

**Poettering, Jorun, *Handel, Nation und Religion—
Kaufleute zwischen Hamburg und Portugal im 17. Jahrhundert*,
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The history of German-Portuguese economic, political and social relations dates back centuries. Since the late Middle Ages, merchants of the Hanseatic League quite regularly set sail towards the Iberian Peninsula and Portugal in particular. Commerce was essentially serving basic needs: bulk commodities such as cereals and timber came from the Hanseatic side; salt cork, fruits, olives and wine from Portugal. With the sphere of Portuguese influence and trade expanding as far as Brazil, Africa and Asia, spices and the colonial products coffee, cocoa, sugar, tobacco and cotton were added to the assortment of goods bought in Lisbon.

In her book *Handel, Nation und Religion—Kaufleute zwischen Hamburg und Portugal im 17. Jahrhundert* (Trade, Nation and Religion—Merchants between Hamburg and Portugal during the 17th Century), Jorun Poettering describes and analyzes some of the facets of the German-Portuguese relations by drawing attention to the characteristics and evolution of the commercial exchanges of European and Colonial merchandise between Hamburg and Portugal during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The book, written in German, is based on the author's dissertation (Universität Hamburg, Germany, 2012) and won the award of the Society of Migration Research *Gesellschaft für Historische Migrationsforschung*. Structured into three major chapters "Political/ Legal Framework Conditions," "Travelling, Life and Commerce" and "Solidarity and Identity," Poettering first familiarizes the reader with the historical development and geo-economic aspects that characterized the Hamburg-Portugal trade during this particular time period. As part of the union of the two Iberian crowns, Lisbon was the capital of the Portuguese Empire and as such one of the major places of transit of colonial (African, Asian and south-American) merchandise. In contrast, Hamburg was the major gateway and trade place of transshipment from and towards the central European hinterland regions, including the

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Baltic Sea. By comparing both places, the author shows different attitudes towards foreigners. The Portuguese legislation encouraged and privileged foreign merchants to settle in Lisbon and to trade with Portugal, while the 1604 Hamburg legislation *Schragen* restricted the assortment of goods handled by immigrants (pp. 44-61).

The second chapter focuses on merchants, merchant networks and merchandise. Poettering puts the findings and conclusions made by Hermann Kellenbenz into question. While Kellenbenz had based his conclusions on the examination of the *Werkzoll* records, a general charge on merchandise from ships that had to be paid on arrival and departure, Poettering also examines the admiralty customs duty records, which provide a highly detailed set of data including port of origin, merchandise, merchants and merchant organizations, name of ship and skipper. In considering the 1604 Hamburg legislations and examining and comparing data from the 1632 and 1647 customs records, she provides the first study that clearly demonstrates the complexity of Hamburg-Portugal trade. Kellenbenz claimed that Portuguese Jews dominated Hamburg-Portugal trade, and that they specialized in spices and sugar on one hand, and that Hamburg merchants had a focus rather of on European produce such as cereals, wine and wax (Poettering, 203, 204, 206-217; Kellenbenz, 1954, 1958).

It is to Poettering's work that the reader is able to see the development of Hamburg's external trade during the first half of the seventeenth century, with each group of traders handling broad ranges of merchandize, and without any monopolies on certain products. Even if some regulations excluded foreign merchants from intermediation between supplier and foreign markets, this did not push the Portuguese to a sectorial constriction, e.g. into the sugar sector, which was not touched by the regulations. Poettering shows that the *Schragen*, nonetheless, privileged merchants holding the status of Hamburg burghers, most prominently in the trade with cereals. Thus Portuguese traders were not allowed to purchase grain directly from the producers but had to buy it from those Hamburg middlemen.

In her final chapter, the author draws special attention to the question of denominations and commerce by comparing the merchant groups and networks by their geographical, social and religious origins. Being excluded from Hamburg's communities such as the *Fabregesellschaften* and *Commerzdeputation* (to become the chamber of commerce), Portuguese New Christians at first joined the Catholic community of foreign merchants in the nearby Danish city of Altona but overtly joined Altona's Portuguese-Jewish community during the following decades (pp. 288-313). Poettering argues that the situation of the

Dutch merchants who traded in Hamburg was quite different from the Portuguese nation. Due to their linguistic separation into Flemish and French speakers and their religious divide into Lutheran, Calvinist and other Protestant groups, Dutch merchants did not possess the same unity as a homorganic community (pp. 314-324). In contrast to the Dutch and Portuguese merchants who operated in Hamburg, the Hamburgers operating in Lisbon rather were organized in several brotherhoods such as the famous St. Bartholomew brotherhood, and their interests were represented by the Hamburg and Hanseatic consulate. Albeit not being persecuted by the inquisition, many Hamburg merchants converted to Catholicism and thus gained access to the Portuguese economic and political elite (pp. 324-339).

Summarizing the present book, the reader is offered a new perspective on merchants and merchant networks during a period of religious conflicts and wars. Jorun Poettering not only analyzed and cross-examined German or Portuguese archival material, the author clearly contributed to the understanding of the socio-economic relations between Northern and Southern Europe by different perspectives based on an international research. Still, the author could have hinted more explicitly to the methodological problem of comparing a city-state on one hand with the capital of a kingdom and of an empire on the other. Also, the effects of Portugal's restoration of its independence from Spain (1640) on Hamburg-Portugal trade could have been considered more detailed.

These constructive criticisms shall not diminish the achievements of Jorun Poettering's book. The study would deserve a translation into English, and even more so as the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hamburg-Portugal trade has not been investigated more systematically since the 1950s.

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