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Via Ostiense, 234 - 00144 ROMA - Tel. 06/57338550, Fax 06/57338490

segreteria@cisge.it – www.cisge.it

COMITATO SCIENTIFICO

Claudio Cerreti, Annalisa D'Ascenzo, Elena Dai Prà, Anna Guarducci, Carla Masetti, Lucia Masotti, Paola Pressenda, Massimo Rossi, Luisa Spagnoli

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VALENTINA CALDARI

EXTRA-EUROPEAN CONCERNS
IN THE STUDY OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY.
THE ANGLO-SPANISH MATCH, 1617-1624

Introduction

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century a common and broad hostility towards Spain was one of the few issues upon which the English parliament and the English political nation frequently agreed¹. Nevertheless, two Tudor monarchs had married a Spaniard, Henry VIII married Katherine of Aragon in 1509 and Mary Tudor married Philip II in 1554. At the beginning of the 1620s it became clear that a Spanish marriage was also decided for Charles, son and heir of King James. In this short contribution, I am using the marriage negotiations for an Anglo-Spanish match in the 1620s as a *leitmotif* in order to demonstrate how crucial it is to acknowledge the importance of considering together European and extra-European history. By maintaining a boundary, one fails to recognise the symbiotic relationship between the metropolis and its colonies. As stated by Cooper & Stoler in the introduction of *Tensions of Empire*,

«Europe's colonies were never empty spaces to be made over in Europe's image or fashioned in its interests; nor, indeed, were European self-contained entities that at one point projected themselves overseas. Europe was made by imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself» (COOPER, STOLER, 1997, p. 1).

After giving a very brief outline of the definition of “Black Legend”, I will firstly try to shed some light on the dialectic of power between Spain and Portugal during the period of the Union of Crowns (between 1580 and 1640) and on the extent to which this influenced the relationship between the Iberian powers and England while the marriage between Prince Charles and the Infanta was being negotiated. Secondly, I will look at how this relationship developed during a specific episode of colonial (mis)understanding when the English East

¹ On the hostility towards the Church of Rome as one of the key factors holding the monarchy together, see FINCHAM (1993) and CLIFTON (1973). See also MARSHALL (2001). According to Marshall, the Counter-Reformation in Spain and the Henrician Reformation in England represented «a prelude to decades, if not centuries, of mutual mistrust and misunderstanding».

India Company attacked the Portuguese possession of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf in 1622. The attempt to pursue a dynastic union between England and Spain has never been considered together with colonial issues and commercial rivalry in the study of the early 1620s, despite “continuance of trade” with the Iberian powers being one of the key positives of the match identified by the British public². I believe that what was happening in the colonies influenced and was influenced by the foreign policy of the European states involved in the negotiations.

The Black Legend

Julian Juderías created the term Black Legend at the beginning of the last century. When speaking of Black Legend, Juderías meant unjustified criticism of Spain created in the sixteenth century:

«The atmosphere created by the fantastical stories about our fatherland, which have seen the light of publicity in almost all countries, the grotesque descriptions made again and again of the character of the Spanish as individuals and as a collective, the denial or at least the systematic ignoring of everything that is advantageous and honourable in the various manifestations of our culture and art» (JUDERÍAS, 1917, pp. 25-26)³.

As William Maltby acutely expressed in his book *The Black Legend in England*:

«In any protracted struggle between two powers, people tend to develop an unwanted interest in their enemy and the society that produced him. This curiosity is largely hostile, aiming at the discovery of weak points» (MALTBY, 1971, p. 88).

However, such curiosity was not necessarily hostile and various historians, including Pauline Croft, have demonstrated that informal trade links between England and Spain continued to exist even when the two countries were at war with each other. However, for the purpose of this essay I will only take into account rivalry and competition among the Iberian powers and England, rather than examples of cooperation, even though those were often in place.

² BL, Add. ms 72392, Trumbull Papers, f. 1r. Among the other advantages that could result from a Spanish Match, the author listed: «Great King daughter», «much money», and «security and safety».

³ «Por leyenda negra entendemos el ambiente creado por los fantásticos relatos que acerca de nuestra patria han visto la luz pública en casi todos los países; las descriptions grotescas que se han hecho siempre del carácter de los españoles como individuos y como coletividad; la negación, o por lo menos, la ignorancia sistemática de cuanto nos es favorable y honroso en las diversas manifestaciones de la cultura y del arte».

Dialectic of power between Spain and Portugal

After decades of conflict, the treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 and the treaty of Zaragoza in 1529, concerning the Atlantic and the Pacific respectively, divided the spheres of influence of Spain and Portugal therefore creating the conditions for a lasting peace between the two empire-builders. In 1578, following the disappearance of King Sebastian in Africa and the death of his uncle and successor, Cardinal Henry, the succession of Philip II of Spain, son of a Portuguese princess, was almost inevitable. The two halves divided at Tordesillas and Zaragoza were brought together again under Philip II in 1580. This led to a radical readjustment of the European chessboard, to the detriment of the Nordic countries and especially of England and the United Provinces (NEWITT, 2009 : pp. 15 and 83). After Philip inherited, bought, and conquered the Kingdom of Portugal⁴, the two Crowns remained united for the following sixty years, a period which was considered by the Portuguese as comparable to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews (STUDNICKI-GIZBERT, 2007, pp. 4-5). In 1581, at Tomar, Philip agreed to respect the independence of Portugal as a kingdom through compliance with the existing laws, guaranteeing that the king would always be represented by a member of the royal family, that the Cortes would be gathered in Lisbon, and that the language used in the administration of Portugal would continue to be Portuguese. In addition, before leaving Lisbon in 1583, Philip II established a Council of Portugal (DISNEY, 2009, vol. 1, p. 201). Regarding the Portuguese territories in Asia, it was decided that their administration and defence would remain under the exclusive control of Lisbon (COUTO, LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 65)⁵. As a contemporary observer, Pedro Fernández Navarrete, wrote:

«It is fair that the burden is fairly distributed; Castile continues to take care of the Royal House and the defense of her coasts and the route to the Indies; and Portugal pays his own military defenses and armies for the East Indies as it did before its union with Castile» (SUBRAHMANYAM, 1993, p. 219).

Although Spain was in conflict with the United Provinces from the 1560s and its relations with England were worsening in the 1570s, before the Union of the Crowns Portugal had been able to maintain rather friendly relationships and extensive trade connections with both the English and the Dutch. After 1580, however, the Portuguese territories were considered a justified target, and the English activity in the Indian Ocean grew exponentially, especially

⁴ «Yo lo heredé, yo lo compré, yo lo conquisté», quot. in BOXER (1969 : pp. 107-108). On Philip's succession to the Portuguese throne, see DE MEDINA (1595: pp. 97-98). Since 1581, Philip was «Rey de Portugal e dos Algarves, daquem e dalem mar em Africa señor de Guine e da conquista navegação, comercio de Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia e da India», ANTT, Colleção de São Vicente, Livro 14, f. 144.

⁵ See also LOUREIRO, RESENDE (2011, p. 89) and FERNÁNDEZ (2008, p. 177).

after 1600 when the EIC was chartered, and largely in response to the closure of the Portuguese ports to English (and Dutch) ships imposed by Spain in the 1590s (COUTO, LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 66; DISNEY, 2009, vol. 1, pp. 210-211). In general, the impact of the union with Spain was disadvantageous for Portugal: because of the union with Castile, Portugal «adquirio nouos and muitos mayores enemigos, do que antes tinha», especially in the East Indies⁶. The Portuguese awareness that other European countries feared a pan-Hispanic Catholic union, together with the continuous attacks on the Portuguese possessions overseas resurrected anti-Spanish feelings⁷. According to Mendo da Mota, one of the most experienced members of the Council of Portugal, major problems for the Portuguese kingdom were caused by the union with Castile which affected «grauemente [...] los principios naturales y esenciales de su buon gouierno»⁸. Only one year after the union of the crowns, an Italian observer, Gian Francesco Morosini, spoke of the «odio immortale che ha regnato, regna, e regnerà sempre fra Castigliani e Portoghesi»⁹.

As for England, it was in conflict with Spain since the 1580s, and the rivalry was often extended to the territories overseas, especially in the area of the Caribbean¹⁰. In 1604, in spite of the peace agreement between King Philip III and King James, Spain continued to refuse British presence in the East¹¹. The peace between the two powers was therefore very fragile, and James's proposal for a dynastic marriage that would have possibly made the peace treaty fully binding went unanswered until, at least, 1612-13 (CROFT, 2003, pp. 84-85). The British political nation was afraid of the universal empire being build by Spain and considered the marriage negotiations among those Spanish strategies to strengthen their power in Europe and overseas:

⁶ BL, Eg. ms. 1131, f. 103v. The new enemies listed were «Olandeses, Ingrezes e dinamarquezes que todos infestão a Índia com grossas armadas e se tem feito senhores do mar». See also, Eg. Ms. 1133, f. 268r, "Mendo da Mota, 4 May 1621". According to Mendo da Mota major problems for the Portuguese kingdom were caused by the union with Castile which affected «grauemente [...] los principios naturales y esenciales de su buon gouierno».

⁷ See BL, Eg. ms. 1131, f. 2r: the enemies of the Spanish Crown «procuran yntroducirse apoderarse y de las Indias Orientales y de la China Trafico y de la Persia».

⁸ BL, Eg. Ms. 1133, f. 268r, "Mendo da Mota, 4 May 1621".

⁹ Quot. in CURTO (2011, p. 516). The author also mentions Girolamo Soranzo, who wrote of the Portuguese as «ancient enemies of the of the Castilians» in 1602, and Ottaviano Bon, according to whom the Portuguese «have always hated the name of the Spaniards and hardly bear to be under their power».

¹⁰ On the continuation of trade between Spain and England, even during the war, see CROFT (1989, pp. 281-302).

¹¹ Despite the articles of the 1604 peace were intended to «bee observed and kept by their subiectes throughge all their Dominions», BL, Add. ms 38139, ff. 71v-73r. See also MARTÍNEZ HERNÁNDEZ (2011, pp. 177-178).

«All our peace, our warre, our treaties, marriages, and whatsoever intendment els of ours, aims at this principal end to get the whole possession of the world,& to reduce all to unitie under one temporal head, that our King may truly be what he is stiled, the catholike & universal King» (SCOTT, 1620, p.5).

«The ambitious Spanish Nation, [...] cannot extinguish the ardent thirst they have of commanding, neither with the Conquest of all the New World discovered by them, nor with so great a part which they possesse in the old (SCOTT, 1622, p. 46)»¹².

In order to grasp the status of the relation between Spain and Portugal it is useful to look at the embassy sent by the Iberian powers to Persia in 1612. The Portuguese did not like that a Castilian, Don García de Silva y Figueroa, was chosen as ambassador to Persia¹³. In fact, the Portuguese continued to consider Persian trade as their own exclusive deal, according to what had been established at Tomar in 1581. The embassy brought into the open the many tensions between the two Iberian countries. In fact, as stated by the author of the *Relación de la Embaxada*:

«Assi el virrey y capitanes de Ormuz, como los demás hidalgos portugueses [...] han siempre mostrado una enemistad clara, conçevida no más, como ellos decían, porque naço era razão, nem comvin a reputação de nacão portuguesa, que fora un embaxador castelchano a Persia. Y esto no lo decían por odio particular de este cavallero, sino general que tienen a esta Corona de Castilla» (RUBIÉS, 2011a, p. 145).

Imperial (mis)understandings

In the second part of this contribution, I will focus on a specific episode of imperial competition between the parties involved in the negotiations: the East India Company [henceforth EIC] attack on Hormuz in 1622. Being a Portuguese overseas territory, according to the agreement reached at Tomar, the defense of Hormuz lay solely on Lisbon. However, it was formally under the Spanish crown as the Habsburgs were also Kings of Portugal since 1580. Therefore, England attacked a dominion that belongs to Spain with whom king James was trying to carry out a dynastic marriage.

Joan-Pau Rubiés is the only historian who mentioned together the loss of the Portuguese possession of Hormuz and the marriage negotiations between Prince Charles and the Infanta in an essay published in 2011. However,

¹² This pamphlet was originally in Italian (BOCCALINI, 1614).

¹³ «No viendo bién la nación Portuguesa en que se enbiase esta embaixada a Persia por la Corona de Castilla» (RUBIÉS, 2011a, p. 141).

with regard to the possible dynastic union, the author decides to «leave aside for a moment the tragicomic unraveling of that particular plan», without returning to the topic over the course of his forty pages essay (RUBIÉS, 2011b).

In the sixteenth century, Hormuz, in modern Iran, was one of the most active centres of Portuguese trade, thanks to its strategic position as a point of interaction between Europeans, Safavids, and Ottomans. For this reason, the position of Captain of Hormuz was the second best-paid of the Estado da Índia (DISNEY, 2009, vol. 2, pp. 177-178). It seems obvious that such a successful trading centre would have attracted the attention of the merchants of the East India Company, but the reasons behind the fall of Hormuz are more complex than it may seem at first glance. The loss of one of Portuguese Asia's most prestigious fortresses has often been regarded as a demonstration of the decadence of the Iberian monarchy, which proved unable to manage its overseas territories (RUBIÉS, 2011b, p. 85). But among the reasons why the Iberian monarchy was no longer able to protect its domains, aside from internal structural problems, was the increase in power of the East India Company and the expansionist policy of the Shah Abbas I, the Persian ruler, who had aimed to control the coastal regions of the Persian Gulf already since the beginning of the seventeenth century (MATTHEE, FLORES, 2011, pp. 121 and 203). The only reason why Shah Abbas waited to attack Hormuz was because he needed a naval force in order to attack the fortress. The EIC was in effect the perfect ally for the Persians. In May 1622, after three months siege, Hormuz fell under a combined Anglo-Persian attack.

Many advisors at the court of Philip III, had tried to warn the sovereign of the dangers faced by the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*:

«No lo es [posible] deffender su Mag\ d/ la India de dos tan poderosos enemigos como el Persa y el Rey de Inglaterra unidos especialmente estando el re de Inglaterra unido con Olandeses. Que por mar no vea que tenga su M\ d/ mas enemigos que a ynglaterra y olandeses y supuesto que por fuerzas es imposible deffender la India de ambos enemigos de tierra y mar»¹⁴.

The decision to attack Hormuz had been taken by the leaders of the EIC in Asia, on whom the Persian sovereign was putting pressure for some time, rather than in Europe. It is not surprising, however, that such a decision could be quite popular in England if one considers the reading that some historians have given of works like Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (first performed in 1621) and *The Sea Voyage* (1622) by Fletcher and Massinger. Especially *The Island Princess, or Generous Portugal*, was seen by many as a request to the English court for a more assertive and aggressive colonial policy (PARR, 1995)¹⁵.

¹⁴ BL, Eg. ms. 1131, f. 67r.

¹⁵ On the interpretation of *The Island Princess* in a colonial light, see CARVALHO HOMEM (2006). On the relationship between the EIC and the British Crown, see

James I, however, considered the peace of 1604 as sacrosanct, and for years he had tried to strengthen it through a dynastic marriage. Even after the news of the taking of Hormuz reached Europe, James tried to do everything that was in his power to keep the marriage negotiations going. When the information arrived to the Count-Duke of Olivares and the other members of the Spanish State Council, they demanded that King James write to the EIC asking them to help the Portuguese to regain Hormuz¹⁶.

The Duke of Buckingham, who, together with James, received a fair amount of money from the EIC as a 'justification' of the incident, only wished to send a letter expressing consternation at the action of the English company in the Persian Gulf. But this was considered as 'unsubstantial papers' by Olivares who believed that the Spaniards, in order to obtain some satisfaction on the Hormuz-issue, needed to profit from the very presence of prince Charles and Buckingham in Madrid between February and October 1623.

The English court was well aware of the extent to which the situation risked compromising the delicate diplomacy between England and Spain. In a letter dated June 1623, Conway expressed concerns about the potential consequences of the taking of Hormuz:

«His Majesty recommends [...] judicious handling of complaints [...] by Ambassadors of Spain against the EIC regarding the great wrongs and spoils made by them to their infinite enriching at Armuse [Hormuz]»¹⁷.

In such a critical situation the Count of Gondomar, who continued to be in close relations with the English king, intervened. Gondomar on the one hand agreed with the Spanish State Council that a letter like the one proposed by Buckingham was not enough, however, on the other hand, he was of the opinion that the British had been pushed to attack by the Portuguese themselves who, instead of creating conflicting situations, should have pursued an agreement with the English company concerning Asian trade¹⁸. His position

STERN (2011): the author rethinks the idea of nation-state and looks at the EIC among other Early Modern political systems. See also BURBANK, COOPER (2010).

¹⁶ DUP, vol. II, pp. 434-8.

¹⁷ *CSP Colonial*, vol. 4, Conway to Calvert, Greenwich, 30 June 1623.

¹⁸ BL, Eg. 1133, fols. 258r-260v. Mendo da Mota considered three reasons for the status of Portuguese overseas territories in the 1620s, the third being that powerful European countries invaded Asia; he recognised that there was no chance that Portugal could continue a war against all its enemies given the lack of money, armies and reputation: «quando nos estamos en este estado sin dinero, sin fuerças, sin reputacion y corruptos con vicios intrinsecos: com se decía pensar que se puede proseguir la guerra contra Olandezes, Inglezes, Dinamarcos y otros enemigos en un mismo tiempo y todos juntos». See also BL, Eg. 1131, f. 103v and BL, Eg. 1135, f. 78. On Gondomar's opinion, see RUBIÉS (2011b, p. 131).

was the same taken by the English, following the *History of the taking of Hormuz* by Edward Monnox, who was in Persia at the time of the agreements between Shah Abbas and the EIC in January 1622 and when the attack on Hormuz took place (MONNOX, 1930, pp. 256-257). The Court minutes of the EIC of 25 July 1623 reported Monnox's words in his journal where he explained the attack on Hormuz as aiming at «the weakening and ruining of the Portugals that had fought with our ships, slain our men, and impeached the freedom of our trade»¹⁹.

The consequences of this capture were felt both in Asia and in Europe. In Europe, in March 1623, which is to say at a crucial time of the marriage negotiations, Philip IV wrote:

«I received with utmost displeasure the news of the fall of Hormuz, one of the most important strongholds of the Estado, because, as well as considerable resources, much reputation was lost with it» (quot. in SOBRAL BLANCO, 1992, vol 2, p. 93).

Conclusions

More than the inevitable decline of the “composite Spanish monarchy”, the loss of Portuguese Hormuz, which corresponded to the diplomatic failure for a dynastic marriage between Spain and England causing the outbreak of war between the two in 1625, seems to testify to the lack of cooperation between the two Iberian powers. Despite the agreements reached at Tomar in 1581, Portugal continued to consider itself a periphery within a larger Castilian entity whose interests did not always coincide with those of Lisbon.

Studies in European and extra-European history often remain separate, but an understanding of the complementarity between European and overseas (in this case Asian) issues seems essential for a better understanding of a crucial period of European history such as the one when an Anglo-Spanish match was planned and the Thirty Years' War was taking place.

The collapse of the marriage negotiations accompanied by the news of the taking of Hormuz, which arrived in Spain just before the stay of Prince Charles in Madrid in 1623, made the war between England and Spain – and Portugal, which was under the same Habsburg crown – inevitable in the short-term. Twenty years after the Treaty of London, no dynastic marriage had intervened to maintain the fragile peace between England and Spain.

¹⁹ *CSP Colonial*, vol. 4, 25 July 1623, pp. 120-33.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANTT, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon
 BL, British Library, London
 EG., Egerton Manuscripts
 ADD., Additional Manuscripts
 BNP, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon
 BNE, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid
 CSP, Calendar of State Papers
 DRI, Documentos remetidos da Índia
 DUP, Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa
 EIC, East India Company

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Ms 1135, Papeles varios de Portugal V

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