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**Article**

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# **Between Medina del Campo and Rome. A Journey of Money in the Sixteenth Century**

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## **ABSTRACT**

During the early modern age, shaping the mechanisms and guarantees of financial and commercial transactions was the basis for the expansion of commercial markets: the beginning of market globalization was due not only to the discovery of a new continent and new trade routes, but also to the manner of being in contact with these new territories and of including them economically and financially in a perspective of political development. The credit instruments were an important tool and the Catholic monarchy was at the forefront of the use of the most appropriate instruments to implement a system of control and domination at a political and financial-economic level.<sup>1</sup> This article investigates an episode – the refusal of the Colegio de Santa María de los Ángeles de la Universidad de Salamanca to pay the difference between old and new chamber ducats, generated in a payment made in Rome; this is a clear example of the complexities of the financial transactions made in Rome that were the result of benefits, concessions and graces of various kinds. The network of relations involved in the quarrel proves the ability of Antonio de Fonseca, a Portuguese banker living in Rome, who was to become an important financial asset in the Italian and curial environment for the Castilian banker Simón Ruiz. Viceversa, Simon Ruiz, too was an excellent contact for Fonseca who used him to find out what was happening within the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> P. Cardim, T. Herzog, J.J. Ibáñez and G. Sabatini (eds.), *Polycentric Monarchies. How did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony?*, Eastbourne, 2012; also P. Cardim, A. Feros, G. Sabatini, “The Political Constitution of the Iberian Monarchies”, in F. Bouza, P. Cardim, A. Feros (eds.), *The Iberian World, 1400-1800*, Abingdon-on-Thames, 2019, pp. 34-61.

monarchy at a time as delicate as its union with the Portuguese kingdom (1580-1640). Their correspondence depicts the dynamics and complexities of the contacts between “hombres de negocios” through the Iberian Peninsula and Rome.

## The Iberian world in Rome

In the sixteenth century, Rome was a place of interest for international bankers despite being on the periphery of the main financial centers: in fact, even though it was outside the European fair circuit, Rome was relevant, especially for the Catholic monarchy, for its political and religious importance and for its jurisdictional power due to the ecclesiastical benefices, with their considerable emoluments, and the consistent financial movements by the apostolic collectors, not to mention the strong presence of a community from the Iberian Peninsula whose economic, financial, and real estate businesses prospered in Rome.<sup>2</sup> Financial agents in Rome worked according to different dynamics and generated different incomes compared to those of the European fairs, but the eternal city was nevertheless an important market for exchanging money and also for getting information that, at different levels, arrived from the Christendom.

The analysis of the correspondence of a “hombre de negocios” like Simón Ruiz with his Roman emissaries offers us an opportunity to uncover what happened in Rome at that time. As I have already argued after reading the correspondence of the late 1560s and early 1570s with the Montalvo family, these letters allow us to enter the

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<sup>2</sup> J.M. Carretero Zamora, “La Colectoría de España en el siglo XVI: los mecanismos de transferencia monetaria entre España y Roma (cambios y créditos)”, in *Hispania*, n. 243/LXXIII, 2013, pp. 79-104; M. Vaquero Piñeiro, *La renta y las casas. El patrimonio inmobiliario de Santiago de los españoles de Roma entre los siglos XV y XVII*, Rome, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> J.I. Pulido (ed.), *Más que negocios. Simón Ruiz un banquero español del siglo XVI entre la península ibérica e italiana*, Madrid, 2017; I. Iannuzzi, “La familia Montalvo: contatti e scambi tra Spagna e penisola italiana nel secondo Cinquecento”, in C. Sanz Ayán, S. Martínez Hernández, M. Aglietti, D. Edigati (eds.), *Identità nobiliarie tra monarchia iberica e Italia. Linaggi, potere e istituzioni (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Rome, 2019, pp. 19-30. F. Ruiz Martín, *Lettres marchandes échangées entre Florence et Medina del Campo*, Paris, 1965.

complicated network of Roman relationships, the gray areas within which all kinds of relationships were shaped, not only the financial ones, since information of various kinds and nature is also exchanged.<sup>3</sup>

The main problem is how to incorporate archival sources into a dialogue with their own environment, with the evidence provided by other letters by Simón Ruiz and, above all, with the documents generated in these same years in the Roman market, inside and outside the curial circles, that is in the context of daily economic, curial, political, religious, and cultural businesses. Roman market, and especially its financial organization, underwent profound transformations in the 1580s in the framework of Papal government: in particular the papacy of Sixtus V implied a transcendental change for the papal economy.<sup>4</sup> By following the threads of these transformations, we will find out to what extent the “Roman” senders of Simón Ruiz, who in the 1580s were mainly the Fonseca, had a part in them.

These are years in which the Portuguese financial players, whose origins were quite controversial, found a basis to develop their businesses in the Italian peninsula, to gain the social recognition that, in most cases, was denied to them in the Iberian Peninsula due to their dubious origins. The initiative of this group and, above all, their money opened the doors to valuable collaborations and positions of relevance within the papal curia.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I would only mention the role of another Portuguese, Giovanni López, a convert with

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<sup>4</sup> I. Iannuzzi, “Los hermanos Peretti en el “gran teatro del mundo” romano”, in P. Botta (ed.), *Poesía y música en la Roma barroca. El Cancionero español Ms. Corsini 625*, Naples, 2022, in print; M.C. Giannini, “Note sui tesoriери generali della Camera apostolica e sulle loro carriere tra XVI e XVII secolo”, in A. Jamme, O. Poncet (eds.), *Offices et papauté (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle). Charges, hommes, destins*, Rome, 2005, pp. 859-883.

<sup>5</sup> F. Ruspio, *La nazione portoghese. Ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia*, Venice, 2007; F. Trivellato, *The Sephardic Diaspora. Livorno and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, New York-London, 2009; B. Crivelli, G. Sabatini (eds.), “Reti finanziarie, reti commerciali. Operatori economici stranieri in Portogallo (XVI-XVIII secolo)”, in *Storia Economica*, n. 2, 2015, especially B. Crivelli and G. Sabatini, “L’espansione commerciale e finanziaria del Portogallo nella prima età moderna. Un bilancio storiografico”, pp. 257-271.

family connections in Ferrara, who in his capacity of advisor to Camilla Peretti contributed to the creation of the formidable fortune of the Peretti family in the years in which Antonio de Fonseca was establishing his business. Under the pontificate of Sixtus V Felice Peretti, Giovanni López became the repository of the *Dataria* Tribunal,<sup>6</sup> collaborating extensively with the Genoese financiers operating in Rome, in particular with Pinelli and Giustiniani, as Jean Delumeau told us in his monumental book on the roman economic world.

### **Simón Ruiz and Antonio de Fonseca: the relationship between Medina del Campo and the Roman market**

The credit market, in some way, precedes the political events that will unite the Portuguese crown during the kingdom of Felipe II: Simón Ruiz seeks access to the Roman financial world, and finds it through Antonio de Fonseca, a Portuguese who was an administrator of the brotherhood of S. Antonio de los Portugueses but who will build his tomb in the church of Santiago de los Españoles, in the chapel of the Santísima Resurrección. We do not know precisely when Antonio de Fonseca arrived in Rome, probably in the mid-1550s since in 1560 he turned out to be among the members of the Portuguese congregation, and the following year he is the governor of the national church of S. Antonio de los Portugueses.<sup>7</sup> He was rec-

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<sup>6</sup> "Depositeria de la Daterie et trésorerie secrète, se trouvaient donc bien placés pour connaître, mieux d'autres, les secrets financiers de la Papauté et profiter des meilleures occasions de profit", in J.J. Delumeau, *Vie économique et sociale dans la seconde moitié du XVI siècle*, 2 vols., Paris, 1959, p. 854. About Juan or Giovanni López: A. Di Leone Leoni, A. Buccapadulius and A. Montecatini, "Due personaggi della "nation portughesa" di Ferrara: un martire e un avventuriero", in *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, Terza Serie, 57, no. 3, 1991, pp. 407-448.

<sup>7</sup> M. D'Almeida Paile, *Santo António dos Portugueses em Roma*, 2 vol., Lisboa, 1951; A. do Couto Oliveira, *Situação jurídica do Instituto de Santo António dos Portugueses em Roma e sua Igreja*, Rome, 1987; G. Sabatini, "La comunità portoghese a Roma nell'età dell'unione delle corone (1580-1640)", in C.J. Hernando Sánchez (ed.), *Roma y España: un crisol de la cultura europea en la edad moderna*, Madrid, 2007, vol. I, pp. 847-873; G. Sabatini, "Entre

ognized as a conscientious administrator, thanks to a wise investment policy in real estate and in the pontifical public debt.<sup>8</sup>

Analyzing his correspondence with Rome, we can easily detect Simón Ruiz's growing interest in the Roman market square. In the 1570s, thanks to the Montalvo, he sensed the possibilities provided by having contacts in Rome with men close to Cosme de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, on the one hand, and with the powerful Cardinal Francisco Pacheco, protector of Castile, on the other. Thanks to them he obtains information of a political nature and can position himself as an intermediary to obtain vacant benefits of all kinds. Thus, he allegedly tries to enter that market in the mid-1570s through his nephew Vítores because he had remained without a sender in Rome after the return of Francisco Ramírez y Montalvo who followed his lord, the Cardinal Pacheco. However, Vítores didn't achieve his goal because he did not find a network of solvent contacts in Rome that would welcome him and also because he did not have the necessary skills to enter an environment as competitive and insidious as the curia.<sup>9</sup>

For Simón Ruiz the situation changed at the end of 1578 when he was commissioned by Héctor Méndez, a "hombre de negocios" from Lisbon in charge of Fonseca's business in Portugal, to settle Antonio de Fonseca's transactions at the Medina del Campo fair and to

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o Papa e o Rei de Espanha: a comunidade lusitana em Roma nos séculos XVI e XVII", in P. Cardim, L. Freire Costa, M. Soares da Cunha (eds.), *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica. Dinâmicas de integração e de conflito*, Lisboa, 2013, pp. 349-389.

<sup>8</sup> C. De Dominicis, "La Famiglia Fonseca di Roma", in *Strenna dei Romanisti*, 1992, pp. 159-174; J.W. Nelson Novoa, "Ecos y recovecos de los judeoconversos en la iglesia nacional de Santiago de los españoles en Roma (siglo XVI)", in X. Company Climent, B. Franco and I. Rega Castro (coord.), *Bramante en Roma, Roma en España: un juego de espejos en la temprana Edad Moderna*, Lleida, 2014, pp. 112-127; J.W. Nelson Novoa, *Being the Nação in the Eternal City: New Christian Lives in Sixteenth-Century Rome*, Peterborough, 2014, and A.J. Díaz Rodríguez, "Puertos de Indias e Indias de Roma: los negocios cuariales de Fonseca y Rojas en la Sevilla moderna (1591-1617)", in *Hispania*, n. 265, vol. XXX, 2020, pp. 405-438.

<sup>9</sup> I. Iannuzzi, "Las cartas desde Roma: la importancia de las redes familiares", in J.I. Pulido Serrano (ed.), *Más que negocios. Simón Ruiz un banquero español del siglo XVI entre la península ibérica e italiana*, Madrid, 2017, especially pp. 107-119.

send the collected money to Rome. Thus, the first contact between the two was established by a letter dated February 13, 1579 in which Simón Ruiz informs Fonseca of the collection he has made at the fair and of the money being sent through the heirs of Federico de Ricci in Florence. He also mentions the problems he encountered in collecting some debts. The letter proves that this is the very first contact between them, especially when Simón Ruiz affirms that he is happy to be able to serve him after having known his value for so long. He also offers his contacts in Madrid in the event Fonseca needs something from the Court.<sup>10</sup>

Antonio de Fonseca is satisfied with his services even though he asks for more information regarding the collection of the debt that Alonso Salinas had acquired from Juan Fernández de Castro who, at the time of payback, had agreed upon an interest rate reduction set by decree by Felipe II. So, to make a long story short Simón Ruiz, acknowledging the validity of the above mentioned decree, had collected an amount that was smaller than the one expected by Fonseca. Consequently, the whole operation was seen as unfortunate from Rome, especially after Fonseca received a letter from Fernández de Castro informing him that Salinas had paid in full all the other representatives at the fair.

Fernández de Castro's meddling is justified because if Salinas hadn't paid, he would have had to cover the part of the uncovered debt, but since Simón Ruiz had accepted the reduction, he was free from this obligation. Throughout the year '79 Fonseca writes to both Simón Ruiz and Héctor Méndez asking for explanations and looking for a way to recover what was lost (which he estimated at 500

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<sup>10</sup> "Y yo huelgo se aya ofrezido ocasión en que poder servir a vuestra merçed porque ha muchos días que tengo noticia de vuestra merçed y de su valor y así me holgaré se ofrezca ocaßión en que poder servir a vuestra merçed en estas ferias y en esta villa donde yo bivo, y quando tanbién sea necesario alguna cosa en Corte, tengo persona allí que hará todo lo que se ofreçiere de su servicio". Archivo Simón Ruiz (ASR), Caja 192 (168-169), Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, February 13, 1579. All this subject can be followed in the letters: ASR, Caja 53 (178, 179, 180); ASR, Caja 55 (199, 200, 202, 204, 209, 212, 216); ASR, Caja 62 (108); ASR, Caja 193 (238).

ducats). However, as we can see by analyzing the correspondence between Medina del Campo and Lisbon,<sup>11</sup> Simón Ruiz's performance had been correct and both he and Méndez agree in saying that Fonseca should be satisfied. Thus, in January 1580 Simón Ruiz writes Fonseca suggesting the following: "Your grace must consider yourself well served in what was done."<sup>12</sup> For his part, the same month, Méndez writes to Simón Ruiz to settle the matter reassuring him on Fonseca's intention to collect the lost money from Méndez, "that the two of us will understand each other well."<sup>13</sup>

The outcome of this lawsuit shows us that the physical distance from the fairs prevents Fonseca from evaluating the real situation of the market at that time and Simón Ruiz and Héctor Méndez confirm that when they affirm that Fonseca should be satisfied with the payment he received. Fonseca's disconnection leaves him in a situation of vulnerability in the face of interested information like that sent by Fernández de Castro. In addition, there are no profitable ways to send the money to Rome – Fonseca prefers to use the heirs of Federico de Ricci, while Simón Ruiz, as we will see, prefers his partner Baltasar Suárez, all of which are in Florence.

Through this episode we can perfectly see what path money takes, or through which roads it reaches Rome: it passes through the hands of the Bonvisis of Lyon or those of the heirs of Federico de Ricci or of Baltasar Suárez in Florence. A real network of contacts that describes Antonio de Fonseca's ability to become an important financial asset in the Italian and curial world on behalf of Simón Ruiz. Something similar to what happened to Fonseca, also occurred

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<sup>11</sup> David Cano is working on the analysis of these letters on his PHD dissertation by the Universidad de Alcalá: *Los Gomes de Elvas: una casa de negocios en el ámbito ibérico y europeo durante los siglos XVI y XVII*. Also on Héctor Méndez: J. Gentil da Silva, *Lettres de Lisbonne*, vol. III, Paris, 1961, p. 419.

<sup>12</sup> ASR, Caja 193 (238), Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, January 1, 1580. "vuestra merçed se debe atener por bien servido en lo que se hizo".

<sup>13</sup> ASR, Caja 55 (216). Héctor Méndez to Simón Ruiz, January 13, 1580. "En lo del señor Antonio de Fonseca de Roma no le dé a vuestra merçed pena su pretencyon que él pueda tener de cobrar de my lo que se quitó en su partida, que bien nos entenderemos los dos".



to Simón Ruiz: the distance separating him from Rome, and his lack of a detailed knowledge of its financial, administrative, and political mechanisms, caused him to remain entangled in the meshes of the credit and money exchange mechanisms that guaranteed a profit to those “hombres de negocios”, suspended between the purchase and sale of goods and the management of exchange rates and different monetary currencies. Looking at the episode we have just analyzed and at what we will describe in the following, we will grasp the complex mechanisms of financial transactions generated by benefits, concessions and graces of various kinds.

It is Simón Ruiz who writes an interesting letter to Antonio de Fonseca on May 2, 1580. In this letter, in addition to requesting the payment that will concern us in the following, he provides information about the courts of Tomar where the king was taking the oath of the Portuguese kingdom so it would remain in peace.<sup>14</sup>

Ruiz was an excellent contact for Fonseca and helped him to find out what was happening within the Catholic monarchy at a delicate time such as its union with the Portuguese kingdom. In fact, Simón Ruiz's correspondence constantly provides insights about the plague in Portuguese cities and the arrival of the Indian ships.<sup>15</sup>

With all this information, Fonseca can give instructions to Héctor Méndez to carry out purchases and investments, and sometimes these instructions are sent through Simón Ruiz, thus implicating him in money movements. In order to handle his capital, he has to be well informed, and he succeeds thanks to Simón Ruiz's widespread European network.

Going back to the presently considered matter, on May 2, 1581,

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<sup>14</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (873-874). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, May 2, 1581. “Su Magestad está en Tomar donde le an jurado todo aquel reyno y escriven que pasará luego a Lisboa con que quedará todo lo de aquel reyno pacífico”.

<sup>15</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (881-882). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, October 2, 1582: “A Lisboa llegó la armada del marqués de Santa Cruz y con ella dos naos de la Yndias y la otra nao que falta se entiende ymbenará en Masanbique Dios la trayga con bien. De don Antonio se entiende que está en la Ysla Tercera, podrá ser que ahora se acomode con su magestad que a todos estará bien haçer esto y allanar aquellas yslas”.

Ruiz wrote Fonseca asking him to pay 204 old chamber ducats to the general collector in Rome, who at that time was Ludovico Taverna,<sup>16</sup> for a five-year period after the papal annexation of the “Colegio de Santa María de los Ángeles de la Universidad de Salamanca.”<sup>17</sup> There seems to be a certain degree of urgency in this assignment, since it envisages taking three acquittances out of this payment and sending two of them to Medina del Campo so that by July 20th, Ruiz could deliver them to the school. He ends the letter by telling him that he can collect the money from the Bonvisis in Lyon or from Baltasar Suárez in Florence, depending on which is the most advantageous, and that he will write to both so that they can pay him.

On May 29, Antonio de Fonseca acknowledges receipt of the previous letter, showing that he understood the instructions, but he also warns Ruiz that some data on the origin of the payment is missing, such as the annexes and the date, an information needed to calculate the five-year periods. And, above all, he explains how the administrative machinery of the collector works in Rome, since: “The acquittances are not given by the general collector but by the chancery officials who receive the money.”<sup>18</sup> Fonseca asks him to send this information, while in the meantime he himself will try to find it out on his own, given the short time they have.

<sup>16</sup> Giannini, M.C., “Taverna, Ludovico”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 95, *ad vocem*, Roma, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (873-874). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, May 2, 1581. «Suplico a v.m. me la haga de que se paguen ay en 20 de junio próximo al colector general de su santidad 204 ducados de cámara viejos y v.m. tome tres quitanzas de que se me embiarán acá las dos de ellas en que diga lo rezive por un quinquenio de la unión y anexión perpetua que sizo su santidad al colegio de Santa María de los ángeles de la unibersidad de Salamanca lo qual reziven de v.m. por horden mia. Y esta carta de pago suplico a v.m. esté acá para los 20 de julio, porque así estoy obligado de entregarla. Y del valor se valga v.m. sobre Benedetto y Bernardino Bonvisi de Lion, o sobre Valtasar Suárez de Florencia de la parte que a v.m. pareziere ser mas de v.m. ventaja que ambas partes escrivio que paguen lo que v.m. les sacare a pagar por mi quenta. Y v.m. perdone esta pesadumbre que en otra cosa lo serviré yo».

<sup>18</sup> ASR, Caja 70 (64). Antonio de Fonseca to Simón Ruiz, May 29, 1581. “Las quitancias no las da el colector general sino los oficiales de cancellaria que reciben los dineros”.

Indeed, on June 12, he wrote again to Simón Ruiz with the news that he had spoken with the collector and thus has learned that the annexes regarded several parishes from Salamanca, Ávila, Cuenca and Burgos; that happened under Pope Pius IV.<sup>19</sup> The conversation with the collector speeds things up and prompts Fonseca to act without waiting for the instructions from Ruiz – since mail exchanges between Rome and Medina del Campo require more than a month– because:

“it had to be paid on March 1 of this year because the union was made at the end of February 66 and the five-year period is paid every 15 years. And he told me that they had proceeded against them and that they promised up to 20 of the current not to be notified of the excommunication. And when I saw this and that the 20th was over soon and that the withdrawal could not go there until July 20 [...] I paid them two hundred and four new chamber gold ducats that were owed to them.”<sup>20</sup>

Then he refers to the amount of money paid: one ducat for the acquittances and another for the solicitor who took care of it. In total it was 206 new chamber ducats, which means 219 and 4/5 old chamber ducats. He finally decides that as proposed by Ruiz, he would

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<sup>19</sup> ASR, Caja 70 (65). Antonio de Fonseca to Simón Ruiz, June 12, 1581. “era de la parrochia de San Pedro de Pedroso, diócesis de Salamanca, y de una sin cura de San Martín de la Calzada y un beneficio de Sigueres y otro de Valdeolivas y otros diez beneficios de la diócesis de Salamanca y Ávila Cuenca y Burgos que todo se unió por Papa Pío 4<sup>o</sup> al colegio de Santa María de los Ángeles de Salamanca cuyos frutos 400 ducados de quanto viene al quindenio 200 ducados y al tesorero 4 ducados que todos son de cámara nuevos y no de cámara viejos como v.m. me escribe”.

<sup>20</sup> ASR, Caja 70 (65). “que se uviera ya de pagar al 1<sup>o</sup> de marzo deste año porque la unión fue hecha a último de hebrero de 66 y se paga el quindenio de 15 en 15 años. Y me dixo que avian procedido contra ellos y que prometieron de hasta 20 del corriente mandar satisfacer por no se les notificar la excomunió. Y quando esto vi y que los días 20 se acabavan presto y que no podría allá ir la quitancia hasta 20 de julio pagando al tiempo por ser partido este ordinario, les pagué duzientos y quatro ducados de oro de cámara nuevos que se les debían, y un ducado de dos quitancias y una copia de la otra que saqué. Y con ésta va a v.m. la una dellas y la otra irá de hoy a 15 días. Y di al solicitador que andó en ello un ducado, que hazen dozientos y seis ducados de cámara nuevos en que montan dozientos y diez y nueve ducados 4/5 de cámara viejos”.

use Baltasar Suárez in Florence to collect what was spent. Fonseca, aware of having been able to cause a problem by paying in this currency, reaffirms:

“And at the foot of the acquittance goes the faith of how new chamber ducats are paid and what is mounted on them, and there is no doubt about this [...] And it is also declared in the acquittance how gold ducats were paid in new chamber gold.”<sup>21</sup>

### **“Ducados de cámara viejos” and “nuevos”**

Simón Ruiz quickly replied to Fonseca on July 11, 1581, grateful for the efficiency and speed of his efforts. But, as Fonseca foresaw in a certain way, he also explains the problem that has arisen: those of the Santa María de los Ángeles school in Salamanca refuse to pay the difference between old and new chamber ducats. According to Ruiz’s calculations, this difference amounts to almost 6,5% and it will be hard for him to get the money back.<sup>22</sup>

Simón Ruiz’s first reaction is to subtly recriminate that he had paid in a currency other than the ordered one:

“I would be glad if you would not pay more than the value of 204 old camera ducats and if they would give the settlement of those and they would owe the rest to the collector until they paid me here.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> “Y al pié de la quitancia va la fe de cómo se pagan ducados de cámara nuevos y lo que se monta en ellos, y en esto no hay duda. Yo lo hize por v.m. me escrivia que avian de ser viejos y en la quitancia va que los pagué por orden de v.m. Y si yo soy bueno para en otra cosa servir a v.m. lo haré siempre de coraçon. Y va también declarado en la quitancia como se pagaron ducados de oro en oro de cámara nuevos”.

<sup>22</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (873-874). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, July 11, 1581. “Y según lo que v.m. dize va a decir de ser de cámara nuevos a ser de cámara viejos cerca de 6 y medio por 100 y conmigo no concertaron sino de cámara viejos y el valor dellos me pagaron. Y ahora, lo que va a dezir de viejos a nuevos, creo que he de tener trabajo en cobrar”.

<sup>23</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (873-874). “Yo holgara que v.m. no pagara más del valor de los 204 ducados de cámara viejos y que de aquellos dieran el finiquito y se le quedara a deber lo demás al colector hasta que acá me lo pagaran”.

But, acknowledging that Fonseca has acted in good faith and above all, urged by time, he thanks him for his actions and assures him that everything he would spend will be paid by Baltasar Suárez. He also probes if there may be any way in Rome to obtain some instruments to force those from the Salamanca college to pay. And finally decides:

“And for another time I will know better how to make myself understood and, to be honest, I never knew that there were new chamber ducats and that they were more valuable than the old ones. It will be noticed ahead.”<sup>24</sup>

Ruiz admits his ignorance and takes it for granted: he will not make these mistakes in the future. If at the beginning Fonseca was outside the fair circuit and for this reason he was not capable of following the market situation and found it difficult to collect money in the Iberian market, now he has discovered the complicated mechanisms of the curia: on the one hand, the existence of a new currency that apparently should have the same value as its predecessor but it is actually worth 6,5% more; on the other hand, he shows his ignorance regarding the functioning of collection by suggesting that it would be possible to keep the money.

Fonseca's answer to this suggestion is very clear and shows us how the machinery worked. On August 21 he writes that if he had not paid in new chamber ducats the chancery officers would not have given him the acquittances, because no acquittance is given for the whole amount of money: only when every college has received the correct amount, the acquittance for the transaction is signed.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (873-874). “Y si no me pagaren lo que va a decir, será necesario embiar de ay una declaratoria para que paguen enteramente. V.m. lo hizo por me azer a mi merçed y así, lo que v.m. hubiere sacado a pagar se dará entero cumplimiento. Y para otra vez me sabré yo mexor dar a entender y, a la verdad, nunca yo supe que avía duca-dos de cámara nuevos y que tubiesen más valor que los viejos. Será aviso para adelante”.

<sup>25</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (873-874). “Yo pagué lo que convenía y se devía y en ninguna manera me diera quitanza se no pagara de cámara nuevos, y los oficiales por quienes se reparten, por muchos como verá por la quitancia, y a cada colegio se ha de pagar lo

From this moment on, the correspondence with Fonseca will focus on finding out how to recover the lost money.

The successive letters, dated July 25 and August 8, 1581, show that Simón Ruiz was probably negotiating with the Santa María de los Ángeles school in Salamanca. At first, he suggests to Fonseca that he might need a “declaration” to force them to pay, but he would request it in the next mail if necessary. Indeed, on August 8 he makes the request: “I beg your grace if possible, send it to me with the first [mail], because I have not given them any of the acquittances, nor will I give them until they pay me the rest, which cannot be done for these people without first having the money in front of me.”<sup>26</sup>

But Fonseca’s response on September 4 does not bring good news: as for the chancery officers there is no longer a debt because he has paid everything in full and they have given the acquittances. In any case, Fonseca is aware of the situation in which the Castilian banker finds himself, so affirms that he will find out if something can be done and will notify him. He is also confident that they will pay because every curial will tell them the difference between new and old chamber ducats and in the acquittances it is stated that the payment was to be made in new chamber ducats.<sup>27</sup>

In his letters Fonseca gives us examples of how connections be-

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que le toca sin de ninguna merçed y, después de satisfechos todos, dan la quitancia. Y los señores a quienes toca a pagar no porman duda nello pues es el deber y se no lo hizieren y v.m. quiere que aga contra ellos y sacar excomunias y hazerle costas, avízemelo que procuraré de hazerlo”.

<sup>26</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (875-876). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, August 8, 1581. “Suplico a v.m. si es posible se me envíe con el primero, porque yo no les he dado ninguna de las quitanzas, ni daré hasta que me paguen el resto, que no se puede hazer por esta gente sin tener primero el dinero delante”.

<sup>27</sup> ASR, Caja 70 (68). Antonio de Fonseca to Simón Ruiz, September 4, 1581. “y me dize v.m. que lembíe una declaratoria contra ellos porque no les tiene dadas las quitancias. No se la embío porque teniendo yo pagado por ellos y teniéndome dado los oficiales quitancia en la qual dize que son pagados dellos por mí, dizen que no saben cómo pueden agora proceder contra ellos, e quando procedesen hazerseles sia muchas costas por ser colegio. Informarme de lo que puedo hazer y lo avisaré a v.m., y bien creo que ellos pagarán porque todo el curial les dirá la diferencia que va a dezir de ducados de cámara nuevos a viejos, y embié a v.m. fee dello y en las propias quitancias dizen los oficiales que recibieron ducados de cámara nuevos”.

tween Medina and Rome were made through Florence. The mechanism begins with the indication of Simón Ruiz to go to Baltasar Suárez to collect what was spent; Fonseca addresses a letter to Florence, indicating the amount and, in the letter sent to Medina on July 10, he already indicates that Suárez has accepted it and that he would pay it on time. Finally, on August 21, he already informs Simón Ruiz that he has collected from Florence. Baltasar Suárez makes the payment because, in the meantime, he has received letters from Simón Ruiz advising him to pay the amount requested by Fonseca and, immediately afterwards, he should issue a new bill to obtain the money from Simón Ruiz. But in this case it is not necessary because the relationship between the two is such that in Florence he has an account provided with money.

As we can see, the system of bills of exchange passing through Florence worked very well and made transactions between Rome and Medina del Campo as agile as the mail times would allow.

Simón Ruiz's position seems weak. He knows that there was no alternative in Rome allowing him to act in another way; he knows that his "clients" commissioned him to pay in a specific currency and he has had to pay in another of higher value, generating a difference that goes against his finances. However, that is less troubling than the resulting loss of credibility he suffers and thus, on October 3, as in the following months, he insists on the need to obtain a "declaration" against the College that makes them pay "so that they don't make fun of these things anymore."<sup>28</sup> This goes on until the beginning of May 1582, when Simón Ruiz, probably after having been negotiating with the college, writes to Fonseca:

"I still beg your grace if there could be any declaration to be able to collect what those of the school of Santa María de los Ángeles

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<sup>28</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (875-876). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, October 3, 1581. "Pudiéndose sacar una declaratoria contra ellos mucha merçed reziviré, que v.m. procure sacarla y embiarmela porque no se burlen más destas cosas, lo que en esto se pudiere haçer para que yo no lo pierda reziviré mucha merçed. Lo procure v.m. y, si no pudiere ser, abremos paçienza".

de Salamanca owe me, that your grace get it that with anything that comes will be charged.”<sup>29</sup>

He seems confident that he has found a solution to which it will suffice to provide any document that comes from Rome. However, his tone changes radically in the following letter that addresses the issue, that is from July 24:

“Your grace will do me a very great mercy in ordering an excommunication against those from Salamanca because in no way have they wanted to pay me and if the excommunication does not come, they will not pay and they deserve well to have this vexation done to them.”<sup>30</sup>

The banker’s patience is reaching its limit. On August 21 he insists on the need for the excommunication against them “since they don’t deserve anything else”. He also assures Fonseca that whatever it costs, this shall be paid by those of the Salamanca college and he will be able to collect it from Baltasar Suárez.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the repeated references to the “colegiales” in the letters sent from Castilla, Fonseca does not refer to this issue again. If he is *making* efforts to obtain excommunication, he does not give any clues until September 17, 1582, the day he sends Simón Ruiz the so much needed document: “quanto a la escomuni6n contra los colegiales de Salamanca que dize v.m. se la embíe porque no quieren pagar, con ésta se la envíó.”<sup>32</sup> He suggests notifying them the excommunication

<sup>29</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (879-880). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, May 1, 1582. “Todavía suplico a v.m. si se pudiere aver alguna declaratoria para poder cobrar lo que me deven los del colegio de Santa María de los Ángeles de Salamanca, que v.m. lo procure que con qualquier cosa que venga se cobrará”.

<sup>30</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (879-880). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, July 24, 1582. “Harámela v.m. muy grande en mandar sacar una escomuni6n contra los de Salamanca porque en ninguna manera han querido pagarme y no viniendo la escomuni6n no pagarán y merezen bien se les haga esta vexaci6n”.

<sup>31</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (879-880). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, August, 21. “Pues v.m. me dize que avisándole se sacará la excomuni6n sobre los colegiales de Salamanca, suplico a v.m. mande se haga, pues no merezen otra cosa y las costas que se hizieren en sacar la escomuni6n se me avisará lo que fuere para cobrarlo también dellos y Valtasar Suárez pagará lo que v.m. le sacare a pagar del coste della”.



thinking that this would be enough to force them to pay. He also specifies that the excommunication itself refers to the 204 new gold chamber ducats that they owed.

As he explains in the letter, a gimmick was found in Rome to achieve excommunication and it is dated August 1576. This solution provides Simón Ruiz with the document he needs and shows us the ability and influence of Fonseca to profit from his network in Rome and achieve his goal, which in this case is to stand by his contact at the Medina del Campo fair, as an important and essential link to continue his business in Lisbon.

Simón Ruiz's satisfaction is clearly expressed in his letter of October 26, 1582 to Fonseca:

"I have received the one from your grace of September 20 and with it the declaration for those of the college of Salamanca that your grace has given me a lot of mercy. It is true that I did not do it so much for the interest of what they owe as for the mockery that they made of it, that I will be happy that they go 8 days in bad for this until they settle."<sup>33</sup>

Actually, for Simón Ruiz, success does not lie in finally being able to collect a derisory amount of ducats after so long, nor in the joy of having the people of the college experience a "8-day" excommunication, but in the satisfaction of demonstrating in Medina that he has contacts in Rome who can get him whatever he needs. After more than a year of suffering for his reputational damage, he can finally prove that he has resources and maneuverability to be respected for.

Finally, on November 9, he informs Fonseca that "Those from the Colegio de Salamanca have already paid the requirement of their

<sup>32</sup> ASR, Caja 78 (131). Antonio de Fonseca to Simón Ruiz, September 17, 1582.

<sup>33</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (881-882). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, October 26, 1582. "he recibido la de v.m. de 20 de septiembre y con ella la declaratoria para los del collegio de Salamanca que me ha hecho v.m. mucha merçed. Zierto no lo he tanto por el interese de lo que deben quanto por la burla que dello hazían, que me holgaré que anden 8 días en mal por esto hasta allanarse".

account, because they feared excommunication and that without this threat they would have never paid anything. I kiss the hands of your grace for the care.”<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusions

We could say that in these early years both bankers studied each other until they found a common language on which to build the necessary trust to develop a fruitful relationship that would last beyond the death of its protagonists. Time, efficiency and honesty are the key elements of a relationship of great value to both. In fact, already in 1582 Antonio de Fonseca would include his nephew Jerónimo de Fonseca in business with Simón Ruiz with new orders, payments, and collections to be made at the Medina fair. And after Antonio's death in 1588, his son Manuel de Fonseca continued the correspondence until 1605.

The analysis of the letters from Rome, as well as of other documentation generated by their protagonists, allows us to reconstruct the world and realities in which the letters were written.

We must not forget that we are referring to years in which the Roman papacy tries to recover centrality and universalism and, for this reason, has an interest in the dialogue with the Catholic monarchy, with all the subjects that at different levels represent it and allow its operation, thus with men as dynamic as Fonseca and indirectly with Simón Ruiz.

In this way, the political financial framework that moved the Roman market can be reconstructed. A business in which not only the Curia made a profit of. It was something more complex. Situating this correspondence, understanding the real and deep meaning of episodes such as the one we have analyzed allows us to under-

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<sup>34</sup> ASR, Caja 194 (881-882). Simón Ruiz to Antonio de Fonseca, November 9, 1582. Ya pagaron los del colegio de Salamanca el requerimiento de su cuenta, que temieron la descomunión y sin ella nunca pagaran nada. A v.m. veso las manos por el cuidado”.

stand the financial framework within which the relationships between Castilian businessmen, like Simón Ruiz, and Roma developed, but above all to realize how fluid was the relationship between the two peninsulas.

A misunderstanding about the currency to be used for payments shows the importance of information and the need to have direct connections wherever these “hombres de negocios” had to operate. Knowing how the curia’s collection machinery works and the concrete currency needed is as important for a banker like Simón Ruiz as it is for Fonseca to know the situation in Portugal, both at a general level, knowing the movements of Felipe II in the union of the crowns, as well as at a local level, receiving information about the plague epidemics in the cities. Everything adds up to be able to decide where it is convenient to move the money. News and information become the most valuable currency for the businessmen of the end of the 16th century, they are their key to make money travel and therefore to obtain benefits.

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