
The Castilian Fairs in Burgos, 1601-1604

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For four years in the early seventeenth century, the principal commercial and financial fairs of Castile were moved by royal order from their traditional home in Medina del Campo to Burgos. This shift had little to do with the needs of Castile's commercial life. In fact, both Medina del Campo and Burgos were in full decline by then. Instead, it illustrates the uncertain economic policy of Philip III and his councillors, a feeble attempt to revive the economy of northern Castile by fiat.

Since their definitive establishment in the early fifteenth century, the fairs of Medina had enjoyed prosperity, especially after the mid-fifteenth century when they were designated as the place at which the accounts of the crown would be discharged.¹ Their decadence occurred in the late sixteenth century for a number of reasons: a gradual shift of economic gravity to the south of Spain and its connection with the American enterprise, the increasing financial difficulties of the crown with consequent bankruptcies and delayed debt repayment, disruption of the Flanders trade due to the

¹ While the fairs almost assuredly were in operation earlier, the oldest extant documents concerning them were issued in 1421 by Doña Leonor, widow of the Castilian coregent and later Aragonese King Fernand de Antequera. CRISTÓBAL ESPEJO and JULIÁN PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias de Medina del Campo* (Valladolid, 1909), pp. 23-29. JAIME VICENS VIVES, *Manual de historia económica de España*, with Jorge Nadal Oller (Barcelona, 1959), p. 252 gives 1321 as the date, but this is surely a misprint. Unfortunately, the error was carried over into the English translation, *An Economic History of Spain*, trans. Frances M. López-Morillas (Princeton, 1969), p. 276.

revolt of the Netherlands, and the tendency of merchants to concentrate their business in the court.²

The city of Burgos was also in trouble by the end of the sixteenth century, suffering a plague in 1565 and a succession of commercial disasters thereafter. Perhaps more than any other Castilian city, Burgos felt the impact of the revolt of the Netherlands. This is readily apparent in the records of maritime insurance, a great component of Burgos's prosperity before the 1570s which fell thereafter to a small fraction of its former importance.³ Manuel Basas Fernández, in his book on the Consulado of Burgos, pointed out that in the period from 1594 to 1619 Burgos insurers wrote only about two thousand policies on shipping, in contrast to some one thousand every six months at their peak in the mid-sixteenth century.⁴ Only forty-eight policies were written from 1600 to 1619, and, in addition to the decline in numbers, an important shift had taken place in the routes of trade. Before the 1570s most wool went to Flanders, and most insurance written in Burgos was on the North Atlantic trade. But for the forty-eight policies⁵ in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, no fewer than thirty-three were for shipments from the Mediterranean port of Alicante to Leghorn and thence to Pisa or Florence; one was on a voyage from Alicante to Venice. Only thirteen policies covered voyages from the Cantabrian ports to the French Atlantic ports of Rouen and Nantes, where the cargoes could

² ESPEJO and PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias*, chaps. 8-10. For discussion of the Castilian fairs in the first half of the sixteenth century, when difficulties were already apparent, see RAMÓN CARANDE, *Carlos V y sus banqueros* (3 vols.; Madrid, 1943-67), I: *La vida económica en Castilla (1516-1556)* (2d ed., 1965), pp. 323-349. Henri Lapeyre challenged the older view that 1575 marked the definitive downturn of the Medina fairs. Instead, he found them functioning "assez brillamment" until 1594. *Une famille de marchands, Les Ruiz: Contribution à l'étude du commerce entre La France et l'Espagne au temps de Philippe II* (Paris, 1955), pp. 496-498. Felipe Ruiz Martín considers that by the mid-1590s Medina had been surpassed by Madrid for the periodic settling of merchant accounts, as Burgos had been surpassed by Madrid in the insurance business. *Lettres marchandes échangées entre Florence et Medina del Campo* (Paris, 1965), p. CXLV.

³ LAPEYRE, *Famille de marchands, Les Ruiz*, pp. 483-490 discusses the financial reverses of many Burgalese merchants from 1568 on. NAZARIO GONZÁLEZ, *Burgos, ciudad marginal de Castilla: Estudio de geografía urbana* (Burgos, 1958) also deals briefly with the same topic. We have analyzed the decisive blow to the Burgos insurance industry in «Spanish Wool and Dutch Rebels: The Middelburg Incident of 1574», *American Historical Review*, 82, 2 (April 1977): 312-30.

⁴ MANUEL BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *El Consulado de Burgos en el siglo XVI* (Madrid, 1963), p. 214.

⁵ Archivo del Consulado de Burgos (hereafter ACBurgos), libro 28. In 1965 María Dolores Pedraza Prades, then the archivist of the Diputación of Burgos, made a new catalogue of the Consulado records, changing the inventory numbers in the process. Therefore, the citations of scholars who used the archive after 1965 differ from those of previous scholars.

be transshipped to Flanders or Brabant.⁶ Faced with the stunning decline in business, many Burgalese merchants left their home to take up residence at the court in Madrid, hoping to recoup their fortunes through royal favor.

Philip III abandoned his father's capital and moved the court to Valladolid in 1601, due in large measure to the avarice of the Duke of Lerma, the king's favorite and probably the most influential man in the kingdom. In the previous year Lerma had become one of the city councillors of Valladolid and had purchased the city's finest palace for himself. Valladolid gave the king a subsidy of 400,000 ducats to move the court there and it also helped to expand Lerma's income.⁷ But Valladolid already housed the royal court of appeals for northern Castile (the Chancillería). To add the court with its army of resident bureaucrats and merchants would have placed too heavy a strain on Valladolid's resources. The king therefore decreed that, for as long as the court stayed in Valladolid, the Chancillería would reside in Medina del Campo⁸ and commercial and fiscal transactions usually conducted in Medina would take place in Burgos.⁹

The city council of Burgos was not at all pleased to be getting Medina's moribund fairs, which were not a « gift equivalent to the needs Burgos has for its restoration ».¹⁰ Pleading with some exaggeration that « this city [is] uninhabited and depopulated », they pressed the crown to send the Chancillería, the Consejo de Hacienda, and the Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas

⁶ The remaining policy was illegible. MANUEL BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *El seguro marítimo en España del siglo XVI* (Bilbao, 1963), p. 112 briefly discusses these policies. The alteration of trade patterns is confirmed by records in the Archivo General de Simancas indicating that many wool shippers of northern Castile — a region whose wool overwhelmingly went to Flanders before the 1570s — were sending it in 1604 to the Mediterranean via the "puerto seco" of Yecla, the inland customs port for goods to be shipped from Alicante. AGS, *Contadurías generales, legajos* 808, 2979.

⁷ BARTOLOMÉ BENASSAR, *Valladolid au siècle d'or: Une ville de Castille et sa campagne au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1967), p. 128. The court's transfer was decreed on 10 January 1601.

⁸ Decree of 10 February 1601, ACBurgos, inventory number 172. The transfer of the Chancillería was done over the protests of its president and judges. ESPEJO and PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias*, p. 287. The contemporary chronicler Luis Cabrera de Córdoba reported overcrowding in Valladolid as early as August 1601 when he mentioned that « ya faltan casas en que posar, y así se han encarecido en extremo los alquileres y los mantenimientos y todo lo necesario, que sin duda cuesta la mitad mas que en Madrid ». *Relaciones de las cosas sucedidas en la Corte de España, desde 1599 hasta 1614* (Madrid, 1857), p. 111.

⁹ ACBurgos, inv. no. 172. This decree was signed in Valladolid on 11 July 1601 and announced there ten days later. It was announced in Burgos on 23 July 1601. Transferring the fairs to Burgos was not an altogether arbitrary decision. Burgalese merchants had been among the most important participants at the Medina fairs, and the Consulado of Burgos had previously taken an interest in their reform. ESPEJO and PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias*, pp. 267, 269-70.

¹⁰ BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *Consulado*, p. 216, citing Archivo Municipal de Burgos, *Libro de Acuerdos*, 1601, fol. 33v.

to Burgos.¹¹ Combining practical action with grandiose requests, however, the council also sent Diego Alonso de San Vítore to study the functioning of Medina's fairs.¹² Though the king did not grant Burgos's requests, he did attempt to enhance the fairs' importance and granted the prior and consuls of the Burgos Consulado jurisdiction over them. This was a new departure; disputes at the fairs of Medina had been settled by local and royal courts. In a crucial decree on 23 September 1601, Philip III specified that all transactions were to be held in the fairs and none in the court,¹³ and that all those present to conduct business at the fairs and all banks and money changers had to register and prove their solvency before the prior and consuls of the Consulado.¹⁴ The requirement of registration, not present in the Medina fairs, meant that the Consulado received complete records for those who participated. Happily, many of these records have survived.

Later in September another decree mentioned some of the reasons for these changes. The residence of businessmen in the court, the king believed, had caused a decline of business in general. Furthermore, merchants had circumvented previous orders prohibiting the negotiation of letters of exchange in the court. Many letters of exchange earlier in 1601 (particularly those issued in Italy) had specified payment in Simancas, a small town some twelve kilometers down the Pisuega River from Valladolid. Thus, the merchants were able to remain barely within the law, maintaining residence in the court and making short trips to Simancas to deal with letters of exchange.¹⁵ By moving the fairs to Burgos and limiting exchange transactions to the fairs, the king hoped to stimulate the economy; he may also have wished to rid the court of a troublesome lobby of merchants.

The preliminary ordinances¹⁶ established four annual fairs of twenty-five days each, beginning on the first days of March, June, September, and December, in conformity with Italian practice. The requirements for regis-

¹¹ BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *Consulado*, pp. 214-15, citing Archivo Municipal de Burgos, *Libro de Acuerdos*, 1601, Regimiento de 22 de enero, fols. 16v-17, 24. The city had lost people, but it was certainly not "uninhabited". From some 25,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Burgos had declined to about 13,325 inhabitants by 1592. Plague hit the city in 1565 and in the 1590s, and by 1611 the figure stood at about 7,640, according to GONZÁLEZ, *Burgos, ciudad marginal*, pp. 136, 159.

¹² BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *Consulado*, pp. 215, 219.

¹³ ELOY GARCÍA DE QUEVEDO, *Ordenanzas del Consulado de Burgos de 1538* (Burgos, 1905), p. 87.

¹⁴ ACBurgos, inv. no. 173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 166. 29 September 1601.

¹⁶ ACBurgos, inv. no. 177; GARCÍA DE QUEVEDO, *Ordenanzas*, pp. 89-90. The royal regulations did not reach Burgos until the fair of March 1602 had begun, so the Consulado used its own judgment on certain questions, as it presumably did in June 1601. ACBurgos, inv. no. 117, Burgos, 5 April 1602. Inventory number 117 is the unfoliated notarial register of Francisco Fernández de Valdivielso, *escribano de número* of Burgos and secretary of the Consulado. It consists of thirty pages and covers numerous questions concerning the fairs from October 1601 to September 1603.

tration before the Consulado were repeated. Mercantile business could be conducted throughout each fair, but the exchange business was restricted to the last ten days.¹⁷ Apparently these first ordinances were too skeletal a set of regulations, for on 15 June 1603 the king issued a number of changes. The last ten days were still reserved for exchange transactions, but because « it is not decent that the December fair goes on through Christmas », the exchange business for that fair was changed to 12-22 December. Debts outstanding after a fair were to be paid within twenty days from its close, but those to be paid outside the kingdom had a forty-five day term. The king repeated the traditional injunction that only goods negotiated at the fairs were exempt from sales taxes (*alcabalas*) and decreed that only fully accredited and registered merchants had the right to vote on setting exchange rates.¹⁸ In addition, merchants conducting banking business had to maintain open books for the term of each fair.¹⁹ Many of these regulations seem to have been designed to force merchants and financiers back to the fairs, to keep them there for the full term, and thus to revive business activity in northern Castile.

If we know a good deal about regulations for the Burgos fairs, we know less, ironically, about how many were held. The question deserves consideration, since Basas Fernández said that only two could be verified, based on *Libros de cajas* (banking records) in the Consulado archives.²⁰ An early proposal was to begin the Burgos fairs in March 1601, but the same delays which had plagued Medina were still at work. The March fair was never called, although one was held in June. The October fair, due to be held in November, as postponed until 7 January 1602 and again until 20-30 January. By the request of the merchants it was finally set for March

¹⁷ ACBurgos, inv. nos. 117, 173-74. Many of those attending the fairs evidently wished to conduct their business quickly and leave. The March 1602 fair lasted only seven days, according to ESPEJO and PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias*, p. 288. Thereafter royal ordinances repeatedly ordered that the fairs should run for the full term and that no exchange business could be done until the last ten days. Whether or not the orders were followed is a matter of some debate.

¹⁸ ACBurgos, inv. no. 117, 177. This was in response to complaints that some merchants were packing the electorate with friends and servants.

¹⁹ GARCÍA DE QUEVEDO, *Ordenanzas*, pp. 90-91. ACBurgos, inv. nos. 179-80 required the Consulado to keep banking books for the term of the fair. See inv. no. 178 for additional regulations in September 1603.

²⁰ BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *Consulado*, p. 222, citing *libros de cajas*, now designated ACBurgos, libro 68. On pp. 219-22 Basas gives a brief analysis of these records, emphasizing the participation of Burgalese merchants.

²¹ ESPEJO and PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias*, p. 287. The decree setting the October 1601 fair in March 1602 was signed by the king in Valladolid on 8 March 1602. ACBurgos, inv. no. 176. Any damages resulting from the postponements were to be presented to the prior and consuls for disposition. GARCÍA DE QUEVEDO, *Ordenanzas*, pp. 87-88.

1602, to be held jointly with the regular March fair²¹ To compensate for the long delay, those with accounts receivable at the October 1601 fair would get a small increment, first suggested as 2 percent, later as 3 to 3-½ percent, and finally set at 3-¼ percent.²² It is these two fairs — June 1601 and March 1602 — for which *libros de caja* still exist.

But there is other documentation that suggests fairs were also held in June, September, and December of 1602; March, June, September, and December of 1603; and March, June, and September of 1604. First of all, *cartas de poder* (powers of attorney) for fairs on these dates were registered before the Consulado and still exist in its archives. In addition, there are records of meetings to set exchange rates for all four fairs of 1602 and the first three of 1603.²³ *Libros de caja* only had to be maintained by the Consulado as a public service in the event that no private banker was conducting business. Clearly this happened during the first two fairs. Thereafter, private bankers were probably present, but since their books were held by the Consulado only for the duration of the fair, they have not been preserved in the archive. We know that Agustín Spínola acted as banker at the September and December fairs of 1603, for example, only because it is mentioned in other documents.²⁴ Royal decrees in 1603 concerning the fairs²⁵ and records of transactions at the June 1604 fair²⁶ provide further evidence that Burgos held as many as twelve fairs from 1601 to 1604.

The documents dealing with exchange rates, the *cartas de poder*, and existing accounts deserve close examination, because together they describe the character of the Burgos fairs and their participants. The exchange rates established for Burgos complement the series published by Henri Lapeyre for the fairs of Medina del Campo between 1578 and 1596,²⁷ as we can see in Table 1. In Burgos the rates were set by a vote of those duly registered for each fair (Table 2). Foreigners present came from Italy, Germany, and possibly France, with Genoese alone accounting for between 20 and 35.7 percent of those voting at various fairs. It is well known that Genoese

²² ACBurgos, inv. no. 117, Valladolid, 8 March 1602 and Burgos, 23 March 1602. At the same time letters of exchange from Lisbon were given a lower increment (3 percent), because they had been outstanding only since November.

²³ ACBurgos, inv. no. 117, 612. Exchange rates for the June 1602 fair do not include the list of voters; all others do.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, inv. nos. 618-21. Spínola also acted as banker in the fair of June 1602, according to José Gentil da Silva, *Stratégie des affaires à Lisbonne entre 1595 et 1607: Lettres marchandes de Rodrigues d'Evora et Veiga* (Paris, 1956), p. 77. The references Silva found in the Portuguese merchants' letters corroborate our information on every fair held in Burgos, except that of September 1604, *ibid.*, pp. 68, 70, 73, 75, 77, 79-83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 177, 15 June 1603; no. 178, 6 September 1603.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 611, the records of Luis Méndez.

²⁷ LAPEYRE, *Famille de marchandes, Les Ruiz*, tables 15 and 16, pp. 499-501. Table 15 is the list of official exchange rates and is more readily comparable to our data.

TABLE 1

EXCHANGE RATES

| Foreign Currency | Value in Castilian Maravedís | |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Medina del Campo (1578-1593) ^a | Burgos (1602-1603) ^b |
| Besançon (<i>escudo de oro de marco</i>) | 1 = 421.4 | 1 = 434.3 |
| Antwerp (<i>grueso</i>) | | 108 = 375 |
| Lisbon (<i>rais</i>) | | 441.7 = 375 |
| Valencia (<i>castellano</i> of 27 <i>sueldos</i> and 4 <i>dineros</i>) | | 1 = 448.9 |
| Saragossa (<i>ducat</i>) | | 1 = 379.4 |
| Florence (<i>escudo</i>) | 1 = 407.6 | 1 = 392.3 |
| Lyon (<i>escudo de oro del sol</i>) | 1 = 419.4 | 1 = 411 |
| Barcelona (<i>escudo</i>) | | 1 = 410.9 |

^a HENRI LAPEYRE, *Une famille de marchands, Les Ruiz* (Paris, 1935), pp. 499-501.

^b ACBURGOS, inv. no. 117.

^c The "Besançon" fairs were moved to Piacenza by Genoese bankers in 1579 and became the prime money market in Europe for several decades thereafter. See FERNAND BRAUDEL, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York, 1972-73), p. 379, see also pp. 343, 380-83, 387-94, 507-08.

penetration into the Castilian economy, which began in the late Middle Ages, was approaching a peak about 1600.²⁸

Native Castilians seem a very small proportion of the total electorate, until we add unidentified voters whose surnames suggest Castilian origins.²⁹ Overall, there is a clear trend toward increasing Castilian participation in the exchange rate electorate and an equally clear trend toward lessening Genoese participation. The numbers, of course, are very small, and the exchange rate electorate represents only the minimum attendance at the fairs. Still, these voting records suggest that the Burgos fairs did not catch on with the foreign commercial and financial community in Spain. Even in the few years for which we have records, the Burgos fairs seemed to become more Spanish and less international.

The picture becomes clearer if we look at the *cartas de poder*, a legal requirement for those conducting business for others. Table 3 gives the total number of *poderes* registered with the Consulado for each fair (at least those which have been preserved). The largest number (eighty-five)

²⁸ JACQUES HEERS, *Gènes au XVe siècle: Activité économique et problèmes sociaux* (Paris, 1961); and the same author's « Les hommes d'affaires italiens en Espagne au Moyen Age: Le marché monétaire », *Fremde Kaufleute auf der Iberischen Halbinsel*, ed. Hermann Kellenbenz (Cologne, 1970), pp. 74-83. Felipe Ruiz Martín's long-awaited study on the Genoese in Spain will be the definitive work for the sixteenth century. For now, his « Los hombres de negocios genoveses de España durante el siglo XVI », pp. 84-99 in the Kellenbenz collection cited above gives a good overview of their activities.

²⁹ To narrow the list of unidentified names, we checked for them in a number of secondary works on related topics.

TABLE 2

MERCHANTS VOTING AT FAIRS

| Merchants Arranged by Place of Origin | Fair of: | | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Mar 1602 | Sept 1602 | Dec 1602 | Mar 1603 | Jun 1603 | Sept 1603 |
| <i>CASTILE</i> | | | | | | |
| <i>Burgos</i> | | | | | | |
| Moneda, Juan Bautista de la | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Pernia, Juan de | | + | | | | |
| Quintanadueñas, Gaspar de | | | | | | + |
| Salamanca, Diego de | | | | + | | + |
| number present | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| % of total | 3.2 | 5.9 | 3.6 | 6.9 | 3.1 | 10.7 |
| <i>Valladolid</i> | | | | | | |
| Bobadilla, Diego de | | | | | + | |
| Díaz Angel, Rui | | | | | + | |
| Fernández Salazar, Juan | + | | + | + | | |
| Gómez de Acosta, Manuel | | + | | | | |
| Rodríguez, Alonso | | | | | + | |
| Ruiz Embito, Cosme | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| number present | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| % of total | 6.5 | 5.9 | 7.1 | 6.9 | 12.5 | 3.6 |
| <i>Madrid</i> | | | | | | |
| Rodríguez Pardo, Gabriel | | | | | + | + |
| Rodríguez Pardo, Manuel | + | + | | | | |
| number present | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| % of total | 3.2 | 2.9 | — | — | 3.1 | 3.6 |
| number present, Castile | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| % of total | 12.9 | 14.7 | 10.7 | 13.8 | 18.8 | 17.8 |
| <i>unidentified, probably from Castile</i> | | | | | | |
| Alvarez, Enrique | | + | | | | |
| Bocarro, Andrés | | + | | | | |
| Bustillo, Miguel de | + | | | | | |
| Cuéllar, Bernardo | | | + | | | |
| Díaz, Sebastián | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Díaz de Aguilar, Alonso | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Díaz de Aguilar, don Fernando | | | | + | | |
| Gómez, Alvaro | | + | | | | |
| Gómez Angel, Antonio | | | | | + | |
| Martínez de Torres, Marcos | | | | | | + |
| Medina, Cristóbal de | | + | + | | | |
| Rodríguez Jorge, Juan | | | | + | + | + |
| Sevilla, Luis Gerónimo de | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Ugalde, Juan Bautista de | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Vega, Pedro de | | | | + | + | + |

Continued TABLE 2

| Merchants Arranged by Place of Origin | Fair of: | | | | | |
|---|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Mar 1602 | Sept 1602 | Dec 1602 | Mar 1603 | Jun 1603 | Sept 1603 |
| Vicente, Sebastián | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Orno (?), Juan Bautista | | | | + | | |
| number present, probably from Castile | 6 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| + number definitely from Castile | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| total | 10 | 14 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 12 |
| % of total | 32.2 | 41.2 | 35.7 | 44.8 | 43.8 | 42.8 |
| ELSEWHERE IN SPANISH MONARCHY | | | | | | |
| <i>Portugal</i> | | | | | | |
| Camarena, Alonso | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| López Cortiços, Antonio (r) | | | | | | + |
| Méndez de Olivença, Luis (r) | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| number present | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| % of total | 6.5 | 5.9 | 7.1 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 10.7 |
| <i>unidentified, probably from Portugal</i> | | | | | | |
| Lisbona, Juan de | | + | + | | | + |
| <i>unidentified, probably from Valencia</i> | | | | | | |
| Baquero, Vicente | + | | | | | |
| number from Spanish Monarchy | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| % of total | 9.7 | 8.8 | 10.7 | 6.9 | 6.3 | 14.3 |
| ITALY | | | | | | |
| <i>Genoa</i> | | | | | | |
| Adorno, Felipe (r) | | + | + | | | |
| Balbi, Nicolao | | | | | + | |
| Centurión, Benito | + | + | | | | |
| Centurión, Otavio (r) | + | + | + | + | | |
| Doria, Domingo | + | | | + | + | + |
| Doria, Donato | | | + | | + | + |
| Doria, Juan Camilo | | + | | | | |
| Grillo, Juan Bautista (r) | | + | | | | |
| Negro, Nicolao de (r) | + | + | + | | | + |
| Palavesín, Gerónimo | | + | + | + | + | + |
| Pianelo, Bautista (r) | + | | | | | |
| Ragio, Ambrosio (r) | | + | | | | |
| Ragio, Antonioto (r) | + | | | | | |

Continued TABLE 2

| Merchants Arranged by Place of Origin | Fair of: | | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Mar 1602 | Sept 1602 | Dec 1602 | Mar 1603 | Jun 1603 | Sept 1603 |
| Saoli family representative | | | | | + | |
| Serra, Bautista (r) | | | + | | | |
| Spínola, Agustín | + | + | + | | + | |
| Spínola, Carlo (r) | + | | | + | | |
| Spínola, Claudio | + | | | | | |
| Spínola Julio (r) | + | | + | + | | + |
| Spínola, Nicolao (r) | | + | + | + | + | |
| Spínola, Pompeo | | + | | | | |
| Squarzafigo, Oracio | | | | + | | |
| Squarzafigo, Vicencio (r) | | | + | + | + | + |
| Strata, Antonio María (Saoli agent) | | + | | + | | |
| number present | 10 | 12 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 6 |
| % of total | 32.3 | 35.3 | 35.7 | 31 | 25 | 21.4 |
| <i>Florence</i> | | | | | | |
| Manuchi, Lorenzo (r) | + | | + | + | | |
| Sirigati, Julián | | | | | | + |
| number present | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| % of total | 3.2 | — | 3.6 | 3.4 | — | 3.6 |
| <i>Lucca</i> | | | | | | |
| Diodati, Lelio | | | + | + | + | + |
| Lipi, Pompeo | | + | | | | |
| Ome, Manuel (Diodati agent) | + | | | | | |
| number present | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| % of total | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.6 |
| <i>unidentified, probably from Italy</i> | | | | | | |
| Badaraco, Agustín | + | | | | | |
| Botini, Prospero | | | | | + | |
| Comodey, Gemilio | | | | | | + |
| Galete, Juan Francisco | + | | | | | |
| Justiniano, Juan Bautista | + | | | | | |
| Justiniano, Paulo | | + | | | | |
| Salucio, Pedro Francisco | + | | | | + | |
| Ysola, Juseppe | | | | | + | + |
| number present, probably from Italy | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| + number definitely from Italy | 12 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 8 |
| number from Italy | 16 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 10 |
| % of total | 51.6 | 41.2 | 42.8 | 37.9 | 37.5 | 35.7 |

Continued TABLE 2

| Merchants Arranged by Place of Origin | Fair of: | | | | | |
|---|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Mar 1602 | Sept 1602 | Dec 1602 | Mar 1603 | Jun 1603 | Sept 1603 |
| THE GERMANIES | | | | | | |
| Ober, Jorge (Fugger agent) | | | | | | + |
| Sliesnequer, Bernardo (Fugger agent) | | + | + | + | + | |
| Van Hilst, Maximilian | + | + | + | + | + | |
| number present | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| % of total | 3.2 | 5.9 | 7.1 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 3.6 |
| ELSEWHERE | | | | | | |
| <i>unidentified, possibly from France</i> | | | | | | |
| Calbart, Guillermo | | | | | + | + |
| Rrens (Rheims?), Pedro | + | + | + | + | + | |
| number present | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| % of total | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 6.2 | 3.6 |
| global total present | 31 | 34 | 28 | 29 | 32 | 28 |
| % | 99.9 | 100.0 | 99.9 | 99.9 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

(r) Those from elsewhere resident in Valladolid.
Source: ACBurgos, inv. nos. 117, 612.

appear for the March 1602 fair, which we recall encompassed both the delayed second fair of 1601 and the regular March fair of 1602. The lowest numbers appear from 1603. Interestingly, this is the only year in which the Mesta, the important organization of sheepowners in Castile, failed to meet.³⁰ It also marked the beginning of Philip III's pernicious debasement policy, which threw normal commercial operations into disorder in Castile.³¹ The *cartas de poder* generally had a single giver and a single receiver, but a small minority of *poderes* had joint givers or receivers or both. Normally they were general powers of attorney, only rarely indicating a specific task or a specific sum to be collected.

Tables 4 and 5 are schematic displays of the individual givers and receivers arranged by place of origin, with the numbers in parentheses indicating those who had established residence outside their place of origin. Again in the *poderes* as in the exchange rate electorate, we find a large

³⁰ JULIUS KLEIN, *The Mesta: A Study in Spanish Economic History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1920), p. 119.

³¹ EARL J. HAMILTON, *American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain, 1501-1650* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934; reprint ed., New York, 1965), pp. 75-79, 211-212.

TABLE 3

TOTAL NUMBER OF CARTAS DE PODER

| | | |
|----------|----------------|----|
| Fair of: | | |
| | June 1601 | 43 |
| | March 1602 | 85 |
| | June 1602 | 36 |
| | September 1602 | 28 |
| | December 1602 | 23 |
| | March 1603 | 12 |
| | June 1603 | 12 |
| | September 1603 | 17 |
| | December 1603 | 24 |
| | March 1604 | 26 |
| | June 1604 | 26 |
| | September 1604 | 16 |

Sources: ACBurgos, inv. nos. 224-609.

TABLE 4

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF GIVERS OF CARTAS DE PODER

| Place of origin | Jun 1601 | Mar 1602 | Jun 1602 | Sept 1602 | Dec 1602 | Mar 1603 | Jun 1603 | Sept 1603 | Dec 1603 | Mar 1604 | Jun 1604 | Sept 1604 |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| OLD CASTILE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Valladolid | 1 (7) | 11 (11) | 3 (11) | 1 (10) | 1 (7) | 1 (5) | 1 (3) | (3) | 1 (9) | 2 (5) | 1 (15) | 1 (2) |
| Soria | | 5 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Medina del Campo | 2 | 2 | 1 (1) | | 1 | 2 | | | 1 | | | (1) |
| Segovia | | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | | |
| Burgos | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Brieva | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Villacastin | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| NEW CASTILE AND ANDALUSIA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Madrid | 3 (1) | 1 | 1 (1) | (1) | (1) | | | | 1 (2) | | 1 | |
| Cáceres | 3 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Toledo | 1 | 4 | | 2 | | | | | 3 | | 4 | |
| Cuenca | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Seville | | (1) | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| Córdoba | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| ELSEWHERE IN SPANISH MONARCHY | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Saragossa | 1 (1) | (1) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Valencia | (1) | | 1 | | | | | | | 2 (1) | | |
| Bilbao | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Alicante | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| Portugal | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| ITALY | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Genoa | 19 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 5 |
| Florence | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Lucca | | 2 | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | |
| OTHERS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Germany | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Antwerp | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Origin unavailable | 7 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 41 | 57 | 32 | 28 | 19 | 13 | 17 | 14 | 23 | 26 | 25 | 14 |

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate temporary residences of citizens of other cities.
 Source: ACBurgos, inv. nos. 224-609.

TABLE 5

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF RECEIVERS OF CARTAS DE PODER

| Place of origin | Jun 1601 | Mar 1602 | Jun 1602 | Sept 1602 | Dec 1602 | Mar 1603 | Jun 1603 | Sept 1603 | Dec 1603 | Mar 1604 | Jun 1604 | Sept 1604 |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| OLD CASTILE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Valladolid | 2 (9) | 8 (24) | 4 (12) | 2 (12) | 2 (8) | 1 (4) | 1 (7) | 2 (3) | 5 (10) | 3 (8) | 2 (13) | 1 (3) |
| Burgos | 1 | 3 | 4 (2) | | 1 | | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Soria | | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 1 |
| Medina del Campo | | | | 2 | | | | | | 2 | | |
| Segovia | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| NEW CASTILE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Madrid | 1 (2) | 3 (1) | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Toledo | | 3 | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Cáceres | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ELSEWHERE IN SPANISH MONARCHY | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Valencia | | 1 | | 1 (1) | | | | | | 2 | | |
| Portugal | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 2 | | | | | 2 | |
| ITALY | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Genoa | 13 | 11 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 | | 1 | |
| Florence | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Lucca | | 2 | | | | | | | | 1 | 5 | |
| Palermo | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| OTHERS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Germany | | 2 | | 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Origin unavailable | 8 | 17 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 8 | 8 |
| Total | 29 | 59 | 29 | 34 | 21 | 10 | 14 | 18 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 12 |

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate temporary residences of citizens of other cities.

Source: ACBurgos, inv. nos. 224-609.

number of Genoese, acting both as givers and receivers. Many had followed the royal court to Valladolid, the city that sent more merchants (both permanent and temporary residents) to the Burgos fairs than any other Spanish city. They did not, however, establish themselves in Burgos, as the king may have wished, but continued to reside at court, traveling to Burgos only during the fairs.³²

We have been unable to identify the origin of a number of merchants, both givers and receivers, but their surnames indicate that most of them were probably Spaniards. Not surprisingly, the givers of *poderes* came from farther afield than the receivers, but, except in March 1602, there was a close relation between the number of givers and receivers and the total number of *poderes*. In other words, there was little consolidation of business in the hands of a few general agents. Instead, givers of *poderes* tended to favor personal representatives linked to them by family or business ties or by place of origin. Members of the large Genoese family of Spínola, many

³² Genoese merchants often mixed socially with those high in the court. See CABRERA, *Relaciones*, p. 231 for a card game with the Duke of Lerma, Nicolao Doria, Simón Saoli, and Pompeo Spinola in December 1604.

TABLE 6

RECORD OF DISBURSALS OF LUIS MÉNDEZ,
FAIR OF JUNE 1604 (INCOMPLETE)

| Amount Paid out (in ducats) | To | On behalf of |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 684 | Fabio Nelli de Spínola | Alfonso de Navacerrada |
| 1,000 | Nicolao Balbi | Juan Núñez Correa |
| 180 | Cosme Ruiz Embito | Antonio González |
| 1,000 | Gabriel Ropard | Manuel López Pérez |
| 750 | Francisco Marini | Gaspar Núñez Londoño |
| 860 | the Consuls of the Consulado | Francisco de la Palma Aguila and Francisco de la Palma Quartado |
| 1,536 | Andrés Baquero | same |
| ? | — Alvarez | Francisco de la Palma |

6,010 ducats total, or 2,253,750 *maravedis*.

of whom resided at the Spanish court, regularly gave *poderes* to relatives.³³ Juan Bautista and Andrés Baquera, probably from Valencia, despatched relatives to Burgos,³⁴ as did Gabriel Rodríguez Pardo of Madrid.³⁵ And Spaniards and foreigners alike often chose persons with the same geographical origin to represent them in Burgos.³⁶

One of the most prominent receivers of *poderes* was Cosme Ruiz Embito, great-nephew of the renowned merchant Simón Ruiz of Medina del Campo. When Simón died in 1597 his nephew Cosme had become head of the house of Ruiz. He established the main branch of the family business at the court in Madrid and followed it to Valladolid in 1601.³⁷ By then his

³³ ACBurgos, inv. no. 362, for example, the *poder general* from Pompeo to Carlo Spínola for April 1604.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 347, *poder* to Miguél and Vicente Baquera for March 1604.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 296, *poder* to Manuel Rodríguez Pardo for March 1602.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 485, eg. *poder* from Catano Serra and Juan Benito Spínola to Oracio Squarzafigo, all from Genoa, for June 1603; inv. nos. 253 (September 1603), 605 (December 1603), 555 (June 1604), and 248 (September 1604), Rodrigo Salcedo to Pablo Kiménez, both of Soria, for four fairs; inv. nos. 238, 514, 555, Marcos Fugger to Juan Lampaguer and Bernardo Sliesnequer, all of German origin, for several fairs; inv. no. 527, Anolico Carnesequi to Lorenzo Manuchi, both of Florence, for March 1602.

³⁷ LAPEYRE, *Famille de marchandes, Les Ruiz*, pp. 95, 99-103 contains a brief history of the second and third generations of the Ruiz family in Castile. Cosme was not the businessman his uncle had been. He went much more heavily into finance and other speculative ventures and was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1606. When he died in 1618 at the age of 58, his son Juan Ruiz Embito took over the business; his other son Cosme Ruiz Embito became a monk of the Descalced Carmelites in Medina del Campo, in charge of the hospital founded by Simón.

own son Cosme Ruiz Embito can hardly have been much over twenty years old, yet he was very active at all the Burgos fairs and voted at every recorded session to establish the exchange rates. He received seventeen individual *cartas de poder* to conduct business for others, plus an undisclosed number of « *diversas escrituras de poder* » and « *varias cartas* ». ³⁸ Among his clients were the Lisbon merchants Rodrigo López de Évora and Manoel da Vega (Veiga); ³⁹ Miguel Bustillo and Juan de Cuéllar; ⁴⁰ Juan de Ríofrío of Segovia; Pedro de Baeza and Miguel de Castro of Valladolid; Eusebio de la Guerra of Medina del Campo; Juan Bachiller of Villacastín; and Pedro Ondatigui, possibly of Basque origin. ⁴¹ That Cosme Ruiz Embito was acting for the family business instead of his father or elder brother is a further indication that the Burgos fairs were less important than the king wished them to be.

Another active receiver of *poderes* was Luis Méndez, whose banking records survive for the June fair of 1604. ⁴² His accounts indicate the amounts he paid out, to whom he paid them, and in whose behalf he was acting. Part of the Méndez information is missing and sections are undecipherable; the accessible portion of his account is displayed in Table 6. Despite his international clientele, Luis Méndez seems to have done only a small business compared to the total volume of transactions for merchants at the first two Burgos fairs. ⁴³ Rather than illustrating a booming international marketplace, Mendez's accounts seem rather to illustrate the fading importance of the Burgos fairs by June 1604. Fewer merchants attended in person, entrusting their rather modest transactions to an agent.

Even if we look at the full four year run of the fairs, the overall impression is that they attracted fewer people and less business than the fairs of Medina. Admittedly, the surest evidence we have from Medina comes from its peak in the mid-sixteenth century, when, according to the evidence provided by Espejo and Paz, the town had serious problems accomodating the numerous merchants and assistants who flocked there. ⁴⁴ Housing was so tight that tent villages sprang up, and a special balcony was built on the main church for the priest so that crowds in the main square could hear Mass at the same time as those within. ⁴⁵ Burgos was much larger than Medina, of course, and there is no evidence that the fairs

³⁸ ACBurgos, inv. nos. 606, 609.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, inv. nos. 228, 250, 339-42, 494.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, inv. nos. 343, 446, 462, 496.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, inv. no. 279, 280, 345, 437, 497, 565.

⁴² *Ibid.*, inv. no. 611.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Libro 68, fols. 2-223.

⁴⁴ ESPEJO and PAZ, *Las antiguas ferias*, pp. 33-36.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

strained its resources for lodging and food. The number of merchants attending the Burgos fairs ranged from a peak of eighty-two in March 1602 to twelve in September 1604, the last fair held in the city.⁴⁶ A generous allowance for assistants and clerks who accompanied the merchants would still not bring the total high enough to have caused noticeable crowding.

The fairs lasted only four years in Burgos and returned to their usual seat in Medina del Campo by December 1604. Why Medina regained the fairs just then is not known, though it is clear that moving them to Burgos had not restored their vitality nor that of the city. In compensation for losing the fairs, Burgos became host to the Chancillería — but again not for long. The royal experiment to revitalize the urban centers of Old Castile had not succeeded. Valladolid had enjoyed a brief boom at the expense of Madrid, but little else had changed. Thus in 1606, when the municipal officials of Madrid offered the king a subsidy of 250,000 ducats over a ten-year period, the court returned home.⁴⁷ Madrid once again had the court, Medina had its fairs, Valladolid recovered the Chancillería, and Burgos was left with nothing but its past.⁴⁸

This return to the *status quo ante* only emphasized what had been true before. The court and the Seville-San Lúcar-Cádiz complex had replaced Old Castile's cities as the economic centers of the monarchy,⁴⁹ and Madrid, almost equidistant between Seville and the Cantabrian coast and between Lisbon and Barcelona, was better suited to be Spain's capital than any city north of the Guadarramas. Wherever the traditional fairs were located in Old Castile, they could not compete with these powerful magnets. Elsewhere in Europe there were similar movements away from organized fairs in favor of locating in cities that had become centers of trade, industry, and finance on their own merits. The spectacular rise of Amsterdam and the decline of even the powerful Genoese fairs at Piacenza after 1621 are cases

⁴⁶ We calculated these numbers by adding 1) those who voted to set the exchange rates; 2) receivers of registered *poderes* who were not mentioned elsewhere, and 3) for the first two fairs, those who appear in the extant account books but were not mentioned elsewhere. This may inflate the figures for the first two fairs. Normal attendance for each fair thereafter was between twenty-five and forty merchants.

⁴⁷ BENNASSAR, *Valladolid*, pp. 128-129; FEDERICO BRAVO MORATO, *Historia de Madrid*, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1966-68), 1:84 reports that the subsidy to the king was 25,000 ducats annually for ten years, plus one-sixth of all house rents in the town.

⁴⁸ BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, *Consulado*, p. 222.

⁴⁹ PIERRE and HUGUETTE CHAUNU, *The Atlantic Economy and the World Economy*, «Essays in European Economic History, 1500-1800», ed. Peter Earle (Oxford, 1974), p. 114. This English translation of a 1953 article in *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* summarized the general findings of their multi-volume work *Séville et l'Atlantique* (Paris, from 1955).

in point.⁵⁰ We have valuable records for the Burgos fairs, largely because of the crown's solicitude for their success, but royal favor alone could not stimulate commerce in Castile, nor artificially divert merchants from the center of the action.

⁵⁰ RUIZ MARTÍN, *Hombres de negocios genoveses*, p. 86. See FERNAND BRAUDEL, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans Siân Reynolds (2 vols., New York, 1972-73), 1:379-82 for the decline of many important European fairs, and LAPEYRE, *Famille de marchandes, Les Ruiz*, pp. 475-501 for the Castilian fairs. For the "Besançon" fairs, see LUIGI DE ROSA, *I cambi esteri del regno di Napoli dal 1591 al 1707* (Naples, 1955), pp. 24-28; and JOSÉ GENTIL DA SILVA and RUGGIERO ROMANO, *L'Histoire des changes: Les foires de "Bisenzone" de 1600 a 1650*, « Annales, E.S.C. » (1962): 715-21.

