

# **The Purchase of Wax from Flanders by the Merchants of Burgos According to the Notarial Protocols of Alonso González de Nestares y Aguayo<sup>1</sup> (1561-1568)**

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*Notarial protocols keep thousands of deeds of sale of wax from Flanders. This work focuses on the records of the notary of the city of Burgos (Spain), Alonso González de Nestares and Aguayo. The preserved documentation is quite scarce. Only five files remain with chronological gaps: 1561 (February-June), 1564 (January-August), 1568 (December 1567-July 1568), 1575 (without chronological order), and 1576 (December 1575-December 1576). Despite this constraint, the richness of the data the documents contain will help us better understand the wax trade, a very important product in the daily life of man throughout its history. In the mid-16th century, Flanders became the most important wax supplier in Burgos.*

*Some of the main international merchants are going to be the ones that import the wax and introduce it into the sales channels of the city, closing wholesale deals with other local commercials interested in this business. But the most abundant sales are those made by these local intermediaries to other Burgos, churches, clergy and neighbors of the province; It also allows us to know the price fluctuation.*

*Keywords: 16th century, wax, commerce, burgos, flanders*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The city of Burgos and its inhabitants had a special importance in the heart of a changing society in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, where the figure of the merchant was the great protagonist. The population of this city, according to the "investigation of the royal taxes" dated 1561, amounted to 4,385 neighbors<sup>2</sup>. If we take into account the most reliable figures to count the population in this century, the number of inhabitants of this urban center would vary between 17.540 and 21.925 persons.

The period we are studying is part of a series of events that negatively affected the evolution of the city. At the beginning of spring 1565, the capital of Castile was surprised by an epidemic of bubonic plague that caused a decrease in the Burgos population by between 40% and 45%, a truly dramatic event.<sup>3</sup> This event, combined with poor harvests, a deep economic crisis in trade and the apparition of other diseases such as typhus and cold, led significant merchant families to leave the city and seek business in other places<sup>4</sup>.

A significant part of the Burgos population was engaged in wholesale and large-scale trade within and outside the peninsula. Foreign trade extended throughout Europe: the Flemish region, France, England

and Italy, but it also kept trade relations with the American territories. At the time of its greatest splendor, more than 100 high-level traders could be counted in the city. The Consulate of the Sea played a very important role in the development of this activity<sup>5</sup>.

### **Wax: A Highly Demanded Product**

The sunset caused the need of lighting the houses rooms, the religious areas and the streets. The oil lamp was the most common way of domestic lighting derived from the abundance of this fuel in Spain, lighting the most stately spaces. A different system for providing lighting was the use of candles that were made of wax or tallow. Tallow candles were used in "ordinary offices and poor houses"<sup>6</sup> because they were cheaper but they were much dirtier if they were simply placed on a wooden base and not used with candlesticks; moreover, being animal fat, they produced a strong smell and more smoke.

Axes and wax candles were used to light up outdoor places and yards. The facades of the most important houses used to have iron supports in their walls, the torches, in order to place the lights.

The production of wax in the earth's honeycombs was not enough to cover the needs, so it was necessary to bring it in from other places. Religious conflicts, which took place in the 16th century with the Muslims in the Mediterranean and North Africa, caused trade to be restricted, and one of its products, wax, was affected and new suppliers were sought. The most important export product from Burgos was the merino sheep's wool. From the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean, America, Africa and India, "spices, salt, sugar, alum, oil, soap, silk, nuts, jams, rice, iron, dyes, leather, precious metals, pearls, diamonds and exotic objects were brought to the Netherlands. From the Antwerp market came canvases, tapestries, English fabrics, luxury cloths, German petticoats, dresses, haberdashery, metal utensils, wax, dried fish, weapons, books, furniture and artistic objects".<sup>7</sup> Due to this heavy commercial traffic, Burgos society knew and wanted to participate in the fashions and lifestyles of the rest of Europe, and it also had the economic capacity to do so.

The city of Antwerp collected wax from various sources. Prussia, Poland, Livonia and Moscow sent important shipments to this city and then brought it to Spain and to the city of Burgos on the return trips of the wool shipments<sup>8</sup>. Wax was also produced in the Netherlands, at Bois le Duc, but commonly known as "Volduque wax". In this way, it appears in the account books of García and Miguel de Salamanca, or in the *Memory of the Goods that enter the kingdom of Spain and that are from different parts of Europe and the Indies*, it is clearly indicated that from the Flemish region, one of the products was Belduque wax<sup>9</sup>. We have only found one reference to this type of wax in the deeds of debentures studied dated January 24, 1568 under which Diego Diez, a resident of Bobadilla del Camino, is obliged to pay Pablo de Agüero, a resident of Burgos, 9.460 mrs. for two "belduke" wax pieces.<sup>10</sup>

Wax was a vital item for those Catholic countries where candles had to be made from this natural product. Its excessive use was criticized by the Reformed ones: this is how Tomás Carrasco stated it, "*What greater bestiality and blindness than lighting the sticks? Who sees so little that would not see the brutality of lighting candles on the stones, as if they were seeing?*"<sup>11</sup> It was usually in use from February, from the Candlemas or Candelaria festival, until April, coinciding with Holy Week and Easter<sup>12</sup>. In the summer, usage was considerably lower, and this was accompanied by the wear and tear on the goods due to the higher temperatures in spring and summer.

The agony and the ceremony that followed the decease were surrounded by the light of candles, candleholders and axes. Some of the prints illustrating the "ars moriendi" present the dying man with a candle in his hands; a light that represents Christ, as John explained in his gospel 8, 12: "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" It is also a symbol of the resurrection, of the soul's eternal life when it leaves the inert body, as opposed to the darkness of hell. And it can be related with the ritual of the Baptism that is extended to the use of the canvas as a shroud, with what is wanted to express the closing of the vital cycle of Christianity, that leaves the Church in the same way that he/she entered, with the light of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

The pillar candles attached to the candlesticks were normally used for burial ceremonies, honors, "novenas" and yearbooks, etc. The candlesticks for this purpose were usually made of wood. It seems that all the urban and rural churches had at least a couple of candlesticks. Richer candlesticks, sometimes

made of silver, were used for non-funeral services and in churches with higher incomes. The parishes or brotherhoods were allowed to spend candles, simple ones with their identifying seal. This symbol was very important, since if during its use it was consumed until it was reached, it was necessary to buy a new candle in order to replace it.

The funeral processions were composed of an entourage that included brotherhoods, clergy, friars, children, poor people and secular people who marched accompanied by the light of axes and candles, the sound of bells and sometimes music<sup>14</sup>. The axes for funeral processions were large luminaries with a long handle that allowed them to be placed on the shoulder because of their high weight and could be seen above the heads of the assistants at funerals by being placed at the height of the lying body carried in hammocks.

The civil and ecclesiastical authorities tried to regulate and limit the use of wax in funeral processions. In Burgos' burials, the most important light was the so-called "axes" made of wax. The most common thing in 16th century Burgos was that during the service of the sung requiem mass two axes accompanied the cross and another two were placed on the altar table, although the deceased could have ordered a larger purchase for the funeral procession<sup>15</sup>. Philip II in *the New Pragmatic of Mourning*, issued in 1565, limited to twelve the number of axes or candles that testators could send in a private capacity.

"As regards burials, offerings, and death anniversary, we command that no person of any quality or precedence, whether a person of title or nobility, may not be carried at his/her burial, or be placed in his/her grave at the time of offerings, or at the death anniversary, more than twelve axes or candles, but this is not to be understood as regards candles, or lights given to clergymen, or friars and children of faith who participate in these burials, or in the wax that the brotherhoods that accompany the dead bodies, or in the wax that is given, or that is ordered to be given for the dead, or for the executors and heirs for the service of the church and the altars and the fire that in this all, nor in the clothing of the poor, nor in other alms, we do not consider to make any changes".<sup>16</sup>

Failure to comply with this pragmatic approach would be punished with a penalty of ten thousand maravedis, which would be divided equally between the denouncer, the judge who sentences and the chosen pious works.

The ecclesiastical population in the city of Burgos was important. There were fifteen parishes: San Pedro and San Felices, Santa Águeda, San Nicolás, San Esteban (now the Museo del Retablo), San Gil, San Lesmes, San Cosme and San Damián, San Pedro de la Fuente and Santiago de la Capilla, which are still in existence today; and the now disappeared Nuestra Señora la Blanca, San Lorenzo, Santiago de la Fuente, San Martín, San Román and Nuestra Señora de la Vieja Rúa<sup>17</sup>. In addition to the parish buildings, the convents and monasteries established in Burgos were attracted by their importance and economic prosperity, which was reflected in the religiousness of their inhabitants. Among the men's orders in this century we find the Compañía de Jesús, the Cartuja de Nuestra Señora de Miraflores, St. Augustine, St. John, St. Paul, St. Francis, the Holy Trinity, de la Victoria, and St. Salvador. If we talk about the female monasteries, the Monastery of Las Huelgas, St. Clare, St. Augustine, St. Dorothy, St. Ildefonso, St. Felices, Mother of God, Monastery of Our Lady La Imperial de Renuncio, of the Franciscan Conception<sup>18</sup>. We must also take into account the chapels and, of course, the Cathedral, which is a very demanding and wax consumer.

The progressive increase in the price of wax meant that most houses were lit with tallow and the use of wax was almost exclusively reserved for palaces, stately homes and liturgical spaces and rites.

Three qualities are known: melted wax, Osterland wax (Germany<sup>19</sup>) and honey wax which was the most appreciated. The documentation reviewed contains references to "Flemish wax" in the vast majority of deeds of debentures,<sup>20</sup> and very rarely some of the qualities mentioned appear. The reference to melted wax is only found in deeds of debenture dated April 10, 1568 in which Pedro Alonso, a blacksmith, and his wife Casilda Gómez, acknowledge a debt of 22,550 mrs. for 275 pounds with this quality.<sup>21</sup> The "Osterland" origin is found in five debentures dated 1568<sup>22</sup>, and the honey wax is thus detailed in three

debentures dated 1568<sup>23</sup>. Other definitions of wax that we have found in the documentation are "carved"<sup>24</sup>, "small"<sup>25</sup> and "very good",<sup>26</sup> although we can say that all the items collected came from Flanders.

In terms of appearance, white wax was of the highest quality and cost, and was reserved for the great liturgical solemnities, as well as for the burials of maidens and religious because it represented the purity of those people. The whiteness was obtained by washing, and this treatment made it consume more slowly than the rest, so it was used in the long ceremonies of the Catholic liturgy and it represented an economic saving, besides producing more light and less smoke. The yellow color was the natural tone, the one that can be seen after its extraction from the combs and was used for ordinary funerals. The black color one was obtained by mixing it with tea soot or burnt paper and it used to be used for royal funerals.<sup>27</sup>

The wax brought to the Peninsula was made into loaves or cakes that were packed into packs of twelve or thirteen cakes, and into double packs. Each loaf of bread or cake was supposed to weigh 60 pounds, although in practice they weighed slightly less, between 52 and 59 pounds, due to the difficulty in making each unit weigh the same and also because this product loses weight with heat. These double packs were numbered consecutively<sup>28</sup>. The cakes only appear in three writings and only one of them reflects the exact weight of "two belduque wax cakes weighing four arrobas and two pounds", which indicates that, in this case, one cake weighed 51 pounds<sup>29</sup>. For the retail trade, the measurement unit used was the ball that weighed approximately half a pound<sup>30</sup>. The measures that we have handled in the consulted protocols are the quintals (100 pounds), the arrobas (25 pounds), pounds and quarters (0.25 pounds).

This product had a very significant weight within the totality of the debentures contained in the three notarial protocols. In 1561 it accounted for 70.5% of all mrs. traded; it dropped considerably in 1564 when it represented 27.5% and rose again, to just over half, 53.63% in 1568.

**TABLE 1**  
**THE STRUCTURE OF TRADE IN BURGOS: AN APPROXIMATION (1561-1568)**

Year	wax (mrs.)		other products		total (mrs.)
	mrs.	%	mrs.	%	
1561	2,813,067.50	70.5	1,117,306.00	39.5	3,990,373.5
1564	3,020,778.75	27.5	8,002,646.75	72.5	11,023,425.5
1568	3,216,818.00	53.63	2,781,410.00	46.37	5,998,228.0

### **The Merchants: Market Merchants and Store Merchants**

The investigation of royal taxes in the city of Burgos dated 1561 shows that there were seven waxworkers with shops that were headed to contribute 35,000 maravedis annually, distributed as follows<sup>31</sup>: Juan Alonso, waxworker, 4,083 m; Francisco de Alba, waxworker, 12,117 m; Francisco de Herrera, waxworker, 2,448 m; Diego de Herrera, 5,008 m; Diego de Aguirre, 4,716 m; Tomás de Mezquita, 5,828 m; Gobantes, 900 m. The three widows, María Ortiz de Uribe, María de Atienza and Isabel Pérez de Arizabala, lived in the Burgos neighborhood, although we have not been able to link them to their husbands.

The shops were located in the Cerería street, next to the Cathedral (now Cadena and Eleta). The candles for domestic use were manufactured and sold in the Casa de la Cerería, located in the Mercado Mayor, next to the Casa de la Sal, which was auctioned to the highest bidder<sup>32</sup>, and in the San Juan street. The candlesticks made a coarser product based on the tallow from the animals slaughtered in the butcher's shops of the city or nearby villages; there were four in the city of Burgos and they were in Trascorrales (current Lain Calvo street)<sup>33</sup>.

Below is a table showing all the people involved in the wax trade in 1561, 1564 and 1568, based on 575 deeds of debentures (Table 1). Two women appeared who, after being widowed, assumed the

responsibility of their husbands: Francisca de Silos, widow of the waxworker Francisco de Alba, and Catalina de Lago, widow of the merchant Francisco de Aragón, who works with her partner Pedro de Porres. The numbers show by years those who participate in the trade and in what proportion, being able to appreciate the increase of participants in 1568 possibly attracted by the performance of this type of product.

We have included in Table No. 2 the number of debentures that each participant performs, so that we can distinguish those that handle an amount over 1,000 pounds (reflected in Table No. 3) and those that are dedicated to selling to individuals and representatives of parishes, guilds, etc. of the city and province of Burgos in their stores.

The group that receives debentures above 1,000 pounds of wax is integrated by sixteen persons, of which two are not from Burgos: Pedro de Parayos, from Laredo, and Hernando de Zárate, from Vitoria. Pedro de Parayos, in 1553, was a shipmaster that brought three packs of wax for the company of the Salamanca family that docked in the port of Laredo<sup>34</sup>. The other persons were wool exporters and merchants who paid significant amounts of mrs. in sea tithes. The study carried out by Henri Lapeyre shows this. The merchants Francisco del Peso and Diego de Curiel, in 1559-1560, paid more than 50,000 mrs. in taxes. At that time, Francisco de Aragón, Francisco de Cárcamo, Diego de Curiel, Gregorio de Madrigal, Francisco del Peso, Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza and Juan de Vitoria appeared as "merchants". Between 1566 and 1571, as wool exporters from the Cantabrian coast: we find Diego de Curiel, Jerónimo López Gaona, Catalina Lago and Pedro de Porres, Gregorio de Madrigal, Francisco del Peso, Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza and Gabriel de la Torre. Later, in 1578, Gregorio de la Enzina, Juan and Hernando Rodríguez and Francisco and Rodrigo del Peso paid over 100,000 mrs. in sea tithes.<sup>35</sup>

Juan de Vitoria belonged to a bloodline dedicated to trade. There was a company called "Pedro de la Torre Vitoria e Juan e Alonso de Vitoria Hermanos" that acted as an intermediary for a wide variety of goods such as brass, honey, wax, rope, iron, etc.<sup>36</sup> It provided wax to Pedro del Castillo and Diego de Cerrabe who would dedicate themselves to retail sales.

Francisco de Aragón belonged to a merchant family that was consolidated during this century. On April 30, 1561, he acted as a partner of Pedro de Porres in a debenture in which he supplied 30 quintals and 89.5 pounds of wax to the also merchant Pedro del Castillo from Burgos, together with Alonso González de Nestares y Aguayo, notary public of Burgos, for the amount of 216,265 mrs. that were due for payment on Christmas Day.<sup>37</sup> Francisco de Aragón died before April 1564, when his widow, Catalina de Lago assumed the role and appeared alongside Pedro Porres supplying 666 pounds of Flemish wax and 57 pounds of coins to Francisco de la Torre, a resident of Medina de Rioseco<sup>38</sup>. Although it should be noted that fabrics were his main commodity.

Jerónimo López de Gaona was a member of another large merchant family, of Alava origin, to which Juan, Nicolás, Lope and Francisco also belonged. We know that sometimes they worked together and sometimes separately. Jerónimo was the most outstanding member and his bankruptcy, in 1579, was a very resounding event in the city<sup>39</sup>. The deeds in question indicate that Jerónimo López de Gaona sold not only wax but also fabrics. He sold wax to the neighbouring merchant from Burgos, Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza, and to the wax maker from Villalón, Cristóbal Rodríguez; as well as to two neighbours from Medina del Campo, Francisco de Castilla and Bernardino de Ureña by proxy.

Diego de Curiel, Francisco del Peso, Gabriel de la Torre are other merchants, belonging to families of commercial tradition, which exceed 1,000 pounds in each deed.

The most significant thing is to indicate that the buyers living in the city of Burgos will act as intermediaries in retail sales. Pedro del Castillo, Diego de Cerrabe, Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza, Juan and Hernando Rodríguez and Juan Sánchez de la Pimienta have shops in the city. The Notary Public Alonso Gonzalez de Nestares y Aguayo, author of the protocols consulted, is associated with Pedro del Castillo to cover a purchase of 3,089.5 pounds of wax. Juan Fernández de Nestares, another of the buyers, appears in the heading as "merino" and will combine his trade with buying and selling wax.

This retail trade is supported by the number of deeds that some of these traders generate with the wax as a product: Pedro del Castillo, 248; Diego de Cerrabe, 132; Juan Fernández de Nestares, 48; Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza, 35; and Juan de Vitoria, 13.

The most numerous sales are those made on a small scale by these local intermediaries to city dwellers of the most diverse origins, churches, clergymen and villagers. The purchases of the latter show the clear intention of obtaining a profit with this product in its place of origin. But they do not only trade with wax, as we can see in the following graphics, other products appear: livestock, silver, fabrics, fish...

**TABLE 2**  
**PEDRO DEL CASTILLO: TOTAL AMOUNTS IN MRS. OF PRODUCTS**  
**TRADED BY YEAR**

	<i>1561</i>	<i>1564</i>	<i>1568</i>
<i>Wax</i>	902,861		461,137
<i>Livestock</i>	26,750	59,191	0
<i>Silver</i>	27,925	27,628	0
<i>Fabrics</i>	2,260	0	7,038
<i>Fish</i>	4,375	0	0
<i>Cordoba leathers</i>	0	43,653	0
<i>Boxcalf</i>	0	5,992	0
<i>Brass</i>	0	9,952	0
<i>Total</i>	<b>964,171</b>	<b>1,347,505</b>	<b>468,175</b>

**TABLE 3**  
**DIEGO DE CERRABE: TOTAL AMOUNTS IN MRS. OF PRODUCTS**  
**TRADED BY YEAR**

	<i>1561</i>	<i>1564</i>	<i>1568</i>
<i>Wax</i>	363,709	542,570.75	19,950
<i>Livestock</i>	87,930	255,800.00	12,000
<i>Total</i>	<b>451,639</b>	<b>798,370.75</b>	<b>31,950</b>

**TABLE 4**  
**JUAN DE UGARTE DE ASTOBIZA: TOTAL AMOUNTS IN MRS. OF PRODUCTS**  
**TRADED BY YEAR**

	<i>1561</i>	<i>1564</i>	<i>1568</i>
<i>Wax</i>	0	21,600	868,298
<i>Livestock</i>	0	1,360	0
<i>Fabrics</i>	0	38,155	303,716
<i>Goods</i>	0	421,842	47,361
<i>Laces</i>	0	65,303	0
<i>Knives</i>	0	1,734	0
<i>Haberdashery</i>	0	0	16,151
<i>Pepper</i>	0	0	6,375
<i>Melinge</i>	0	0	5,252
<i>Saffron</i>	0	0	28,344
<i>Cinnamon</i>	0	0	9,044
<i>Sugar</i>	0	0	17,280
<i>Total</i>	<b>0</b>	<b>549,994</b>	<b>1,301,821</b>

**TABLE 5**  
**JUAN FERNANDEZ DE NESTARES: TOTAL AMOUNTS IN MRS. OF PRODUCTS**  
**TRADED BY YEAR**

	<i>1561</i>	<i>1564</i>	<i>1568</i>
<i>Wax</i>	306,655	234,792	156,380
<i>Livestock</i>	6,750	41,757	37,500
<i>Silver</i>	73,465	9,296	0
<i>Total</i>	<b>386,870</b>	<b>285,845</b>	<b>193,880</b>

**TABLE 6**  
**JUAN DE VITORIA: TOTAL AMOUNTS OF PRODUCTS PER YEAR**

	<i>1561</i>	<i>1564</i>	<i>1568</i>
<i>Wax</i>	381,980.5	0	0
<i>Fabric</i>	9,225.0	0	0
<i>Bell material</i>	25,105.0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<b>416,310.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The deeds of debenture were deferred payment commitments. The payments had to be made on dates such as Our Lady of August (August 15th ), Our Lady of September ( September 8th ), Saint Miguel (September 29th ), Saint Lucas (October 18th ), All Saints' Day (November 1st ), Saint Andrés (November 30th ), Christmas (December 25th ), or at the May and October fairs in Medina del Campo or at the Villalón fair. The city of Burgos had a fair that began on Saint John's Day in June, lasted fifteen

days, and was known as the Saint Peter's Fair. This local fair was not as important as the ones held in the above-mentioned locations, and not very significant for the payment of wax deals.

The market merchants are the ones who will collect the amounts of the debentures from the fairs of Medina del Campo and Villalón. In this way, on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1564, Francisco Rodriguez, acting on behalf of Francisco de Castilla, merchant and resident of Medina del Campo, agreed to pay the Burgos resident Jerónimo López de Gaona 151,000 mrs. for 50 arrobas of Flemish wax and two packs of petticoats. Payment would be made as follows: 120,000 mrs. at the October fair in Medina del Campo and the remaining amount at the May fair on 1565 in that town<sup>40</sup>. That same day Francisco Dávila, acting on behalf of Bernardino de Urueña, resident of Medina del Campo, acknowledges a debt to Jerónimo López de Gaona of 151,004 mrs. for 50 arrobas of Flemish wax and two packs of petticoats. The payment was to be made in the same way as the previous debenture<sup>41</sup>. On May 27, 1564 Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza acknowledges his debt to Jerónimo López de Gaona, a total amount of 168,624 mrs. for 20 quintals of Flemish wax and two packs of canvas. It is agreed to make payment as follows: 12,000 mrs. at the May fair to be held that same year in Medina del Campo and the remaining amount at the October fair in that town<sup>42</sup>. On April 20<sup>th</sup> 1564, Francisco de la Torre, resident of Medina de Rioseco, acknowledges his debt to Catalina de Lago (widow of the merchant Francisco de Aragón from Burgos) and Pedro de Torres, a total amount of 154,965 mrs. for the delivery of 57 pounds of coins and 666 pounds of Flemish wax. The payment of goods was to be made as follows: 47,000 mrs. at the May fair in Medina del Campo that same year, 72,000 mrs. at the October fair in that town, and the remaining amount at the 1565 Villalón fair<sup>43</sup>, held during Lent.<sup>44</sup>

On January 5, 1568, the brothers and merchants of Burgos, Juan and Hernando Rodriguez, acknowledged their debt to Gregorio de Madrigal and Gonzalo de la Enzina, also from Burgos, a total amount of 508,038 mrs. for 30 quintals of Flemish wax, two packs of holandas and 100 pounds of coins from Flemish haberdashery. The installment payment was to be carried out as follows: 87,000 mrs. on Easter that year; 240,000 mrs. at the May fair of Medina del Campo in 1567 "which is to be done", and 181,038 mrs. at the May Fair of 1568.<sup>45</sup>

On January 21, 1568, Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza, acting on behalf of Gregorio de Molina and Domingo de Aguila, merchants and residents of Soria, acknowledges his debt to his fellow countryman Juan Rodriguez, 57,750 mrs. for six arrobas and five pounds of Flemish wax, two packs of melinge canvas and a pack of angeo (net). The payment was to be made in three instalments, 12,505 mrs. on St. Barnabas' Day that year, 22,000 mrs. at the May fair of Medina del Campo in 1567, which "is to be done" and the remaining amount at the October fair of 1567 which was also to be done.<sup>46</sup>

On April 6, 1568, Juan Marañón, a resident of Barbadillo del Mercado, acknowledged his debt to Hernando de Zárate, a resident of Vitoria, 25,943 mrs. for 313 pounds of Osterlanda wax and the payment would be made at the May fair of Medina del Campo in 1567 which "is to be done"<sup>47</sup>. A few days later, on April 17, Martín de Vergara agreed to pay Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza 133,380 mrs. for 1,433 pounds of Flemish wax and 155.5 pounds of "other wax" at the Medina del Campo May Fair of 1567 that "is to be done".<sup>48</sup>

The last deed of debenture to be paid at the fair is that issued on April 28, 1568, by the brothers and merchants from Burgos, Juan and Hernando Rodriguez, who acknowledge having purchased 12 wax cakes, two packs of Holland and 10 packs of haberdashery from the company of Gregorio Madrigal and Gregorio de la Enzina for a total amount of 452,837 mrs. The instalment payment was to be made in the following manner: 46,000 on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1568, 52,000 eight days after Holy Spirit Easter of 1569, and the remaining amount at the fair of Medina del Campo in 1568.<sup>49</sup>

Some of the instalments regarding the payments of the 1568 debentures had to be paid at the May and October fairs in Medina del Campo the previous year, 1567, which had not been held. This situation has its explanation in the beginning of the first disorganization phase of the fiscal system in 1564 derived from "the Monarchy's impossibility to pay the creditors and in view of the delay of the fleets, some fairs are postponed to even, in the end, several are held at the same time".<sup>50</sup>

All these merchants from Burgos were logically looking for an economic profit from the wax trade. The difference between buying and selling, according to the data we have handled, is not at all high, but



rather the opposite, reasonable. Table 2 shows the price of the pound of wax in the years consulted, a price that will be increased at retail sale. In 1561 a price range of between 69.5 and 71 mrs/pound is observed; for 1564 it is between 72 and 75 mrs/pound; and for 1568 this price difference is considerably greater, between 72 and 86 mrs/pound, we suppose that considering the qualities of the same, although it is not specified. According to the data we have analyzed, the price increase experienced by the wax trade could range from 4% to 33%, a difference that could be related to volume and quality.

**TABLE 7**  
**PURCHASE AND SALES PRICES OF WAX (MRS./POUNDS) AND INCREASE (%)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>merchant</b>	<b>purchase price</b>	<b>selling price</b>	<b>increase</b>
1561	Pedro del Castillo	70-70.5	75-85	7.15-21.5
	Diego de Cerrabe	69.5-70.5	78-86	12-22
1564	Pedro del Castillo	74	80-85	5-19
	Diego de Cerrabe	72	78-88	8-21.5
	Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza	72	75	4
	Juan Fernández de Nestares	73	83-88	13.5-20.5
1568	Pedro del Castillo	75	85-100	13-33
	Diego de Cerrabe		95-96	
	Juan and Hernando Rodríguez	72	82	14

It is assumed that many of the retail buyers took this product back to the rural areas where they were neighbours, where they shared transport costs and a profit with their neighbours.

## CONCLUSION

From the 1560s to the 1570s, the system of colonies and mercantile nations of Castile in Europe entered into decadence. According to Professor Hilario Casado several facts can be mentioned: the very decadence of the Spanish trade with Europe which extended to the French and Italian markets and the loss of cohesion among the members of the communities of merchants which could have its origin in the religious problem that affected the continent during this period. Some members of the companies and trading companies based in the Netherlands embraced the Protestant Reformation, which led to a fragmentation within them. In his memoirs, Francisco de Enzinas himself described the confrontations and accusations that took place between merchants based in the Netherlands.<sup>51</sup>

In spite of this situation and the fact that the city of Burgos, between 1579 and 1584, was immersed in the crisis, it declared itself to have carried out annual sales of wax that exceeded two million maravedis.<sup>52</sup> This trade continued in all its importance during the 17th century because the demand for wax did not decline. Another issue is who provides the waxworks in Burgos. García del Peso between 1609 and 1617 sold 8,063 pounds on average with an amount, also in average, of 1,075,233 mrs., however there are years when it reaches 9.717<sup>5</sup> (1615) and 10.779<sup>5</sup> pounds (1616).<sup>53</sup>

**TABLE 8**  
**LIST OF TRADERS WHO CARRIED OUT WAX TRANSACTIONS IN THE YEARS 1561, 1564 AND 1568**

Merchant	1561			1564			1568		
	Pounds	Mrs.	Debentures	Pounds	Mrs.	Debentures	Pounds	Mrs.	Debentures
Agustín de Castrillo							600	52,200	2
Andrés de Benavente Távira	325	25,150	2						
Andrés de Távira							2,926.5	150,512	15
Andrés Maldonado							4,256.5	339,933	15
Baltasar de Ribero	25	2,125	1				180	16,200	3
Diego de Cerrabe	4,312.25	363,709	63	6,613.3	562,897.75	66	198	19,950	3
Diego de Curiel							1,202	90150	1
Diego de Herrera, cerero				s/e	10,139	4			
Diego López Montero							502	42980	1
Francisco de Alba, cerero	145	10549	2	341	25,480	5			
Francisca de Silos, widow of Francisco de Alba									
Francisco de Aragón and Pedro de Porres	3,089.5	216,265	1				304.62	25,775	6
Catalina de Lago, widow of Francisco de Aragón, and Pedro de Porres				666	53,280	1			
Francisco de Lantadilla				400	29,600	1			
Francisco del Peso				4,003	288,216	1			
Gabriel de la Torre				1,100	81,400	1			
Gaspar de Montoya							550	45,100	1
Gregorio de la Enzina							3,000	213,000	1
Gregorio de Madrigal	5,583	391,113	2				617	52,445	1
Gregorio de Madrigal and Gregorio de la Enzina							926.5	75,046	2
Gregorio de Madrigal and Gregorio de Almansa							631	51,111	1

Merchant	1561			1564			1568		
	Pounds	Mrs.	Debentures	Pounds	Mrs.	Debentures	Pounds	Mrs.	Debentures
Hernando de Zárate							2,595	190,674	2
Jerónimo López de Gaona				6,527	475,944	4			
Juan Bautista de la Moneda	1,125.5	78110	2	100	8,000	1	153	12509	1
Juan de la Sierra	228.5	17,762.5	2						
Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza				275	21,600	1	10,790	868,298	34
Juan de Vitoria	5,343.5	381,980.5	13						
Juan Fernández de Nestares	4,325.5	306,655	4	2,852.5	237,697	29	1,920	169,880	15
Juan Rodriguez							155	12,710	1
Juan y Hernando Gutiérrez							208	17,056	1
Luis de Rojas				150	11,700	1			
Martin de Villalva	250	17,750	2						
Martin Fernández de Nestares	93.75	7,500	1						
Miguel Ruiz de Urramendi	613	43,216.5	1				541	47411	2
Miguel Vallejo	150	11,400	1						
Pablo de Agüero							102	8,772	1
Pedro de Parayos (Laredo)							1,371	117,906	1
Pedro de Vadillo	325	36150	2				106	10,086	1
Pedro del Castillo	11,009.5	901,357	115	15,242.5	1,214,825	104	8,886.5	461,137	29
Sebastián de Mucharaz	275	20,075	1				328	24,928	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,219</b>	<b>2,787,651</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>38,270.3</b>	<b>3,020,778.75</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>42,449.62</b>	<b>3,115,769</b>	<b>141</b>

Source: Own elaboration from the Notarial Protocols of the Notary Public Alonso González de Nestares y Aguayo.

**TABLE 9  
MERCHANTS WHOSE DEBENTURES EXCEED THOUSAND POUNDS OF WAX**

<b>Merchant</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of pounds</b>	<b>Mrs./l.</b>	<b>Imp. mrs.</b>	<b>Purchaser</b>
Antonio de Maldonado (Burgos)	1568-02-28	1,130.0	76	85,880	Diego Ruiz de Villaespa (Covarrubias)
Diego de Curiel (Burgos)	1568-03-18	1,202.0	75	90,150	Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)
Francisco de Aragón and Pedro de Porres (Burgos)	1561-04-30	3,089.5	70	216,265	Pedro del Castillo and Alonso González de Nestares y Aguayo (Burgos)
Francisco de Cárcamo (Burgos) and Pedro de Parayos (Laredo)	1568-03-06	1,203.0	84	101,052	Bautista Díez (Peñafiel)
Francisco del Peso (Burgos)	1564-02-26	4,003.0	72	288,216	Diego de Cerrabe (Burgos)
Gabriel de la Torre (Burgos)	1564-04-14	1,100.0	74	81,400	Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)
Gregorio de Madrigal (Burgos)	1561-03-12	3,520.0	69.5	244,640	Diego de Cerrabe (Burgos)
	1561-03-30	2,063.0	71	146,473	Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)
	1568-03-24 <sup>a</sup>	617.0	85	145,821	Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza, on behalf of Francisco Pérez (Alcalá de Henares)
		664.0	81		
		520.0	76		
Gregorio de Madrigal and Gregorio de la Enzina (Burgos)	1568-01-05 <sup>b</sup>	3,000	72	216,000	Juan and Hernando Rodríguez (Burgos)
Hernando de Zárate (Vitoria)	1568-05-04	2,282.0	72	164,304	Juan Sánchez de la Pimienta (Burgos)
Jerónimo López de Gaona (Burgos)	1564-02-25	2,027.0	72	145,944	Cristóbal Rodríguez, cerero (Villalón)
	1564-03-15 <sup>b</sup>	1,250.0	72	90,000	Francisco Rodríguez, on behalf of Francisco Castilla (Medina del Campo)
	1564-03-15 <sup>b</sup>	1,250.0	72	90,000	Francisco Dávila, on behalf of Bernardino de Ureña (Medina del Campo)
	1564-03-27 <sup>b</sup>	2,000.0	72	144,000	Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza (Burgos)
Juan de Ugarte de Astobiza (Burgos)	1568-04-17 <sup>c</sup>	1,433.0	77	133,380	Martin de Vergara
		155.5	81		
	1568-06-03 <sup>c</sup>	644	88	94,909	Juan Pérez, cerero (Burgo de Osma)
		469	78		
		25	48		
Juan de Vitoria (Burgos)	1561-02-08	1,843.0	70.5	130,054	Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)
	1561-04-12	1,674.5	70.5	118,052	Diego de Cerrabe and Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)
Juan Fernández de Fuentes (Burgos)	1561-04-28	3,975.5	70	278,285	Diego de Cerrabe and Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)

Pedro del Castillo (Burgos)	1564-04-07	2,000.0	73	146,000	Juan Fernández de Nestares (Burgos)
	1564-04-09	1,500.0	75	112,500	Diego de Herrera Quintano (Burgos)
Pedro de Parayos (Laredo)	1568-04-10	1,371.0	86	117,906	Diego de Herrera Quintano (Burgos)

**Source: Own elaboration from the Notarial Protocols of the Notary Public Alonso González de Nestares y Aguayo.**

<sup>a</sup> The deed of debenture specifies three different types of wax with their price.

<sup>b</sup> The price of the pound of wax is not specified, an approximate price has been adopted.

<sup>c</sup> The deeds of debenture specify two and three different types of wax with their price.

## ENDNOTES

1. The documentation retained in the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Burgos (AHPBu), Notarial Protocols section, by the notary public Alonso González de Nestares y Aguayo, is quite limited but very valuable in relation to the wax trade. It is divided into five files corresponding to the years 1561, 1564, 1568, 1575 and 1576, and with time gaps since these years are not complete. For this work we have studied the first three of them, in which we have found 575 deeds of debenture in which wax appears as a product of exchange. These three books are: Book 5723 (February - June 1561, 728 pages); Book 5724 (January - August 1564, 1.048 pages); Book 5725 (December 1567 - July 1568, 862 pages). In 1575 we find four writings referring to wax and in 1576 no writings at all.
2. GONZÁLEZ PRIETO, Francisco Javier: *La ciudad Menguada: Población y economía en Burgos, S. XVI y XVII*, Santander, 2006, p. 26.
3. LÓPEZ GÓMEZ, José Manuel y Esther Pardiñas de Juana. “Un testimonio inédito sobre la epidemia de peste de 1565 en Burgos”, in *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, year 78, No. 221, 2002 (2), p. 227-250.
4. PAYO HERNANZ, René Jesús y José Matesanz del Barrio: *La Edad de Oro de la Caput castellae. Arte y Sociedad en Burgos. 1450-1600*, Burgos, 2015, p. 28.
5. BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, Manuel: *El Consulado de Burgos en el siglo XVI*, Madrid, 1963; CAUNEDO DEL POTRO, Betsabé: “Comercio Exterior”, in *Historia de Burgos. Edad Moderna* (2), Burgos, 1992.; PAYO HERNANZ, René Jesús y José Matesanz del Barrio, *La Edad de Oro...* p. 35.
6. HERRERO GARCÍA, Manuel: “El alumbrado de la casa española en tiempo de los Austrias”. In *Hispania*, 1957 Madrid, No. 67, p. 262-299.
7. CASADO ALONSO, Hilario: *El triunfo de Mercurio. La presencia castellana en Europa (centuries XV y XVI)*. Burgos, 2003, p. 101.; IBÁÑEZ PÉREZ, Alberto C. *Burgos y los burgaleses en el siglo XVI*, Burgos, 1990, p. 168.
8. URIARTE MELO, Carla: “Un buen negocio ocasional. El comercio de la cera en el siglo XVI”, en *Letras de Deusto* Vol. 28, No. 81, p. 69.
9. BRUMONT, Francis, “El comercio exterior castellano a mediados del siglo XVI: un memorial “de las mercaderías que entran en el Reyno”. In *Castilla y Europa. Comercio y mercaderes en los siglos XIV, XV y XVI*, Burgos, 1995, p.189.
10. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5725, fol. 247 r.
11. *Carrascón. Segunda vez impreso. Con mayor corrección y cuidado que la primera. Con licencia y privilegio a costa del autor*. By María Sánchez Nodriz. Year 1633. Introductory study by Luis Usóz y Río. First work of the Spanish Ancient Reformers Collection. 1847.
12. URIARTE MELO, Carla: “Los negocios de Martín Sáez de Anuncibay a mediados del siglo XVI” in *Bidebarrieta: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of Bilbao*, No. 17, 2006, p. 41
13. POLANCO MELERO, Carlos: *Muerte y sociedad en Burgos en el siglo XVI*, Burgos, 2001, p. 179 y 180.
14. MARTÍNEZ GIL, Fernando: *Muerte y Sociedad en la España de los Austrias*. Cuenca, 2001, p. 402.
15. POLANCO MELERO, Carlos: “Crisis económica y actitudes ante la muerte: el artesanado burgalés en los siglos XVI y XVII (I)” in *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, No. 237, 2008, p. 426.
16. *Pragmáticas nuevas. Quaderno de algunas pragmáticas y declaraciones nuevas que los señores del Consejo Real de S.M. manda que se impriman este año de 1565*. Printed in Alcalá at Andrés de Angulo's

- house. Sell at Francisco Lopez's house, bookseller in court. Fol. 7.  
Available in <https://books.google.es/books?id=4FdcAAAACAAJ>
17. ALONSO DE PORRES, César: *Las parroquias en la ciudad de Burgos*, Burgos, 1981, p. 42-43.
  18. IBÁÑEZ PÉREZ, Alberto C.: *Burgos y los burgaleses...* p. 337-351.
  19. LUCAS VILLANUEVA, Oscar: *El Comercio Internacional castellano a través del puerto de Laredo en la época de Felipe II, según la correspondencia de Simón Ruiz*. Thesis defended at the University of Cantabria, 2009, p. 427.  
<http://www.tdx.cat/bitstream/handle/10803/108499/TesisOLV.pdf;jsessionid=C7A482E147823E07774A7E4FF9B1F984?sequence=1> p. 426.
  20. The origin of 16 of the 575 deeds of debentures consulted is not specified, although we assume that it was brought from the Flemish region.
  21. AHPBu, Book 5725, fol. 620 r.
  22. AHPBu, Book 5725, fol. 60 v., 73 v., 472 v., 492 r., 810 v.
  23. AHPBu, Book 5725, fol. 619 r., 786 v., 832 r.
  24. AHPBu, Book 5723, fol. 295 r.; Book 5724, fol. 1022 r.; Book 5725, fol. 579 v.
  25. AHPBu, Book 5725, fol. 810 v.
  26. AHPBu, Book 5725, 807 v., 808 v.
  27. MELGOSA OTER, Oscar Raúl: *Los Burgaleses ante la enfermedad y la muerte de sus reyes: Rogativas y honras fúnebres reales en la ciudad de Burgos en los siglos XVI y XVII*, unpublished thesis defended at the University of Burgos, 2005, p. 346.
  28. Uriarte Melo, Clara: "Un buen negocio..." p. 73.
  29. AHPBu, Book 5725, fol. 247 r.
  30. LUCAS VILLANUEVA, Oscar: *El Comercio Internacional castellano...*, p. 427.
  31. Archivo General de Simancas, Expediente de Hacienda 62, fol. 121,
  32. IBÁÑEZ PÉREZ, Alberto C.: *Burgos y los burgaleses...*, p. 211.
  33. GONZÁLEZ PRIETO, Francisco Javier: *La ciudad Menguada...* p. 232.
  34. UGARTE MELO, Clara: "Un buen negocio..." p. 76.
  35. LAPEYRE, Henri: *El comercio exterior de Castilla a través de las aduanas de Felipe II*, Valladolid, 1981, p. 234-238, 251-252, 278-281.
  36. BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, Manuel: "Nuevos datos documentales sobre el linaje "Vitoria". In *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, 1950, year 29, No. 112, p. 197.
  37. AHPBu, Book, 5723, fol. 494 v.-495 r. April 30, 1561.
  38. AHPBu, Book 5724, fol. 646 v.-647 r. April 20, 1564.
  39. BASAS FERNÁNDEZ, Manuel: "Mercaderes burgaleses en el siglo XVI. (Conclusión), in *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, 1954, year 33, No. 127 p. 160-161;" Linajes vascongados en la Universidad de mercaderes de Burgos", in *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, 1964, year 43, No. 162, p.123-124.
  40. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5724, fol. 396 v.-397 v.
  41. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5724, fol. 401 r.- 402 r.
  42. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5724, fol. 525 r.-526 v.
  43. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5724, fol. 646 v.-647 r.
  44. YUN CASALILLA, Bartolomé: *Sobre la transición al capitalismo en Castilla. Economía y Sociedad en Tierra de Campos (1500-1830)*, Salamanca, 1987, p. 187.
  45. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5725, fol. 69 r.-70 r.
  46. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5725, fol. 190 r.-v.
  47. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5725, fol. 492 r.-v.
  48. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5725, fol. 580 v.-581 r.
  49. AHPBu. Notarial Protocols, Book 5725, fol. 684 r.-v.
  50. YUN CASALILLA, Bartolomé: *Sobre la transición...* p. 216.
  51. CASADO ALONSO, Hilario "Las colonias de mercaderes castellanos en Europa (siglos XV y XVI)". In *Castile and Europe. Comercio y mercaderes en los siglos XIV, XV y XVI*, Burgos, 1995, p.54-56.
  52. GONZÁLEZ PRIETO, Francisco Javier: *La ciudad Menguada: Población...*, p. 231-232.
  53. CUESTA NIETO, José Antonio: "García del Peso. Un mercader burgalés en tiempo de crisis".