

Luisa Piccinno, Andrea Zanini

Genoa: Colonizing and Colonized City?
*The Port City as a Pole of Attraction for Foreign Merchants (16th-18th centuries)**

THE PORT CITY BETWEEN COSMOPOLITISM AND INTERCULTURAL TRADE

The presence, either transient or stable, of foreign merchants in Mediterranean port cities and the links they established with local merchants have so far been poorly covered by historiography. As a matter of fact, most studies are confined to the late Middle Ages, and fail to investigate how this phenomenon progressed into modern age, when international scenarios and the role of port cities themselves were affected by the rise of the great national states, the shifting of all main traffic routes to the Atlantic, and the adoption of new mercantilist economic policies. Apart from its chronological limits, research has often been confined to some specific aspects, such as the settlement and location of foreign merchant colonies within an urban context, the establishment of formally recognized *nationes* and the rules governing their activities, as well as the specific business features of individual groups identifiable on a national, ethnic, or religious basis.¹

Only recently have some studies – mostly covering either intercultural and inter-confessional trade, or port cities, considered to be the hubs of transnational trade networks – dealt with the above subject, albeit in a non-systematic way.² As pointed out by Silvia Marzagalli – although specifically referring to the French case and inter-confessional trade –, scholars have rather focused on the patterns of commodity flows, rather than on the relationships among traders. As to modern age, if we look at the latter aspect, the prevalence of business relations and forms of association among individuals belonging to the same religion is quite evident. How-

* Luisa Piccinno wrote the first sections, and Andrea Zanini wrote the second one. The third section was jointly written by both authors.

¹ *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri, XIV-XVIII secolo*, D. CALABI, P. LANARO eds., Rome-Bari 1998; *Comunità forestiere e “nationes” nell’Europa dei secoli XIII-XVI*, ed. G. PETTI BALBI, Naples 2001; *Trade, migration and urban networks in port cities, c. 1640-1940*, A. JARVIS, R. LEE eds., St. John’s 2008 (Research in Maritime History, 38); *Merchant colonies in the early modern period*, V. ZAKHAROV, G. HARLAFTIS, O. KATSIARDI-HERING eds., London 2012 (Perspectives in economic and social history, 19); M. GRENET, *La fabrique communautaire. Les Grecs de Venise, Livourne et Marseille, 1770-1840*, Rome 2016 (Collection de l’École française de Rome, 521).

² M. FUSARO, *Gli uomini d'affari stranieri in Italia*, in *Il rinascimento italiano e l’Europa*, F. FRANCESCHI, R. GOLDTHWAITE, R.C. MÜLLER eds., Vicenza 2007, pp. 369-395; *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900*, F. TRIVELLATO, L. HALEVI, C. ANTUNES eds., Oxford 2014; *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade around Europe, 1300-1600*, W. BLOCKMANS, M. KROM, J. WUBS-MROZEWICZ eds., London 2017.

ever, in port cities, and especially in big trading centres, this was not always the case: relations among merchants of different nationalities and / or religions were not an exception, but rather the rule. It is therefore appropriate to investigate its causes and consequences from an economic, social, political, and cultural point of view.³ For example, with reference to business strategies, the establishment of business relations and corporate ties with members of one's family network undeniably helps reduce risks and, more generally, transaction costs. However, extending one's customer network to include foreign individuals, even those with different religions, is likely to promote turnover growth and is often key to enter new markets.⁴ A well informed choice must be made to take greater risks in exchange of competitive advantages through the harnessing of the so-called "strength of weak ties." As stated by sociologist Mark Granovetter, weak ties are essential for individuals as they are the means, or, more precisely, the opportunity to integrate into a community.⁵ Obviously enough, this process is rather limited and often difficult to quantify, due to the lack of available data. And yet, some evidence of it allows us to shed light on some of its typical features.⁶

More generally, large cities and especially port cities were by nature a pole of attraction not only for merchants and businessmen looking for opportunities to make money, but also for many other classes of workers with specific skills related to shipping, such as captains, sailors, and porters. Several factors used to play a key role in making a port more or less attractive than its direct competitors, namely: geographic location and positioning within the main traffic routes, connections with the hinterland and with the other national ports, operational facilities in terms of berths, storage areas and other services provided to both shipping and trade (i.e. *magistrature* – governing authorities – with specific skills, consulates, interpreters, mediators, etc.), to be seen in a highly dynamic and changing context over time. At the same time, also the origin and number of foreign merchants settling permanently in a port city tended to vary, as well as their positioning in the market and the density of ties with local traders. It is thus necessary to take due account of the

³ On the cosmopolitanism of the main marketplaces, see: S. MARZAGALLI, *Négoce et politique des étrangers en France à l'époque moderne : discours et pratiques de rejet et d'intégration*, in *Les étrangers dans les villes-ports atlantiques (XV^e-XIX^e siècle)*. *Expériences allemandes et françaises* Paris, M. AUGERON, P. EVEN eds., Paris 2010, pp. 45-62; P. POURCHASSE, *Dynamism and integration of the North European merchants communities in French ports in the Eighteenth century*, in *Merchant colonies*, cit., pp. 45-59.

⁴ S. MARZAGALLI, *Commercer au-delà des frontières confessionnelles dans la France de l'époque moderne*, in *L'économie des dévotions. Commerce, pratiques et objets de piété à l'époque moderne*, ed. A. BURKARDT, Rennes 2016, pp. 348-349.

⁵ Indeed, according to Granovetter, while weak ties are "indispensable to individuals" and to their integration into communities, strong ties, breeding local cohesion, lead to overall fragmentation." (M. GRANOVETTER, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, in "American Journal of Sociology", 78, 1973, n. 6, pp. 1360-1380, 1378).

⁶ As Andrea Caracausi and Christof Jeggle pointed out, a quantitative analysis of trade flows and commercial networks makes sense only if the volume of available data has statistical relevance. Anyway, focusing on the concepts of "social network" and "social interaction" it is possible to shed light on the multiple ties among the main players of merchant networks. (A. CARACAUSI, C. JEGGLE, *Introduction*, in *Commercial Networks and European Cities, 1400-1800*, A. CARACAUSI, C. JEGGLE eds., London-New York 2014, pp. 1-5).

economic, political, and social motivations, which might have either positively or negatively affected these processes.

As to the above mentioned factors, it is first of all necessary to understand which ones were actually driving these individuals to permanently settle in a foreign city, rather than opting for a more occasional presence. Further, it must be verified whether there were any links or some sort of reciprocity with likely migration flows in the opposite direction. If so, what were their time patterns, or whether, as stated by Maria Fusaro, the balances were tipped, whereby “a strong Italian presence abroad in the Middle Ages was offset by the presence of foreigners in Italy, starting from the second half of the 16th century.”⁷ In particular, it seems appropriate to assess how much this decision was determined by the international reputation of the port city in question, in terms of trade and economic dynamism, as well as of opportunities to do business on site with good profit margins and limited risks. Further, the extent to which such reputation actually depended on the merchant network size, with the port in question as its focal point, should also be examined. All these elements were in turn closely linked to mercantilist policies implemented by the various governments. Through several types of actions – i.e. by granting privileges and tax exemptions, ensuring particular forms of legal protection in case of disputes, etc. – governments were likely to either foster or hinder migration. Policies of great openness towards foreign merchants were generally aimed at exploiting what Henry Méchoulan has defined, with reference to the Amsterdam case, as “les bénéfiques de la tolérance”, namely being able to increase trade by promoting the immigration of individuals with capitals and skills deemed instrumental to the objective to be pursued.⁸ The effectiveness of these policies, however, was in turn influenced by international scenario evolutions and by the economic policies implemented by nearby and / or competing port cities, which would often play a decisive role in driving the movements and decisions by foreign merchants. Finally, an analysis is required on the social structure and stratification of the merchant class characterizing the port city of immigration. This is essential to understand how many and which were the “spaces” taken up by local businessmen and those that could be allocated to foreign merchants, or filled by the latter group due to some competitive advantage. It is also possible to understand the degree of openness towards foreigners, in particular by looking at the number of companies or other business arrangements jointly set up between local and foreign traders.

In a port city, almost all trade interactions and operators were centred on the port. When a free trade area was granted, this trend was even more marked. There were, as known, several reasons why a state would decide to adopt this provision, including but not limited to demographic policies aimed to increase the city population, purely commercial purposes, and finally to increasing trade volumes by im-

⁷ Authors' translation of M. FUSARO, *Gli uomini d'affari stranieri in Italia*, cit., p. 370.

⁸ H. MECHOULAN, *Amsterdam, XVII^e siècle. Marchands et philosophes. Les bénéfiques de la tolérance*, Paris 1993; R. DI TUCCI, *Genova e gli stranieri. Secoli XII-XVIII*, in “Rivista Italiana di Diritto Internazionale Privato e Processuale”, 2, 1932, pp. 501-518, 504.

plementing a duty-free regime up until the goods left the bonded warehouses to be sold again.⁹

While a duty-free zone did not always lead to the desired economic results, from a social point of view it undeniably contributed to more cosmopolitan port cities.¹⁰ For this reason, the analysis on the dynamics of a free port and the resulting presence of foreign merchants is deemed instrumental not only to the objectives of this work, but also for comparison purposes between geographically neighbouring ports which, for a certain period of time, introduced a duty-free-trade zone, even if only on paper.

GENOA AND THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN MERCHANTS

The presence of foreign businessmen in Genoa and, more generally, the structure of the merchant class, have so far been poorly investigated. Apart from some specific studies on the presence of Flemish, German, and English merchants,¹¹ plus some literature on the Jewish community, a total lack of historiographic investigations is even more evident.¹² Historians have for long focused on the entrepreneurial skills of Genoese merchants on the international stage, who from ‘colonizers’ became bankers. Other studies concerned the city and its port, but they were main-

⁹ The term free port is generally used when a port, or a part of it, is out of the customs border. More precisely, according to Ugo Marchese, if the exemption from customs duties is limited only to a specific area of the port, we should use the term duty free zone. (U. MARCHESE, *Il porto di Genova dal 1815 al 1891*, in *Archivio Economico dell’Unificazione Italiana*, s. II, IX, Turin 1959, p. 7).

¹⁰ R. ESCALLIER, *Le cosmopolitisme méditerranéen. Réflexions et interrogations*, in “Cahiers de la Méditerranée”, 67, 2003, pp. 1-13. For a deep analysis and comparison between the cases of Genoa, Leghorn and Marseilles, see: T.A. KIRK, *Genoa and the Sea. Policy and power in an early modern maritime Republic 1559-1684*, Baltimore-London 2005, pp. 151-185; A. IODICE, *Il porto franco, diffusione di un modello economico: politiche, attori, ideologie, mito. Due realtà a confronto: Genova e Marsiglia (1590-1817)*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Naples “Federico II” and University of Aix-Marseilles 2017; IDEM, *L’istituzione del porto franco in un Mediterraneo senza frontiere*, in “Politics. Rivista di Studi Politici”, 5, 2016, n. 1, pp. 19-33.

¹¹ M.C. LAMBERTI, *Mercanti tedeschi a Genova nel XVII secolo: l’attività della compagnia Raynolt negli anni 1619-20*, in “Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria”, n.s. 12, 1972, n. 1, pp. 71-121; J. ZUNCKEL, *Esperienze e strategie commerciali di mercanti tedeschi fra Milano e Genova nell’epoca della controriforma*, in *Commerce, voyage et expérience religieuse. XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles*, A. BURKARDT, G. BERTRAND, Y. KRUMENACKER eds., Rennes 2007, pp. 231-255; M.C. ENGELS, *Merchants interlopers seamen and corsairs. The Flemish community in Livorno and Genoa*, Hilversum 1997; E. GRENDI, *Gli inglesi a Genova (secoli XVII-XVIII)*, in “Quaderni storici”, 39, 2004, n. 1, pp. 241-278; G. PAGANO DE DIVITIIS, *English merchants in seventeenth-century Italy*, Cambridge 1997; G. GALLIANO, *Génova, encrucijada de gentes musulmanas durante los siglos XV-XVII*, in “Revista de estudios colombinos”, 6, 2010, pp. 25-29.

¹² C. BRIZZOLARI, *Gli ebrei nella storia di Genova*, Genova 1971; R. URBANI, *La formazione della “nazione” ebrea a Genova (secc. XVII-XVIII)*, in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di studi storici Rapporti Genova-Mediterraneo-Atlantico nell’età moderna*, ed. R. BELVEDERI, Genoa 1983, pp. 291-317; R. URBANI, M. FIGARI, *Considerazioni sull’insediamento ebraico genovese (1600-1750)*, in “Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria”, n.s. 29, 1989, n. 1, pp. 305-337; *The Jews in Genoa*, R. URBANI, G.N. ZAZZU eds., 2, 1682-1799, Leiden-Boston-Köln 1999; A. ZAPPÀ, “A riguardo dell’utile che alli pubblici introiti apportano gli Ebrei.” *Considerazioni socio-economiche sulla nazione ebrea a Genova tra Sei e Settecento*, in “RiMe. Rivista dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Europa Mediterranea”, 17, 2016, n. 2, pp. 75-112.

ly focused on the development of facilities – i.e. urban development, construction and expansion of port infrastructures such as docks, piers, warehouses –, and trade.

As Michel Balard pointed out with reference to the late Middle Ages and to the relations between Genoa and overseas cities, “Genoa, a colonizer in the East, is colonized by the Orientals.”¹³ The aim of this work is to verify whether and to what extent this concept is applicable also to the modern age and whether it involved a wider geographic area than the one examined by this French historian. We will therefore outline the features of the presence of foreign merchants in Genoa between the 16th and 18th centuries as a phenomenon complementary to the better known “diaspora” of Genoese businessmen. In this regard, it should be pointed out that expressions like “merchant settlements” and “communities of merchants” will be used indifferently, although specific historiography has shown that these settlement models were substantially different depending on the context.¹⁴ There are many elements to be considered. Currently available sources, although insufficient to acquire a full picture, do offer some useful information in order to shed light on some key features, as well as to define guidelines for further research in this field. It should be pointed out that, although in the period in question the citizens of other Italian states were obviously considered to be foreigners, in order to verify that Genoa was actually “colonized” by foreigners, it seemed appropriate to rather focus on those who came from other European regions.

One of the main problems when carrying out a study on foreign businessmen operating in Genoa in the modern age is to determine their numbers, and then assess their economic power. This is partly related to the policies implemented by the Republic of Genoa regarding foreigners: apart from some short-term measures to overcome critical periods – such as after the plague in 1656-57 – these policies were never characterized by marked openness, but rather by a general attitude of tolerance, sometimes beefed up with commercial privileges. No particularly favourable legal status was ever granted to foreigners under Genoese laws, which would never contain any reciprocity clauses concerning the treatment granted to foreign communities in Genoa and the one reserved to Genoese colonies in many foreign countries. As for checks on foreigners entering the city, the main distinction, which remained substantially unchanged over time, was between foreign residents and those simply transiting or on shorter stays in the city. No systematic census of foreigners was ever carried out.¹⁵

A first attempt to somehow tackle the whole issue, also aimed at strengthening public order and banning vagabonds and beggars from the city, dates back to 1628, when the *Magistrato della Consegnà* was established. The tasks of this public authority included but were not limited to identifying all foreigners arriving in Genoa and issuing them a so-called *bolletta*, a temporary stay permit, with longer or shorter va-

¹³ Authors’ translation of M. BALARD, *Le minoranze orientali a Genova (secoli XIII-XV)*, in *La storia dei Genovesi*, III, Genoa 1983, p. 72.

¹⁴ V. ZAKHAROV, G. HARLAFTIS, O. KATSIARDI-HERING, *Introduction*, in *Merchant colonies*, cit., pp. 1-10; O. KATSIARDI-HERING, *Greek merchant colonies in central and south-eastern Europe in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries*, in *Merchant colonies*, cit., pp. 127-139.

¹⁵ R. DI TUCCI, *Genova e gli stranieri*, cit., p. 504.

lidity depending on the reasons for staying in the city.¹⁶ Under the applicable regulations, foreigners were grouped into four different types, each of them duly recorded in a different log book: the first one referred to foreigners on a short visit, staying in Genoa only a few days, while waiting to continue their journey by sea or by land. This class of visitors was most probably the biggest one, especially in some periods of the year. For example, at the beginning of the 18th century, an officer checking travellers entering through one of the city gates, Porta di San Tommaso, in the western walls, was surprised by the large number of foreigners entering the city every day.¹⁷ The second group referred to foreigners who had to stay in the city for longer periods in order to finalise an agreement or for work. In this case, the *bolletta* could have a validity of up to twelve months, after which period, if one wanted to extend their stay, a proper extension had to be applied for. The third class concerned Jews, who were all listed in a separate register, regardless of the length of their stay. The fourth class was for some particular categories of craftsmen, who would typically come from abroad: i.e. stonemasons, marble workers, stucco workers.¹⁸

Then there were foreign craftsmen and merchants who would actually move to live in Genoa. In this regard, under the applicable Statutes of the Republic, after three years of residence, it was possible to acquire Genoese citizenship “by habitation.” This was especially relevant from a legal point of view, since it granted foreigners the so-called *privilegio del foro*, namely the possibility to appeal to the court for commercial disputes that was reserved only to citizens.¹⁹ This privilege did not actually imply full recognition of political citizenship, since government jobs were reserved for the noble class. At the same time, becoming a citizen of Genoa could nullify tax benefits granted to certain groups of foreigners.²⁰ In other words, maintaining one’s status of foreigner was no obstacle to doing business and financial activities. Conversely, acquiring the Genoese citizenship would often bring too few advantages when considering the tax burdens associated with it. In this, Genoa was

¹⁶ R. DI TUCCI, *Genova e gli stranieri*, cit., p. 517; E. GRENDI, *Gli inglesi a Genova*, cit., p. 242.

¹⁷ ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI GENOVA (ASGE), *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1047, 7th November 1702. On this point there is only scattered information. For example, from 14th to 23rd March 1661, 87 French citizens entered in Genoa, but most of them were pilgrims on their way to or from Rome (ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1045, 23 March 1661). More than one century later, a Genoese magazine reported that in June 1788 there were several foreigners coming from different countries, especially from Hungary, who reached the city while completing the Grand Tour of Italy (“Avvisi”, n. 24, 14th June 1788, p. 185). During 1799, 646 foreigners arrived in Genoa, among them 281 from other Italian regional states, 206 from France, 43 from Switzerland, 28 from Spain, 26 from Austria (R. DI TUCCI, *Genova e gli stranieri*, cit., p. 518).

¹⁸ ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1045, “Regolamento circa li forestieri che alloggianno nella presente città tenuto dal Serenissimo Magistrato della Consegna.”

¹⁹ *Degli Statuti Civili della Serenissima Repubblica di Genova*, Genoa 1622, p. 92.

²⁰ There is very limited literature about Genoese policies on citizenship. For an overview, see V. PIERGIOVANNI, *Alcuni consigli legali in tema di forestieri a Genova nel Medioevo*, in IDEM, *Norme, scienza e pratica giuridica tra Genova e l'Occidente medievale e moderno*, Genoa 2012, pp. 251-262; G. CASARINO, *Tra “estraneità” e cittadinanza: mercato del lavoro e migrazioni a Genova (sec. XV-XVI)*, in “*Revista d'Historia Medieval*”, 10, 1999, pp. 85-121; E. GRENDI, *Gli inglesi a Genova*, cit., p. 242.

similar to other cities characterized by a mature economy, namely, in order to grow, it did not need to attract foreign operators on a stable basis.²¹

After the above introduction, it should be pointed out that after the loss of the archive held by *Magistrato della Consegna*, it is impossible to retrace the flows and quantify the number of foreigners in the city. Demographic sources do not help fill this gap. The government census ordered in 1680-81, for example, was not only incomplete (i.e. all data for one of the neighbourhoods are totally missing), but it was also biased by census takers carrying out their tasks in quite different ways: i.e., for some areas, a list of names was available indicating the nationality and the occupation; for others, instead, only the total number of foreigners or the number of households was reported.²² The situation is not very different for ecclesiastical records, such as the so called ‘states of the souls.’ Criteria for filling them were mostly affected by the personal sensitivity and the meticulousness of parish priests, and the information there contained mostly refers to non-Catholics. For example, in 1700, 32 Huguenots and two Flemish merchants, defined as “heretics”, were living within the city walls; in 1707, instead, the number of Protestants (including Huguenots) was 42, plus 28 Jews.²³ According to the information contained in a census seventy years later, there were in total 215 foreigners, including Jews, Protestants and heretics, out of a total population of 79,343 inhabitants.²⁴

By combining different sources with the data reported in some studies, it is possible to identify the most numerous national groups: the Germans and the Swiss were for sure among them, although in most cases their presence in the city was not linked to trade.²⁵ A significant number of both groups of nationals were serving in Genoa’s army; further, the Swiss were traditionally working also as dockers in the port.²⁶

²¹ M. FUSARO, *Gli uomini d'affari stranieri*, cit., pp. 375-379.

²² ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1092.

²³ ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1047 and 1049. Data are probably underestimated, as many priests did not register people belonging to other confessions.

²⁴ ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1053.

²⁵ E. GRENDI, *I Nordici e il traffico del porto di Genova, 1590-1666*, in “Rivista Storica Italiana”, 83, 1971, n. 1, pp. 23-71; M.E. GAZZOLA, *Rapporti tra la Repubblica di Genova e le città svizzere nel XVII secolo. Ricerche d'archivio*, in *Genova, la Liguria e l'Oltremare tra Medioevo ed Età moderna. Studi e ricerche d'Archivio*, a c. di R. BELVEDERI, Genoa 1981, pp. 361-409; P. FONTANA, “Non si può né devesi haver fede in chi ha a Dio negato.” *La presenza protestante a Genova e in Liguria tra il XVI e il XIX secolo*, paper presented at the conference *La Riforma e la nascita della società moderna*, Genoa, 20-21 October 2017 (in press). Among German merchants operating in Genoa there were the Raynolds (M.C. LAMBERTI, *Mercanti tedeschi a Genova*, cit.); the most important merchants from Switzerland were the De La Rües (C. AUBERT, *Les De La Rüe, marchands, magistrats et banquiers. Genève, Gênes, 1556-1905*, Lausanne 1984).

²⁶ Workers from Switzerland were employed as dockers in the “Caravana della Grassia” (the guild holding the monopoly on the transport of cured meat) and in the “Caravana dei facchini da Olio” (the guild holding the monopoly on the transport of olive oil). Membership to these guilds (about 30 men on the whole) was restricted to people coming from Domodossola, Mendrisio, Lugano and other Swiss valleys (L. PICCINNO, *Le Compagnie di facchini stranieri operanti nel porto di Genova (secoli XV-XVIII)*, in *Comunità forestiere e “nationes” nell'Europa dei secoli XIII-XVI*, ed. G. PETTI BALBI, Naples 2002, pp. 325-338). On the Swiss community, see L. CODIGNOLA, M.E. TONIZZI, *The Swiss community in Genoa*

The French were one of the most numerous groups of foreigners. 148 individuals were recorded in 1659, and three years later there were about a hundred of them.²⁷ Conversely, in 1699, according to the report of the local consul, the group of “notable” subjects of His Very Christian Majesty, the King of France, living in Genoa was made up of 52 individuals, a figure that practically did not change until the middle of the following century.²⁸ In these latter documents, only eminent fellow citizens were reported, in full disregard for any social stratification of foreign colonies, which, far from being homogeneous, were highly composite and socially articulated groups. Alongside the most prominent businessmen engaged in international trade and / or financial operations, and accounting for the foreign community elite from an economic and social standpoint, there were craftsmen, retailers and street vendors, servants and other workers who, despite their stable jobs in Genoa, would undoubtedly play a secondary role.²⁹

The city also attracted merchants from other Italian states, although in this case the information to date is quite incomplete. In 1678, for example, there were 81 individuals from Messina, 79 of them were Christians and 2 slaves. From the list available, it is evident that most of them were in Genoa for “negotij di mercantie” (on business).³⁰

As was the case in other marketplaces, the most numerous groups succeeded in establishing their own organizational structure and having their own consul accredited with the Genoese government, who would protect their economic interests and had jurisdictional powers to settle internal disputes. Until 1616, all merchants from northern Europe had only one common consul; from that year on, the Dutch began to appoint their own consul. They were followed some time later by the English. In the same period, the French also appointed their own consul. All this is evidence of the various national communities getting progressively settled in Genoa and of their increased economic weight.³¹

As far as Jews are concerned, the Genoese community, unlike those in other port cities, was made up of a small, stable core, backed up by a more or less numerous and fluctuating group of other Jews, depending on the period. In terms of social stratification, middle class members were prevailing, who were only partially

from the Old Regime to the late nineteenth century, in “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, 13, 2008, 2, pp. 152-170.

²⁷ ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1045, 6th October 1659 and 17th May 1662. Among the 148 names listed in 1659 there was only one woman, while in 1662 there were only men. This suggests that these lists might have included only the breadwinners.

²⁸ R. BOUDARD, *Gênes et la France dans la deuxième moitié du XVIII^e siècle, 1748-1797*, Paris-La Haye 1962, pp. 219, 233.

²⁹ R. BOUDARD, *Gênes et la France*, cit., pp. 233-234, 238-239.

³⁰ ASGE, *Senato, Sala Bartolomeo Senarega*, 1045, 24th October 1678.

³¹ E. GRENDI, *Gli inglesi a Genova*, cit., pp. 264-272. On the French case, see: G. FERRETTI, *La ricerca di un'alleanza: l'istituzione del consolato francese a Genova*, in *Genova e Francia al crocevia dell'Europa (1624-1642)*, Atti del Seminario Internazionale di Studi, Genova 25-27 maggio 1989, ed. M.G. BOTTARO PALUMBO, Genoa 1989, pp. 101-147; A. MÉZIN, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières (1715-1792)*, Paris 1997, pp. 692-693.

involved in international trade³². As a matter of fact, the mercantilistic policies implemented by the Republic of Genoa would only occasionally aim to attract Jews to promote port activities and trade, as was commonly done in other Mediterranean cities.³³

Still with reference to religious minorities, Huguenots were another important group, who until 1685, the year when the edict of Nantes was revoked, were usually included among the French. However, after this date they tended to be identified as a separate group, sometimes together with English merchants.³⁴ Based on currently available information, the group of Protestant merchants, in particular Huguenots and Calvinists, was at the helm of important trading companies working on an international level and which, quite often, would maintain operations in Genoa for several decades.³⁵

From the above, although brief, outline, the cosmopolitan nature of the city is quite evident. However, the commercial vocation of the various foreign colonies, the balance of power between the different groups, their interactions with the Genoese merchant class and the effects on the city economy are still unclear. Thus, the free port provides a vantage point of view to shed light on these issues. Since its establishment, it became a pole of attraction for domestic and foreign economic operators.

MERCHANTS AND THE FREE PORT

The Free Port of Genoa dates back to 1590, when the Government of the Republic and Casa di San Giorgio agreed to grant free port rights for just one year to all the ships calling at Ligurian ports and carrying grains for at least two thirds of their cargo, in order to deal with a severe food scarcity affecting the whole Mediterranean area. Such provision was renewed a year later, although with a substantial change: it was no longer granted to all ports in the domain, but reserved only to the port of Genoa, the capital city. In 1609, this right was extended to almost all goods handled there, except for those coming from the other ports in the Republic. In

³² *The Jews in Genoa*, cit.; A. ZAPPÀ, “À riguardo dell’utile che alli pubblici introiti apportano gli Ebrei?”, cit., pp. 75-112. See also G. CALAFAT, *L’indice de la franchise: politique économique, concurrence des port francs et condition des Huijs en Méditerranée à l’époque moderne*, in “Revue Historique”, 686, 2018, n. 2, pp. 275-320.

³³ This concept, developed by Dubin with regard to Trieste and to the privileges allowed by the Habsburgs to Jewish merchants after the declaration of the free port, can be referred also to other port cities, such as Leghorn and Marseilles (L.C. DUBIN, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*, Stanford 1999).

³⁴ E. GRENDI, *Gli inglesi a Genova*, cit., pp. 248-249.

³⁵ On the most important foreign trading companies, see H.-T. NIEPHAUS, *Genuas Seehandel von 1746-1848. Die Entwicklung der Handelsbeziehungen zur Iberischen Halbinsel, zu West- und Nordeuropa sowie den Überseegebieten*, Köln-Wien 1975, pp. 305-338 (Forschungen zur internationalen sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 8).

1623, a “free, general and very general Free Port” was established which, following several renewals, remained in force until the fall of the aristocratic Republic.³⁶

The Free Port of Genoa was first established to meet contingent needs. However, over more than two centuries of existence it was also a significant economic policy tool specially designed to turn the port into a trading centre for the redistribution of goods throughout the Mediterranean. The rules governing its activities were rather confused, and mostly driven by the need to respond to the policies implemented by other competing ports, i.e. Nice, Marseilles, and especially Leghorn, as well as by the economic crises affecting traffics in the port of Genoa, rather than aimed at attracting a stable presence of merchants to the city. Indeed, whilst full tolerance was shown for foreigners of all religions in the 1590 edict announcing the entry into force of a free trade area for grains, with the establishment of the general free port in 1609 such opening disappeared, leaving room exclusively to the clauses relating to customs exemptions. In 1613, some Genoese merchants even asked the Dutch government to have all Dutch ports publish the conditions granted by the Free Port of Genoa in the hope of drawing the interest of northern merchants. A significant number of them, however, opted for Leghorn as their operational base, where they were granted more favourable tax facilities, thus using the Genoa port only for transit trade.³⁷

With the renewal of the free trade zone in 1654 for another ten years, free port policies changed again becoming more similar to those applied in Leghorn, which were clearly aimed at increasing its population. Indeed, the new regulations, which would be maintained more or less unchanged for some time later, contained a general invitation to every person of any nation, status, class, and condition to settle in Genoa for as long as they wanted, thus shelving the above mentioned provisions on the stay of foreigners. It further stated that even infidels and Jews could be admitted, notwithstanding any other specific rules issued by the Government of the Republic in this regard.³⁸ In particular, the provisions concerning the Jewish community do not seem to follow well-defined guidelines, unlike other ports such as Leghorn, where Jews could buy properties and be free to move without being forced to wear any distinctive signs.³⁹ Once again, however, there was no organic design with incentives and tax breaks for those who moved permanently to Genoa, unlike for example in Marseilles and Leghorn. Indeed, in the first case, policies launched by Colbert, and partly opposed by Marseilles merchants, aimed to foster the establishment in the city of a large group of foreign merchants including Ital-

³⁶ Temporary suspended in 1799, it was reopened in 1805 under Napoleonic rule, and then definitively abolished in 1872. See: A. BRUSA, *Dal Porto Franco della Repubblica genovese al franco dei giorni nostri*, in *Il Porto di Genova nella mostra di Palazzo San Giorgio*, Milan 1953, pp. 134-135; G. GIACCHERO, *Origini e sviluppo del Porto franco genovese. 11 agosto 1590-9 ottobre 1778*, Genoa 1972, pp. 51-59, 119; L. PICCINNO, *Economia marittima e operatività portuale. Genova, sec. XVII-XIX*, Genoa 2000, pp. 222-225; T.A. KIRK, *Genoa and the Sea*, cit., pp. 151-157.

³⁷ A. IODICE, *Il porto franco, diffusione di un modello economico*, cit., pp. 164-165.

³⁸ G. GIACCHERO, *Origini e sviluppo del Porto franco genovese*, cit., pp. 131, 150.

³⁹ C.S. TAZZARA, *The Masterpiece of the Medici: commerce, politics and the making of the free port of Leghorn (1574-1790)*, Stanford 2011, p. 80.

ians, Greeks, Swiss, Dutch, and above all Armenians.⁴⁰ In the second case, conversely, the measures launched by the Medicis and designed to populate Leghorn through the granting of exemptions and privileges to foreigners settling in the city led to an exceptional population increase: from 530 inhabitants in 1590 to around 28,000 in 1738.⁴¹

The Free Port of Genoa drew a relatively limited number of foreign trading companies compared to the other above mentioned ports – as will be explained below. However, the effects of this provision on the city fabric and on port operations were certainly significant. The extension of duty free rights to all product classes in 1609 changed the needs for and specifications of storage spaces, where “general cargo” – which would also include packed products with a high unit cost – unloaded in the Genoa port could be stored, and making it necessary to look for new storage areas even outside the port. Thanks to a constant flow of investments by Casa di San Giorgio (an institution in charge of free zone management), the warehouses designed for this purpose went from 1,700 square meters in 1609 to about 6,000 in 1675. In addition, following a new series of works that began in the 1720s, ten new quarters were built over an area of 13,000 square meters previously used for public ovens.⁴² Equally significant were the consequences of these measures on cargo handling operations in this area, which, similarly to what was done by the customs offices in Pisa, Milan and Venice, were exclusively allocated to foreign workers. The approximately 60 dockers of Compagnia dei Caravana, all from Bergamo, actually were the only ones authorized to carry goods within the free zone. They were often at odds with the local workers owing to the privileges granted to them.⁴³

By examining archival sources providing a detailed mapping of the tenants of these warehouses from 1670 to the 1740s, information could be collected on the number and origins of foreign merchants working in Genoa and their more or less continuous presence over time. This time span coincides with a period of port traffic growth, beginning after the 1656-57 plague, picking up in the seventies, and stopping in 1746, following the war of the Austrian succession. Several factors had contributed to this long positive economic cycle, such as a renewed interest of the Republic for shipping, also driven by the so-called ‘pronavalist party’, which was

⁴⁰ J.T. TAKEDA, *Levantes and Marseille: the politics of naturalization and neutralization in Early Modern France, 1660-1720*, in “Seventeenth Century French Studies”, 302, 2008, n. 2, pp. 170-181; A. IODICE, *Il porto franco, diffusione di un modello economico*, cit., pp. 166-167.

⁴¹ During the 1640s taxes on foreigners in Leghorn were almost half those charged in Genoa (L. FRATTARELLI, *Livorno 1676: la città e il Porto Franco*, in F. ANGIOLINI, V. BECAGLI, M. VERGA eds., *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, Firenze 1993, p. 890). See also G. CALAFAT, *Être étranger dans un port franc. Droits, privilèges et accès au travail à Livourne (1590-1715)*, in “Cahiers de la Méditerranée”, n. 84, 2012, pp. 103-122; C. TAZZARA, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World*, Oxford 2017.

⁴² L. PICCINNO, *Città, porto, economia locale. I progetti di ampliamento del Porto Franco di Genova tra Sei e Settecento*, in *Ricchezza del mare, ricchezza dal mare, secc. XIII-XVIII*, ed. S. CAVACIOCCHI, Florence 2006, pp. 773-794.

⁴³ On the *Caravana* dockers and their longlasting activity in the free port of Genoa, see L. PICCINNO, *Economia marittima e operatività portuale*, cit., pp. 229-240.

fostering a domestic navy re-launching and, in particular, the aforementioned works to increase storage capacity in the free port area.⁴⁴

Tab. 1. **Warehouses in the Free Port of Genoa rented to local and foreign merchants (1670-1744)**

| Year | No. of available warehouses | Rented to Genoese merchants | Rented to foreign merchants | | % of warehouses rented to foreigners |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | Total | In partnership with Genoese merchants | |
| 1670 | 89 | 72 | 17 | – | 19.1 |
| 1676 | 104 | 86 | 18 | – | 17.3 |
| 1693 | 121 | 96 | 25 | 4 | 20.7 |
| 1703 | 149 | 123 | 26 | 4 | 17.4 |
| 1739 | 202 | 133 | 69 | 3 | 34.2 |
| 1744 | 239 | 175 | 64 | 3 | 26.8 |

Source: ASGE, *Banco di San Giorgio*, 183,00234-1, 183,00235, 3,00201, 3, 00202.

As can be seen from Tables 1 and 2, the increase in the number of available warehouses corresponded to an increase in the number of rents, although with different trends depending on whether the tenants were Genoese or foreigners. With reference to the latter group, the most significant growth was recorded between 1703 and 1739, when, following an increase in available warehouses, foreign traders took hold of another 43 storage spaces (+ 165.4%), compared to Genoese merchants whose number of warehouses remained substantially unchanged. As a result of this trend, in 1739 foreign traders held over a third of all warehouses. In the following period, when other 37 warehouses were opened, the number of warehouses rented by Genoese traders grew more significantly, increasing from 133 to 175 (+ 31.6%). This was also matched by a slight decrease in the number of warehouses rented by foreign merchants, which went down to 26.8%.

⁴⁴ G. FELLONI, *Organizzazione portuale, navigazione e traffici a Genova: un sondaggio tra le fonti per l'età moderna*, in *Studi in memoria di Giorgio Costamagna*, Genoa 2003, I, pp. 337-364; T.A. KIRK, *Genoa and the Sea*, cit. On the economic context of Genoa after 1746, see: F. VENTURI, *Genova a metà del Settecento*, in "Rivista Storia Italiana", 79, 1967, n. 3, pp. 732-795, 784-787; G. FELLONI, *Genova e la contribuzione di guerra all'Austria nel 1746: dall'emergenza finanziaria alle riforme di struttura*, in IDEM, *Scritti di Storia economica*, Genoa 1998, 1, pp. 297-306. On the *partito navalista*, see L. PICCINNO, *La riflessione economica in Liguria tra scienza e pratica (secoli XVI-XIX)*, in "Storia economica", 4, 2001, n. 2, pp. 279-327, 292-293.

Tab. 2. **Number of foreign merchants holding warehouses in the Genoese Free Port (1670-1744)**

| Year | Foreign merchants | | | Total |
|------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| | Holding one warehouse | Holding two warehouses | Holding three or more warehouses | |
| 1670 | 11 | 3 | – | 14 |
| 1676 | 12 | 3 | – | 15 |
| 1693 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 16 |
| 1703 | 17 | 3 | 1 | 21 |
| 1739 | 26 | 15 | 4 | 45 |
| 1744 | 30 | 11 | 3 | 44 |

Source: ASGE, *Banco di San Giorgio*, 183,00234-1, 183,00235, 3,00201, 3, 00202.

Tab. 3. **Main foreign merchants holding warehouses in the Genoese Free Port and their fortunes (1739)**

| Merchants | Nationality | Wealth (in Genoese liras) | No. of warehouses rented |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| David and Guglielmo André | Huguenots | 200,000 | 2 |
| Gio Sandelin | Huguenot | 80,000 | 2 |
| Paolo Maystre | Huguenot | 52,000 | 2 |
| Gio Batta David | French | 50,000 | 2 |
| Gio Biltres | English | 50,000 | 1 |
| Guglielmo Boissier, Bourguet e Pasteur | Huguenots | 48,333 | 4 |
| Beneamin Barbaud (*) | Huguenot | 45,000 | 2 |
| Nicolò Rei and brothers | French | 44,000 | 2 |
| Giovanni Lovat | French | 40,000 | 1 |
| Roberto Periman | English | 40,000 | 2 |
| Gio Galup and brothers | Spanish | 37,000 | 1 |
| Abram Racca | Jew | 36,000 | 1 |
| Angelo Del Mare | Jew | 30,250 | 1 |
| Giacomo Bover | Huguenot | 30,250 | 2 |
| Francesco De La Riva (°) | Huguenot | 25,000 | 2 |
| Abram Rosa | Jew | 22,250 | 3 |
| Gio Isacco da Moulin | Huguenot | 20,000 | 2 |
| Amico Rigot | Huguenot | 15,000 | 1 |
| Matteo Nadal | Huguenot | 15,000 | 1 |
| Moise Alvarez | Jew | 12,500 | 2 |
| Naville Brothers | Huguenot | 12,000 | 1 |
| Pietro Rouvier | Huguenot | 12,000 | 1 |
| Francesco Regny | French | 10,400 | 1 |
| Gio Sanxay | English | 10,000 | 1 |

Source: ASGE, *Antica Finanza*, 509; *Banco di San Giorgio*, 3,00201.

(*) One of the two warehouses is rented in partnership with Biagio Calvi.

(°) One of the two warehouses is rented in partnership with Carlo Nicolò Zignago.

With reference to 1739 data, it is possible to reconstruct the hierarchy of foreign merchants holding bonded warehouses by looking at tax computations prepared for an extraordinary taxation in 1738 involving all assets worth more than 6,000 Genoese lire (see Table 3). As clearly pointed out by historiography, these figures, although only approximate, are anyway significant for wealth classification.⁴⁵ By limiting our examination to those who had assets amounting to minimum 10,000 Genoese Lire, a list of twenty-four names between trading companies and individual merchants can be drawn up.⁴⁶

The Huguenots, with twelve people and assets totalling about 554,600 Genoese lire, are undoubtedly the most significant group from an economic point of view, as also confirmed by their holding the first three places in such a ranking. Brothers David and Guglielmo André, whose ancestors had been working in Genoa since at least the sixties of the previous century, stand out among them with total assets worth 200,000 Genoese lire.⁴⁷ The French and the Jews, with four people each, and total assets amounting to 144,000 and 100,000 Genoese lire respectively, rank second, followed by the British who, although present with only three people, had total assets matching those of the Jewish merchants. Many traders would run more than one warehouse: for example, the company Guglielmo Boissier, Bourguet and Pasteur held four of them, and was most likely to use also other two warehouses independently leased by another member of the Boissier family, Giovanni *quondam* Gaspard.⁴⁸ Finally, two of the merchants in question, in addition to holding a warehouse in their own name, had another storage space rented in partnership with a Genoese merchant, such as in the case of the Huguenots Beniamino Barbaud, partnering with Biagio Calvi, and Francesco De La Rive, partnering with Carlo Nicolò Zignago.⁴⁹ These are not the only cases we have found, but the two most significant ones in terms of wealth of the foreigners involved. This would also suggest that some foreigners would settle in Genoa to expand their business networks also to groups with different religions, following specific business strategies.

Based on these data, we were able to map the number and origins of foreign merchants operating in the city and, more specifically, in the free port area. There are still many open questions about the scopes of their businesses, the nature and intensity of relationships with the other businessmen operating in the same marketplace, and in particular about conflicts, synergies, and the establishment of merchant networks. Answering all these questions will require specific case-by-case investigations. However, it is already evident that many foreigners would own warehouses in the free port area for long periods of time, sometimes even for a few decades. Using their links with their countries of origin, they would import prod-

⁴⁵ A. ZANINI, *Tra emergenze finanziarie e caute riforme: la politica fiscale della Repubblica di Genova nel XVII e XVIII secolo*, in *Genova abundat pecuniis. Finanza, commerci e lusso a Genova tra XVII e XVIII secolo*, Genoa 2005, pp. 58-69, especially p. 61.

⁴⁶ ASGE, *Antica Finanza*, 509.

⁴⁷ A. ZANINI, *Impresa e finanza a Genova. I Crosa (secoli XVII-XVIII)*, Genoa 2017, p. 33.

⁴⁸ ASGE, *Banco di San Giorgio*, 3,00201, cc. 11, 19.

⁴⁹ ASGE, *Banco di San Giorgio*, 3,00201, cc. 91, 176.

ucts from their lands of origin to Genoa, where they would then export Genoese products and / or imported goods (for example, colonial products). During the 18th century, in addition to international trade, the leading merchants would also be involved in banking or financial brokerage, which for many of them would later become their main business. This was particularly common among the Huguenots, such as the Andrés and the Boissiers, who were operating in Genoa as early as since the second half of the 17th century, but also the Maystres, or the French Regnys, who settled in Genoa more recently.⁵⁰

In general, this analysis shows that foreign merchants belonged to communities that had put down roots in Genoa to different extents. In addition to a consular office as mentioned above, some groups also had their own place of worship: this is the case for example of the French, with the chapel of San Luigi inside the church of Santissima Annunziata.⁵¹ At the beginning of the 18th century, even the different group of Protestants were allowed to have a common place of worship hosted by the English consul.⁵²

It is therefore evident that as far as Genoa is concerned, for sure, we cannot speak of colonization by foreign merchants. Although limited in number, some of these traders were quite important in terms of both financial resources and turnover. Despite the limited number of partnerships with local merchants, foreign traders do not seem to have been openly in competition with or operating against the local traders. When settling in the city, foreigners would bring their families and religious networks with them, which would then integrate with the vast merchant, financial and information network of Genoese businessmen, thus bringing economic benefits for everyone.

From this overview, therefore, some important elements emerge allowing us to shed light on the effective attractiveness of Genoa, with reference not only to port traffic, but also to the establishment of foreign trading companies. As mentioned above, in the period under consideration, the Republic failed to implement any specific policy designed to attract foreigners. A similar approach is also found with regard to the measures concerning the free port, mostly aimed at attracting ships. Most probably, and at least in the initial phase, the granting of duty free rights, especially to Northern Europe merchants, was also justified by political reasons. For example, the adoption of more incisive strategies to attract a stable presence of Dutch merchants might have been hindered by the fact that Genoa was, as is well known, under the influence of Spain.⁵³

In light of these considerations, the reasons for the settlement of foreign merchants in Genoa must be looked for in other areas. From the analysis carried out so far, different factors must have clearly played a significant role: such as the often mentioned availability of adequate spaces for the storage of goods; efficient port

⁵⁰ G. FELLONI, *Gli investimenti finanziari genovesi in Europa tra il Seicento e la Restaurazione*, Milan 1971, especially pp. 403-424; H-T. NIEPHAUS, *Genuas Seehandel von 1746-1848*, cit., pp. 305-338.

⁵¹ F. LELEUX, *Saint-Louis-des-Français de Gênes (depuis la fondation de cette église en 1662)*, in "Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique", 64, 1960, pp. 356-366.

⁵² E. GRENDI, *Gli inglesi a Genova*, cit., pp. 251-252.

⁵³ T.A. KIRK, *Genoa and the Sea*, cit., p. 164.

operations; numerous business opportunities offered by a dynamic market such as Genoa and its great mercantile traditions. Finally, it should not be forgotten that, unlike Leghorn, Genoa would enjoy a privileged position vis-à-vis the markets of the Po Valley and transalpine hinterland, and this factor contributed to further promoting its transit port function. The city is in fact a nodal point in a vast network of trade routes stretching to at least the whole of Europe. Therefore, both tangible and intangible elements would jointly contribute to convincing foreigners to settle in Genoa: in other words, the solid reputation enjoyed by Genoa in the international arena, at least in part, must have offset the lack of proper immigration incentive policies.