

Trusteeship and Cooperation in the Flemish merchants community in Cadiz: The brotherhood of “San Andrés de los Flamencos” (17th-18th centuries)

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ABSTRACT

This article presents information on the development, over the centuries, of a little known aspect of the communities of foreign Merchants who settled in Spanish cities during the Modern Age. Using previously unpublished documents, relating to the “Ilustre y Antigua Nación Flamenca” of Seville and Cádiz, the article aims to give a description of the charitable activities carried out by the colony of merchants in Seville and, especially, in Cádiz, who were natives of the Southern Low Countries and the Dutch Republic. This merchant community had assigned the administration of a “Patronato” to their brotherhood, which included the control of numerous items of furniture and properties of great value. The description of this religious and benevolent activity gives a no less interesting view, when compared with the purely economic one, of its importance on the integration of these communities into the Spanish society of the 17th and 18th centuries. This research has been made with historical documents from Spanish Archives (Cádiz, Madrid and Alcalá de Henares).

Keywords: Early Modern History, Merchant Communities, Low Countries, Spain, charitable organization, brotherhood, Flemish nation.

1. Introduction: The practice of benevolence in Spain during the Ancient Regime

The historian W. J. Callahan described in his classic article on benevolence and social service the social support practices that existed in Spanish society during the Ancient Regime¹. In spite of being an economic driving force for the evolution of society, foreign merchant’s communities residing in Spain also adopted these practices that became mechanisms of integration and insertion within the social and mental framework in which they lived. Recent contributions have explained the principal factors that drove the expansion of merchant’s networks in the Hispanic Monarchy and in the global context of the Early modern centuries. In the words of Frederic Mauro: “the study of merchant communities represents the sociological dimension of research on “merchant empires”². From research carried out on the nature of these foreign merchant communities in the Atlantic region it can be inferred that one of these factors was the strongly urban and commercial nature of the communities that gave them a socio-political and economical position. Due to their role in the economic development and integration of regions and markets, existing literature gives great relevance to issues such as their ability to control monopolies, their ability as both private traders and as part of merchant companies, and their activity within the economic system. They organised themselves in social networks of cooperation and competition. From this perspective, the colonies of foreign merchants, thanks to their economic activity, promoted spatial economic integration and maritime routes between the various European markets and between these and the colonies. In fact, the merchant communities were, essentially, local urban groups which created trading organisations, with strong solidarity and fraternity links amongst their members. They established monopolies and created a way to communicate their commercial skills and this is an essential fact to understand the Spanish expansion into the

¹ Callahan W. J., 1978. “Caridad, sociedad y economía en el siglo XVIII”, *Moneda y Crédito*, 146: 65-77. (Research Project GlobalNet, Ref. HAR2011-27694).

² Mauro F. 1990. “Merchant Communities, 1350-1750”, in *Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, edited by Tracy J.D. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 255-285; Crespo Solana A. 2010. “Geostrategy of a System? Merchant Societies and Exchange Networks as Connection Centres in the Spanish Atlantic Trade in the First Global Age”, in *Networks in the First Global Age, 1400-1800*. Edited by Mukherjee R. Delhi: Primus Book: 11-32 and Crespo Solana A, 2010. *Comunidades Transnacionales. Colonias de mercaderes extranjeros en el mundo atlántico (1500-1830)* Madrid. Doce Calles.

Atlantic region³. Studies also point to certain aspects relating to the population characteristics of these groups and to their family relationships, not forgetting the complex elements arising from socioeconomic and institutional research. To understand the Spanish case, French, German, English and Flemish communities established in Spain have been examined and their study has highlighted some interesting discrepancies in relation to the current state of investigations on foreign colonies⁴. For example, attention has been drawn to the difficulty in defining terms as contradictory as nation, merchant colony or consulate, the first referring directly to the community itself, with its internal hierarchy and fraternity bonds, its members linked by family, economic and social relationships (the latter nearly always based on the institutional system and a shared religion), as well as common geographic and linguistic origins⁵. Consulates, on the other hand, were organisations imposed by the Spanish Crown according to the diplomatic interests at a given time, but they did not always favour the interests of the merchant communities established in Spain⁶.

From a legal point of view, the colonies of foreign traders also wanted to be subject to a special jurisdiction which they called "*fuero de conservaduría*" (jurisdiction by an administration); they would constantly take advantage of this condition when facing Spanish institutions, particularly the Crown, to claim their status as a community or "*nation*" living in territories of the Spanish Monarchy⁷. The "*fuero de conservaduría*" of a foreign *nation* was represented by an administration judge who, by virtue of a special commission or faculty, could hear cases of damages and grievances against members of a community⁸. The privileges granted to foreign communities, in exchange for conferring special citizenship conditions, subjected them to a number of obligations, such as special taxation, in the port cities where they settled as well as some other issues often related to their constant expectation of being accepted in the place where they lived, to be able to trade with America, or have their properties and assets protected by Spanish legislation. Because of this, trading communities formed a micro-society within a stratified class framework, especially in the urban environment where they blended in with the values, practices and behaviours of other members of society⁹. One of the least known activities of foreign trading communities in Spain was their readiness to privately practice charitable work and their relationship in the formation of confraternities associated with a sacred patron. The practice of benevolence was, for foreigners, a social consideration deeply embedded in society, it represented a socio-religious rite and a social act in the community, besides providing the opportunity to show solidarity with their members¹⁰.

The objective of this article is to analyse the development, throughout more than a century, of an almost unknown aspect of the foreign trading communities living in Spanish cities during the Modern Age. Using mainly unpublished documents which refer to what was known as "*Ilustre y Antigua Nación Flamenca de Sevilla y Cádiz*" (Illustrious and Old Flemish *Nation* of Seville and Cadiz). The aim is to describe trusteeship and cooperation activities carried out by the confraternity of merchants formed by traders from the Low Countries, both from the south and the Dutch Republic itself, who lived in Seville and, especially, in Cádiz. Cadiz was, together with Seville,

³ cf. Introduction chapter to: Crespo Solana A. 2010. *Comunidades transnacionales*: 8-15.

⁴ Hausberger B, Ibarra A, eds. 2003, *Comercio y poder en América colonial: los consulados de comerciantes, siglos XVII-XIX*, Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert.

⁵ Salas Aussens J.A. 2009. *En busca de El Dorado. Inmigración francesa en la España de la Edad Moderna*, Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco; Weber K, 2001. "German Merchants in the Atlantic: Trade and Colonial Goods and European Manufactured Goods, linking Hamburg, Cadiz and Bordeaux (1700-1830)", *Jahrbuch für Europäische Überseegeschichte* 1: 169-174; Hancock D, 1995., *Citizens of the world. London Merchants and the integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press; Gestrich A, Schulte Beerbühl, M, eds. 2011. *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society, 1660-1914*, German Historical Institute London, Bulletin, Supplement 2; Ramada Curto D, Molho A, eds., 2002. *Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World*, EUI Working Papers,HEC, nº 2.

⁶ Crespo Solana, A, 2011. "El interés público y el interés particular: una visión comparativa en las representaciones de los mercaderes flamencos en la Corte de Felipe V", in *Agentes e identidades en movimiento. España y los Países Bajos, siglos XVI-XVIII*. Edited by Vermeir R, Ebben M, Fagel R. Madrid: Sílex: 373-403.

⁷ Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (AHNM), Sección Estado: 623, 532. Juntas de Dependencias de Extranjeros, 18 August 1722. "Petitions of the Flemish nation of Seville and Cadiz to request the granting of a Judge administrator and the recognition by the central Administration of the "*fuero de conservaduría*" for the citizens of the Low Countries resident in Spain"; and AHNM. Estado, 641, 716. "Memorial de la nación flamenca de Cádiz" 17. November. 1727.

⁸ Crespo Solana A. 2009. *Mercaderes Atlánticos. Redes del comercio flamenco y holandés entre Europa y el Caribe*. Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba.

⁹ Villar García M.B., 1996. "La burguesía de origen extranjero en la España del siglo XVIII", *Baética. Estudios de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, 18: 437-455.

¹⁰ Maza Zorrilla E. 1987. *Pobreza y asistencia social en España. Siglos XVI al XX*, Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid; Rumeu de Armas A. 1981. *Historia de la previsión social en España*, Barcelona: Biblioteca de Historia Hispánica.

the commercial and maritime capital of the Spanish Atlantic world and it was there where the largest Flemish and Dutch colony of the Spanish empire was created. Cadiz rose as the key centre to several markets in the second half of the 17th century and was also a major port of call in the Atlantic routes to the Canaries and America. As an important port city linked to the Atlantic economy, many merchants' communities were settled here. The Flemish and the Dutch case (Netherlanders in general) is a paradigmatic example of a commercial community in Spain, along almost three centuries. The Flemish case is exceptional maybe because of the large numbers involved, and its dramatic drive during the last decades of the 16th century (only comparable to the drama of the Jewish exodus), and the early geographical extent of its networks. It can be said that, in the latter, they were ahead of the British and the French. In the main, the origin of the various waves of immigration, both of exit and reception, were always centred on the provinces of Flanders, Brabant and Holland, geographically the Low Countries, in relation to the new international maritime circuits with their economic development and the structure of historical relationships which would underline their link with the rest of Europe. This "Vlaamse Natie te Cadiz", or "*Ilustre y Antigua Nación Flamenca de Sevilla y Cádiz*" (as is known in historical documents), integrated by both Flemish and Dutch migrants, had assigned to the foundation of its confraternity the administration of a *patronato* (trusteeship), which controlled many valuable assets, both chattels and property. Thus, the description of this pious religious activity, which had a strong guild-like slant, provides an equally interesting view of the importance - when compared with the purely economic one - of the integration of these communities into Spanish society during the 17th and 18th centuries¹¹.

2. Between Mutualism and Benevolence: Welfare practices

Social welfare in Spain during the Ancient Regime was scattered and disorganised. In addition, it was geared to addressing the different needs of either groups or individuals, other than the strictly pious and benevolent. As a direct result of the jurisdiction or privileges of certain sectors of society there was a strong mutualism financed within a guild or confraternity by funds and legacies donated, as a general rule, with a non-disposable character to the trusteeships, chaplaincies and other institutions founded by individuals and which were truly privileged funds for investment. At the same time, this mutualism was also practiced by guilds, which amongst other things, defended the collective and social spirit of a society where an individual could be legally unprotected if not recognised as belonging to a group. The guilds were the panacea for mutual assistance because in them there was a persistent spirit of brotherhood, representing a kind of expression of internal solidarity and mutual help for the group, which was embedded in a stratified society¹². Benevolence and solidarity as practiced by the guilds were also carried out by other institutions whose guild-like essence was not dissimilar to the former, such as the various confraternities, congregations and brotherhoods; they had their roots in churches and were not just professional monopoly corporations, but also promoted popular piety with the sole aim of "*worshipping a certain saint or specific dedication as well as reinforcing confraternity links to give mutual help and promote the spiritual life of the community*"¹³. Thus, within certain groups, institutions or legally defined sectors of the stratified society, amongst which guilds and foreign trading groups were particularly outstanding, mutual social assistance, benevolence and pious practices went further from their real functions, as they became a clear manifestation of group strategy. Essentially, these practices were performed in various ways: the creation of special hospitals (for the sick, the poor, widows and even travellers), spiritual help (where practices generated by practical Catholicism were used), the channelling of grants and financial help for marginal sectors of society (which were mainly in the form of alms) and, finally, as the most extreme manifestation of Christian piety: burial. These services, which could have either a charitable nature, when provided to marginalised groups of society, or for mutual assistance to other members of specific groups, were integrated into a number of institutions of which the most important were the confraternities.

There are many local studies on these organisations but little joint research, since they were a highly heterogeneous phenomenon. This study has been linked to the guilds since their members were most prolific in the foundation of confraternities and because, originally, the guilds were religious-benevolent associations

¹¹ Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos*: 106-115; Crespo Solana A, 2010. "Dutch Mercantile Networks and the Trade with the Hispanic Port cities in the Atlantic (1648-1778)", in *Redes y negocios globales en el mundo ibérico, siglos XVI-XVIII*. Edited by Böttcher N, Hausberger B, Ibarra A. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert: 107-142.

¹² Rumeu de Armas A. *Historia*: 267- 288.

¹³ Aguilar Piñal F. 1966. "Asociaciones piadosas madrileñas del siglo XVIII (Descripción bibliográfica de sus Constituciones)", *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños*, VII: 1-34.

related to the formation of merchant, craftsmen and other professional groups. It seems that there was a similar model of association in France, England and Germany that were always treated with suspicion and even suffered persecution during the 18th century. The guild-like confraternities have been divided under two large groups: the religious-benevolent (intended to offering shelter to the destitute) and the guild-welfare (for mutual assistance)¹⁴.

However, the confraternities were not the only institutions that took on these welfare or mutual activities in Spain during the Ancient Regime. There were other manifestations based, theoretically, on pious initiatives such the *patronatos* or trusteeships, so far scarcely studied; these have scarcely been studied, but were a very important and interesting secular expression of welfare activity¹⁵. Cádiz, in 1799, had approximately some 71 trusteeship foundations, to which their patrons had donated an enduring income for benevolent purposes, as well as various devotional activities and Christian worship. But this also meant that there was the possibility, as in the case of the confraternity of *San Andrés de los Flamencos*, of obtaining some financial benefits arising from that income to be used for different purposes. The foundation of these trusteeships was closely linked, in most known cases, to dynastic lineages and families from the nobility and merchants, and even, to “nations” of foreigners settled in a given city.¹⁶ This was the case of the Flemish citizens in Seville and Cádiz who, since the start of their settlement in Spain, were given the right to form a confraternity of merchants that brought together all residents and travellers of their nationality¹⁷.

There are indications that other communities of foreign nationals, such as the French or Irish, also had these trusteeship foundations, and the limited information available points towards the fact that it was common for the trusteeship to be placed under the protection of a saint or apostle to conduct the welfare work for their fellow Christians and countrymen. Examples of this were the confraternities of St Patrick for the Irish or St Louis for the French, who had settled in Spanish cities. Usually associated with these confraternities and trusteeships were a crypt or pantheon for the burial of the members of the group of nationals and also the payment of a type of tax from which benefits were derived annually and allocated to pious work. The Italians (especially the Genoese) also established many of these religious foundations and even hospitals or refuges¹⁸.

3. The chapels and hospitals of San Andres de los Flamencos in Spain: their foundation and purpose

The Flemish had an existing tradition of these activities, not just in Spain but also in the rest of Europe. They had founded since the 15th century, or possibly earlier, several special hospitals along the Route of St James, devoted to looking after Flemish residents and travellers¹⁹. The huge number of Dutch migrants to the Iberian Peninsula and the suspicions they had generated since the beginning of the Dutch revolt, could have encouraged the desire for internal solidarity in the community and to create the image of pious and charitable Christians to the rest of society.²⁰ The majority of these migrants, most of them merchants, sailors and factory workers, settled in the merchant port cities that were the key to the Spanish monopoly. Constantly suspected of heresy and frequently victims of persecution by the Inquisition, from the moment they became part of Spanish society they had two

¹⁴ Arias de Saavedra I, López-Guadalupe Muñoz M.L, 2000. “Las Cofradías y su dimensión social en la España del Antiguo Régimen”, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 25: 189-232.

¹⁵ Carasa Soto P. 1990. “La asistencia social en el siglo XVIII español. Estado de la cuestión”, *Coloquio Internacional Carlos III y su siglo*, Madrid: Universidad Complutense: 425-452.

¹⁶ Pascua Sánchez M.J.1991. “La fundación de la Casa de las Viudas de Cádiz: el gesto caritativo de Juan Clat Fragela, un comerciante de Damasco”, *La Burguesía de negocios en la Andalucía de la Ilustración*, Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, II: 238-297.

¹⁷ Vidal Galache F, Vidal Galache B. 2001. *El Hospital de San Andrés de los Flamencos*, Madrid: Nerea; Crespo Solana A, 2001. *Entre Cádiz y los Países Bajos: una comunidad mercantil en la ciudad de la Ilustración*, Cádiz: Fundación Municipal de Cultura: 157-200.

¹⁸ Sancho de Soprani H, 1949. “La reforma de la Iglesia conventual de San Francisco de Cádiz (siglo XVIII)”, *Archivo Iberoamericano*: 289-327 and 338; Biblioteca Municipal de Madrid (BMM): “*Constituciones de la Congregación y Escuela de Christo Nuestro Señor, fundada bajo la protección de María Santísima, Señora Nuestra, y del Glorioso San Felipe Neri, en el Hospital de los italianos de Madrid*”, Madrid, Imprenta de Lorenzo Francisco Mojados, 1727, Manuscrito (Ms). 1208 and Ms.2439.

¹⁹ Stols E, 1971. *De Spaanse Brabanders en de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld, 1598-1648*, Brussel: Paleis der Academiën; Thomas W, Verdonck R.A, 2000. *Encuentros en Flandes. Relaciones e intercambios hispanoflamencos inicios de la Edad Moderna*, Leuven: Leuven U. Press, Fundación Duques de Soria.

²⁰ Thomas W. 1991. *Een spel van kat en muis. Zuidnederlanders voor de Inquisitie in Spanje, 1530-1750*, Brussels: Paleis der Academiën.

wishes: to be both respected and recognised as Catholic subjects of the King of Spain, and to retain the privileges granted by their origin “*from the lands of Flanders*”. The Hispano-Flemish citizenship was acknowledged for the first time in 1533 in a Pragmatic Decree issued by the Emperor in Genoa when the process of unification of the 17 Provinces was already advanced, with the exception of Guelders, which did not join the Bourbon cause until 1543. The Archduke Albrecht and Archduchess Isabella renewed this decree in 1616, at a time when the revolt in the southern provinces was already accomplished. The provinces continued to be known as Flanders but, in Spain, an increasing distinction was made between the names for different regions when referring to the Flemish Catholics and the Dutch rebels. This meant that the majority of the Dutch immigrants preferred to opt for the corresponding jurisdiction granted to them by being considered in Spain as members of the “*Ancient and Noble Flemish Nation*”, which immediately gave them greater potential for integration into Spanish society at most levels.²¹ Since the first half of the 16th century there were many factors influencing the migration of Dutch citizens to Spain²². In Spain, as in their own country, all the pious works established and administered by the Flemish were under the protection of the apostle St Andrew, martyr of Arayá, patron of the Duchy of Burgundy and the Order of the Golden Fleece. The first hospital in Spain, of which there is accurate information, was founded in Cádiz in 1565, although the most documented was in Madrid, where the merchant aristocrat Charles of Antwerp founded the St Andrés hospital. He was originally from the Duchy of Brabant, had immigrated to Madrid and lived and worked there in the service of ambassadors and diplomats. When he died in 1604, Charles of Antwerp donated all his estate to “*Flanders and its poor people*” with the condition that they gave shelter to Flemish people passing through Madrid, regardless of their social and economic status, and cared for the sick by providing them with food and accommodation. This legacy, of an extremely pious nature, supported the permanent availability at the hospital of a Dutch-speaking priest for the confession of sins. This hospital remained under the protection of a pious institution run by the Dutch themselves, and together with its assigned trusteeship, depended on assets donated by Charles of Antwerp, consisting of several properties and census, this produced a regular income used to finance the worship of the apostle St Andrew and works of benevolence. Nevertheless, the majority of its social work had a strong mutual connotation: to give shelter and hospitality to Flemish nationals in Spain. Philip III was appointed patron of this legacy in 1609 and, in April 1613, the statutes or constitution of the Hospital of San Andrés de los Flamencos were established. King Philip IV established certain prerogatives in favour of the confraternity of St Andrew, which granted a special jurisdiction to this *nation* and authorised them to establish trusteeships, brotherhoods and institutions, of a welfare and benevolence nature, in cities where Catholic Dutch merchants had settled²³.

In spite of its mainly pious character, the hierarchisation of its institution and the individuals who made up the Board of Deputies, both demonstrated the elitist nature of this foundation within the principles of Christian charity. However, it may have possibly touched the philosophies of philanthropy and “*love to thy neighbour*” that prevailed in Europe at a time of continuous waves of religious change²⁴. The settlement of many Dutch citizens in the cities key to the maritime and commercial Castilian expansion, such as Seville and Cádiz, encouraged this type of foundations to extend to the citizens, where this national community reached, great social and economic prestige. The Flemish colony in Seville, studied in detail by E. Stols, was very large and extended its network to the Bay of Cádiz itself and its hinterland: the coastal towns of Puerto de Santa María, Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Jerez de la Frontera²⁵. According to the chronicler Hye Hoys, there was in Seville a Flemish abbot of the Order of

²¹ Fagel R. 1996. *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld. De contacten tussen Spanjaarden en Nederlanders, 1496-1555*, Brussels/Nijmegen: Crespo Solana, 2001. *Entre Cádiz y los Países Bajos*: 134. Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid (BNM): Guicciardini L. *Descripción de (...) todos los Países Bajos, que por otro nombre se llama Alemania la Baja*, Ms. 786.

²² Brulez W, 1960. “De diaspora der atwerpse kooplui op het einde van de 16e eeuw”, *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 15: 279-306.

²³ AHNM, Sección Estado, 641. Petitions of the Flemish *nation* of Seville and Cadiz in which information on statutes and privileges of the community are mentioned

²⁴ Archivo General de la Administración, Alcalá de Henares (AGA), Sección Gobernación, caja 6086: “Informe sobre antecedentes y características del Hospital de San Andrés de los Flamencos”, Madrid, 23 de junio de 1878; Archivo de la Villa de Madrid (AV.), Sección Secretaría, 2-421-23, fol. 19-57, “Constituciones del Real Hospital de San Andrés de los Flamencos”, Madrid, 1802; Hye Hoys I, 1882. *Fondations pieuses et charitables des marchands flamands en Espagne, Précis Historiques*, Brussels.

²⁵ Everaert J. 1973. *De Internationale en koloniale handel der Vlaamse firma's te Cadix*, Bruges; Ghent: RijksUniversiteit Ghent; Crespo Solana A, 2011. “Elementos de transnacionalidad en el comercio flamenco-holandés en Europa y la Monarquía Hispánica” *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, X: 55-76.

St Benito, Jacques Byns, born in Audenarde, who founded the shelter or hospice of San Andrés²⁶. Seville had a large and hierarchical colony formed by many nobles and merchants from the Low Countries, who still retained many of the privileges from Flemish-Spanish citizenship. This community or *nation*, highly hierarchical, included consuls, stewards, deputies and representatives of the rest of the society, well connected with the city's elites and Spanish institutions, especially those of the American monopoly.

The Flemish *nation* in Seville also had a national archive where all laws and credentials were issued in order to assert the special jurisdiction of its citizens, and which was located in the *Casa Hospital del Señor San Andrés* (sic) itself, today the church and convent of Santo Tomás of Cadiz, whose contents have been lost²⁷. At the beginning of the 18th century when the southern Low Countries had become part of the Austrian Empire, the Dutch citizens living in Seville still wanted to be considered subjects of the King of Spain and congregated in the "*confraternidad y capilla de San Andrés*" (the confraternity and chapel of St Andrew); this conferred to them a "*fuero de conservaduría*" (administrative jurisdiction), both to those already settled with a house and family in the city and to those who were still in the process of immigrating from Northern Europe. Although the largest Flemish and Dutch community was, by the 17th century, to be found in Cadiz, the Flemish merchants of Seville still demanded from the "*Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros*", or Board for Foreign Affairs (created by the Spanish Crown in 1714 with the purpose of watching over foreign merchants in Spain), the preservation of some privileges, including their right to live in those two cities, to own houses and trade freely, as well as to join confraternities²⁸.

There is no doubt that there was a direct link between belonging to the confraternity of merchants which was part of the community, under the protection of St Andrew, together with the social and welfare benefits that were part of its chapel and trusteeship in each city, and the right of Catholic Flemish or Dutch migrants arriving in Spain to be considered included in the jurisdiction of the *nation*, as was stated in their petitions presented to the *Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros*²⁹. For both the Flemish merchants and the Spanish authorities the creation of confraternities was connected with the naturalisation privileges that the foreign communities requested. Also the existence of the administrative judge was a guarantee of the preservation of certain matters. In August 1722, Manuel de la Torre, the regent of Seville, stated that maintaining these privileges and the preservation and practice of pious works meant the very survival of the Flemish merchant communities and that he had no doubt that: "*if they were granted the administrative judge as requested, the few that have left the confraternity would return and the fear of the worship of the chapel and the saints diminishing or disappearing would cease in time. There was a wish to attract (with exceptions) other businessmen from the dominions of Flanders to live in the city, with the belief that they would be treated with the same prerogatives as before, and as it is true that the number of businessmen would increase because of the free trade, it is also true that the this type of property would ensure income for the cult of the chapel, hospitality and other pious works*"³⁰.

4. The trusteeship of the Flemish *nation* in Cadiz

The Dutch community of Cadiz was very large during the 17th and 18 centuries. The only existing quantitative data relates to these two centuries but there are no indications that they were any smaller in previous times. This community was essentially made up of tradesmen, craftsmen and sailors, and its elite were a prestigious, rich and influential group in the Cadiz society. There is evidence that key social and charitable activities were taking place since the foundation of this *nation* in the Bay of Cadiz and, by 1598 the merchants were living in their own houses, with the *nation* "*being governed by a steward who was appointed annually to look after their common interests.*"³¹ Although the Flemish chapel of Cadiz and the hospital attached to this confraternity of St Andrew

²⁶ Hoys H. *Op. Cit.*: 32.

²⁷ These certificates, pragmatic decrees and laws date from 1533, 1616 and 1754. Their existence is known from their mention on the letter patent of nobility of the Dutch merchant from Cadiz Theodoro Joseph de Roy, Archivo Histórico Municipal de Cádiz (AHMC), Book 10.601.

²⁸ AHNM, Sección Estado, 623 (2), expediente 532. Manuel de la Torre, regent of the Audiencia de Sevilla in his petition to the Sate Council. August. 18 1722.

²⁹ Ibidem. Cf. Crespo Solana A, Montojo V, "La Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros (1714-1800): Trasfondo socio-político de una historia institucional" *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, LXIX, 232: 363-394.

³⁰ AHNM, Sección Estado, 623 (2), expediente 532. Report of Manuel de la Torre, regent of the Audiencia de Sevilla, August. 18 1722.

³¹ AHNM, Sección Estado, leg. 641. Expediente 716. Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros. November 17 1727. Petition of the steward of the Flemish nation with attached minutes by the del Marqués de la Paz. August 20 1727.

was founded prior to the one in Madrid, it was not until the decade of the 1630's when this institution became enriched by the material contributions from the creation of the trusteeship of the same name. The trusteeship of the Flemish *nation* of Cadiz, as it became known, was founded by a German captain, Pedro de la O, who died in 1636. His son, Pedro de la O the younger and the Flemish captain Ricardo Oguen, both from Cadiz and also members of the Flemish-German merchant group, administered his testament and regulated the corresponding accounts for the construction and administration of what would later become the trusteeship, permanently linked to the Chapel and Hospital of San Andrés³². The liquidation of certain trading deals, allegedly extremely rich, Pedro de la O, granted to the Flemish community of Cadiz, as did his compatriot Charles of Antwerp in Madrid, the power to administer a huge amount of properties, land, taxes and income to the value of up to 100,000 ducats³³. There was also other income attached to the trusteeship by the express wish of his sister, Juliana de la O, who died without heirs and whose capital was bequeathed to what was later known as the dowry fund for poor maidens of the city. Part of the trusteeship was also a number of properties from the estate of Maria de Villalba, wife of the captain³⁴. The executors of the De la O siblings granted the privilege to the "*Antigua y noble nación flamenca y alemana*" (ancient and noble Dutch and German *nation*) of Cadiz and to Ricardo Oguen, as chief administrator, steward and businessman³⁵. Towards the middle of 1640 the institution came under the direct administration of the Flemish and Dutch *nation* of Cadiz, its accounts were kept personally by the steward, who was elected on a yearly basis. This foundation was different in some ways from other religious-benevolent associations which, although created by a lay person, were under the tutelage of a church chaplain. From the time of its foundation it was decided by the legatee that the welfare work and the religious and pious ceremonies as well as the fortune belonging to the trusteeship should be administered by the executor of the founder. In fact, the creation of a trusteeship meant the attachment of private assets and, as they were lay institutions, they were not subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical judge, but to secular justice. Most of the revenue collected by the administrators of this institution for nearly two centuries were made up of benefits arising from property rental and returns from the different taxes imposed on houses and plots of land. The Flemish community authorised the construction of the church and chapel of St Francis on one of these plots in the old town centre, and they became their main patrons and benefactors, together with another two foreign communities of the city (French and Genoese). In return Dutch citizens would have a sacred burial ground if they died in Cadiz. This place also became the official site of the chapel of St Andrew in the city. French and Genoese traders, as well as the Flemish, also placed their burial crypt inside the precinct. Next to it, on "Calle de San Francisco" (San Francisco Street), the *nation's* hospital was built, assigned to the trusteeship. Therefore, the St hospital of Andrew became synonymous with type of brotherhood, with a strong guild character, similar to the one in Madrid, with a double function as shelter and infirmary. It served as residence for many Dutch from the northern and southern Low Countries who went to Cadiz for business reasons.

It also sheltered travellers and pilgrims and offered care to the sick and the underprivileged, however, according to the information shown in the accounts kept by the stewards of the community, the trusteeship was more likely to channel the benefits to the development of mutual assistance practices and meet the needs of other members of the group rather than to charitable activities. This was the essential spirit of solidarity within the confraternity of foreign merchants although, as we have seen, they were not too different from other religious-benevolent brotherhoods that flourished in Spain during the Ancient Regime³⁶. The administration of this trusteeship granted the usufruct of valuable income to the Flemish *nation*. However, it was also clear that religious practices, with their customs so deeply rooted in the stratified society generated vast benefits, not only economic, to the groups. This was to such an extent, that the foreign merchant communities used these benefits to attain a greater recognition of their social integration.

³² Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Cádiz (AHDC): 1789. The testament of Pedro de la O, senior, signed before the scribe Diego de Soto Castellano, March 16 1636.

³³ AHDC: 1029. Writs dated June 1659 against the Flemish nation to give account of the administration of the trusteeship.

³⁴ AHDC: 1029. Writs relating to the 1672-1675 accounts and lawsuit served on their uncle by the younger children of Francisco de Villalba, brother of the wife. It referred to houses on Calle Rosario of Cadiz. According to the writ, Pedro de la O and Maria de Villalba were buried in the "*reja de la capilla de San Telmo de San Francisco*", next to the Flemish crypt.

³⁵ AHDC: 1029. Testament of Captain Pedro de la O. Cádiz, March 16 1636.

³⁶ AHDC: 1029. Cádiz, July 3 1665. "*Notificación de Joan Baptista Cornelissen y Pedro Breviste, mayordomos de la Capilla de San Andrés en el Convento Casa grande de San Francisco sobre la administración de las casas que llaman el Hospital de los Flamencos, conocida por este nombre en la calle de San Francisco*" (sic).

4.1 The foreign nation and the confraternity of merchants

Today it is known that foreign trading *nations* residing in a given city had an internal hierarchy. Over and above the strictly economic differences, these communities had an organisation which was mainly reflected in the annual election of a senior and a junior steward, the latter succeeding the former the following year. This position was held by wealthy businessmen chosen from within the merchant group. In addition, the steward was supported by a small group, maybe belonging to the most influential sector of the community who met regularly at one the members' private houses with the aim to resolve any conflicts arising within the group, such as problems relating to the port used by their ships, their cargo, any legal disagreements and, especially, the creditors meetings when any of the *nation* companies fell into the shame bankruptcy; an issue that all members felt very strongly about. These meetings also discussed, behind closed doors with the steward, matters regarding the assets belonging to Dutch citizens who had died intestate in the city³⁷.

It is very difficult to distinguish, from a conceptual viewpoint, the characteristics of the merchant confraternity from what was, strictly speaking, the merchant *nation* itself. From the earliest days of the foundation of a confraternity, with its own chapel dedicated to St Andrew and internal administration, the group fought for the recognition of some of their privileges and rights. It is also well known that to be part of a *nation* also meant the participation in the merchant confraternity and vice versa. For this reason the steward kept "a type of registration that they – the *nation's* members – abide by, to show who the real members are and to avoid being removed from the desired vassalage they have obtained"³⁸. In theory this was a guarantee for those arriving in Spain from the old 17 Provinces, now divided between a protestant State and the Catholic southern Low Countries. Nevertheless, this was not very clear within the Flemish-Dutch merchant group of Cadiz itself. In fact, representatives of the community managed to defend some of the rights, relating to the wish of their group members to be recognised as Spanish Flemish and not as transient traders, during meetings of foreigners with King Philip V in Madrid. However, they constantly reinforced their intention that the same commercial rights enjoyed by the French, English and Dutch who remained under the consulate of the General States should also be applied to them³⁹.

Whichever the origin of a Dutch citizen arriving in Cadiz, he was able to enjoy the benefits, both material and spiritual, offered by the *nation*, the confraternity and its trusteeship. To tend to strictly religious matters, the *nation* had chaplains who for a long time were also Dutch arriving in Spain, usually with the Company of Jesus. They settled in the convent of St Francis and there were no problems until the order was expelled from the Crown territories. It is known that some Spanish Franciscan monks also played this role; the chaplains were assigned an annual payment from the *nation's* funds to restrict themselves to fulfilling their religious obligations. As already indicated, they did not become involved in the administration of assets bequeathed to the trusteeship, which were the exclusive responsibility of the steward of the *nation*, in spite of the distrust of the clergy. A document, signed in 1773 by request of the then steward Gisberto Vancacele, warns of problems concerning the Flemish, with regard to the appointments of these chaplains, as well as the use of funds belonging to the trusteeship to pay for their income. They also expected these clerics to be from the Low Countries, to assist not only members of the community in Cadiz, but also the many Dutch citizens arriving in ships from the Republic to Cadiz commissioned or employed by Flemish and Dutch companies established in the city, who often stayed living in the area as members of the Dutch *nation*. During the decade of the 1770's, a Jesuit cleric, Pedro Janssensz, was appointed to the role, and later Juan Dammers, both drawing a salary of 5400 ducats per year. The intention of the steward of the *nation* was clearly expressed thus: "...the *nation* always yearns for the welfare and spiritual wellbeing of its members..." In addition, the importance that the chosen cleric should be fluent in the Dutch language was emphasised, as he had to hear confessions and attend ships and hospitals. The possibility that he may have to teach Christianity to heretics and Protestants arriving in Cadiz from Northern Europe was also highlighted as they might feel the need (either material or spiritual) to publicly embrace the Catholic faith. The convent of St Francis was where mass and religious ceremonies took place; this received in return alms for providing clothing for the Flemish chaplains and the clerics of the Order. The money was obtained from an annually paid tax of five ducats⁴⁰.

³⁷ Crespo Solana 2001. *Entre Cádiz*: 177.

³⁸ AHNM, Section Estado: 641, Report (1727).

³⁹ AHNM, Section Estado: 641. Report by the steward of the Flemish nation and letters from the Marqués de la Paz, Madrid, Junta de Dependencias de Etranjeros, November 1727.

⁴⁰ AHDC: 1789. Lawsuit of 1722.

4.2. Benevolence or business?

The trusteeship founded by Pedro de la O granted the Flemish *nation* and its merchant confraternity the direct administration and control of a very high income. In the case of a trusteeship such as this, its assets became a kind of entailed estate, that is, they could be neither sold nor transferred under any circumstances. This included leases and other types of income. The accounts kept by the trusteeship's administration provide a great deal of information relating to the various assets, and their value, which the *nation* owned in a usufructuary capacity. The assets were largely made up of properties generally located in the city, but also in other areas of the province, as well as leases and taxes levied on them. There was also a small amount of valuable furniture, works of art and silver crafts worth some 3000 ducats; most of them were pieces of sacred art brought from Antwerp or Amsterdam. Unfortunately there no surviving complete inventory of the true value of these assets and the only information available have been collated from the accounts kept by Flemish stewards of the benefits generated from rents and interests. There is data on the administration of the trusteeship during the period between 1665 and 1787; the latter being the date when the last inspection visit took place. This visit was partly to value the properties of the trusteeship in order to apply a 3% tax on their rental⁴¹. There is an evolving trend in the ownership of these assets which can be identified from available accounts kept by the stewards, but it is very difficult to assess the timescales, the accounts from 1670 and 1702 being the most detailed though not the most reliable. In addition, the different elements of these assets can also be estimated. The following tables show the level of benefits, but not their value, produced by the assets of the trusteeship during the aforementioned dates.

Table 1: Trusteeship accounts, 1668-1670. (1)

CONCEPT	TOTALS
Funds in the national coffers	108,216.8
Income from properties of Alcalá de los Gazules	45,080
Leases and taxes of the Villa de Alcalá y Paterna de la Rivera	29,363.10
Leases of privately owned buildings	3,168
Rent from buildings owned by the trusteeship	69,890
TOTAL	255,717.18

Table 2: Trusteeship accounts in 1702. (2)

CONCEPT	TOTALS
Rent from houses, offices, shops, warehouses in Cadiz and the Isla of Leon	37,753
Private taxes and leases	3,495
Taxes on buildings owned by the Trusteeship	10,780
TOTAL	52,028

(1 and 2) **Source:** AHDC: 1029. (Totals expressed in silver *reales* and *maravedies de vellón*)

From 1702, the Flemish group had to justify the existence of their trusteeship assigned to the confraternity of merchants, given the mistrust that these institutions raised in the civil justice system and the views of enlightened governments. Other problems also arose as a result of disagreements within the group when the provinces of the southern Low Countries became part of the political structure of the Empire. As happened with so many other institutions of this type, a foreign community benefiting from so many assets created suspicions in the legal system. Between 1702 and 1722 the ecclesiastical tribunal again ordered several visits to the trusteeship and order the issue of a number of writs to ascertain the real use the Flemish *nation* made of assets belonging to the foundation.

The law dictated that the steward should share the yearly benefits exclusively amongst welfare and benevolent work, and reserve in the treasury at least 500 ducats to carry out the necessary repairs to properties belonging to the trusteeship. On 23 April 1725 the public prosecutor of the Court and the bishopric of Cadiz manage to get the administrators around the table to finally render accounts⁴². The son of Pedro de la O, as executor of his father's

⁴¹ García-Baquero González A. 1991. "Burguesía mercantil y propiedad urbana en Cádiz durante el siglo XVIII: el rostro de Jano de la inversión burguesa", *Comercio y burguesía mercantil en el Cádiz de la Carrera de Indias*, Cádiz: Diputación Provincial: 123-134.

⁴² AHDC: 1789. Letter of the Audiencia de Sevilla, March 29 1724 and meeting in Cádiz on April 23 1725.

will, forced the Flemish stewards swear an oath to abide by the regulations of the foundation. The stewards accounted for the latter part of the 17th century and for 1703, 1709, 1714, 1717, 1718, 1719 and 1720 before the bishop of Cadiz but he found them to be fraudulent. The bishopric established certain issues, amongst them the halving of the budgets allocated for the maintenance of charges and repairs to the buildings. There was also an agreement to withdraw capital on alternate years, for alms and for the dowries of maidens. The ecclesiastical tribunal also commanded the accounts kept by the stewards be presented before it. During a meeting of the General Board of the Flemish *nation* during November 1726 at the residence of the then steward Felipe van Bouchout it was agreed to abide by these obligations. Nevertheless, it seems that problems continued to arise during subsequent years because the bishopric made another attack against them during 1745 and 1746⁴³. There are, however, many gaps in the *nation's* accounts.

Table 3: Balance of the accounts of the *Patronato* (1)

YEAR	CREDIT (2)	DEBIT
1665	0	0
1668-1670	255,717.18	12,046
1673		17,702
1690	0	0
1697	10,719	
1698	0	
1700	76,428 (3)	
1702	52,028	46,310
1714	0	0
1717	34,939 and $\frac{3}{4}$ (4)	
1718	35,569 and $\frac{3}{4}$	
1719	22,272 and 25	
1720	0	0
1773	26,000 – 30,000 (5)	

(1): Source A.H.D.C, Legs. 1029 and 1781 (*passim*). Amounts are in silver *reales*.

(2): Totals are for concept of benefits from rental of properties (35,646 silver *reales*) and for interests on private taxes (26,782 silver *reales*)

(3): Mainly made up of benefits obtained from rental of houses and office in the city.

(4): The businessman Cornelio Beyens, steward in 1717, also gave information relating to a tax of 4,624 *reales* to be paid by the *nation*, works to the value of 814 and $\frac{1}{2}$ *reales*, alms and other non-specified expenses for a total value of 26,531 *reales*, to which the salary of the chaplain plus "*other domestic issues of the nation*" (*sic*) were added to give a total of 3,300 *reales*.

(5): Increase in the benefits obtained "*thanks the zeal of the stewards*" (*sic*)

A very large part of the assets of the trusteeship was made up of property. The high degree of urban speculation in the city of Cadiz, at a time of continuous expansion is well documented and this was mainly due to the massive influx of immigrants looking for business opportunities. It can confidently be stated that the majority of the benefits obtained from the income of the trusteeship came from the rental and leasing of houses and offices controlled by the community and their merchant confraternity. In addition to the main houses owned by their late founder, in the streets of San Francisco and Rosario, the trusteeship owned many other houses, plots of land, offices, warehouses and other buildings which were normally rented as stables or stores. A considerable number of rentals were temporary since the houses were occupied by businessmen visiting the city for short periods. According to the Hendrix's accounts, benefits from rentals amounted to 43,200 *reales de vellón* per year in 1700, a significant amount considering that the price of a property during the early 18th century oscillated between 40,000 and half a million *reales*. This was not exceptional, as in most commercial cities, amongst which Cadiz was outstanding, investments in property and their rents were attractive and privileged propositions for the bourgeois class⁴⁴.

⁴³ AHDC: 1789. Visit made by request of Lorenzo Hoys and Pedro Joseph Vienne the younger, in 1746. The last visit took place in 1787 when Bernardo Nuytens was steward, and by order of Francisco del Castillo y Alcázar.

⁴⁴ AHDC: 1029. Accounts of Juan Antonio Hendrix. (Totals shown in *reales de vellón*).

The rents were divided as follows: first the numerous main houses, of one or two storeys, on San Francisco street, where the most distinguished and wealthiest members of the Cadiz business world lived. Half the residents were Flemish and the rental prices varied between 1,980 and 2,520 *reales de vellón*. Professionals from the manufacturing industry and craftsmen such as hatters, watchmakers, wine tasters etc. lived on "Calle de la Carne" and paid between 600 and 1,800 reales per year. Rosario Street was also very popular with businessmen and most of the properties had quarters which they used as stores and sometimes as stables. Prices here varied greatly, between 375 and 1980 *reales de vellón*; these figures relate to 1700. "Calle Nueva" was a similar case but prices here were higher sometimes reaching 4,140 *reales*. Most of the main houses belonging to businessmen also included one or two offices although they could be in separate buildings. Many of these businessmen had a warehouse on "Calle los Flamencos" and in the so-called "Callejón de San Andrés", also paying rent for the latter to the trusteeship of the *nación*. Rents on "Calle Puerto" (Port Street) were usually lower, between 300 and 900 *reales*; this is where many of the occasional or temporary workers in the maritime sector lived, most of them Dutch who arrived in Cadiz in convoys coming from Ostend or Amsterdam.

As well as the houses, the stewards were also responsible for the ownership of burial rights, the crypt of St Andrew inside the Church of San Francisco being one of the most important responsibilities of the trusteeship. They also owned crypts located in other churches where different families were buried, however even the wealthiest Flemish businessmen usually preferred to be buried in the collective crypt of the *nación*⁴⁵. Another of the trusteeship's properties was the *Punta de las Peñas* fish farm located at the castle of *Santa Catalina*, but our source does not indicate its value or the possible benefits it generated. On more than one occasion the *nación* had to spend large amounts of money in improvements and work to the houses which were paid by trusteeship's rents themselves⁴⁶. In addition to the large funds that made up the estate of Pedro de la O the elder, the foundation was enriched by later legacies from other members of the family.

Apart from property, a large part of the assets came from leases and taxes assigned to the trusteeship. Some were included in the legacy from Pedro de la O but others were bought later through various donations or came from leases and taxes agreed by the stewards themselves on behalf of the *nación*. An approximate calculation of the capital administered by the trusteeship of the Flemish confraternity, both in leases and other types of taxes indicates that Flemish merchants received significant amounts of money from the rents of the properties. They could also charge large sums for arrears in the payment of rents, paid as fines of up to 50% of the monies owed⁴⁷. Paradoxically, many pious institutions and convents of the city were in turn charged with this type of tax and then had to pay the interest using alms money.

⁴⁵ Crespo Solana, 2001. *Entre Cádiz*: 201.

⁴⁶ AHDC: 1781. Accounts of Carlos Francisco Van Susteren, 1702: "*Relación jurada y cuenta de Carlos Francisco Van Susteren, mayordomo de la capilla de San Andrés que la nación flamenca tiene en el convento de San Francisco, Casa Grande de esta ciudad y mayordomo en dicho año del patronato y obras pías que fundó (.....) cuyo patronato dejó anexo a dicha mayordomía cuya cuenta es de las rentas de dicho patronato su cobranza y distribución...*".

⁴⁷ AHDC: 1029. Accounts of 1668-1670. Interest payments by Alcalá de los Gazules

Table 4. Taxes, leases and other income in 1665 (1)

PRINCIPAL (2)	CONCEPT/OWNER
22,426	Properties and duties from Alcalá de los Gazules and Paterna de la Rivera.
78	Houses
12,120	<i>Ditto</i> ⁴⁸
5,500	<i>Ditto</i>
4,840	<i>Ditto</i>
1,540	Houses and outbuildings of the town of Rota
1,235	<i>Ditto</i>
8000	Lease in the name of Francisco Villalba Galindo, Tarifa.
3,000	Convent of the sisters of Alcalá de los Gazules.
14,000	Convent of the Marian sisters ,Cádiz
24,300	Juan Infante Olivares, houses of Orito and co.
14,760	Isla de León, farms and offices
13,120	<i>Ditto</i>
726	Francisca Román, widow of Francisco Jiménez.
1,650	José Pérez.
528	Martín de Aguirre
165	House of the secluded sisters of Cadiz
1,480	Alonso de la Sierra
3,120	<i>Ditto</i>
3,630	Juan García de Baeza
136,218	TOTAL

(1): Source: AHDC: 1029. This table shows the tributes of the fund of Pedro de la O and agreed by him, which were later collected by the Flemish *nation*. The majority of these rents were signed in 1620 by the founder, but were later enhanced with other rents agreed by the Flemish themselves as administrators of the trusteeship. The amounts shown were specified in the contract as well as by their owners.

(2): Amounts are shown in silver *reales*.

But, what happened to the monies allocated for alms and pious works that the trusteeship was supposed to carry out? Although the founding document specified that the mission of the steward was to collect and administer the benefits generated by the rents of the trusteeship and distribute them for the purpose of charitable work, it has to be said that alms for the underprivileged and dowries for maidens are not identified anywhere. There is, however, some information regarding small amounts intended for the celebration of religious ceremonies, such as the 660 *reales* donated each year to the supplier of the convent of the barefoot monks of San Diego for congregation expenses, clothing for clerics, masses and processions⁴⁹. In 1699 the Flemish gave, according to the steward, 9,936 *reales* in alms to the poor “for their needs and in memory of the soul of the founder of this trusteeship”⁵⁰. They also offered alms to Franciscan monks preaching in Africa⁵¹.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the Flemish *nation* extended their sphere of activity when they became involved with other institutions, also of a religious-welfare nature, founded by other member of Cadiz society, as was the case in 1719 of the cooperation with the chaplaincy and trusteeship of the Bishop Lorenzo Armengual y de la Mota, in Cádiz, at the Church of San Lorenzo. In this case, as well as others, the Flemish dedicated the rents generated by some houses owned by the community on *Calle San Francisco* (San Francisco Street) “Rosario” and “Callejón de San Andrés” to provide dowries to poor maidens so that they could get married or become nuns. The income that the Flemish *nation* had available for these dowries reached 4,050 *reales de vellón* from an interest rate of 3% per year, gained by some of their houses whose value was 133,334 *reales de vellón*⁵².

⁴⁸ This expression means “Ibidem” in the original document of archive.

⁴⁹ Who in 1700 was Father Francisco de San Buenaventura, legal representative. Ibidem.

⁵⁰ AHDC: 1029. Accounts of Adrián Guillermo de Noye. 1699.

⁵¹ AHDC: 1789. Accounts of Carlos Francisco Van Susteren.

⁵² Archives of the parish church of San Lorenzo, bundle 1, are corresponding to 1722-1728.

5. Conclusion

The trusteeship, administered by the Flemish *nation* in Cadiz, could be defined as an act of piety and charity carried out collectively, but for those who practiced it, it was also a question of survival as a hierarchical group within a stratified society. The commercial bourgeoisie, including foreign merchant groups residing in the country or region where they became the outstanding elite, both socially and financially, had other reasons to participate in this pious work. The institutions, so noticeably stratified and guild-like, that were created by these social groups had a double social purpose. On the one hand, there was the charitable gesture and the practice of a certain ritual or practical Catholicism for the rest of society to see. On the other, strongly linked to the restoration of the group's jurisdiction and privileges within the stratified society, these pious foundations and institutions were the link to a collective or community heritage which, administered by a deputy, executor or representative of the community, ensured the financial benefits generated from their assigned assets. This was something very typical of those groups who were extremely concerned with the survival of their heritage and family history, and created a number of mechanisms to reinforce them. The existence of a trusteeship assigned to a merchant confraternity became a guarantee of material survival of the community but also an entailed estate which, in a way, provided the merchant group with a financial base as well as the social prestige and economic benefits. The implementation of these social practices and the ownership and administration of the funds of the trusteeship gave the *nation*, and its jurisdiction of citizens, an unimpeachable image of honour and social credibility. This was, both at individual and collective levels, a justification for their existence not only in life but also in death.