

NAPLES, SIXTEENTH CENTURY-1809

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1. Coverage

This questionnaire concerns the Kingdom of Naples over a period that goes from the sixteenth century to 1809, when the customs system changed completely. In 1806 (under French rule) private duties were taken over by the state and managed together with other duties by a new unified customs administration. In 1809 all the traditional duties were abolished and replaced by a single import/export duty that applied universally to the whole Kingdom.

2. Documents

No documents (certificates, registers...) have been found to date concerning individual import-export operations of each consignment of goods (customs, date, name of trader/dealer, quantity and/or value of the imported/exported goods, duty collected). We do not know whether the records still exist because many archives are inaccessible to researchers or are simply unknown.

The “original data” available include the annual documents (“statements” or *rendiconti*) which customs officials presented to the tax magistrate (*Tribunale della Sommaria*) for periodical administrative checks. These statements report the total revenue from the duties under their jurisdiction with, sometimes, further information as well. The revenue from specific duties (related to a single product category) makes it possible to estimate the quantity of imported/exported goods (with a certain margin of error since several regulations and customs practices allowed for customs exemptions for certain categories of shopkeeper/trader). For instance, Montaudo (2005) has reconstructed

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the export of olive oil during the eighteenth century; Ciccolella (2004) has reconstructed the imports of sugar to Naples during the period 1737–1797 using this kind of sources.

However, tracing the latter poses numerous problems. The customs archives that have been discovered so far (and which can be consulted by researchers) concern certain customs authorities only and are extremely fragmentary. Even in the archives of the *Tribunale della Sommaria* the statements were not presented and/or kept properly/systematically.

Summary reports of annual imports/exports of single products were occasionally prepared (e.g. to plan customs duty reforms or to establish whether to forbid or encourage the trade of foodstuff). This information can be occasionally found in the numerous documentary sources of the secretaries of state and the consultative bodies of the Kingdom.

Foreign trade balances were only produced for the years 1771 and 1772 at the request of an intellectual who intended to publish the data in his work entitled *Nuova descrizione delle Sicilie*. They were published in 1788 (cf. Galanti 1788; Ciccolella 2010). In it, detailed figures are given for 1771, while only totals of import/export values are given for 1772. Later on, periodic trade statistics were produced beginning only in 1810. Those have been partly rediscovered and published recently in Ciccolella (2013).

3. Institutional setting

Until 1809:

1) There were hundreds of customs duties that varied by product and province.

2) Some customs duties were levied by the state, others privately.

3) The customs duties were levied by several authorities, which were completely independent of each other. Three large institutions had regional jurisdiction (the Customs Authorities of Naples, Apulia, and Calabria). They controlled numerous import and export duties of several types of products, but only in the provinces under their jurisdiction. Other administrative bodies were responsible for individual import/export duties on specific products (e.g. silk, oil, iron, etc.), for certain provinces or for the entire Kingdom.

The individual customs authorities collected the information. Brief summaries were probably made by the general director of the Customs Authority of Naples, but they were not published.

4. Motivations

The data was collected to: 1) ensure customs revenue and to restrict smuggling through extensive checks on the circulation of goods; 2) check the accounts of the customs authority. The customs data were used (and are occasionally available) in legal disputes (between owners/administrators of customs duties and tax authorities, between owners/administrators of customs duties and tax payers, etc.).

5. Methods

The power of customs officials to check goods, especially for imports, varied according to the nationality of the shopkeepers/traders: in some cases, they merely had to record specifications, while in others they could inspect documents on board ship and check the goods directly.

On the basis of the customs data, only a few series of foreign trade statements for specific categories of products have been reconstructed. It is impossible to say whether they are truly representative of actual trade flows, because the data has not been cross-checked against other sources, but according to all contemporary observers smuggling was widespread (*cf.* Clemente 2013). The customs data can certainly not be used to reconstruct a series of prices because the customs operated according to constant values (see below).

6. Information

The customs authorities recorded trade flows in quantity. Health and port officials (Health department and Harbor office) recorded the type of goods being transported by vessels but not their quantity or value (Damiani 2002). The value was calculated according to an old fixed tariff. It did not include transport costs and insurance. Prices have been reconstructed, but only for certain periods and products (e.g. Romano 1964).

A dozen units were used in the records, including weight units and measurement units.

There was no coherent list of categories of goods used to register the flows.

The schedule of values/duties lists 2250 products. Customs officials probably “simplified” the recording of goods; in other words, they did not always take account of the differences in quality or provenance of similar products. For example, the tariff included 11 entries for sugar

but in the customs records only a distinction between “white” and “red” (brown) sugar was made (Ciccolella 2004).

Customs officials did not record the provenance/destination of the goods (unlike health and port officials). However, different duties were paid for some goods according to their provenance/area of production. In these cases, the provenance was recorded as being “incorporated” with the name of the goods (e.g., “cheese from Sardinia”, “cheese from Rome”, etc.).

7. Availability

The data have not been digitized.

8. Bibliography

8.1. Primary sources

Archivio di Stato di Napoli, *Arrendamenti* (archives of the authorities of several types of customs duty).

Archivio di Stato di Napoli, *Regia Camera della Sommaria, Dipendenze* (archive of the auditors’ board of the customs authorities).

Archivio di Stato di Napoli, *Regia Camera della Sommaria, Dipendenze*, II s., vol. 74 (Tariff of values of imported and exported products).

8.2. Secondary works publishing and commenting on the data

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8.3. Secondary works using the data

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G. Fenicia (1996), *Politica economica e realtà mercantile nel Regno di Napoli nella prima metà del XVI secolo (1503-1556)*, Bari.

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8.4. Complementary sources

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- C. Damiani (2002), *Il movimento mercantile del porto di Napoli nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo*, PhD on Economic history, 12th cycle, Naples (about institutions involved in collecting data on navigation).
- L. De Rosa (1958), *Studi sugli arrendamenti del Regno di Napoli. Aspetti della distribuzione della ricchezza mobiliare nel Mezzogiorno continentale (1649-1806)*, L'arte tipografica, Napoli.
- R. Romano (1965), *Prezzi, salari e servizi a Napoli nel secolo xviii (1734-1806)*, Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milano (on prices).