

## ***Naples: a Maritime Port***

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In ancient times the port of Naples had practically never existed. It was little more than a fishing village. Even in Roman times, the ports of Miseno, Baia and above all Puteoli (Pozzuoli), in the nearby bay of Puteoli, were the main places for embarking and landing goods and passengers.<sup>1</sup> And when Puteoli did decline, this was not on account of the rivalry from the ports of Miseno, Baia or Naples, but because of the development of the port of Ostia.<sup>2</sup>

The port of Naples was a medieval invention. It began to emerge, alongside Amalfi and Gaeta, at the time of the Byzantine duchies in the ninth century. Yet even then it was Amalfi and Gaeta which plied the seas of the Eastern Mediterranean with their boats and crews, carrying to the West the products purchased on the shores of Asia Minor and Egypt, in the Far East and the Byzantine Empire, and from the first Arab caliphates which were being established in the Middle East. Naples was more of a commercial centre than a maritime centre. Its inhabitants were not even involved in the coastal trade which went on up and down the coasts of Campania, Lucania and Calabria. Coastal trade had been taken over by the Salerno sea-faring population who purchased local products and traded them with other goods procured elsewhere or in Naples.

<sup>1</sup> M. Del Treppo, *La marina napoletana nel Medioevo: porti, navi, equipaggi*, in A Fratta (a cura di), *La fabbrica delle navi. Storia della cantieristica nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, Electa (Napoli, 1990), p.30.

<sup>2</sup> A. Stazio, *L'antichità*, *ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>3</sup> G. Pardi, *Napoli attraverso i secoli. Disegno di storia economica e demografica*, Società editrice Dante Alighieri (Milano-Roma-Napoli, 1924), p.34.

This situation persisted into the twelfth century and for the greatest part of the thirteenth century. The real story of the port of Naples began when the city became the capital of the southern Kingdom in the second half of the thirteenth century, with its 30-35 thousand inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> The Angevins settled there after being forced to leave Sicily and quickly enlarged the port facilities and the area comprising the Arsenal and the dockyard, with the construction of stone buildings which in some places were fitted with high towers for defence.

Within a few years the arsenal increased its capacity for repairing and building ships, from 8 galleys at the time of Frederick II to 24 galleys in 1334. Three years later it was able to repair and build 60 galleys, even overtaking Venice in this sector. There was nothing new about this achievement, for ever since Norman times the Kingdom, which was thinly populated and covered by woodland, had been able to fit out a fleet containing between 120 and 160 war and merchant vessels.

With the Angevins, the number of ships in the bay and port of Naples increased more and more. The war fleet grew in number from 45 to as many as 70 large galleys, which the King had built at his expense. The barons and earls were then obliged to fit them out<sup>4</sup>. With the Angevins the number of ships in the bay of Naples increased. The war fleet rose from 45 to as many as 70 galleys in some years, which the King built at his own expense while obliging the counts and barons in the Kingdom to fit them out.<sup>5</sup> These were galleys which were active only in spring and in summer, that is, for no more than 4 to 5 months a year, since navigation and war were at that time dictated by climatic conditions. However, apart from the building of large galleys for the purposes of war, the Angevins also built ships for trading, which they engaged in on their own account, earning for themselves a reputation as "the foremost tradesmen in the Kingdom"<sup>6</sup>. Such activity had become a necessity owing to the enormous expenditure incurred in the country's administration. So that both the

<sup>4</sup> Ivi, I. Schiappoli, *Napoli aragonese: traffici e attività marinare*, Prefazione di E. Pontieri, Giannini, (Napoli, 1972), p.7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> L. De Rosa, *Attività e strutture commerciali e finanziarie* in G. Galasso-R. Romeo (a cura di), *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, Edizioni del Sole, (Napoli, 1991), vol. VIII, p. 307.

military and the merchant marine could be centred in the capital's port, Charles II of Anjou had had a wharf built, which afterwards became known as the big wharf to distinguish it from the smaller one already in existence, known as the Angevin wharf. The construction of the wharf, which was begun in 1301, took some years. In 1334, Charles' successor, Robert of Anjou, had the old dock enlarged and a new arsenal built, adding to the one already existing, called the arsenal of the Sicilians. The new arsenal had a capacity for 50 galleys other than for those under construction or in the process of being fitted out. It was built on the city's southern shore, near to the Church of the *Carminè* and had "around thirty roofings for one or two galleys and [had] defence turrets". The 1343 earthquake caused severe damage to the port's buildings as well as causing several ships to sink. However in 1383 and 1384 both the arsenal and the pier were rebuilt.<sup>7</sup>

The growth of the port of Naples and the impetus given to ship-building and to the military and mercantile marine led to a radical change in political strategy. There was a gradual shift in the Kingdom's and port's activity away from the Greek-Byzantine-Islamic sphere of influence, which was beginning to diminish in importance in South Italy – as it passed into the hands of the Genoese and Venetians – towards the western sphere, that is, towards the French-Provençal-Italian sphere of influence and later towards Catalonia and Aragon.<sup>8</sup> This shift in focus was highlighted by the presence of foreign merchants and artisans who were not all Neapolitan and who occupied the streets converging onto the port. It was thus possible to distinguish between the *rue catalana*, *toscana*, *francesa*, *scalesia*, *la loggia dei genovesi*, *dei pisani*, *la via dei fiorentini* and above all the *via degli orefici*, *armieri*, *spadari*, *lanzieri*, *giubbonari*, *azzimatori*, *barrettari*, *calzettari*, *taffettanari*, *scoppettieri*, *zabbateria*, *selleria*, *specieria*, *conciarìa*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Schiappoli, *op. cit.*, pp.33-34.

<sup>8</sup> Del Treppo, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> M. Del Treppo, "Stranieri nel Regno di Napoli. Le élites finanziarie e la strutturazione dello spazio economico e politico" in G Rossetti (a cura di), *Dentro la città. Stranieri e realtà urbane nell'Europa dei secoli XII-XVI*, 2<sup>a</sup> edizione, Gijem-Liguori (Pisa-Napoli, 1999), pp.196-197, 211 ff.

The new shipping routes, however, were not run by mostly Neapolitan vessels. Very few ship's masters resided in the city. As for the ships fitted out on the shores of the bay, especially along the Sorrentine coast, these were largely used for costal trading. Yet not even coastal traffic, which mobilised "considerable human energy and small but widespread amounts of capital", was the exclusive domain of the city's and Kingdom's shipping and population. Coastal trading was also carried on by vessels owned by feudatories and especially by Catalan ships on the Calabrian coast and by Ragusans on the Apulian coast.

The interest in shipping and trade and in the port of Naples, which had declined in the last few years of Angevin rule, when the military and mercantile fleets had been reduced in size and in efficiency, began to revive in 1441 with the accession of the Aragonese to the throne, whose fleets had long plied the waters of the Southern seas, as we have already mentioned. Already in 1442 the new King, Alphonse the Magnificent, ordered adequate funds to be allocated for the building of a large number of galleys. The building of other galleys was financed in subsequent years. Similar attention was paid to the pier and arsenal. From 1451 to 1455 large sums were allocated to consolidate the main pier and to build the salt customs house, while from 1456 to 1458 work was done to improve the small pier too. The big pier continued to be enlarged in the last few decades of the fifteenth century with the building of two decks, one small and one large for the launching of ships. At the same time, the designing of a "new hall" led to the further expansion of the large arsenal.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the galleys that he had built for royal purposes, King Alphonse also encouraged private citizens to promote shipbuilding through fiscal incentives, including vessels that were larger than those usually designed by the Kingdom's shipowners. There were two reasons for this. The first was that in the event of enemy attack, Neapolitan ships were obliged to side with Catalan vessels which were large in size and used to sailing on the big Mediterranean routes. The second was that King Alphonse set out to free the Kingdom's trade from the control of

<sup>10</sup> Schiappoli, *op.cit.*, pp.34-37.

Florentine intermediaries, who had had a large influence on the Neapolitan economy during Angevin rule.

For this purpose, the Royal Fleet was also engaged largely in commercial activity, despite the Turkish threat which had arisen after the conquest of Constantinople (1453) and following the skirmishes along the Calabrian and Apulian coasts, culminating in the conquest of Otranto (1480-1481). The death of King Alphonse and the accession of his son Ferrante to the throne did not lead to a change in Aragonese navy policy. King Ferrante also encouraged all those who turned to "the seas to seek their fortunes:"<sup>11</sup>

Despite this effort, the Aragonese did not succeed in bridging the gap that separated the Neapolitan military and merchant navies from those of the Genoese and Venetians. Both in relation to the size of ships and the routes they operated on, the divergence continued and hardly seemed likely in the short term to be overcome.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless this inferiority did not hamper the growth of a significant volume of trade between Naples and Catalonia. Barcelona, Valencia and other ports continually received Neapolitan shipping just as Catalan vessels, in an even larger number, docked in Neapolitan and other southern ports. Adriatic routes also converged on Naples. Ships of different nationalities kept alive trading relations between the port of Naples and the shores of Sicily, Albania, Tunisia and Alessandria in Egypt. Most of them carried the Genoese or Venetian flag and transported an increasing variety of luxury goods. In the Renaissance the Aragonese did not behave any differently from other sovereigns who had ruled over Italian States in that period. They did not shun the luxury which characterised Court life at the time, based on gatherings, festivities, balls and sumptuous ceremonies which helped to increase the consumption of luxury items, items that had to be imported, even though King Ferrante had especially sought to encourage the development of manufacturing, above all textiles (woollen and silk products) and printing.

Neapolitan ships and merchants also engaged in this import trade. The most renowned name was that of Francesco Coppola who traded

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.30-33.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

in cloth as well as in grain and iron.<sup>15</sup> Coppola possessed a fleet with ships of varying size, including some very large vessels, to the extent that to one contemporary his fleet appeared to be even larger than the King's own fleet<sup>16</sup> with which Coppola frequently had common business interests. In fact the King had ennobled him, conferring upon him the title of Count of Sarno. In the end, however, Coppola became implicated in the Conspiracy of the Barons in 1486 and was sentenced to death while his fleet was confiscated by the King.

What cargoes did the foreign and Neapolitan ships carry? Corn, wine, agricultural products and raw materials were the main items of trade between the port of Naples and other states in Italy and elsewhere. Cereals were the main foodstuff sought by African and Asian countries, from which silk, precious stones and spices were imported. Tunisia, for example exported horses, wool, spice and sugar in large quantities. However, it has been shown that from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century the number of shipping routes operating fell. In the fourteenth century the Kingdom of Naples exported a range of products to Constantinople and to the ports on the Black Sea. Such exportation stopped after the Turkish conquest of Constantinople and Caffa. Moreover, the Turkish military victories encouraged the Barbary pirates in North Africa, who became more aggressive and made Mediterranean trade more difficult. Despite this, the Kingdom and port of Naples in particular, continued to foster trade relations with Egypt, Albania and albeit in a sporadic way with Tunisia. Schiappoli points out that one of the two shipping routes of the Florentine galleys bound for Barbary passed through Gaeta first and then through Naples, before going on to North Africa, while the same ship bound for Egypt stopped off at Gaeta and Naples other than at Talamone.

We have said that the Aragonese were especially interested in the conditions and operations of the port of Naples, a port which, as a Florentine noted at the end of the fifteenth century, was "convenient for the Levant, Africa and the West, almost situated in the middle of those places, so that manufactures from such parts and goods are shipped

<sup>15</sup> Schiappoli, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>16</sup> Del Treppo, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

there".<sup>15</sup> The Aragonese had disciplined the port's traffic by the *Institutiones rei nauticae*, a kind of maritime code, and had connected Naples to Barcelona in a stable way, by promoting trade in each other's products. The expansion in trade was soon reflected in the city's Customs. The Naples' Customs Authority was now the most important in the Kingdom, first and foremost on account of the size of the territory under its control. It had jurisdiction not only over the Campania region, that is, over the province of Terra di Lavoro, the two Principati and Benevento and over Naples and the islands (Capri, Ischia, Procida and Nisida) but also over the vast territory of Abruzzo which included towns like Teramo, l'Aquila, Lanciano, Ortona and Chieti, *caricatoio del Fortore*, one of the main points for grain export, and in addition the Kingdom's main fairs, those of Foggia, Aversa, Lanciano and Salerno.<sup>16</sup> Considering that the *fundicus major* - which governed the minor warehouses operating in the Kingdom's two other Customs Authorities, those of the Calabrian provinces and Apulia- was annexed to the Naples' Customs, we have an idea not only of the size of the port but also the conspicuous movement of goods both incoming and outgoing which was carried on there. Naturally, the goods entering the *fundicus* had to correspond to an *ius fondaci*. And we should add that the fervour of industrial (wool, silk, paper manufacture and printing), maritime and commercial activity which the Aragonese had generated in the Kingdom's economy had attracted not only foreign financiers with their large sums of capital, but also "foreign artisans and and foreign craftsmen with specific skills and technical and operative methods." Neapolitans, Catalans, Spaniards, Genoans, Ragusans, Milanese, Bolognese, and Florentines encountered one another not only in the woollen trade but in other trades and especially those related to the port and to maritime business.<sup>17</sup>

From the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth

<sup>15</sup> P.O. Kristeller, "An Unpublished Description of Naples by Francesco Bandini, in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, (Roma, 1956), pp.407-408.

<sup>16</sup> L. De Rosa, *Studi sugli Arrendamenti del Regno di Napoli*, l'Arte tipografica, (Napoli, 1958), pp5 et seq.

<sup>17</sup> Del Treppo, *Stranieri nel Regno di Napoli... op. cit.* p.221.

century neither the city nor the port emerged unscathed by the clashes with Charles VIII's army. When Charles VIII was about to enter the city, the arsenal, for example, was set alight together with all the rigging, equipment and ships under construction. The Spanish Vice-regal government which established itself in Naples after Charles VIII's retreat, found that both the walls that defended the city from possible sieges from the surrounding countryside and those that protected it from attacks from the sea appeared "abandoned and in ruins". Therefore, the first measures adopted by the government were to restore most of the walls and especially those overlooking the sea. No less important were the works undertaken to repair the port itself. The Viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo (1532-1553) took special care over the enlargement and improvement of the piers and seabed. He also showed great interest in the Arsenal which was not only rapidly rebuilt to double its former size in order to increase its capacity for constructing more galleys, but was also brought within the city's fortified walls, inclusive of turrets and bulwarks. The foundry was restored; protective arcades were built along with sentry boxes.

The number of war-ships arriving in the port rose yearly so that by the mid-sixteenth century there were 30 galleys and 10 large galleons in the port.<sup>18</sup> These were not just Spanish or Neapolitan ships. At the end of the sixteenth century, for example, seven Ragusan ships were stationed in the port and a further eight were expected to arrive from Ragusa, Genoa, Taranto and Gallipoli, all in the King of Spain's pay and all very large in size so that four of five would have been sufficient to transport 2000 infantry.<sup>19</sup> In May 1634 "the arrival of vessels" from Genoa was expected in the port, while in the Naples arsenal "a large galleon" was under construction and another had been "bought by the Vice-Roy for 27 thousand ducats"; to these were to be added four more ships of Ragusan construction.<sup>20</sup> This increase in the size of the fleet was in response to the

<sup>18</sup> L. De Rosa, "Tra i fulgori e le ombre del viceregno" in Fratta, *La fabbrica delle navi...* *op. cit.*, p.47.

<sup>19</sup> A. Barzari, (ed.), *Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane da Napoli, Dispacci*, vol. III (27 maggio 1597 - 2 novembre 1604), Poligrafico dello Stato-Istituto Italiano per gli studi filosofici, (Roma-Napoli, 1991) [hereafter *Dispacci*], p.54.

<sup>20</sup> *Dispacci*, vol VII, p.193.

growing Turkish threat in the Mediterranean, which had become especially evident along the Kingdom's coasts. Viceroy Don Pedro himself had been witness in 1552 to the threat from a powerful Turkish fleet, comprising 150 large galleys which were anchored just off Procida, the island in the bay of Naples, and were awaiting a favourable moment to attack the capital. The fleet finally withdrew after skirmishes with Genoese ships and after the payment of a large sum by the Viceroy. However, neither the withdrawal from the waters of the bay nor the battle of Lepanto in 1571 had lessened the danger of attacks from the Turkish fleet, and the threat of landings continued to loom, to which the frequent and sudden attempts at landing, plundering and abducting along the coast testified. In the sixteenth century alone there were 14 such attempts and the danger from corsairs continued to hang over navigation. There were not infrequent cases of ships being plundered by Algerians and Tunisians.<sup>21</sup>

As a result there was a need for a large and functioning Arsenal which was able to keep seaworthy an efficient fleet. This led to the building of a new, larger and well protected Arsenal which took years to complete.

The Neapolitan fleet based in the Naples Arsenal was made up of 14 galleys which never sailed for more than 8 months a year. In the remaining four months, the 3000 persons who had manned the vessels, populated the Arsenal and the dock-yard instead, where the galleys lay anchored. Many slaves were employed on the galleys alongside Spaniards and Neapolitans. A document of 1556 shows that each galley had to be manned by at least 164 men as rowers. Most of these were made up of slaves, natives of Bosnia, Tripoli, Istanbul, Salonico, Metelino, Anatolia, Indil, Biserta, Tunis, the Black Sea, Rumania, Medina, Negroponte and Tartaria.<sup>22</sup> We should point out that sailors and subjects of the Kingdom were in their turn taken as prisoners at sea or on land and ransoms had to be paid in order to free them. For this purpose public charity had set up a body called the *Redemptione dei captivi* which drew on legacies and donations to ransom those who fell into the hands of Turks and Algerians.

<sup>21</sup> *Dispacci*, vol.III, p.210; *idem*, vol.VII, p.127.

<sup>22</sup> [Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Sezione Militare], Conti delle galere, fasc. 155, years 1585-1589. On the capture of Barbary corsairs cf., *Dispacci*, vol III, pp. 192, 195, 234, 358; *idem*, vol VII, p. 127.

In addition to this throng of men of diverse origin, religion and nationality, there were those who worked in the shipyards, repairing the damage to the ships caused by sailing and storms, and by fighting with corsairs, pirates and enemy ships. Sometimes repairs had to be carried out on the ships lying at anchor in the port of Naples. In fact, the large port - there was also a little port for smaller ships - where big merchant ships and warships put in was particularly exposed to the force of the southerly winds, especially the *scirocco* (south-east wind) and the *libeccio* (south-west wind). It needed only normal sea-storms to damage the protective barriers and the paving of the quay. But infinitely greater damage was reported when the port was attacked by tempests. On 1 April 1597, for example, a tempest raged all night and part of the following day, causing the sea to engulf "all the ground" and dislodge many of the posts to which the ships' hawsers were fastened. This caused five galleys, three large ships and some other smaller vessels to sink<sup>23</sup>. The result was that the port fell into such a disastrous state that the Viceroy, Conte di Olivares, in office from November 1595, was forced to deal with the problem of building a new port. The project was prepared but could not be carried out for financial reasons. The great storm of 1595 was not an isolated event. Five years later, in 1600, the situation reoccurred, and was even worse. Heavy rain and a blustering wind lashed the island of Nisida, near Naples, where six ships sank. The storm then hit the port of Naples, where a further seven ships sank, as well as one at Vietri, near Salerno: they were "large ships of great value both in themselves and because of their cargo", while another 40 smaller ships, though not destroyed, were "greatly damaged" when they crashed against each other. The ships which were destroyed and sank included four from Ragusa and one from Naples with a cargo of corn, one belonging to the Vecchietti, Florentine merchants, with oars and naval equipment on her way to Spain, a galleon from Malta with goods from Genoa, and the Venetian ship *Bragadina*, with no cargo. More than 300 people drowned<sup>24</sup>. And, although not on such a large scale, similar disasters were seen again and again.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> D. Parrino, *Teatro eroico e politico de' Viceré del Regno di Napoli dal tempo di Ferdinando il Cattolico*, Gravier, (Naples, 1770), vol. I, p.260.

<sup>24</sup> *Dispacci*, vol. III, pp. 271-272.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vol III, pp. 349-350.

To avoid such disasters, the authorities tried to improve the access roads to the port and to provide purpose-built warehouses to store the corn and flour imported by sea. The Viceroy Count of Lemos (1610-1616) was responsible for further improvements, but, nevertheless, the port was far from safe and totally insufficient for the requirements of the city, whose population continued to increase, numbering almost 225,000 at the beginning of the seventeenth century, as against an estimated 125,000 at the beginning of the sixteenth century. There is no doubt that in 1607-1608, when there was a terrible shortage of wheat everywhere in Italy, including Naples, and cargoes of wheat were brought urgently to Naples, many of the transport ships seriously risked being wrecked because it was impossible for them to find shelter in the port<sup>26</sup>. Capaccio was probably not wrong in writing, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, that he knew of "nothing more necessary ... for this so famous city as [a] safe port"<sup>27</sup>. But, once again, the projects studied could not be carried out for lack of funds. And so, instead of going into the port, many ships coming in to Naples had to drop anchor at Baia, in the Bay of Pozzuoli, and wait until they could go into Naples to dock<sup>28</sup>.

As the years went by, the conditions of the port in Naples did not improve. In 1622 the port was still considered "not too good for nefs and galleys"<sup>29</sup>; and, indeed, the lack of maintenance then and later threatened to cause its silting up, until, during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631, the heavy fall of ash clogged the port completely. Since it was impossible for large shipping, especially galleys and nefs, to dock, the authorities were faced again with the problem of building a new port. However, because of the financial state of the Spanish Empire, involved in costly wars (the hardest phase of the Thirty Years War had begun) and in spite of the projects being ready, the idea had to be abandoned<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> G.C. Capaccio, "Napoli descritta nei principi del secolo XVIII", edited by B. Capasso, in *Archivio Storico per le province napoletane*, vol. VII (1882).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>28</sup> M. Sirago, "Attrezzature portuali e costruzioni navali in Napoli e nelle antiche province di Terra di Lavoro e di Principato citra durante il Vicereame spagnolo" in T. Fanfani (ed.), *La penisola italiana e il mare*. Costruzioni navali, trasporti e commercio tra XV e XX secolo, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, (Napoli, 1993), p.180.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

Meanwhile, because of the Kingdom's economic decline and because of the advantages that Livorno was reaping from having been made a free port<sup>31</sup>, a proposal to make Naples a free port too was gaining consensus. Indeed, a law of 1633 approved the institution of a free port in Naples.<sup>32</sup> However, the initiative was not successful. Conditioned by the demands of the contractors of export licences (or drafts), foreign merchants did not find the privileges agreed upon to their advantage, and they gradually abandoned the institution, greatly damaging the traders and the Naples Customs Authority whose rights were severely diminished because of the unsuccessful development of the free port.<sup>33</sup>

The port was not, however, without traffic. During the period of Spanish rule, Spanish galleys always put in there; sometimes they stayed for a few days between missions, and sometimes they stayed longer as during most of the winter or for the sails and the ship's equipment needing repair. At times galleons put in to port. Chroniclers of the time often recorded this traffic. But none of them mention a Neapolitan fleet. Although it built warships, the Kingdom of Naples did not have its own navy and the defence of its coasts - not always efficient - was the job of Spanish ships.

Although it did not excel in the number and tonnage of its own vessels and those of the Kingdom of Naples, the port of Naples played an important role in the country's trade, because not only the produce of the immediate hinterland but also that of the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic and Ionian countries was imported there. The port of Naples, since the sixteenth century, had been a consumer market for different goods and foodstuffs was an efficient base for exporting products to such countries as England, Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Flanders. In fact, it was used by ships and crews from Spain, England, Holland, Genoa and Venice.

<sup>31</sup> F. Braudel-R.Romano, *Nauvires et Marchandises à l'entrée du Port de Livourne (1547-1611)*, Librairie A. Colin, (Paris, 1951), pp. *et seq.*; cf also P. Scrosoppo, "Il porto di Livorno e gli inizi dell'attività inglese nel Mediterraneo," in *Bollettino storico Livornese*, 1937; *Idem Attività commerciale del porto di Livorno nella 1ª metà del secolo XVIII*, Ivi, 1934.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. A. Di Vittorio, "Porti e porto franco" in *Mitteilungen Osterreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 25, Band Wien, 1972, p. 259.

<sup>33</sup> L. De Rosa, *Studi sugli arrendamenti ecc...* *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61, nota 27.

The Genoese came to Naples to load cargoes of cereals, oil and silks; the English brought salted fish, tin, lead, iron, steel<sup>34</sup> and woollen cloth; the Dutch brought spices and went away with oil, cereals, pulses and silks; the Spaniards brought sugar and spices, and went away with silk and fabrics for their American colonies. With this traffic of warships, trading vessels and fishing boats, the port provided work for a variety of workers (fishermen, stevedores, coopers, carters, merchants, agents, storekeepers, insurers, moneychangers and salesmen<sup>35</sup>).

A port with so much traffic was inevitably prone to the risk of contagion, especially that of the plague. Until 1600, Naples had a lazaret outside the city walls, on dry land at San Gennaro, and it was there that suspected carriers of contagious diseases were taken and shut away<sup>36</sup>. But in 1601, the Viceroy wanted Naples to regain possession of the island of Nisida, which the city had sold to the Prince di Conca in 1593, in order to make it into the city's lazaret, in place of the existing one. Nisida was reacquired for 12,000 ducats, and a further 20,000 ducats were spent to erect the buildings where suspected carriers of contagious diseases would stay in quarantine<sup>37</sup>.

The *Deputazione della Salute* should be mentioned among the preventive measures: its task was to keep itself informed on the risks of plague and on the places where there was the possibility of a risk of infection. Once the information was gathered and its validity checked, the *Deputazione* adopted the measures it deemed effective to prevent contagion spreading. Generally orders went out to close the city gates and a certificate of immunity from contagion for the place the ship came from or for the traveller who arrived at the city gates was obligatory. Suspected cases had to go into quarantine on the island of Nisida: the suspected ship had to lie at anchor off Nisida and its cargo had to be placed in the sun. At the same time, two feluccas were equipped to search the sea in front of the Bays of Gaeta, Pozzuoli, Naples and Salerno in opposite directions,

<sup>34</sup> *Dispacci*, vol. VII, p. 532.

<sup>35</sup> L. De Rosa, *Introduzione a C. Celano, Notizie del bello, dell'antico e del curioso*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, (Napoli 1970), pp.XXXV.

<sup>36</sup> *Dispacci*, vol. III, pp. 350-351.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.389.

night and day, in an attempt to prevent people, whose state of health had not been ascertained, from landing. These measures had saved Naples from the plague on several occasions, at the end of the sixteenth century, in 1620 and in 1630. They did not have the same effect in 1656.

In fact, the plague of 1656 did not spare Naples: almost half the city's inhabitants died. However, in the second part of the seventeenth century the city began to recover, and by the end of the seventeenth century its population had grown again, and Naples had become the fourth largest city in Europe, after London, Paris and Constantinople. Since most trading took place by sea, the port of Naples still needed to be enlarged and to be provided with defence structures, even though at the end of the seventeenth century the Viceroy Marchese del Carpio had built better wharfs, quays, warehouses and a lighthouse. Moreover, as well as being the lung of the city in which it had always played an important role, the port continued to be the largest and most varied emporium in South Italy.

With the accession of the Austrians to the Naples throne in 1707 the project for a *porto franco* was taken up again. This time however policy makers seemed to favour Pozzuoli, which was not very far from Naples. Neapolitan commercial interests opposed the initiative and argued that it was much better to make Naples the *porto franco*, not Pozzuoli. In the end the conflict between the two parties led to the abandonment of the project<sup>38</sup>.

The Austrian government paid equal attention to the mercantile and military navy.<sup>39</sup> Already in 1714 on the request of the government, the Board of Trade (*Giunta di commercio*) had proposed financial incentives and privileges for citizens who built ships. But it went even further: in order to increase mercantile shipping, which had declined noticeably, it proposed that the Austrian viceregal government should build ships and then sell them to private citizens at a reasonable price. And, furthermore, it proposed that foreigners should be forbidden to transport goods from one port to another within the Kingdom of

<sup>38</sup> A. Di Vittorio, *Gli Austriaci e il Regno di Napoli 1701-1734*. Ideologia e politica di sviluppo, Giannini, (Napoli, 1973), pp.263-269.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.407.

Naples, as they often did. Despite some progress in this sense in the early seventeenth century, there were still a lot of foreign ships involved not only in international trade but also in coasting trade and in transit traffic, as in that to and from Sicily, to and from Morea and the East in general. English and Genoese vessels were the ones most often seen. However, there were also ships from Livorno, Malta, Venice, Sicily, Catalonia and France.

However, during the Austrian occupation, very little attention had been given to the port. And so, when Charles Bourbon arrived in Naples in 1734, the port appeared very neglected. This was all the more deplorable in that the population of the city had continued to increase: by now Naples had close on 300,000 inhabitants and, consequently, its demand for products had increased.

King Charles realised that the port had to be enlarged and consolidated: two years after his accession, he began the work which in a few years repaired and enlarged both the quays and the sea bed of the port of Naples<sup>40</sup>. He went even further: he legislated so that the port remained practicable by forbidding ship's masters, captains and sailors on any kind of vessel to throw overboard into port anything that could damage the sea bed. At the same time, he made provision for the enlargement and the modernisation of the navy. Faster ships were built, such as the xebecs, which were particularly useful in fighting the corsairs who infested the seas of the Kingdom of Naples, especially the coasts of Calabria and Sicily. The merchant navy was accorded incentives, especially fiscal incentives: it was in a sorry state, with few ships, lacking in equipment and with crews who often did not know even the most elementary rules of navigation.

The first stage was to put shipping under strict control to ascertain its state, setting up regulations for voyages, the number of sailors to be hired, life on board and relations with the authorities. Legislation on commercial traffic was drawn up. Captains, ships' masters and pilots were given better training, and those who did not offer professional guarantees were excluded. Lastly, an attempt was made to begin a policy of treaties to open markets

<sup>40</sup> L. De Rosa, "Navi, merci, nazionalità, itinerari in un porto dell'età preindustriale. Il porto di Napoli nel 1760" in *Studi sul Settecento Italiano*, Istituto Italiano per gli studi storici, (Napoli, 1968), p.337.

for southern Italian trade. And so the Kingdom of Naples subscribed to the treaty between France and the Hapsburg Empire (1739), and entered into treaties with the Turkish government (1740), the Tripoli Regency (1741), Sweden (1742), Denmark (1748) and Holland (1753)<sup>41</sup>.

Both the Kingdom of Naples' merchant navy and the port of Naples showed marked progress within a few years. In 1760, for example, only just over 25% of the merchant shipping which entered the port of Naples belonged to other countries and, among these, Genoa was the place from where the greatest number of ships came<sup>42</sup>. About 75% of the shipping which entered the port of Naples flew the Neapolitan flag. These ships were built and fitted out in Procida, Torre del Greco, Sorrento and Castellammare di Stabia<sup>43</sup>, in other words in places which gravitated towards Naples. Apart from the feluccas, the smallest transport vessels, very few ships belonged to Neapolitans. Broggia wrote in 1764 that only 5 or 6 ships belonged to Neapolitan merchants, built however "about ten years (before) because the King of Naples (had) granted a discount of one quarter of the draft and customs duties on all goods produced in the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily which went out onto the ocean flying the Neapolitan flag", and also on those which "from foreign countries beyond the Straits (of Gibraltar) were brought into the two Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily on ships flying the same flag".<sup>44</sup> In the following years the Neapolitan merchant navy continued to expand. In 1760, a total of 1,244 Neapolitan vessels had put in to the port of Naples, but, according to G. M. Galanti's calculations, 2,683 Neapolitan vessels put in to Naples in 1784: shipping and the volume of trade had more than doubled.

However, despite the government's efforts, most of the vessels were still very small indeed, while most of the traffic boiled down to the transportation of foodstuffs from the coasts of the various provinces of the Kingdom to the capital<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> A. Di Vittorio, *Il commercio tra Levante Ottomano e Napoli nel secolo XVIII*, Giannini, (Napoli, 1979), pp. 19 *et seq.*

<sup>42</sup> De Rosa, *Navi, merci... op. cit.*, p. 349.

<sup>43</sup> C. A. Broggia, *Le risposte ai quesiti del Console Balbiani*, Giannini, (Napoli, 1979), p.167.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>45</sup> G.M. Galanti, *Nuova descrizione geografica e politica delle Sicilie*, (Napoli, 1788), vol. 3, p. 361.

The fact was that a seafaring spirit was lacking practically everywhere in the Kingdom of Naples. Galanti wrote that on the Adriatic, only the inhabitants of Bari undertook on long voyages: despite their owning “badly built ships”, they traded with Venice, Trieste and with the coasts of Dalmatia opposite them. As far as the other inhabitants of Apulia were concerned, the people in Foggia confined themselves to fishing; the people of Taranto set sail, but did not go beyond the Ionian Sea. Neither the population of the Abruzzi nor that of Basilicata had any merchant ships. On the contrary, the people of Calabria had a liking for the sea, but lacked the means, and did not go beyond trading with small boats along the coasts. The inhabitants of a hamlet near Tropea were the only exception: they traded along the coasts of France and Spain, and some of them had even ventured to America.

Therefore the real seafaring region of the Kingdom was the Bay of Naples. It was Naples, Procida, Ischia, Torre del Greco, Castellammare, Sorrento, Vico Equense, Positano, Conca and Vietri which made the greatest contribution to the presence of the Neapolitan flag at sea. However, among the different types of ship which flew the Neapolitan flag, one stood out more than the others: the Sorrentine two-masted vessel, called a *polacca*, which could transport 4,500 hectolitres of corn.

As well as being used in coastal trade, this type of ship was used mainly in international trade. Some Sorrentine *polaccas* sailed along the coasts of Liguria, France and Spain; others crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and went to Portugal, England and America; others still were hired by people in Ancona to transport Sicilian products to Ancona, Venice and Trieste<sup>46</sup>.

All this constituted an undoubted sign of progress, but it did not secure the Kingdom of Naples autonomy and independence in the maritime sector. At the end of the eighteenth century, a sizeable part of commercial traffic was still conducted by foreign shipping and foreign capital (Genoese, English and French).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.329 *et seq.*

