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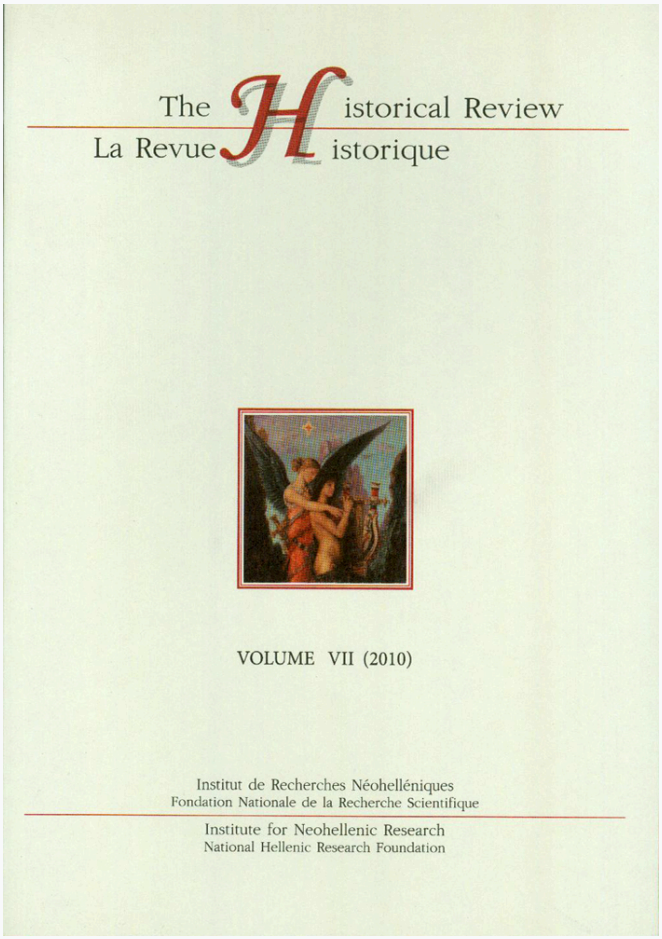

The Napoleonic Wars and the Disruption of Mediterrnean Shipping and Trade: British, Greek and American Merchants in Livorno

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THE NAPOLEONIC WARS AND THE DISRUPTION OF MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING AND TRADE: BRITISH, GREEK AND AMERICAN MERCHANTS IN LIVORNO[1]

Katerina Galani

Abstract: The end of the eighteenth century was marked by the outbreak of the French and Napoleonic Wars waged across Europe and the Mediterranean. They ushered in a political and economic crisis that disrupted the established patterns of shipping and trade. The turbulence of war created a new equilibrium among existing players and new entrants, who competed over a share of the Mediterranean market. Based on archival material from the quarantine station of Livorno, one of the most significant Mediterranean entrepôts, the paper investigates the adaptation of traditional and ascending maritime powers to the upheaval and the economic crisis generated by the Napoleonic Wars. While British merchants and ship-owners searched for alternative, safer ports to relocate their trade, the newcomers – the Greeks and the Americans – profited from their neutrality and entered the Livornese market.

Crises striking in societies, be they political, demographic, ecological or epidemic, disrupt the routine of everyday life and have a strong impact on the economic activities of both communities and individuals. Although crisis has *per se* a negative connotation, as it encompasses the unexpected, the extreme and risk, it also provides a unique opportunity to reshuffle the cards and establishes a fresh status quo in which new players are allowed to enter the game and profit therein.[2]

The second half of the eighteenth century and the turn of the nineteenth was a very turbulent era, marked by a series of crises on a world-wide range. Profound changes took place, and war appears to have been the catalyst.

[1] This paper is a preliminary study on the port of Livorno conducted during the completion of my doctoral thesis under the title "British Shipping and Trade in the Mediterranean in the Age of War (1770-1815)". It was presented at the workshop "Social Groups and Practices of Trading in the Mediterranean, 17th-19th centuries", held in Athens, 4-5 April 2008. The workshop was funded by RAMSES2 and was successfully organized by Maria Christina Chatziioannou and Evrydiki Sifneos on behalf of the Institute for Neohellenic Research.

[2] M. Stopford, *Maritime Economics*, London 1997, pp. 139-148, on the variables that affect shipping demand and supply and more broadly on the "prime movers" of historical developments; C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914,* Oxford 2004, pp. 5-7.

The American War of Independence breached the political and mercantile relations of metropolitan Britain. On the other side of the chessboard, the French Revolution and the political and military upheaval that followed ushered in the Napoleonic era with military operations spreading out across continental Europe and the Mediterranean. This was indeed a transitory period when the equilibrium of the old powers was disrupted; France and Britain competed over political and economic predominance, and the battle took place on more than one front.[3]

International conflicts sparked off easily in the age of mercantilism due to the struggle of states over colonies and trade. At the same time, the manifestations of warfare drew heavily upon the key principles of mercantilism. The series of blockades imposed during the Napoleonic era reflected the intention of the belligerents to prevent the enemy's exports rather than to assure their own imports. An outstanding example that illustrates such a policy took place in 1809-1810. A food shortage in Britain as a result of poor harvests was mitigated by direct imports from France in the midst of the war between the two countries. Any intention to impede the enemy's alimentation and drive him to surrender was not considered as an option at the time.

In this context, it was of vital importance for the belligerents to control the Mediterranean, which was the frontier and the oldest traditional market. Despite the expansion into the colonial markets of the periphery, intra-European trade was still the most significant in terms of value and volume throughout the eighteenth century. As Patrick O'Brien stressed, during the 1790s 76% of European exports were directed within Europe, ceding only a small share in total economic activity to the trade with the periphery. In the same vein, transcontinental trade at this early stage allowed Europeans to refine their taste with exotic foodstuffs, while Europe and the Mediterranean remained the primary market for staples.

In a competitive freight market which expanded across the world, warfare in the Mediterranean disturbed existing patterns and created opportunities to which ship-owners responded. War brought about a series of changes, such as fluctuation in duties, prohibitions of trade and increases in transport, agency and insurance costs. It also intensified the need for information that was not only related to the market supply and demand but also to military

[3] J. Black, *Natural and Necessary Enemies: Anglo-French Relations in the Eighteenth Century,* London 1986; R. Findlay and K. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War and the World Economy in the Second Millenium*, Princeton University Press 2007, pp. 227-428.

operations and the perils of war. It is no coincidence that *Lloyd's List* and other contemporary maritime gazettes were thoroughly updating the list of ships captured as prizes by the ever-growing menace of privateers. Moreover, consular correspondence across the Mediterranean and beyond Gibraltar included detailed information about the naval operations and the course of warfare. However, freights were soaring under such perilous conditions and the slumps and booms that are clearly seen in the trade statistics of this period boil down to substantial albeit precarious profits.[4]

In addition to the naval activities, a new cycle of mercantile activities was now put forward to accommodate the fleet and soldiers stationed in the Mediterranean. Naval victuals and stores gave a new boost to shipping and trade, and the British Admiralty established a special Board of Transport in 1794 to organize the transport service and cater to the British Navy wherever it was engaged. The Admiralty and the Board relied heavily on private contractors, amongst which ship-owners who were involved in the transport and victualling of the navy and soldiers at war.[5] The Henleys, ship-owners from Derby and one of the very few commercial houses of the eighteenth century whose business records have been published, demonstrate this involvement of private ship-owners in the transport service. In the heyday of their business, between 1775 and 1830, they deployed ships in the coastal coal trade, in the West Indies, the Baltic and the Mediterranean particularly for transport. It remains to be established whether the Henleys were the rule or its exception, but nevertheless their case illustrates how the transport service lured a number of ship-owners into Mediterranean trade.

The existing literature has made several attempts to gauge the economic impact of the Napoleonic Wars on trade, producing so far controversial or uncertain findings. The blockades, smuggling, corruption, and detours in sea and inland routes have all been factored in to detect whether growth was slowed down if not damaged by the intermittent wars, as well as their effect on the welfare of the belligerents. In addition, economic historians have worked extensively on the repercussions of the Napoleonic era on a number

[4] C. K. Harley, "Ocean Freight Rates and Productivity, 1740-1913: The Primacy of Mechanical Invention Reaffirmed", *The Journal of Economic History* XLVIII/4 (1988), p. 854; Stopford, *Maritime Economics*, pp. 105-106; R. Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry,* London 1962, p. 256; E. B. Schumpeter, *English Overseas Trade Statistics, 1697-1808,* Oxford 1960, pp. 17-18.

[5] C. Wordsworth, R. Knight and M. Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet, 1793-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State,* Woodbridge 2010.

of industries and trade both in Britain and France, but shipping has been understudied to the present day.

This paper will attempt to investigate the adaptation of traditional and ascending maritime powers, namely the British, the Greeks and the Americans, to the economic crises generated by the Napoleonic Wars in the Mediterranean using the nodal port of Livorno – Leghorn to the British – as a case study. While Britain strove to overcome the shock of war and maintain her thriving trade and shipping by implementing a series of economic and political measures, the Greeks, as local carriers in the Mediterranean, entered the maritime trade and gradually consolidated one of the most sizeable and financially productive fleets. It is noteworthy to mention that by the end of the French Wars the fleet under the Ottoman flag had doubled. To this we should also add the Greek-owned vessels operating under Venetian, Russian and Jerusalem flags. The emergence of the Greeks as a significant local maritime power was not unforeseen. For a long time they had been apt seafarers of the Ottoman and the Venetian Empires, accustomed to the culture and practices of shipping and sea trade.[6] The geographical determinism of the numerous islands and the coastlines they inhabited naturally led them to engage in coastal trade and make their living as mariners, merchants, ship-builders, etc. In the course of the eighteenth century, favoured by the political and economic conjuncture, they broadened their scope of activity, stretching as far out as Latin America and paving the way for the golden era of Greek shipping in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

While introducing the key players in the Mediterranean under study, we should include another Atlantic actor, i.e. the Americans; a neutral power in the Anglo-French rivalry, they grasped the opportunity to enter the Mediterranean market, creating or reinforcing existing networks of trade with the ports which were traditionally engaged in Atlantic trade.[7] Their appearance in Southern Europe was also a by-product of warfare, which explains its limited duration. When the British regained control of the Mediterranean there was hardly any scope left for the US vessels. Despite the limited time span of the Americans in Livorno, it serves as an interesting case

[6] M. Greene, "Beyond the Northern Invasion: The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century", *Past and Present* CLXXIV/1 (2002), pp. 42-71; M. Fusaro and A. May, "Les Anglais et les Grecs. Un réseau de cooperation commerciale en Méditerranée vénitienne", *Annales* LVIII/3 (2003), pp. 605-625; and M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants,* Princeton University Press 2010, pp. 110-137.

[7] For the Americans in the Mediterranean, see J. A. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882,* Princeton University Press 1969, pp. 3-103.

study to probe their adaptation to the local, Mediterranean conditions, as well as their relations with their long-established friends and foes, the British.

An intersecting study of British, American and Greek shipping in the Mediterranean is now feasible, since the Greek fleet of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth has been documented in the Amphitrete database, which includes over 24,000 entries of Greek ships from more than 15 major Mediterranean ports. This quantitative endeavour, which questions and reshapes the existing apprehension over the scope and scale of Greek maritime activity in the eighteenth century, will be used as a benchmark for the study of the British and American presence in the Mediterranean.

At this point, we should take the opportunity to specify whom exactly we identify as "Greeks" in the historical conjuncture of the eighteenth century. In the absence of a national Greek State, which was founded only in the 1830s after the Greek War of Independence against the Ottomans, the use of the word "Greek" without the obvious reference to a national state might seem premature. Nevertheless, identifying the Greeks in the records did not seem to pose a problem. This is the exact term that, according to the archival evidence, was used across the Mediterranean, by all port officials, to identify captains coming from the dominion of the Ottoman or the Venetian Empires. As Gelina Harlaftis has consistently argued, the Greeks were in fact both Ottoman and Venetian subjects, originating broadly from what is currently known as Greece and the coastline of Asia Minor.

It is not within the purpose of this paper to define what it was that constituted the Greek nascent identity at the time, but its existence seems to be indisputable, acknowledged across the Mediterranean. It must have been on the grounds of language and religion that captains entering the Mediterranean ports were (self-)identified and registered as Greeks. However, it remained a fluid identity, as Greeks could adopt in the future a Russian, Ottoman, Greek-Ottoman or Venetian identity. There are cases in the archives where a single person had borne all of those at some point during his ventures. Additionally, an identity referring to the place of birth could also be used when entering a port. Nevertheless, Greeks even prior to the formation of a national state, under different political dominions and across political borders seem to have shared a sense of communality together with common business practices, cultural and linguistic ties and have worked in partnership with those considered as members of the same ethnicity.

In the meantime, the Greeks interacted and competed with the British particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. As friends and foes, they were British agents or even vice-consuls in the Levant, residents in British colonies such as Port Mahon, trade partners or rivals. By the

early 1830s the Greeks and the British dominated the grain trade across the Mediterranean and into the Black Sea. It was during the Napoleonic period that the foundations of this trade were laid. Grain shortages from the continental blockade and military operations caused rising grain prices and freights and an increase in ship movements. The Greeks had unhindered access to the Black Sea and to the Russian granary after the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji in 1774, which allowed Greek ships bearing the Russian flag to cross the Dardanelles. The British were granted access to the Black Sea in 1802, but remained largely dependent on the Greeks to carry grain to the entrepôts of the Western Mediterranean as naval victuals or imports to Britain.[8]

The ascent of the Greeks at the time was not only favoured by the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji, as is traditionally asserted in the literature, but also by the innovative policy implemented by Selim III. A series of administrative reforms in the Ottoman Empire aimed to strengthen the position of the Ottoman mercantile fleet against its international rivals in the competitive Mediterranean shipping and trade. Certain measures sought to consolidate a group of non-Muslim merchants entitled to trade with Europe under favourable terms, like the ones the Ottoman Empire had been granting to European merchants through commercial treaties. It was only sensible that the Greeks, due to their prior experience as seafarers and merchants, would benefit from such a policy, which seems to have created, on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, the institutional framework for the boom in Greek shipping.

The above-mentioned three actors, the British, Greeks and Americans, sprang from the archival material as significant factors in the maritime activity of Livorno. What is even more important is their engagement in shipping and trade both across and beyond the Mediterranean. A comparative study of these three ethnic groups provides an insight into the maritime history of the Mediterranean, into the notions of continuity and change and the adaptation to economic crises. Affected by the political and economic conditions at the turn of the century, a new equilibrium was set, with old and new players trying to win their share of the market.

The Role of Livorno in Times of Peace and War

Quantitative data from the port of Livorno, one of the most vibrant commercial hubs in Southern Europe, will help us detect the impact of the Napoleonic Wars and the blockades in shipping and trade. The port of Livorno was free from customs due to the policy of the Grand Duchy

[8] A. C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company,* London 1964, pp. 180-181.

of Tuscany, which tried to facilitate trade and attract ever-more foreign merchants. It was made clear to the Hapsburg Empire that Tuscany was lacking the infrastructure and the natural resources to support a competitive local industrial production, and therefore, alternatively, there was more scope for mercantile activities, in particular accommodating transit trade. It was not just a matter of a provincial strategy, but more or less part of the strategy of Maria Theresa to permeate the Mediterranean, proclaiming a number of free ports such as Fiume and Trieste in the early eighteenth century. Within this framework attention was diverted to catering for shipping and trade and an elaborate infrastructure was provided, including a number of lazarettos (quarantine stops) and warehouses that could store and preserve products for up to a year.[9] Livorno turned into a key port both for the Italian Peninsula and for the redistribution of cargoes in the Mediterranean.[10] In addition, it acted as an entrepôt linking Europe with the colonial market of North America and facilitating transit trade carried out largely by foreign merchants. British, French, Spanish, Austrians, Scandinavians and Greeks, together with Italians, included Livorno in their trade networks. It is no coincidence that Livorno was called the "Italian Marseille" since shipping and trade were comparable to those of the biggest French port during the years of the Napoleonic Wars. Just after the outbreak of the wars, in 1794 and 1795 the total number of vessels calling at Livorno rose to 1135 and 1048 respectively, from 527 and 646 for the years of peace 1791 and 1792. In the course of the wars, the number of arrivals fluctuated but still remained above the equivalent mean average for the years prior to the wars. Despite French occupations after 1796, Livorno sustained its maritime traffic along with an elevated volume of imports of cotton and grain, which were the primary cargoes in the Mediterranean.

The British in Livorno[11]

In the second half of the eighteenth century the British mercantile fleet was the largest in Europe with 882,000 tons, according to the estimates of Ruggiero Romano for the year 1786. In the Mediterranean the business organization

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[9] D. Panzac, *Quarantaines et lazarets,* Aix-en-Provence 1986, pp. 173-176.

[10] For its role as a redistributional centre and a Mediterranean emporium, see Fr. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers,* New Haven 2009, pp. 102-112; P. Herlihy,"Russian Wheat and the Port of Livorno", *The Journal of European Economic History* V/1 (1976), pp. 45-68.

[11] P. Scrosoppi, "Il porto di Livorno e gli inizi dell'attivita Inglese nel Mediterranea", *Bolletino Storico Livornese* IV (1937), pp. 339-380; M. D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Livorno, 1573-1737,* Messina 2004; *id*., "The British Factory at Leghorn in the XVIIIth Century: A Kind of Chamber of Commerce cum Consulate", in C. Vassallo (ed.), *Consolati di Mare and Chambers of Commerce,* Malta 2000, pp. 113-126.

of British trade was diverse: free traders operated simultaneously with the decadent Levant Company, which held the monopoly of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. During the hazardous years of war, part of the trade was also carried out by privateers who were operating side by side with the Royal Navy. From the quarantine records of the port of Livorno, one can identify all these different business practices; ships hired by the Levant Company were entering the port escorted by naval convoys, together with British free traders and privateers bearing the letters of marque vessels *in corso e mercanzie*, as it is often stated in the archives.[12] The port of Livorno had long accommodated British maritime interest in the region, acting simultaneously as an entrepôt and a commercial link between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic markets.[13] In addition to exporting British cloth and other manufactures, re-exports formed a big part of British trade in the port. In particular, British ships were deployed in a triangular trade carrying primarily salted fish and other colonial products such as sugar, coffee and tobacco from America to Livorno, from where they would be diffused to the ports of the Levant and North Africa. Therefore Livorno was a significant port within the context of both European and colonial trade.

The Greeks in Livorno

For the Greeks, Livorno was considered an ideal stepping stone to the markets of the Western Mediterranean and even to markets located beyond the Strait of Gibraltar. As will be stressed in the course of this paper, the ascending Greeks followed the steps of other foreign nations operating at the port, who were caught in war at the turn of the nineteenth century; Livorno was an easy and obvious place for Greeks to set up trade because they were able to adopt the existing maritime and commercial apparatus and networks.

A number of Greek merchants had settled in Livorno from the early eighteenth century, originating primarily from the western coast of Greece and the islands. However, it was not until 1747 that the Greek mercantile community grew stronger and played a significant role in the grain trade that was carried out in Livorno. The commercial treaty of 1747 signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Duchy granted the minimum 3% duty

[12] Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima, F 623-705.

[13] G. Pagano de Divitiis, "Il porto di Livorno fra Inghilterra e Oriente", *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* I (1993), pp. 43-87; M. C. Engles, *Merchants, Interlopers, Seamen and Corsairs: The "Flemish" Community in Livorno and Genoa,* Hilversum 1997, pp. 21-46.

to products traded between Tuscany and the Ottoman Empire. The Greeks now had an additional motive to use the Tuscan port with its warehousing facilities and connections with both Western Europe and the Atlantic trade.

The Americans in Livorno[14]

The nature of the port, its connection with the Atlantic market and its uninterrupted traffic during the years of war and turbulence in Southern Europe account for the sudden appearance of American ships in the early nineteenth century (see fig. 1). Right after American Independence, American shipping and trade was disrupted once it lost the British protection that had been indulged so far. With the advent of the nineteenth century, just as local, neutral carriers profited from the conditions of war, the Americans saw in the Mediterranean a new arena to expand their maritime activities and called at a number of Mediterranean ports such as Livorno, Bordeaux and Smyrna, which had already been involved, prior to the war, in transatlantic trade. Especially in 1806 and 1807 with the continental blockade and the British counter-blockade imposed by the Orders in Council to retaliate Napoleon's attempt to cut off British trade, American ships arriving at Livorno reached the significant number of 137 and 138, when the equivalent arrivals for the British had dropped to zero and the ascendant Greeks were at 116 and 36 respectively.[15] In 1808 and 1809, Thomas Jefferson imposed an embargo on all American ships according to which they were not allowed to call at any foreign port. The embargo was soon revoked but American shipping in the Mediterranean was further hindered by the British. American ships were captured despite their neutrality and American sailors were impressed as they were considered deserters from the Royal Navy. "Fighting for free trade and sailors' rights" led to the Anglo-American War of 1812-1815, which suspended the American penetration into the Mediterranean.[16] Nevertheless, the Americans remained active until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when Britain regained its supremacy and outdid its rivals.

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[14] For an all-round presentation and evaluation of American shipping, see C. A. Keene, "American Shipping and Trade, 1798-1820: The Evidence from Leghorn", *The Journal of Economic History* XXXVIII/3 (1978), pp. 681-700.

[15] ASL, Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima, F 623-705.

[16] R. D. Paine, *The Old Merchant Marine*, New Haven 1919, chapter VI.

Historical Background: The French Occupations of Livorno

Napoleon occupied Livorno for the first time from 1796 until 1797, striking a blow to the character of the free port that Livorno had acquired since 1692.[17] The British were warned of the approach of the French troops and fled to the islands of Corsica and Elba in search of shelter to avoid being captured or molested. Until that point British merchants had played a dual role in the Tuscan port by procuring the Italian market and importing products both from the Atlantic and Britain for re-export to the Eastern Mediterranean. They returned to the city in 1797 right after the first French occupation ended. The Greek merchants in the port-city remained intact, if not favoured, by the new political conditions. Meanwhile, Livorno was blocked by a number of British naval ships, which disrupted the commercial activity of the port, causing the drop in the total number of ships entering the port to 457 for the first year of the occupation.[18] In 1799, after a brief break in the siege of Livorno, the port was once again under French occupation for a few months when Napoleon declared war against Austria. The strategic importance of Tuscany made its occupation significant for the course of the war and the expansionist plans of the French Empire. In October 1800 Livorno fell for a third time into the hands of the French; in 1801 it was declared the Kingdom of Etruria and granted a regime of self-government, which was, however, bound to accommodate French interests.[19] With the exception of the spell of the Peace of Amiens in 1802-1803, the British seemed to have retreated from their position in Livorno, seeking more favourable conditions for trade and shipping eastwards. It was during this last phase, when both belligerents imposed blockades in 1806 and 1807 respectively, that smuggling reached its peak. The Kingdom of Etruria turned a blind eye to contraband trade despite the protests of France. Nonetheless, it is very difficult to gauge the extent of smuggling, as it is a clandestine business in the first place and therefore no public ledgers were kept. However, all contemporary sources stress its magnitude and estimate that occasionally it equalled legal trade. Even though the contraband trade cannot be factored in a quantitative analysis, we must

[17] For an account of the successive occupations during the Napoleonic Wars, see D. Vlami, *Το φιορίνι, το σιτάρι και η Οδός του Κήπου. Έλληνες έμποροι στο Λιβόρνο, 1750-1868* [The florin, the wheat and Garden Street: Greek merchants in Livorno, 1750-1868], Athens: Themelio, 2000, pp. 113-131.

[18] See fig. 2 for the overall port traffic.

[19] M. D'Angelo, "The Mid-Mediterranean as an Alternative Market: British Merchants, Ships and Merchandises during the Napoleonic Wars", *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of Maritime History,* CD, Corfu, 21-27 June 2004.

bear it in mind, especially since it mostly referred to the import of British products to the Italian Peninsula and also affected trade throughout the Mediterranean, wherever the continental blockade was imposed.

The hybrid Kingdom of Etruria lasted only until 1807, when it was annexed to the French Empire, and the period spanning from 1809 to 1814 was characterised by the implementation of the French mercantilist laws of trade. The state of being a free port was officially abolished in 1810, but its repercussions were alleviated by acknowledging Livorno as an entrepôt under the control of the French authorities. In 1814 the Conference of Vienna restored the Hapsburg-Lorena dynasty in Tuscany; the news was received with great relief by the merchant community of the port-city. On 1 May 1814 war ended for Livorno and the Lorena dynasty returned to the throne. After a turbulent period of political and economic instability, Livorno appeared to regain its position in the Mediterranean market.[20]

Resource Description and Analysis

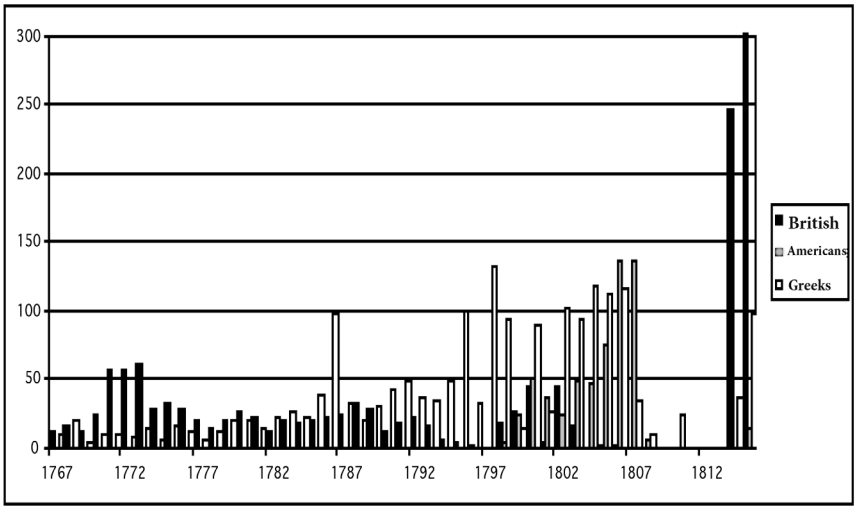
This paper focuses on the ship movements in the port of Livorno with a special interest in interpreting the trends of shipping during the Napoleonic Wars. To this end, data have been drawn from three different archival sources in an attempt to best construct an overall picture of the shipping activity in Livorno. A new time series spanning from 1767 until 1815 was put together, based on the quarantine records from the two lazarettos operating in Livorno during that period. The records are held in the Archivio di Stato di Livorno under the title Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima. The lazaretto of San Rocco was responsible for all ships carrying a *patenta neta*, a clear sanitary pass, while the lazaretto of San Leopoldo received all ships bearing a *patenta brutta*, an unclear pass.[21] From this record we were able to compile a data set of 4000 entries covering 48 years with the exception of 1811 to 1813 due to archival constraints. This corpus is a detailed register of British, Greek and American ships entering the port, with additional information about ship names, types, captains, cargoes, ship routes, duration

[20] *Id*., "British Trade and Merchants in the Mid-Mediterranean: An Alternative Market during the Napoleonic Wars", in C. Vassallo and M. D'Angelo (eds), *Anglo-Saxons in the Mediterranean,* Malta 2007, pp. 97-113.

[21] J. Howard, *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe*: *With Various Papers Relative to the Plague together with Further Observations...,* Warrington 1789, p. 7; Th. MacGill, *Travels in Turkey, Italy and Russia during the Years 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806,* London 1808, pp. 183-184.

of voyages, crew sizes, consigners, etc. The data set was compared to the aggregate statistical tables published by Jean-Pierre Filippini in the 1980s. Filippini drew his tables, organized on the basis of ships' flags and/or ship types, from the records of the French authorities during the occupations of Livorno. A true statistical fever had overwhelmed the French administration, which ordered its consuls across the Mediterranean to provide tables not just for French trade and shipping but – for comparative purposes – for the maritime activities of other nations engaged in the Mediterranean as well. A third archival source was retrieved from the Archivio di Stato di Livorno in a series of files under the name Governo civile e militare di Livorno. These are in fact some stray statistical tables registering the ship entries in Livorno for the years 1797, 1798, 1802 and 1805. The tables refer both to entries of ships grouped in terms of flags and also in terms of types, where the distinction between naval and mercantile ships has proven exceptionally valuable. These tables were put together by the French authorities of Livorno in an attempt to chart the shipping activity in the port.

Fig. 1. Arrivals at the port of Livorno, 1767-1815.



Source: ASL, Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima, F 623-705.

The above figure contains all entries to the port of Livorno from 1767 to 1815, and it is plotted for British, American and Greek ships depending on

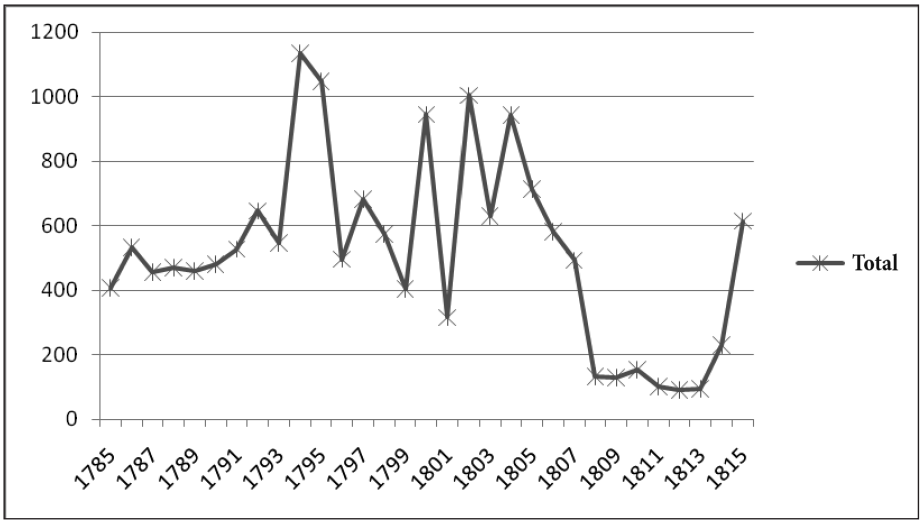
their flag or the stated origin of the captain where appropriate. It must be taken into account that only the larger vessels, namely brigs, polaccas and ships, are included in the statistics since our interest lies with the deep-sea voyages across the Mediterranean and beyond the Strait of Gibraltar. Smaller vessels, which were mostly engaged in coastal trade and largely belonged to the local Tuscan fleet, are therefore excluded from the figures. At this point it is interesting to highlight that the types of large vessels mentioned above were by and large deployed by all three national groups with minor technical variations, a fact that points to the adaptation of shipping to local conditions.[22]

Looking at the maritime activity in the long run, the British had a long-lasting presence in the port of Livorno, which is in accordance with the existing literature that describes the Tuscan port as the "British hub" in the Mediterranean since the 1700s. With rising number of entries for the years around 1770 British ships had a more or less stable presence in Livorno. Towards the last two decades of the eighteenth century the Greeks seem to have penetrated the Livornese market, while their operations appear to have been more prone to yearly fluctuations, for example rising to 101 arrivals in 1795, just to drop to 33 the next year and then shoot up to 133 in 1797.

Another interesting point that is raised from the sanitary records is the sudden appearance of the Americans for a few consecutive years at the turn of the nineteenth century. They are recorded entering the port right after the first occupation of Livorno, when the British had fled. From that point onwards their presence in the port increased steadily. The establishment of an American network seems to have attracted ever-more Americans, who, according to the archives, mostly originated from the ports of Salem, Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Unfortunately, missing sources generate a lacuna from 1808 to 1813, and attempts have been made to complement the lapse from alternative archival material, as will be shown below. Nevertheless, a limited American presence is expected in this period due to the Jefferson embargo and the outbreak of the Anglo-American War in 1812.

[22] A. Delis, *Ερμούπολη (Σύρος). Το ναυπηγικό κέντρο της ιστιοφόρου ναυτιλίας, 1830-1880* [Ermoupoli (Syros): the shipbuilding centre of tall ships, 1830-1880], Ph.D. thesis, Ionian University, Corfu 2010. For a detailed typology of Mediterranean and North Atlantic vessels, see pp. 218-245.

Fig. 2. Arrivals at the port of Livorno: the overall number of ship entries.



Source: for the overall number of entries: J.-P. Filippini, "Il movimento del porto di Livorno durante il primo periodo lorenese, 1731-1801", *La Toscana dei Lorena. Riforme, territorio, società*, ed. Z. Ciuffoletti and L. Rombai, Vol. I, Florence 1989, pp. 76-77.

Plotting the shipping statistics for the nationalities under study along with the total number of ship entries in the port of Livorno reveals similarities in terms of the trends of arrivals. The peak of 1794 reflects the adaptation of the Tuscan port to the outbreak of the French Revolution and the disrupted trade of Marseille that relocated eastwards. Subsequently, the first French occupation caused a drop in the number of ships' arrivals followed by another fall in the second occupation in 1799. The last occupation in 1801 and the establishment of the Kingdom of Etruria caused a steep fall in the overall movement at the port. The Peace of Amiens raised the port traffic in 1803 until the imposition of the continental blockade, which led to a downward trend. For the following years until the end of the wars, according to the available data, ship entries remained fairly stable for Americans and Greeks despite the fluctuations in the total arrivals. This corroborates the argument that neutral powers stepped in and extracted a share of the Livornese market.

In an attempt to follow more closely the ramifications of war on the maritime activity in Livorno, we narrow our period of study to the years of the Napoleonic Wars. It is evident that the biggest plunges occurred with the French occupations of Livorno. Right after the first attack, in 1797 the British entries in the port were null, as one might have expected, since the British

mercantile community was transferred eastwards. In the following years there seemed to be a "numb" movement in the port, while the continental blockade imposed by Napoleon from 1806 and onwards may have further repressed British entries to Livorno. However, just before the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1814 and 1815, British entries to Livorno reached the astronomic figures of 248 and 306 respectively, announcing the return of the British and the restoration of their maritime activities in the port-city. Never before had their presence been so strong in Livorno, and according to supplementary archival sources the trend remained upward in the aftermath of the war, indicating that it was not just a reaction to the defeat of Napoleon.

One does not fail to observe (fig. 3) that the Americans made a strong appearance in Livorno exactly at the moment when the British had retreated in the early 1800s, and this is a point that needs further investigation. Livorno had always been a port open to the Atlantic; colonial products were brought in by the British, warehoused and re-exported across the Mediterranean. It is highly likely that the Americans saw warfare as an opportunity to break into the Italian market, which was up to then confined to British shipping due to the Navigation Laws. After all, the United States was a neutral country and until the outbreak of the Anglo-American War in 1812 it expanded its trade networks to a number of European ports which had Atlantic trade ties.[23] Even though there was an extended contemporary debate on the connections between the British and the American mercantile fleet, especially in relation to the American sailors who were considered deserters from the Royal Navy, this is not endorsed by archival research.[24] Based on the data from the quarantine records, where the ships can be identified by their name and captain, the American vessels which were recorded entering Livorno after 1800 were cross-checked with the ones listed as British in the data set. It is interesting that no concurrences appear. This shows that an independent American mercantile fleet was crossing Gibraltar during the war and calling at Livorno.[25]

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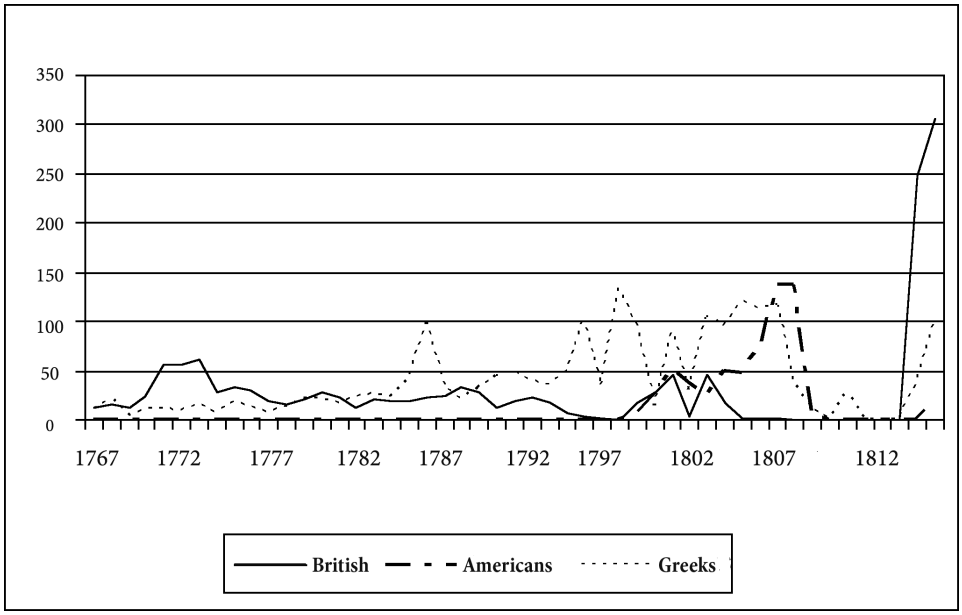
[23] S. Marzagalli, *Les boulevards de la fraude. Le negoce maritime et le blocus continental, 1806-1813,* Villeneuve D'Ascq 1999, pp. 91-92.

[24] J. Black, *America as a Military Power: From the American Revolution to the Civil War*, London 2002, p. 44.

[25] On the home ports of the American vessels calling at Livorno, see Keene, "American Shipping and Trade", p. 687, table 1.

Fig. 3. Arrivals at Livorno, 1767-1815.



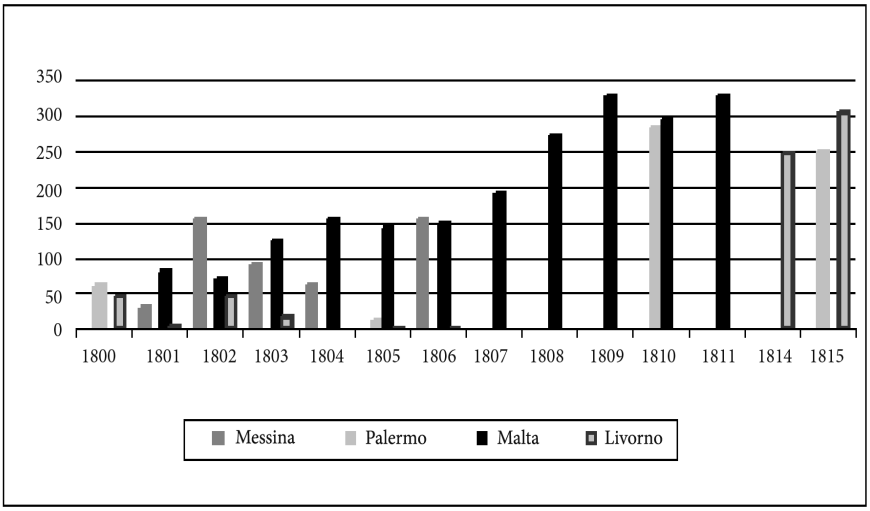
Source: ASL, Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima, F 699-705.

At the same time, the Greeks seem to have filled in part of the gap that was created by the retreat of the British from Livorno during the French occupations. There was a Greek mercantile community housed in the port-city, which facilitated the further engagement of Greek ships in the Italian Peninsula, especially since they had the privilege of being considered as neutral carriers in belligerent waters. Although they appear to have entered the port as early as 1767, which is the starting point of this database, they showed a significant increase in arrivals from 1793 onwards. The blockade and the revocation of the status of free port for Livorno seemed to have influenced the Greek maritime activities for a few years. However, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars they maintained their trade networks in Livorno.

But the question still remains: what happened to the British merchants who were operating in Livorno and the Mediterranean more generally? Was their shipping and trade disrupted by the Napoleonic Wars and the continental blockade? It turns out that the Mediterranean market was still profitable, if not more profitable now during the Napoleonic Wars, which created opportunities for transport services and soaring freights. The British did not flee the Mediterranean, especially since a large part of their naval fleet

was stationed in Southern Europe. On the contrary, they adopted a more flexible policy, moving eastwards to safer ports, out of French reach. In effect, either they populated ports which were well known to them from the past or created from scratch new maritime and naval bases.

Fig. 4. British arrivals in Mediterranean ports, 1800-1815.



Sources: ASL, Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima, F 623-705; M. D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi in Sicilia, 1806-1815*, Milan 1988, pp. 220, 223, 225.

As shown in figure 4, Livorno in the crucial war years was replaced by other port-cities such as Messina and Palermo in Sicily, where the British had settled before the war, and Malta, which emerged temporarily during the Napoleonic era as the most significant British hub in the Mediterranean.[26] It is noteworthy that the ports which were the most frequented in this period were actually operating both as commercial and naval bases. The case of Malta is one of striking development. Its maritime activity steadily rose from year to year, with a peak of 330 entries in 1809. What is of even greater

[26] For an overview of the role of Malta in Mediterranean trade, see J. Debono, *Trade and the Port Activity in Malta, 1750-1800,* Malta 2000; M. D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Malta, 1800-1825,* Milan 1990; X. Labat Saint Vincent, *Malte et le commerce français au XVIIIème siècle,* Vol. II, Ph.D. thesis, Université Paris IV-Sorbonne 2000; S. Fiorini and V. Mallia-Milanes (eds), *Malta*: *A Case Study in International Cross-currents,* Malta 1991; and D. Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers, 1793-1815,* Cranbury, NJ, 1996.

significance is the disappearance of Malta from the foreground by the end of the Napoleonic era, when it no longer served British interests. With the end of the war, the shipping and trade from Malta moved back to Livorno, which demonstrated a spiking increase in British ship entries. Sicily, as has been pointed out in the existing literature, seemed to be equally important to Malta. The port of Palermo showed an impressive number of arrivals and together with Marsala and Mazara, from where wine was exported, were the ports of call for the British ships. After all, Messina and Palermo had hosted British mercantile communities, which formed part of a network spreading out in the Mediterranean.

The Riddle of the Data

In an attempt to sketch a more complete view of the ship movement in the port of Livorno, more than one archival source was employed in order to supplement the others. In figure 5, the sanitary records from the lazarettos of Livorno are plotted together with the official statistical figures registered by the French administration and the reports of French consuls for the British ships, which were published by Filippini. Although the different data sets refer to the same set of years, there are some significant disparities that have to be further examined.

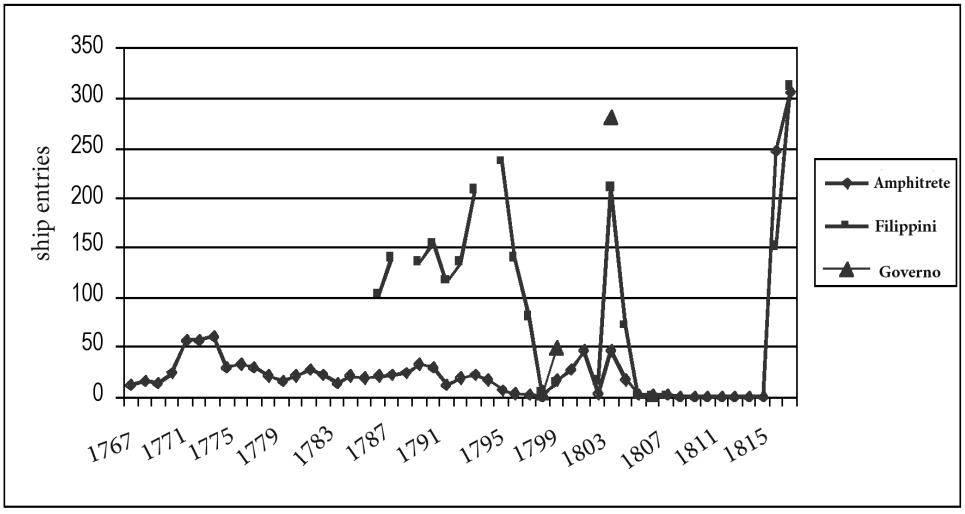
All in all, the French source shows a much stronger presence of British shipping for the years that preceded the first occupation of Livorno in 1796 with significant differences in the nominal figures compared to the quarantine records.[27] The following year, 1797, British ships did not call at the port, which was now considered as enemy ground. At the turn of the century British maritime activity tried to recover until the continental blockade, which likely accounts for another quite dramatic fall in 1806. In the meanwhile, in 1802, the ceasefire that was implemented briefly by the Peace Treaty of Amiens seems to have allowed a respectable 230 British ships to enter once more the port of Livorno.

How we can interpret the different data sets in a supplementary way and account for the disparities remains in question. The riddle becomes more

[27] The high figures for the English delivered by Filippini have caught the attention of other scholars, who treat them cautiously. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, p. 135, points out that "the figures [for the years 1700, 1715, 1730, 1735] are incredibly high" and juxtaposes more moderate approaches, such as L. Santini, "I protestanti a Livorno nel period mediceo-lorenese", *I Valdesi e l'Europa*, Torre Pellice 1982, pp. 351-387, here p. 365, where he states that the English vessels constituted 30% of all foreign entries in the port during the second half of the 18th century.

complex when we use Filippini's table to counter-check the Greek entries and discover a complete accordance of the data with those deriving from the sanitary records from the Archivio di Stato di Livorno.[28] One potential explanation might lie in the fact that the quarantine registers would normally include ships arriving from "suspicious" ports, and these would be predominantly all ports of Eastern Europe, where plague was endemic. At least this was the case for the quarantines in other Mediterranean ports. But this does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation for Livorno, since a substantial number of registered British ships had declared as port of provenance either British or Atlantic ports. More specifically, while 60% came from within the Mediterranean, a good 38% of British ships entering Livorno originated from the Atlantic, plus 3% originating from the Baltic and North Seas. This distribution gives hard evidence that all British ships entering Livorno would be recorded in the quarantine registers irrespective of their port of provenance.

Fig. 5. The riddle of the data.



Comparative sources: Amphitrete database; Filippini, "Il movimento del porto di Livorno", pp. 147-151; ASL, Magistrato poi Dipartimento di Sanità marittima, F 699-705, Governo civile e militare di Livorno.

[28] G. Harlaftis and S. Laiou, "Ottoman State Policy in Mediterranean Trade and Shipping, *c.* 1780-*c.* 1820: The Rise of the Greek-owned Ottoman Merchant Fleet", in Mark Mazower (ed.), *Networks of Power in Modern Greece*: *Essays in Honour of John Campbell*, London 2008, pp. 7-9.

The archival material from the port of Livorno is extremely rich with information about shipping and trade for British, Greeks and Americans, who are the three nationalities under study. This paper has presented only a small portion with the intention to quantify and chart the movement of ships in the port and investigate the disruptions that economic and political crises, and more specifically the French and Napoleonic Wars, brought upon the port. Old and new players co-existed in Livorno, employing similar tactics to overcome the difficulties. The British concentrated on safer ports, from where they could continue their maritime activity, while the Greeks followed the exact opposite course, moving westwards and expanding their networks and sea routes to the coasts of Spain, Gibraltar or even further, for example to Latin America. Profiting from soaring freights and the rivalry between the British and the French, the Americans made a brief appearance for a few consecutive years calling at Livorno, which had already developed trade ties with the Atlantic. As was also the case with the Greeks, their neutrality was their passport in the Mediterranean and assured profitable business even with a short life expectancy.

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