

4. The cod fleet, Bensaude & Cia, Mariano & Irmãos and the White Fleet

As early as the 16th century, the Portuguese were interested in cod fishing on the banks of Newfoundland. However, with the Iberian Union, cod fishing in this area was interrupted, only resuming in the 19th century. In 1835, the Companhia de Pescarias Lisbonense was created, which fished for cod in the waters of Newfoundland.

This fishing was done in sailboats, by line, in small boats called dory, which were harnessed from the mother ships. This fishing was done from the end of April, mid-May, until the months of September and October, in order to avoid winter storms.

In the second half of the 19th century, two companies, whose owners are Azoreans, will invest in cod fishing. They are Bensaude & C.^a (from São Miguel), and Mariano & Irmãos (from São Jorge). In 1891, Bensaude & C.^a was extinguished, to become known as the *Parceria Geral de Pescas*. Both companies were based on the mainland due to the existence of a climate more suited to the drought of cod than the Azorean climate. These two companies, whose owners were Azoreans, from 1886 to 1903, held almost all the cod fishing, and in 1902, of the 15 vessels in the Portuguese cod fleet, 12 belonged to these two companies.

Many of the cod vessels, before heading to Newfoundland, either in the 19th century or in the first decades of the 20th century, stopped in the Azores to fill their crews, so many Azoreans served on the cod fishing vessels on the banks of Newfoundland and even of Greenland.

A company was also founded for cod fishing in Ponta Delgada, based in this city, the company *Christiano Ignácio Pacheco & Companhia*, with the vessel *Autonómico Açoreano*, which fished for cod and other fish in Newfoundland, with the vast majority of the crew composed of Azoreans, and the fish was possibly dried in the civil parish of Santa Clara in Ponta Delgada.

From 1903 to 1914, the number of cod vessels grew from 16 to 34 ships, then the number of ships decreased during the 1st World War, but already with 65 ships in the year 1922. Later, in 1934, it would be created the Comissão Reguladora do Comércio do Bacalhau (The Cod Trade Regulatory Commission [CRCB]) was created to regulate prices and imports.

From 1939 to 1945 the Second World War took place. Despite being dangerous to sail in the Atlantic Ocean, Portuguese cod vessels continued to head towards the big banks. To avoid problems with German submarines (despite Portugal being neutral in the conflict), the fleet began to paint its hulls white, with the ship's name in large letters, along with the national flag. They would be known by the name of *White Fleet* due to the color of the ships. From the 1970's onwards, fishing with sailboats and angling would come to an end, and in addition to this, Canada would increasingly protect its territorial waters from foreign fishermen.

One of the best known cod-fishing sailing ships would be the *Argus*, which became especially famous for the book released by Allan Villiers about his campaign in 1950, in which many Azoreans participated, 29 men in a crew of 70.

On the hospital ship that helped and assisted the fishermen of the cod vessels, *Gil Eannes*, the Azorean artist from São Miguel, Domingos Rebelo, painted two works of art, one in the captain's quarters, and the other in the ship's chapel.

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