

Networking in high society
The Duarte family in seventeenth-century Antwerp¹

Timothy De Paepe
Vleeshuis Museum | Klank van de stad & University of Antwerp

At the end of the sixteenth century the Duarte family, who were of Jewish origin, moved from Portugal to Antwerp and it was here that Diego (I) Duarte laid the foundations for a particularly lucrative business in gemstones and jewellery. His son Gaspar (I) and grandson Gaspar (II) were also very successful professionally and became purveyors of fine jewellery to the courts in (among other places) England, France, the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg Empire. Their wealth enabled the Duartes to collect art and make music in their “palace” on the Meir. Their artistic taste and discernment was such that the mansion became a magnet for visitors from all over Western Europe. The arts were a catalyst for the Duartes’ business, but also constituted a universal language that permitted the family to transcend religious and geographical borders. The death of Diego (II) Duarte in 1691 brought to an end the story of the Duartes in Antwerp.

The Duartes were possibly the foremost dealers in jewellery and gemstones in Antwerp in the seventeenth century, but they did not achieve that position without a great deal of effort. Thanks to hard work, determination, a love of the arts and a widespread family network, plus the advantage of Antwerp’s geographically central position, these enterprising cosmopolitans managed to overcome religious discrimination and a succession of setbacks. And in the intimacy of their home they brought together the world of business, the arts and diplomacy in an environment that welcomed every discerning visitor, irrespective of his or her religious background. This article focuses on two periods from the life of the Duarte family.

1. “Ce beau Mont Parnasse à Anvers”

In the closing years of the nineteenth century Antwerp city council decided to widen the Meir, already a major arterial road, thereby creating a boulevard which, together with De Keyserlei, would link the historic city centre with the railway station-to-be. The plan involved demolishing a considerable number of houses and grand mansions to make way for a new street and new, monumental buildings, like the impressive *Magasins Tietz* and the city’s banqueting hall (Stadsfeestzaal). Numerous old houses and their history were quietly obliterated in the name of progress and economic prosperity.

One of those houses, located between Kolveniersstraat and Otto Veniusstraat, was the Hôtel de Succa, built by Bernardino de Succa, a merchant from Piedmont, around 1561. But it was the Duarte family who, having acquired the house in 1615², set about altering and extending it and making it a veritable magnet. Under father Gaspar (I), his wife Catharina, their son Diego (II) and his brother and four sisters, the Duartes’ mansion became a cultural meeting place where, for example, painting and music crossed the path of international diplomacy.³ Numerous foreign travellers visited the Duartes’

¹ The author would like to thank Martijn Akkerman, Mirjam Knotter and Anton Kras for their help.

² Antwerp City Archive, *Wijkboeken*, PK # 2295, fol. 260^f.

³ Timothy De Paepe, ‘Diego Duarte II (1612-1691): a converso’s experience in seventeenth-century Antwerp’, *Jewish History* 24 (2010) 2, p 176.

house between 1615 and 1691, from the Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin to stadtholder William III of Orange, from the royalist refugees William and Margaret Cavendish to the English composer Nicholas Lanier and from the Italian merchant Guilielmo Calandrini to the French baroness Béatrix de Cusance. In 1641 the English diarist John Evelyn described the Duartes' house as “[a] palace [...] furnish’d like a prince’s”.⁴ In 1653 the Dutch diplomat and *uomo universale* Constantijn Huygens referred to “ce beau Mont Parnasse à Anvers”, the Antwerp Mount Parnassus, a place where the arts converge.⁵ Members of the Duarte family usually regaled their visitors with a concert or perhaps a guided tour of their sizable art collection which included *chefs-d’oeuvre* by Coques, Brueghel, Dou, Titian, Rubens, Massijs, van Dyck, Vermeer and others. The name and fame of the Duartes' cultural and intellectual pleasures were however the result of, and also facilitated, their professional life, namely the trade in precious stones, pearls and jewellery. In other words, their professional life was central to the cultural context.

*Ill. 1. Hypothetical reconstruction of the Hôtel de Succa as it was in the seventeenth century
(computer visualization: Timothy De Paepe).*

The Duarte family owned the mansion from 1615 to 1691.

1. The Duarte family

It may have been Diego (I) Duarte (ca. 1544-1626) from Lisbon who shortly before 1571 decided to move – with or without his father - from Portugal to Antwerp with a view to building his gemstone and jewellery business.⁶ At that time Antwerp boasted a considerable Portuguese mercantile community, united in the Portuguese *Nação*, or ‘Natie’ in Dutch, i.e. associations of workers practising a specific craft or profession in a town. Back in 1511 Antwerp city council had put an impressive building at the disposal of the *Nação* and given its members special privileges. This gave rise to a dynamic trade in spices and other colonial wares through the *Feitoria Portuguesa de Antuérpia*. Though Antwerp was involved in the Eighty Years' War from 1568, it was still a large and very important commercial centre.

For Diego (I) Duarte and his family there was another important reason for moving to Antwerp: their Jewish roots. In 1492 Jews in Spain were given the choice of converting to Catholicism or being expelled from the country. A few years later, King Manuel of Portugal adopted the same rule in his country. Numerous Jews converted, including the Duarte family, who until then had gone under the name of Abolais. But the government and the Church were deeply suspicious of these *cristãos-novos* or *conversos* and this led to harassment and even massacres, including a pogrom in Lisbon in 1506 in which at least two thousand Jews were murdered. With the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1536 (the Spanish Inquisition had been in operation since 1478), the persecutions intensified. Though Antwerp was under the Spanish crown, the city was by nature independent. While Jews were not welcome in Antwerp, the city never made sustained attempts to track down and try *conversos*,

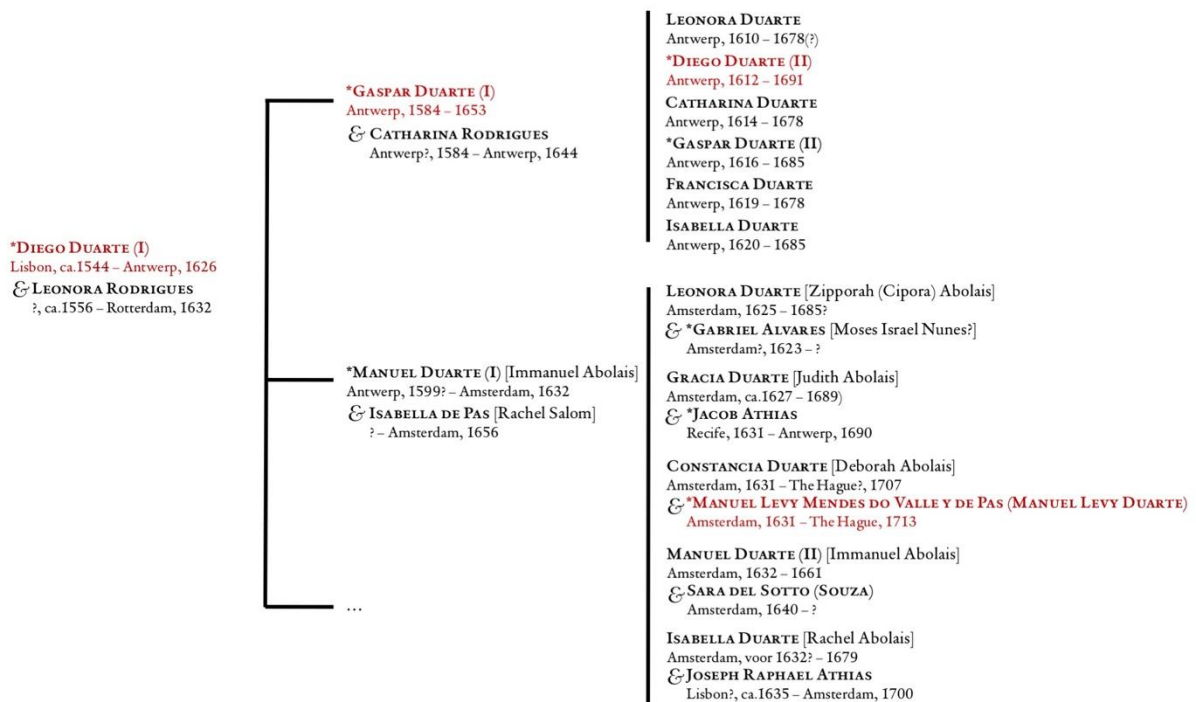
⁴ Quoted in Rudolf Rasch, ‘The Antwerp Duarte Family as Musical Patrons’, *Orlandus Lassus and His Time. Colloquium Proceedings*, Peer 1995, p 415.

⁵ Letter (Worp 5322) from Constantijn Huygens to Béatrix de Cusance (1653). The letters from and to Huygens follow the numbering used by J.A. Worp. See Constantijn Huygens, *Briefwisseling*, The Hague 1911-1917.

⁶ In 1571 the name Diego (I) Duarte (‘Diogo Duarte con familia’) appeared for the first time in a list of members of the Portuguese ‘Natie’ in Antwerp. See I.S. Révah, ‘Pour l’histoire des marranes à Anvers: Recensements de la “Nation Portugaise” de 1571 à 1666’, *Revue des études juives* CXXII (1963), 133.

unlike in Portugal and Spain where Jews were persecuted for their faith and even executed until well into the eighteenth century. Antwerp presented a golden opportunity for Portuguese merchants with a *converso* background: the city gave them the opportunity to conduct business outside the direct influence of the Inquisition in a familiar Iberian or even Portuguese environment, the *Nação*, where Portuguese was the lingua franca. Moreover, the presence of numerous merchants of different nationalities meant that Antwerp was a city where information, economic knowhow and new ideas were readily available. So the city was an attractive destination for a merchant looking to emigrate, like Diego Duarte.

In Antwerp Diego (I) Duarte laid the foundations for a successful jewellery trade, but it was above all his son Gaspar (I) and his eldest son Diego (II) (ill.s 2, 3 and 4) who took the family company to great heights. Many details about the Duartes' professional activities are missing, but two decades in their lives are considerably better documented. On the one hand, there is the period 1631-1641 when London, as well as Antwerp, played a prominent role and, on the other hand, there is the period 1681-1691 when Antwerp was the focus. The Antwerp branch of the Duarte family died out in 1691.



Ill. 2. Duarte family tree. The four members of the Duarte family who successively headed up the family company are shown in red. The * denotes family members involved in the jewellery and gemstone business.

Ill. 3. Lucas Vorsterman, Engraving of Gaspar (I) Duarte (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Underneath is a poem by Constantijn Huygens.

Ill. 4. Gonzales Cocques, Family portrait [The Duarte family], 1644 or earlier (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest). On the left are Gaspar (I) and his sons; on the right the mother Catharina and three of her four daughters.

2. London, 1632-1642

In the spring of 1632, Diego (II) Duarte and his brother Gaspar (II) arrived in London, escorted by their father. There they targeted a wealthy clientele with their exceptionally high-quality items of jewellery. Perhaps they were hoping to tap into a market of new customers in England, particularly in court circles. While the father headed up the firm from the residence on the Meir in Antwerp, his two sons would manage a branch in England, like a kind of trading post. Nothing is known about the education of Diego (II) and Gaspar (II), but they may have been home-taught in preparation for a life as merchants, and so rather than learning Greek and Latin, they would have studied arithmetic and bookkeeping, geography and French. English may also have been part of the language package, for later on Diego (II) had no difficulty in switching between Dutch, French, English and of course Portuguese. And finally there was music, which not only provided refinement, but also mathematical harmony. Moreover, the two brothers would have been inducted in the workings of the jewellery trade by their father from an early age. So when they arrived in London in 1632, the 20-year-old Diego and his 16-year-old brother were not completely wet behind the ears, despite being so young.

As jewellery merchants, the Duartes followed the wave of artists and craftsmen from the Low Countries who headed for London during the reign of Charles I, either invited by the sovereign or simply hoping for commissions from the royal court or the aristocracy. In 1632 alone the painters Jan Lievens, Hendrik Gerritsz. Pot and Anthony van Dyck arrived. The latter was immediately appointed ‘Principalle Paynter in Ordinary to their Majesties’. Others who moved in court circles, or who were soon to do so, were painters like Daniël Mijtens, Gerrit van Honthorst and Alexander Keirincx who was from Antwerp, and the silversmith Christiaan van Vianen. During his stay in London in 1629-1630, Peter Paul Rubens was even commissioned to execute the ceiling paintings for the Banqueting House. In short, in London the Duartes found themselves in a ready-made community from the Low Countries.⁷

Gaspar (I) soon returned to Antwerp, but in December 1632 Diego (II) acquired citizenship through the so-called ‘denization’ process, whereby an applicant received limited civil rights but did not have to take an oath of loyalty or swear religious obedience, as was the case with naturalization. In the course of the next two years, Diego established important and high-placed contacts, possibly through fellow countrymen working at the court. In February 1635 that provided him (and not his father as is sometimes claimed)⁸ with the appointment of ‘His Majesties Jeweller in Ordinary during life’, court jeweller to Charles I.⁹

Charles and his wife, Henrietta Maria of France, were known for their love of majesty and splendour.¹⁰ Every year the royal couple spent a fortune on jewellery, art and entertainment. They did

⁷ See also Juliette Roding et al., *Dutch and Flemish Artists in Britain 1550-1800*. Leiden 2003.

⁸ See for example Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch. How England plundered Holland's Glory*. New York 2008, p 177.

⁹ Thomas Rymer, *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscumque generis acta publica [...] Tomi octavi pars I. et II*. The Hague 1743, p 113.

¹⁰ See, for example, Erin Griffey, *On display. Henrietta Maria and the Materials of Magnificence at the Stuart Court*. London 2015.

not regard ostentation as vanity, but as an almost indispensable outward show of their God-given kingship.

Jewellery, like crown jewels and other regalia, were of course of great importance for a sovereign. Charles I kept the collection in the Jewel House, originally built to house Edward III's treasures.¹¹ But jewellery also served as gifts. Rewards for those who had rendered service to the sovereign often came in the form of rings or earrings and from 1635 it was Diego Duarte's responsibility to supply them. Diego could rely on the family company and on its international network. The production of jewellery and the process of creating gemstones were carried out by craftsmen from different backgrounds. These craftsmen – gold and silversmiths and diamond workers – were also united in guild structures. A diamond and ruby-cutting guild had been established in Antwerp back in 1582. However, a considerable number of merchants dealing in jewellery and precious stones, both in the Duartes' network but also in general, had a *converso* or Jewish background. The precise reasons for this are not clear, but undoubtedly multiple. Guilds both in the Southern and Northern Netherlands, but also elsewhere, were rarely open to Jews, though trade was permitted. Moreover, the jewellery trade was a practical one. Though valuable, jewellery was not bulky, unlike grain or wine, for example. Experience had shown that from one day to the next action could be taken against *conversos* and Jews. So a mobile trade had its advantages. And as numerous Jews, having fled persecution, were living all over Europe, they often had a widespread family network within which Portuguese was the *lingua franca*. The Antwerp Duartes had family ties with jewellery and gemstone merchants from Amsterdam to Lisbon and from Paris to Hamburg. So a disadvantage was of necessity turned into an advantage. As Edgar Samuel stated, "the ideal unit for the conduct of the international gemstone trade is an ethnic minority living within a major mercantile city and connected by language and kinship with similar communities in other major cities".¹² When special items came onto the market, all these people could quickly pass on information. This gave Diego (II) Duarte the edge over many of his English associates. Moreover, the fact that he came from the Low Countries, in Charles I's eyes a source of artistic talent, made him all the more interesting.

Most of the items of jewellery which Diego Duarte supplied were intended as gifts, as evidenced by official documents relating to the English royal household. For instance, the king sent "a fair hart [sic] diamond, faceted and set in a ring" to the Baron de Rochecour and "a fair heart diamond" to the father of Hedwig Eleonora of Holstein-Gottorp, the later queen of Sweden, to commemorate the birth of Hedwig.¹³ Frederick, landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, was also given a ring. More diamond rings went to, for example, Jeanne de Schonberg, duchess de Liancourt, and to Monsieur de Rouvigny, the French ambassador, to commemorate the birth of Princess Anne, daughter of Charles I.¹⁴ In 1635 Mary Villiers (later Mary Villiers Lady Herbert of Shurland) was not given a ring, but two matching diamonds.¹⁵ She was only thirteen years old but the gift may have been to mark her marriage to Charles Lord Herbert of Shurland. Shortly afterwards she sat for Anthony van Dyck, unfortunately wearing pearls rather than diamonds supplied by Diego Duarte.

¹¹ Hervey Sitwell, 'The Jewel House and the Royal Goldsmiths', *The Archaeological Journal* CXVII (1960), p 150.

¹² Edgar R. Samuel, 'Manuel Levy Duarte (1631-1714): An Amsterdam Merchant Jeweller and His Trade with London', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England London* 27 (1978/1980), p 25

¹³ *Calendar of state papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of Charles I. 1636-1637*. London 1867, p 442.

¹⁴ *Calendar of state papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of Charles I. 1637*. London 1868, p 318.

¹⁵ *Autograph Letters and Historical Documents*. S.I. 1932, p 88.

In 1637 an unusual commission came Diego's way. Two years earlier Charles I and Henrietta Maria had asked Anthony van Dyck to paint a portrait of the king to be sent to the sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini in Italy. Van Dyck painted Charles from three different angles on one canvas, so that Bernini had an almost three-dimensional image of the sovereign as a model for a marble bust. In July 1637 the finished bust arrived, and the result was, according to the sovereign, phenomenal.¹⁶ To thank the sculptor, Diego Duarte was asked to choose a diamond ring, which was sent to "Signor Bernino who cut His Majesty's statue in marble".¹⁷

Information supplied by the sovereign for the purchase of jewellery was recorded fairly precisely, if not always consistently, and usually filed away in the so-called 'state papers'. They show that Diego – like Anthony van Dyck - often had to wait a long time for payment. As Charles' coffers were invariably empty, the king sought other ways to pay suppliers and employees, which is how Diego Duarte managed to acquire a large piece of land together with hunting and deforestation rights near Cricklade in Wiltshire for a very good price¹⁸. A neighbour was Philip Jacobson, another jeweller. Diego was now one of the landed aristocracy and until his death he called himself "Edelman en Domestique van zyn Koninklyke Majesteit van Groot Brittanje" – Nobleman and Servant of His Majesty of Great Britain (ill. 5).

Ill. 5. Ode by the diamond merchant Jacobus de Bruyn in the publication of Diego Duarte's stage play Den weerdigen gunsteling (The Deserving Favourite), around 1685 (Antwerp Heritage Library 719165 [C2-643 c]).

Perhaps the most important transaction Gaspar (I) and his son Diego ever arranged was in 1641. For the past few years Charles I had been looking for a suitor for his daughter Mary Henrietta (1631-1660). Though William II of Orange (1626-1650), the son of Frederik Hendrik, stadtholder of Holland, was not the first choice, arrangements were made for Mary to marry him. Despite the very young age of both partners, the marriage was solemnized in the Chapel Royal at Whitehall Palace in May 1641. The agreement and the forthcoming marriage triggered a flurry of diplomatic activity behind the scenes. Several months before the wedding, representatives of Frederik Hendrik approached court jeweller Diego Duarte asking him to look for a suitable wedding present for William II to present to his bride. As progress in the negotiations about the jewel proved slow, Gaspar (I) Duarte may have asked poet, composer and diplomat Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687) to step in and speed up the discussions. Huygens was a good networker, knew England (in 1622 he was knighted by King James I) and had been Frederik Hendrik's secretary since 1625. For almost forty years, until his death in 1687, Huygens corresponded with the Duartes. The oldest surviving letter from that correspondence dates from October 1640 and was written by Gaspar (I) Duarte. Gaspar struck a familiar tone and the letter shows that Huygens and Duarte had already exchanged several letters, among other things about the sale of an estate near Antwerp belonging to the Huygens family.

¹⁶ Jerry Brotton, *The sale of the late king's goods*. London 2006, p 165. Sadly, Bernini's bust was destroyed in a fire.

¹⁷ *The Manuscripts of the Earl Cowper, K. G. Preserved at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire, Volume 2*. London 1888, p 186.

¹⁸ A map showing Diego (II) Duarte's estate is preserved in the National Archives. See also Ethel M. Richardson, *The story of Purton*. Bristol 1919, p 101.

Moreover, in 1638 a friend of Constantijn Huygens had commended the musical qualities of the Duartes to Huygens.¹⁹

Huygens and the Duartes realized that such a transaction, which would amount to several tens of thousands of guilders, would put their reputation on the line. The correspondence should take a confidential and prudent approach. However, Huygens and the Duartes shared a great passion for art and music and it proved to be a neutral but genuinely friendly, and so ideal theme from the outset. Scores were sent to and fro, and the discussion in the letters smoothed the way for the serious subject of the wedding jewel.

Operating from Antwerp, Gaspar was the pivotal figure in the negotiations, and on March 24th 1641 he was able to inform Constantijn Huygens that his son in London had found the ideal jewel, valued at 80,000 guilders or more than three hundred times the annual wage of a simple craftsman. Diego had it in his possession and would hasten to Antwerp to show it to Huygens, while a facsimile was sent to Frederik Hendrik via Joachim de Wicquefort.²⁰ On April 8th Huygens had the chance to study the gem. The jewel was a pendant or breast ornament centred around four diamonds which together gave the illusion of forming one exceptionally large diamond.²¹ There may also have been a ring with an approximately nine-carat diamond, worth 11,000 guilders.²² There is no further discussion of the ring, but Huygens argued the case of the breast ornament with Frederik Hendrik. His first offer was too low for Gaspar and Diego, who let it be known that Charles I was considering purchasing the jewel himself and had already made an offer via Gaspar (II) who had stayed behind in London.²³ Gaspar (I), 57 years old and just appointed consul of the Portuguese *Natie* in Antwerp,²⁴ was at the top of his game professionally. He played for high stages, and his friend Constantijn Huygens played with him. It is questionable whether Charles seriously considered making an offer, but he may well have expressed his approval of the jewel. Be this as it may, confirmation soon arrived that stadtholder Frederik Hendrik wished to purchase the magnificent jewel. On April 27th 1641 Gaspar Duarte agreed to the offer,²⁵ and the payment of 48,000 guilders followed on May 9th.²⁶ In Holland a secretary recorded the following words: “Caspar Curant [=Gaspar Duarte] ter sake van een boote²⁷ van vier steenen ende een pendelocke alle diamanten in facetten aen Syn Hooch¹ vercocht” – Gaspar Duarte

¹⁹ “How gladly I would listen to music at the Duarte’s in Antwerp again; I heard it no better at Monteverdi’s in Venice. Letter (Worp 1964) from Guilliello Calandrini (September 25th 1638).

²⁰ Full details of the negotiations are to be found in the complete publication of the correspondence of Constantijn Huygens, provided by J.A. Worp.

²¹ “les quatre diamants joints ensemble font une parade d’un seul diamant de la valeur d’un million de florins”. Letter (2677) from Gaspar (I) Duarte to Constantijn Huygens (March 24th 1641). The Royal Archive of the House of Orange-Nassau refers to: “Une Boëtte de 4 Pierres et une Pendelocque tous diamans à facettes”. See R. van Luttervelt, ‘Het portret van Willem II en Maria Stuart in het Rijksmuseum’. *Oud Holland* 68 (1953) 3, p 159.

²² Letter (Worp 2691) from Diego (II) Duarte to Constantijn Huygens (April[?] 1641).

²³ Letter (Worp 2694) from Gaspar (I) Duarte to Constantijn Huygens (April 21st 1641). The offer was for £6,500, or circa 65,000 guilders.

²⁴ Hans Pohl, *Die Portugiesen in Antwerpen (1567-1648). Zur Geschichte einer Minderheit*. Wiesbaden 1977, 354.

²⁵ Letter (Worp 2698) from Gaspar (I) Duarte to Constantijn Huygens (April 27th 1641).

²⁶ Letter (Worp 2703) from Gaspar (I) Duarte aan Constantijn Huygens (May 9th 1641).

²⁷ ‘boote’ may be a corruption of ‘boîte’ or ‘boîte à portrait’, referring to a portrait miniature that could be worn as a brooch. However, there is no evidence that the wedding jewel contained a portrait.

regarding a box of four stones and a pendeloque, all faceted diamonds, sold to His Highness.²⁸ Mary Henrietta received the jewel on May 13th, the day of her wedding,²⁹ and the wedding portrait made by Anthony van Dyck shows her proudly wearing the brooch (ill.s 6 and 7).

Ill. 6. Anthony van Dyck, William II of Orange and his bride Mary Henrietta Stuart (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

Ill. 7. Anthony van Dyck, William II of Orange and his bride Maria Stuart (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) (detail of ill. 6).

In the months following the marriage, Diego Duarte looked on as Charles' financial problems compounded and the relationship between the sovereign and his parliament took a nosedive. Inaccurate evaluations and misplaced decisions put Charles on a direct collision course with a growing number of his people. In July 1641 Queen Henrietta Maria left for the thermal baths in Spa in a secret attempt to transport as many royal jewels to the continent as possible with a view to selling them there. On January 10th 1642 the sovereign realized that he had lost control of London and he fled the capital. On February 23rd Henrietta Maria set off for The Hague, this time with a much larger quantity of jewellery and other valuables.³⁰ Diego Duarte must have realized that England was a powder keg about to explode and that the escalating situation was not safe for a (Jewish) court jeweller. On April 14th 1642 Diego requested and received permission to leave England to visit his sick mother in Antwerp.³¹ Though he regularly left the country, with this request he seems to have wanted to indicate that he would be away for a longer period, perhaps until the situation normalized. That did not happen, and in August 1642 the bloody English Civil War broke out. Diego Duarte's time at the English court was over. On April 30th 1649 Charles I was executed. Twelve years later, on the eve of the coronation of Charles II and the restoration of the English monarchy, Diego hoped to return to his former post, which had been granted him for life, but others had already taken his place.³² However, it seems that years later Diego did go on to perform services for Charles II.³³

The years spent at the English court were a wonderful and formative time for Diego (II) Duarte. He had managed to make a name for himself there as a top-class jeweller and he had built up such a network that many of the acquaintances from his English period remained friends for years. From 1642 numerous royalists fled to the Continent, including William and Margaret Cavendish, duke and duchess of Newcastle. They went to live in Rubens' former house, just round the corner from the Duarte's home. The Duartes became almost one of the family.

In London Diego (II) Duarte and his brother were also moving in the sovereign's cultural circles. Anthony Van Dyck's paintings became one of Diego's passions and he gradually collected several of

²⁸ Royal Archive of the family of the House of Orange-Nassau, quoted in R. van Luttervelt, 'Het portret van Willem II en Maria Stuart in het Rijksmuseum'. *Oud Holland* 68 (1953) 3, p 159.

²⁹ "Le lendemain qui estoit le 13 de may je [=Willem II] donne à la princesse unne bague de diamant en table, une boete de diamans à facettes, unne schene de 400 perles." See F.J.L. Krämer, 'Journalen van den Stadhouder Willem II uit de jaren 1641-1650'. *Bijdragen en mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap*. 27 (1906), p 420.

³⁰ David Humphrey, 'To Sell England's Jewels: Queen Henrietta Maria's visits to the Continent, 1642 and 1644', *Revue électronique d'études sur le monde anglophone* 11 (2014) 2.

³¹ National Archives, *Signet Office and Home Office: Docquet Books and Letters Recommendatory* SO 3/12.

³² *Calendar of state papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of Charles II. 1660-1661*. London 1860, p 583.

³³ *Infra*.

Van Dyck's English works including portraits of the Duchess of Northumberland, the Count of Carlisle, the Duchess of Richmond, and a double portrait of Karl Ludwig, Elector Palatine and his brother Rupprecht. According to a research committee, during the sale of King Charles I's possessions a portrait was allocated to Diego depicting Queen Henrietta Maria giving the sovereign a laurel wreath, but Diego could never have received it.³⁴

As well as painting there was also theatre and music. For example, Diego translated and reworked Lodowick Carlell's play *Den weerdigen gunsteling* as *The Deserving Favourite* (1629). A good friend of the family was Nicholas Lanier, 'Master of the King's Musick' and an assiduous art collector, who having fled the civil war stayed with the Duartes in Antwerp for a while in 1645-1646. Diego may have provided his father, brother and sisters with lots of English music. Around 1640 the sister Leonora composed a series of *Sinfonias*, short pieces in the English style for a consort of five viola da gambas. While Diego soaked up London's cultural life, father Gaspar together with three of his four daughters created their own artistic circle. The Italian merchant Guilielmo Calandrini visited the family in 1638, the Dutch poet Anna Roemers Visscher in 1640, John Evelyn in 1641 and Sir William Swann in 1643. All four were astounded by the quality of the musical performances. Of course the affluence that stemmed from the professional life of Gaspar and his children facilitated these passionate artistic leisure activities, but at the same time the Duartes' active cultural interests also created a neutral forum which brought people of different nationalities and diverse religious persuasions together in the home of a *converso*. There is no doubt that the arts served as a catalyst that facilitated professional contacts.³⁵

3. Antwerp, 1681-1691

The Eighty Years' War held the Low Countries in its grip from 1568 to 1648. During this conflict between the rebellious provinces and Spain's political and religious hegemony, Antwerp played a crucial and strategic role as a major mercantile city. In 1585 the city fell into Spanish hands. More than half of the population of approximately 100,000 people emigrated to the Calvinist North. The centre of Antwerp's diamond trade also shifted from Antwerp to Amsterdam³⁶, where Jews were tolerated. Around 1620 Manuel Duarte, the brother of Gaspar (I), decided to move to Amsterdam so as to be able to profess the Jewish religion openly, a decision which was not negatively received by the (outwardly Catholic) branch of the family in Antwerp. Manuel was not the only member of Antwerp's Portuguese community to leave, and the seventeenth century saw the Antwerp *Nação* shrink. Antwerp nevertheless continued to play a role in the jewellery and precious stones trade, even if that trade was now increasingly in the hands of non-Portuguese merchants, such as the Forchondt family (with whom, incidentally, Diego (II) Duarte had a working relationship³⁷).

The fact that Gaspar (I) Duarte and his children went on living in Antwerp rather than move to the Republic like Gaspar's brother Manuel Duarte, undoubtedly had to do with the fact that after 1585, and even after the confirmation of the so-called 'closure' of the River Scheldt in 1648, Antwerp

³⁴ *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register. Volume 40.* Boston 1886, p 31. The painting eventually came into the hands of Franciscus van Imstenraedt. Christopher Brown & Hans Vlieghe, *Antoon van Dyck 1599-1641.* Amsterdam 1999, p 240.

³⁵ Timothy De Paepe, 'Diego Duarte II (1612-1691): a converso's experience in seventeenth-century Antwerp', *Jewish History* 24 (2010) 2, pp. 181-186.

³⁶ Karin Hofmeester, 'Shifting trajectories of diamond processing: from India to Europe and back, from the fifteenth century to the twentieth', *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013) 1, 37.

³⁷ See, for example, Antwerp City Archive, IB 1124.

retained its central location, as a border city where pragmatism quite often triumphed over religious hair-splitting. Moreover, the first half of the seventeenth century saw a revival in Antwerp's economy and the city became a centre for the production of luxury goods, from harpsichords to paintings. So there was plenty of scope for jewellery merchants too. And the Duarte family had not isolated itself. With a trade and family network that extended right across the Western and colonial world, the Duartes kept their finger firmly on the economic and political pulse. Consequently, information travelled quickly. Antwerp was also an important printing centre in the seventeenth century. And where there are books, there is knowledge and information. Furthermore, their merchandise was purchased and sold not *in* Antwerp but *from* Antwerp, with the house on the Meir as the pivot around which the Duarte firm rotated. Antwerp itself was not an important market; the buyers were elsewhere, often concentrated around the European courts.

We are quite well documented on what is categorized here for the sake of convenience as the Duartes' 'London period', at least as regards the English sources. We know much less about the professional life of the family in Antwerp at that time. Four decades later there is suddenly much more information about their activities in Antwerp. Like his ancestors, Diego (II) Duarte kept a detailed administrative account of his professional dealings, though, sadly, all the bookkeeping has been lost. And that only goes to make Diego's surviving letter book all the more special.³⁸ The letter book, which is actually more a collection of badly damaged loose sheets, contains copies and summaries of dozens of outgoing letters from the period 1681 up to and including 1689. The letters are addressed to business contacts, but also to personal correspondents. Or to a combination of the two, for among the addressees are numerous family members who were also involved in the jewellery and/or gemstones trade. So subjects like the health of a niece are followed by the purchase of a parcel of pearls. The letters are those of a family that has undergone many a transformation since 1642. Gaspar (I) died in 1653, nine years after his wife, and was buried with fitting ceremony in St James' Church. Diego (II) immediately took over the running of the family company, assisted by his right-hand man, his brother Gaspar. Neither Diego, nor his brother, nor his sisters ever married. The company was the focus of their attention. In 1678 an epidemic affected Antwerp and proved fatal for Diego's sisters Francisca and Catharina, as well as (among others) the painter Jacob Jordaens. Leonora may have died earlier. There is no proof as to whether or not the Antwerp branch of the family had continued to secretly identify with Judaism, but others continued to see them as such throughout the seventeenth century. For instance, in 1608 Gaspar (I) Duarte was accused of being Jewish.³⁹ And almost six decades later Constantijn Huygens' daughter Susanna described Diego (II) Duarte as "un juif" without the slightest malicious intent,⁴⁰ while after an unfavourable art deal with Diego (II) Duarte, the Parisian merchant Jean-Michel Picart stated that he wanted nothing more to do with "Jews".⁴¹

In December 1681, from when the oldest letters in the letter book date, Diego was almost seventy years old. That was a good age for someone in the seventeenth century, but Diego still ran the show. One of the letters from that period, written in French on Christmas Eve, was to Princess Albertine Agnes of Nassau, one of Diego's many high-placed clients and the ancestress of today's Dutch royal

³⁸ Amsterdam City Archive 334 Portuguese-Israeli Council Archive, 682 *Kopieboek van uitgaande stukken 1681-1689*.

³⁹ Antwerp City Archive, 288 # 6103.

⁴⁰ Letter from Susanna Huygens to Christiaan Huygens, April 1st 1663, quoted in Elisabeth Keesing, 'De kinderen onderling: een hechte familietrouw', in V. Freijser (ed.), *Soeticheydt des buyten-levens. Leven en leren op Hofwijck*. Delft 1988, p 78.

⁴¹ Jan Denucé, *Na Peter Pauwel Rubens*. Antwerp 1949, p 425.

family. Other letters from December were addressed to ‘Athias & Levy’ and to the jewellery merchant and supplier Henry Loo in London. The three letters are emblematic of the whole letter book and deal with transactions. In the case of the letter to Loo, written in English, the correspondence concerned (among other things) a necklace with 57 pearls. The letter to ‘Athias & Levy’, written in Portuguese, was to two Jewish, Amsterdam cousins and fellow jewellery merchants.

Diego would often take a proactive approach and look for clients but, equally, high-placed clients often contacted *him*, usually through a secretary or employee, with a message to say that they were looking for specific items of jewellery. Drawing on his network of suppliers, Diego knew instantly what was available, upon which he would provide a description of the jewel he had in mind. Moreover, a bond of friendship often developed with loyal customers and favours were exchanged. In the case of Albertine Agnes of Nassau, Diego had costly tapestries repaired for her and he arranged the purchase of a painting by Nicolaes van Verendael, in each case advancing the necessary funds himself.

Fellow jewellers with whom Diego cooperated were based in various European cities: Anthony Alvares and Jacob Nunes Henriques in Amsterdam, Luis Alvares and Philippe Puijart (Puyart) in Paris, Simão Nunes Henriques in Hamburg and Franciscus van Imstenraedt (Franz von Imstenrad) in Cologne. Correspondents were located as far afield as Vienna and Dublin, Middelburg and Lisbon. The Amsterdam firm Athias & Levy occupied a prominent place in the trade network. In 1660 Manuel Levy Mendes do Valle (after his marriage Manuel Levy Duarte) married Constancia Duarte, one of Manuel Duarte’s daughters. A year later, his good friend Jacob Athias married Constancia’s sister, Gracia Duarte. The firm Athias & Levy was established around 1661 and became an important player in Amsterdam’s jewellery trade. Jacob Athias and Manuel Levy Duarte worked with (among others) Francisco Lopes Suasso and other prominent figures from the Amsterdam Sephardic community.⁴²

Ill. 8. A sheet from Diego Duarte’s letter book. The side shown (verso) contains summaries of letters to (among others) Constantijn Huygens (The Hague) and jewellery merchant and banker Jacob Nunes Henriques (Amsterdam). On the recto side is (among other things) a letter to Jacob Athias and Manuel Levy Duarte. (Amsterdam City Archive 334 Portuguese-Israeli Council Archive, 682)

Three commodities feature in the letter book: diamonds, pearls and above all finished items of jewellery. Both the diamonds and most of the pearls came from or via the Portuguese trading posts and colonial areas in India; other pearls came from Central and South America, as well as areas where there was a significant Portuguese presence. With Portuguese as their mother tongue and still family in Portugal, the Duartes were in an excellent position to order parcels via Lisbon or straight from the colonies. The East India Company (England) and, to a lesser extent, the United East India Company (the Republic) also played a role in the transportation of precious stones. Furthermore, the total quantity of diamonds and pearls transported was invariably much larger than officially declared.⁴³

Every local market brought with it opportunities and problems, as illustrated by several letters from English jewellers to Manuel Levy Duarte. England was not a good place to buy pearls because demand there was high and consequently the price too. However, that made it an ideal place to sell

⁴² Edgar R. Samuel, ‘Manuel Levy Duarte (1631-1714): An Amsterdam Merchant Jeweller and His Trade with London’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England London* 27 (1978/1980), p 14.

⁴³ Karin Hofmeester, ‘Shifting trajectories of diamond processing: from India to Europe and back, from the fifteenth century to the twentieth’, *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013) 1, 25-49.

strings of pearls, and other finished jewels. But then they had to be the most expensive, because the middle classes didn't spend money on jewellery. Only the aristocracy did that and they wanted valuable pieces. The Netherlands was an ideal place to sell less expensive pieces and to purchase raw diamonds. But those prepared to take a risk could buy diamonds illegally at the Dutch price in England direct from crew and passengers on East India Company ships.⁴⁴

Both diamonds and pearls were extremely expensive and came with their own challenges. Merchants dealing in pearls often needed a large stock because pearls were usually sold in groups: they had to match in terms of colour, shape and size if they were to be used, for example, for a necklace. Just as there were different quality pearls, there were also different quality diamonds and in the seventeenth century colour, size and clarity also played a role in their sale. But finished diamonds often required a whole industry. As well as cut diamonds, the Duartes bought rough diamonds, and for those rough diamonds skilled craftsmen were on hand in Antwerp.

The diamond industry – the cleaving and cutting of diamonds – had developed since the early sixteenth century, the beginning of Antwerp's Golden Age (1500-1585). We have already referred to the establishment in 1582 of the Guild – or 'Natie' - of Diamond and Ruby Cutters. That guild had come despite the strong opposition of the Portuguese *Nação*, led by Diego (I) Duarte⁴⁵, which just goes to show how important the jewellery trade was to the Portuguese *Nação* in Antwerp. Understandably, the Portuguese jewellery merchants feared that the creation of a guild would curtail their activities. After all, art dealers had once become part of the Guild of Saint Luke, the guild of painters, engravers and other visual artists. What if gemstone merchants were also forced to join the diamond and ruby cutters' *natie*? With their complex background – Portuguese and *converso* – membership might be difficult to come by. The diamond and ruby cutters' *natie* did materialize, however, and the Duartes not only did business with its members, but a number of them also became friends. A close friend of Diego (II) Duarte was Jan Baptist Gruls. Gruls was a diamond cutter (Manuel Levy Duarte described him as a 'feitor', or overseer) and he had a hand in the publication of Diego's play *Den weerdigen gunsteling* (The Deserving Favourite) around 1685.⁴⁶ Moreover, Gruls and his wife went on to receive a substantial part of Diego's inheritance after his death, including several houses.⁴⁷

The exact shape of the diamonds which the Duartes bought and sold is not known, but the Duartes may have gone along with demand and fashion, initially still trading in the older table diamonds but soon mainly the more modern rose-cut diamonds. The first mention of rose-cut diamonds and the Duartes appears with Gaspar (I) Duarte in 1615.⁴⁸ The last mention appears with Diego (II) in 1687(?) in relation to a sizable order of (among other things) "une pair de pendens oreilles de diamans roses, les corps consistans en deux roses grandes pareilles et les pendelocques en deux grands diamans" (ill. 9).⁴⁹ (a pair of rose-cut diamond drop earrings, the body consisting of two similar large rose-cuts and

⁴⁴ Edgar R. Samuel, 'Manuel Levy Duarte (1631-1714): An Amsterdam Merchant Jeweller and His Trade with London', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England London* 27 (1978/1980), p 12.

⁴⁵ D. Schlugleit, *Geschiedenis van het Antwerpsche Diamantslijpersambacht (1582-1797)*. Antwerp 1935, p 11.

⁴⁶ Timothy De Paepe, "'Den Heer Jacobi Duartes Weerdigen gunsteling". Diego II Duarte en de Antwerpse Aalmoezeniersschouwburg', *De zeventiende eeuw* 26 (2010) 1, pp. 91-106.

⁴⁷ Antwerp City Archive, N 2818, fol. 338^v-339^r.

⁴⁸ Jan Walgrave, 'Diamantslijpvormen in de 17^{de} eeuw', in *Een eeuw van schittering. Diamantjuwelen uit de 17^{de} eeuw*, p 45.

⁴⁹ Amsterdam City Archive 334 Portuguese-Israeli Council Archive, 682.

the pendeloques of two large diamonds.) There is no evidence that the Duartes had any direct influence on the design of the jewels.

Ill. 9. Two contiguous pages from Diego Duarte's letter book. On both pages Diego (II) Duarte gives a summary ("memoire") of items of jewellery that are available. Among other things, he refers to "une pair de pendens oreilles de diamans roses" (a pair of rose-cut diamond drop earrings) and to "un gros collier de 27 perles" (a large necklace with 27 pearls), "une paire de pendens d'oreilles de [deux?] perles" (a pair drop earrings with [two?] pearls) and a breast ornament or brooch with at least six rose-cut diamonds. The individual items are priced between 6,000 and 20,000 guilders. (Amsterdam City Archive 334 Portuguese-Israeli Council Archive, 682)

Ill. 10. Six fronts and backs of pendants, Louis Cossin, after Gilles Légaré, Paris, 1663 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-1956-438). This is the type of jewellery the Duartes dealt in: fashionable pendeloques with (rose-cut) diamonds and pearls.

The scale and reach of Diego's (client) network is nicely illustrated in 1684. Needless to say, the jewellery trade was not without its financial risks. In 1684 Jacobus Hendrickx, a valet of Diego Duarte, made off with a large quantity of money and jewellery. Diego's network immediately swung into action: Leoline Jenkins and Robert Spencer (both Secretary of State under King Charles II), Richard Graham, Viscount Preston (the English ambassador at the French court) and Charles Colbert de Croissy (Louis XIV's *Ministre d'État*), as well as several other local correspondents such as Mr. Couvreur in Paris and the above-mentioned Henry Loo in London. Given the profile of the contacts involved, it seems that the consignment also had a diplomatic significance for both the English and the French courts. Diego constantly addresses Charles II as "mon maître" in this affair. Were the gold and the jewellery diplomatic gifts which had to be transferred discretely? Or were there other items too, like letters? Naturally, artists and merchants, and in particular jewellery merchants with their access to the European courts, made good envoys. The painter Peter Paul Rubens was a case in point. Moreover, Antwerp made an ideal base for an information network. After all, the city was "a city of informers" *par excellence*, a city where informants from different *naties* met in taverns and grand mansions.⁵⁰ Had he been younger, Diego might well have accompanied the consignment himself, but not in 1684. In the end, Hendrickx turned up in Cambrai, where the French authorities managed to capture, try and eventually execute him.

In many cases the trade network with its prominent clientele was also the network through which Diego (II) Duarte amassed his art collection. Duarte was a shrewd collector and that meant not only buying but also selling paintings. Diego Duarte bought paintings from the collections of (among others) Charles I, Emperor Rudolf, Nicholas Lanier, Don Emanuel of Portugal, the Duke of Buckingham and the Count of Arundel.⁵¹ The purchase of a painting by Raphael of Mary and Child, Anne and Joseph is an interesting one. Diego paid for it with jewellery rather than cash: "een diamantinck, de diamant rou kost 2000 guld met noch een achtkantich safirken, daer ingegraveert de faustina, en nog een curieus robyntie beyde in ring" (a diamond ring, the rough diamond costing 2,000

⁵⁰ Janet Todd, *The secret life of Aphra Behn*. London 1996, p 91.

⁵¹ G. Dogaer, 'De inventaris der schilderijen van Diego Duarte', in *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (Antwerp, 1971), 195-221

guilders, also with an octagonal sapphire engraved with Faustina, and a notable ruby, both in the ring). Diego Duarte was not an art dealer – art dealer Matthijs Musson called him “een liefhebber [...] die er geen professie van maect in ’t publiek schilderyen te verkoopen” (an enthusiast... who did not make a profession of selling paintings to the public)⁵² – but in fact Diego regularly sold works. For example, a Van Dyck from Duarte’s collection found its way via banker and art dealer Everhard Jabach to Louis XIV,⁵³ and Rubens’ *Judgment of Paris* went to the Duke of Richelieu via Jean-Michel Picart.⁵⁴ Such sales undoubtedly oiled the wheels when negotiating jewellery deals.

Given the international character of the Duartes’ business and clientele, war posed a real threat, not least because in times of war more money was spent on warfare and troops than on jewellery. In June 1683 Diego expressed his concern about “den drijghenden oorlogh” (the menacing war) – perhaps the Franco-Spanish War - to Franciscus van Imstenraedt, a (jewellery)merchant from Cologne and cousin of Everhard Jabach, and he hoped that “Godt [zal] beware alle goede menschen van swaericheden” (God would spare all good people). Yet in practice war does not seem to have caused Diego any major problems, no doubt owing in large part to the geographical spread of his customers.

From 1685 Diego wrote fewer and fewer letters. The death of his brother Gaspar and sister Isabella in the summer of that year may have had something to do with this. With them Diego lost his last Antwerp family members, and it was a huge blow. Yet the 73-year-old merchant continued to trade. The last letter in his letter book dates from 1689. Perhaps Diego felt that his strength was waning and he called upon his Amsterdam family for help. In the summer of 1689 his Amsterdam cousins Jacob Athias and Manuel Levy Duarte suddenly turned up in Antwerp.⁵⁵ It was not long before Jacob was described as a “coopman woonachtig binne dese stadt” (a merchant residing in this city),⁵⁶ and Manuel as an “innewoonder deser stadt” (an inhabitant of this city).⁵⁷ For Jacob, however, the move did not have a happy outcome, for he died in March 1690.⁵⁸ The fact that they both seem to have been prepared to come to Antwerp despite their own business in Amsterdam, means that the trade conducted from the mansion in Antwerp was too important and too closely tied up with its central position just to be transferred to Amsterdam. Evidently, Manuel Levy could run his Amsterdam business from Antwerp, but the reverse was too complex. In 1690 he immediately began keeping a ledger containing all the transactions he undertook for Diego (II) Duarte (ill. 11). Manuel Levy had no difficulty integrating into Diego’s former network of Antwerp merchants.

Ill. 11. Page from the ledger kept by Manuel Levy Duarte in Antwerp. On the page on the right Manuel refers to the diamond transaction. (Amsterdam City Archive 334 Portuguese-Israeli Council Archive, 691 Ledger)

⁵² Quoted in Jan Denucé, *Na Peter Pauwel Rubens*. Antwerp 1949, p LIX.

⁵³ Christopher Brown & Hans Vlieghe, *Antoon van Dyck 1599-1641*. Amsterdam 1999, p 312.

⁵⁴ Lois Oliver et al., ‘The Evolution of Rubens’s *Judgment of Paris* (NG 194)’, *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 26 (2005), p 14.

⁵⁵ Letter from Branca da Ronza to Manuel Levy Duarte (Jewish Historical Museum, V1295). With thanks to Mirjam Knotter (Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam) for sharing this recently rediscovered letter.

⁵⁶ Antwerp City Archive, N 2823, fol. 12^r.

⁵⁷ Antwerp City Archive, N 2824, fol. 124^r.

⁵⁸ Antwerp City Archive, N 2824, fol. 174^r.

4. Epilogue

Diego Duarte died in Antwerp on August 15th 1691 and laid to rest in the family grave in St James' Church. Manuel Levy continued operating out of Antwerp for five years after Diego's death. They were relatively turbulent years in which the Church urged the city council to take a harder line with the *conversos* (i.e. Jews) in Antwerp. The city council did briefly consider having suspected Jews wear a badge that would identify them or of housing them in a ghetto, but did not action this.⁵⁹ In 1692 the Bench of Burgomaster and Aldermen made it clear that expelling possible Jews from the city was not a good idea:

En les chassant absolument, plusieurs centaines de familles se retireront de notre ville et un grand nombre de maisons demeureront vuides et le commerce en souffrira extremement, principalement celuy des diamans.⁶⁰ (If we expel them, several hundred families will quit our city and many houses will be left empty and trade will suffer badly, especially the diamond trade.)

In the same year a covert synagogue was closed, but the city council did not take any further action, to the vexation of a large number of lower clergymen.⁶¹ For Manuel Levy Duarte it was nevertheless clear that the Duartes' Antwerp period was at an end. In 1696 Manuel Levy left, after first selling Diego Duarte's almost entire art collection to numerous collectors at home and abroad. What did not sell went to the new home of Manuel Levy and Constantia Duarte in The Hague. It was also around this time that, possibly financed with a part of Diego's inheritance, Manuel had a magnificent silver-gilt kohanim dish made for the *Esnoga*, the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, where Manuel played an important role. The dish is still used today on major Jewish festivals such as Rosh Hashanah, Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. The magnificent and extremely valuable item of silverware is an appropriate and tangible tribute to the Antwerp Duartes and their prestigious network.

Ill. 12. Johann (III) Beckert, Kohaniemschaal, Augsburg, c. 1694. (Collection belonging to the Portuguese-Israeli Council, Amsterdam)

⁵⁹ Luc Dequeker & Veerle Seymus, 'Les autorités de la ville d'Anvers sur l'émancipation des Juifs Portugais, août 1682', *Lias: sources and documents relating to the early modern history of ideas* 16 (1989), pp. 324-333.

⁶⁰ Floris Prims, 'Joden te Antwerpen in 1682-1694', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis* (1937), p 173.

⁶¹ Luc Dequeker & Veerle Seymus, 'Les autorités de la ville d'Anvers sur l'émancipation des Juifs Portugais, août 1682', *Lias: sources and documents relating to the early modern history of ideas* 16 (1989), p 317.