

The Failure of the Spanish Crown's Tobacco Tax Monopoly in Catalonia during the XVIIIth Century

Rafael Torres Sánchez

University of Navarre

This article examines the expansion strategies used by the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly, the Renta del Tabaco or tobacco estanco, from the point of view of Catalonia. In fact the region was in position to become one of the regions with the greatest tobacco consumption under the Spanish Crown and, without doubt, a leading area for the continued expansion of the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly. However, repeated efforts by the tobacco monopoly to exploit the region's consumption potential failed to reap the expected gains. On the contrary, the Catalan smoker was apparently able to access other sources for tobacco that were decidedly not part of the monopoly, sources which managed to develop considerable demand, while the monopoly continued its policy of stocking up and marketing products that were not consumed by their supposedly captive market. The theoretic potential for tobacco consumption in Catalonia turned rapidly into a series of problems for the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly. This study may be useful in evaluating the strategy of a fiscal monopoly that placed greater focus on expanding a captive market, rather than on seeking to increase market demand.

1. Introduction

According to Hilton Root, the creation of tax monopolies during the Old Regime was the solution devised by the European kingdoms in response to their inability to fund themselves when exposed to competitive and open markets¹. Although prevailing economic thought was quite contrary to these monopolistic practices, principally because they produced unfair prices², the states had to give in to these systems when faced with the need to increase their fiscal revenues or else incur the costs of a

¹ H.L. Root, *The Fountain of Privilege. Political Foundations of Markets in Old Regime France and England*, (Berkeley 1994), p.166.

² R. de Roover, 'Monopoly Theory Prior to Adam Smith: A Revision', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 65, 4 (1951), p. 524.

widespread taxation. As Adam Smith concluded, the fiscal monopolies established over the tobacco trade were much more justifiable as a means of facilitating the collection of taxes on tobacco consumption, in consideration of the impossibility of producing tobacco on European soil³.

The fiscal monopoly system ceased to be convenient for the state when the problems with its management were too great. The solutions proposed by the European states in response to the complications deriving from the management of monopolies were diverse. England, for instance, preferred to eliminate its monopoly over the tobacco trade quickly (1627-1640⁴) and instead put its confidence in the re-exportation of tobacco from the Americas to Europe as its chief means of obtaining financial gains. Meanwhile, France chose to abandon the cultivation of tobacco on French soil in exchange for granting the monopoly to certain contractors or "Farmers-General" (1674), due to the fact that they offered higher incomes to the Exchequer and financial support for key projects in the French Crown's economic policies, such as the Indies Company⁵. The French Crown attempted to extend the monopoly and then take complete control, but its continued financial difficulties led to the failure of repeated attempts to evict those contractors from their positions. The Spanish Monarchy was somewhat more successful than their French counterparts, following a strategy of expansion. The Spanish Tobacco Monopoly gradually acquired territories and markets, both in Spain and in the colonies, whilst at the same time it developed administrative controls that were increasingly direct⁶.

In this article we wish to study the expansion strategies used by the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly, the *Renta del Tabaco* or tobacco *estanco*, from the point of view of one of the regions incorporated into this system: Catalonia. Catalonia showed a great potential for tobacco consumption

³ A. Smith, *La riqueza de las naciones*, (Madrid 1994), p.227.

⁴ A. Rive, 'A Brief History of Regulation and Taxation of Tobacco in England', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd Ser., Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr., 1929), pp. 73-87.

⁵ J.M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674- 1791, and of its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, (Michigan 1973).

⁶ A. González Enciso, Agustín y R. Torres Sánchez (eds), *Tabaco y Economía en el siglo XVIII*, (Pamplona 1999).

throughout the eighteenth century. In the Kingdom of Spain, it was one of the regions with the greatest economic and demographic growth, with high levels of urbanisation and a very notable military presence within its population. This military presence was a consequence of the Catalanian defeat in the War of Spanish Succession and its decision to oppose the victor of that war, Philip V. If this potential were, indeed, fulfilled, Catalonia was in position to become one of the regions with the greatest tobacco consumption under the Spanish Crown and, without doubt, a leading area for the continued expansion of the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly. However, repeated efforts by the tobacco monopoly to exploit the region's consumption potential failed to reap the expected gains. On the contrary, the Catalan smoker was apparently able to access other sources for tobacco that were decidedly not part of the monopoly, sources which managed to develop considerable demand, while the monopoly continued its policy of stocking up and marketing products that were not consumed by their supposedly captive market. The theoretic potential for tobacco consumption in Catalonia turned rapidly into a series of problems for the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly. This study may be useful in evaluating the strategy of a fiscal monopoly that placed greater focus on expanding a captive market, rather than on seeking to increase market demand.

2. The tobacco market in Catalonia in the seventeenth century

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly was introduced into Catalonia, as a result of the expansion of the Castilian tobacco tax *Renta del Tabaco* and the unification of the peninsular kingdoms under the rule of Philip V. Since 1636 the Castilian Treasury had established a monopoly over the consumption of tobacco. In the course of the seventeenth century, and especially after 1683, the Castilian *Renta del Tabaco* gradually brought together a number of institutions and laws in order to improve the Crown's control over the management of the monopoly granted to a contractor. The growing economic importance of the *Renta del Tabaco* for the Spanish Exchequer encouraged Philip V to establish (1701) direct administration and a

monopoly over sales by means of *estancos*. This paved the way for other kingdoms to establish similar *estancos*, although they would be run by regional institutions⁷. The strategy was simple enough: covering the peninsula with a series of *estancos* would avoid illegal commerce and improve the viability of fiscal monopoly.

This expansion strategy was not very well received in Catalonia due to the fact that this kingdom already had a well-developed tobacco trade of its own, with interests clearly different from those of Castile. As in other kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, since the mid-seventeenth century steps had been taken in Catalonia to establish tax monopolies at local and municipal levels; however, the difficulties in fully implementing these monopolies were overwhelming. One example of this was the strong objections of the Catalan mercantile community to the attempts by the *Consell de Cent* (Council of the One Hundred), the city's governing body, to limit the sale of tobacco in the city of Barcelona in 1653⁸. Just as the trading community in Seville had done when confronted with the project to create the tobacco *estanco* in Castile in 1636⁹, the Catalan tradesmen who, according to Carrera Pujal, "managed the (tobacco) business well and reckoned on abundant capital", saw the *estanco* as a threat to their flourishing business of importing and selling tobacco¹⁰.

Everything suggests that Catalan merchants participated actively in the international tobacco trade from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Tobacco contacts with France seem to have been very frequent by that time. The majority of the tobacco grown in France, Guienne, between 1647 and 1651 was exported mainly to the Italian ports of Genoa and Leghorn, as well as to ports in Catalonia¹¹; according to Savary's *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, Barcelona, together with Havana

⁷ A. González Enciso, 'La hacienda castellana y la economía en el siglo XVIII', *Estudis*, 29 (2003), pp. 21-41.

⁸ J. Carrera Pujal, *Historia política y económica de Cataluña*, (Barcelona 1947), II, p. 282.

⁹ J. M. Rodríguez Gordillo, *La creación del estanco del tabaco en España*, (Madrid 2002), p.102.

¹⁰ J. Carrera Pujal, *Historia política y económica de Cataluña*, (Barcelona 1947), II, p.293.

¹¹ J. M., Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674- 1791*, (Michigan 1973), I, p.161.

and Portugal, was one of the main distribution centres for tobacco destined for France¹². It was quite common for Catalan merchants to travel to Lisbon in search of Brazilian tobacco for later distribution (legal or illegal) in Mediterranean markets¹³. If we consider that the Catalan merchants already had significant contact with the international tobacco trade, and to this we add the sudden emergence of the tobacco monopoly in Castile, we can begin to understand why those same merchants would be so opposed to the establishment of similar tobacco *estancos* in Barcelona.

The Catalan merchants' opposition to the tobacco *estanco* was recorded through a number of complaints and protests lodged against the monopoly in the Royal Audience of Barcelona, as well as through direct pleas before the *Consell de Cent*. In the end these efforts paid off, as the councillors agreed to drop the *estanco* in exchange for an increase in the taxes levied upon tobacco prices in Barcelona. In other words, the authorities abandoned all attempts to establish any sort of monopoly over the acquisition and sale of tobacco, the costs were passed on to the consumer, and the conditions of the tobacco business remained unchanged as a whole; in this way the importation and distribution of tobacco within and outside Catalonia continued (in precisely the same manner as in England)¹⁴.

The victory of the Catalan merchant community, in marked contrast to their Sevillian counterparts, can be explained by Catalonia's lesser financial dependence and greater monetary stability (the Catalonian Treasury was in far better shape than the Castilian Treasury which was in some difficulty at the time). It is also important to note the scant effect the tobacco taxes of the time had on Catalonia initially. In 1667, for example, even after a 20% rise in the price of tobacco, the Catalan tobacco trade, together with *aguardiente* (a type of liquor) accounted for only 2.9% of the taxes collected by the Treasury in the city of Barcelona¹⁵. In

¹² J. Pérez Vidal, *España en la Historia del Tabaco*, (Madrid 1959), p.75.

¹³ C. Martínez Shaw, *Cataluña en la carrera de Indias, 1680-1756*, (Barcelona 1981), p.74.

¹⁴ R. C. Nash, 'The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Legal and Illegal Trade', *The Economic History Review*, 35, 3 (1982), p.355.

¹⁵ J. Carrera Pujal, *Historia política y económica de Cataluña*, (Barcelona 1947), II, p.293.

other words, tobacco was not important for the Catalan Treasury, and this favoured the interests of the Catalan merchants, who looked to markets and consumers beyond Catalonia, as well as in Catalonia itself.

As the tobacco tax gradually became an increasingly important item in Catalan municipal finances, the interests of the Treasury and the interests of the merchants became more contradictory and conflicting. Until the beginning of the 1690s, the tobacco tax was a complementary income, often used to compensate for a lowering of taxes on wine, the mainstay of Catalan taxation¹⁶. The merchants accepted the rise in taxes while the commercial conditions for trading (importation and distribution within and outside Catalonia) remained unchanged. In fact, dealings between Catalan merchants and Lisbon grew during the last decades of the seventeenth century and imports from France also increased, especially after 1676, when the cultivation of domestic tobacco was banned except in Bordeaux and Montauban, regions near the Pyrenees border, "most of which was usefully exported to Italy and Spain"¹⁷. As Gilbert Larguier concluded, the illegal trading in Spain was especially intense in Roussillon, where "la contrebande est donc antérieure à l'établissement du monopole espagnol sur le tabac fondé en 1701 auquel on la fait généralement remonter"¹⁸. It is quite certain that the large Catalan merchant community found that tobacco had a notable growth factor¹⁹. Meanwhile, those who benefited from the tobacco tax took advantage of fiscal growth to improve the conditions of the beneficiaries, principally by increasing the number of years stipulated in the contract²⁰.

3. The opposition to the tobacco *Estanco* in Catalonia

That the Catalan tobacco market was more open and dynamic than its Castilian counterpart became clear in 1701 when the Catalan *Corts*, the Catalan Parliament, decided to follow the Castilian example and

¹⁶ J. Carrera Pujal, *op.cit.*, II, p.305.

¹⁷ J. M. Price, *op.cit.*, I, p.146.

¹⁸ G. Larguier, "Contrabande par terre et par mer en Roussillon 1715-1815", in C. Denys, C. (ed.) *Frontière et Criminalité 1715-1815*, (Arras 2000), p.63.

¹⁹ P. Vilar, *Catalunya dins l'Espanya moderna*, (Barcelona 1986), II, p.386.

²⁰ J. Carrera Pujal, *op.cit.*, II, pp.306-307.

humour the new Bourbon monarch by monopolising tobacco consumption in Catalonia. There were significant objections in the Barcelona *Corts* in 1701, and the arguments presented illustrate how problematic the issue was. In this assembly it was argued that the *estanco* would be difficult to apply in the kingdom, as Catalonia was "so exuberant and open that paramount care and a voluminous administration would be necessary, as this venture is new and unprecedented". Moreover, the *estanco* did not seem a profitable innovation, as it was predicted to produce an income of some £15,000 to £20,000 per year, while at the time the city of Barcelona had a budget of £200,000. It was argued that, besides having few benefits, the measure would make it necessary to compensate the Catalan cities that had already established it, as they would now be losing it to Barcelona. They even went so far as to suggest that the tobacco *estanco* was, in itself, an inherently unjust system in that it was in essence a case of urban demand penalising rural consumers. However, there was one particularly outstanding argument: the fear that the establishment of an *estanco* would cause a decline in Catalan foreign trade and in the possibility of taking goods, such as tobacco, to the interior of the Iberian Peninsula: "as much of the merchandise that is today sent on to the kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia would cease to enter the Principality"²¹.

The problem, therefore, was not so much demand, nor even the Treasury, but rather the fact that the tobacco *estanco* would impose a major control over trade and create a huge number of obstacles for trading circles, for whom tobacco had become a key strategic product. Indeed, when those same *Corts* finally decided to establish the *estanco* for the entire Principality of Catalonia and it was held up for tender, there were a number of significant offers. The first came from a group of merchants from the city of Mataró, who offered £217,500 for five years, a figure far exceeding the most optimistic of estimates but nonetheless explicable because of their "intention to divert towards their city the greater part of the tobacco traffic"²². This offer was soon surpassed by one offered by a

²¹ J. Carrera Pujal, *op.cit.*, II, p.314-315.

²² I. Lobato Franco, *Compañías y negocios en la Cataluña preindustrial*, (Seville 1995), p.196.

group of merchants from Barcelona; although they offered a smaller sum of £208,803 and for two months less, they formed an important cooperative headed by Josep Durán, which included the notables of Catalan commerce and tobacco merchants²³. The main objective of this company was the acquisition of raw tobacco and the processing and repackaging of it in private mills before its distribution. Tobacco purchasing was outside the authorities' realm of control and hence was a somewhat envied sector of the tobacco business. Somehow the basic operations of the tobacco business had not changed all that much. The Catalan merchants were able to continue accessing and participating in the international tobacco market, while satisfying the Catalan demand for tobacco and continuing to transport tobacco from Catalonia to other regions and *estancos* within the Iberian Peninsula.

In spite of what was achieved, the Catalan merchant community's pressure to eliminate all forms of institutional control over the tobacco trade continued and did not take long to resurface. In the Barcelona *Corts* in 1706 the controversy re-emerged when they came to debate the advantages of not renewing the *estanco*. Once again, it was alleged that the *estanco* was "causing more harm than good", and it was even proposed to suppress the *estanco* and replace it with a tax levied upon all the inhabitants of Catalonia, including the military and the clergy (urban and rural)²⁴. In other words, the *Corts* were willing to propose more fiscal pressure on all of Catalonia in exchange for the elimination of the tobacco *estancos*. There is no doubt that the sacrifices the Catalans were willing to make in favour of the tobacco trade showed that its importance went beyond its contribution to the Catalan Treasury. It was obvious that the tobacco market in Catalonia was moving in a different direction to that of its Castilian counterpart.

4. The establishment of the tobacco tax in Catalonia

Whilst in Catalonia the means of limiting or doing away with its own tobacco *estanco* were debated, the Spanish Crown was occupied with

²³ I. Lobato Franco, *op.cit.*, p.183.

²⁴ J. Carrera Pujal, *op.cit.*, II, p.322.

developing its own policy for a fiscal monopoly on tobacco based upon territorial expansion. For Philip V, the viability and efficiency of the tobacco monopoly was dependent upon extending the *Renta del Tabaco* to the whole of the Iberian Peninsula. The legitimacy needed to implement these plans came with the Crown of Aragon and Catalonia's insurrection against, and subsequent defeat by, Philip V during the War of Spanish Succession.

The Pact of Genoa, signed in 1705 between England and Catalonia, by which Catalonia formally joined the cause of the Archduke Charles of Austria and promised to support his claim to the throne, gave Catalonia the opportunity to become a major player in the international tobacco market, one that was free and completely outside the Spanish Monopoly. England's alliance with Catalonia required the securing of several routes of communication with Barcelona. From Lisbon, warships and English merchants sailed directly to Barcelona, transporting gold and commercial goods, including Brazilian tobacco, to sustain the allied armies; in the same way, the English used Genoa to send economic aid and merchandise and, from 1707, they even reactivated direct trade between London and Barcelona, in which the exportation of English textiles and the re-exportation of colonial goods (such as Virginian tobacco) featured strongly²⁵. Catalonia, therefore, not only avoided complete isolation and the disintegration of its lucrative tobacco trade, but actually managed to strengthen its position in the international tobacco trade. In other words, Catalonia had the opportunity to become an international centre for the redistribution of tobacco from the English colonies, which, with the great increase in demand for North American tobacco in the French markets, would certainly have offered attractive gains for the Catalan merchant community. This was a community that viewed its alliance with Great Britain, even with the costs of dependence, as one with very important possibilities for the future.

The Bourbon monarch had very different plans for Catalonia. From the chronicles of Fernando Ceballos, the Director of the *Renta del Tabaco* in Catalonia, we learn that Philip V's intentions were clear from the very moment that his troops crossed the Catalan border. Ceballos was named

²⁵ D. W. Jones, *War and Economy in the Age of William III and Marlborough*, (Oxford 1988), pp. 83, 88 and 107.

head of the future *Renta del Tabaco* in Catalonia in 1711, in the middle of the war and before Philip's troops had even reached Barcelona. In other words, the *Renta del Tabaco* advanced in Catalan soil with the force of the Bourbon army. Along the front, on the lands conquered before the capital surrendered, Ceballos gradually established the organisation of the entire administration – both executive and judicial – necessary for the efficient functioning of the *Renta*. He created the *estancos* and designated who would run them in the cities and towns he found useful. He ordered the construction of mills and cigar factories or used those already in existence. Furthermore, just as he had done in Aragon, he purposely did not destroy many of the cigar factories in Catalonia because of the need to satisfy the arm's demand and because the Catalan tobacco was, it was said, "of bad quality", not to be compared with that of Castilian tobacco and, according to this Crown servant, it beyond competing with it. The immediate need to satisfy the army's requirements led him to organise, with attention to detail, the preparation of the leaves and the distribution of tobacco within the Principality. On arriving at the gateway of Barcelona in 1711, Intendant José Patiño named him the first General Administrator of the Catalan tobacco tax²⁶.

Phillip V's victory over the Catalan authorities in 1716 gave him the legitimacy needed for the Bourbon government to impose its reforms of Catalan administration and government, including its Treasury, and the Royal Decree of *Nueva Planta*, or reorganisation. The Royal Treasury incorporated the majority of the taxes previously collected by the Treasury of Catalonia, and imposed a new direct tax, collected according to a census that attempted to equal the Castilian *Rentas Provinciales*, and, because such taxes were indirect, the remaining Castilian dues and monopolies (tobacco, salt, sealed paper and general rents) were also introduced²⁷. The Catalan institutions lost whatever margin of negotiation they had previously enjoyed, and had no control over the tobacco monopoly. Catalonia found that it had become an integral part of the Iberian Peninsula tobacco monopoly, the *Renta del Tabaco*.

²⁶ AGS (Archivo General de Simancas), DGR, I, lg.2403.

²⁷ E. Fernández de Pinedo, *Los ingresos de la Hacienda Real en Cataluña, 1717-1779*, (1984) p. 194.

5. The logic behind the monopoly as a system.

The war had enabled the Castilian *estanco* to spread geographically, but the expansion strategies of the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly were still quite ambitious. Various ways were sought to create a more perfect monopoly. One notable example was increased administrative control. In the years immediately after the war, the *Renta del Tabaco* had managed to establish direct administration to supervise the most important of their territories: Seville and Madrid. In the rest of the provinces, the operation was entrusted to *arrendadores*, special administrators who were required to submit their accounts to the Crown. However, in the 1720s work began on the extensive restructuring of the administration, with the ultimate aim of eliminating all subcontracting and establishing direct administration throughout. This was completed and implemented in December 1730. Henceforth, and for the rest of the century, civil servants were responsible for all operations concerning the Monopoly (sales and taxation).

Meanwhile, and at almost exactly the same time, the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly moved towards achieving control over the supply of tobacco. Recognising the French government's failure to suppress the farming of the Tobacco Monopoly in France, once the continuity of the Monopoly was acknowledged, and to ensure at least that the tobacco consumed was grown in French colonies, the Spanish Crown had more success in imposing its mercantilist policies²⁸. In 1717 the Crown established an *estanco* on the island of Cuba and the exclusive sale of tobacco was consigned to the Spanish Monopoly. Although some producers protested, and for some years it was necessary to grant this exclusive privilege to the Royal Company of Havana, the *Renta del Tabaco* managed to secure a privileged source for the supply of raw tobacco. This system continued until the end of the century, with the silver of New Spain being used for the purchase of raw materials in Cuba, which were later refined solely in the Royal Tobacco Factory of Seville²⁹. This monopoly over supply and

²⁸ J. M. Price, *op.cit.*, I, p.360.

²⁹ L. Nater, "Tabaco: la carta española en la lucha por el control del comercio atlántico", in Johanna Von Grafenstein, *El Caribe en los intereses imperiales, 1750-1815*, (México 2000), p. 17.

production was complemented by a monopoly over the sale of the product which also came under the control of the *Renta del Tabaco*, with a fixed governmental price control³⁰. From 1740, the tariffs that applied to public sales were applied to the entire monopoly. Henceforth up to 1809, the differences in price were no longer determined by the type of tobacco used, but rather by the place and amount sold. This increased direct control over and ensured a more efficient collection of, the tobacco tax.

This almost perfect monopoly was extended to Catalonia without any problem. Catalonia, like all the other provinces, was incorporated into the *Renta* as a provincial administration. The Monopoly was administered from the capital Barcelona, where the main warehouses were situated, from which the tobacco was distributed to the rest of Catalonia, and where the more important of the *Renta* officials resided. The *factoría* was also located in Barcelona, which served as the main point of distribution for the other administrations, in the interior of the Peninsula and along the Spanish Mediterranean coast. In 1714 Catalonia was divided into 17 administrations, which were themselves subdivided into *colectas*. The *Renta del Tabaco* preferred to superimpose its own administrative organisation on that inherited from its provincial predecessors, so the former territorial unit of *veguerías* was replaced by *coregimientos* in the *Nueva Planta* decree, and these, in turn, served as a basis for defining Catalonia's *estanco* administrations³¹.

This administrative system was very similar to that found in other Spanish provinces, and lasted for the rest of the century. The most significant innovation of the *Renta del Tabaco* in Catalonia was the notably greater dependence on the region's Military authorities. The main political authority in Catalonia, the *Intendente*, besides being responsible for all military matters in the province, was also responsible for the administration of the Royal Treasury in Catalonia. The Accountant and the Treasurer of the province, the second-highest ranking officials of the Treasury after the *Intendente* were also members of the army.

³⁰ A. González Enciso, "Aspectos de la Renta del Tabaco en el reinado de Carlos III", *Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre "Carlos III y la Ilustración"*, tomo II, (Madrid 1989), p. 266.

³¹ AGS, DGR, I, Lg. 2403.

Consequently the *Intendente* of Catalonia was, by proxy, also the most important official of the *Renta del Tabaco* in Catalonia. As sub-delegates of the *Renta del Tabaco*, the *intendentes* of Catalonia oversaw all matters related to tobacco, including judicial issues, as well as coordinating with the *Junta del tabaco*, or Board of Tobacco, and the Director Generals of the *Renta del Tabaco* in Madrid, especially in matters related to smuggling. The Intendant of Catalonia's control and authority concerning all tobacco-related issues in the Principality was maintained throughout the eighteenth century and came to be a key issue in the plans proposed by the Board of Tobacco to modify and increase the number of administrations, in a clear attempt to escape the direct control of the all-powerful Intendant. This was the case in 1727, when the Junta successfully established subsidiaries in Mataró, Tarragona, Lérida, Vich and Puigcerda, which, after a few years of confusion, were permanently dismantled in 1731. The same occurred in 1740, when the creation of eight subsidiaries in Mataró, Seo de Urgel, Tarragona, Tortosa, Gerona, Lérida, Puigcerdá and Talarn were proposed but ultimately rejected by the Intendant, who preferred to give the Barcelona office sole responsibility for overseeing the entire Principality³².

The Intendant's direct control over the *Renta del Tabaco* in Catalonia reduced the opposition of the Catalans to the monopoly and increased the possibility of quelling any objections, while also offering the Crown a privileged source of information regarding the Monopoly's progress in Catalonia.

Compared to the other provinces which were under the regime of the Tobacco Monopoly, Catalonia was also unique in that a large percentage of its population was military. The continued occupation of the province by large numbers of military contingents was explained by the fears of a new uprising and by the strategic function of Catalonia as a logistics centre and as the starting point for the most important military campaigns of the century, such as those in Italy (1717-1718, 1733-38 and 1743-48), Portugal (1761), Algeria (1775) or Minorca (1782). This concentration of armed troops was far superior to that in any other

³² E. Escartín, *La intendencia de Cataluña en el siglo XVIII*, (Santandreu Editor, Barcelona 1995), pp. 127, 256.

Spanish region. It is believed that between 20-30,000 soldiers were stationed in Catalonia during the first half of the eighteenth century, although during certain stages of the war the number of troops reached the 40,000 mark. During the second half of the war these figures declined, but there were never less than 20,000 soldiers in Catalonia at any given time. If we consider the number of bread rations handed out to Spanish troops in the mid-eighteenth century, we may conclude that approximately one in every four soldiers in Spain was stationed in Catalonia. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Catalonia was replaced by Andalusia as the most militarised region, with Catalonia in second place. These figures are even more significant if we bear in mind that throughout the eighteenth century the population of Catalonia accounted for only 6%-8% of the Spanish nation³⁵.

Catalonia, therefore, had become completely incorporated into an *estanco* by the beginning of the 1730s, an *estanco* that continued to grow in its attempt to expand the Monopoly. Its incorporation was facilitated by the marked dependence of the Tobacco Monopoly's administration on the principal political and military authorities. All factors favoured the greatest possible success of the Tobacco Monopoly. The demand potential of the region in a period of population and economic growth, was increased with the high concentration of troops who were traditionally major tobacco consumers. The demand for tobacco in Catalonia appeared to endorse the lucrative possibilities of the Spanish Monopoly's expansionist policy.

6. The loopholes in the monopoly

The Spanish Tobacco Monopoly aimed to exercise full control over the tobacco trade, from the exclusive procurement of raw tobacco in Cuba or Venezuela to its refinement in Seville and Cadiz and subsequent distribution and sale at a fixed price³⁶. In order to make this monopoly

³⁵ R. Torres Sánchez, "El gran negocio de la época, la provisión de víveres al ejército por Francisco Mendinueta (1744-1763)", *Francisco Mendinueta: Finanzas y mecenazgo en la España del siglo XVIII*, (Pamplona 2002), p.115.

³⁶ A. González Enciso, *Los usos financieros del tabaco; o bien, para qué servían los dineros obtenidos con la Renta del Tabaco*, (Las Palmas 2000), p.25.

effective, the Board of Tobacco devised a complex administrative system and relied on the positive response of consumers who were presented with a superior quality of American tobacco from the Spanish colonies which was refined in Seville, the most important being snuff, *polvo*³⁵, which the Monopoly supplied in its extensive network of stores. But this quality had a price. As Price concluded, the conditions of the French tobacco trade in the first few decades of the eighteenth century meant “we need not concern ourselves much with Spain. Its tobacco – whether from Venezuela (Verinas) or from Cuba – was several times more expensive than any other on the European market and was only used by the French for mixing in luxury snuffs”³⁶. While the Spanish Monopoly's strategy is comprehensible from a mercantilist point of view, it ruled out the possibility to compete in the European markets and it placed the Monopoly in a constantly defensive position, faced with the fluctuations of consumer demand and the possibility that it could be satisfied from abroad.

From an administrative point of view and as far as the delivery of quality is concerned, the Monopoly presented several loopholes, which were significant in the case of Catalonia. The first moves of the Monopoly in Catalonia went against the interests of the Catalan merchant community. The supplying of tobacco was entrusted in 1716 to two Sevillians, José Benítez and Francisco Miguel de Alcalá, who appear to have been linked to the group of Portuguese Jewish converts of Baltasar de Castro and who were very active in their dealings with the Spanish Exchequer and the *Renta del Tabaco*³⁷. However, in the following years the supplying of tobacco to Barcelona's *factoria* gradually passed into the hands of the Catalan merchant community, whose trading in the international tobacco markets in previous years no doubt facilitated Catalan participation. Not only did Catalan ships carry the tobacco for the Monopoly from Seville to Barcelona, they also transported it to the main Spanish Mediterranean ports, from Barcelona to Majorca, Alicante and Valencia. Furthermore, Catalan merchants offered the Monopoly the possibility of obtaining

³⁵ The tobacco snuff refined in Seville (*polvo*) was different from European snuff tobacco. J.M. Rodríguez Gordillo, *La difusión del tabaco en España*, (Sevilla 2002), p.239

³⁶ J. M. Price, *op.cit.*, I, p. 182.

tobacco which came from the "free port of Genoa" for the *factoría* of Barcelona³⁴.

There was a good deal of Brazil-leaf tobacco amongst the tobacco shipments transported by Catalan merchants. This type of tobacco, originating in Brazil, was popular throughout Europe because of its agreeable odour, sweet taste and the simplicity of its consumption whether in pipes, cigars or by chewing. Its popularity was also due to the fact that the main supplier of this type of tobacco, Portugal, adopted a free market policy in Lisbon, and also to the stability of export prices throughout the century, which is what attracted so many merchants from all over Europe and provided the opportunity to sell a popular tobacco at a competitive price³⁵. The demand for Brazilian tobacco quickly became a very real alternative to the snuffed tobacco sold by the Spanish Monopoly.

The Monopoly faced a serious problem which was difficult to solve because it went against the very reasons which had led to the introduction of the Monopoly in the first place. On the one hand, the Monopoly had to admit that Spanish consumers increasingly preferred to consume Brazilian tobacco and, therefore, they had to secure a steady supply for the retail outlets. This meant the Monopoly would have to compete against the own tobacco, Cuban tobacco, and that demand for the cigar factory in Seville would decrease. On the other hand, it was not in the Monopoly's interest to expand the consumption of Brazilian tobacco because this would require tobacco to be purchased outside the Spanish Empire, which meant losing Spanish capital, as well as running the eternal risk of contraband. As the Spanish Ministry of Finance declared, "Brazilian tobacco is harmful to Spain as it removes silver from our Kingdom and opens the door to perpetual fraud by foreigners who seek to introduce other tobaccos into Spain"³⁶. The Monopoly had to decide between

³⁴ R. Escobedo Romero, *El monopolio fiscal del tabaco en la España del siglo XVIII*, (Pamplona 2005), pp.457-458.

³⁵ AGS, DGR, I, lg. 2403.

³⁶ R. Torres Sánchez, "Capitalismo internacional y política estatal. Los asentistas del tabaco en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII", in A. González Enciso and R. Torres (eds.), *Tabaco y Economía en el siglo XVIII*, (Pamplona 1999), p.417.

³⁷ Miguel Múzquiz to the Spanish Consul in Lisbon, 28-4-1767, AGS, SSH, lg. 1997.

growth through satisfying the tastes of its consumers or giving preference to economic policies and protecting domestic production.

The Catalan merchants understood this situation, and they exploited the Tobacco Monopoly as a means to extend their own trade. From the 1720s a number of Catalan companies regularly offered to transport and distribute Brazilian tobacco to ports throughout Spain, on behalf of the tax authority, in order to satisfy its supply needs. In the following decade Catalans almost totally dominated the supplying of Brazilian tobacco, a situation which lasted until the 1740s. This rapid rise was due to various factors. One of them was the number of Catalan merchant houses involved in the exportation of spirits to Cadiz and the importation of English textiles, which they acquired during the direct purchase of Brazilian tobacco in Lisbon, and later distributed in Catalonia and along Spain's Levantine Coast. They undertook this activity in order to convince the Tobacco Board to accept their services. Some of these Catalan merchant houses, such as that of Miguel Pujol and that of José Vidal y Batella of Barcelona, obtained big contracts from Madrid to supply Brazilian tobacco to the main ports of the Iberian Peninsula, including Cadiz, in the 1730s⁴¹.

In other cases, the main factor became relations between Catalonia and Genoa⁴². The Genoese merchants were very active in the Lisbon tobacco market, known as the *Jardin* (literally, the "Garden"), because they were in charge of supplying Brazilian tobacco to the Italian monopolies, especially those of Sardinia and Naples⁴³. The influx of tobacco and the exportation of French domestic tobacco, made Genoa the main tobacco entrepôt for the Mediterranean. Bernardo Gloria, for example, spent the decade between 1720 and 1730 developing a network of contacts that linked the markets of Lisbon and Genoa in order to better serve their contracts to supply Brazilian tobacco to the Spanish monopoly⁴⁴. Other Catalan merchants, like Pedro Merizano, maintained

⁴¹ AGS, DGR, I, lg. 2403.

⁴² AGS, DGR, II, lg. 4692. Reports from the Spanish Consul in Genoa to the Spanish Ministry of Finance.

⁴³ AGS, DGR, II, lg. 4688.

⁴⁴ R. Fernández, "La burguesía barcelonesa en el siglo XVIII: la familia Gloria", *La economía española a finales del Antiguo Régimen*, (Madrid 1983), pp.33-40.

strong links with Genoese merchant houses, such as those of Bensi, Gnecco or Maffoni, in order to sustain their business of supplying provisions to the Spanish troops stationed in Catalonia and in Italy and transferring income from Spanish aristocrats in Italy to Spain. They used their network of contacts to secure important contracts for the purchase of Brazilian tobacco in Genoa, tobacco which was destined to be sold to the Spanish Monopoly⁴⁵.

The Catalan merchant community's interest in the tobacco trade was many-faced, as it was not only a means to demonstrate "service to the king", which was particularly important to a community recovering from a war of rebellion against the Crown, but it was also an efficient means of obtaining capital or permission to use and export Spanish silver legally, which was essential for the effectiveness of the merchants' trading. These tobacco contracts also offered a legal cover for smuggling of all sorts - mainly textiles⁴⁶, and the illicit importation of great amounts of Brazilian and other types of tobacco, such as Virginia tobacco, along the Spanish coasts, particularly the Levantine Coast⁴⁷. As was proven in the case of England, these contracts for legal trade were the main source of contraband in the domestic markets, as they permitted fraudulent agreements with the port authorities and the relanding trade⁴⁸. And so the Monopoly's need to import Brazilian tobacco (which accounted for approximately a third of the tobacco sold by the Monopoly in Spain⁴⁹), in order to satisfy the demands of Spanish consumers, gave the Catalan merchants the perfect opportunity to become actively involved in the tobacco trade whilst providing them with a privileged position *vis-à-vis* the great source of wealth that came from the growing markets for contraband goods throughout Spain, and especially in Catalonia itself.

⁴⁵ J. C. Maixé Maixé Altes, *Comercio y banca en la Cataluña del siglo XVIII. La Compañía Bensi & Merizano de Barcelona, 1724-1755*, (La Coruña 1994), p.57.

⁴⁶ E. Martín Corrales, "El contrabando en el litoral catalán en la primera mitad del siglo XVIII (1720-1759)", in G. López Nadal (ed.) *VIII Jornades d'Estudis Històrics Locals: el comerç alternatiu. Corsarime i contrabàn: ss. XV-XVIII*, (Palma de Mallorca 1990).

⁴⁷ Contracts in DGR, II, leg. 4688; 4689 and 4695.

⁴⁸ R.C Nash, *op.cit.*, p.360.

⁴⁹ This accounted for 40% if one adds Virginia tobacco. R. Torres Sánchez, "Capitalismo internacional y política estatal...", *op.cit.*, p. 417.

7. The legal consumption of tobacco in Catalonia

At first the Monopoly had to fight the black market which, as we shall see, was deeply rooted in Catalan society and in its economy. The Monopoly turned out to be less than perfect and left a margin for alternative suppliers. This emerges from the figures recorded by the Catalonia Monopoly concerning the number of tobacco consumers.

According to the accounts of the *Renta del Tabaco*, the Monopoly's tobacco sales in Catalonia actually declined as the eighteenth century progressed. Contrary to all expectations, Catalonia's importance in the Spanish Monopoly decreased, its role diminishing with the publication of each new set of figures regarding consumption rates, which fell each year. At the beginning of the 1730s, the tobacco sold by the Monopoly in the Catalan *estancos* accounted for somewhat more than 4% of all tobacco sold in Spain, with a maximum of 5.04% in 1733, while at the same time Catalonia accounted for over 7% of the total Spanish population. This paradox continued to increase throughout the eighteenth century, and particularly after the 1770s. From then until the end of the century, the Monopoly in Catalonia had its worst results in terms of sales. While the Catalan population increased its growth rate, eventually accounting for 8% of Spain as a whole, the legal consumption of tobacco declined and Catalonia's share in the total sales of the Monopoly declined notably, with a minimum of 2.57% in 1797.

With the aid of these figures we can conclude that the Monopoly lost its market in Catalonia as the eighteenth century progressed, and the decline became more rapid from 1770 onwards. This contrasts with the conditions of Catalonia's urban, demographic and economic growth during the last third of the eighteenth century, one of the century's periods of most intense growth, when Catalonia continued to boast a huge military presence. This encouraged the belief that there would be a strong rise in tobacco consumption in Catalonia, a belief shared by the heads of the Monopoly, who expressed their bewilderment at the Monopoly's inability to generate in Catalonia the incomes "which correspond to its expansion as well as to the tastes

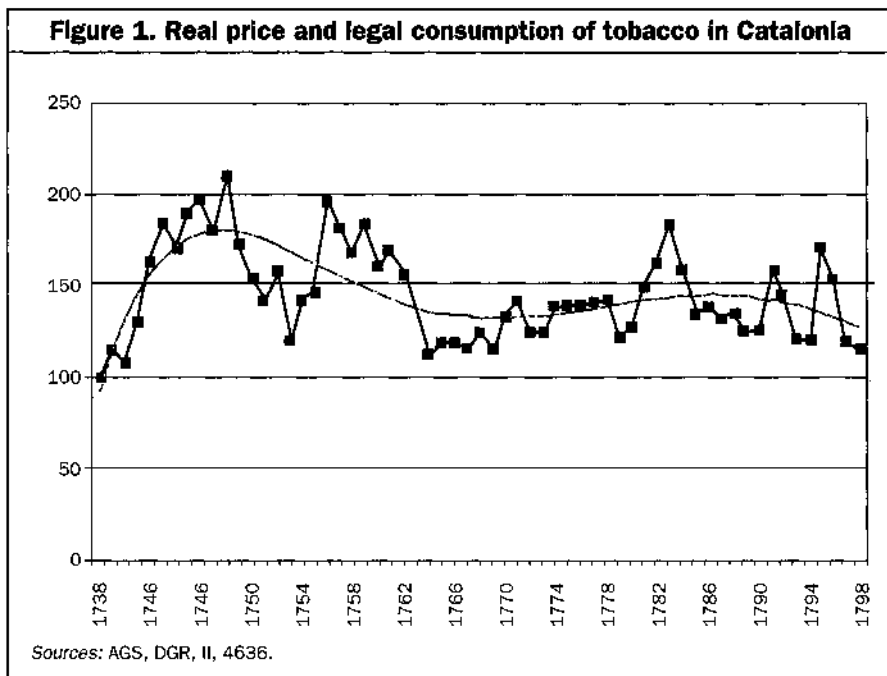
TABLE 1. Tobacco sold by the Renta del Tabaco in Catalonia. 1731-1799

Decade	CATALONIA			SPAIN			CATALONIA WITH RESPECT TO SPAIN	
	Consumed	Population	Consumed	Consumed	Population	Consumed	Consumed	Population
	Per capita			Per capita				
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	
1731-39	119,550	595,624	0.201	2,827,307	8,272,289	0.342	4.23	7.20
1740-49	105,747	647,787	0.163	2,686,387	8,561,683	0.314	3.94	7.57
1750-59	125,800	693,966	0.181	2,926,691	8,937,775	0.327	4.30	7.76
1760-69	119,498	755,452	0.158	3,192,466	9,399,387	0.340	3.74	8.04
1770-79	146,526	808,966	0.181	3,666,619	9,848,384	0.372	4.00	8.21
1780-89	115,324	877,797	0.131	3,134,377	10,267,145	0.305	3.68	8.55
1790-99	97,604	928,193	0.105	2,844,883	10,752,559	0.265	3.43	8.63

Sources: (a) AGS, DGR, I, 2403 y II, 4626. Pounds consumed, annual average; (b) and (e) in A. Moreno, "La evolución de la población española, 1500-1860", *Historia Moderna de España*, (Ariel, Madrid 2004); (c) = b/a; (d) AGS, DGR II, 4636 Pounds consumed, annual average; (f) = c/d. (g) = a/d*100; (h) = b/e*100.

of the natives"⁵⁰. In sharp contradiction, we find, instead, that in the eighteenth century the Catalans consumed less tobacco than all the other Spaniards: 40% less in the 1730s and a full 60% less in the final years of the century.

Why did the Monopoly lose its Catalan tobacco consumers? The most immediate answer to this question points to the prices of tobacco sold in the official stores belonging to the Monopoly. The Crown proclaimed several increases in the price of tobacco throughout the eighteenth century, with the goal of meeting urgent financial needs and avoiding further treasury reforms⁵¹. There are many studies on the advantage of not raising prices in order to avoid the negative effects that such measures had on the consumer, although those effects are



⁵⁰ José Patiño, Sevilla 27-12-1731, AGS, SSH, 1767.

⁵¹ A. González Enciso, "Los usos financieros del tabaco; o bien, para qué servían los dineros obtenidos con la Renta del Tabaco", in Santiago Luxan, Sergio Solbes, JJ. Laforet (eds.), *El mercado del tabaco en España durante el siglo XVIII: fiscalidad y consumo*, (Las Palmas 2000), pp.25-52.

never actually specified: we can draw some conclusions by comparing trends in the price of tobacco sold in the Monopoly's stores to the consumption rates in Catalonia and the legal consumption of tobacco in Catalonia.

The real price of tobacco doubled between 1737 and 1746, and tobacco sales dropped by 30%. Later, when the real price of tobacco fell between 1746 and 1754, Monopoly sales in Catalonia picked up, rising by over 40%. The increase in sales continued vigorously until 1760, even though the price of tobacco began to rise. In other words, the 1750s were the golden age of the Tobacco Monopoly in Catalonia. Henceforth, the price-sales relationship ceased to balance. The marked fall in the real price of tobacco between 1760 and 1770 did not revive the former increase in sales, and in fact was marked by the most rapid decline in sales of the eighteenth century. In the last third of the century these inconsistencies continued, and a long stability in the price of tobacco was not sufficient to revive sales; they continued to decline, and by the end of the century prices were similar to those in 1737 but sales were 40% down. These figures can lead to the conclusion that the price of tobacco, combined with the living conditions of the Catalans, may have in some way influenced the extent to which Monopoly tobacco was consumed in the period prior to 1760. After this date, the price influence seems to have declined significantly, implying that the decline in sales was due to other factors.

After analysing the domestic tobacco market in eighteenth-century Great Britain, Robert C. Nash came to the conclusion that the British government's continuous policy of maintaining high taxes on tobacco consumed in the country did not (in any decisive way) affect the levels of consumption, as the consumer found other alternative suppliers, either by changing the type of tobacco consumed or by purchasing contraband tobacco goods⁵². In the case of the Catalan consumer, this search for alternatives was determined by the supply policies practised by the *Renta del Tabaco* monopoly.

⁵² The British government was able to maintain this situation because at the same time it allowed the re-exportation of tobacco, which offered greater incomes through customs duties. R.C Nash; "The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades ...", *op.cit.*, p. 369.

While the French government, faced with contractors or "farmers-general" who were interested in purchasing the cheaper tobaccos grown in the British colonies, was incapable of imposing the tobacco grown in its own colonies, the Spanish government had far more success with its mercantilist policy of putting its colonial tobaccos first. This success allowed the Spanish Monopoly to offer a product of quality in its *estancos*, such as Sevillian snuff, but it also obliged the Monopoly to compete against other tobaccos. Competition was especially intense in the field of tobacco for smoking, made with tobacco leaves which came from colonies that were not under Spanish rule, such as Virginia and Brazil, and which were more attractive, cheaper, more abundant and easier to consume⁵³.

The Spanish Monopoly's tobacco sales have been studied in relation

TABLE 2. Types of tobaccos sold by the monopoly

	CATALONIA				SPAIN			
	For snuff		Smoked		For snuff		Smoked	
	%	Index	%	Index	%	Index	%	Index
1731-34	40.7	69	59.3	180				
1735-39	46.3	86	53.7	177				
1740-44	64.1	100	35.9	100	67.3	100	32.7	100
1745-49	75.1	118	24.9	70	65.9	93	34.1	99
1750-55	74.5	132	25.5	16	61.9	95	38.1	120
1755-59	75.6	148	24.4	17	60.0	98	40.0	134
1760-64	80.3	161	19.7	14	58.8	101	41.2	145
1765-69	81.8	127	18.2	10	57.3	100	42.7	152
1770-74	75.8	160	24.2	18	52.4	101	47.6	189
1775-79	71.5	161	28.5	23	50.2	101	49.8	207
1780-84	70.4	114	29.6	17	48.9	82	51.1	175
1785-89	72.3	130	27.7	18	47.2	81	52.8	186
1790-94	83.0	134	17.0	10	49.3	76	50.7	161
1795-98	83.3	107	16.7	8	41.9	50	58.1	143

Source: see Table 1.

⁵³ R. Torres Sánchez, "El Banco de San Carlos y el negocio del tabaco. Una investigación de mercado en el siglo XVIII" (2000), in Santiago Luxan, Sergio Solbes, JJ.Laforet (eds), *El mercado del tabaco en España durante el siglo XVIII: fiscalidad y consumo*, (Las Palmas 2000) p. 118.

to the habits and inclinations of the consumers⁵⁴. According to sales figures, throughout the eighteenth century Spanish consumers gradually abandoned the regular use of snuff, favouring tobacco for smoking instead: in other words, in Spain exactly the opposite of what happened in France took place. This rapid change in consumer preferences has been interpreted as a reaction to the prices, which encouraged people to consume cheaper tobacco. In actual fact, the three price increases decreed by the government (1741, 1779, 1794) regarded all types of tobacco. Price competition can only be interpreted as a desire to increase the levy, and confidence in the superiority of the Spanish colonial tobacco sold by the *Renta* became a factor in consumer preferences. The government was convinced that having the *estancos* well supplied with good-quality tobacco was what “most influences the increase in the values of the *Renta*”⁵⁵. Even when the shift in preference to smoking cigars became evident, the government decided to encourage the consumption of Cuban cigars, ignoring the opinion of the Monopoly’s director, who considered it more profitable to secure the supply of Brazilian tobacco because there was a much greater consumer demand for it⁵⁶.

A mercantilist policy regarding the supply of tobacco, together with price conformity and an emphasis on quality, implied a strong dose of interventionism in markets such as the Catalan market, which had other options. Trends in the sale of tobacco in Catalonia has shown us the possible outcome of such an alternative. There was almost no tobacco for smoking sold in Catalan *estancos* as the eighteenth century progressed. In the context of a strong recession in tobacco consumption in Catalonia, and the general decline in the consumption of snuff in Spain, it is strange that the remaining Catalan consumers were particularly interested in buying snuff. Similarly, it is interesting to note that the increase in *per capita* tobacco consumption is found in Catalonia’s southern regions,

⁵⁴ L. Alonso, ‘Transformaciones en las pautas de consumo y crecimiento de la demanda en los orígenes de la industrialización: el tabaco en España, 1735-1886’, *Ler História*, (27-28, 1995), p. 24. Greta, ‘El consumo de tabaco en España en el siglo XVIII’, *Cuadernos de Investigación Histórica* (19, 2002), p. 324.

⁵⁵ AGS, SSH, Muzquiz, 16-3-1737.

⁵⁶ F. Gallardo, *Origen, progresos y estado de las rentas de la corona de España, su gobierno y administración*, VII, (Madrid 1808), p. 366-367.

furthest away from the French border. After Barcelona, the administrations that sold the most tobacco for smoking were Tortosa and Tarragona, the two administrations furthest away from the French border. Higher consumption rates are to be found as the distance between the administration and the French border increases, and continues down to Valencia, where tobacco for smoking was the type with the highest sales.

According to figures for the Monopoly's sales in Catalonia, the bulk of the market was concentrated in four administrations: Barcelona, Girona, Tarragona and Tortosa. These administrations had the largest populations and a decidedly urban profile: they accounted for 54.1% of the population and consumed 70.3% of all tobacco sold by the *Renta* in Catalonia. The greatest sales were to be found in the *estancos* of Barcelona, where, with only 14.2% of the total Catalan population, the sale of tobacco was extremely high: 43.1%. This high concentration of the Monopoly's sales in the main urban centres, and especially in Barcelona, can be explained by the effects of urbanisation on the consumption of tobacco, and by assuming that the Monopoly was not so deeply entrenched in the inland regions of Catalonia (the aforementioned cities are all on the coast). If

TABLE 3. Geography of the sale of tobacco by the Tobacco Renta in Catalonia in 1779

	Tobacco %	Population %	Per capita	Smoking / Total	Smoking / Snuff
Barcelona	43.19	14.20	0.52	43.5	27.0
Girona	9.60	19.22	0.09	4.4	12.2
Tarragona	9.56	15.16	0.11	12.5	35.0
Tortosa	7.96	5.53	0.25	14.1	47.2
Lleida	6.76	6.80	0.17	7.8	30.8
Cervera	4.55	5.05	0.15	2.8	16.6
Puigcerda	4.49	6.08	0.13	1.1	6.3
Vich	3.90	8.08	0.08	2.0	13.5
Mataro	3.72	6.76	0.09	3.9	28.0
Manresa	3.22	5.39	0.10	1.4	11.4
Villafraanca	3.06	6.04	0.09	6.7	58.2
Total	100	100	0.17	100	26.8

Source: AGS, DGR, I, lg. 2405.

this is the case, the Monopoly may even have lost geographical territory to the Catalan tobacco market.

We believe that all these statistics not only reflect a change in consumption habits in Catalonia, but also show the existence of a clearly divided market: on the one hand, legal tobacco, supplied by the Monopoly (mainly snuff, controlled strictly by the *Renta del Tabaco* in its *factorías* as well as in its distribution to the *estancos* of the *Renta*¹⁷), and on the other, tobacco for smoking, partially supplied by the Monopoly (where less refining is required as the raw goods can be smoked directly by the consumer) and, as we shall see, by an important alternative supplier with abundant goods and a sturdy organisation. For this reason, the unusual growth in snuff consumption in Catalonia could be considered a reflection of the Monopoly's inability to make their *estancos* attract the consumers of the growing smoked-tobacco market. The progressive loss of the tobacco sales capacity in Catalonia suggests that the Monopoly was able to attract only those seeking quality, a market which each year became more and more isolated geographically. The expansion potential that existed because of the potential for consumers in Catalonia was not exploited as it should have been by the Spanish Tobacco Monopoly. The Monopoly's supply politics and the Royal Treasury's financial difficulties limited the Monopoly's ability to offer a wide variety of tobacco easily. Price rises and uniformity, as well as the emphasis on quality, did not help to attract Catalan consumers, and were no response to the growing black market, which was by this time a flexible yet elaborately structured business. Let us now turn our attention to how the illegal supplying of tobacco to Catalonia served as a very real alternative for Catalan tobacco consumers.

8. The illegal supplying of tobacco to Catalonia.

Before the Monopoly was able to regulate the tobacco market in Catalonia, the Catalans had already secured the supplying of tobacco

¹⁷ The alternative to snuffed tobacco was French snuff, but the *Renta* attempted to compete with it by producing it in Seville from 1786 onwards.

and they played an active part in the tobacco trade, travelling directly to the most important European redistribution ports. The difference between the tobacco sold in the *estancos* and the stability of, and even fall in, the prices of international tobacco, especially that coming from Virginia and Brazil⁵⁸, encouraged the Catalans to participate in the illegal tobacco trade. The Monopoly's efforts to stop the introduction of contraband tobacco was a long and constant battle throughout the century, but expectations and possibilities changed.

Appraising contraband is always a very difficult task, with uncertain results⁵⁹, although we can attempt to make a simple estimate based upon the expected consumption rates. In order to do this we assume that the *per capita* consumption was at least constant, when all the qualitative references point to a sharp increase in consumption, and consider the difference as an approximate indicator of the illegal trade⁶⁰. According to this estimate, the consumption of illegal tobacco had a big impact on the Catalan tobacco market, particularly in the last third of the eighteenth century. The amount of contraband tobacco escalated, but not in any

**TABLE 4. Estimates relating to the extent of contraband tobacco
in Catalonia**

Decade	Pounds of Tobacco Annual Average	Population Total	Amount Consumed Per capita	Amount Consumed Hypothesis	Contraband Hypothesis	Contraband %
1731-39	119,550	595,624	0.20	119,550	0	0.0
1740-49	105,747	647,787	0.16	130,020	24,273	18.7
1750-59	125,800	693,966	0.18	139,289	13,488	9.7
1760-69	119,498	755,452	0.16	151,630	32,131	21.2
1770-79	146,526	808,966	0.18	162,371	15,844	9.8
1780-89	115,324	877,797	0.13	176,186	60,862	34.5
1790-99	97,604	928,193	0.11	186,301	88,697	47.6

Source: AGS, DGR, l. lg. 2405.

⁵⁸ R. Torres Sánchez, "Capitalismo internacional y política estatal...", *op.cit.*, p.437.

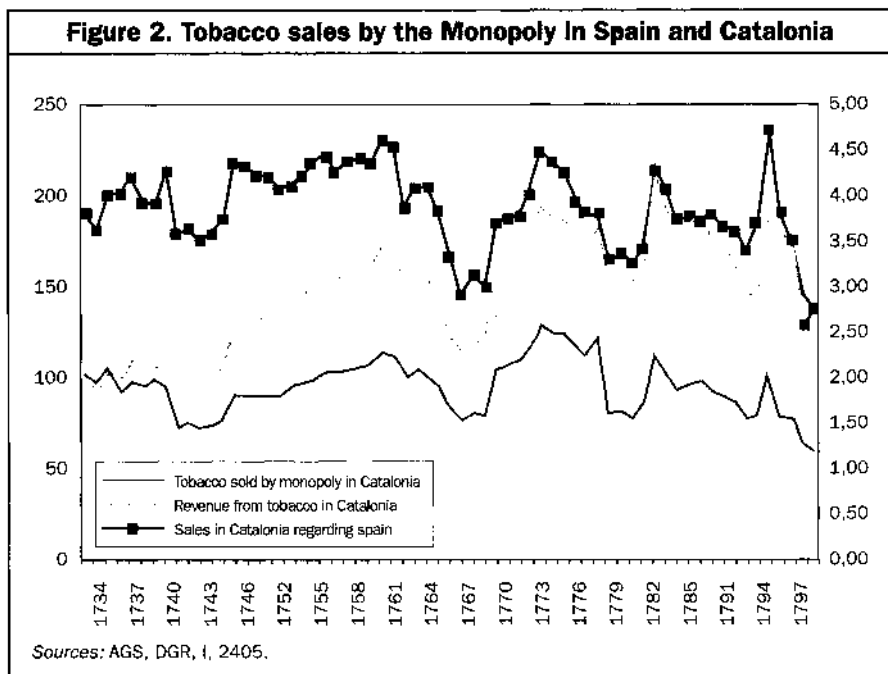
⁵⁹ W.A. Cole, "Trends in Eighteenth-Century Smuggling", *The Economic History Review*, 10, 3 (1958), p.395.

⁶⁰ R. C. Nash, "The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades ...", *op.cit.*, p.364.

uniform manner, as there were recessions in the 1750s and 1770s. The black market was hugely successful at the end of the eighteenth century, when nearly half the tobacco consumed in Catalonia was purchased from sources that were not part of the Monopoly.

Conclusions about the growing success of this alternative market are to be found in the abundant information about the Monopoly's war against contraband. This information is principally qualitative, and biased towards the protagonists and the objectives of the Monopoly, but it is nonetheless useful in understanding the organisation and operations of this alternative market.

Towards the end of 1731, the Treasury Secretary, José Patiño, wrote to the heads of the Monopoly demanding to know why the value of the Catalan *Renta del Tabaco* was falling, apparently unaffected by the efforts of the Monopoly. The *Renta* officials were also surprised that "although important steps had been taken by land and by sea...there were no results as far as improving the values of the *Renta del Tabaco* were concerned"⁶¹. The Crown



⁶¹ Seville, 27-12-1731. AGS, SSH, I, 1767.

was worried about this limitation of the Tobacco Monopoly in Catalonia because its revenues were necessary for the wages of the troops stationed in Catalonia, who set out thence for Italy – for this reason Madrid had a special interest in the income from the Tobacco Monopoly in Catalonia.

In the following years, various reports were sent to Seville and Madrid⁶² pointing out the difficulties that the Monopoly was having in extending consumption of tobacco among the Catalans, which seemed absurd considering the number of troops present in the region, the enormous population and the “well-known consumption of tobacco.” These reports to Seville and Madrid both concluded that the main reason their task was so difficult was because the Catalans could easily find alternative suppliers, which were obviously illegal. From the Monopoly’s point of view, there were several reasons why contraband existed, but it was felt that the Catalan authorities were serving as accomplices to the contrabandists: “fraud continues in Catalonia, those principally responsible being the very Catalan authorities who, because of greed or dislike of the Spanish, decide to help them”. In actual fact, they allowed the cultivation of tobacco in Catalonia, which seemed to be somewhat extensive, even though expressly prohibited by the government: “the sowing of tobacco is so extensive that it threatens to ruin the *Renta*”⁶³; and they also covered for the contrabandists, among whom were to be found Catalan agents and merchants: “the mayor lives with the contrabandists and the ecclesiastics clothe and protect them”⁶⁴. On a more secondary, but nonetheless important, level, the Monopoly officials also alluded to the difference in prices as being the reason for the contraband problem: “the elevated cost of tobacco, all priced the same, contributes in no small way to the declining consumption”⁶⁵.

During the first phase - the decade from 1730 to 1740 - the illegal market grew very notably, and the main reasons for this point to the complicity of Catalan society. In the following periods, with the greater

⁶² Marqués de Risbourg, Barcelona 8-12-1733, Antonio Sartine, Barcelona 22-10-1734, Jacobo Flon to the Marques of Torrenueva Madrid 2-3-1737. AGS, SSH, lg. 1767.

⁶³ Directores Rentas Generales, Madrid 6-10-1734. AGS, SSH, lg. 1767.

⁶⁴ It is considered that the authorities’ implication in the contraband efforts were a means of protest against the Bourbon monarchy – E. Martín Corrales, “El contrabando en el litoral catalán durante el reinado de Carlos III”, *Pedralbes*, pp.485-494.

⁶⁵ AGS, SSH, lg. 1767, Martín Jose de Bustamante a Campillo, Barcelona 13-8-1742.

presence of the Monopoly in Catalonia, there was a significant change in the arguments used by the *Renta* officials to explain the illegal market. They began to insist that it was caused by foreign forces, pointing to the increasingly active contraband trading of international tobacco in Catalonia, and the focus was thus shifted to both land and sea borders.

From the end of the 1740s until the end of the 1750s there was a significant drop in news about contraband in Catalonia. In this period there was very little correspondence between Barcelona and Madrid regarding the tobacco issue and at the same time legal tobacco sales rose, surpassing even the national average. This was indeed the Monopoly's "golden age" in Catalonia, and it soon ended, giving way to a profound transformation of the tobacco trade. In the following decade, the 1760s, the Catalan *estancos* lost 40% of their previous sales, the loss being related particularly to smoked tobacco, and reports concerning the rise of contraband movements resurfaced. This new resurgence, which does not coincide with a change in Monopoly prices, may be related to the changes in the French Monopoly. The financial problems of the French crown led to the sale of offices in the tobacco monopoly, which had been prohibited since 1694. As Price pointed out, "anyone who bought such an office intended to make more than the normal profits out of it by fraud". Furthermore, in 1751 a refinery was established in the French port of Cette, for tobacco imported from Chesapeake; "Cette became a fixture in the international tobacco trade, receiving ten or more British tobacco ships a year with two million and more pounds"⁶⁶. Henceforth, the problems relating to tobacco brought in from France became very serious.

The heavy presence of troops in Catalonia may have served as a catalyzing agent for contraband. As Larguier noted, the great demand from the troops stationed in Catalonia encouraged trading between Languedoc and Catalonia. The exportation of provisions and, above all, livestock, turned into an intense commercial flow which increased throughout the century with the growing demands for provisions from the people of Barcelona, thus providing an exclusive route for the shipping of contraband⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ J.M. Price, *op.cit.*, p. 366 and p. 419.

The increase in contraband prompted the military authorities in Barcelona and the Monopoly officials to send continuous reports to Madrid in which they alerted the capital about the existence of numerous tobacco warehouses along the French coast. The most important ones were in Bañuls, which was called the "tobacco fair", where Catalan ships took tobacco from Genoa, frequently under the names of French merchants. Here the Roussillon merchants' support of the contraband is clearly evident, so much so that contraband actually became the principal source of income for that region, which was known by the French authorities as the "contraband republic"⁶⁸.

At various places throughout Roussillon, and particularly at the warehouses in Bañuls, the tobacco was sold to the Catalan contrabandists who would then bring it into Catalonia on foot. The Spanish authorities suspected that the French agents and merchants were behind the warehouses. As the Intendant of Catalonia, Baron de la Linde, informed the Treasury Secretary, Miguél Múzquiz, the French Monopoly farmers-general were interested in the warehouses and the contraband as a means to raise the prices of the French Monopoly, and the strategy that they used was to keep all the outlets along the French border well supplied in order to attract Catalan contrabandists: "there is nothing more clever than the French tactic of stocking muslins and other such forbidden goods, as well as their finest tobaccos, in their towns nearest to our border, to serve as bait and as a continuous temptation for those who would think of introducing them"⁶⁹. Several attempts to close the warehouses by diplomatic means were made, and several agreements between France and Spain regarding contraband tobacco were signed, as was the case in 1765 and 1774⁷⁰, but with very few results. This was due in part, as one Spanish official commented, to the complicity of the French government itself, which allowed these dealings to take place: "as many years' experience has shown me, they (the French government and the

⁶⁸ G. Larguier, "Contrabande par terre et par mer en Roussillon 1715-1815", *op.cit.*, p. 62.

⁶⁹ G. Larguier, "Contrabande par terre et par mer en Roussillon 1715-1815", *op.cit.*, p.68.

⁷⁰ Barcelona, Linde a Muzquiz, 6-4-1779, AGS, SSH, lg.1769.

⁷⁰ M. Deformeaux, "La contrebande roussillonnaise et les accords commerciaux francoespagnols après le Pacte de Famille, 1761-1786", *Actes du 94e Congrès National des sociétés savantes*, (Paris 1963), p. 148.

Commander General of Rosellón) have attempted to stop the introduction of the goods in many ways, and they have never managed to do so, as these goods have instead been found in greater quantities, and therefore one should be alert and think only of defending one's home"⁷¹.

If it was impossible to stop the influx of illegal tobacco over the French border, it was even more difficult to stop the shipments from Genoa, which mostly ended up in the French warehouses⁷². Genoa's position as the main tobacco redistribution centre in the Mediterranean was based upon its ability to supply several Italian tobacco monopolies, most importantly that of Naples, and on its sales of, not only tobacco, but also English textiles, arriving from the markets in Lisbon and Amsterdam, mainly by way of Jewish merchant houses. The Catalans had always had close trade relations with Genoa, and tobacco was an opportunity they could not afford to lose. Genoa is constantly cited as the origin of contraband tobacco in Catalonia in the eighteenth century, but these references are particularly frequent after 1760. According to the Spanish consuls in the ports of the Gulf of Lyon, trading in contraband tobacco from Genoa was much busier in the last third of the eighteenth century⁷³.

From these reports it can be concluded that there were some changes in the methods used. Until the 1760s contraband came from large English, French and Genoese ships that passed along the French coast on their way to Genoa or Cette: small boats were sent to unload shipments on the French and, to a lesser degree, Catalan coasts. Later, the most frequently used method was for Catalan ships to sail directly to Genoa to pick up the shipments, and then bring them into Catalonia via the French or the Catalan coast. In this second phase, the role of the Catalan ships is marked: "only Catalan ships and Genoese ports practise this illicit commerce, as no French take part, and few British"⁷⁴. These Catalan ships worked alone, or in collaboration with the merchants of Bañuls, Collioure and Port Vendre, who would later purchase most of the tobacco. The

⁷¹ Figueras, Manuel Thomas Diaz a Barón de Linde, 11-12-1785, AGS, SSH, lg. 1772.

⁷² Correspondence of the Consul to Genoa, regarding tobacco issues, 1770-1779 en AGS, DGR, II, lg. 4692.

⁷³ Consul to Marseilles: José de Uriondo, Consul to Cette: Antonio Marqués, Consul to Marseilles: Juan de la Rosa, AGS, SSH, lg. 1769

⁷⁴ Barón de Linde a Miguel de Múzquiz, Barcelona, 26-6-1779, AGS, SSH, 1769.

reasons why Catalan ships managed to obtain licences from the Spanish authorities to travel to the Italian coast were varied. The most common were their claims to be transporting wine, and indeed the greatest activity was reported "after the fermentation of the grapes, when they travelled to Genoa to obtain wine and return with hidden tobacco". Similarly, Catalan fishing ships, called *corredoras* (runners), would go along the coast towards Sicily, collecting coral⁷⁵. The coral served to pick up tobacco in the ports, as it was an excellent means of payment. In Genoa there was a big demand for coral, mainly from English merchants who used it for their trade with India⁷⁶. Another means of payment used by these fishing boats was to invest their fishing salaries, mainly in pounds, for the purchase of contraband goods, thus offsetting the 5% or 6% loss in the exchange rate⁷⁷.

Tobacco competition was not only concerned with price: quality was also a factor. This was foreseeable for, as we recall, it was the particular strength of the Spanish Monopoly. Tobacco sent from Genoa was of a quality that surprised the Spanish authorities whenever they discovered a shipment: "that from Brazil and from Genoa was of the same quality as that sold in the name of His Highness..."⁷⁸. Moreover, a constant complaint of the Spanish authorities was that, when compared to contraband tobacco, the tobacco sold in the Catalan *estancos* was of "a poor quality"⁷⁹.

In the last third of the eighteenth century the issue of contraband tobacco became complicated when it began to pose problems of law and order⁸⁰. Those responsible for protecting the Monopoly began to be crushed by the presence of large gangs of smugglers; "it is true that the

⁷⁵ Castañosa a Muzquiz, Barcelona 11-8-1773, AGS, SSH, 1768.

⁷⁶ G. Yogeve, *Diamonds and Coral. Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth Century Trade*, (Leicester 1978), p.17.

⁷⁷ Antonio Marqués a Baron de la Linde, Cete 26-8-1779, AGS, SSH, 1769.

⁷⁸ Baron de la Linde a Miguel Muzquiz, Barcelona, 30-12-1777, AGS, SSH, 1769. Perez Vidal, referring to powder tobacco, quotes a reference to the manufacture of tobacco in Civita Vecchia "in the Spanish style", J. Pérez Vidal, *España en la Historia del Tabaco*, (Madrid 1959), p.76.

⁷⁹ Baron de la Linde a Miguel Muzquiz, Barcelona, 6-4-1779, AGS, SSH, 1769.

⁸⁰ F. J. Vicente Alguero, 'La política de orden público en Cataluña en los años centrales del siglo XVIII', *Pedralbes. Revista d'Història Moderna*, 10 (1990), p.250.

tobacco contrabandists have truly become embedded in Catalonia”⁸¹ Some were like armies, which marched past customs posts without being arrested⁸². What initially had probably been collaboration between the people and the local authorities had turned into a serious issue of law and order. It is very significant that part of Catalan society offered to collaborate actively to eliminate what Francisco de Novell, Deputy of the Kingdom on behalf of the nobility of Catalonia and Majorca, called the “faeces of the Principality”. The Catalan nobility saw the opportunity to commend itself to the Crown in what was not only a matter of notable importance to the Royal Treasury, but also an issue of public safety, and so offered to solve the smuggling problems “privately”. Gabriel Garriga, on behalf of the Guilds and the Barcelona Trading Associations, also offered to “exterminate these enemies of the nation”⁸³.

In the face of such heated public debate, Madrid’s response could not have been more significant: “let the administrations and *estancos* be well stocked with tobacco of quality and which is popular with consumers, as this will help to improve the Monopoly’s income”. At the same time it ordered the military occupation of the border⁸⁴. In 1761, on the orders of the Marqués de la Mina, Captain General of Catalonia, three infantry companies were sent to guard the border. In 1770 the Guadalajara Regiment was sent to the area. In 1772 the Count of Ricla proposed creating a permanent force of four battalions, but the high maintenance costs involved dissuaded him from following through his proposals. In 1778 the infantry battalions of Valls, with some 400 men, were mobilised and sent to help defend the Tobacco Monopoly’s interests. Moreover, special care was taken to make sure that the military, judicial, and municipal authorities cooperated and coordinated the war against contraband⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Barcelona, 20-11-1772, AGS, SSH, lg. 1768.

⁸² “ a group of 234 and well armed passed through...a few days later a group of 155 contrabandists passed through... Juan de Garro a Muzquiz, Rosas, 20-6-1772. AGS, SSH, lg.1769.

⁸³ Barcelona, 16-6-1770, AGS, SSH, lg.1768.

⁸⁴ Marqués de la Corona a Miguel Muzquiz, Madrid, 14-2-1772, AGS, SSH, lg.1768.

⁸⁵ The coordination instructions, and notably the instructions of the “Escuadras de los Mozos del Bayle de Valls”, 1779, AGS, SSH, lg.1769.

The military occupation of the border yielded significant results: from 1770 to 1779 the Monopoly's sales in Catalan *estancos* increased rapidly, by nearly 50%, reaching the highest sales level in the century. Notably, Brazilian tobacco, which until then had been dropping progressively, suddenly reversed its downward trend and grew until it accounted for 26.4% of all the tobacco sold in Catalan *estancos*.

Such large-scale military occupation of the border was impossible to sustain for long. The cost was prohibitive. In 1772 the Catalan *Renta del Tabaco* began to record the expenses incurred. That same year 8.36% of all the Monopoly's income was used to pay military expenses, and the cost increased. In 1780 it reached 13.34% of the income, and by the end of the century it accounted for 16.02%, and this was probably just the tip of the iceberg: expenditure was spiralling out of control⁸⁶. Meanwhile, there was the other issue regarding the cost of the American War of Independence⁸⁷. Unlike other conflicts, where war froze trade and the military took control of traffic and enabled domestic consumption to rise, during this war tobacco consumption dropped once again. The French border was again responsible. The Spanish government withdrew its troops from the French border in order to station them on its many fronts during the American war, and particularly to prevent the invasion of Minorca. With the sudden relaxing of security at the border, the situation quickly returned to its 1760 conditions: once again the Monopoly lost consumers and, in fact, the war years caused a big slump in tobacco sales in the Catalan *estancos*.

After the war, the battle against contraband was even more complicated. The rise in the price of tobacco in Spain had only served to increase the difference in price of tobacco from France and, above all, from Genoa, providing the stimulus for the illicit trade to continue. As if this were not enough, tobacco contraband actually grew stronger with the rise of silver smuggling. The same smugglers that brought *duros*, silver coin, on their outward journeys, brought tobacco on their return voyages. The Spanish

⁸⁶ AGS, DGR, I, 2403 y II, 4626.

⁸⁷ J. G Gigot, 'Banyuls-sur-Mer et la contrebande du tabac (1780)', *Cerca*, 34, (1964) p. 247 and M. Deforneaux, 'Le contrebande du tabac en Roussillon dans le seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle', *Annales du Midi*, 82, (1970), p. 171.

authorities reported to Madrid in 1783 that Catalan smugglers were going with silver to buy tobacco in Bañuís. The Catalans were not alone in this trading. Frequently they were reported to be associated with French merchants, who the authorities call “smuggler foremen” because “they help them, giving them provisions and other aid”⁸⁸. In some cases, as the Spanish Consul to Collioure reported, these associations came to the point in which “the greatest smugglers that were ever known in these parts, be they involved in the tobacco and silver contraband from Catalonia to France” were partners with the director of the banking house of Perpignan that, in its own right, was connected to the banking houses of Paris⁸⁹.

The contraband activities of the French Farmers-General on the Catalonian border also intensified and contributed to the continuing of the tobacco smuggling. They were under pressure from the French Crown during the 1780s, as it had reduced its permits to the French royal tobacco and salt monopolies, and had raised its tobacco supply fees⁹⁰. Thus the temptation to continue smuggling with Catalonia was even greater. In 1785 the Spanish authorities discovered that not only had the number of tobacco warehouses along the French border multiplied, but that similar warehouses were also being established all across Rosellón, and even in Sardinia, where there were important Brazilian tobacco deposits that were obliged to sell “to none other than the Spanish, giving comfort to the buyers who wished to travel safely throughout Rosellón”⁹¹. The prices in these deposits were, on average, about 10 reales (rs) per pound, and the Spanish *estancos* would sell them for 40rs, although there were some notable differences according to the type of tobacco being sold: “snuff at three pesetas (12 reales) and Brazilian tobacco at 2 (8 rs)”⁹².

⁸⁸ Conde Gausa a Felix Oneille, Madrid, 3-9-1783, AGS, SSH, lg. 1771.

⁸⁹ Collioure, 30-1-1785, Narciso Montaner y Badía a Conde de Gausa. AGS, SSH. lg.1772. One of the banking houses which benefited most from this transfer to Paris, and also from its connections with the silver and tobacco contraband, even with some Catalan partners, was that of Greffulhe Montz, G. Antonetti, *Une maison de banque à Paris au XVIIIe siècle, Greffulhe Montz et Cie, 1789-1793*, (Cujas 1963).

⁹⁰ M. Vigie, *L'Herbe à Nicot: Amateurs de Tabac, Fermiers Généraux et Contrebandiers sous l'Ancien Régime*, (Paris 1989), p. 3; J. M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674- 1791*, (Michigan 1973), I, p.372.

⁹¹ Baron de Linde, 20-10-1785, AGS, SSH. lg.1772.

⁹² Baron de Linde to the Count of Lerena, Barcelona 15-11-1785. AGS, SSH. lg. 1772.

Not only did these warehouses continue to operate, but they actually increased in number when Spain, unable to solve the issue by diplomatic manoeuvres, secretly authorised the establishing of salt warehouses along the Spanish border in order to sell exclusively to French smugglers. The rise in salt prices in France and the direct attack that this brought to the French Monopoly sparked a warehouse war. The Intendant of Barcelona, being well aware of the superiority of Spanish salt, ordered his men to "make greater quantities of Spanish salt available in the warehouses on our side of the border: we shall make a deal to suppress them when the French complain, fearful of the effects that the superiority and affordability of the Spanish salt might have upon their incomes"⁹³. The result of this trade battle between monopolies was that the *Renta del Tabaco* continued to sell less and less tobacco in Catalonia. The fall was already inevitable and, significantly, it stopped only during the war with France in 1794 – the only two years in which the Monopoly was able to raise tobacco sales in a proportion superior to that of the rest of Spain.

9. Conclusions

The introduction of the Spanish Tobacco Tax Monopoly in Catalonia offered high consumer potential and theoretical support for the expansion strategies of the Monopoly, but when put into practice the reality of the situation was quite different. Although the *Renta del Tabaco* aspired to create a perfect monopoly and thus sought to control all aspects of the tobacco trade, from production to sales, it nonetheless failed to keep the market closed. The tobacco interests Catalonia had before the Monopoly was introduced continued to exist, and served to exploit the weak points of the Monopoly. The Spanish Monopoly had to face a flexible, well-structured illegal market sustained by Catalan merchants and by international trade and, ironically, supported by the French Tobacco Monopoly. The Monopoly's expansion policy, with its supplying quality tobacco and uniform prices, actually helped to worsen the situation. The result of this war between the two markets was that throughout the

⁹³ Baron de Linde to the Count of Lerena, Barcelona 16-11-1785. AGS, SSH. Ig. 1772.

Eighteenth Century the Monopoly lost its market of Catalan smokers, and had to be satisfied with the demand for snuff (which was limited to a few cities), while having to tackle an active contraband movement that spread from Catalonia towards the rest of the country under the Spanish Monopoly.

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