

Diplomatic Letters (1732-1739) concerning the Asiento Contract: How Diplomatic Relations between England and Spain were established

CHARACTERISTICS

- Written in the **First person**
- Written in English by Englishmen by order of the **Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Thomas Geraldino** (1682-1755), originally named Fitzgerald, watched over the interests of Spain first in the company's London Court of Directors -according to the art. 28 of the Asiento Contract- and later as Spanish ambassador in London. He saved these letters until his death.
- More **direct** than Third Person Notes
- Not as formal** as Third Person Notes
- Official character** in contrast with Non Papers
- Use of **abbreviations** and other peculiarities of the English Language in the 18th Century
- Signed by **W. Smith**: Secretary of the Court of Directors
- Issues: **Annual Ship** and **Accounts**

After the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713)...

Spanish Crown needed to rely on foreigners to supply slaves to the West Indies

The Treaty of Utrecht (1713)

Crown of Spain Felipe V (25% + 5% of Annual Ship + 10% Licensed Ships and extra benefits)

THE ASIEN TO CONTRACT (1713-1750)

42 clauses

Reformed by the Convention Treaty of 1716

Parts

Licensed Ships (1715-1716)

Bedford, Elisabeth almost 1000 tons

Irregularities
 Contraband

Crown of England Queen Anne George I and II (25%)

Monopoly of Slave Trade from Africa to the West Indies

→ 144.000 piezas de India --> [...] referred to a prime male slave in good physical condition between 14 and 30 years of age and about 4'8" tall [...]" (Sorsby. 1975. Page 11)

South Sea Company (1711-1788): joint stock venture created by act of Parliament. Speculation in the company's stock led to a great economic crisis known as the South Sea Bubble in 1720

Annual Ship

Extra clause in the Asiento Contract which allowed to introduce every year an Annual Ship with 500 tons of merchandises -650 tons after the Convention Treaty of the 12th of June 1716- at fair time as compensation for expected losses in the slave trade. It was the perfect excuse for contraband. During the Asiento period the South Sea Company sent seven

Accounts Delivery -art. 29-

We have now delivered to You the Accounts relating to the first five Years Trade of this Company, which we have endeavoured to frame as near as possible to the Rules laid down in the Asiento Treaty, in doing which You cannot but be sensible of the great Difficulties we have laboured

Main Bibliography:

- 1) Primary sources : Letters kept by the Archivo de Simancas and Archivo de Indias
- 2) Secondary sources: - SPERLING, J.G. 1962. *The South Sea Company: An Historical Essay and Bibliographic Finding List.* Cambridge, Mass. Kress Library of Business and Economics. - DONOSO ANES, R. 2007 "Un análisis sucinto del Asiento de esclavos con Inglaterra (1713-1750) y el papel desempeñado por la contabilidad en su desarrollo." *Anuario de Estudios Americanos.* 64,2. July- December. Sevilla. Pages. 105-144. - SORSBY, V.G. 1975. *British Trade with Spanish America under the Asiento, 1713-1740.* Phd thesis. University of London.

The Court of Directors of the Royal Asiento Company have certain advice that Ships are to be this Year dispatched from Old Spain to Carthagena and Portobelo with Merchandizes, in the Manner of Gallions, tho' under a different Name; And the said Company being by the Asiento Contract to send an Annual Ship of Merchandizes to the Indies, which, in pursuance thereof, are to be sold only in the Time of the Fair; But the Time of holding the

by the said Contract, His Catholick Majesty (upon the Representation which the Company had made) was pleased by the Convention Treaty of the 12. June 1716.

agreed by His Catholick Majesty, That in case Flota or Gallions should not be departed from Cadix in all the Month of June, the said Company might cause their Annual Ship to

Opening
 Sir London 22 April 1736

Closing
 Your most Obedient and most humble Servant
 By Order of the Court of Directors of the Royal Asiento Company
 W. Smith Secy

At the end of every first page
 London, and being arrived at
 Sir Thomas Geraldino the Secy