwards. When the ships returned from the Iberian Peninsula to the Low Countries they generally carried raw material for the textile industry such as Spanish merino wool and alum, complemented with less bulky agricultural produce (e.g. olive oil and southern fruits) and products from the New World (esp. dyestuffs and spices). Counterbalancing these imports, Flemish merchants had jumped at opportunities for export: Brulez' reconstruction of the Low Countries balance of trade showed a considerable export surplus in their trade with the Iberian Peninsula by the mid of the sixteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

Given the commercial importance of both towns and the professional profile of the majority of the Flemish immigrants, it is not surprising that all but one were active in Medina del Campo or Valladolid. More interesting, however, is that the majority of the Flemish immigrants – twenty-one, including at least twelve merchants – obtained citizenship (*vecindad*) in their place of residence (see Table 3).<sup>58</sup>

**Table 3. Place of residence of the Flemish immigrants in the region of Valladolid, 1501-1600**

|                  | Citizenship | Only resident | Total     |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| Medina del Campo | 10          | 7             | 17        |
| Valladolid       | 10          | 2             | 12        |
| Olmedo           | 1           | 0             | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>21</b>   | <b>9</b>      | <b>30</b> |

Migration historiography considers obtaining citizenship a crucial parameter to recognize sedentary immigrants.<sup>59</sup> However, in sixteenth-century Castile, becoming a citizen was less bound to regulations than in most oth-

57 See Wilfrid Brulez, 'De handelsbalans der Nederlanden in het midden van de 16de eeuw', *Bijdragen voor de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 21 (1967) 278-310; Puttevils, *Merchants and Trading*, 25-40.

58 When foreigners acquired citizenship, they were not automatically naturalized to Castilian subjects. Before the eighteenth century the concept of 'naturaleza' was highly debated in Castile. In practice, foreigners could chose to act as natives or as foreigners depending on the occasion. For more information on the concepts of 'vecino' and 'naturaleza' see Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations. Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (London 2003); Raymond Fagel, 'Cornelis Deque. Un mercader flamenco en la Castilla del siglo XV. Un debate sobre el concepto de 'vecindad' y 'naturaleza' entre mercaderes', in: Hilario Casado Alonso (ed.), *Castilla y Europa. Comercio y mercaderes en los siglos XIV, XV y XVI* (Burgos 1995) 241-263, 1995

59 It was not necessary to obtain citizenship in Castile when appealing at the *Chancillería*.

er European towns.<sup>60</sup> To become a *vecino* the head of a household should have expressed this desire to do so and proven it by his actions, for example, by residing in the town and paying local taxes. The two requirements for people who wanted to become a member of the local community were loyalty to the Catholic faith and reception by the local community.<sup>61</sup> Gaining special commercial privileges, which were connected to the status of citizen, such as low tariffs and the right to trade certain goods, must have been an important incentive for Flemings to acquire that status.<sup>62</sup>

Although the majority of the Flemish immigrants gained citizenship, this does not automatically guarantee a long stay in that city, since acquiring citizenship was not a formal process and thus very flexible. People could easily gain citizenship in another place if they chose to do so.<sup>63</sup> According to Fagel, city councils were already satisfied with the promise of a long-lasting commitment to the local community, resulting in Flemish immigrants who could change their citizenship two or even three times in only a couple of years.<sup>64</sup> A typical example of this is Diego de la Haya, a rich and famous merchant-banker, who was in 1536 a *vecino* of two towns at once – La Parilla (Valladolid) and Portillo (Valladolid) – something that was actually illegal.<sup>65</sup> Only two years later he had become a citizen of Valladolid.<sup>66</sup> Probably, city councils were even more lenient to grant citizenship rights when the immigrants were of vital importance to their city as was the case for merchants and merchant-bankers in Medina del Campo and Valladolid.

Yet, as flexible as the *vecino* statute was and despite the many different agendas which could lie behind the acquisition of citizenship, it does provide a minimum measure of the aspiration to integrate in Castilian society. In most cases, it appears that the Flemish immigrants did stay put for several years.<sup>67</sup> Diego de la Haya, for instance, was mentioned in seven *cartas*

60 For more information on the regulations concerning citizenship in other European cities see Dubost, 'Les Italiens'; Pelus-Kaplan, 'Travail, immigration et citoyenneté'; Alphonse Thijs, 'Minderheden te Antwerpen (16de/20ste eeuw)', in: Hugo Soly and Alphonse Thijs (eds.), *Minderheden in Westeuropese steden (16de-20ste eeuw)* (Brussel 1995) 15-42.

61 Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 7, 25-30, 202.

62 Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 6.

63 Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 25.

64 Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 447.

65 ARCV, Sala de Hijosdalgo (hereafter SDH) c. 489,10; Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 28; Abed Al-Hussein, 'Los mercaderes', 153.

66 ARCV, PLC, PAF, c. 164,5.

67 This estimation is based on the case files related to some of the trials under investigation in this paper. ARCV, PAF, c. 164,5; 757,4; 89,5; 58,5; 529,8.

and stayed a citizen of Valladolid for at least nineteen years. Moreover, he married the Spanish Catalina Barquete before 1538. This marriage could also explain Diego's rapid change of citizenship, since a local marriage automatically generated citizenship rights.<sup>68</sup> However, obtaining citizenship will not have been his prime motive to marry Catalina. As it was not that difficult for the Flemish immigrants to obtain these rights, this marriage was probably motivated by Diego's wish to start a family and to strengthen his ties with the local community. His commission of an altarpiece, including an effigy of himself and his wife, for a local church, provides additional proof that Diego was firmly rooted in Valladolid.<sup>69</sup>

**Table 4. Origin of the wedding partner of the Flemish immigrants in the region of Valladolid, 1501-1600**

|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| Unknown      | 16        |
| Spanish      | 11        |
| Flemish      | 3         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>30</b> |

Diego de la Haya was not the only Flemish immigrant who chose a local marriage partner. For fourteen of the thirty Flemish immigrants listed in the *cartas*, their marital status and the origin of their wedding partner could be identified.<sup>70</sup> As shown in Table 4, eleven married a Spanish bride or groom.<sup>71</sup> The available data thus reveal that at least one third of the research population had strong social ties with Valladolid's urban community. Rodrigo de la Corte even married twice with a Spanish woman: first he married Leonor Vazquez and after her death Catalina Lopes.<sup>72</sup>

In contrast to merchants who were interested in developing strong local bonds, there were at least three Flemish immigrants who chose a Flemish wedding partner: Juan Firens married Henriette Spicar, Melchior de Bis married Margarita Mahieu and Enoc de Morin wedded the sister of Jacques

68 Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 446.

69 Manuel Gómez-Moreno, *Las águilas del renacimiento española: Bartolomé Ordóñez, Diego Siloé, Pedro Machuca, Alonso Berruguete, 1517-1558* (Madrid 1941) 168.

70 Pedro Esquilfe and Pedro de Amberes were also married, but the origins of their wives is unclear. ARCV, RDE, c. 1156,10; Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 261.

71 Giles de la Bala married to Elonor de Turienco, Diego de Bruselas to Madalena Garcia, Benedito Flamenco to Maria López de Zarate y Echavarrí, Diego de la Haya to Catalina Barquete, Bautista de Flandes to Maria Gutiérrez, Pedro de Cambray to Beatriz de Vallejo, Beatriz de Cambray to Diego de Velasco and Pedro de Flandes to Isabel de Paz. ARCV, RDE, c. 458,35; 459,30; 1219,32; 1302,27; 1488,6; 1701,20; Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 238; Abed Al-Hussein, 'Los mercaderes', 153.

72 Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 232.

Mahieu.<sup>73</sup> The latter was probably the aforementioned Margarita Mahieu who remarried after she had become a widow around 1584.<sup>74</sup> It is striking that these three Flemings were merchants and that in every case, the spouse belonged to an Antwerp-based family of merchants with business interests in Valladolid.<sup>75</sup> In the same vein, the merchants Jacques Mahieu and Pedro de Amberes, who both married a Spanish woman, also chose daughters of local businessmen as their wedding partners.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Juan Firens married his daughter to Adrian de Bergas, a Fleming who was also involved in the Castilian fairs.<sup>77</sup> These results run parallel with the results from Ana Crespo Solana for the Flemish immigrants in seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries Cadiz and with those of Maartje van Gelder for Flemish immigrants in early modern Venice.<sup>78</sup> Marriage for these merchants was more than the union between husband and wife. It was the fusion of two families and 'a well-chosen spouse offered the opportunity to combine two families' capital, network of contacts and experience in international trade.'<sup>79</sup>

The available evidence on citizenship and marriages with Castilian spouses thus reveals that, contrary to earlier scholarship, it is not fruitful to imagine the high-end segment of the Flemish presence in interior Spain as either sedentary or ambulant. About half of the Flemings who appeared before the *Chancillería* had citizen status, and at least one-third had gone as far as to marry into local communities, and this distribution does not correspond to the division between merchants and artisans as some historians had speculated. The data on the thirteen Flemings that only appeared in the notarial acts give additional proof as they provide a sampling of the different kinds of merchants that visited the Castilian fairs (see Appendix 2). Some of these merchants seem to have lived on a more permanent base in the region. Melchior de Bis, for example, had a trade firm together with his wife in Medina del Campo. It was also in this city that he registered

73 Margarita Mahieu was living in Medina del Campo. It is unclear where Henriette Spicar lived.

74 Rojo Vega, *Guía*, para. 377; Anastasio Rojo Vega, 'El Negocio Del Libro En Medina Del Campo. Siglo XVI Y XVII', *Investigaciones Históricas: Época Moderna Y Contemporánea* 7 (1997) 26; Valentin Vazquez de Prada, *Lettres marchandes d'Anvers*, IV (Paris, 1960), 28.

75 ARCV, RDE, c. 1395,1; Valentin Vazquez de Prada, *Lettres marchandes d'Anvers*, I, 185; Valentin Vazquez de Prada, *Lettres marchandes d'Anvers*, III, 86; 112 and 344-345; Bril, 'De handel', 42.

76 Mariana del Canto was a member of the famous printing family Boyer-Canto of Medina del Campo and Isabel de Paz was the daughter of a vallasolitan merchant. ARCV, RDE, c. 890,74; Rojo Vega, 'El Negocio', 26.

77 Vazquez de Prada, *Lettres marchandes*, I, 185.

78 Crespo Solana, 'Diasporas', 15; Maartje Van Gelder, *Trading Places. The Netherlandish Merchants in Early Modern Venice* (Leiden 2009) 114.

79 Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, 114.

his last will. Yet, next to these more ‘sedentary’ Flemings, the notarial acts also mention at least three ambulant Flemish merchants. As this group left fewer traces, these three are presumably only the tip of the iceberg.<sup>80</sup> So, ‘ambulant’ and ‘sedentary’ should not be seen as two opposing categories, but rather as the two ends of a broad spectrum and while some Flemish merchants might be clearly categorised as ambulant or sedentary, many of them should be located somewhere between these two extremes.

In fact, the mixed preferences of Flemish residents in Valladolid may have endowed a community of merchants with considerable tensile strength. The more footloose merchants who had not integrated much in Castilian society must often have had close ties with fellow merchants who had married into a Castilian family, or who had acquired the statute of *vecino*, and who could help to bridge the distance with Castilian merchants or officials whenever necessary. Inversely, the presence of compatriots who remained largely focused on Netherlandish society may have helped integrated merchants to maintain contacts with the fatherland. While the direct evidence on commercial activities is scarce, the available information is sufficient to reveal that a Flemish merchant community was formed in the Valladolid region and that this community helped to bridge the gap between regional and international trade. In the next section, I will therefore elaborate on the mutual contact and the organisation of the Flemish merchants in the Valladolid region.

## 5 Factors and fairs

The survey of the legal evidence not only allows to probe the social cohesion among ‘Flemings’ in Valladolid and Medina del Campo, it is also revealing for the range of action of merchants in the Iberian Peninsula. Next to the thirty Flemish immigrants who lived in the Valladolid region, the *cartas* also mention eight Flemish litigants who lived somewhere else: one lived in Lisbon,<sup>81</sup> two in other Spanish towns,<sup>82</sup> and five in the Low Countries.<sup>83</sup> Although this last group were all merchants trading with the region of Valladolid, they never appeared before the *Chancillería* in per-

80 Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld*, 211.

81 Lorenzo Hermis. ARCV, RDE, c. 1395.1.

82 Nicolas Mahieu and Benedicto Urio. ARCV, RDE, c. 1569.43; 1681.69; Rojo Vega, *Guía*, 326.

83 Antonio Fermaute, Pedro Claveson, Gastelbanove Flamenco, Miguel de Hermosen and Guillermo Rubin all lived in the Low Countries. The first lived in Armentières and traded from Antwerp, while the others lived in Antwerp. ARCV, RDE, c. 856.44; 1153.5; 1209.39.

*Illustration 2: View on Antwerp titled Salve felix Andwerpia. Anonymous woodcut in Unio pro conservatione rei publice by Jan Gheet, 1515 (University Library KU Leuven, no. 2B 2529.*



son but were represented by their lawyer or factor.<sup>84</sup> A notable example of such a factor is Jorge Tulaime who had left Tournai at a young age to be stationed at Medina del Campo for the business partners Guillermo Rubin and Antonio Fermaute who traded from Antwerp.<sup>85</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, it is in this role that he first appeared in the *cartas*. Shortly after these two lawsuits, in 1559, Jorge had become the third largest importer of commodities – including cloth – through the northern ports of Castile.<sup>86</sup> Yet, it remains unclear if he still acted as an agent for Guillermo and Antonio at that moment, since he became a merchant in his own right somewhere between 1557 and 1566. This step towards independence can be traced because it was accompanied by a series of conflicts with his ex-employer, Guillermo Rubin.<sup>87</sup> In 1566, the first lawsuit between Guill-

84 ARCV, RDE, c. 856,44; 888,8; 111,36; 117,25; 1153,5; 1209,39.

85 Vazquez de Prada, *Lettres marchandes*, IV, 85; Bril, 'De handel', 105.

86 Lapeyre, *El comercio exterior*, 96.

87 It seems that Guillermo Rubin traded simultaneously alone and with Antonio Fermaute. Bril, 'De handel', 91, 105.



volving Guillermo Rubin and Jorge Tulaime.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, business went well for Jorge, who hired his own factor, Carlos de Latre, and traded with France, England, Portugal and other regions in Spain. After some years, however, Carlos de Latre also started working on his own, starting a lawsuit against Jorge about the ownership of some goods, including five rubies. The last *carta* involving Jorge was drawn up in 1598, which concludes a series of seventeen *cartas* mentioning him.<sup>89</sup> During Jorge Tulaime's rise from simple factor to successful merchant, he was thus able to combine a permanent presence in Medina del Campo with close contacts with Flemish merchants in the Low Countries and in Spain.

The story of Jorge Tulaime is only one example of the many Flemish agents and merchants in the region. A similar story could be told of Enoc de Morin and Gaspar de Morin who were sent to Medina del Campo to act as a factor for the family business, run by Flores de Morin from Antwerp.<sup>90</sup> Another example is Jacques Mahieu who acted as factor for his family business. The Mahieu family was one of the most prominent merchant families of Lille. Apart from a base in the commercial metropolis that was sixteenth-century Antwerp, the family had members stationed in London, Cologne and Frankfurt and trade relations in Lisbon and the Baltic.<sup>91</sup> These Flemish merchants seem to have stayed for longer periods of time in the region and that they were often members of significant (family) trade companies with their base or an important branch in Antwerp.

It is striking that the factors of these Flemish trade companies were often family members and if not, at least also of Flemish descent. This may have been a matter of trust. Long-distance trade was risky given the amount of capital involved and the absence of reliable control mechanisms. As a result, it was very important to pick the right business partner or factor. In first instance, merchants preferred to rely on family members, since due to their shared responsibility to the family, they were less likely to cheat. If no family member was available, a compatriot was chosen to act as factor. Yet, the risk of betrayal was much greater as these factors were often young men eager to learn the trade in order to start their own business in

88 ARCV, RDE, c. 1104,4; 1111,36; 1111,53; 1117,26; 1153,5; 1209,39.

89 ARCV, RDE, c. 856,44; 888,8; 1104,4; 1095,14; 1111,36; 1111,53; 1117,25; 1153,5; 1177,26; 1183,33; 1184,24; 1209,32; 1219,31; 1228,7; 1395,1; 1513,15; 1865,33.

90 Juan, Simon and Jeronimo de Morin were also involved in the trade with Spain. Vazquez de Prada, *Lettres marchandes*, I, 185; *ibidem*, IV, 86, 112.

91 Hermann Kellenbenz, *Unternehmerkräfte im Hamburger Portugal- und Spanienhandel, 1590-1625* (Hamburg 1954) 208 and 220; José Gentil da Silva, *Lettres de Lisbonne, 1563-1578*, I (Paris 1959) 261; Émile Coornaert, *Les français et le commerce international à Anvers fin du XVIe-XVIIe siècle*, I (Paris 1961) 160-168.

time. As a result, it was more likely that they would put their own interest before that of the firm.<sup>92</sup> In order to cope with this hazard, merchants tried to bind their factors to the firm through kinship and friendship relations. These strategies explain why endogamy was so common among merchants and why they relied on family members and in-laws for important functions.<sup>93</sup> It also demonstrates how strongly the social and economic profile of these Flemish merchants were intertwined.<sup>94</sup>

In the case of Valladolid, these socially endogamous marriages and business relations often resulted in strong ties between several Flemings residing in the region. Juan Firens, for example, was related to Gregorio Criter.<sup>95</sup> Enoc de Morin was the brother-in-law of Jacques Mahieu.<sup>96</sup> Jorge Tulaime traded with Jacques Mahieu, Pedro the Flandes and Juan Bautista de Olanda.<sup>97</sup> The combination of all these connections, as evidenced by Figure 2, confirms that the social ties that are revealed in the *Chancillería's* legal snapshots added up to a Flemish merchant community that branched out from Valladolid and its environs.

Based on shared occupation, provenance, friendship, and kinship ties, an informal merchant community was created, providing mutual assistance.<sup>98</sup> The trials of Juan Bautista de Olanda can serve as an example as most of the Flemish merchants present in the area came to his aid and acted as a witness for the defence.<sup>99</sup> While this Flemish merchant community was never formalised in an institution, it will have played a similar role as such as the nations or confraternities that are attested in Lisbon or Seville.

92 This weakness of the factor system led to its disappearance in favour of commission trade. John Everaert, *De internationale en koloniale handel der Vlaamse firma's te Cadix, 1670-1700* (Brugge 1973) 41.

93 Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*, 7; Wilfrid Brulez, *De firma della Faille en de internationale handel van Vlaamse firma's in de 16de eeuw* (Brussel 1959) 374-375; Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, 113-116; Luuc Kooijmans, 'Risk and Reputation. On the Mentality of Merchants in the Early Modern Period', in: Clé Lesger and Leo Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times. Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market* (Den Haag 1995) 25-34.

94 Van Gelder came to the same conclusion for the Flemish presence in early modern Venice. See Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, 115.

95 Gregorio Criter was the cousin of Hans Firens. Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 282.

96 Rojo Vega, *Guía*, para. 263.

97 ARCV, RDE, c. 1219,32; Rojo Vega, *Guía*, para. 1777; 1809; Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 228.

98 According to Gelderbom and Grave's categorisation of merchant associations, the Flemish network in the region of Valladolid is organised through 'informal constraint'. Regina Grafe and Oscar Gelderblom, 'The Rise and Fall of Merchant Guilds: Re-Thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40 (2010) 477-511; Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, 118.

99 Fagel, 'De koopmansboeken', 228.

<sup>100</sup> Moreover, this Flemish merchant community was likely to be important for newly arriving and ambulant Flemish merchants. According to Curtin, the merchants who settled in alien towns often functioned as cross-cultural brokers for compatriots who continued to travel back and forth.<sup>101</sup> In a similar vein, Leslie Moch stated that these newcomers ‘established contacts among people who spoke a similar language and shared such cultural habits as cuisine, religious practice, and fertility patterns.’<sup>102</sup> Inversely, Flemish merchants who remained firmly rooted in the Low Countries might have proven useful contacts and sources of information for Flemings living in pain. In fact, the combination of a shared background and the different preferences when it came to integration – ambulant, sedentary and everything in between – will have functioned as a bridge connecting the Flemish merchant community to different trade networks both regional and international.

## 6 Conclusion

In 1960, Wilfried Brulez famously speculated that the presence of numerous Flemish merchant communities on the Iberian Peninsula contributed to the know-how and networks on which the Dutch would built their commercial empire in the seventeenth century. In the wake of this provocative thesis, follow-up research has revealed traces of Flemish commercial activities in the main port cities, but it remained an open question whether they were also active in the interior of the Iberian Peninsula. The case study of the Valladolid region provides a significant contribution to this debate in that it shows that the Flemish commercial networks on the Iberian coast had tendrils that reached deeply into Spain. These Flemish merchants were primarily motivated by their interests in the textile trade, but they had soon diversified their activities.

Several Flemish trade companies found the economic opportunities offered by the rising demand for cheap linen in Spain and for Spanish merino wool in the Low Countries so alluring that they stationed a factor in places such as Valladolid and Medina del Campo, or even used it as a home base

<sup>100</sup> For more information on the Flemish nations and confraternities, see Crespo Solana, ‘Nación extranjera’; Julian Montemayor, ‘Les étrangers à Madrid et à Tolède XVIe-XVIIe siècle’, in: Jacques Bottin and Donatella Calabi (eds.), *Les étrangers dans la ville. Minorités et espace urbain du bas Moyen Âge à l’époque moderne* (Paris 1999) 53-62.

<sup>101</sup> Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Moch, *Moving Europeans*, 16.

for their business ventures. Just as was the case for their compatriots that resided in coastal towns, the Flemish merchants active in this region were inclined to rely on family members and compatriots for important commercial ventures as an effective way to overcome the hazards inherent to long-distance trade. In a similar vein, occupational endogamy was the rule rather than the exception, since marriage offered the opportunity to bind employees to the firm and to merge two merchant companies. Through these mutual ties, a Flemish merchant community took shape. This community, although never formalized, must have played a similar role as the Flemish nations or confraternities that are attested in other parts of Europe. It provided aid to compatriots and a safety net for new immigrants and ambulant Flemish merchants arriving in the region.

What is striking is that notwithstanding the strong bonding between its various members, this community did not function in isolation. Many Flemings living in the region also kept social relations with the local community, but the intensity of these contacts differed strongly from individual to individual. They all had different inclinations when it came to residence and integration. While some Flemish merchants only resided in the area, others were more closely tied to inland Spain, e.g. by having obtained citizenship and/or by having married into the local community. The debate about Flemish activities in the Iberian Peninsula is traditionally dominated by the conceptual dichotomy between ambulant and sedentary merchants, but this case study reveals that in practice, the merchant community was much more complex, in that it covered the entire spectrum between these two positions.

This is important, because it was perhaps precisely this diversification that provided the Flemish merchant community with tensile strength. On the one hand, ambulant Flemish merchant had easy access to the local market through sedentary Flemish merchants, as they often knew them very well. On the other hand, sedentary Flemish merchants had no difficulties in staying in touch with the motherland, even if they invested much energy in integrating into local society. As a result, these more sedentary merchants were not cut off from Netherlandish society. Rather, the mix of sedentary and not-so-sedentary merchants linked different trade networks in Spain and the Low Countries, permitting the transfer of knowledge and expertise back and forth. Further research should therefore explore how exactly these hybrid Flemish merchant communities have stimulated the gradual accumulation of commercial expertise in the Low Countries, but the social fabric of the Valladolid communities suggests that the continued interest in the suggestion of Wilfried Brulez is not without merit.

## About the author

Janna Everaert (1990) studied history at Ghent University where she has written her master's thesis on the Flemish immigrants living in the region of Valladolid during the sixteenth century. Subsequently, she obtained a teacher degree at the University of Antwerp and an Advanced Master in Archival Science at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel with a master's thesis on the valorisation of museum archives. Currently, Janna is preparing a PhD thesis on the political elites of Antwerp (ca. 1400-1550) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the University of Antwerp.

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**Appendix 1. Flemings mentioned in the cartas and living in the region of Valladolid, 1501-1600**

| Name                         | Flemish origin explicitly mentioned | Occupation            | Place of residence | Vecino | Year(s) the person is mentioned in the <i>cartas ejecutorias</i> (1501-1600) | Year(s) the person is mentioned in the notarial acts of the fairs of Medina del Campo (1530-1590) <sup>1</sup> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|--|--|
| <b>Amberes, Arnao</b>        | No                                  | Merchant              | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1521 and 1546 <sup>2</sup>   |  |
| <b>Amberes, Adrian</b>       | No                                  | Tinsmith              | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1555 <sup>3</sup>  |  |
| <b>Amberes, Pedro</b>        | No                                  | ?                     | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1569 <sup>4</sup>  |  |
| <b>Bala, Giles de la</b>     | Yes                                 | Merchant              | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1566, 1567, 1569, 1571, 1573, and 1583 <sup>5</sup>                          | 1576 (para. 1913) and 1578 (para. 865)   |
| <b>Bruselas, Álvaro de</b>   | No                                  | Merchant-banker       | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1501 <sup>6</sup>  |  |
| <b>Bruselas, Diego de</b>    | No                                  | Tax farmer            | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1509 and 1528 <sup>7</sup>   |  |
| <b>Cambray, Beatriz de</b>   | No                                  | ?                     | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1544, 1550, 1556, 1574 and 1575 <sup>8</sup>                                 |  |
| <b>Cambray Florentina de</b> | No                                  | ?                     | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1534, 1542, 1544 and 1550 <sup>9</sup>                                       |  |
| <b>Cambray, María de</b>     | No                                  | ?                     | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1534, 1542 and 1544 <sup>10</sup>  |  |
| <b>Cambray, Pedro de</b>     | No                                  | Merchant              | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1507 and 1513 <sup>11</sup>  |  |
| <b>Corte, Rodrigo de la</b>  | Yes                                 | Merchant and jeweller | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1501 <sup>12</sup>   |  |
| <b>Critir, Gregorio</b>      | Yes                                 | Merchant              | Medina del Campo   | No     | 1571, 1572 and 1576 <sup>13</sup>  | 1581 (para. 263)   |

1 Rojo Vega, Guía, passim.

2 ARCV, RDE, c. 349,33; 626,71.

3 ARCV, RDE, c. 836,12.

4 ARCV, RDE, c. 1156,10.

5 ARCV, RDE, c. 1104,4; 1111,36; 1111,53; 1117,25; 1153,5; 1209,39; 1265,23; 1488,6.

6 ARCV, RDE, c. 155,42.

7 ARCV, RDE, c. 236,20; 412,13.

8 ARCV, RDE, c. 586,43; 708,1; 854,55; 1302,27; 1312,80.

9 ARCV, RDE, c. 458,35; 558,24; 586,43; 708,1.

10 ARCV, RDE, c. 458,35; 558,24; 586,43.

11 ARCV, RDE, c. 217,8; 289,30.

12 ARCV, RDE, c. 155,42.

13 ARCV, RDE, c. 1204,30; 1229,32; 1331,78.

| Name                        | Flemish origin explicitly mentioned | Occupation      | Place of residence | Vecino | Year(s) the person is mentioned in the <i>cartas ejecutorias</i> (1501-1600) | Year(s) the person is mentioned in the notarial acts of the fairs of Medina del Campo (1530-1590) <sup>1</sup> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------|--|--|
| <b>Esquiife, Pedro</b>      | Yes                                 | Merchant        | Valladolid         | ?      | 1565 <sup>14</sup>   | 1557 (para. 1351)  |
| <b>Firens, Juan</b>         | Yes                                 | Merchant        | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1588 <sup>15</sup>   | 1584 (para. 377) and 1589 (para. 2003)   |
| <b>Flamenco, Benedite</b>   | No                                  | ?               | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1534 <sup>16</sup>   |  |
| <b>Flamenco, Juan</b>       | No                                  | ?               | Olmedo             | Yes    | 1549 <sup>17</sup>   |  |
| <b>Flandes, Antonio de</b>  | No                                  | Merchant        | [Medina del Campo] | ?      | 1586 <sup>18</sup>   |  |
| <b>Flandes, Bautista de</b> | No                                  | ?               | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1591 <sup>19</sup>   |  |
| <b>Flandes, Pedro de</b>    | No                                  | Merchant        | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1571 and 1572 <sup>20</sup>  |  |
| <b>Haya, Diego de la</b>    | No                                  | Merchant-banker | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1538, 1539, 1543, 1546, 1550 and 1557 <sup>21</sup>                          |  |
| <b>Haya, Juan de la</b>     | No                                  | ?               | Valladolid         | ?      | 1585 <sup>22</sup>   | 1558 (para. 502)   |
| <b>Haya, Luis de la</b>     | No                                  | ?               | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1553 <sup>23</sup>   |  |
| <b>Latre, Carlos de</b>     | Yes                                 | Merchant        | Valladolid         | Yes    | 1570, 1579, 1584 and 1590 <sup>24</sup>                                      | 1580 (para. 1241)  |
| <b>Mahieu, Jacques</b>      | Yes                                 | Merchant        | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1586 and 1588 <sup>25</sup>  | 1569 (para. 1809), 1578 (para. 865) and 1590 (para. 2006)  |
| <b>Mahieu Margarita</b>     | Yes                                 | Merchant        | [Medina del Campo] | Yes    | 1588 <sup>26</sup>   | 1584 (para. 377)   |

14 ARCV, RDE, c. 1083,32.

15 ARCV, RDE, c. 1622,9.

16 ARCV, RDE, c. 459,30.

17 ARCV, RDE, c. 692,59.

18 ARCV, RDE, c. 1546,39; 1569,43.

19 ARCV, RDE, c. 1701,20.

20 ARCV, RDE, c. 1219,32; 1228,7.

21 ARCV, RDE, c. 512,33; 519,41; 570,61; 581,14; 673,8; 713,60; 879,1.

22 ARCV, RDE, c. 1536,50.

23 ARCV, RDE, c. 779,24.

24 ARCV, RDE, c. 1177,26; 1395,1; 1509,17; 1681,69.

25 ARCV, RDE, c. 1546,39; 1569,43; 1622,9.

26 ARCV, RDE, c. 1622,9.

| Name                            | Flemish origin explicitly mentioned | Occupation | Place of residence | Vecino | Year(s) the person is mentioned in the <i>cartas ejecutorias</i> (1501-1600) | Year(s) the person is mentioned in the notarial acts of the fairs of Medina del Campo (1530-1590) <sup>1</sup>     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|--------|--|--|
| <b>Morin, Enoc de</b>           | Yes                                 | Merchant   | Medina del Campo   | ?      | 1584 <sup>27</sup>   | 1583 (para. 1973; 1975), 1588 (para. 1998) and 1594 (para. 1137)   |
| <b>Morin, Gaspar de</b>         | Yes                                 | Merchant   | Medina del Campo   | ?      | 1584 <sup>28</sup>   |  |
| <b>Proudhome, Juan de</b>       | Yes                                 | Merchant   | [Medina del Campo] | ?      | 1584 and 1586 <sup>29</sup>  |  |
| <b>Olanda, Juan Bautista de</b> | Yes                                 | Merchant   | Medina del Campo   | ?      | 1567 <sup>30</sup>   | 1568 (para. 1777) and 1570 (para. 1837)  |
| <b>Tulaime, Jorge</b>           | Yes                                 | Merchant   | Medina del Campo   | Yes    | 1566, 1567, 1570, 1571, 1572, 1579, 1584 and 1598 <sup>31</sup>              | 1555 (para. 1216), 1560 (para. 1657), 1562 (para. 213), 1568 (para. 1777), 1569 (para. 1809) and 1578 (para. 1929) |

27 ARCV, RDE, c. 1395,1.

28 ARCV, RDE, c. 1395,1.

29 ARCV, RDE, c. 1513,15; 1546,39; 1569,43

30 ARCV, RDE, c. 1132,47.

31 ARCV, RDE, c. 856,44; 888,8; 1104,4; 1095,14; 1111,36; 1111,53; 1117,25; 1153,5; 1177,26; 1183,33; 1184,24; 1209,32; 1219,31; 1228,7; 1395,1; 1513,15; 1865,33.

**Appendix 2. Flemings mentioned in the notarial acts and not included in Table 1, 1530-1590**

| <b>Name</b>                         | <b>Place of residence</b> | <b>Ambulant or sedentary</b> | <b>Occupation</b>       | <b>Year(s) the person is mentioned in the notarial acts of the fairs of Medina del Campo</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Amberes, Mateo de</b>            | Medina del Rioseco        | Sedentary                    | Merchant and notary     | 1554 (para. 1583) and 1564 (para. 1693)  |
| <b>Artsen, Artus</b>                | ?                         | ?                            | Merchant                | 1583 (para. 1978)  |
| <b>Criter, Juan</b>                 | ?                         | ?                            | Merchant                | 1581 (para. 263)   |
| <b>Bavon, Helink</b>                | Antwerp                   | Ambulant                     | Merchant                | 1569 (para. 1012) and 1575 (para. 352)   |
| <b>Bis, Melchior de</b>             | Medina del Campo          | Sedentary                    | Merchant                | 1582 (para. 1087; 1093) and 1584 (para. 377)   |
| <b>Hooghenbossche, Diego van 't</b> | Medina del Campo          | Sedentary                    | ?                       | 1568 (para. 1010)  |
| <b>Hus, Adrian</b>                  | Middelburg                | Ambulant                     | Merchant                | 1534 (para. 931)   |
| <b>Mahieu, Nicolas</b>              | Salamanca                 | Sedentary                    | Merchant and jeweler    | 1583 (para. 1975; 1978)  |
| <b>Pozo, Bernaldo del</b>           | Valladolid                | Sedentary                    | Merchant                | 1593 (para. 2013)  |
| <b>Risel, Melchior</b>              | Medina del Campo          | Sedentary                    | Merchant                | 1580 (para. 363; 367) and 1581 (para. 1079)  |
| <b>Sandres, Juan</b>                | Valladolid                | Sedentary                    | Merchant                | 1589 (para. 2003)  |
| <b>Schetz, Baltasar</b>             | Antwerp                   | Ambulant                     | Merchant                | 1553 (para. 297) and 1554 (para. 1559)   |
| <b>Unguen, Pedro</b>                | Valladolid                | Sedentary                    | Merchant and sock maker | 1589 (para. 2003)  |

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