

## Fighting for a *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science*: France, England and Spain in the Strategies of Ambassador Dantas (1557-1568)

*Luchando por el Mare Clausum y la Ciencia Secreta: Francia, Inglaterra y España en las estrategias del embajador Dantas (1557-1568)*

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### Abstract

The Portuguese ambassador to France and England during the 1560s, João Pereira Dantas, played a decisive role in Portuguese attempts to sabotage French and English expeditions to the Portuguese *Mare Clausum*. Studying Dantas' correspondence, and comparing it with Spanish, French and English sources and studies, this article proposes that tied to traditional policies of *Mare Clausum*, there was also an attempt at "secret science", intended to prevent Portuguese nautical experts from serving England and France. The study of Dantas' maritime espionage shows that Portuguese cosmographical knowledge played a key role in Elizabethan England's and Valois France's maritime expeditions in the 1560s.

**Keywords:** Espionage, Diplomacy, Nautical Science, Pilots, Maritime Knowledge, Portugal.

### Resumen

El embajador portugués en Francia y Inglaterra en la década de 1560, João Pereira Dantas, desempeñó un papel decisivo en los intentos portugueses de sabotear las expediciones francesas e inglesas al *Mare Clausum* portugués. Estudiando la correspondencia de Dantas, y cotejándola con fuentes y estudios españoles, franceses e ingleses, este artículo propone que, ligada a la política tradicional del *Mare Clausum*, existió una de Ciencia Secreta, destinada a impedir que los expertos náuticos portugueses sirviesen a Inglaterra y Francia. El estudio también demuestra el valor que los conocimientos cosmográficos portugueses tuvieron en las expediciones marítimas inglesas y francesas de este período.

**Palabras clave:** Espionaje, diplomacia, ciencia náutica, pilotos, conocimiento marítimo, Portugal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The European maritime expansion in the early modern period was made possible due to a combination of different events and causes. One of the most important, as R. C. D. Baldwin has demonstrated, was the interchange of nautical information between maritime rivals. Explaining how France, England and the Dutch Republic were able to start their maritime enterprises, after the ones initiated by the Iberians, he outlined that the Portuguese *Casa da Índia* and the Spanish *Casa de la Contratación* quickly became their emulated models (BALDWIN, 1980: 27). Prior, Portuguese scholars Avelino Teixeira da Mota and Luís de Albuquerque had also made this argument (MOTA, 1970; ALBUQUERQUE, 1972). More recently Ângela Barreto Xavier readdressed the issue, making the point for a Portuguese science for administration ever since the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (XAVIER, 2018). This topic is intrinsically linked with the history of information in the European early modern period, as approached in a recent edition by Ann Blair, Paul Duguid, Anja-Silvia Goeing and Anthony Grafton (BLAIR *et al.*, 2021: 61-127). Its association with the history of knowledge, as approached by Peter Burke (BURKE, 2016), and the problems entailing its circulation, as detailed by James Secord (SECORD, 2004), ensure that there is still much to research concerning information/knowledge circulation.

One clear area needing more analysis is the circulation of Portuguese information within its Empire and to Europe in the sixteenth century, namely because there is no study comparable to the Spanish one (BRENDENCKE, 2016). Since the publication of Dante Fedele's book (FEDELE, 2017), it has become clear that the complexification process of diplomacy in the early modern period meant that diplomats engaged in a wide range of activities. Jean-Michel Ribera's study on the French ambassadors to King Philip II's (1556-1598) court, testifies to the relevance of diplomatic channels in the processes of information's circulation. Ribera's research also illustrates how the boundaries between diplomacy and espionage are sometimes hard to trace (RIBERA, 2018).

This tenuous border between diplomacy and espionage when applied to studies on global maritime studies in the Iberian early modern period is closely associated with the traditional *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempted policies. The importance of *Mare Clausum* debates and attempts by the Iberian Crowns to convince what they perceived as intruders (France, England and later the Dutch Republic) to respect their sea routes and maritime rights is also well-known. Historiographical works have underlined how linked with *Mare Clausum* attempts, the Portuguese and Spanish Crowns developed a whole juridical and legal approach, well-reflected on its ambassadors' speeches and actions in all Europe. Regarding Portuguese attempted *Mare Clausum* policies, vis-à-vis France and England, some previous works (MACEDO, 1995; PEREIRA FERREIRA, 1988; 1995; 2002), have underscored its importance. Still, it is important to stress how the Portuguese challenge was also shared by Spain and this explains the similarities between Portuguese and Spanish historiographical debates (LADERO QUESADA, 1997). The same logic can be applied to the debates on the attempts to keep

knowledge secret and away from the hand of maritime competitors. Such *Secret Science* attempts are well-known, for the Spanish case, since María Portuondo's book (PORTUONDO, 2009), but were not so systematically studied for the Portuguese case. Furthermore, recent studies have framed attention on these topics linking them with the importance of the networks of technological knowledge circulation within the Spanish empire (YUN-CASALILLA, 2018). In doing so, new light was cast on the critical importance that pilots, cartographers and cosmographers had in these processes of technological knowledge production (SÁNCHEZ, 2018) and, I would add, circulation. Other recent historiographical contributions have also extended to the Portuguese case, claiming its inclusion in important debates concerning the Iberian contribution to the rise of early modern scientific practises in Europe (SÁNCHEZ, 2021; LEITÃO and SÁNCHEZ, 2021).

It is precisely within this broader scope of history of science, global maritime history and diplomatic studies that the correspondence of the ambassador João Pereira Dantas offers an excellent opportunity to document these on-going processes of maritime knowledge circulation between rivals, the diplomacy involved and the espionage attempts. The Portuguese ambassador to France between 1557 and 1568 and to England in 1562, Dantas' missives do more than providing a striking example of the tenuous borderlines between diplomacy and espionage: they document the results of Portuguese attempted *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies in the critical years when the French and English maritime defiance's to the Iberians were becoming increasingly menacing and serious. Mostly known as the diplomat that harboured in his house Portuguese pilots, cartographers and cosmographers, Dantas is also recorded as the man who, in 1556, proposed to King John III of Portugal (1521-1557), the fortification of the Cape Good Hope (SANTOS, 1969 and 1990). His embassies to France and England were marked by his attempts to impose Portuguese *Mare Clausum* (FERREIRA, 1989), as both coincided with *France Antartique* in Brazil, between 1555 and 1560, and also with the onset of major English expeditions under Queens Mary I (1553-1558) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603). In both cases, the Portuguese government relied on Dantas' ability to solve the maritime tensions and also to prevent the departure of English and French expeditions. Thus, bribery and espionage soon became a reality in Dantas' strategies. Despite, Dantas' correspondence importance there has been no systematic study and as a consequence his action remains largely unknown.

Aiming at developing a work on the lacking study about the connection between the circulation of Portuguese nautical experts and the Portuguese *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies in Europe in this period, I tried to reconstruct, as closely as possible, Dantas' original epistolary. Around 150 surviving that Dantas wrote and received were identified, in several funds in Portuguese archives (Torre do Tombo and Biblioteca da Ajuda, Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto), as well as in other archives (Archivo General de Simancas, the British Library, Bibliothèque National de France). Along the path to recover Dantas' main letters, were compiled, in the aforementioned archives, all the documents that, although not written by Dantas, address the topics connected to his embassies.

The research effort also included also published documental collections of different origins: Spanish (the correspondence of the Spanish ambassadors in France and England), English (the documents at the Calendars), and also French (correspondence of French ambassadors in Portugal and Spain).<sup>1</sup> This effort also extended to manuscripts in Spain, France and England.

Dantas' epistolary addresses a variety of issues that, by their significance and number, are simply impossible to mention in full detail in a sole article. Thus, I wrote a previous work on the main political issues of Dantas' embassies in France and England,<sup>2</sup> while this one will focus on how the maritime issues of Dantas' embassies reflect Portuguese *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempts vis-à-vis France and England. Studying Dantas' correspondence, the purpose of this article is to identify its mains topics, strategies and mainly document how Portugal was trying to fight French and English maritime expeditions not only with the classical *Mare Clausum* policies (BENTON, 2010: 105-134), but also with the methods employed by Dantas to harbour in his house the *Secret Science* of Portuguese nautical experts.

Therefore, along this article, the terms *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* will be used in association and it is important to provide a definition for both. On *Mare Clausum*, It is encompassed the Iberian Crown's policies and attempts at convincing, through diplomacy and maritime engagements at sea, France and England not to enter what they perceived as the lands and waters owed to Portugal and Spain since the 1494 Tordesillas Treaty. On *Secret Science*, are embraced the Iberian Crown's attempts at stopping the circulation of its nautical experts (pilots, cartographers and cosmographers) to France and England, sometimes with complex espionage and counter-espionage operations. Within this expression is also included, all the maritime espionage aimed at disrupting overseas plans by depriving French and English overseas expeditions of critical Iberian pilots with the requisite nautical knowledge for undertaking successful oceanic voyages.

The study will start with the French case, and later will address Dantas' action towards Elizabethan England. In the first part concerning France, It will discuss Dantas' *Mare Clausum* policy regarding *France Antartique* and the French expeditions to Florida. Then, It will proceed the analysis with Dantas' *Secret Science* policy, documenting the methods he used to gather in his house Portuguese nautical experts. It will then move to deepen how both policies by Dantas motivated his downfall and discuss its reasons. The second major section extends the analysis of the same topic's vis-à-vis Elizabethan England, studying Dantas 1562 *Mare Clausum* embassy to England and how its failure motivated all his later maritime espionage in England. All along, It will demonstrate the importance that leaks of Portuguese information and agents circulating to France and England had for the systematic launch of French and English maritime expansion in this period, as well as document how Portuguese *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies, in Dantas' case, so often failed. In the Conclusion, It will reflect on the

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1 Along this work and every time that it proved possible, I opted to quote studies on these documents instead of the documents themselves to avoid a longer extension.

2 On the topic see: Nuno VILA-SANTA, 2023a.

overall significance of Dantas' embassies and will compare the role and weight of Portuguese diplomacy in Europe with its Spanish and French counterparts, suggesting that Portuguese diplomacy also needs to be more studied.

## 2. DANTAS' EMBASSY TO FRANCE (1557-1568)

### 2.1. Maritime diplomacy and espionage: Dantas and the French menaces in Brazil and Florida

Albeit, Dantas' original instruction did not survive, it becomes clear by all his action, that his main goal was to use diplomatic and espionage methods to prevent any further French overseas challenges to the Portuguese. In the first years of his embassy this had a clear translation in two overseas areas: the French attempts in Brazil and West Africa. This was owed to the fact that Dantas arrived in France with a commission by King John III (1521-1557) to negotiate with King Henry II (1547-1559) the renewal of the previous treaties of non-mutual maritime attacks between French and Portuguese seafarers. The ambassador succeeded shortly after his arrival with the treaty's renewal, in June 1557 (CRUZ, 1992: 222). Dantas also tried to ensure that in the 1559 Cateau-Cambrésis peace treaty, between Spain and France, King Henry II would forbid Frenchmen to sail to Portuguese overseas areas. However, by July 1559, D. Francisco Pereira, the Portuguese ambassador to King Philip II (1556-1598), confirmed that France only committed in word and not in written form.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay, the Spanish ambassador to France, also negotiated with King Francis II (1559-1560) a project of agreement in which France would commit not to challenge the Spanish and Portuguese *Mare Clausum*.<sup>4</sup> But this did not happen, as the return of Nicholas Durrand Villegagnon (1510-1571) to France soon proved. The 1560 arriving news on the Portuguese conquest of Fort Coligny, in Brazil, soon forced Dantas to negotiate with the formal leader of *France Antartique* to prevent a major break-down on French-Portuguese maritime relations. What started as a mere negotiation soon evolved into a major operation of bribery.

In April 1561, Dantas received news from bishop Quadra, the Spanish ambassador to England, and also from a Portuguese agent in England (Manuel de Araújo), that Villegagnon was departing with a huge fleet to avenge the loss of Fort Coligny.<sup>5</sup> While Villegagnon did not depart, Dantas was called to the *Conseil Privé* to account for Portuguese action in Brazil against the French. Dantas argued that France had violated the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas with Villegagnon's expedition and also that the French attacked the Portuguese shortly after their arrival. To counterbalance the French accusation that the command to attack Fort Coligny was directly sent from Lisbon, Dantas demanded to see evidence of this. But as the Valois court was unable to present it, Dantas closed the issue

<sup>3</sup> *Archivo*, I, 1950: 39.

<sup>4</sup> Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), *Cartas Missivas*, Maço 2, nº 141, fls. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico* (CC) I-3-2 and I-104-114, fl. 1.

stating that the French court lacked any proof of the Portuguese court's order to attack.<sup>6</sup> As Chantonay reports, the matter was so delicate that the Queen-Mother Catherine de Medici (1519-1589) opened an exception to take part in the meeting and witness admiral Gaspard de Coligny's (1519-1572) angry and abrupt shut down of the meeting.<sup>7</sup> Despite this initial success, Dantas was forced to maintain a negotiation with Villegagnon. The need for this typical *Mare Clausum* approach was felt by Dantas, as despite he had been successful in ensuring that the French Crown would not patronize immediately any other attempt in Brazil, he could not be sure that Villegagnon would easily drop his cause

It is in this context that in January 1563, Dantas reported that Villegagnon approached him, with documents from the *Conseil Privé*, demanding financial compensation. Dantas confessed his difficulties in counterbalancing Villegagnon's sophisticated arguments and counselled Portugal to pay him the compensation, as he was a dangerous leader and a very good Catholic. He also sent all the process to Portugal and asked for instructions. By March, Dantas assumes that he dissimulated and delayed the dealings to profit from Villegagnon's courtesan downfall.<sup>8</sup> But Villegagnon's pressure must have continued as, in July, Dantas opened negotiations with Coligny and also with Michel de l'Hôpital (1507-1573), the French Chancellor, to convince them to become servants of Portuguese interests in Villegagnon's Brazilian affair. He even sent to King Sebastian (1557-1578) the copy of the letters he was exchanging with Coligny.<sup>9</sup> Dantas also sought to break the letter of marque that Villegagnon received from King Charles IX (1560-1574) to compensate for the loss of Fort Coligny. While dealing with this affair, Dantas' concern was also to avoid that Villegagnon won any support from Coligny or l'Hôpital that could end in any possible French Crown's official support to another expedition to Brazil.

In May 1564, even though he had received orders from Portugal to proceed, Dantas delayed the negotiation again. As Villegagnon approached him with more documents from the *Conseil Privé*, Dantas re-addressed them to Lisbon and asked for the Portuguese court's final position. He confessed that he had been paying Coligny and l'Hôpital since 1562 to favour his case, but also warned that he delayed more payments while the final instructions did not arrive. By November 1564, Dantas had not yet departed to accompany King Charles IX and the Queen in their Grand-Tour of France because he intended to meet personally with Coligny at Châtillon. In a February 1565 letter, Dantas explains the meeting with the French admiral. He states that Coligny received him with many shows of affection but also that Coligny confronted him with the hanging of eleven Frenchmen in Lisbon. Dantas immediately petitioned Coligny to defend himself in the *Conseil*

6 ANTT, CC I-106-4, fl. 1v.

7 *Archivo*, III, 1951: 217.

8 Dantas was well-aware that after Villegagnon's return to France, Coligny, due to his conversion to Protestantism and leadership of the Huguenot party, had become an enemy of Catholic Villegagnon. This is why Dantas' explored the opposition between the two previous allies. It is important to remind that Coligny had patronized Villegagnon's departure to Brazil in 1555. However, in 1560-61, their relations worsened.

9 Biblioteca da Ajuda (BA), 49-X-9, fl. 1v., 17v. and 30-30v.



*Privé* and was unable to speak with Coligny about Villegagnon's case. Dantas justified that he had been negotiating with Coligny because King Charles IX did not take any important decision without hearing the admiral's advice.<sup>10</sup> He also tried to persuade Coligny not to send French expeditions to Guinea and Mina, but D. Francés de Alava, the new Spanish ambassador to France, reported that Coligny was not convinced.<sup>11</sup> Another letter by Dantas, dated February 1566, in which he praises the Constable Anne de Montmorency (1493-1567), also raises the doubt if he did not attempt to pay him to become a Portuguese servant.<sup>12</sup> After all, Montmorency was another key-actor at the Valois court, and one that King John III, in the 1530s, had also ordered his diplomats to bribe (JULIEN, 1978: 113; FERREIRA, 2002). Still, concerning Dantas, no final conclusion can be reached as no more documents on the topic are known.

It is in an important letter to King Sebastian, dated March 1565, that Dantas details the negotiations he undertook because of Villegagnon's affair. Commenting on the formal reply from the *Conseil Privé*, Dantas confesses his surprise. To explain the unpredictable outcome, Dantas recalled all the events. He started by recording that Coligny had been paid in 1562, 1563 and 1564, L'Hôpital in 1563 and 1564 and that more payments were agreed. In exchange, L'Hôpital and Coligny would argue in the *Conseil Privé* that Villegagnon's affair did not concern the French Crown but only Villegagnon. Dantas even mentions a written deal with Coligny and L'Hôpital. In a previous meeting with Coligny, he had prepared a gift and another payment to him, but Coligny refused it, arguing that he would still serve Portugal. Worried with Coligny's answer, Dantas wrote to a friend of L'Hôpital stating that he would pay his pension to her wife with a diamond from a friend. L'Hôpital's friend accused Dantas of trading and refused too. Therefore, Dantas recognised that the previous conditions on payments, ordered on him from the Portuguese court, had caused this outcome. He also blamed Lisbon for ordering him to proceed in such unhonourable ways. As Dantas had previously refused the idea of giving up Fort Coligny to the bishop of Orleans for him to renounce it on King Sebastian, he counselled to simply drop the payments. Instead, Dantas advised exploring the personal tension between Catholic Villegagnon and Huguenot Coligny, as they would never agree, and the French Crown would not assume Villegagnon's affair as its own. He finished the letter asking for a final instruction.<sup>13</sup> Lisbon's last position is not known. Still, Portugal ended up paying a compensation to Villegagnon in exchange for his renunciation to his Brazilian project (HEULHARD, 1897: 242-245).

Thus, Dantas had a coherent approach from the beginning to the end of Villegagnon's affair: separate the French Crown's previous backing to Villegagnon in 1555 from any new possible support. In doing so, Dantas wisely manipulated the scenario at the Valois court to his goal by exploiting rivalry between Catholic Villegagnon and the Valois with Huguenot Coligny in the scenario of the French

10 BA, 49-X-9, fls. 47-48, 51, 65 and ANTT, CC I-107-41, fls. 1-1v.

11 *Archivo*, VII, 1953: 90.

12 ANTT, CC I-107-105, fl. 1v.

13 BA, 49-X-9, fls. 70-71 and 72v.

wars of religion. In this specific *Mare Clausum* attempt, Dantas succeeded as Villegagnon never returned to Brazil in spite of all his calls to action. But, in the meantime, Dantas also fulfilled his orders to break branch letters against Portuguese navigation and kept a strict vigilance on the French expeditions to Florida.

Although Florida was out of the Portuguese area, according to the Tordesillas Treaty, Dantas warned Portugal on the French preparations by Jean Ribault (1520-1565), stating that the French had been there already in 1539.<sup>14</sup> Dantas' December 1562 missive, reveals not only his personal interest in the region but also that he undertook an espionage mission on the French. In this letter, Dantas detailed all the geographical discoveries made by Ribault's expedition in 1562. He describes the Florida coast and stated that he had in his possession the rutter and cartography of the entire region made by the French. Should King Sebastian request him this material, he would gladly send it. As Dantas was worried about the effects of Ribault's expedition, he provided advices to Lisbon. Firstly, he warned that the French had sent Huguenots to deceive the inhabitants of the land. Secondly, he stated that the French were falsifying all the rutters and cartography to argue that the entire region was discovered by them so that, in their rivalry with Spain, they could claim it for France. Thirdly, he posited that the French emulated the Portuguese tradition of placing landmarks with the arms of France to formally claim the area for the Valois. Dantas sent this piece as he was concerned that the French would attempt the same in Portuguese overseas areas. He also sent secretly his informant to Lisbon, asking for rewards to him.<sup>15</sup> But, how did Dantas obtain this secret information?

His correspondence reveals that, like his predecessors, Dantas had spies in the French ports. In this case, the Spanish ambassador Chantonay reports, in January 1563, how Dantas acquired the intelligence: he convinced the best pilot that the French employed in the expedition, which happened to be Portuguese, to return to his homeland.<sup>16</sup> In a more recent study, I was able to uncover the story of the Portuguese pilot that provided all the information to Dantas. Initially on the service of Spain and later kidnapped by the French in the Caribbean, Portuguese pilot Bartolomeu Borges was forced to guide Jean Ribault's expedition. When Ribault's fleet returned to France, he fled and requested Dantas' assistance in returning to Portugal. Dantas provided Borges conditions to sail to Portugal. It was certainly during the bargain that Dantas seized from Borges all the details of Ribault's expedition.<sup>17</sup> Dantas' action vis-à-vis Borges embodied a classical example of his *Secret Science* attempt. Perfectly aware that the French used the nautical knowledge of a skilled Portuguese pilot to plan their voyage to Florida, he intervened to avoid that any new French voyage to the region would be guided by the aforementioned pilot. In proceeding in such a way, Dantas was also pleasing Spain: by depriving the French from their pilot, he was making it harder

<sup>14</sup> ANTT, *Fragmentos*, box 1, maço 1, n.º 22, fl. 1v.-2.

<sup>15</sup> BA, 49-X-9, fls. 4v.-5.

<sup>16</sup> *Archivo*, V, 1952: 18.

<sup>17</sup> On pilot Borges see Nuno VILA-SANTA, 2023b.



for France to launch another expedition to the area claimed by Spain.

But, Dantas' concern with Florida went further. In March 1563, he informed Portugal that Jean Ribault had fled to England with a full package of rutters and charts and warned that the English were said to be preparing expeditions to Florida. Dantas did not credit them, but he was worried that English ships could profit from a French establishment in Florida to launch raids at the Azorean Islands against Portuguese East Indies vessels. The matter was so delicate that he counselled King Sebastian to debate it with his advisors. Perfectly aware of Coligny's negotiations to have Ribault back in France, Dantas also informed of Ribault's failed attempt to return to France, in July 1563.<sup>18</sup> Dantas' letters also reveal that, at this stage, he was aware of the French Huguenots' collaborations with Protestant English at sea against the Portuguese and the Spanish. This is why, in May 1563, he noticed that the supposed English expedition to Florida, was in fact directed to Guinea and Mina. He lacked information of French ships joining the English as one of his agents (Manuel de Araújo) for some French ports had refused to run them. Araújo feared being discovered and killed by the French. In this scenario, Dantas advised Portugal to send a fleet to the area to fight English and French vessels,<sup>19</sup> as it ended up happening.

Thus, these letters by Dantas show clearly that he was aware of the traditional Anglo-French interchange of information, namely on Coligny's and King Henry II's attempts at having French pilots and cartographers, such as Jean Rotz or Jean Ribault, back to France (BALDWIN, 1980: 215-219). But, Dantas' correspondence also proves that, aside from the aforementioned case of the Portuguese pilot on the Florida expedition, he employed all the means to prevent Portuguese nautical expertise to work for France and England, a topic (Dantas *Secret Science's* policy) that shall now be examined more closely.

## 2.2. Dantas' house: harbouring Portuguese expertise abroad

During Dantas' embassy to France, the episodes with Portuguese nautical experts accumulated. As for the previous case with Florida, they often involved Elizabethan England and later influenced King Philip II's action against Dantas. This was due to the fact that Dantas' behaviour to the Portuguese in France was considered polemical by Alava, the Spanish ambassador to France, but also by King Sebastian's advisors (CRUZ, 1992: 161). A description of each of these cases from the less to the most meaningful will be made a description of each of these cases from the less to the most meaningful, so that later on the reasons behind Dantas' downfall can be discussed.

In October 1559, when France and England were considering sending a joint embassy to the Moroccan sultan, Dantas was informed that Portuguese Belchior Vaz de Azevedo was about to depart as the ambassador. France had already

<sup>18</sup> BA, 49-X-9, fls. 21v.-22v. and 31v.

<sup>19</sup> ANTT, CC I-106-70, fl. 1.

attempted to send him to Morocco in 1556 but Azevedo was jailed in Spain. When he was released, Dantas discovered, via his brother-in-law, that he was to secretly depart to negotiate an alliance with the Moroccan sultan. The goal was to expel the Portuguese from their Moroccan fortresses of Ceuta and Tangier and then to invade Southern Spain. In the letter to Portugal, Dantas revealed all the arrangements, promised to place a spy on board Azevedo's vessel and asked for a Portuguese-Spanish collaboration to prevent the French from landing in Morocco.<sup>20</sup> In this case, he also counselled the murder of traitorous Portuguese like Azevedo.<sup>21</sup> However, depending on the circumstances (the characters' motivations and their personal knowledge), Dantas also advised different strategies.

A good example of this is found in a December 1561 long missive by Dantas to Portuguese merchant Gaspar Ribeiro that had just arrived to Lyon. Resorting to biblical predestination arguments, Dantas argued that Ribeiro should return to Portugal as life in France was expensive and the French did not treat well the Portuguese. He also contended that Ribeiro should be a patriot and live his final days in Portugal. Dantas stated that ever since Ribeiro's departure from Portugal, he had decided to write him and warned that this was not his normal procedure. Yet in December, Ribeiro replied to Dantas to clarify that he did not come to France as a traitor but because his wife and daughter had been imprisoned in Portugal and he had family settled and well treated in Lyon. He thanked Dantas for his consideration but he was not to return to Portugal.<sup>22</sup> Thus, and contrary to Belchior Vaz de Azevedo's case and similarly to Bartolomeu Borges, Dantas intervened to repatriate another Portuguese that he feared could be used by the French against Portuguese interests. However, in Ribeiro's case, there was another motivation for Dantas' action: the fact that Ribeiro came to France due to the promises of Jean Nicot, the French ambassador to Portugal between 1559 and 1561. Dantas was outraged with this and with Nicot's negotiations to have Portuguese pilots sent to France.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, at unclear circumstances, Dantas seems to have been able to send Ribeiro away from France, as he departed for businesses to Venice in June 1563.<sup>24</sup> In other cases, similar to Florida's rutters and cartography, Dantas did not hesitate to "steal" servants from the Queen-Mother Catherine de Medici to place them on Portuguese service.

In January 1563, Dantas recommended to King Sebastian the services of the German Nicolau de Lambarch, whom he envisaged as a possible informant on Huguenot maritime movements against Portugal. Dantas states that he negotiated

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20 While Azevedo was going as the ambassador of Antoine de Bourbon (1518-1562), the King of Navarre, Dantas rightly understood that Azevedo would negotiate, as he did, a diplomatic treaty between France and Morocco. Bourbon also sent Azevedo in his attempt to pressure King Philip II to return to him Spanish Navarre. This is why Dantas' denounced Bourbon's plans to invade Portuguese and Spanish positions.

21 ANTT, CC I-103-125, fls. 1-3.

22 ANTT, CC I-105-68/73.

23 ANTT, *Fragmentos*, box 1, maço 1, n.º 22, fls. 1-1v. On the topic see my article titled «Diplomacy and Humanism: ambassador Jean Nicot and the French-Portuguese maritime rivalry (1559-1561)» forthcoming at *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*.

24 BA, 49-X-9, fl. 32v.

in secrecy to have Lambarch coming to Portugal. He convinced Lambarch that the Queen-Mother was not in the conditions to pay him what she had promised because France was torn apart by the first civil war. As Lambarch had an unspecified secret invention, and to ensure his departure to Portugal, Dantas offered him better conditions than the Queen.<sup>25</sup> In the end, Dantas did exactly what he had criticised ambassador Nicot for. Lambarch' case shows that Dantas' action in France was not only aimed at preventing Portuguese expertise from working to the Valois: if foreign expertise at work in France was of interest to Portugal, he would also intervene. In doing so, Dantas was also ensuring conditions for receiving a better reward when the time of his final return to Portugal would arrive.

Dantas' attempt to please the Portuguese court with foreign expertise is also documented for another instance. In May 1564, Dantas also managed to retain in his house a 26 years old talented German who spoke German, Flemish, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and a little of English. He recommended King Sebastian to adopt him as royal interpreter and ensured that Portugal would never find such a talented person. By March 1565, Dantas informed that he still maintained in his house this interpreter and also promised to bring him when he would return to Portugal.<sup>26</sup> It remains unknown if Dantas brought this unnamed German to Portugal, but it becomes clear once more how Dantas was also interested in all sorts of humanistic and scientific expertise that he knew could serve Portugal. Thus, it is perfectly plausible that the list of foreign experts harboured in his house might have been larger than what Dantas' missives reveal.

Meanwhile, as was his main duty, Dantas also kept vigilance towards Portuguese pilots arriving to France. In March 1563, Dantas confessed that he convinced the aforementioned pilot Bartolomeu Borges to return to Portugal to prevent the damage from him speaking. Still, he was surprised that King Sebastian allowed him to return via Flanders and not directly by ship, worrying that Borges could flee in the meantime. Fortunately for Dantas and the Portuguese government, this was not the case, as Borges was received by the Portuguese Regent in Lisbon, in May 1563, awarded and later on approached by the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon to return to Spain's service.<sup>27</sup> Also, in October 1564, Dantas sent back to Portugal a denunciation on pilot Gonçalo Birão. Although Dantas does not mention the accusation, he advised caution with the denouncers as they could be lying. He warned that a good Portuguese pilot in France was not necessarily a traitor to Portugal.<sup>28</sup> Dantas' statement is particularly relevant, as it shows that the ambassador always analysed each specific case. Precisely for this reason, Dantas would defend pilots against the Portuguese and Spanish government's interests, as shall be detailed ahead, based on his own judgment of the pilot's loyalties to the Iberian Crowns. It is in this framework that the case of the Homem brothers, Portuguese cosmographers, whom Dantas managed to entertain in his house for some years, should also be approached.

25 ANTT, CC I-106-45, fl. 1v.-2.

26 BA, 49-X-9, fl. 53-53v; ANTT, CC I-107-59, fls. 1-1v.

27 For further details, see note 17.

28 BA, 49-X-9, fl. 32v. and 65.

In September 1562, Dantas reported that he had been harbouring for two years the sons of Portuguese cartographer Lopo Homem and asked for grants to them. But, by July 1563, those rewards from the Portuguese King had not arrived and Dantas complained of his difficulty to retain André, António and Tomé Homem. He claimed that they had considered fleeing his house. Worried that the Homem brothers would end serving France or England, Dantas had prevented that from happening, by promising that he would convince King Sebastian to grant them a reward in Portugal. Dantas insisted that all, but especially André, were top experts in the science of chart production. Well-aware that previously the brothers had fled Lisbon and to convince the Portuguese court of his claim on André Homem's expertise, Dantas reminded his long personal experience on the topic and interest in this kind of personnel.<sup>29</sup> For that reason, Dantas argued that the Portuguese King should not hesitate to grant them what they asked, as they would have work in any part of the world. He advised King Sebastian to send him an award of 100 cruzados so that he could convince the brothers to embark to India. He finished the letter stating that it would be a terrible mistake not to prize the value of low people with such abilities, as were Lopo Homem's relatives. In May 1564, when Dantas received the money, he suspended the brothers' departure owing to André's complaints that the money was short. As Dantas was about to leave Paris, he ensured King Sebastian that, in his absence, André would inform him about everything.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it becomes clear that Dantas employed André Homem as his own agent. Although, no more details are known, it is possible that Dantas had made further promises to André Homem, while using him to spy on admiral Coligny's movements and intentions. However, if this was Dantas' secret play, the events clearly escaped his control.

It is likely that during Dantas' absence, André entered Coligny's service. In a March 1565 letter, Dantas reports that, in July 1564, André had a fight with one of his servants, fled his home and went to Coligny's house to present him a globe. Coligny gave him money to keep him in French service. Thus, León Bourdon's hypothesis that Dantas tried to negotiate André Homem's return to Portugal in his meeting with Coligny, at Châtillon, in late 1564 (BOURDON, 1972: 16-17), is very likely since, in the March 1565 missive, Dantas mentions that he had been trying to convince André to return to Portuguese service.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in the February 1565 well-known letter that André Homem wrote to Dantas, André stated that he had already been accepted as King Charles IX's cosmographer and that Dantas' manoeuvres to destroy the scientific reputation of his work had failed. In this menacing tone letter, André Homem reminded Dantas that he had offered the globe to Coligny because Dantas did not fulfil his word of convincing King Sebastian to give him a pension of 1350 cruzados in exchange for his return to Portugal. Nevertheless, as André owed much money to Dantas, he still considered returning to Dantas' house, if Dantas paid him his debts and ensured

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<sup>29</sup> This fact is linked with Dantas' previous proposal on the erection of a Portuguese fortress at the Cape of Good Hope in 1556 (on the topic see Santos, 1969 and 1990).

<sup>30</sup> BA, 49-X-9, fls. 32v.-33, 52v. and 87.

<sup>31</sup> ANTT, CC I-107-60, fls. 1v-2.

him the pension he requested.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Dantas' reply to this letter seems not to have survived. Regardless, by late 1566, the Spanish ambassador Alava reports that Dantas managed to send António and Tomé Homem to Portugal (BOURDON, 1972: 22-23). As for André Homem, he went to England with pilots Gaspar Caldeira and Antão Luís to propose Queen Elizabeth I an expedition to a West African Eldorado. After André Homem's return to France, and to Coligny's house in particular at unknown dates, Dantas sent Miguel Guedes to spy his movements. Already during the year 1567, Dantas seems to have been successful in winning back André's trust and even agreed with him that he would stay in Coligny's house to spy his activities for him (BOURDON, 1955: 14).

Dantas' action is again telling of his *Secret Science* attempts, which had a clear *Mare Clausum* motivation. While Dantas was able to repatriate António and Tomé Homem, he failed to repatriate the most skilled (and therefore dangerous of all at France and England's service): André Homem. In this process, it becomes clear how Dantas had to fight against the Portuguese government lack of rewards and unawareness on the expertise of a cosmographer like André Homem. Despite his sophisticated arguments and efforts, Dantas could not control at distance, the decisions taken at the Portuguese court. Thus, for André Homem's case, Dantas' failure in repatriation is linked with the absence of a coherent Portuguese official policy to repatriate its nautical and cosmographical expertise, as has already been argued (GUERREIRO, 1999: 196-197). This aspect is further revealed in another critical example: that of pilots Gaspar Caldeira and Antão Luís, that clearly demonstrate, as André Homem's instance, how the Portuguese government only reacted too late and was not worried at solving at their birth (by issuing a policy of competent attraction and maintenance of such experts at its service) the reasons behind the migrations of its nautical experts.

The cases of Portuguese pilots Gaspar Caldeira and Antão Luís were so critical for Portuguese *Mare Clausum* interests that they even allow to fully document Dantas' espionage and counter-espionage in France and England. Therefore, a full analysis of this episode of Dantas' *Secret Science* attempt is needed. Caldeira and Luís left Portugal because Regent Cardinal Henry (1512-1580), seized, in Lisbon, their illegal trade cargos from West Africa. Both fled to Spain in 1564, where they proposed to organize an expedition of gold to a non-held Portuguese area in West Africa. King Philip II gave them six months to launch the expedition. Since they failed to prepare it, they fled to France (BOURDON, 1955: 8-9). By July 1565, Dantas reports, without mentioning their names, that two Portuguese appeared disguised at the Valois court to trade pepper and gold. They were quickly attended by the Queen-Mother Catherine de Medici and by the Constable Anne de Montmorency. Although Dantas was unable to discover what they spoke, he immediately suspected that they would guide a French expedition to Benin. By that time, he only knew that both were sent to serve captain Peyrot Monluc (?-1566), who was preparing, in Guyenne, a fleet for Canada. Possibly because of this, in August 1565, during his secret meeting with the duke of Alba (1507-1582) at the Franco-Spanish

32 ANTT, CC I-107-47, fls. 1-2.



meeting in Bayonne, Dantas proposed a maritime alliance between Portugal and Spain against French and English attempts in Florida and other places. The letter also leaves the suspicion that Dantas may have proposed Alba an agreement to prevent Portuguese experts from crossing the Franco-Spanish border. Such a proposal by Dantas embodied the two Portuguese attempted policies that have been the target of this paper: *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* and how it was critical to deprive France and England of Portuguese nautical expertise to avoid any more menacing French and English overseas plans against Portugal and Spain. Alba quickly understood the importance of Dantas' proposal. He promised Dantas that he would present the topic upon his return to Madrid and that King Philip II would reply directly to King Sebastian. Some days later after the meeting with Alba, Dantas reported that he already had Caldeira and Luís spied.<sup>33</sup>

Still in August 1565, Dantas delayed his ambassadorial duty to accompany King Charles IX owing to Caldeira and Luís' plans. He had discovered that they were both held secretly prisoner in a Guyenne castle. He sent friar António Pinto and then his servant Diogo Ribeiro to speak with them. Dantas asserted that pilots Luís and Caldeira had a low understanding. Luís was more open to the idea of returning to Portugal than Caldeira. Dantas re-addressed to King Sebastian the letters he was exchanging to convince them to return homeland. In the negotiation, Dantas stated that he did not promise both what had been promised to pilot António Eanes Pintado when he fled to England in 1551-52 and ended up training English seamen.<sup>34</sup> Dantas reported that Luís and Caldeira had presented Portuguese nautical rutters and charts to the French and even that captain Peyrot Monluc had confiscated them those materials. On that occasion, Caldeira even complained that if he knew the French would treat him like this, he would have gone to Istanbul, a statement that fully reveals how for Portuguese pilots the way they were treated and received abroad was a chief motivation for their migrations. But, by that time, Dantas was worried that the intelligence presented by Caldeira and Luís to Monluc would motivate the French to sail not to Canada, as was officially stated, but to Guinea and Mina. Thus, Dantas urged the Portuguese King to send a fleet to the region and immediately spoke with his friend Jean Monluc (1502-1579), the bishop of Valence and uncle of captain Peyrot Monluc. Dantas confronted him with his nephew's plans to Portuguese overseas areas and threatened to denounce the case to King Charles IX. The bishop swore Dantas that he did not know anything. As a consequence, Dantas advised Lisbon to send a formal protest letter to King Charles IX and asked for instructions on what he should do regarding Caldeira, if he did not accept to return to Portugal. Basically, Dantas was asking for formal authorization to order his murder, as it becomes clear that Dantas envisioned Caldeira as a traitor and a menace to Portuguese attempted *Mare Clausum*. He finished this letter to King Sebastian,

<sup>33</sup> BA, 49-X-9, fls. 79v.-80 and 83.

<sup>34</sup> The case of António Eanes Pintado become much celebrated in England during the 1550s and even motivated a series of Portuguese diplomatic and espionage attempts in England. For more details on the topic see my article titled «From allies to rivals: Portuguese maritime espionage in England (1551-1559)» forthcoming at the *English Historical Review*.



advising a good grant to Michel de Seure (?-1593), a previous French ambassador to Portugal between 1557 and 1559, because he disapproved of Peyrot Monluc's anti-Portuguese plans.<sup>35</sup>

Shortly before temporarily departing to Portugal, in February 1566, Dantas was relieved to announce that he hoped to have Antão Luís back to Portugal, while Gaspar Caldeira was still serving the French as Peyrot Monluc's fleet had not yet departed. Due to this situation, Dantas wrote to King Sebastian that the Portuguese fleet was not needed at sea to fight the French.<sup>36</sup> This letter costed Dantas some of his reputation due to Peyrot Monluc's attack at Madeira Island, in October 1566, and especially because of Luís and Caldeira's guidance as pilots in the French fleet. These facts easily prove once more how Dantas, despite all his abilities and espionage, could sometimes also be tricked. The difference in Caldeira and Luís' cases was that this time, the events would have harder consequences for Dantas' himself, by deploying a series of events that would end his embassy. It is in this context that when Dantas returned to France, in late 1566, he soon received orders to jail Luís and Caldeira and send both to Portugal. The Portuguese Regent's order (Cardinal Henry) caused a counter-espionage operation between England, France and Spain, orchestrated by Dantas to lay his hands on Luís and Caldeira. Such operation, particularly in the timeline involved, documents once more how *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempted policies were deeply connected and how their outcomes hanged in the balance at every moment of all the delicate operation.

By February 1567, Dantas was informed that the English were preparing an expedition to China by sailing westwards, in which a great Portuguese cosmographer (possibly André Homem) was to take part. In May 1567, Guzmán de Silva, the Spanish ambassador to England, informed that Caldeira and Luís were already in England. By September 1567, news confirmed that both were going to take part in John Hawkins' (1532-1595) third voyage, which was to sail for Guinea and Mina.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Dantas ordered two of his men to go to England and convince personally Luís and Caldeira to return to his service. Dantas also warned Portugal of their departure in Hawkins' fleet. Gabriel Pereira's (one of Dantas' agents) missive on the matter is known. Pereira's dealings with Luís and Caldeira almost read like a full police romance case in 16<sup>th</sup> century London with an emotional report on persecutions and accusations of treachery.<sup>38</sup> Although, Pereira failed to convince Luís and Caldeira to return to Portugal, it is important to highlight that it is highly probable that they both fled from Hawkins' leadership also because of Dantas' promises. Hawkins was considered responsible for their escape by Edward Clinton (1512-1584), the English Admiral, and had to justify himself to Queen Elizabeth I. In the end, Caldeira and Luís deceived William

35 BA, 49-X-9, fls. 85-85v. and 87v.-88v. In the comment on Seure's position, Dantas was clearly mistaken. Seure's «official» position to Dantas was a manoeuvre by the French to trick Dantas, as Seure was no less than one of the sponsors of Peyrot Monluc's voyage.

36 ANTT, CC I-107-105, fls. 1-1v.

37 ANTT, CC I-108-31/54.

38 ANTT, CC I-108-72/74.

Wynter (1519-1589) and the Queen to whom they, with André Homem, had again proposed the expedition to a West African Eldorado.

Dantas certainly promised Luís and Caldeira that he would convince King Sebastian to pardon them, as, yet in 1567, he harboured them in his house for some time and then sent them to the Spanish border in disguise (BOURDON, 1952: 16-18, 21-22 and 26-30), where they were imprisoned and sent to Portugal. In February 1568, Gaspar Caldeira, Antão Luís and another pilot, Belchior Contreiras, were publicly executed in Lisbon for their guidance of Peyrot Monluc's expedition to Madeira Island. Caldeira and Luís' prison at Fuenterrabia was only made possible, as Raymond Fourquevaux, the French ambassador to Spain, noticed, because in November 1567, Portugal and Spain agreed to avoid the arrival of Portuguese pilots and cartographers to France (BOURDON, 1952: 31).

Such statement by Forquevaux shows the clear link between Portuguese *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempted policies. It also demonstrates that Dantas' previous proposal to Alba in 1565 was seriously considered and even accepted by Spain in 1567. The Spanish acceptance is connected with the fact that Spain also had its own attempted *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies, as all the story of French expeditions to Florida in the 1560s easily show. But in this case, Spain was also deeply aware that Portuguese pilots, cartographers and cosmographers working for France and England were not merely a Portuguese problem: they were also its own problem as too often they ended fuelling French and English overseas plans against Spanish interests or, worst even, attacking Spanish overseas interests.<sup>39</sup> Seen on this light, Portuguese-Spanish diplomatic and espionage collaboration was fully needed in 1567 to prevent major consequences for Iberians' overseas interests.

Possibly, due to this agreement too, yet in 1567, and after the coming to France of Portuguese cosmographer Bartolomeu Velho (?-1568), the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon succeeded in preventing Portuguese humanist and nautical expert Fernando de Oliveira (1507-158?) from entering Valois service (MOTA, 1966: 5-7). Yet, for Velho and Oliveira's, there is no known record of Dantas' intervention, as the story had all its critical events in Lisbon. Still, given Dantas' espionage network, it is likely that, at least, he became aware of their cases. The dangers of the espionage and counter-espionage that Dantas undertook in France and England were not unnoticed by Spain. Indeed, the lack of Dantas' collaboration with Spain due to Portuguese pilot Mimoso would mean the end of his embassy in 1567-68.

### 2.3. «French and Huguenot»: Spain and Dantas' downfall

The process that triggered the end of Dantas' embassy to France had a starting point in the French attack to Madeira Island, in October 1566. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>39</sup> A classic example of this is given by François Le Clerc's famous attack to Santiago de Cuba, in 1555. Le Clerc's attack was possible due to the guidance of the Portuguese renegade pilot Pero Brás.

sources prove that he was not dismissed from the French embassy because of his allegedly soft complaint at the Valois court, but due to a systematic campaign against him by Alava, the Spanish ambassador to France, which had the *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempted Portuguese policies at its heart. It is important to contextualize both events in order to analyse Dantas' downfall.

In March 1566, the Queen Catherine de Medici sent Dantas to Lisbon with a commission to negotiate the marriage between King Sebastian and her daughter Marguerite de Valois (1533-1615). Already at Lisbon and in July, Dantas wrote to the Queen-Mother to remind her that she had promised before his departure from France that she would protect Portuguese interests while he came to Portugal. Therefore, he asked her to prevent any expedition by Peyrot Monluc headed for Guinea, Brazil or Congo. Dantas argued clearly to the Queen-Mother that it was not true to state that Monluc's expedition was bound for Canada, as he had intelligence confirming its destination (MATOS, 1952: 188-190). Thus, when Monluc attacked Madeira Island, Dantas worst fears were confirmed. A process of diplomatic litigation involving the Portuguese, Spanish and French courts was unleashed.

Since by the schedule of Monluc's attack, Dantas was in Lisbon, it was one of his agents, Manuel de Araújo, who formally presented a complaint at the Valois court. Araújo confronted the Queen-Mother and King Charles IX. Both condemned the attack and ensured that they had not previously authorized it. They issued documents forbidding the return of Monluc's fleet to France, but in the letter to Cardinal Henry, Araújo blamed Dantas for the attack as he had information on the expedition before his departure and did nothing to prevent it. Still, Araújo offered to serve as temporary ambassador until Dantas' return. In a second letter, also dated November 1566, Araújo counselled to hang the Portuguese pilots that drove Monluc to Madeira Island.<sup>40</sup> As has been underscored in the previous section, this was precisely what happened in February 1568 in Lisbon. A recent investigation on this attack has proved that King Charles IX and the Queen-Mother had not authorized Monluc to attack either the Spanish or the Portuguese overseas. This was owed to the Spanish ambassador Alava's threat that if Monluc attacked any Spanish area, there would be open war between France and Spain. Knowing that King Philip II would also back the Portuguese against any hypothetical attack from the French, the Queen-Mother and King Charles IX, like Peyrot father's, started by not patronizing his plans but allowed him to sail if he did not attack Iberian interests (BREHM and TRINDADE, 2020: 31-33).

Owing to the attack, Dantas was consulted, while in Lisbon, on the Portuguese reaction. Cardinal Henry decided to send him back to France to complain and only to proceed with the negotiation for King Sebastian's wedding if the Valois court agreed to give back the stolen goods and pay compensation for the destruction in Madeira Island.<sup>41</sup> On the way to France, Dantas imprisoned a Breton merchant in Spain, allegedly because of the Madeira affair (DOUAIS, 1896: 145). Shortly after his arrival, in November 1566, Alava testified that Dantas came

40 ANTT, CC I-107-8, fls. 2-3v and I-108-10, fl. 1.

41 ANTT, *Colecção de São Vicente (CSV)*, III, fls. 19-19v.

out of his meeting with the Queen-Mother and King Charles IX empty-handed.<sup>42</sup> He was only able to convince King Charles IX to forbid Monluc's men return, but not to force France to pay compensation. By December 1566, Dantas had to write two angry letters to the lord of Fresnes, the French secretary of state in charge of affairs dealing with the Iberian Peninsula. Dantas complained that the decree forbidding Monluc's men return was not published in all French ports. Dantas also asked to see the formal French answer to Portugal to avoid worsening relations (MATOS, 1952: 202-204). Dantas' action shows once more how hard it was to achieve in France a compensation due to Portuguese *Mare Clausum* policies. If Portugal never received a compensation from France on the Madeira attack, the same can be said for the reparations that King Philip II demanded from the Valois court about Florida. Ambassador Alava was vocal in his claims, but he also did not achieve that goal. These examples show how Portuguese and Spanish *Mare Clausum* attempts shared severe difficulties and even failed their goals.

Shortly after, a meeting of the *Conseil Privé* was held. In it, Charles de Guise, cardinal of Lorraine (1524-1574), whom Dantas so much admired, condemned the bloodshed caused by Monluc. However, Coligny argued that the attack was the revenge for Villegagnon's case and, owing to Monluc's death, convinced King Charles IX to pardon his men. As a consequence, Monluc's men returned and an envoy was sent to Portugal to explain the shift of French position (BREHM and TRINDADE, 2020: 56). As Dantas did not want to bury the hypothesis of King Sebastian's marriage in France, he did not present a loud complain at the Valois court. This fact was reported by the Constable Anne de Montmorency when he wrote to Portugal. Dantas' position soon motivated advices to Cardinal Henry that Dantas should be dismissed from the French embassy. But the Cardinal refused the idea (CRUZ, 1992: 167 and 170-172), as he supported Dantas' delicate situation at the Valois court: trying to negotiate a compensation on Madeira's affair as a condition for the Portuguese King's wedding in France. Documents prove that, even after receiving the order to return to Portugal, Dantas managed to negotiate a formal treaty between Portugal and France, in February 1568, to exchange traitors and rebels on both sides. The document does not detail if pilots and cartographers were included, but its terms seem to imply that they were.<sup>43</sup> This document strongly suggests that Dantas was compensating from his previous action that was so criticized at the Portuguese and Spanish courts, but it also shows that he never forgot his *Mare Clausum* goals in France.

During the year of 1567, the deterioration of Dantas' position in France was, thus, not associated with his lack of results on the Madeira affair or with the negotiations for King Sebastian's wedding, but mainly with his perceived scandalous behaviour towards Portuguese pilots, a topic that deals closely with Dantas' own *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempts. This was the cause for Alava's campaign against Dantas. Nevertheless, Dantas had previously collaborated with the Spanish ambassadors to France (Chantonay and Alava), as some examples evidence. On the aforementioned 1559 French embassy to

<sup>42</sup> *Archivo*, IX, 1955: 96.

<sup>43</sup> ANTT, CSV, III, fls. 445-446.

Morocco, Dantas shared information with his Spanish colleague Chantonny and even asked him to arrange a secret meeting with King Philip II.<sup>44</sup> Alava also entrusted Dantas a courier of his correspondence to Spain and also praised Manuel de Araújo, Dantas' agent in the French ports, whom he even sent in mission to Spain.<sup>45</sup> Still, by March 1566, Alava briefed King Philip II about Dantas' frequent meetings with Coligny at Châtillon and how he was held as a Frenchman from Paris. Although, Dantas tried to convince Alava that he was dealing with Coligny because of French plans in Guinea, Alava still found it strange that Dantas always stopped at Châtillon every time and met so regularly, at the Valois court, with Coligny (BOURDON, 1956: 66-67). It is in the context of Alava's dispute on Dantas' *Mare Clausum* strategy, that he came to contest Dantas' *Secret Science* attempts. Alava's suspicions were soon heightened with Dantas' behaviour towards Portuguese pilot Francisco Dias Mimoso. But, why did Mimoso become so important?

During King Henry II's reign, Mimoso joined the French navy. By 1559 he already had a letter of naturalization as French and was settled with his family at Le Havre. In 1561 and 1564, Mimoso participated in French attacks on Spanish navigation in the Atlantic. Due to this, Chantonny and Alava asked for his condemnation to death in France, but Mimoso still participated in the 1564 French expedition to Florida, as well as in the 1566 Monluc's expedition to Madeira. Alava considered Mimoso as a threat owing to his knowledge of Spanish Atlantic routes, in a case that repeats the Spanish concern with Jean Ribault that was executed in Florida precisely for the same reason. Knowing in 1566 that Monluc intended to employ Mimoso at the expedition that ended in Madeira, and because Mimoso had previously been sentenced to death, Dantas tried to convince Peyrot Monluc to hand over Mimoso to him. Dantas argued that he wanted to avoid Mimoso's death as a Portuguese traitor in France (BOURDON, 1956: 6-13, 16, 18 and 20-22). Once more, this fact proves that Dantas acted before the attack to Madeira materialized and that, as he did with the other aforementioned cases, he attempted to defend Mimoso's interests on the grounds of his personal convictions. What Dantas might not have measured well was the opposition he would face for proceeding in such a way.

Dantas failed in this attempt to convince Peyrot Monluc to give him Mimoso. After this, he refused twice to collaborate with Alava to assist him in convincing the Queen-Mother and King Charles IX to fulfil Mimoso's death sentence. When Mimoso returned to France, after the expedition to Madeira Island, in March 1567, Alava was outraged. He ordered his agents to spy Mimoso. In his belongings, Alava discovered that Mimoso carried letters from Dantas and the Valois court securing him safe-conduit to Paris. Alava confronted Dantas. Dantas replied that he was not betraying Portugal and that Alava would still witness that he was right. At this stage, Alava wrote to King Philip II blaming Dantas for not fulfilling his previous word of assisting him in Mimoso's affair. He also insinuated that Dantas' secret dealings with Coligny were intended to direct French expeditions

<sup>44</sup> *Archivo*, I, 1950: 152, 377 and 398.

<sup>45</sup> *Archivo*, VI, 1952: 151-152 and 394.



against Spanish overseas areas, and advised King Philip II to debate the issue at the Indies Council (BOURDON, 1956: 23-30 and 66-67). Basically, Alava argued that Dantas manipulated the traditional Portuguese *Mare Clausum* objectives vis-à-vis France to convince the French to attack the Spanish, instead of the Portuguese, promising to change his *Secret Science* policy, by providing Coligny Portuguese nautical expertise. Alava's missive caught immediate attention from the Catholic King.

In October 1567, King Philip II informed Alava that he had already ordered his ambassador in Lisbon to denounce Dantas' strange behaviour in France and to ask for a formal collaboration in pilot Mimoso's affair (RODRÍGUEZ and RODRÍGUEZ, 1991: 194). However, documents prove that this was not King Philip II's first initiative. Already in May 1567, Regent Cardinal Henry wrote to King Philip II to inform him that he had written to Dantas, about Mimoso's affair, ordering collaboration with Alava. By June 1567, Alava briefed King Philip II that Dantas delayed the reception of Cardinal Henry's courier. He also stated that Dantas justified to Coligny that he had not sent Mimoso to Paris to be kidnaped by Alava. It was in this context that Alava went further: he insinuated that Dantas looked at Coligny in a strange way and also that he had the habit of sending to Coligny's home his men every ten days (BOURDON, 1956:72-76). Therefore, Alava accused Dantas of collaborating with Coligny for a second time, warning King Philip II that he might have agreed with Coligny to a non-attack on Portuguese areas in exchange for Dantas' offer of Portuguese experts harboured in his house. For a King obsessed with papers and controlling information about his empire (BRENDENCKE, 2016), this particular missive by Alava sounded the alarm: the Portuguese ambassador in France was manipulating Portuguese attempted *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies to Spain's demise. Action was immediately required.

Yet, in July 1567, King Philip II ordered his ambassador in Lisbon to press again Queen Catherine of Austria (1507-1578) and Regent Cardinal Henry on the matter. Both wrote letters to King Philip II ensuring again that they had ordered Dantas to collaborate with Alava on Mimoso's affair. But the situation worsened. In August, Alava, clearly exaggerating, reported that because of Dantas, Coligny already knew more about Guinea than the Portuguese. He also stated that Coligny was organizing an expedition there. By September, Alava had confirmed Coligny's plans but decided not to warn Dantas owing to his previous behaviour. It was in this context that the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon pressed, for a third time, Queen Catherine of Austria and Cardinal Henry. While the Queen became suspicious of Dantas' action, the Cardinal replied that he had ordered Dantas to harbour in his house all the Portuguese traitorous pilots in France promising them a royal pardon, so that Dantas could send them to Portugal for the Cardinal to order their execution (precisely what happened in February 1568). Thus, this time, King Philip II understood that Dantas' action in France was a mere emanation of the Cardinal's orders. However, this did not mean that he accepted such an outcome. As a consequence, the fourth insistence of the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon on 5 October 1567 was again met with no results. The Cardinal replied that he still hoped to read Dantas' arguments. The Cardinal was also aware of



a night surprise attack on Dantas' house, possibly ordered by Alava, in which some of Dantas' servants were injured. In this context, the Cardinal also replied to the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon that Alava was campaigning against Dantas (BOURDON, 1956: 76-80), making it clear that he knew that Alava had Dantas' movements spied. This was something (his ally's espionage) that Cardinal Henry condemned.

Unfortunately, Dantas' letters from this period seem not to have survived, with the exception of a 1567 fragmentary letter in which Dantas seems to be defending himself on accusations against him about pilots.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, and bearing in mind all of Dantas' strategy in France, it seems possible that he decided to make some sort of deal with Coligny to prevent the French from attacking Portuguese overseas areas. The hypothesis is reasonable as Dantas defended King Sebastian's marriage in France, even after the attack on Madeira Island. In proceeding in such way Dantas would also be essentially manipulating, for Portuguese profit, Coligny's anti-Spanish feelings and policy (WHITEHEAD, 1904: 335-336). However, I do not consider possible that Dantas would proceed in such a way, without having some previous approval by Cardinal Henry for doing so. The lack of documents on this point does not allow for total confirmation, but the Cardinal's replies to the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon unequivocally demonstrate that some part of Dantas' action was a mere emanation of his own orders. What Dantas could not foresee, while stationed in France, was that events in Lisbon and Madrid would surpass his abilities and motivate his demotion.

On 22 October 1567, the fifth insistence of the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon achieved King Philip II's aim: Dantas' recall (BOURDON, 1956:81). In the formal letter of recall, Dantas was said to be returning to Portugal owing to his poor health that could not withstand another winter in France.<sup>47</sup> Previously, Dantas had already asked for King Charles IX's and Queen Catherine de Medici's authorization to depart to Portugal on this basis. Thus, it becomes clear that Cardinal Henry resisted the pressure of King Philip II's diplomacy as long as he could, and even that when he finally acquiesced to its demands, he did not want to harm Dantas too much. For this reason, he used a valid argument in the letter, but obviously did not mention that it was King Philip II's wish that motivated it. Still, this fact was quickly noticed at the Catholic King's court.

Fourquevaux, the French ambassador to Spain, reveals that Dantas' house was spied by four or five men from ambassador Alava, at least since July 1567. This was due to the fact that Dantas was held as a "Frenchman and Huguenot" at King Philip II's court, although Dantas did not know it. When it became known in Madrid that Dantas was returning to Lisbon to be exiled to his property, Fourquevaux reported that Dantas was accused of heretical involvement with Coligny. He also noticed King Philip II's satisfaction that relations between Portugal and France were on bad terms, as he preferred a war between them than a good relation (DOUAIS, 1986: 277, 298 and 395). Therefore, it was not only

<sup>46</sup> ANTT, *Fragmentos*, box 1, maço 1, n.º 31, fl. 1-1v.

<sup>47</sup> The letter is at the Russian Academy of Sciences. I thank Professor Vladimir Chichkine this information.

Dantas' *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies, based on Mimoso's affair, that motivated King Philip II's action. The Catholic King did not want Portugal to be in the orbit of France, either because of matrimonial unions or maritime issues. To King Philip II's eyes, Dantas was reapproaching Portugal to France, something that challenged his policy regarding Portugal and the rest of Europe.

In this context, Dantas' return to Portugal took place in May 1568 as Alava's missives evidence. In February 1568, Dantas received formal authorization, from King Charles IX and the Queen-Mother, to return to Portugal. He asked to bring pilot Mimoso with him and they agreed, something that infuriated Alava. By April 1568, Dantas was still buying horses to bring to King Sebastian. He failed to return to Portugal with pilot Mimoso, who was murdered by Alava's agents in February 1569 (BOURDON, 1956: 44 and 82-83). Dantas also tried to bring back André Homem to Portugal, but he refused. As a consequence, Dantas was accused of plotting for a failed shot on André's life, allegedly because André had revealed Dantas' secrets (likely his espionage methods) at the Valois court. Although Dantas was called by King Charles IX, nothing happened to him, but no further details are known. Thus, once more, even after his formal recall, Dantas still stood up for Portuguese *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempted policies. In Mimoso's affair, this even meant continuing to dispute with ambassador Alava the Portuguese pilot's own destiny. Although, Dantas failed in this effort, it is impossible not to notice that Alava was only able to kill Mimoso, after Dantas' departure. Dantas' action vis-à-vis the failed shot against André Homem, also clearly shows how his *Secret Science* goals had gone unchanged by his recall letter. Furthermore, the *Mare Clausum* goals that drove all of Dantas' embassy in France, were not forgotten in his formal speech before departure.

Dantas departed on 22 May 1568 but only after begging the French Chancellor to protect Portuguese interests, as he knew that he would not have any formal successor in the embassy. When Dantas finally returned to Lisbon, in August 1568, he was unable to defend himself properly near King Sebastian (Bourdon, 1956, 37-38 and 84). But he still hoped to be named again as ambassador to France, a fact that once more proves how his demotion from the French embassy did not defeat a feisty personality of an ambassador like Dantas. Ambassador Fourquevaux contacted Dantas in the context of King Sebastian's marriage alliance with the Valois court. Dantas informed him, in December 1569, that he was to return to France as ambassador to proceed with the negotiations. However, Dantas died on January 1570 without recovering his office in France (DOUAIS, 1900: 159, 162 and 174). Dantas' illegitimate heir, Tomé da Silva, endured an accusation of Protestantism by the Portuguese Inquisition in the next years. Although dead, Dantas was accused, by members of his household, of having raised his heir with a Lutheran master in Paris.<sup>48</sup> But, such an accusation only had political conditions to appear after Dantas' death, a fact that should be taken into account.

Thus, in the end, Dantas' downfall was mainly caused by his controversial harbouring and use of Portuguese nautical experts in France, or, as has been

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<sup>48</sup> ANTT, *Tribunal do Santo Ofício*, Inquisição de Lisboa, book 193, fl. 243.

argued, by his *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempts. This was a quite uncommon reason for an ambassador's downfall in general, and more particularly for Portuguese ambassadors in France, but it was the basis used by Alava to insinuate Dantas' traitorous behaviour to Portugal and his Huguenot sympathies. Nevertheless, Dantas' commentary of the French civil wars, easily prove that far from a secret Protestant, Dantas was a fierce Catholic.<sup>49</sup> Dantas' strategy was related to his perception that to better defend Portuguese *Mare Clausum* policies in France, in a time when Coligny's leadership seemed to Portugal as a serious menace, he also had to resort to a *Secret Science* policy adaptable to shifting circumstances. Still, Dantas' action in France, and particularly his controversial dealings with Coligny, are also linked to his strategy to deal with the emergence of major maritime English expeditions under Queen Elizabeth I, a topic that will now be analysed. In the end, Dantas was the first Portuguese ambassador that had to simultaneously coordinate a Portuguese response to two maritime threatening rivals to Portugal: France and England.

### 3. DANTAS AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND (1557-1568)

#### 3.1. Fighting for *Mare Clausum*: the antecedents and Dantas' embassy to England (1557-1562)

In June 1557, when Dantas arrived at his embassy in France, he knew Portugal lacked a permanent ambassador in England and likely suspected that the English overseas expeditions were soon to force him to contribute to Portuguese *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* attempts also on the other side of the English Channel. If Dantas was not aware of this in 1557, he quickly realized this with concrete events. In July 1558, Portuguese pilot Roque Fernandes was returning in his ship to Portugal. Previously his vessel and cargo had been seized by the French but Dantas had succeeded in negotiating the cargo and ship's devolution. On the way to Portugal, Fernandes was attacked by an English pirate that stole him all his cargo, Dantas' letters and books and also kidnapped Portuguese pilot Francisco Dias Salgado, who was already familiar with the English.<sup>50</sup> Dantas not only had his personal correspondence to Portugal stolen by the English: this episode demonstrated him that the English were following the French examples and launching systematic overseas expeditions that also threatened Portuguese *Mare Clausum*. Roque Fernandes' letter, at the beginning of Dantas' embassy to France, evidences that Dantas could not ignore such rising overseas English pretensions, which often included hiring Portuguese pilots. Already for Thomas Wyndham's first voyage to Guinea in 1553, Portuguese agents had tried to convince Portuguese pilots Francisco Rodrigues and António Eanes Pintado to return to Portugal. They ended up participating in the expedition because Edward Clinton, the English

<sup>49</sup> On this topic see my other article on Dantas. See note 2.

<sup>50</sup> ANTT, CC I-102-113, fls. 1-2.

Admiral, imprisoned Portuguese agents until the departure of Wyndham's fleet (ANDREWS, 1984:106-107).<sup>51</sup>

When the news on Queen Mary I's death arrived in Portugal, envoy D. João Pereira was ordered to visit Queen Elizabeth I to congratulate her for succession. Until now, it has been assumed that it was Dantas who was appointed in January 1559. But the chosen figure was not Dantas: it was the son of the Portuguese ambassador to King Philip II.<sup>52</sup> This envoy may have arrived in England by March-April since his accreditation letter in the State Papers dates from 15 April (SANTARÉM, 1842: XCI and 102). However, as Portugal had been named in the 1559 Cateau-Cambresis' peace treaty as the judge on the Calais affair between France and England (CRUZ, 1992:175), Dantas ended up involved indirectly in this mission to England. In a missive penned on March 1559, Dantas confessed that he was not particularly optimistic about the outcome of D. João Pereira's visit to the new Queen of England said to be walking away from Rome's authority.<sup>53</sup> Still, Queen Elizabeth I's formal reply to Queen Catherine of Austria, by then Regent of Portugal, was in a hopeful term, reminding of the old alliance between Portugal and England (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 48-49). Nevertheless, the Portuguese Crown had not forgotten the English sailings to Guinea and Mina and also the need to send, in 1554, ambassador Diogo Lopes de Sousa to formally press Queen Mary I to forbid her English subjects from sailing to Portuguese overseas areas. The results, by then achieved by Portuguese diplomacy and espionage in England were a clear lesson for Dantas' own later action.<sup>54</sup> As a consequence, and considering Dantas' later action described in this section, it possible that, yet in 1559, when Francisco de Mesquita was sent as an envoy to Queen Elizabeth I to protest against the renewed English sailings to West Africa (CRUZ, 1992: 224), Dantas might have suggested such approach to Lisbon. Either way, events were soon to force Dantas to come to England in his own embassy.

During the year of 1561, the accumulation of news on English movements seriously worried Dantas. In April, he was informed of English plans to attack Madeira Island. By September, bishop Quadra, the Spanish ambassador to England, informed Dantas that an English fleet had just returned from Mina. Despite the navigational problems, it had been able to load merchandises and London merchants were already preparing a new voyage. Queen Elizabeth I was reported to be planning to send one of her ships in the expedition and also to be dealing with Huguenot Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé (1530-1569), to send a joint ambassador to the sultan of Morocco. In the letter to King Sebastian, also from September, bishop Quadra regretted his inability to prevent the next English fleet from sailing and warned that five French ships would sail together with the English.<sup>55</sup> Quadra's letter was motivated by a Portuguese request to protest

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51 On this topic see also note 34.

52 D. João Pereira, son of D. Francisco Pereira, the Portuguese ambassador to King Philip II in the Netherlands in 1558-59, should not be confused with our character named João Pereira Dantas. Despite, their close names and likely familiar relations, they were different persons.

53 ANTT, *Fragmentos*, box 2, maço 2, n.º 66.

54 See note 34.

55 ANTT, CC I-104-114, fl. 1, I-105-34, I-105-63, fl. 1 and I-105-64.

in England on its behalf since at that time Portugal did not have a permanent ambassador in England. Still, Dantas was always informed of Quadra's action on the defence of Portuguese *Mare Clausum* interests in England, as several letters exchanged between Dantas and Quadra prove that they kept regular correspondence.

By December 1561, Dantas had already sent his agent, Manuel de Araújo, to England to protest and gather details on the next English fleets. Dantas, then, informed King Sebastian that the English fleet was composed of six ships and that it was to carry materials to build a fortress in West Africa. As he had been debating with bishop Quadra, Dantas suggested that Portugal send a formal ambassador to complain about English sailings. Although he could not recommend anyone, Dantas considered that this ambassador would have to argue with Law and also that it would have to present directly his case to secretary William Cecil (1520-1598) and to Lord Clinton, the English Admiral. He finished the missive advising that Portugal made a formal maritime league with King Philip II since that would isolate England, as Queen Elizabeth I could not withstand bad relations with Spain and Portugal while she was contesting Calais with France.<sup>56</sup> Dantas' advice was on the spot, but what he could not guess was the determination of Queen Elizabeth I to fully patronize English overseas voyages.

Some part of the aforementioned intelligence that Dantas reported to Portugal was certainly sent to him by his agent Araújo, who went to England in March-April 1561 to lodge two formal complains, based on Portuguese *Mare Clausum* arguments, to Queen Elizabeth I. This fact explains why Queen Elizabeth I wrote to Lord Clinton to forbid English sailings to Mina. But, in the meantime, Martin Frobisher (1535-1594) sailed to Mina (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 51-54). By January 1562, Dantas was delighted to announce to Lisbon that the English expedition had returned home, although he was unsure if it would return to the sea. Later that month, bishop Quadra informed Dantas that very hardly the English fleet would depart in the winter. He also reported that the English were planning to join the French in Berlengas islands to attack ships returning to Portugal.<sup>57</sup> It was certainly after this letter that Dantas was named as ambassador to England. On 25 April 1562, Dantas wrote to bishop Quadra revealing his joy to come to England because he had personal admiration for Queen Elizabeth I.

However, the specifics of Dantas' embassy to England were far from such enthusiasm as his embassy was marked by the same *Mare Clausum* thorny challenges that marked Dantas' embassy in France since the beginning. As a result, when Dantas arrived in England, what soon followed was an exchange of arguments between the Portuguese ambassador and the *Privy Council*. All the documents are preserved in the State Papers. Dantas seems to have personally written them all in French, although some of them seem unfinished (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 59-62). In all this documents and although on a sophisticated way, Dantas presented the traditional rhetoric and legal arguments for Portuguese *Mare Clausum* interests, which were a mere repetition of what the Portuguese Crown

<sup>56</sup> ANTT, CC I-105-70, fls. 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> ANTT, CC I-105-62/88.



had already done since the 1530s in France (FERREIRA, 1995; MACEDO, 1995).

Dantas presented an initial petition to Queen Elizabeth I on 22 May in which he used the traditional *Mare Clausum* rhetoric in the defence of Portuguese maritime rights in West Africa and attempted to explain how those rights excluded any English ventures to the area. Probably understanding how his speech did not convince his interlocutors, the next day, Dantas wrote a letter to William Cecil's wife offering her a rent, on behalf of Portugal, for the dowry of her daughter. In the letter, Dantas almost forced Cecil's wife to accept his offer as he wrote that she should bear in mind the prestige of King Sebastian and never think of refusing the pension. Nevertheless, the proposal seems not to have been accepted. Some days later, the *Privy Council* replied contesting property rights in regions where Portugal lacked a fortress and asking Dantas to appoint the areas where Portugal had a garrison so that Queen Elizabeth I could formally forbid her subjects to go there. As a proof of arguments, Queen Elizabeth I relied upon Martin Frobisher's report of West Africa, as he had been a prisoner of the Portuguese there for some time, in her accurate, but deadly argument for Portuguese *Mare Clausum* goals, that the Portuguese only had a fortress at Mina and Axem.

Somehow Dantas already predicted this argument. He replicated, on 25 May 1562, with a long reply explaining that Portuguese rights included fortresses, tributes and commercial rights. He insinuated Portuguese power in West Africa when he stated that Portugal annually sent around 15 000 men and had a permanent fleet there all the year to dissuade intruders. He also claimed that Portugal occupied the area for missionary purposes and that no one in Europe dared to contest Portuguese rights. On the contrary, famous mathematicians, historians and cosmographers praised Portugal for its role in civilizing the region and getting it known in Europe. Despite, a mere repetition of previous Portuguese *Mare Clausum* speeches, Dantas' narrative was written in a way as to "defeat" point by point all previous English objections. However, by that time, Dantas already knew that no argument would dissuade Queen Elizabeth I and William Cecil to continue patronizing English ventures overseas. As a consequence, some days later, Dantas changed his approach. He wrote directly to William Cecil to offer him a pension, on behalf of Portugal, if he should accept to become the protector of Portuguese interests in England. In the letter, he demanded a written answer should Cecil refuse the offer so that the world may know the injustice of the English treatment to an ambassador like him. His letter remained unanswered by Cecil (OLIVEIRA, 2018:62-66 and 118-124; SANTARÉM, XV, 1842, CII-CVII). Dantas was aware of Cecil's role in the *Privy Council* and hoped that winning him to his side, the formal answer would be different.

But, meanwhile, the *Privy Council* answered Dantas, on 7 June. Dantas replied again and the *Privy Council* made a final statement on 15 June (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 125-137). Since Dantas had also failed his goal to institute a court to judge maritime attacks between English and Portuguese seamen, as had been done with France in the 1530s (CRUZ, 1992: 179), he wrote the final protest directly to the *Privy Council*. In this long document, dated 19 June 1562, Dantas refuted once more all English arguments. Still, what is important in this reply is Dantas' statement



that he had come to England to negotiate directly with Queen Elizabeth I and not with the *Privy Council*. He wrote that Queen Elizabeth I should read his papers and that he had prepared himself to discuss each point with her. He also refuted Cecil's accusation that he had subtle and sibylline arguments, reminded of the traditional alliance between Portugal and England and announced his return to France. Dantas also wrote another protest to Queen Elizabeth I on 25 June.

Thus, until the end, Dantas tried to use his persuasion and diplomatic «savoir-faire» to personally convince the Tudor court that his topic was to be discussed directly with Queen Elizabeth I. In this action, Dantas tried to take advantage from the Queen's admiration of him, but he failed in this purpose: Queen Elizabeth I did not accept to hear his arguments personally another time. Instead, on that same day, the English Queen replied formally to King Sebastian stating that Dantas' demands had not been met but praising very much his courtesy. The Queen's personal decision not to meet Dantas again was certainly based on her conviction that nothing more than a further deterioration of Anglo-Portuguese relations would be achieved, as neither she nor Dantas would change their positions. However, the personal admiration between maritime adversaries remained, as documents clearly prove. After returning to Paris, Dantas wrote to Queen Elizabeth I, promising that he would order the production of a better pair of gloves to send her, as she had requested him (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 66-67 and 137-151).

In his 1562 *Mare Clausum* embassy to England, Dantas followed the same strategy that he attempted in France, sensing that William Cecil, should he accept, could play a similar role to Coligny and L' Hôpital, in the English scenario. But, if Dantas had some success in France, in England with Cecil, the result was the opposite. It remains unknown whether Dantas also tried to bribe Lord Clinton. Although there is no formal evidence, I would not step aside that hypothesis, given that Dantas previously suggested that any ambassador to England in 1562 should petition him directly. Therefore, the outcome of Dantas' second embassy to England was an aggravated concern with English maritime expeditions. Understanding from 1562 onwards that he could not stop them, Dantas changed his strategy, resorting to espionage and counter-espionage, as his correspondence for the next years clearly show.

### **3.2. Spying on the English: Dantas' espionage and counter-espionage in England (1562-1568)**

Aware of London merchants' renewed interest in West Africa, before leaving England, Dantas already knew that he could rely on Rui Mendes de Vasconcelos' contacts to keep him updated of important events. The formal Portuguese overseer/consul in Antwerp, Vasconcelos had created his own network of informants in England during the 1540s. Already on 5 September 1562, Vasconcelos informed Portugal that the English voyage to Mina had gone

so well that the English had bought in Flanders more merchandise for the West African trade. On 26 September, Vasconcelos wrote to Dantas to advise that Portugal should have an armed fleet there to sink all English ships. He envisaged it as the only way to dissuade England from daring to enter what he considered Portuguese waters. He finished the letter hoping that Dantas' influence could convince Portuguese advisors and Lisbon to take seriously the English menace in West Africa.<sup>58</sup> Vasconcelos' writing is typical of the Portuguese *Mare Clausum* attempts and mentality that prevailed even after the several previous failures of this policy vis-à-vis France. This is the reason why his letter ended with the hope that Dantas could install some real-sense at the Portuguese court on the English menace. It is no wonder, then, that Dantas relied on Vasconcelos several other times in his *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* schemes to disrupt and spy further English overseas expeditions.

Shortly after receiving Vasconcelos' warning to Portugal, Dantas decided to send to England as his agent Francisco Costa Pontes (SANTARÉM, XV, 1842: CXIII). Pontes also warned Dantas, yet in September 1562, of all English preparations, reported that a Jewish traitor was giving sensitive information to the English and asked further for his instructions. Dantas re-addressed this intelligence to Cardinal Henry yet in September. In October, bishop Quadra also informed Dantas that Queen Elizabeth I had authorized the departure of three ships directed for Mina. Dantas also received information that six French ships were to join the English fleet but heading for trade in Morocco. From Antwerp, Vasconcelos also confirmed all the English preparations yet in October.<sup>59</sup>

Based on this intelligence, Dantas briefed King Sebastian, on 20 November 1562, about the departure of the English fleet to West Africa after Christmas. He also stated that John Hawkins had already departed and that French Huguenots were serving in the English ships. On 13 December, Dantas informed the Portuguese King that the English fleet was not going to sail South but was heading for West Africa and also that Hawkins' ship only had onboard merchandise. By 30 December, Dantas confirmed to King Sebastian the names of the two English ships that were heading for Mina on 10 January, stating Portugal still had time to send its fleet there and that after all rumours France would not send any ship. However, by February 1563, Pontes, Dantas' agent in England, was caught attending the mass in the house of the Spanish ambassador and was jailed by the English authorities. Dantas comforted King Sebastian that he was already dealing for his release and also warned that the English ships had orders to trade in front of Mina's castle.<sup>60</sup>

Dantas' intelligence proved important in the naval combats that took place in the area that year and eventually resulted in English losses. The same was to happen in the following years when the English expeditions to West Africa were marked by violence and plunder due to the presence of important Portuguese war fleets (ANDREWS, 1984: 109-110). Thus, for the first voyage of John Hawkins,

<sup>58</sup> ANTT, CC I-106-11/23.

<sup>59</sup> ANTT, CC I-106-22/24/26; BA, 49-X-9, fl. 86v.

<sup>60</sup> BA, 49-X-9, fls. 2v.-4, 13-13v. and 15v.; ANTT, CC I-106-43, fl. 1.

Dantas did more than simply collecting intelligence. In his *Mare Clausum* plans against England, he directly suggested to Lisbon how and when to attack the English fleet, sensing that, at that stage, only unofficial maritime war could dissuade Queen Elizabeth I from patronizing those voyages. Still, events would prove Dantas how the English Queen's determination was unshaken.

In 1564, the reports on English preparations accumulated and Dantas resorted again to action. On 2 July, Guzmán de Silva, the new Spanish ambassador to England, warned Dantas that Queen Elizabeth I was preparing two ships to join two other merchants' ships heading for Guinea. On 16 July, Dantas re-addressed Guzmán's letter to King Sebastian. By 5 August, Pontes had come directly to Paris to warn Dantas that for John Hawkins' second voyage the English would send eight to ten ships, had instructions to sail to Guinea and Mina and to establish contact with a friendly African prince. The next day, Dantas communicated to King Sebastian all the details that Pontes had given him, assuring that his good spies<sup>61</sup> in French ports had confirmed him that no French ship was to join the English expedition. He also explained that the English investment was larger than in previous years because the Flanders market was closed to English trade and the English wanted to prevent any Portuguese attack like the 1563 one. On 15 September, Dantas sent King Sebastian the latest news of Hawkins' fleet, sent from Flanders by Vasconcelos, based on intelligence provided by the Spanish ambassador to England. Dantas did not credit the news and even stated, with clear exaggeration, that the Spanish ambassador to England had worst spies in the English ports than him. Finally, on 29 September, Dantas briefed on Hawkins' departure and denounced his intention to build a fortress, buy slaves and then sell them at Spanish Santo Domingo.<sup>62</sup> Once more these missives prove how Dantas was well-informed of events in Europe and overseas: he knew of the maritime battle in West Africa between the English and Portuguese fleets in 1563, and was well aware that English trade had recently been embargoed by King Philip II. Thus, Dantas correctly revealed to Portugal all the plans and details for John Hawkins' second voyage.

The reports sent by Dantas to Portugal were also decisive to convince Lisbon to name, in September 1564, Aires Cardoso as envoy to England to lodge another formal protest to Queen Elizabeth I. His instructions were very clear. Cardoso should stop first in France, where Dantas was to instruct him on how to deal with the English based on his previous experience. Once in England, Cardoso was to take the less time he could and go to the Spanish ambassador's house. Guzmán de Silva was responsible for arranging a meeting with Queen Elizabeth I. Cardoso was also ordered to dissimulate<sup>63</sup> while he was in England, to gather all information on old and new English fleets preparations and also to try to prevent them from departing.<sup>64</sup> If Cardoso found sensitive evidence on Queen Elizabeth

61 «bons espías» in Portuguese.

62 ANTT, CC I-106-142, fl. 1, I-107-4, fls. 1-1v and I-107-12, fl. 1; BA, 49-X-9, fls. 58, 60v-62.

63 «dissimular» in Portuguese.

64 Biblioteca Pública Municipal Porto, Ms. 85. The manuscript has no folio numeration. Cardoso's instruction is in the end.

's personal involvement in naval preparations, he was authorized to confront the Queen in person and even to insinuate the possibility of open war between Portugal and England (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 67-70).

In November 1564, Dantas wrote to King Sebastian to communicate that Cardoso had arrived and already departed from his house. After explaining all his 1562 embassy in England, Dantas thought Cardoso the lesson of Portuguese espionage in Europe. He instructed Cardoso on the itinerary to follow in England and also to spy on the English before arriving at the Elizabethan court since he would be unable to do it in the return to Portugal because by that time the English would already know that he was the Portuguese envoy.<sup>65</sup> Dantas' advice to Cardoso was justified by the maritime tension between England, Spain and Portugal, as John Hawkins' voyages had also caused a tension in Anglo-Spanish diplomatic relations. It was in this context that the Spanish ambassador to France predicted, in November 1564, that Cardoso's *Mare Clausum* mission was to be fiercely attacked when the English would discover that he was to lodge another complaint with Spanish support.<sup>66</sup> Owing also to Dantas' role in defending Portuguese interests against England, by December 1564, King Sebastian refused Dantas' requests to return to Lisbon, as Portugal lacked a suitable successor in France and England.<sup>67</sup>

Cardoso's protest, another example of Portuguese *Mare Clausum* speeches in England with clear antecedents in France, is known but again was not met with success. This time, Queen Elizabeth I wrote to King Sebastian stating that Cardoso's protest was attended when she simply gave him the same answer Dantas received in 1562 (SANTARÉM, XV, 1842: 157-163; OLIVEIRA, 2018: 67-70). However, as the aforementioned cases of Portuguese pilots Gaspar Caldeira, Antão Luís and Portuguese cosmographer André Homem's participation in John Hawkins' third voyage in 1567 prove, Dantas continued his espionage and counter-espionage activities in England with some success. It is with this case, that Dantas' *Secret Science* policy vis-à-vis Elizabethan England can also be best documented. However, despite the lack of other surviving instances on Dantas' attempts to avoid Portuguese cartographers, pilots and cosmographers from working for England, there is no reason to assume that his policy was different to the one he followed in France. Dantas' own embassy to Queen Elizabeth I in 1562, as well as his espionage on the 1562, 1564 and 1567 English voyages can easily be compared with his actions in France vis-à-vis Villegagnon and to the Portuguese pilot in Jean Ribault's expedition to Florida in 1562. Still, the lack of several of his letters for the years 1566-68 prevents from documenting further evidence of his operations in England.

Nevertheless, it is plausible to admit that, as he did with Portuguese pilots in France, Dantas tried to avoid Anglo-Portuguese collaborations such as those of Portuguese pilot Bartolomeu Baião, who, in 1565, attacked Cape Verde Islands with the English (ANDREWS, 1984: 110-111). The consequence of Cardoso's mission

65 BA, 49-X-9, fls. 65-65v.

66 *Archivo*, VI, 1952: 507.

67 BA, 49-X-9, fl. 66.

to England in 1564 was a Portuguese retaliation at sea against English vessels in Guinea and Mina, where one of the Wynter brothers' ships was seized. Already in 1567, the case motivated Queen Elizabeth I to dispatch ambassador Thomas Wilson to Lisbon. By that time, the Portuguese court also complained about John Hawkins' assaults against Portuguese ships. Wilson's embassy did not achieve its goal but it had the effect of forcing Portugal to name a permanent ambassador to England (Manuel Álvares), in 1567-68. War was on the verge of being declared in 1569, when King Sebastian infuriated with Queen Elizabeth I's lack of formal reply, suspended the alliance with England and seized all English ships and properties in Portugal (SANTARÉM, XV, 1842: CXIX and CXX; OLIVEIRA, 2018: 80-85). By that time, Dantas was not an ambassador anymore. Still, he had made his contribution, with all his previous *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policy, to the English decision of withdrawing from West Africa in the end of the 1560s due to the effects of French competition and the presence of the Portuguese war fleet (ANDREWS, 1984: 112).

After his embassy to England in 1562, all this data points to the fact that, based on his French embassy, Dantas worked as a sort of informal ambassador to England. Even though Dantas did not return personally there, he had a system of intelligence at his disposal that allowed him to resort to action on any occasion. It is important to outline that it was the first time that this was happening on such a scale in the Portuguese diplomatic scenario since no previous Portuguese ambassador to France had to deal at the same time with so challenging English and French maritime expeditions. Although in England's case, as for France's, this ended up requiring some degree of collaboration with the Spanish diplomatic network, it is important to highlight that Queen Elizabeth I treated differently the Portuguese and the Spanish ambassadors at her court. While the Spanish were frequently accused of treason and ended up on bad terms, the same never happened to Portuguese ambassadors in England in the 1560-70s. When Portuguese ambassadors were held as suspects of Catholic plots and even when they were found collaborating with Catholic French and Spanish ambassadors to England, Queen Elizabeth I always ensured them good living conditions and status at her court (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 118, 124 and 137). Possibly for this outcome, Dantas also made his Portuguese contribution when he favourably impressed Queen Elizabeth I in 1562. Thus, it is now time to return to our initial question: How to avail Dantas' embassies to France and England and what is the output of his epistolary to the Portuguese attempted policies of *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science*? The answer to this question will deal with some comparative considerations on early modern European maritime diplomacy and espionage.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As has been demonstrated previously, one of Dantas' *leitmotivos* for action, possibly owed to royal instructions delivered upon him that did not survive,



was to prevent English and French expeditions from departing to what Portugal considered its *Mare Clausum*. This policy is generally known to the scholarly community. Still, what is less mentioned, and Dantas' correspondence fully documents, is how tied with Portuguese *Mare Clausum* policies was also a full policy of attempted *Secret Science*, meaning the attempt to stop the drainage of Portuguese nautical expertise to France and England. Dantas' espionage and counter-espionage either in France or in England are essentially explained by this fact. As Baldwin accurately argues, the circulation of Portuguese nautical experts to France and England and the French and English espionage on Portuguese nautical science only became seriously problematic from the 1550s onwards (BALDWIN, 1980: 40).

In the case of France, Michel de Seure's and Jean Nicot's embassies to Portugal, between 1557 and 1561, document this aspect very well, especially with Nicot's sending Portuguese pilots, nautical rutters and cosmographical works to France.<sup>68</sup> For the English case, the Iberian connection is a recognised fact in the rise of English overseas expansion. But, while England profited from a better relationship with Portugal and Spain, the same did not happen with France who had troubled relations with Spain and sometimes a better status with Portugal. The good English relations with Spain allowed England to successfully import nautical knowledge until Queen Mary I's reign, wed with King Philip II (WATERS, 1970; WRIGHT, 1980). The fact that England also had the late fourteenth century alliance with Portugal also eased the contacts with Lisbon and determined the slow growth of a Portuguese community in England that helped to provide personnel for English maritime expeditions. For France's case, the 1559 Cateau-Cambresis peace treaty and the prospect of an alliance with Spain ended up by not materializing a better relationship. As a consequence, France was forced to rely on Huguenot personnel to launch its maritime expeditions and also to spy on Portuguese nautical and cartographical knowledge to access critical intelligence. This is why the hiring of Portuguese cosmographers André Homem and Bartolomeu Velho, alongside André Thevet's scientific works, were so vital for France during the 1560-80s (BALDWIN, 1980: 242, 244 and 246). However, the French civil wars from 1562 onwards deprived France of good conditions to systematically challenge the Iberian *Mare Clausum*, especially after Coligny's death.

Perfectly aware of the English and French interests not just in what he considered Portuguese overseas areas, but also on Portuguese nautical experts, Dantas tried to prevent them for entering in Tudor or Valois service. To achieve this goal, as it is noticeable with the cases of pilots Gaspar Caldeira, Antão Luís, Francisco Dias Mimoso or the Homem brothers, Dantas resorted to different, and sometimes ambiguous and dangerous, strategies. While he tried to "buy" the favours of the highest figures in the French (Coligny and Michel de L'Hôpital) and English courts (Cecil and possibly Clinton) to turn them into promoters of "Portuguese interests", he also invested very seriously in creating a good image

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68 For more details see note 23.

for himself and Portugal, near the Queen-Mother Catherine de Medici, King Charles IX and Queen Elizabeth I. Although most of Dantas' bribery and actions failed, rising Spain's suspicions and causing his downfall, Dantas was much more successful in his personal relations with Queen Elizabeth I and also with the Queen-Mother Catherine de Medici and King Charles IX.<sup>69</sup> Yet, in his strategy, Dantas was too often alone, trying to fight the wave of French and English overseas expansion. His main innovation, although with some antecedents, was the proposal of a maritime alliance between Spain and Portugal to prevent France and England from achieving major overseas successes (FERREIRA, 1989: 159 and 166). This is the reason why, in Dantas' correspondence, so many times it is noticeable that he had to wait for instructions from Lisbon in some cases, while in others he explicitly disobeyed the orders he received.

Dantas' position on this matter is also related to the fact, reported on his letters, that formally and informally France and England collaborated themselves to fight Iberian maritime hegemony at sea or even in political arenas such as Morocco. It is hard not to notice that Dantas' reports on Anglo-French collaboration, took place in spite of the traditional Anglo-French rivalry and even when there was tension between Protestant Queen Elizabeth I and the Catholic Valois. In a certain sense, this Anglo-French collaboration denounces the difficulties that the English and French felt when they tried to seriously challenge Iberian *Mare Clausum*, precisely as Portuguese-Spanish diplomatic and military cooperation reveals the seriousness of the French and English overseas challenge. It was also precisely in this scenario that Dantas understood that Portugal was not in conditions to accumulate the traditional maritime rivalry with France, with that of England, and had also to strengthen his *Secret Science* policy. His insistence on the alliance with Spain can only be understood on this sense since Dantas never became a promoter of a Portuguese-Spanish political alliance, as his defence until death of the French marriage of King Sebastian corroborate. Still, his correspondence is also a good testimony of how Portuguese diplomacy was very attentive to France and England and only resorted to Spanish collaboration when it was strictly necessary. In this process, Dantas' strategies and espionage are easily mirrored on the French diplomats to King Philip II's court, particularly with ambassador Fourquevaux (RIBERA, 2018: 433-516), or with French ambassadors to Portugal like Michel de Seure and Jean Nicot, but also with Spanish diplomats to Portugal (such as D. Juan de Borja or D. Juan de Silva) and to England (bishop Quadra and Guzmán de Silva). For all of them, it is noticeable the same goals and methods to spy and disrupt maritime expeditions and hire nautical personnel.

Dantas' position was, thus, of a man of truly European expansion who understood that Portuguese *Mare Clausum* interests had to be fought primarily at European courts and only secondly at sea (SANTOS, 1990). In this process, his correspondence also testifies very well of the maritime nature of Portuguese power and prestige in Europe. Nevertheless, Dantas' embassies are also eloquent proof of how, for different reasons, France and England mirrored Portuguese maritime

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<sup>69</sup> See note 2.

knowledge and experience as a successful model they wanted to emulate. This is why both Elizabethan England and Valois France were always keen on hiring Portuguese pilots and cartographers and Dantas, in his *Secret Science* policy, had to turn his house into a sort of house of talents. The international careers of André Homem and his brother Diogo Homem also show very well how Portuguese knowledge could be so highly prized. It certainly is not an accident that Richard Hakluyt (1553-1613) wrote to Walter Raleigh (1552-1618) in the 1580s that André Homem was the prince of cosmographers of his time or that, as late as in a 1622 publication, Richard Hawkins (1552-1622) still argued that England had much to learn from the Iberian maritime system (BOURDON, 1972: 28; BALDWIN, 1980: 195). In this sense, more studies on how Portuguese maritime knowledge, either nautical and cartographical works or technical personnel circulating and contributing in the sixteenth century to the rise of English and French maritime expansion, are still required. They embody what has been termed along this article as the attempted Iberian *Secret Science* policies, that, as Dantas' correspondence, easily proves, were, most of the times, destined to fail. Still, even this failure and its reasons, need to be more researched and placed in its global maritime history contexts.

What stands as absolutely clear is that the international nature of maritime knowledge was, by itself, impossible to control (BALDWIN, 1980: 58), despite all Portuguese and Spanish attempts to do so. This explains why Dantas' espionage in France and England can also be compared to the Spanish ambassadors' actions in France and England. However, as Dantas' case so well evidence, Portuguese diplomacy due to its neutrality policies in the European scenario during the sixteenth century, never evolved to an open-rupture with France and England, as Spain did. Portugal also never accepted the full maritime collaboration that King Charles I (1516-1556) and King Philip II always wished and requested to Portugal. As a result, Portuguese diplomacy would always have to be different from its Spanish counterpart and this explains why Portuguese diplomats never ended up on bad terms as it happened with Chantonny or Alava in France or with Bernardino de Mendonza's expulsion from England. Thus, despite, the similarities between Portuguese and Spanish attempted *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies, there were also differences. Possibly the major one is the intensity, as Spain had a more coherent attempt throughout all the sixteenth century, while in the Portuguese case, as Dantas' correspondence shows, the attempt was not so serious and systematic. Even in the challenging 1550-60s, Portugal never erected a full policy to control its nautical experts' movements by providing them no reasons to migrate. This conclusion is not that different from what other researches have pointed out for the early sixteenth century Portuguese scenario (GUERREIRO, 1999: 196-197).

This difference between Portugal and Spain's *Mare Clausum* and *Secret Science* policies was quickly understood by Valois France and Elizabethan England who approached Portugal and Spain differently in diplomatic terms. But, both Valois France and Elizabethan England recognised the difference between Portugal and Spain and they fully acknowledged the value of Portuguese nautical science and

personnel for the launch of their maritime expeditions, as Dantas' embassies to France and England demonstrate. Therefore, in the end, Dantas' strategies match perfectly the high levels of the sixteenth-century French and Spanish maritime diplomacy in Europe, and that, in itself, is also another relevant conclusion for Dantas' embassies in France and England. This last conclusion leads to a final one: Portuguese diplomacy in Europe needs to be fully researched in order not only to correctly locate its place, weight and role in European affairs and history but mainly to proceed with comparative diplomatic studies.

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