

## **Trade Exchanges between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Countries of the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea (1734-1861)**

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### **Abstract**

*When Charles of Bourbon occupied the kingdom of Naples, in 1734, the situation was quite critical because it lacked the infrastructure, the fleet had been destroyed, the harbours were in disuse and the trade was in crisis. Around 1750, some very big ships, called "polacche" (polacres), were built: they were also equipped with guns, and they took part in the trade between England and the (American) colonies. During the regency of Bernardo Tanucci (1759-1767), mainmasts for the new fleet were sent from Sweden and Denmark, with whom the Bourbons had already stipulated some trade agreements (in 1742 and 1748). The purpose is to establish a framework of the trade routes between the Kingdom of Naples and the new emporia in the Black Sea and in the Baltic Sea. To this end, an examination of customs documents used in foreign trade during the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies kept in the State Archives of Naples, will be the main concern of the paper.*

**Keywords:** Kingdom, Naples, Trade, Black Sea, Baltic Sea

### **1. The Bourbon monarchy from 1734 to 1799**

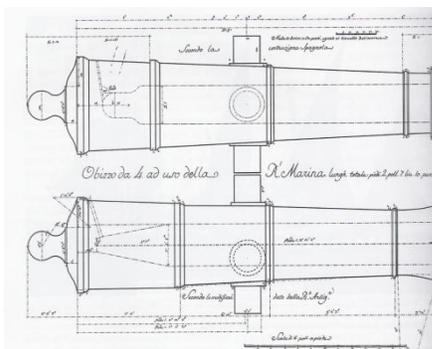
The economic, political and social situation of Southern Italy radically changed since the arrival of the Bourbons in 1734. The ministers serving young king Charles soon spread European mercantilism in the Kingdom, after an unsuccessful attempt under the previous Austrian rule. Plans were made to restore the most important ports and revive trade reforms<sup>1</sup>. The first trade agreements were signed with the Ottoman Porte (April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1840) and the Regency of Tripoli (June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1741) to trade in the Mediterranean ports of call whose access had been denied so far, because of the pirate attacks supported by those same countries. Further agreements for the Baltic trade were then made with the Kingdom of Sweden (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1842), with the Kingdom of Denmark (April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1878), with Holland (August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1753), and, finally, with the Russian Empire (January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1787)<sup>2</sup>. The interest for the Baltic area, shown by king Charles of Bourbon from the beginning, derived from the need of getting some raw materials only available in northern Europe, particularly wood for masts and iron for guns, both used by the Royal Navy<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Aliberti, G. (1976). *Economia e società da Carlo III ai Napoleonidi (1734-1806)*, in *Storia di Napoli*, 2<sup>nd</sup>ed., V, Napoli: ESI pp. 7-80.

<sup>2</sup>Castellano, G. (1956). *Relazioni internazionali e politica commerciale estera del Regno di Napoli*, *Archivi. Archivi d'Italia e relazioni internazionali diplomatiche*, serie II, XXIII, pp. 22-48 and pp. 177-210.

<sup>3</sup>Formicola, A. & Romano, C. (1990). *Il periodo borbonico (1734-1860)*, in Fratta, A. (Ed.), *La fabbrica delle navi. Storia della cantieristica nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, Napoli: ESI, 61-156.



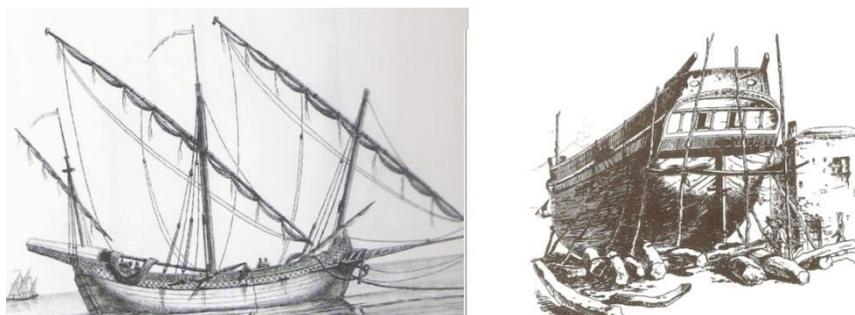
**Picture 1. Swedish guns, late 1700s**

Sirago, M. (2012), The Shipbuilding Industry and Trade Exchanges between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Countries of the Baltic and the Black Sea (1734-1861), *Mediterranean Review*, vol. 5, 2, December 2012.

At that time, the Merchant Navy, mainly assembled in the shipyards of Piano and Meta di Sorrento, and on the island of Procida, was formed by small units which could not cover a very long distance. However, since 1750, king Charles had promulgated some new laws to promote the development of the Royal Merchant Navy. Some vessels, called “polacche” (polaccas) or “pinchi” were built: they were also armed with guns<sup>4</sup>.

**Picture 2. Sorrentine Pink Sorrentine polacca**

Santi-Mazzini, G. (2000). Formicola, A. & Romano, C. (1992).



During the Seven Years War (1756-1763), they succeeded in following the same trade routes as the English ones, usually dominated by British or by other European merchant navies, sometimes even getting to the Americas (Martinique). However, by the end of the war, the English Navy had regained ground and done its business at one of the most important fairs in southern Italy, the “Fiera franca” of Salerno, where a lot of foreign products were sold, especially English merchandise. In the meantime, an intense shipbuilding activity was carried out to provide the Royal fleet with new vessels<sup>5</sup>. When Charles of Bourbon became king of Spain, he resigned the crown of Naples, leaving his minister Bernardo Tanucci to head the regency council of his son Ferdinand until he attained his majority. During the “Regency” of Bernardo Tanucci (1759-1767), a great number of mainmasts from the Baltic sea kept on arriving in the kingdom, carried by Dutch ships; since 1767, they had been directly bought by Giacinto Catanti, Tanucci’s brother-in-law, who had been appointed Neapolitan consul, first in Netherlands (The Hague) and then in Denmark (Copenhagen, 1766): in those years he had gained great experience in trading this kind of products, especially during his stay in Holland<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>Radogna, L. (1982). *Storia della marina mercantile delle Due Sicilie (1734-1860)*, Milano: Mursia; Sirago, M. (2004). *Le città e il mare. Economia, politica portuale, identità culturale dei centri costieri del Mezzogiorno moderno*, Napoli: ESI.

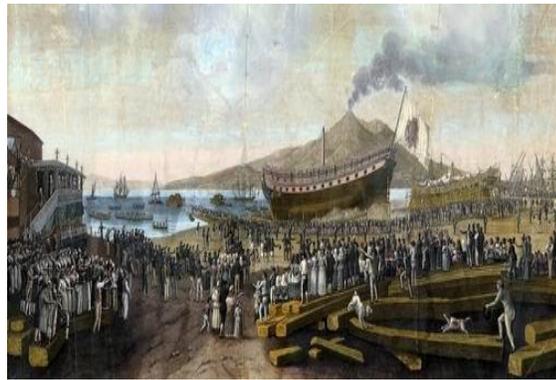
<sup>5</sup>Sirago, M. (2004). *Le città e il mare. Economia, politica portuale, identità culturale dei centri costieri del Mezzogiorno moderno*, cit.

<sup>6</sup>Tanucci B., *Epistolario*, XV in Maiorini, M.G. (Ed.) (1996), Napoli: Società Napoletana di Storia Patria. 1996; Tanucci B., *Epistolario*, XVI, Maiorini, M.G. (Ed.) (1999), Napoli: Società Napoletana di Storia Patria.

In the same period a lot of guns had been ordered in Sweden, where iron and steel industries had been flourishing since the second half of the eighteenth century thanks to English, Flemish and German workers (Rydén; Evans); “alberi del Nord” (masts of the North) were also imported from Sweden<sup>7</sup>. Since the beginning of king Ferdinand’s reign, his ministers had been trying to promote the economic growth, both by expanding the trade with the Baltic sea and the Americas, and by adopting a close foreign policy<sup>8</sup>. The growth of the merchant navy was promoted too: in 1770, the Nautical School in Piano and Meta di Sorrento, with its ancient merchant shipyard and a long tradition of sea trade, and the Neapolitan Nautical School of San Giuseppe a Chiaia for pilots and sailors were founded<sup>9</sup>.

Since the early 1770<sup>8</sup>, Giovanni Bompiede, the engineer who had already restored the harbours of the Capital, Castellammare, Brindisi, Bari – the most important ports of the kingdom<sup>10</sup> - also decided to build some coastal fortifications with a 174 gun battery. He ordered to import 40 guns from Sweden in 1772, 60 in 1773 and the remnants between 1773 and 1774, so that everything was complete by 1775<sup>11</sup>. In the same year, some “Masts of the North” and anchors (1775)<sup>12</sup> were sent to the kingdom to be used for the new 60 gun-vessels on the stocks.

A further improvement of the Royal fleet was carried out starting from 1779, when queen Maria Carolina appointed John Acton **Commander (“Director”) of the naval forces of Naples**. He decided to build a new royal shipyard in Castellammare di Stabia, completed in 1783, which was suitable for the building of big vessels with 74 guns, following French plans and with the collaboration of a French engineer called Imbert.



**Picture 3.**

Jacob Philipp Hackert, *The launching ceremony of the new vessel “Partenope”, 1776*, Royal Palace, Caserta

According to Acton, the 15 new vessels had to be equipped with 1058 guns, which were ordered in Sweden in 1780, while the shipyard was being finished. As for the Royal Arms industry built in Torre Annunziata, the balls for the guns, and the plates of “iron from Muscovy” used in industrial processes, came all from northern Europe, too<sup>13</sup>. In that same period, the kingdom started to trade with the Black sea, because the raw materials for the fleet were cheaper: French had been buying the same materials for the arsenal in Toulon since the 1780s. After the signing of the treaty in 1787, Vincenzo Musenga, vice consul in the Black sea, was expected to work together with the Neapolitan consul in San Pietroburgo, Antonino MarescaDonnorso, duke of Serracapriola, in order to get the material at a lower price. However, the treaty became effective only after the end of the Russian-Turkish war in 1792<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> Aliberti, G. (1976). *Economia e società da Carlo III ai Napoleonidi (1734-1806)*, cit., pp. 7-80.

<sup>9</sup> Sirago M. (2009), *La scuola nautica di Piano di Sorrento dalla fondazione ai giorni nostri*, in D’Agostino, G. (Ed), *Piano di Sorrento città comunità territorio (1808-2008)*, Napoli: Giannini, pp. 224-255.

<sup>10</sup> Sirago, M. (2004). *Le città e il mare. Economia, politica portuale, identità culturale dei centri costieri del Mezzogiorno moderno*, cit.

<sup>11</sup> Mincuzzi, R. (1969). *Lettere di Bernardo Tanucci a Carlo III di Borbone (1759-1776)*, Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, Roma.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> AaVv, (1985). *Napoli e la Svezia in età gustaviana*, Mostra Documentaria, Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Arte Tipografica, Napoli.

<sup>14</sup> Cavalcanti, M. L. (1979). *Alle origini del Risorgimento - Le relazioni commerciali tra il regno di Napoli e la Russia (1777-1815) - Fatti e Teorie*, Geneve: LibrairieDroz.



**Picture 4.**

*St. Petersburg view of the Admiralty and the Palace Embankment from the First Corps of Cadets into*  
<http://www.arcarussa.it/forum/fedor-alekseev-vt4755.html>

In 1783, while negotiations between the kingdom of Naples and Russia were still pending, two Neapolitan merchants, Matteo Saverio Manes and Matteo Scherini (Giuseppe de Ribas' brother-in-law, he founded Odessa in 1794) tried to ship Neapolitan goods to the Baltic sea. The ship sank, although the cargo was salvaged from the wreck<sup>15</sup>. During the following years other merchants shipped their goods to the Baltic ports (Prussian, Swedish and Russian): they dealt mainly with the olive oil from Puglia, exported by the city of Gallipoli and carried by English ships. This oil was in great demand not only to be eaten, but also to be used by the developing industry of Northern Europe<sup>16</sup>. In 1783 trade agreements were signed to buy some "Masts of the North" on behalf of the Neapolitan Royal Navy, because they fitted the new vessels which were under construction in Castellammare. After the trade agreement with Russia was signed, Antonino Maresca, duke of Serracapriola, living in San Pietroburgo, was appointed consul. In Cronstadt a vice consul was appointed to spare no efforts to buy those particular masts coming from Russia and sell them in Riga to all the European merchant navies. He had also to check their quality and ship them, usually on Dutch or Swedish cargoes. Planks of wood and mainmasts were shipped together with iron "in plates", for the arms industry built in Torre Annunziata<sup>17</sup>. The supply of mainmasts for the Navy came from the Baltic ports, where it was easier to find ships suitable for their transport. Thanks to those abundant supplies of mainmasts and iron, Acton could finish his building plans by 1798<sup>18</sup>. At that time, Neapolitan merchant navy, particularly that of Piano and Procida, had increased its profits and navigation to the Black Sea, the Baltic and the Americas<sup>19</sup>.

Attempts were made to buy raw materials in the Black Sea, specifically in Odessa, a city founded in 1794 by the ispano-neapolitan general Giuseppe de Ribas by order of Catherine II. In a short time, viceconsul Vincenzo Musengawas transferred there and many Neapolitan merchants moved to the new growing city: one of them was de Ribas' brother, Felice, who dealt with wheat trade<sup>20</sup>.

## **2. A long crisis (1799-1815)**

When the king fled to Sicily at the end of 1798, he ordered to set fire to the fleet, which sank in the Gulf of Naples. At the beginning of 1799 the Parthenopean Republic was proclaimed. The king came back to Naples six months later with the help of admiral Nelson, who had previously escorted him to Palermo.

<sup>15</sup>Sirago M. (2012), *Il consolato napoletano nel Mar Nero e lo sviluppo di Odessa tra la fine del Settecento e la prima metà dell'Ottocento*, in Mascilli Migliorini, L. and Mafri, M. (Eds.) *Mediterraneo e'è Mar Nero. Due mari tra età moderna e contemporanea*, Napoli: ESI, pp. 203-233.

<sup>16</sup>Montaudo, A. (2005). *L'olio nel Regno di Napoli nel XVIII secolo. Commercio, Annona, Arrendamenti*, ESI, Napoli: ESI.

<sup>17</sup>Cavalcanti, M. L. (1979). *Alle origini del Risorgimento - Le relazioni commerciali tra il regno di Napoli e la Russia (1777-1815) - Fatti e Teorie*, cit.

<sup>18</sup>Radogna, L. (1978). *Storia della marina militare delle Due Sicilie (16734-1860)*, Milano: Mursia.

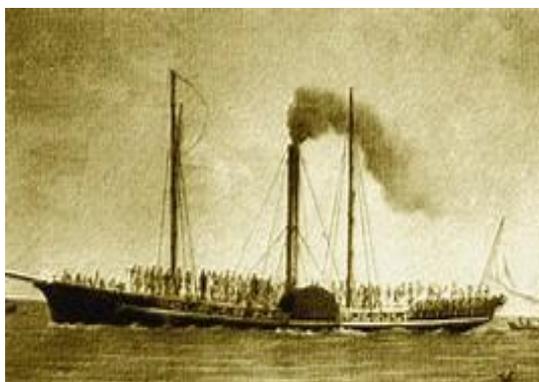
<sup>19</sup>Sirago, M. (2004). *Le città e il mare. Economia, politica portuale, identità culturale dei centri costieri del Mezzogiorno moderno*, cit.

<sup>20</sup>Sirago M. (2012), *Il consolato napoletano nel Mar Nero e lo sviluppo di Odessa tra la fine del Settecento e la prima metà dell'Ottocento*, cit.

However, in 1806, Giuseppe Bonaparte was proclaimed king of the two Sicilies by his brother Napoleon, who forced him to take measures to restore the most important ports in the kingdom, starting from Brindisi and Taranto. Two years later, Murat, who replaced Giuseppe as king of Naples, was impelled by Napoleon to build vessels with 80 guns, in conformity with the French plans, like those in the arsenal of Toulon. Therefore, Murat decided to start expanding the arsenal of Castellammare and ordered to build three docks to make simultaneously three vessels. However, it was not possible to get the material from the Baltic or the Black sea because of the period of recession, deriving from the English Continental Blockade (21<sup>st</sup> November, 1806). The embargo was effective intermittently for about half the time and it ended on 11 April 1814, after Napoleon's first abdication<sup>21</sup>. Business relations with Russia started again only after the end of that closedown, even though former consul, duke of Serracapriola, was allowed to stay in St. Petersburg on his own<sup>22</sup>.

### 3. The Bourbon Restoration (1815-1860)

After the Bourbon Restoration, the duke of Serracapriola, who had taken part in the Congress of Vienna, was confirmed in his office as consul general, so the trade routes were set out for both the Black and Baltic sea again, respectively supervised by Felice de Ribas, consul of the New Russia living in Odessa, and by the vice consul living in Cronstadt<sup>23</sup>. When king Ferdinand came back to Naples, he conformed to the adopted trading policy and promoted further improvements. He decided to rearrange the main ports and reorganized the nautical schools following Matteo Galdi's plan, dating back to 1809<sup>24</sup>. He also supported the construction of new merchant ships, like brigs, particularly those "a coffa", so called because of their platforms which had to support the upper masts, whose construction was on a shore leave. In a short time, the merchant navy increased shipbuilding<sup>25</sup>, particularly brigs and brigs "a palo" in the shipyards of Naples, Piano, Meta di Sorrento, Castellammare, the island of Procida, and the Principato Citra in Conca (in the 1840s, the number of brigs was about 340 in 10.000 units, for a total amount of 250.000 tons). In 1826 king Francis I settled the question about the privileges enjoyed by English, French and Spanish Navies after the Restoration: he promulgated a navigation law which put on the same level Neapolitan Navy to the others<sup>26</sup>. During his reign, there was the development of the steamship building. The "adventure" of steam engines had begun.



**Picture 5.**

*The Ferdinand I, Marseille Chamber of Commerce*

<sup>21</sup>Sirago, M. (2004). *Le città e il mare. Economia, politica portuale, identità culturale dei centri costieri del Mezzogiorno moderno*, cit.

<sup>22</sup>Sirago M. (2012), *Il consolato napoletano nel Mar Nero e lo sviluppo di Odessa tra la fine del Settecento e la prima metà dell'Ottocento*, cit.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup>Sirago M. (2009), *La scuola nautica di Piano di Sorrento dalla fondazione ai giorni nostri*, cit.

<sup>25</sup> Clemente, A. (2011). La marina mercantile napoletana dalla Restaurazione all'Unità. Flotta, tecniche e rotte tra navigazione di lungo corso e cabotaggio. *Storia Economica*, 2, 207-246.

<sup>26</sup>Sirago, M. (2004). *Le città e il mare. Economia, politica portuale, identità culturale dei centri costieri del Mezzogiorno moderno*, cit.

In 1818, the French trader Pierre Andriel had a patent-right to build the first steamship (with an English engine) at the Marina di Vigliena, near Naples: it was called “Ferdinando I”. However, it wasn’t a successful achievement, so the ship was dismantled. In 1823 George Wilding, prince of Butera, had a ten-year patent-right to found a steamship society to connect Naples to Palermo. Finally, starting from the 1830’s, some steamships, made with English engines and called “cavafondi” (used to clean the harbors), were built for the Royal Fleet. After the shipyard of Castellammare was equipped for the new vessels, a factory in Pietrarsawas built to make domestic steam engines. At last, the Kingdom could have its ships built entirely on site, from the outer hulls to the engines<sup>27</sup>.

Trade exchanges with the Baltic ports, primarily the Swedish and the Russian ones, were set out again since the Restoration to find the raw materials for the brigs and for the steamships. Indeed, in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the consul general Felice de Ribas tried to trade in wood and iron from the Black Sea. He thought he would make a bargain by buying 18 masts and some samples of iron, but he failed because he couldn’t find any kind of boat to carry such a small store of material. So, he had to sell it back again with a loss of 25% of its value<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, masts and iron kept on coming from the Baltic sea, particularly from the port of Riga, carried by Swedish, Danish and Dutch ships. Towards 1840, Neapolitan ships joined this trade thanks to the improvement in technology. Sweden exported other products such as tar and pitch, used in shipbuilding industry, and great amounts of salt fish, which was mostly preferred in Naples<sup>29</sup>.

The problems related to the navigation in the Baltic sea came from the expensive fares due to Denmark to cross the Straits of Sund. However, the Neapolitan kingdom had always kept good business and diplomatic relations with the Danish: a consul general was living in Copenhagen and a vice consul in Elsinor. A Neapolitan consul lived in Stockholm, too. Indeed, in the first decades of the 19th century, there was a considerable trade in olive oil exported by Neapolitan ships from Gallipoli to St. Petersburg (as in the 18th century), Szczecin (where a Neapolitan consul was living) and the Hanseatic cities, as well as to England and Holland. At first, the products exported to these countries were mainly fruit, citruses, essence of lemon, wine and sulfur from Sicily (the same goods exported to the black Sea) and olive oil from Puglia (Gallipoli) and Calabria (Gioia). The business trips were made by the same Neapolitan captains who used to load the wheat and the linseeds in the Baltic sea (in Cronstadt) to unload them preferably in England (in Falmouth) and in Holland. Finally, they used to load English goods or sugar from Holland and come back to the Mediterranean Sea.

The greatest part of the trade of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was with England, which mostly exported machines and raw materials and imported oil for their factories. It was such a good business for them that the English trade balance exceeded the Neapolitan one. Captains from Naples, Sorrento and Procida had gradually gained ground with their new ships on the routes to England and the Baltic sea, which were considered quite dangerous. They had also reached the Americas; even better, sometimes, some ships, docked at St. Petersburg, had left for Holland and from here to the Americas, to come back to the Mediterranean again. The same captains had learned how to navigate in the Black sea, where they only traded in corn, which was exported to the European ports. Data about this kind of trade are fragmentary: they were mostly collected from the Record Office of Naples (Archivio di Stato di Napoli), particularly from the documents regarding the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce.

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<sup>27</sup>Sirago, M. (2006). Nuove tecnologie: dal vascello alla nave a vapore, *Storia dell’Ingegneria*, Atti del 1° Convegno Nazionale, Napoli, 8-9 marzo 2006, 2 tomi, II, Napoli: Cuzzolin, 671-679; Sirago M. (2015), *Development of New Steamships and History of the Shipping Industry in the Kingdom of the two Sicilies (1816-1861)*, in Pisano R. (Ed.), *A Bridge Between Conceptual Frameworks Sciences, Society and Technology Studies*, Amsterdam: Spinger, pp. 495-511, then edited in Italian, *Lo sviluppo della navigazione a vapore in età borbonica 1815-1861*, *NavalHistory*, La SIMS ricorda Alberto Santoni (1936-2013), Società Italiana di Storia Militare, Quaderno 2014, 433-450.

<sup>28</sup>Sirago M. (2012), *Il consolato napoletano nel Mar Nero e lo sviluppo di Odessa tra la fine del Settecento e la prima metà dell’Ottocento*, cit.

<sup>29</sup> Graziani, A. (1958). *Il commercio estero del Regno delle due Sicilie dal 1838 al 1858. La politica commerciale del Regno delle due Sicilie. Il commercio estero del Regno delle due Sicilie nella sua composizione merceologica. Le relazioni commerciali fra il Regno delle due Sicilie e gli altri Paesi Europei ed Extraeuropei*, Atti della Accademia Pontaniana, N.S., VI, a.a.1956-57, Napoli: Giannini, 201-217, 219-238, 247-276, 277-292.

Despite all these difficulties, the data collection gives us very interesting information about the typology of the ships, their tonnage, sometimes even their captains' nationality (at first called generically as Neapolitans, making no distinction between them and those coming from Sicily), and, finally, about the number of the business trips (the names of the ships are available). Other data were collected from the "Tavole di Commercio"<sup>30</sup>, kept in the Record Office of Naples in the section regarding the years 1838-1855, where it is possible to find information about the growth of the merchant navy and the trade relations between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the other countries and vice versa. It is also possible to reconstruct the new routes held by the Neapolitan captains, above all those from Sorrento, who used to study at the nautical schools of Meta and Carotto with the supervision of professor Ferdinando Scarpati. He had been one of the first young captains to follow the new routes to the Black sea; then, he had also written very good nautical books, the first ever published in the kingdom. The captains coming from Procida had studied under professor Michelangelo Lachianca's guidance: he was a friend of Scarpati's and had published nautical books for his students, too<sup>31</sup>.

De Luca provides a summary for the last years of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In 1853, the total amount of foreign ships which entered the harbor of Naples was 2.612: 6 were Danish, 16 were Swedish, 9 were Russian, 3 were Prussian against the 960 Austrian, 383 were French and 279 were English. Trading statistical information regarding the year 1854 can be summed up as follows: 15.086.840 ducats for exportations; 12.682.430 for importations; as for Russia: 1.115.000 for exportations (mostly olive oil); 2.578.500 for importations (corn from Crimea, wood and various kinds of goods from the Baltic area). In addition, there was a further growth of the merchant navy, counting 10.863 Neapolitan ships, for a total amount of 202.318 tons, and 2031 Sicilian ships, for a total amount of 47.438 tons. Even though these statistics witnessed the growing trade of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, it was coming to an end because of its unsolved political and economic problems<sup>32</sup>.

#### 4. *The trade in the Baltic sea: Sweden, Denmark and Imperial Russia*



**Picture 6.**

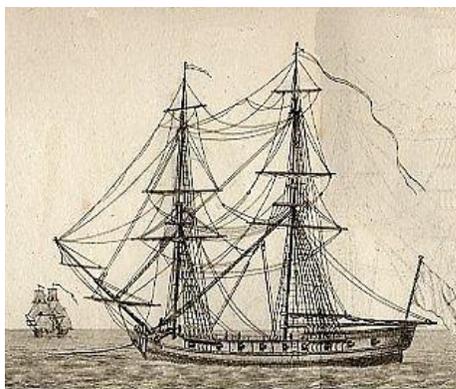
*Maritime routes for the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, Giura 1*

Trade exchanges with the Baltic ports, primarily the Swedish and the Russian ones, were set out again since the Restoration to find the raw materials for the brigs and for the steamships.

<sup>30</sup> Graziani, A. (1958). *Il commercio estero del Regno delle due Sicilie dal 1838 al 1858. La politica commerciale del Regno delle due Sicilie. Il commercio estero del Regno delle due Sicilie nella sua composizione merceologica. Le relazioni commerciali fra il Regno delle due Sicilie e gli altri Paesi Europei ed Extraeuropei*, cit.

<sup>31</sup> Sirago M. (2009), *La scuola nautica di Piano di Sorrento dalla fondazione ai giorni nostri*, cit.

<sup>32</sup> Davis, J. (1979) *Companies and entrepreneurs in the Bourbon Kingdom, 1815-1860*, Laterza: Bari; Demarco, D. (1960). *Il crollo del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, *Annali dell'Istituto di Storia Economica e Sociale*, Napoli: ESI.



**Picture 7 .**

*A brig, www.sullacrestadellonda.it*

Indeed, in the first decades of the 19th century, the consul general Felice de Ribas tried to trade in wood and iron from the Black Sea. He thought he would make a bargain by buying 18 masts and some samples of iron, but he failed because he couldn't find any kind of boat to carry such a small store of material. So, he had to sell it back again with a loss of 25% of its value. Therefore, Neapolitan merchant vessels were destined to import only wheat from the Black Sea. Therefore, raw materials (masts and iron) kept on coming from the Baltic Sea, particularly from the port of Riga, carried by Swedish, Danish and Dutch ships. Towards 1840, Neapolitan ships joined this trade thanks to the improvement in technology. Sweden exported other products such as tar and pitch, used in shipbuilding industry, and great amounts of stock fish, which was mostly preferred in Naples.

The problems related to the navigation in the Baltic sea came from the expensive fares due to Denmark to cross the Straits of Sund. However, the Neapolitan kingdom had always kept good business and diplomatic relations with the Danish: a consul general was living in Copenhagen and a vice consul in Elsinor (today Helsingor). A Neapolitan consul stayed in Stockholm, too. Indeed, in the first decades of the 19th century, there was a considerable trade in olive oil exported by Neapolitan ships from Gallipoli to St. Petersburg (as in the 18th century), Sweden and the Hanseatic cities, as well as to England and Holland. At first, the products that had been exported to these countries were mainly fruit, citruses, essence of lemon, wine and sulfur from Sicily (the same goods exported to the Black Sea) and olive oil from Puglia (Gallipoli) and Calabria (Gioia).

The business trips were made by the same Neapolitan captains who used to load the wheat and the linseeds in the Baltic sea (in the fortified city of Kronstadt, close to St. Petersburg) to unload them preferably in England (Falmouth) and in Holland. Finally, they used to load English goods or sugar from Holland and come back to the Mediterranean Sea. The greatest part of the trade of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was with England, which mostly exported machines and raw materials and imported oil for their factories. It was such a good business for them that the English trade balance exceeded the Neapolitan one.

Captains from Naples, Sorrento and Procida had gradually gained ground with their new ships on the routes to England and the Baltic sea, which were considered quite dangerous. They had also reached the Americas; even better, sometimes, some ships, docked at St. Petersburg, had left for Holland and from here to the Americas, to come back to the Mediterranean again. The same captains had learned how to navigate in the Black sea, where they only traded in corn, which was exported to the European ports. Historical economic literature on pre-unified Mezzogiorno (Southern Italian Territory) has expanded since the 1960's with the aggregate series concerning imports and exports of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies collected by Augusto Graziani. This first collection of aggregate data, even though limited, was still useful to analyze the industrial era of southern economy, defined by John Davis "underdeveloped and depressed"<sup>33</sup> as well as an economy that grows in patchy, a regional production uneven with the city of Naples, which is the main center of trade.

The reconstruction through the study of Graziani aggregate series, however, presents some difficulties due to the different pricing systems that undergo continual adjustments, and because the collection of data concerning imports and exports prevented a proper and reliable assessment of the competitiveness of the South of Italy in the international economic landscape.

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<sup>33</sup> Davis, J. (1979) *Companies and entrepreneurs in the Bourbon Kingdom, 1815-1860*, cit.

Graziani indeed shows imports and exports of the Kingdom for the years 1832-1858 stressing that exports data of the years 1832-1836 did not account for the duty-free goods, useless to calculate the balance of trades.

To confirm this, Daniela Ciccolella cites a report of the 1820 Interior Minister Giuseppe Zurlo, who wrote about the prices of imported goods: "instead of just the primitive price, it is necessary to include also the customs duty and charges"<sup>34</sup> arguing that export prices were quoted without including fees and expenses. From 1838, the data detection system changed, and Trade Statistics of the Ministry of Finance included duty-free goods, their origin and destination in addition to the description of the flag under which the carrying ship was sailing. The inclusion of all kinds of goods, whether exempt or not, allowed to achieve a more precise determination of the trade balance of the Kingdom. The data collected by Graziani in table VIII, organized in product groups by quantity and number of ducats, report imports and exports according to the countries of origin and destination. But commercial movements do not appear with Sweden, Denmark and the Imperial Russia, probably because these are considered irrelevant<sup>35</sup>. The sources used are the statistics of the Ministry of Finance<sup>36</sup>.



**Picture 8.**

ASNA, *Ministero delle Finanze*, voll. 14132-14149, years 1838-1855

Seventeen years of imports and exports to and from the Kingdom during the period 1838-1855<sup>37</sup>. Each volume contains the data collected for each year from which it is possible to reconstruct the international trade of the Kingdom. The main part of the exports consisted in agricultural products such as sugar, coffee, oil and stock fish; whereas, artifacts and manufactured goods were imported. Half of the export trade consisted of food: wheat, olive oil, licorice depending on the progress of crops; the imported goods were mainly manufactured goods, cotton, wool, hemp, silk and food such as cocoa, pepper, salted fish and rapier. Of course, the Kingdom balance of trade was positive when food and raw materials were included.

<sup>34</sup> Ciccolella D. (2013). *Il commercio estero*, in Malanima, P. & Ostuni, N. (Eds), *Il Mezzogiorno prima dell'Unità. Fonti, dati, storiografia*, Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubbettino, p. 236.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 247.

<sup>36</sup> Graziani, A. (1958). *Il commercio estero del Regno delle due Sicilie dal 1838 al 1858. La politica commerciale del Regno delle due Sicilie. Il commercio estero del Regno delle due Sicilie nella sua composizione merceologica. Le relazioni commerciali fra il Regno delle due Sicilie e gli altri Paesi Europei ed Extraeuropei*, cit., p. 85.

<sup>37</sup> Archivio di Stato, Naples, *Ministry of finance*, vol. 14132-14149, years 1838-1855.

**Table 1**  
**Neapolitan Shipping in the harbor of Naples 1843-1855**

Entrance						
Year	Neapolitan from foreign countries	Neapolitan from Sicily	Danish	Swedish	Russian Empire	Total
1843	2002	460	3	7	2	2927
1845	--	--	--	1	15	2391
1846	2431	1534	4	17	8	4577
1847	2428	2122	1	7	3	5218
1848	2160	723	4	22	4	3531
1849	2014	1940	6	13	14	4539
1850	2221	2352	3	7	8	5236
1851	2190	1965	10	3	7	4712
1852	2138	2963	3	9	3	5637
1853	2268	2630	2	16	--	5363
1854	2084	2360	5	17	1	4814
1855	1952	2719	1	15	--	5127
Exit						
Year	Neapolitan to foreign countries	Neapolitan to Sicily	Danish	Swedish	Russian Empire	Total
1843	2060	401	1	1	2	2838
1845	--	--	--	5	--	24311
1846	2391	1204	--	2	2	4075
1847	2294	1884	2	10	7	4827
1848	2006	543	4	17	2	3107
1849	2040	1561	5	20	10	4142
1850	2231	2143	3	12	12	5038
1851	2140	1754	2	8	7	4470
1852	2089	2878	3	46	4	5448
1853	1793	2640	2	20	--	4883
1854	1904	4375	4	14	1	4954
1855	1945	2577	2	12	--	4937

The 2/3 of the Kingdom's imports came from France (30%) and Great Britain (35%). In the following order, France, Austria and Britain absorbed about 70% of the exports of the Kingdom (Bursotti). Table 1 shows that trade of Denmark, Sweden and Russia is a fraction of that of England France and Austria. Most goods, especially stock fish, and materials for shipbuilding (masts, iron, pitch), originate from the Baltic Sea, Sweden and Russia, particularly from the port of Riga, carried by Swedish, Danish and Dutch ships. Towards 1840, Neapolitan ships joined this trade thanks to the improvement in technology. At the outbreak of the Crimean War (1854), trade with Sweden increased at the expense of Russia.

Danish imports consisted mostly of stock fish: in fact, as can be seen from table 2, during the 1842-1854 period, imported stock fish amounting to 80,097.63 Ducats was carried by foreign ships, while exports of leather, wheat and olive oil were both from foreign ships and from Neapolitan ships. Olive oil transportation, particularly, was entirely prerogative of Neapolitan ships. The product mostly imported was Swedish stock fish. Over the considered years (table 3) 1,690,752.75 Ducats of fish were imported, of which 731,987.66 Ducats were transported by foreign ships and 958,765.09 Ducats by Neapolitan ships. The main product imported from Sweden was olive oil who traveled almost exclusively on Neapolitan ships. Import from Russia, on the contrary (table 4), involved iron, wood, wheat, stock fish, linen raw tallow, worked tar; as for exported goods, olive oil and edible products were almost always carried by Neapolitan ships. Foreign trade was mainly effectuated by ships, and customs revenue was therefore mostly from sea customs.

The origin and destination of goods often did not coincide because, they used to veer to the duty-free ports of Genoa, Livorno, Civitavecchia and Trieste in order to benefit of 10% discounts on the duties; actually, those goods were not from local origin. Moreover, the use of Neapolitan vessels was more beneficial than foreign ships because it meant the exemption of duty on the carried goods.

**Table 2. Denmark Import 1842-1854**

Year	Goods	Money (ducats) Foreign ships	Money (ducats) Neapolitan ships	Total
1842	Vitriol		7.727,90	7727,90
1843	Stock fish	2.727		2.727
1844	Tar, Pitch, Wood	4.428,54	309,60	4.738,14
1845	Stock fish	2.500		2.500
1846	Stock fish	19.096		19.096
1847	Stock fish	5.031		5.031
1849	Stock fish	10.737,70		10.737,70
1850	Stock fish, Wine	6.088,80 + 48,80		6137,60
1851	Stock fish, Tar, Pitch	7067,61+766,14+147		7980,75
1852	Stock fish, "Salami"	10.174,50 + 16,80		10.191,30
1854	Stock fish	16.675,02		16.675,02

**Denmark Export 1847-1855**

Year	Goods	Money (ducats) Foreign ships	Money (ducats) Neapolitan ships	Total
1847	Sheepskins	118,80		118,80
1850	Corn	7.500		7.500
1851	Olive oil and almonds	4.767,68	11,600	16.367,68
1855	Olive oil		37.023,20	37.023,20

**Table 3. Sweden Import 1838-1855**

Year	Goods	Money (ducats) Foreign ships	Money (ducats) Neapolitan ships	Total
1838	Tar, Stock fish	St. 29.550,71	Tar 28,40 St. 47.174,12	76.753,23
1839	Stock fish, Coffee	St. 15.899 C. 8,40	164.825	180.732,80
1841	Tar, Stock fish, Pitch, Iron	St. 8.860	T. 3045,12 P. 3671,90 St. 83.722,70 I. 1.378,48	102.245,83
1842	Stock fish, Iron, Sugar		St. 59.879,50, I. 15.319,84, S. 2.838,60	79.104,04
1843	Stock fish	30.216,20	98.432,60	129.133,88
1844	Tar, Stock fish, Pitch, Sugar	T. 58,72, St. 743,20, P. 8043,50	T. 1.547,96, St. 77.326,30, S. 54.736,74	160.886,77
1845	Tar, Stock fish, Sugar	St. 5611,70	T. 6.342,05, St. 69.085,40, S. 43585,38	136.693,15
1846	Stock fish, Pitch, Sugar	St. 43867,30, P. 8114,15	T. 5055,28, St. 35.490, S. 32.408,28	152.178,91
1847	Stock fish	50.773,50	70.276,60	123.934,78
1848	Stock fish	142.042,40	51.271,80	193.134,36
1849	Stock fish	47.915	52.591,90	116.765,66
1850	Stock fish	44.302,60	87.031,60	130.442,22
1851	Stock fish	60.414,03	73.363,14	163.747,84
1852	Stock fish	45.068,31	105.660	150.728,31
1853	Stock fish	83.922,30	21.397,68	115.423,10
1854	Stock fish	68.179,86	9.540	85.662,38
1855	Stock fish	54.622,26	16.521,75	73.894,49

*Sweden Export 1838-1855*

Year	Goods	Money (ducats) Foreign ships	Money (ducats) Neapolitan ships	Total
1838	Worked silk		4,13	4,13
1845	Olive oil	226,71		1113,80
1846	Olive oil			1113,80
1847	Olive oil	670,18		670,18
1848	Olive oil	1532,05		1532,05
1849	Olive oil	546,55		546,55
1850	Edible products	473,19		473,19
1851	Olive oil	101,40		101,40
1852	Edible products	1250		
1853	Goods	1633,60		1633,60
1854	Hemp worked	8000	642,80	8642,80
1855	Olive oil		Olive oil 17.591,47	17591,47

**Table 4***Russian Empire Import 1838-1855*

Year	Goods	Money (ducats) Foreign ships	Money (ducats) Neapolitan ships	Total
1838	Iron from Muscovy		4572I	7200,50
1839	Iron from Muscovy		2892,60	2892,60
1841	Iron from Baltic and wood from		I. 7187,41 W. 4999,90	13.233,11

*Russian Empire Export 1838-1855*

Year	Goods	Money (ducats) Foreign ships	Money (ducats) Neapolitan ships	Total
1838	Olive oil	24.038,40	240.771,20	264.989,44
1839	Olive oil		313.785,60	315.976,20
1841	Olive oil	13.233,11	31.781,32	50.542,81
1842	Olive oil		567.974,57	570.100,57
1843	Olive oil		703.479,56	704.410,06
1844	Olive oil		349.133,76	349.169,56
1845	Olive oil		421.526,55	421.675,95
1846	Olive oil		472.252,60	474.214,69
1847	Olive oil		325.650,49	326.847,53
1848	Olive oil	33.299,80	147.091,17	180.390,97
1849	Olive oil		385.306,74	387.335,54
1850	Olive oil		400.186,08	401.721,86
1851	Olive oil	15.977,82	175.216,64	191.838,56
1852	Olive oil	26.491,09	216.019,41	243.457,10
1853	Olive oil		161.771,31	161.811,29
1854	Olive oil		185.953,50	110.616,40
1855	Edible products		6533,49	6533,49

The olive oil produced in the Land of Otranto was the most in-demand goods in the Baltic States. Actually, many decrees regulated the trade: in 1843, an extra tax of 0.02 ducats was applied for each bushel of oil, corresponding to 10 “rotoli”. Then, in 1846, it was decided to reduce the duty on olive oils of 1.40 ducats provided that they were carried only by ships sailing under Neapolitan flag. In 1852, another Royal Decree established the price of 6 ducats for each “cantaio” of exported oil, which could have been reduced to 4 ducats if transported on ships sailing under Neapolitan flag. At the same time, import tariffs were also reduced from 8 to 4 ducats for each “cantaio”. A decree of 1854 established a further 15 “grana” of extra tax for each “cantaio”, corresponding to 100 “rotoli” of olive oil exported from the Otranto Land.

In spite of the official statistics deriving from trade data of the Kingdom, there was a growing increase of both imports and exports: the trade policy of the Kingdom during the nineteenth century followed a protectionist tendency either for consumer goods or raw materials. Customs duties have been rarely reduced to relieve the tax burden on trade. Actually, it does not seem that the Government has ever, if not in the last few years of the Kingdom, demonstrated a real willingness to adopt a liberal policy that would abandon the protectionist policies practiced in favor of local industries.

Prior to 1845, the Kingdom had signed single short-term trade agreements. Subsequently, and until at least 1858, a series of real commercial treaties were concluded to develop trade with other European powers, and to develop and protect the Neapolitan Navy. In exchange for reduction of duties, the other powers renounced to the ancient privilege of the flag. As to the necessity of risk-free trading with other European powers, the conclusion of the treaties came about in the last twenty years of the reign. Particularly, in 1845 a Treaty of Commerce was signed with Russia establishing "full freedom of travel, residence, navigation and commerce to the subjects and fleets for each of the two countries in the territories and waters of the other". The agreement also included the reduction of 10% on Russian customs duties on imported goods transported by ships sailing under the Russian flag.

In 1846, the Kingdom signed a similar treaty with Denmark. The agreement stipulated equal rights of customs, stopovers and moorings for the fleets of the two contracting Nations, in addition to the ratification of the clause that the Kingdom of Naples was to be the most-favored-nation with rights of transit through the Straits of Sund, Belt and of Holstein, and a 10% duties reduction on the imports of Danish goods traveling on ships sailing under the flag of Denmark<sup>38</sup>.

In conclusion, for the period covering the end of the Kingdom (1860), Giuseppe De Luca provides a summary of the last years of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In 1853, the total amount of foreign ships which entered the harbor of Naples was 2.612: 6 Danish, 16 Swedish, 9 Russian, 3 Prussian against the 960 Austrian, 383 were French and 279 English. Trading statistical information about the year 1854 can be summed up as follows: 15.086.840 ducats for exportations; 12.682.430 for importations; as for Russia: 1.115.000 for exportations (mostly olive oil); 2.578.500 for importations (corn from Crimea, wood and various kind of goods from Baltic area). In addition, there was a further growth of the merchant navy, counting 10.863 Neapolitan ships, for a total amount of 202.318 tons, and 2031 Sicilian ships, for a total amount of 47.438 tons. Even though these statistics witnessed the growing trade of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, it was coming to an end because of its unsolved political and economic problems.

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