



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



The Mediterranean Spice Trade Further Evidence of its Revival in the Sixteenth Century

Author(s): Frederic C. Lane

Source: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Apr., 1940), pp. 581-590

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1840697>

Accessed: 06-02-2018 22:49 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Oxford University Press, American Historical Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*

NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

THE MEDITERRANEAN SPICE TRADE

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF ITS REVIVAL IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THE Portuguese did not reduce the Levantine spice trade to permanent insignificance. Although the flow of spices through the traditional routes of the Levant was severely checked during the first decades of the sixteenth century, it later found its way through the obstacles raised by the Portuguese. Even pepper again came through the Red Sea in approximately the volume of the years before the Portuguese opened their new route to India. This thesis was suggested by the following figures for the Venetian pepper exports from Alexandria, which were presented in the *American Historical Review* of January, 1933:

Yearly average before Portuguese
interference was felt about 1,150,000 lbs. Eng.
Yearly average, 1560-64 inclusive. 1,310,454 lbs. Eng.¹

The source of the figures for 1560-64 and their isolated character make it desirable to present corroboratory evidence of the revival of the Levantine spice trade.

The travel diary of a young Venetian nobleman, Alessandro Magno, furnishes a picture of the trade in Egypt in the middle of the century.² On April 4, 1561, Alessandro sailed for Alexandria in the "Croce", a round ship of about 540 tons.³ Such ships had very largely taken the place of the merchant galleys which in the previous century monopolized the shipping of the more precious types of merchandise.⁴ Copper

¹ Frederic C. Lane, "Venetian Shipping during the Commercial Revolution", *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XXXVIII, 228-29. The source for the later figure is an isolated sheet in the Donà della Rosa family papers, Busta 217, Museo Civico, Venice. The figures given are there said to be copied from the records of the Venetian consulate in Alexandria.

² Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D. C., MS. 1317.1, no paging, third voyage. I am indebted to Professor Kent Roberts Greenfield for calling this manuscript to my attention and to Dr. J. Q. Adams, the director of the library, for permission to quote from it.

³ The description of this ship in Magno's diary agrees with that in the ship lists from the Donà della Rosa papers (Lane, *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XXXVIII, 238).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229. The galleys auctioned for the voyage to Alexandria after 1536 were as follows: 2 in 1549, 2 in 1550, 2 in 1554, 2 in 1555, 2 in 1557, 3 in 1563, 3 in 1564—Archivio di Stato di Venezia (cited hereinafter as A.S.V.), Senato, Terminazione, Incanti Galere, Reg. 2, lib. 4 and 5.

and woolen cloth, which had been among the chief items in the cargo lists of the galleys, bulked large among the wares carried by the "Croce".⁵ As his own venture, Magno took along some silk cloth and two thousand ducats.

As soon as he reached Alexandria, on May 2, he presented his letters of recommendation to the resident Venetian merchants and was assigned a room in one of the houses or *fondachi* belonging to the Venetian colony. The Venetians had two such *fondachi* at Alexandria, the other "nations", the Genoese, Ragusans, and French, who were less numerous, each having one. Venetians were settled at Cairo also, for in 1552 they had obtained permission to trade in that city.⁶ Young Alessandro soon moved there and spent a good part of his time there seeing the sights and taking a trip to the pyramids. When at Alexandria he had bartered some of his silk cloth for pepper and had used some of his cash to buy more pepper. Before making the rest of his purchases he meant to await the arrival of a caravan which was expected from Tor, the Red Sea terminus of the ships bringing wares from India. After about a month of sight-seeing around Cairo he returned to Alexandria and then wrote instructing a relative in Cairo to invest the rest of his funds in pepper as soon as the new merchandise arrived from Tor. These plans were upset by the decision of the captain of the "Croce" not to wait any longer. As soon as it was known that the

⁵ Alessandro Magno gives the complete cargo of the "Croce" as follows: Rami lavoradi (manufactured copper), balle 250; Rami in verga (copper in bars), cassette 85; Pani de lana (woolen cloth), balle 129; Pani de seda (silk cloth), cassette 21; Carisee (kerseys), balle 28; Barette (caps), casse 35; Coralli (coral), casse 23; Ambre (amber), casse 1; Coralli e ambre (coral and amber), casse 12; Sbiacche (white lead), barili 100; Jrios (Florentine iris. A dye ?), caratelli 15; Banda raspa (tin plate, filed down), barili 22; Pater nostri de vedro (glass rosaries), casse 7; Pater nostri e barrette (rosaries and caps), casse 3; Merce (merchandise), cai 11; Carta (paper), balle 30; Assafetida (assafetida), fagoti 2; Tabini (a kind of fine cloth ?), ligacetto 1; Contadi (cash), ducati —. Alessandro gives also the cargo for Zante and says the total freight paid by shippers was eighteen hundred ducats. Cargo lists of galleys may be found for comparison in Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii* (Venice, 1879-1903), III, 1187-88 (for 1500); IX, 536 (for 1510); XII, 77-78 (for 1511); and XXXX, 175-76 (for 1525).

⁶ [Friedrich] Wilken, Über die Venetianischen Consuln zu Alexandrien im 15^{ten} und 16^{ten} Jahrhunderte", K. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, *Abhandlungen aus dem Jahre 1831* (Berlin, 1832), Historisch-philologische Klasse, p. 44. The restriction of Venetian traders to Alexandria had become galling to Venetians in the middle of the sixteenth century because Jews and others interjected themselves between the Arabs in Cairo and the Venetians in Alexandria. These intermediaries not only took a middleman's profit in the trade in grain and spices but even succeeded in loading their own spices and other wares on Venetian ships. To meet this competition the Venetians requested that they be allowed to trade at Cairo. A.S.V., Senato Mar, Reg. 32, f. 35-36.

ship was leaving, "everyone began to buy furiously. Pepper, which before had been worth twenty ducats a cantar went to twenty-two, and could not be had, and everything else similarly." Alarmed by the sudden rise in prices, Alessandro canceled his orders to buy pepper in Cairo and put the rest of his money into cloves and ginger which he bought in Alexandria. The "Croce" weighed anchor on October 19, before the arrival of the autumn caravan from Tor,⁷ yet it carried more than a half million pounds of spices including a little more than 400,000 lbs. Eng. of pepper.⁸ Alessandro was back in Venice on November 18 and soon sold at 97 ducats a *cargo* the pepper he had bought at the equivalent of a fraction more than 56 ducats a *cargo*. He figured his profits as 266 ducats, 18 denarii, and 22 piccoli.

Syria as well as Egypt had been a center for spice exports to the West

⁷ Because of the monsoons, wares from India reached Egypt mainly in the fall. Wilhelm von Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au moyen âge* (Leipzig, 1885-86), II, 446-47, 500.

⁸ In his travel diary Magno gives two lists of the cargo of the ship, one from the record of the Venetian consulate, one from the ship's manifest. The largest items among the spices were entered on the ship's manifest in *colli*, and the total number of *colli* is 478, which, at 1120 lbs. Eng. per *colli*, is 525,360 lbs. Other items are given in *nichesse, fardi, casse*, etc., the weights of which are unknown to me. Besides spices and drugs the ship carried a few bales of cotton, linen, and carpets, some hides, and 800 *ribebe* of broad-beans. The following cargo of spices and drugs is given from the records of the consulate in cantara (presumably cantara of different weights since the units used in measuring were different for different spices), except in the case of indigo: Piper (pepper), cantara 4452; Zenzeri buli (dressed or coated [?] ginger), 266; Belledi (ginger native to west coast of India), 828; Sorati (ginger from Surat), 554; Mordassi (ginger with biting taste [?]), 96; Mechini (ginger from near Mecca), 45½; Zedoaria (zedoary), 35½; Canelle (cinnamon), 32½; Nose (nutmeg), 61; Garoffoli affus^{de} (cloves), 26; Spigo nardo (spikenard), 6½; Macis (mace), 32½; Galanga (galingale), 18¼; Boraso pate (borax cakes), 4; Zucari (sugar), 66; Sandoli rossi (red sanderswood), 24; Nose condite pate (candied nutmeg cakes), 4; Porcellette (purslane or pursley [?]), 4; Assafetida (assa-fetida), 2; Aloe patico (hepatic aloes), 138; Salarmoniago (salammoniac), 3½; Turbiti (turpeth), 7½; Cocole (kermes dye), 72; Mira (myrrh), 50; Incenso (frankincense), 178; Penacchi (plumes), 34; Goma arabica (gum Arabic), 97; Endeghi (indigo) . . . zurli (bundles wrapped in cowhide), 43; Mirabolani (myrobalans), 50; Tamarindi (tamarind), 91; Cassia (cassia), 47; Curcuma (turmeric), 20; Piper longo salvadego (long pepper, wild), 23; Siena (senna), 100; Zenzeri verdi (green ginger), 4. Cargo lists of galleys may be found for comparison in *I Diarii di Girolamo Priuli* (published in *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, 2d ed., Vol. XXIV, pt. 3), Vol. I (Castello, 1911), p. 73 (for 1497), and in Sanuto, XIV, 25-26 (for 1512).

The equivalence, 1 *collo* = 1120 lbs. Eng. is based on Sanuto, XVII, 191, and is presumably a rough general average. Copies of invoices giving individually the weights of fifty-nine *colli* shipped from Alexandria in 1497 show that their weights varied between 968 lbs. Eng. and 1222 lbs. Eng. The average for the fifty-nine bales or *colli* was 1083 lbs. Eng. per *collo*. A.S.V., Misc. Gregolin, Busta 10, Lettere commerciali, fragment of a letter book of Michiele da Lezze.

in the fifteenth century, and Syria shared the revival in the mid-sixteenth century. Here also the Venetians moved their chief colony farther into the interior and transferred their consulate from Damascus to Aleppo, which was nearer to the route to Bagdad and Basra. This route gave access to the wares of India, whence, says a *relazione* of 1553, "come all the spices, which are one of the primary foundations of the trade of our colony".⁹ The arrivals at both Aleppo and Damascus of caravans with spices are described in the dispatches of the Venetian consuls, Giovanni Battista Basadona (1556-57) and Andrea Malipiero (1563-64).¹⁰ From 1560 to 1563, however, during the Turkish-Portuguese hostilities, the caravans from Basra were very small, and while the Venetian trade at Alexandria prospered, that at Aleppo languished.¹¹

On the volume of the spices moving through the Levant in the mid-sixteenth century considerable can be learned from Portuguese sources. The Portuguese embassy in Rome assembled what news they could collect from the Levant in order to warn their royal master of the preparation of Turkish war fleets in the Red Sea or Persian Gulf.¹² In 1559 Lourenço Pires de Távora became Portuguese ambassador to the papal court,¹³ and he at once set to work to improve the Portuguese news service in the Levant. He engaged the services of two Jews, Isaac Becudo and Mathew Becudo, who possessed the friendships or connections necessary for gathering information and for sending secret dispatches to the Portuguese consul in Venice. Isaac posted himself at Aleppo, Mathew at Cairo,¹⁴ and their letters were forwarded from Venice to Rome and from Rome to Lisbon.¹⁵ Those of Mathew, at least, described not only the naval activity but also the spice trade, and

⁹ Eugenio Albèri, *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, III (Florence, 1840), 223, "Relazione anonima della guerra di Persia". See also the *relazione* of Marino Cavalli in 1560 (*ibid.*, III, 283-84), that of Daniele Barbarigo in 1564 (*ibid.*, VI, 3-10), and Guglielmo Berchet, *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria* (Turin, 1866), introduction.

¹⁰ A.S.V., *Relazioni* (Collegio, Secreta), Consoli, Busta 31. I am indebted to the Social Science Research Council for a grant-in-aid which made it possible to consult these and the later cited reports of Venetian consuls.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, letter from Lorenzo Tiepolo, May, 1563; Museo Civico Correr, Venice, Cod. Cicogna, Busta 3154, *relazione* of Lorenzo Tiepolo, published by Sacerdote Daniele Canal, *Per Nozze Passi-Valier Tiepolo* (Venice, 1857), p. 40; A.S.V., Senato Mar, Reg. 35, f. 29, 164.

¹² *Corpo Diplomatico Portuguez*, published by the Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, ed. by L. A. Rebello da Silva and others (Lisbon, 1862-1910), III, 396-97; IV, 14-15; VII, 35, 153, 201, 434; VIII, 115, 364.

¹³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 148.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-75, 396; IX, 13, 108, 489.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 236, 250, 354; IX, 108, 251.

Pires interested himself in this trade. His career before coming to Rome had given him occasion to be informed about it. He had sailed to India as admiral of a spice fleet in 1546.¹⁶ Later, when he was the Portuguese ambassador to the Emperor Charles V, King John III acted on his advice in closing the royal spice selling agency in Antwerp.¹⁷ At Rome Pires supplemented the information furnished by the Jews already mentioned with reports from Venetians, Genoese, and Ragusans,¹⁸ and above all from Antonio Pinto, a Portuguese, who became Pires's secretary. Pinto had been at Cairo as a captive of the Moslems and after his release returned there to negotiate the ransom of other prisoners.¹⁹

After Pinto's return from the latter trip, Pires wrote in November, 1560, as follows: "From this Antonio Pinto of Cairo and also from important persons of Venice and Ragusa with whom I have spoken, I understand that there come to Alexandria each year 40,000 quintals [4,480,000 lbs.] of spices, being pepper for the principal part". Pires then described in detail the routes by which the spices came from India and concluded, "there being so much which comes to the dominion of the Turks, it is no wonder that so little comes to Lisbon".²⁰

So seriously did Pires consider the competition of the routes through the Red Sea and Persian Gulf that he advised arranging a contract to have the spices for the king of Portugal brought through the Levant in case peace could be arranged with the Turks. The chances of peace seemed to him slight in 1560 because of the "insolence" of the Turks,²¹ but the possibility of such an arrangement between the Portuguese and the sultan was worrying Venetian statesmen four years later.²²

Large quantities of spices continued to reach Alexandria for some years after 1560. In 1561 spices were so abundant in Egypt as to encourage a rumor at Venice and Florence that the Portuguese viceroy of India was in revolt and therefore had sent the spices to Alexandria instead of to Lisbon. Not crediting this wild rumor, Pires sought some other explanation of the "disorder in the guarding of pepper". For that year, at least, it seemed that the Levantine supply of spices would dominate the European market, for the Portuguese fleet to India had

¹⁶ Fortunato de Almeida, *História de Portugal* (Coimbra, 1922-29), III, 435 n.

¹⁷ Fr. Luiz de Sousa, *Annaes de elrei Dom João Terceiro*, ed. by A. Herculanio (Lisbon, 1844), pp. 420-23.

¹⁸ *Corpo Dipl. Port.*, IX, 110, 134-35, 303.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VIII, 154, 174, 295, 415; IX, 89-90, 109, 485.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, IX, 110-11. This passage is mentioned by Almeida, III, 562.

²¹ *Corpo Dipl. Port.*, IX, 134-36, 251-52.

²² Albèri, VI, p. 6, *relazione* of Daniele Barbarigo.

missed the monsoons. The Venetians and Germans were counting on the scarcity of spices in Lisbon and were pushing up the price in Venice. The whole situation, said Pires, was a clear demonstration of how much damage the Portuguese king suffered from the competition of the Red Sea route.²³

Since Lourenço Pires left the Portuguese embassy in Rome early in the spring of 1562, we have no more of his illuminating reports.²⁴ The spy in Cairo, Mathew Becudo, was caught, imprisoned, and sentenced to death. His friends and his money secured his release, however, and he was able to send further reports, at least on spices, to the Portuguese consul in Venice. In October, 1564, Mathew recorded the capture by the Portuguese fleet of four Moslem merchant ships near Mecca, yet, in the same letter, he estimated that 30,000 quintals of pepper would enter the Red Sea that year and said that Venetian sources estimated the pepper available at 25,000 quintals (2,800,000 lbs. Eng.).²⁵

Large quantities arrived during the next two years also, according to the letters from the Venetian consul at Cairo. In August, 1565, he wrote that messengers from Mecca reported the arrival at Jiddah with spices of the following ships: one from Daibul, four from Gujarat, two from Surat, eight from Batalà, three from Calicut, two from Mordassi (?), and three from Assi (a kingdom in the island of Sumatra). Two others from Assi were expected. Next year, in May, 1566, he reported that five ships from Assi and three from Batalà had already reached Jiddah with 15,000 *boara*, about 24,000 cantara of pepper (2,256,000 lbs. Eng.). Even if the additional ships expected from Gujarat, Calicut, and elsewhere did not arrive, he wrote, an excellent supply of spices was assured for that fall.²⁶

These figures, from both Portuguese and Venetian sources, indicate that the importation of spices from Alexandria to Europe about 1560 was as large or larger than it had been in the late fifteenth century. They suggest that shipments from the India Ocean to the Red Sea roughly equaled or occasionally exceeded the Portuguese imports.²⁷

²³ *Corpo Dipl. Port.*, IX, 251, 261, 271, 277, 303-304.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, IX, 508.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, 472; X, 186. That the amount reaching Egypt may have been twice the amount reaching Venice is understandable in view of the consumption of the Levantine countries and the imports of Ragusa and other rivals of Venice.

²⁶ A.S.V., Dispacci, Consoli, Busta 20. I assume that the cantar referred to by the consul was the Alexandrian *cantar forfori* of about 94 lbs.

²⁷ Heyd (II, 533) estimated Portuguese imports at 25,000 to 35,000 quintals, but the amount actually received, 1503-1506, was less. Leonardo da Ca'Masser, "Relazione sopra

Evidently the consumption of spices, or at least of pepper, increased greatly in Europe during the sixteenth century.²⁸

Shipment from Alexandria westward went principally to Ragusa, Messina, and Venice. From these three *scalas*, said Pires, spices were sent to all Italy and Germany.²⁹ Venice was still the leader in the Levant trade, according to her own reports and those of the Portuguese, and Venetian trade with Germany was "in full bloom".³⁰ Some of the German merchants, however, had begun to do business through Ragusa, for the Venetian-Turkish War of 1537-40 had enabled the Ragusans to take a larger part in the Levant trade.³¹ At Venice Germans were prevented from buying directly in the East. By trading through Ragusa they could send their own agents to the Levant.

The switch of Portugal's German customers to the Alexandrian

il commercio dei Portoghesi nell'India, 1497-1506", *Archivio storico italiano*, Vol. II (1845), Appendice, pp. 13 ff. Some later records of cargoes of Portuguese fleets are: 1518, 48,097 cantara, Sanuto, *Diarii*, XXV, 594-95; 1519, 37,530 cantara, *ibid.*, XXVII, 641; 1530, 18,164 cantara, *ibid.*, LIV, 131; 1531, 20,586 cantara, *ibid.*, LV, 63. A falling off in Portuguese imports in the middle of the century is suggested by the tenor of Pires's remarks. Estimates of the volume of the annual Portuguese imports at the end of the sixteenth century vary from 40,000 quintals of pepper alone to 20,000 quintals of pepper and 10,000 quintals of other spices. Bal Krishna, *Commercial Relations between India and England* (London, 1924), pp. 45-46. Bal Krishna's apparent source for the higher figure—*The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1885), II, pp. 220-22—does not seem to me to justify this figure but rather to support other indications that 30,000 quintals of pepper was the amount which the Portuguese hoped to load in India each year. The standard of 30,000 quintals of pepper is given in Charles de Lannoy and Herman vander Linden, *Histoire de l'expansion coloniale des peuples européens*, Vol. I, *Portugal et Espagne* (Brussels, 1907), p. 199, and M. A. Hedwig Fitzler, "Der Anteil der Deutschen an der Kolonialpolitik Philipps II. von Spanien in Asien", *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, XXVIII (1935), 249.

The cantar used in the above cited passages in Sanuto is clearly the Portuguese quintal equaling about 112 lbs. Eng. I assume that the quintal used in the Portuguese reports to the Portuguese court was also the Portuguese quintal, not the Alexandrian *cantar forfori* of about 94 lbs., and that the Portuguese quintal is also that meant in the other works cited in this note.

²⁸ A numerical statement must contain a large element of conjecture, especially so because the figures for imports through Syria are not satisfactory for any part of the century. My guess would be:

Annual pepper imports of Western Europe about 1500 1½ to 2 million lbs.
 " " " " " " about 1560 over 3 " "

²⁹ *Corpo Dipl. Port.*, IX, 111.

³⁰ J. Falke, "Oberdeutschlands Handelsbeziehungen zu Südeuropa im Anfang des 16 Jahrhunderts", in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Kulturgeschichte*, IV (1859), 610, 615, 625; Henry Simonsfeld, *Der Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venedig und die deutsch-venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen* (Stuttgart, 1887), II, 123-25.

³¹ A.S.V., Senato Mar, Reg. 24, ff. 80, 149; Reg. 25, f. 55.

spice market seemed to Pires a particularly alarming aspect of the situation which he thus described in 1560:

The Fuggers of Augsburg sent the last year one of their factors to buy pepper in Alexandria to try out that route. Beginning with only 10,000 crusados he bought a quantity which they loaded in a Ragusan ship and from there in long boats to a place belonging to the emperor which is called Fiume. He returned this September with a larger sum [and] ought to buy advantageously [by] this route, and it would be very bad to have this buyer or bidder absent from the contracts and purchases in Portugal, but this business of the Fuggers being to the disadvantage of the export of the Venetians and passing by a route through their sea, I believe they will arrange to stop it.³²

The use by the great German merchant houses of Ragusa as a way station may be the explanation also of the agents posted in Cairo and Alexandria by the firm of Ulstetter.³³

Although Pires did not mention French merchants, Marseilles also imported spices from Alexandria. The diplomatic alliance of France and Turkey was supplemented in 1535 by commercial treaties which gave the French a legal standing on which to base competition with the Venetians in the Ottoman Empire.³⁴ The Marseilles merchants whose company received the rights to coral fishing off Tunis were pushed into the Levant trade because most of the coral had to be marketed in Alexandria. From the papers of this *Compagnie du corail* we learn that in 1565 its ships came from Alexandria full of spices and these spices from the Levant were sent to Lyons, Paris, and even to Rouen. They competed in Toulouse with the spices brought through Bordeaux from Lisbon.³⁵

Why could so much spice be shipped to Europe through the Levant in spite of Portuguese control of the route around Africa? Although an answer to that question cannot be fully given and demonstrated within the limits of this note, a suggestion may not be out of order. Portuguese policy was dominated by the desire for high prices, and the

³² *Corpo Dipl. Port.*, IX, 111-12.

³³ Falke, *Zeitsch. f. Deut. Kulturgesch.*, IV, 611. Because of the Venetian restriction on the trade of German residents in Venice, André-E. Sayous expresses doubt of Falke's assertion in an article, "Le commerce de Melchior Manlich et Cie d'Augsburg à Marseille et dans toute la Méditerranée entre 1571 et 1574" (*Revue historique*, CLXXVI [1935], 396), but the existence of a route around Venice through Fiume and Ragusa renders it quite credible.

³⁴ Paul Masson, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au xvii^e siècle* (Paris, 1896), pp. xii-xiv.

³⁵ Paul Masson, *Compagnies du corail* (Paris, 1908), pp. 123-25. See also Masson, *Histoire du commerce*, pp. xv-xvi, and Sayous, *Rev. Hist.*, CLXXVI, 406.

Portuguese “monopoly” depended upon interfering with the Red Sea trade. The prices charged by the Portuguese at Lisbon or Antwerp were so high that the Levantine spice trade could be revived whenever Portuguese interference could be overcome. For some decades after 1500 the Portuguese put serious obstacles in the way of the Red Sea trade and forced the prices of spices at Alexandria up above their fifteenth century level. Later the Portuguese officials in India became so inefficient, or so easily corrupted, that they no longer placed costly obstacles in the way of trade through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. A Venetian consul reported that the spices which came to Cairo were “allowed to pass by the Portuguese soldiers who govern India in the Red Sea, for their profit against the commands of their king, for they can make a living in that region only by selling cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, pepper, and other drugs”.³⁶

The years 1560-66, for which the evidence presented is most detailed, may have been the peak of the revival, but spices from the Levant were already affecting Antwerp prices in 1540.³⁷ Alexandria and Aleppo remained sources of spice shipments to Europe during the rest of the century. When Philip II of Spain became king of Portugal he tried to put new energy into cutting the Red Sea route,³⁸ but spice cargoes were still coming to the Levant when the Dutch ships reached India.³⁹ For the Venetians as well as the Portuguese the arrival of the Dutch in the Indian Ocean was counted a catastrophe.⁴⁰ Again Venetian consuls in the Levant, like those of a hundred years before, lamented the decline of the caravans which used to arrive from India rich with spices.⁴¹

³⁶ Museo Civico-Correr, Venice, Cod. Cicogna, Busta 3154, *relazione* of Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1556 (in Canal). See the *relazione* of Antonio Tiepolo in 1572 (Albèri, XIII, 204), which says that the “robbery” of the Portuguese officials in India allowed Alexandria to participate in the spice trade, “perhaps for the greater part”.

³⁷ Florence Edler de Roover, “The Market for Spices in Antwerp, 1538-1544”, *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, XVII (1938), 215-18. The imports of Venice from Alexandria picked up enormously, and from a low level, between 1550 and 1554. Museo Civico-Correr, Venice, Cod. Cicogna, Busta 3154, *relazione* of Daniele Barbarigo.

³⁸ Fitzler, *Vierteljahrsch. f. Soz.- und Wirtschaftsgesch.*, XXVIII, 248 ff.; *Fugger News-Letters*, ser. 2, ed. by Victor von Klarwill, trans. by L. S. R. Byrne (London, 1926), pp. 109, 111; Albèri, IX, 309, and XIII, 396.

³⁹ Berchet, pp. 80, 102-103.

⁴⁰ *Fugger News-Letters*, ser. 1, ed. by Klarwill (New York, 1924), no. 201, “in time great harm will befall the kingdom of Portugal *and the Venetians*” (italics mine).

⁴¹ The *relazione* of 1625 by Antonio Capello, says: “Questi [*i.e.*, Venetians in Egypt] da certo tempo in quà sono diminuti et semati assai di numero et di conditione per il mancamento delle specie dell'Indie, che per la nuova navigazione ritrovata da fiamenghi

The evidence here presented indicates that the Mediterranean cities had a prominent part in the spice trade during certain years in the later sixteenth century. How far that affected their general importance as commercial centers is a different question and one which cannot be answered without taking into consideration a great many other factors. The answer might involve the conclusion that spices were a relatively minor element in the shift of the commercial center of Europe from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. The spectacular vicissitudes of the spice trade have attracted so much attention that there is real danger of overemphasizing their influence.

FREDERIC C. LANE

The Johns Hopkins University.

hanno preso altro corso ne capitano più nel Cairo o in poca quantita; in particular il garofalo veniva tutto da quelle parti et hora non se ne vede, et bisogna a chi ne vuole farlo venire di qua." Museo Civico-Correr, MS., P. D. 306c II and MS. Wcovich-Lazzari, Busta 20. The *relazione* of Gerolamo Foscarini, 1628, says: "Diverse sono le cause, per le quali, da molti anni in qua, il negotio di tutto il Levante e quello d'Alessandria in particular è grandemente decaduto. La prima, senza dubbio fu, la navigation ritrovata da Fiamenghi", A.S.V., *Relazione* (Collegio, Secreta), Consoli, Busta 31. Earlier *relazioni* of 1597, 1602, and 1615, in the same *busta*, make no mention of the Dutch. For *relazioni* from Syria in these years see Berchet.