

STORIA ECONOMICA

ANNO XXIII (2020) - n. 1



Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane

Direttore responsabile: LUIGI DE MATTEO

Comitato di Direzione: ANDREA CAFARELLI, GIOVANNI CECCARELLI, DANIELA CICCOLELLA, ALIDA CLEMENTE, FRANCESCO DANDOLO, LUIGI DE MATTEO, GIOVANNI FARESE, ANDREA GIUNTINI, ALBERTO GUENZI, AMEDEO LEPORE, STEFANO MAGAGNOLI, GIUSEPPE MORICOLA, ANGELA ORLANDI, PAOLO PECORARI, GIAN LUCA PODESTÀ, MARIO RIZZO, GAETANO SABATINI

La Rivista, fondata da Luigi De Rosa nel 1998, si propone di favorire la diffusione e la crescita della Storia economica e di valorizzarne, rendendolo più visibile, l'apporto al più generale campo degli studi storici ed economici. Di qui, pur nella varietà di approcci e di orientamenti culturali di chi l'ha costituita e vi contribuisce, la sua aspirazione a collocarsi nel solco della più solida tradizione storiografica della disciplina senza rinunciare ad allargarne gli orizzonti metodologici e tematici.

Comitato scientifico: Frediano Bof (Università di Udine), Giorgio Borelli (Università di Verona), Aldo Carera (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Francesco D'Esposito (Università G. d'Annunzio di Chieti-Pescara), Marco Doria (Università di Genova), Giulio Fenicia (Università di Bari Aldo Moro), Luciana Frangioni (Università di Campobasso), Paolo Frascani (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"), Maurizio Gangemi (Università di Bari Aldo Moro), Germano Maifreda (Università di Milano), Daniela Manetti (Università di Pisa), Paola Massa (Università di Genova), Giampiero Nigro (Università di Firenze), Nicola Ostuni (Università Magna Graecia di Catanzaro), Paola Pierucci (Università G. d'Annunzio di Chieti-Pescara), Giovanni Vigo (Università di Pavia), Giovanni Zalin (Università di Verona)

Storia economica effettua il referaggio anonimo e indipendente.

Direzione: Luigi De Matteo, *e-mail:* ldematteo@alice.it.

Redazione: Storia economica c/o Daniela Ciccolella, CNR-ISMed, Via Cardinale Guglielmo Sanfelice 8, 80134 Napoli; *e-mail:* ciccolella@ismed.cnr.it.

Gli articoli, le ricerche, le rassegne, le recensioni, e tutti gli altri scritti, se firmati, esprimono esclusivamente l'opinione degli autori.

Amministrazione: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, via Chiatamone 7, 80121 Napoli – tel. 081/7645443 pbx e fax 081/7646477 – Internet: www.edizioniesi.it; *e-mail:* periodici@edizioniesi.it

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Napoli al n. 4970 del 23 giugno 1998.

Responsabile: Luigi De Matteo.

Copyright by Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane – Napoli.

Periodico esonerato da B.A.M. art. 4, 1° comma, n. 6, d.P.R. 627 del 6 ottobre 1978

SOMMARIO

ANNO XXIII (2020) - n. 1

ARTICOLI E RICERCHE

- GIULIO FENICIA, *Una soluzione atipica al disavanzo pubblico napoletano del 1575: il «donativo della numerazione»* p. 5
- FRANCESCA FERRANDO, «*Acciò la gente stii occupata*». *Le manifatture dell'Albergo dei poveri di Genova* » 41
- ALIDA CLEMENTE, *Ai margini della capitale? Spazi urbani, conflitti distributivi e dinamiche politico-istituzionali nella pesca napoletana del secondo Settecento. Il caso di Santa Lucia a mare* » 73
- ALESSANDRA TESSARI, *Quality control in the British food system from the Victorian Age to the self-service revolution* » 107
- ANDREA LEONARDI, *Tra squilibri finanziari e strategie nazionali: le banche di Trieste e dei territori ex asburgici dopo la prima guerra mondiale* » 135
- GERARDO CRINGOLI, *Una relazione parallela nel sistema bancario italiano: Toeplitz e Agnelli (1915-1933)* » 165
- ÁNGEL CALVO, *Domestic market and internationalisation in the telecommunications equipment industry: Telettra Española at the end of the 20th century* » 203

NOTE E INTERVENTI

- IDA FAZIO, RITA FOTI, *The establishment of the free port of Messina between the XVII and XVIII centuries. An ongoing research agenda* » 229

RECENSIONI E SCHEDE

- Armando Sapori*, a cura di S. Moscadelli e M.A. Romani, Università Bocconi Editore, Milano 2018 (M.P. Zanoboni) » 247

- A History of Wine in Europe, 19th to 20th Centuries*, I, *Winegrowing and Regional Features*; II, *Markets, Trade and Regulation of Quality*, a cura di S.A. Conca Messina, S. Le Bras, P. Tedeschi e M. Vaquero Piñeiro, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019 (M. Robiony) » 249
- ROSARIO LENTINI, *Sicilie del vino nell'800. I Woodhouse, gli Ingham-Whitaker, il duca d'Aumale e i duchi di Salaparuta*, Palermo University Press, Palermo 2019 (P.-S. Canale) » 254
- MARIA PAOLA ZANOBONI, *La vita al tempo della peste. Misure restrittive, quarantena, crisi economica*, Jouvence, Milano 2020 (R. Salvemini) » 256

NOTE E INTERVENTI

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FREE PORT OF MESSINA BETWEEN THE XVII AND XVIII CENTURIES. AN ONGOING RESEARCH AGENDA*

The paper outlines an ongoing study on the free port of Messina, in the context of the historiographical reappraisal on the establishment of free ports in the Mediterranean in the Early Modern Age. Adopting a diachronic approach, it summarizes the purposes and issues that affected its outcomes, from 1695 throughout the entire 18th century: its rules and the institutional turning points, the economic debates, and some critical issues like the franchise area, the trade of local goods (wheat, silk, oil), smuggling, mercantile justice and safe-conduct.

Free port, Sicily, Messina, Mercantile justice, safe-conduct, smuggling

L'articolo ripercorre l'agenda di una ricerca in corso, che affronta, attraverso il caso di Messina, il tema dell'istituzione dei porti franchi nel Mediterraneo di età moderna, tornato di recente all'attenzione della riflessione storiografica. Esso sintetizza con approccio diacronico, dalla fondazione nel 1695 per tutto il XVIII secolo, gli scopi e i problemi che ne condizionarono la riuscita: le regole e le svolte istituzionali, i dibattiti economici, le questioni cruciali come l'area delle franchigie, i problemi relativi alle merci locali (olio, seta, grano), il contrabbando, la giustizia mercantile, il salvacondotto.

Porto franco, Sicilia, Messina, giustizia mercantile, salvacondotto, contrabbando

1. *Open questions, outstanding issues*

The free port of Messina had the distinctive feature of being both

* This article is based on research carried out within the PRIN (Progetto di Ricerca di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale) 2015 project *Alla ricerca del negoziante patriota. Mercantilismi, moralità economiche e mercanti nell'Europa mediterranea (secc. XVII–XIX)*. Paragraphs 1, 2, 8 are written by both authors; Ida Fazio wrote paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and Rita Foti wrote paragraphs 6, 7.

problematic and unstable from its very beginning, in 1695. However, the few studies researching its history (Liliana Iaria in the 1980s on the period of the Habsburg rule¹, Ida Fazio and Fausta Gallo in the 1990s on the Savoy period², Salvatore Bottari in the early 2000s on the last decades of the Spanish Viceroyalty³, and Michela D'Angelo on the first 15 years of the 19th century and the British Decade⁴) have focused on specific points of interest, like the institutional templates, the discussions on reform projects, and some short series of the few quantitative data on import-export and tax revenues available, given the loss of the city's archives in the 1908 earthquake and in the World War II bombing. Nevertheless, Messina was undoubtedly an important part of the Mediterranean system of free ports in the last two centuries of the Early Modern period, thus, a comprehensive and systematic analysis of its institutional and economic features must be undertaken. Our ongoing research aims at attempting a problematic and comparative approach on at least the first 100 years that the free port of Messina was active. In doing so, we will point out some issues which are worth investigating with special attention, and address some hypotheses on the main reasons for its instability and for the lack of success that those of the time – both rulers and users – complained about and tried to overcome.

Free ports were a principal player on the world commercial stage at the end of the Early Modern Age (17-18th centuries) on both an economic and institutional level. However, as Antonio Iodice pointed out⁵, not all the free ports were founded for the same purposes, nor with the same features, and neither did the economists of the times

¹ L. IARIA, *Il porto di Messina tra Austriaci e Borboni*, «Memorie e Rendiconti dell'Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arti degli Zelanti e dei Dafnici di Acireale», 36 (1983), pp. 157-181.

² I. FAZIO, *Rappresentazioni di un'economia urbana. Le proposte all'amministrazione sabauda e il rilancio economico di Messina dopo la crisi di fine Seicento*, «Bollettino storico bibliografico subalpino», 94 (1996), pp. 213-272; F. GALLO, *L'alba dei Gattopardi. La formazione della classe dirigente nella Sicilia austriaca (1719-1734)*, Donzelli, Roma 1996, pp. 111-118.

³ S. BOTTARI, *Post res perditas. Messina 1678-1713*, Sfameni, Messina 2005, pp. 136-152, and ID., *The port of Messina*, in *Making waves in the Mediterranean*, ed. by M. D'Angelo, G. Harlaftis and C. Vassallo, Istituto di Studi Storici G. Salvemini, Messina 2010, pp. 641-650.

⁴ M. D'ANGELO, *'The Emporium of Trade of the Two Seas': The re-launching of the port of Messina, 1784-1815*, in *Making waves in the Mediterranean*, pp. 654-669.

⁵ A. IODICE, *L'istituzione del porto franco in un Mediterraneo senza frontiere*, «Politics. Rivista di Studi Politici», 1 (2016), pp. 19-33.

have the same opinion on their convenience⁶. Thus, several debates were held on the topic throughout Europe.

Moreover, not every free port succeeded in achieving the goals that the rulers expected. It was difficult to replicate the success of Leghorn, «la vera scala franca» (the true free port)⁷, a city built up in the 1590s for the sole purpose of the establishment of a free port for the States of the Grand Duke of Tuscany⁸. Some were less efficient at the beginning, but in the following years earned a notable position in the geography of Mediterranean trades; some decayed with time and with the changing of the sea routes. While it was doubtful that Leghorn itself could be awarded the title of free port, according to Savary⁹, it was even less probable, in his viewpoint, that it could be awarded to Messina. However, Leghorn, more than Genoa, Venice or Marseille, was a model worth replicating, and so Messina tried to imitate Leghorn from 1695 to 1784, awarding immunities and privileges and pursuing often conflicting custom and fiscal policies, always heatedly discussed. In fact the free port of Messina, in the intentions of the authorities who established it, should have been, at the same time, an entrepot for foreign trade made to attract merchants from all nations and religions, a resource for the active trade of the Kingdom of Sicily, and a means of increasing the income of the Royal Treasury. Contradictory goals, both from a theoretical point of view (free trade *vs* mer-

⁶ A. CARACCILO, *Il dibattito sui "porti franchi" nel Settecento: genesi della franchigia di Ancona*, «Rivista storica italiana», LXXV (1963), III, pp. 539-558.

⁷ BIBLIOTECA COMUNALE DI PALERMO (herein BCP), ms. Qq F 91, ff. 829-854v, *Progetto della giunta di commercio di Messina*, f. 835v.

⁸ J.P. FILIPPINI, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli 1988; C. TAZZARA, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017; ID., *Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Information, and the Free Port of Livorno*, «The Journal of Modern History», 86 (2014), pp. 493-529; G. CALAFAT, *Une mer jalouée. Contribution à l'histoire de la souveraineté (Méditerranée, XVII^e siècle)*, Seuil, Paris 2019; *Livorno, 1606-1806: luogo di incontro tra popoli e culture*, ed. by A. Prosperi, Allemandi, Torino 2009; F. TRIVELLATO, *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, Yale University Press, New York-London 2009; *La città delle nazioni. Livorno e i limiti del cosmopolitismo (1566-1834)*, ed. by A. Addobbati and M. Aglietti, Pisa University Press, Pisa 2016; L. FRATTARELLI FISCHER, *L'Arcano del mare. Un porto nella prima età globale*, Pacini editore, Livorno 2016, in part. A. ADDOBBATI, *Prefazione. L'arcano del porto franco*, *ivi*, pp. 11-20.

⁹ J. SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce contenant tout ce qui concerne le commerce qui se fait dans les quatre parties du monde*, chez la Veuve Estienne, Paris 1741, 3 voll.

cantilism) and from a practical one, because quite often the fiscal levy and the entitlement or the exclusion from the free port of people and goods hindered one another. The port of Messina, an ideal meeting point of the Levant and the West, was involved in trade bringing imports arriving, or in-transit, from, and heading to other ports in Italy and abroad (Venice, Genoa, Leghorn, Trieste, Malta, Marseille, Britain, and mainly the Levant, from which the Greeks subjects of the Ottoman Empire traded). On the contrary, as we will see soon, the connection with the other ports of the Kingdom of Sicily (Palermo, Milazzo, Siracusa, Augusta, Licata, Catania, Trapani) and their goods (wheat, oil, salt, cheese, salted fish, coral), and with Calabria Ultra and the Messina district with their silk remained problematic¹⁰.

For all these reasons, researching the history of a free port – and Messina is not an exception – needs both a diachronic and a comparative approach. It has to be investigated within the context of the contemporary system of trades and of the commercial networks set up by merchants.

In the meantime, its story – made up of proposals, reforms, political decisions, and of the economic behaviours of the actors, which constituted its successes and failures over time – needs to be carefully examined.

2. *Rules, discussions and debates*

Before pointing out the main issues that we think are worth investigating, we can look through a list of the institutional turning points in the life of the free port of Messina in the 17th and 18th century. Established with an order (Bando) of the Viceroy Duque de Uzeda in 1695 with the aim of uplifting and improving the economy of the city, which had fallen after the repression of the anti-Spanish rebellion of 1674-78, it came with a safe-conduct for Muslim and Jewish merchants and a tariff. After three years, in 1698, the new Viceroy Duque de Veraguas amended some sections of the decree¹¹. The Duque

¹⁰ Quantitative data on the traffic of the port of Messina between the 1710s and 1730s are published in IARIA, *Il porto di Messina*, based on sources filed in several archives (among others, Paris, Vienna, Venice, Naples). But see also data on traffic and the names of the masters of the vessels between 1724 and 1730 in BCP, ms. Qq G 66, ff. 558-565.

¹¹ *Istruzioni della scala e porto franco della città di Messina fatte dall'illustre*

de Uzeda and the Supreme Council of Italy had been clearly aware that any intervention on Messina, the commercial capital of the Kingdom of Sicily, would affect the entire island, whose wealth largely depended, among other factors, upon its port. Thus, after the 1693 earthquake of the Val di Noto, the city was awarded the privilege of the «scala franca», which until then had been withdrawn for military, religious, and health reasons in 1633, then approved in 1648, then withdrawn again in 1663, showing the conflicting approaches of Spanish and Sicilian theologians and ministers¹².

In 1714, after the changeover of the Kingdom of Sicily to Savoy rule, King Victor Amadeus II confirmed the free port, although a debate on its reformation failed to obtain the changes requested by merchants, who complained that it did not offer the proper facilities for their trades. When the Kingdom of Sicily was handed over to the Habsburg dynasty in 1720, several discussions were raised involving many institutions and merchants, as in the Savoy period, and a reform finally came in 1728, less than a decade after the establishment of the free port of Trieste by the same Emperor, Charles VI. In future research, a comparison between Messina and Trieste will be of great importance. Unfortunately, the reform seems not to have achieved significant improvements, as Charles III of Bourbon in 1735, coming to Messina after his accession to the throne of the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, ordered «convenient and experienced subjects»¹³ to make a plan aimed to suggest the best solutions to fix the multifarious problems it still had. The free port of Messina was the subject of debates between Neapolitan and Sicilian secretariats during the reformist period of the Bourbon rule. During his viceroyalty (1747-1754), Eustachio de Laviefeuille spent two years in Messina devoting time, effort

duca di Uzeda nel 1695, con altre dichiarazioni fatte dall'Ill. duca di Veraguas nel 1698, nella regia stamperia d'Antonino Epiro stampatore della Regia Corte, in Messina e in Palermo, 1724.

¹² ARCHIVO GENERAL DE SIMANCAS, *Estado*, leg. 3503, 1684-1685, nos. 47, 103; leg. 3506, 1690, nos. 3, 4; leg. 3507, 1692, nos. 14, 139, 142; leg. 3508, 1695, nos. 6, 10, 15, 17, 39, 46, 69. ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO NACIONAL DE MADRID (herein AHN), *Estado, Secretaria de Sicilia*, leg. 2215, *Relacion del duca di Uzeda e Notamento de lo que toca a la Real Hacienda*, 1686-1697; *Estado*, leg. 2237, 1693; leg. 2196, nos. 1, 2, 3 and docs. from 1633 to 1698. BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA DE MADRID, mss. 2665, 1634; 2669, 1685. See G. TRICOLI, *Un periodo del governo spagnolo di Sicilia nella relazione del viceré Uzeda (1686-1697)*, Thule, Palermo 1980, pp. 110-113; BOTTARI, *Post res perditas*, pp. 133-140.

¹³ Real Dispaccio 29 april 1735, in C.D. GALLO, *Annali della Città di Messina*, per Francesco Gaipa impressore, Messina 1758, t. IV, p. 277.

and energy to restoring the city's economy ruined by the plague of 1743 that isolated Messina for two years¹⁴. Finally new regulations came in 1784, during the reign of Ferdinand IV and the Viceroyalty of Marquis Caracciolo, and after a second disaster in 40 years: the earthquake and seaquake that in 1783 destroyed the city and seriously damaged the harbour¹⁵.

Our survey on rules and regulations of the free port of Messina shows that, during the 18th century, it went from one model to another: from the «walled enclosure» to the entire city as «a set of warehouses» («un ammasso di magazzini»), from civil to religious tolerance, from mercantile justice to a centralized one based on sole rights (*giustizia privata*). Underlying the laws issued over time, stood the often diverging advice and discourses of the several Trade Councils, of ministers and Sicilian and foreigner merchants, of port offices and officers. Thus, these documents allow us to approach the economic and political projects both of the King and of the different subjects involved.

Among the economists that discussed the issue of the free ports in the 18th century, three focused in particular on the case of Messina. Viceroy Caracciolo himself did not think that the free port would help the economy of the city¹⁶. In his view, it was labour and manufacturing (*travaglio e industria*) that should enhance Sicilian economic growth. Hence, writing in 1783 to the Prime Minister Acton, he referred to the opinion of the economist Carlo Antonio Broggia who, in his treatise *De' tributi* (1743)¹⁷, fiercely criticized free ports that, in his opinion, could only help foreign merchants and would not im-

¹⁴ *Il simbolo della perfezione manifestato nel ternario delle provvidenze per il governo economico della nobile, fidelissima, ed esemplare città di Messina capitale del Regno [...] per regolamento dell'annona, patrimonio della città, e peculio frumentario di questa*, Regia Stamperia Francesco Gaipa, Messina 1753.

¹⁵ *Editto reale per lo ristabilimento ed ampliazione de' privilegi, e del Salvo Condotto della scala e porto franco della città di Messina con le istruzioni per lo buon regolamento del medesimo e con la tariffa delle valutazioni delle mercanzie per regola dell'esazioni de' dritti di Lazzaretto, di Porto Franco e di estrazione per dentro il Regno di Sicilia*, presso Giuseppe del Nobolo, Messina 1784.

¹⁶ Caracciolo to Acton, 10 and 17 July 1783, in E. PONTIERI, *Lettere del marchese Caracciolo, viceré di Sicilia, al Ministro Acton (1782-1786) con appendice*, Coop. Tip. Sanitaria, Napoli 1932, pp. 74-76, 103-106, 127, 138-139, 146-147, 188, 191-192.

¹⁷ C.A. BROGGIA, *Trattato de' tributi, delle monete, e del governo politico della sanità, opera di stato, e di commercio, di polizia, e di finanza. Molto, alla felicità de' popoli, alla robustezza degli stati, ed alla gloria e possanza maggiore de' principi, conferente e necessaria*, presso Pietro Palombo, Napoli 1743, pp. 111-113.

prove tax revenues, mentioning among others the case of Messina. Finally, in 1789 Vincenzo Emanuele Sergio, a man from the merchant's milieu and a former officer of the Kingdom's administration, then appointed to the first chair in political economy at the University of Palermo and a member of many academies, including the Accademia dei Georgofili, dedicated a pamphlet to the uplifting of the economy of Messina after the 1783 earthquake¹⁸. In it he addressed the issue of the foundation of a Royal Trading Company in particular, stressing that the free port should not «limit the sale of our commodities and cause the decline of the national manufactures».

To be honest, a rebellion and its extremely tough repression, three regime changes under the rule of four dynasties, and two natural catastrophes in a century time span are definitely a notable burden for a city, even such an old and important one as Messina. But we think that the perpetual crisis of its free port cannot be attributed entirely to these reasons. Many other issues seem to have made the free port of Messina unprofitable for the merchants (both natives and foreigners), for the Royal Treasury, for the city itself, sometimes intertwining with each other. They were mainly of an economic-commercial, juridical-institutional, and fiscal kind. We will try to point out some of our queries and hypotheses on the most prominent of these issues in the 18th century, between the establishment of the free port in 1695 and the Bourbon reform in 1784.

3. *The area of the free port*

At the time of its establishment, the free port of Messina was restricted to a limited area, like the free port of Genoa: the warehouses, once of the Peculio Frumentario¹⁹ (the wheat provisioning urban in-

¹⁸ V.E. SERGIO, *Memoria per la reedificazione della città di Messina, e pel ristabilimento del suo commercio*, Solli, Palermo 1789, p. 47: «Dovrebbe similmente ivi riaprirsi il porto franco sotto la sovrintendenza del regio ministro con Istruzioni che sempre più facilitassero la negoziazione universale dell'Europa, e il libero riposto in Messina di tutte le merci, e manifatture: purché fossero di quelle, che non tendessero a limitare lo spaccio delle nostre derrate, ed a causare decadenza delle manifatture nazionali».

¹⁹ I. FAZIO, *Sterilissima di frumenti. L'annona della città di Messina in età moderna (XV-XIX secolo)*, Lussografica, Caltanissetta 2005; EAD., *Magazzini, luoghi di sbarco e personale dell'annona della città di Messina in età moderna*, «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée», 2 (2008), pp. 503-520.

stitution), along the dock nearby the Royal Palace. The aim of the founders was to build up an entrepot for the exchange of commodities, so custom taxes had to be paid to the city and to the Royal Treasury on the goods brought into the city, to be sold in the city itself or in the Kingdom of Sicily. This rigid separation between the free port area and the rest of the city was harshly criticized by local merchants who were consulted after the regime changes from the Spanish to the Savoy dynasty, and from the Savoy to the Habsburgs²⁰, as shown in a number of manuscripts kept in the Biblioteca Comunale of Palermo and other archives and libraries. Most of them made a comparison between the case of Leghorn, where the entire urban area was under the rule of the free port, and the case of Messina. They blamed the separation between the free port area and the rest of the city for the lack of improvement of the urban economy. If the entire city (within the town walls) were under the rule of the free port, they argued, both the city and the kingdom's revenues would improve, because the city indirect tax revenues (gabelle) on bread, wine, oil and salted meat and fish would increase due to the immigration of businessmen and traders, and the custom taxes on imports would benefit from the rise in exchanges. Some consultants complained also that the traditional August Duty Free Fair, which provided the complete fiscal exemption for two weeks, when «the entire Kingdom» went for supplies to Messina, was detrimental to the achievement of the free port²¹. However, in 1728, the new Instructions of the Austrian government²² declared that the entire city within the town walls would be free port, and that the August Duty Free Fair would be abolished. The Trade Council (Giunta di Commercio di Messina), a council sitting from the beginning of the Bourbon period to discuss the economic problems of the city and its port, attended by representatives of both merchants and members of the Royal high-

²⁰ See FAZIO, *Rappresentazioni*, and IARIA, *Il porto di Messina*.

²¹ ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI TORINO (herein AST), *Fondo Sicilia*, 130/1, cat. 2, mazzo 4, fasc. 12 e 12 bis, *Compendiosa relatione*, e *Relatione dello stato presente della Scala Franca della Città di Messina, delle cause del poco introito delle Gabelle e Regie Dogane e della Pianta della Nova Scala e Porto Franco, che sarà il riparo con grande beneficio agli introiti regi, rimessa dal duca Fornari*, Messina, february 1714. On the duke of Furnari Antonio Fornari, gentleman of the Privy Chamber of Vittorio Amedeo II during his stay in Messina, see FAZIO, *Rappresentazioni*, p. 229.

²² *Bando regio in cui si contiene il salvocondotto concesso da SMCC per lo stabilimento dello scalo, e porto franco di questa Nobile, Fedelissima ed Esemplare Città di Messina*, 1728.

est institutions like the Tribunale del Real Patrimonio (Tribunal of the Royal Heritage), although stating that the extension of the free port area should be maintained, complained that from other points of view the situation had worsened, because the trades with the merchants from Palermo and the rest of the island stopped with the end of the Duty Free Fair²³. Actually, the medieval system of duty free fairs, based on special fiscal exemptions and on specific privileges granted for a limited period, displayed opposite characteristics and relied on a completely different model of trade from the free port's model. The latter was based on free trade, although in a mercantilistic economic system, and looked to the future; the former was deeply rooted in the past. In the case of Messina the two models came into conflict, as we can see in the actors' practices and in the wavering behaviour of institutions. In spite of the fiscal changes that in 1728 modified taxation on imports and exports from Messina towards the Kingdom and the other countries, actually, the free port did not seem to affect the exchanges of Sicilian products with foreign commodities.

4. *Wheat, silk, oil*

As a matter of fact, one of the most challenging issues addressed by the establishment of the free port of Messina was definitely the trading of the most important commodities produced in Sicily and in neighbouring Calabria. This region was part of the Kingdom of Naples, which was separated from an institutional point of view from the Kingdom of Sicily both in the period 1713-1734, when Naples and Sicily were ruled by different dynasties, and also under the Spanish Viceroyalty (until 1713) and then under the Bourbons (from 1734 onwards) when the rulers were the same²⁴. Western Sicily produced wheat, which in the 18th century went back to being a staple product of the island's exports from the *caricatori*, the loaders of the central-western coasts²⁵; Calabria and north-eastern Sicily produced raw

²³ BCP, ms. Qq F 91, *Progetto della Giunta di Commercio di Messina*, ff. 829-854v, 831.

²⁴ The two Kingdoms were joined in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies only after the Restoration.

²⁵ S. LAUDANI, *Dai magazzinieri ai contrascrittori: il sistema dei "caricatori" nella Sicilia d'età moderna tra mutamenti e continuità*, «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée», 120 (2009), 2, pp. 477-490; A. BLANDO, *I porti del grano siciliano nel XVIII secolo*, *ibid.*, pp. 521-540.

silk and oil, and Messina had always been their port of export, also according to a privilege that under the Spanish rule permitted the exportation of Calabrian silk only from Messina; a privilege that was abolished after the rebellion of 1674-78²⁶.

The first regulation of the free port of Messina, in 1695, excluded goods and merchants of the Kingdom of Sicily from the exemptions, but in 1698 the reform of the Viceroy Duque de Veraguas allowed them, and therefore at the time of the Habsburg reform of 1728 they actually used the free port. This state of affairs caused problems with the particular franchises that the merchants were entitled to according to their citizenship of many Sicilian cities, regarding the payment of import and export taxes.

Handling special goods like oil and silk on the one hand, and wheat on the other, led to other significant fiscal problems, and to the very important issue of smuggling. All the subsequent regulations of the free port of Messina forbid the inclusion of silk and oil in the franchise. As the Giunta of Messina noticed in 1724, during the wars of the last years, silk from Calabria began to be smuggled towards the free ports of Venice, of the Church (Civitavecchia and from 1732 Ancona), of Genoa and Leghorn at cheaper prices than Sicilian ones²⁷. The reform of 1728 did not solve the problem, and the Trade Council soon after stressed again that the silk was still brought to Leghorn. Emperor Charles VI allowed the city of Messina to import it, although not to its free port, with the aim of favouring local silk manufactures, that were strongly challenged by the nearby city of Catania that enjoyed a freer productive environment with less restrictions from the guild system (in Messina the Silk Consulate strictly controlled that sector of the economy, while Catania didn't have a Consulate). Thus, the consultants asked again to allow both silk and oil into the free port, not only from Calabria but also from the Levant, to trade it outside the Kingdom²⁸. Also foreign merchants felt it would be crucial to avoid vessels going to Leghorn to load silk and oil from Calabria and Apulia. Furthermore, they stressed that if they were not able to load these important goods after unloading their cargos in Messina, they would have to come back empty²⁹.

²⁶ S. LAUDANI, *La Sicilia della seta. Economia, società e politica*, Donzelli, Roma 1996.

²⁷ *Sentimenti della Giunta di Messina* [1724], BCP, ms. Qq G66, ff. 370-376.

²⁸ BCP, ms. Qq F 91, *Progetto della giunta di commercio di Messina*, ff. 838v-839.

²⁹ BCP, ms. Qq G 66, f. 555r-v, *Un Negoziante Inglese residente in Livorno*, 15

The case of the wheat trade involved the complex issue of the relationship between Messina and Palermo, between western and eastern Sicily, with their different economic organizations and their different ruling classes. Messina had always had the problem of scarcity, while the western area of the island was the major producer of wheat. In the West there was Palermo, with the Maestro Portulano, the authority that granted export licenses for wheat, where the majority of wheat loaders was located, and where trades and speculations on the internal and foreign markets were held³⁰. Foreign merchants, like an anonymous «negoziante Inglese residente in Livorno» in 1728, suggested that «for the benefit of both the King and of Messina» a wheat loader had to be built in the harbour of Messina, in order to make it easier to load Sicilian wheat, as the southern loaders were exposed to many dangers of loading and unloading. The British Consul in Leghorn felt that the regulation of 1728, «rather than enhance trading, it serves no other purpose than to diminish it far too much»³¹. Probably, the Habsburg regulation did not allow the free port of Messina to challenge the primacy of western Sicily in the wheat trade.

The Instructions of 1784, issued with an Edict by Ferdinand IV, profoundly changed this set up. The new regulation aimed to attract foreign traders and businessmen, craftsmen included, more effectively³². Subjects of the two Bourbon Kingdoms were still excluded³³, but not their local commodities, including wheat, silk and oil³⁴. Foreign wheat was permitted only for the needs of the city of Messina, but export of Sicilian wheat from its port was made easier recalling a Royal Or-

november 1728: «Sete ed ogli di Calabria ed Apuglia [...] si trasporteranno qui in Livorno, conforme voi ben lo sapete, e si baratteranno contro quei generi qui, cioè pannine, sete, ferro, droghe, salume che necessitano per il consumo di quel Regno, quali con piccoli bastimenti e felughe con facilità si introdurranno nel Regno; l'istesso pur succederà per li prodotti del Regno anche di Sicilia i quali tutti per necessità verranno qui smaltiti, stante che le navi non avendo speranza di trovar costì l'ogli per dar il fondamento de' loro carichi, si fermeranno tutti qui, e per conseguenza ogn'uno costì, che tiene di quell'effetti e prodotti, rimanderà qui per l'esito, dove si sa l'esservi sempre il concorso della navi che li ricercano, e dove si vendono i loro prodotti, e pure per non tornar li bastimenti, o felughe vote, si provvediranno di pannine, e di tutti quei generi che potranno smaltirsi in codesto nostro Regno».

³⁰ A. BLANDO, *Istituzioni e mercato nella Sicilia del grano*, s.n., Palermo 2003.

³¹ See footnote 29.

³² *Editto reale per lo stabilimento ed ampliazione de' Privilegi e del Salvo Condotta*, in part. chap. XIV of the *Salvacondotta*.

³³ *Ibid.*, chap. XXI of the *Salvacondotta*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, *Istruzioni*, chap. IV, I-III.

der of 1753 (when the Viceroy De Laviefeuille settled down in Messina for two years with the aim of uplifting the economy of the city after the plague) that entitled to the local administrator of the Royal Finance in Messina (Ministro di Azienda in Messina) to grant export licenses for wheat, instead of the Maestro Portulano³⁵.

5. *Smuggling*

Until the edict of 1784, the exclusion of silk and oil from the free port reinforced smuggling, which would appear actually practiced by every merchant³⁶, with the complicity of officers, employees and other workers of the free port. The tariff on the basis of which 1% was calculated to pay for the use of the free port, enacted in 1695, was reformed only 90 years after. Taxation on goods that were to be imported into the Kingdom was heavy, and many of the charges had to be paid by vessels docking in the harbour. Charges like «lanternaggio, falangaggio, ancoraggio, schifato, mazze e vento» were considered «angarie» (i.e. vexations) by merchants and unlawfully too high; the Guild of Dockworkers from Bergamo and Switzerland («camali Bergamaschi»), settled in Messina with the institution of the free port, held the monopoly on loading and unloading goods until 1784, when also locals were authorized to do so. Last but not least, the contractor of the tobacco monopoly tried to compel vessels to pay charges even if they docked in the free port³⁷.

Vessels going or coming from the port could very easily moor on either shore of the Strait of Messina and of the South-Eastern Calabria shore and load goods scot-free. Alongside the trafficking organized by merchants, there seems to have also been out-and-out «filtration» smuggling practiced by some of the coastal population on both shores, with a number of small boats that, thanks to the very short distance, ferried limited quantities of goods from not well guarded locations on the coasts or, more often, loaded them at sea from ships in transit. In 1729, the Giunta of Messina submitted a report docu-

³⁵ Ibid., *Istruzioni*, chap. V, IV.

³⁶ See the case of the British Consul Thomas Chamberlain in 1717, AST, Fondo Sicilia, inv. I, cat. II, mazzo 14, n. 9.

³⁷ The cases of two vessels, one flying a national flag bringing tobacco from Brazil via Lisbon, and the other flying the French flag bringing tobacco from Brazil, are reported in *Sentimenti della Giunta di Messina*, f. 374v.

menting many cases of smuggling to the Marquis de Figueroa (Reggente Collaterale), complaining that the 1728 reform did not succeed in stopping smugglers³⁸, because the prohibition of importing silk from Calabria without paying custom duties was still in force, «to the detriment of the Royal Treasury, for which custom duties decreased [because of smuggling] and many mercers languish in poverty most of the year, when the work with the local silk is done». But also, after the 1784 reformation, which allowed the import of Calabrian silk, and after the Napoleonic wars that enhanced smuggling between the two, now belligerent, ex Bourbon Kingdoms, was the free port of Messina associated with smuggling³⁹.

6. *Justice*

With the aim of facilitating the resolution of disputes and litigations, the free port had a judge with exclusive jurisdiction («privativo»), who was appointed for legal proceedings on appeal from the Sea Consulate, the ancient mercantile court of the city⁴⁰. The free port, more than other commercial contexts, needed a specific judicial system for the merchants. Messina, like Trapani since the 13th century, had a Sea Consulate that ruled according to the laws of the homonymous body of laws of Catalonian origin, spread throughout the Mediterranean⁴¹. However, this Tribunal wasn't the only one having

³⁸ BCP, ms. Qq G 66, ff. 583-584, *Un occorso nel Faro di Messina*, n.d. but 1730; *Memoriale del Conte Anastasio Vodda, Console delli Greci, ed altri negozianti greci sudditi della Porta Ottomana residenti nella città di Messina*, ff. 568-569, n.d. but after 1730; *Estratto d'una lettera d'un negoziante Inglese residente in Livorno in data 15 novembre 1728*, f. 555r-v.

³⁹ ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI PALERMO, *Real Segreteria – Incartamenti*, 5440, *passim*, but in particular see correspondence with Minister Ferreri: *Il Segreto Ppe di Sant'Elia a S.E. il Segretario Ministro di Stato presso il Luogotenente Generale il Signor marchese Don Gioacchino Ferreri*, 11 september 1817 e and 30 november 1817. See also I. FAZIO, *Soggetti, spazi e istituzioni urbane nel contrabbando di sale tra Sicilia e Regno di Napoli fra guerre napoleoniche e restaurazione*, «Archivio storico messinese», 100 (2019), pp. 147-160.

⁴⁰ *Istruzioni della scala e porto franco*, 1695; *Istruzioni della Corte e Consolato di mare della città di Messina*, per Agostino Epiro stampatore della Regia Corte, in Palermo, 1696.

⁴¹ V. LA MANTIA, *Consolato del mare e dei mercanti e capitoli vari di Messina e di Trapani*, Reber, Palermo 1897; L. GENUARDI, *Il libro dei capitoli della corte del Consolato di mare di Messina*, Vena, Palermo 1924; C.A. GARUFI, *Il Consolato del mare di Messina e la Tabula de Amalfa*, Boccone del Povero, Palermo 1935; C.

jurisdiction over maritime business: in the city and in the Kingdom, there were many privileged courts of justice where it was possible to appeal. Free port regulations intertwined with many other jurisdiction conflicts and privilege challenges. For instance, the Inquisition and the Grand Master of the Order of Malta demanded to inspect the vessels, and Genoese, Maltese, Venetian, and Ragusei merchants and other citizens of tax-exempted cities wanted to maintain their longstanding privileges⁴². Since 1695, merchants, especially foreign ones, unanimously required a Trade Court to exclusively hear cases concerning the free port «sola facti veritate inspecta». Merchants wanted their disputes (mainly about credits) in all court levels to be judged in Messina under the rules of the Sea Consulate. Thus, already from 1695 they also asked to forbid the transfer of mercantile cases to central courts in Palermo⁴³. The Instructions of 1714 and 1728⁴⁴ reconfirmed the free port's mercantile justice system: the Sea Consulate (court of first instance) – the Free port's exclusive judge (first appeal court) – and the Regia Udienza, i.e. the King's court in Messina (second appeal court). The establishment in Palermo, in 1739 (at the same time as in Naples) of the Supreme Trade Court of Sicily⁴⁵, a centralized special court for mercantile justice, endangered the jurisdictional prerogatives of the Sea Consulate and of the exclusive judge. The Consulate itself, the City Council and the Trade Council (Giunta di Commercio) of Messina opposed the attempted reform⁴⁶, sustaining

TRASSELLI, *Il Consolato dei messinesi e il Consolato del mare di Trapani*, Società siciliana per la storia patria, Palermo 1948.

⁴² AHN, *Estado, Secretaria de Sicilia*, leg. 2196, nos. 1 and 3.

⁴³ BCP, ms. Qq G 58, 1732-1733, *Per il modo di decidere le cause mercantili in Sicilia*.

⁴⁴ *Istruzioni della Corte e Consolato di mare della Nobile e Fedelissima ed Esemplare Città di Messina. Pubblicate nell'anno 1728. Per lo Scalo e Porto franco concesso da S. C. C. M. in tutto lo recinto murato di detta Città; colle Tariffe delli dritti spettanti a detto Ufficio, ed Istruzioni del Giudice Privativo di detto Scalo e Porto Franco e, Tariffe delli dritti di dett'Ufficio*, in Messina, nella Regia Stamperia di D. Michele Chiaromonte e Antonino Provenzano nel Regio Palazzo.

⁴⁵ V. SCIUTI RUSSI, *Il Supremo Magistrato di Commercio in Sicilia*, «Archivio Storico per la Sicilia Orientale», LXIV (1968), pp. 253-300; G. RAFFIOTTA, *Il supremo magistrato del commercio in Sicilia, 1739-1747*, Denaro – La Fauci, Palermo 1953.

⁴⁶ Just one month after the edict that established the Supreme Trade Court in Palermo (28 november 1739), the City Council (Senate) of Messina sent a petition to Viceroy Bartolomeo Corsini, proposing to settle the new court in Messina as it was the seat of the free port «e per conseguenza concorso di negozi e negozianti, di imbarcazioni, di commissioni, di compre e vendite [...] e controversie, litiggi e discordie degne di essere giudicate, rimediate e decise». They petitioned that «per ma-

that where there was a free port there had to be an exclusive judge. Thus it came about that the Supreme Trade Court did not have the jurisdiction over the appeals against the decisions of the Consulate, which returned under the jurisdiction of the Free port's exclusive judge⁴⁷. The new regulation of 1784 maintained the exclusive jurisdiction established in 1728⁴⁸.

7. *The safe-conduct*

Safe-conduct is one of the fundamental rules of free ports⁴⁹, and thus the religious regulations involving merchants trading in Messina are one of the most important sections of this research. The safe-conduct of its free port was aimed to attract and encourage the settlement of merchants of every nation and faith, first and foremost of the Jews from the West and from the Levant, with their international relationships. The safe-conducts were reformed over time, from the first one of 1695, which was quite restrictive⁵⁰, to the more inclusive one of 1728, to the last one of 1784. They were addressed to merchants of every nation, «from the Levant, the West, Spaniards, Por-

teria di commercio non si estraesse da Messina causa veruna, bensì esaminarsi dal Consolato di essa assemblea di mercanti e giudice privativo». This was necessary «per il buon concetto di porto franco» and especially because «ove vi sono i porti franchi ivi risiede positivamente il magistrato che giudicare dee delle leggi e regole». BCP, Qq F 87, ff. 568-575, 1 december 1739, but see also BCP, Qq G 41, ff. 403-425.

⁴⁷ The 7th of may 1740 (but already with a dispatch of 20th february 1740), the Viceroy informed the Sea Consulate of Messina that «tutte le cause di parti attinenti al commercio non debbano estraersi da cotesta Città, ma che la prima istanza seu cognitione sia di cotesto Consolato di mare e di terra, e la seconda tocchi al Giudice Privativo del Porto franco come delegato del Magistrato [...] che se le parti di commune consenso vorranno passare la causa in terza istanza a questo magistrato del Commercio, possono liberamente farlo», in *Editti, Proclami, ed Ordini reali per la creazione e governo del Supremo Magistrato di Commercio e de' Consolati di Mare, e Terra in questo fedelissimo Regno di Sicilia*, nella stamperia di Francesco Cichè, Palermo 1741, p. 29.

⁴⁸ *Editto reale per lo ristabilimento ed ampliazione de' privilegi, e del Salvo Conducto della Scala e Porto Franco della città di Messina*.

⁴⁹ TRIVELLATO, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; EAD., *Credito e tolleranza. I limiti del cosmopolitismo nella Livorno di età moderna*, Pisa University Press, Pisa 2016, p. 42.

⁵⁰ AHN, *Estado, Secretaria de Sicilia*, leg. 2196, no. 3, *Instruccion general para el Gobierno, del salvo conducto y escala franca en el puerto de la ciudad de Mecina de el Reyno de Sicilia*, 1694-1695.

tuguese, French, English, Dutch, Germans, Italians, Greeks, Jews, Turks, Moors, Armenians and Persians». They were to be free to «come, stay, trade, pass and dwell with their families» and «trade, sell, buy and export» every kind of goods. They were entitled to trade facilitations, safety for their families and for their belongings, and civil tolerance. The Jews, though, weren't allowed to travel in the Kingdom, were obliged to live in the ghetto and had to wear a yellow distinctive mark. Thus they «should not have to be subjects to any questioning for having lived outside of Messina as Christians» and they were allowed to sail «under the name of Christians». Proselytism on their part was banned, and also, on the contrary, their evangelization. Converted Jews and Muslims that became apostates were excluded from the safe-conduct⁵¹. «Excessive» privileges granted to Jews in 1728 were severely disapproved by the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office⁵². Despite the regulations which the Inquisition disapproved of, one year after the new safe-conduct, no new company owned by strangers or Jews had yet established in Messina. The presence of the Spanish Holy Office in Sicily was a more serious and insurmountable obstacle to the settlement of the Jews than the Roman Inquisition. Just one year after the abolition of that Tribunal in 1783 by Viceroy Caracciolo, the safe-conduct of 1784 repeated respect for the Navigation Acts and trade agreements and addressed all religions and cults tolerated in Europe, including Muslims, Jews and Christians of the Greek ritual, who had already been granted asylum and privileges in Messina, extending civil tolerance to religious one⁵³. The Jews however did not trust the regulation, and never settled in Messina. Trade with the Levant had been handled for a long time by Catholic Greeks residing in the city, but a substantial presence of Jews was considered a primary goal. But «Port Jews» actually were never to settle in Messina, which was to become instead a port of Englishmen: the strategic importance of the Strait of Messina for Mediterranean trade, and the opportunity of loading goods like silk, made the Sicilian port one of the most sought-

⁵¹ In *Istruzioni e nuovo regolamento dello scalo e porto franco di questa nobile e fedelissima ed esemplare città di Messina*, nella Regia Stamperia di D. Michele Chiaramonte, ed Antonino Provenzano nel Regio Palazzo, Messina 1728.

⁵² ARCHIVIO PER LA CONGREGAZIONE DELLA DOTTRINA PER LA FEDE, *Stanze Storiche*, CC 1d, ins. 1, 1729.

⁵³ *Editto reale per lo stabilimento ed ampliamento de' Privilegi e del Salvo Condotto*.

after locations for British merchants, consuls and vessels from mid-seventeenth century⁵⁴.

8. Conclusions

The project of giving the free port of Messina a fundamental role in the development of trade of the entire Kingdom of Sicily seems to have characterized the whole period under consideration. In the opinion of local economic actors, the free port was to have been not only a venue for transit and deposit of goods, but the very place where goods coming from the East and the West, and from Sicily itself, could be sold and exchanged. That is the reason why debates and projects involved, at the same time, the creation of trade companies holding exclusive rights on certain goods, the development of manufacturing of woven fabrics of silk and other products, and the issue of exchanging wheat, silk and oil with foreign goods.

But, how to combine the idea of the free port on the model of Leghorn and these expectations? How to balance the interests of foreign merchants with those of Sicilian producers? How to prevent – like Genovesi wrote – the foreign merchants coming to Messina «for pirating and not for trading»⁵⁵?

Many issues persisted in subsequent edicts, and clearly show the problem areas of the free port of Messina. These issues included monopolies and exclusive rights («privative») like the one for tobacco, and, in general, contracts on offices and indirect taxes; the complex system of import-export duties; interests and privileges of groups of merchants, like the Genovese first, and then the Greeks and the Mal-

⁵⁴ G. PAGANO DE DIVITIIS, *Mercanti inglesi nell'Italia del Seicento*, Marsilio, Venezia 1990; M. D'ANGELO, *Porti e traffici marittimi in Sicilia tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, in *Sopra i porti di mare. La Sicilia*, ed. by G. Simoncini, Olschki, Firenze 1997, pp. 71-110; EAD., *Mercanti inglesi in Sicilia 1806-1815. Rapporti commerciali tra Sicilia e Gran Bretagna nel periodo del Blocco continentale*, Giuffrè, Milano 1988; EAD., 'The Emporium of Trade of the Two Seas'; EAD., *British trade and merchants in the mid-Mediterranean: an alternative market during the Napoleonic Wars*, Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of Maritime History, CD, Corfu, 21-27 June 2004; S. BOTTARI, *Nel Mediterraneo dal mare del Nord. La presenza commerciale inglese nella Sicilia del Settecento*, Aracne, Roma 2012; H.G. KOENIGSBERGER, *English Merchants in Naples and Sicily in the Seventeenth Century*, «English Historical Review», LXII (1947), pp. 302-366.

⁵⁵ A. GENOVESI, *Delle Lezioni di commercio, o sia d'economia civile da leggersi nella Cattedra Interina*, Fratelli Simone, Napoli 1765, vol. 1, p. 319.

tese that competed with other foreigners; the cumbersome procedures of custom and health offices (registration, estimation, weighing, etc.) managed by a plethora of officers imposing abusing power, harassments and outrageous charges. On these matters, liberalization and administrative simplification were delayed⁵⁶. The balance of too many interests and powers was difficult, and the objective of the free port, the idol of many economists, seems to have been the hardest to achieve.

IDA FAZIO - RITA FOTI
University of Palermo

⁵⁶ On the administrative simplification of the free port of Leghorn after 1676, TAZZARA, *The Free Port of Livorno*.