

The Mediterranean Connections of Basque Ports (1700-1841): Trade, Trust and Networks*

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ABSTRACT

This research analyses the commercial relationships between Basque and the Mediterranean ports from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the first third of the nineteenth century, when the customs were moved to the coast. Although part of a wider international network, these connections must be considered a strategic relationship to both parties. The research delves into the lives, the evolution and the strategies put into practice by Mediterranean merchants who settled in Basque ports and Basque merchants who, without moving to other ports, strengthened their commercial ties, thanks to a combination of kinship, ethnicity and marriage between traders' families. Epistolary correspondence of some traders not only brings to light daily details and methods implemented by merchants in order to succeed, but also allows us to measure or at least get an approximate idea of the uncertainty, insecurity and dangers they faced during their commercial activity.

1. Introduction

Little is known about the trade connections between Basque and Mediterranean ports during the Early Modern period. It was, however, a strategic relationship, both for Basque and for Mediterranean merchants. During the eighteenth and the first half of

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the nineteenth century, trade networks were established between Bilbao, San Sebastián, Cadiz, Algeciras, Malaga, Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa and Livorno, as a part of a wider international network which encompassed Spanish America, the thirteen British colonies of America, the West of Europe, the Mediterranean and even Asia. The broader framework in which this relationship was set and the dearth of sources make it almost impossible to measure its impact quantitatively, but we can discern two main strategies. On the one hand, some Mediterranean merchants settled in Basque ports, mainly Bilbao and San Sebastián, as indeed did some Catalanian, French and Italian merchants, who arrived during the second half of the century. These merchants took advantage of their own networks to supply Basque territories with Mediterranean products, not only from their countries of origin but also from all over the Mediterranean world. In turn, they dispatched products purchased in Basque ports to their Mediterranean counterparts. Meanwhile, Basque merchants had agents and representatives in the Mediterranean, thus enabling the two regions to share networks, contacts, products, capital, ships and crews, in a reciprocal relationship.¹

Like Cadiz, where there was a large Basque colony – the largest during the 1770s² – Basque ports were gateways for American and Spanish products, mainly Basque iron, Castilian wool and American silver. Thanks to the *fueros* (special set of rights and privileges), their unique legal framework made them an essential part of the international trade networks of the period at least until 1841, when the customs were definitively moved to the coast, eroding their commercial privileges. This explains why so many foreign mer-

¹ Á. Aragón Ruano and A. Angulo Morales, “The Spanish Basque Country in Global Trade Networks in the Eighteenth Century”, in *International Journal of Maritime History*, XXV, 1, 2013, pp. 149-172.

² M. Bustos Rodríguez, *Cádiz en el sistema atlántico: la ciudad, sus comerciantes y la actividad mercantil (1650-1830)*, Madrid, 2005, pp. 130-138, and “Colonial Trade and development: The Spanish Case in the Eighteenth Century”, in P.C. Emmer et al., *A Deus ex Machina Revisited. Atlantic Colonial Trade and European Economic Development*, Leiden, 2006, pp. 118.

chants flocked to the Basque territories, especially after the Royal Company of Caracas was founded in 1728. In turn, Mediterranean products such as wheat, leather, citrus fruit and textiles arrived in the Basque Country, to be redistributed to the European and American markets. This paper analyses unpublished data from Basque, French and Spanish archives in order to chart not only the trade networks themselves and the places, people and products involved in them, but also the strategies pursued and the devices used. In this sense, we are lucky to have, among other sources, epistolary correspondence pertaining to one of the aforementioned merchants, which provides fascinating insight into the different situations experienced by those working in the field and the real impact of common concepts such as trust, distrust, reciprocity, uncertainty, friendship and disagreement. The principal aim of this paper is to provide an in-depth analysis of the trade relations that existed between Basque ports and the Mediterranean region, not as a specific network in its own right, but rather as part of a broader international business network linking markets around the world. The sources analysed enable us to understand more about the day-to-day commercial practices before and during periods of war, the strategies based on practical considerations, the importance of managing updated information on freights, wages, and so on, and of overcoming any objections and obstacles to hiring crews and ships from other countries. Ultimately, this research discusses the strategies used in order to enhance commercial trust.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first analyses the extent of Basque international trade networks, in order to calibrate the complementarity of Mediterranean links. The second discusses the presence of Mediterranean traders in Basque ports and their connections with their places of origin. The third section goes further into the presence, the relationships and the personal networks of Basque traders in the Mediterranean. Finally, the last section discusses the trade strategies, including the use of neutral crews, captains and ships, implemented by Basques in the Mediterranean trade.

2. International trade networks shared by Basque merchants

Although the main commercial connections of Basque ports were focused on Atlantic trade routes and the Americas, the Basque Country was also part of the “great European coastal trade route”, as Arnaud Bartolomei has recently defined it³. Basque iron, Castilian wool and American silver were dispatched from Bilbao and San Sebastián in exchange for European and American products.⁴ Both Bilbao and San Sebastián had commercial ties with the main North European and American cities.⁵ For instance, according to a letterbook belonging to Antonio Tastet, this San Sebastián merchant had trade links with many European cities, both on the Atlantic coast and inland, including 31 ports ranging from Scandinavia to Spain and from Britain to the Mediterranean. Other sources inform us that, like other merchants from San Sebastián and Bilbao, he also traded with North America and Spanish America, including Boston, Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, Martinique, Port Royal, Havana, La Guaira (Venezuela) and Veracruz.⁶ Tastet dealt in a wide variety of goods, such as cocoa, tobacco, coffee, iron, lead, forks, nails, flour, meat, corn, beans, sugar, molasses, salt, spirits, beer, wool, leather, cloths, orcinol (a dye), African slaves (Guinea), coke, wood, hog-head staves, masts, fir boards, tar, riggings, sails, buttons, cod, Norwegian roe (used as sardine bait), sardines, herrings, cheese, citrus fruit (lemons and oranges), nuts and oil.⁷

Yet, little is known about commercial links between Basque ports and Mediterranean cities. Earlier studies have paid only fleeting attention to this subject, owing to the paucity of documentary sources.

³ A. Bartolomei, “Cadix et la Méditerranée à la fin du XVIII^e siècle”, in *Revue d’Histoire Maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 173-210, 192.

⁴ Á. Aragón Ruano, “The Spanish Basque Country”, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-172.

⁵ R. Basurto Larrañaga, *Comercio y burguesía mercantil de Bilbao en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII*, Bilbao, 1983, pp. 95-97; P. O’Flanagan, *Port cities of Atlantic Iberia, c. 1500-1900*, Aldershot, 2008, pp. 265-267; A. Zabala Uriarte, *El comercio y tráfico marítimo del norte de España en el siglo XVIII*, 2 vols., San Sebastian, 1983, 2, pp. 13-242, and *Mundo urbano y actividad mercantil. Bilbao 1700-1810*, Bilbao, 1994, pp. 341-385.

⁶ General Archives of Gipuzkoa (GAG), JD AIM 551.

⁷ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782).

Ties between the Basque Country and the Mediterranean Sea existed at three levels. First, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, Italian, French and Catalanian merchants began to settle in Bilbao and San Sebastián, from where they continued to trade with their countries of origin. Second, Basque merchants traded directly with Mediterranean cities, such as Cadiz, Algeciras, Malaga, Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa and Livorno. And third, during the American Revolutionary War, the aforementioned merchants hired Italian, Portuguese, Danish or Imperial (i.e. from the Holy Roman Empire) captains and sailors to man their ships, thus ensuring neutral crews; later, during the French Revolutionary Wars, the Danes themselves, the Swedes – by the end of the eighteenth century Denmark and Sweden presumably had the fourth or fifth largest merchant fleet in Europe⁸ – and the Americans would play the same role, thanks to their treaties with the North African states of Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli and Morocco, which secured free passage for unarmed ship.⁹

3. Mediterranean merchants in the Basque Country

During the Early Modern Era, foreign merchants were a com-

⁸ H.C. Johansen, "Scandinavian Shipping in the late Eighteenth Century in a European Perspective", in *Economic History Review*, 45, 1992, pp. 479-493.

⁹ D.H. Andersen, "Denmark-Norway, Africa, and the Caribbean 1660-1917: modernisation financed by slaves and sugar?", in P.C. Emmer et al., *A Deus ex Machina, op. cit.*, pp. 291-315; D.H. Andersen and P. Pourchasse, "La navigation des flottes de l'Europe du nord vers la Méditerranée (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles)", in *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 21-44; D.H. Andersen and H.J. Voth, "The grapes of war: neutrality and Mediterranean shipping under the Danish flag, 1750-1807", in *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 48, 2000, pp. 5-27; S. Marzagalli, "American Shipping into the Mediterranean during the French Wars: A First Approach", in *Research in Maritime History*, 44, 2010, pp. 43-44, and "Les États-Unis en Méditerranée. Modalités et enjeux d'une nouvelle présence atlantique dans la Mer intérieure", in *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 71-100; L. Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce. The Swedish Consular Service and Long-distance Shipping, 1720-1815*, Uppsala, 2004, pp. 140-141 and 162; "Commerce et navigation suédois en Méditerranée à l'époque moderne, 1650-1815", in *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 61-70, and "Great power constraints and the growth of the commercial sector: the case of Sweden, 1600-1800", in P.C. Emmer et al., *A Deus ex Machina, op. cit.*, pp. 317-351; P. Pourchasse, "The North: a stake in European economy", in P.C. Emmer et al., *A Deus ex Machina, op. cit.*, pp. 266-289.

mon presence in the Basque Country. French, English, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese merchants would sojourn for long periods in the region, either as temporary residents or on a more permanent basis, above all in the thriving commercial ports of Bilbao and San Sebastián. Nevertheless, during the eighteenth century, most foreign merchants in the Basque region were French, because of geographical proximity and the rise of the Bourbon dynasty following the War of the Spanish Succession (1700-1713). These merchants were also attracted by the Royal Company of Caracas, founded in 1728, which had a monopoly over the Venezuelan cocoa trade.¹⁰ The largest foreign resident communities were those hailing from the French Basque Country and Béarn,¹¹ although there were also a quite a few British subjects (both English and Irish). A smaller number of Italian merchants also resided in the Basque Country. In 1792, according to a survey conducted by the Spanish Crown, some of them lived in Guipúzcoa, although none is recorded as being resident in Biscay. In Tolosa, there was Juan Bautista Balou, from Milan, who had arrived ten years previously; in Mondragón, Antonio Bernardo Zandeti, who had also arrived ten years earlier and had married a Spanish-Basque woman and settled down; in San Sebastián, Jerónimo Esquenor, from Genoa, who had settled there 30 years previously and also married a Spanish-Basque woman; and finally, there were Angel and Estanislao Pierini,¹² two brothers who had lived in San Sebastián at least since 1783, when they were involved in a trial, accused by Pedro Antonio Purroy, a merchant from San Sebastián, of defaulting on a loan.¹³

Spaniards from elsewhere in Spain (including Catalonia) were

¹⁰ M.L. Díaz Truchuelo, "La Real Compañía de Filipinas en Guipúzcoa", in *Itsas Memoria*, 4, 2003, pp. 369-381.

¹¹ Á. Aragón Ruano, "'Con casa, familia y domicilio'. Mercaderes extranjeros en Guipúzcoa durante la Edad Moderna", in *Studia Historica. Historia Moderna*, 31, 2009, pp. 155-200.

¹² *Estado de la resultancia de las diligencias practicadas en la Provincia de Guipuzcoa y Pueblos de su partido para la Matrícula de Extranjeros y demás que comprende la Real Cedula de 20 de julio del año próximo pasado (1792)*, National Historical Archive (NHA), Estado, 629.

¹³ NHA, Consejos Suprimidos, Consejo de Castilla, L29281/EXP 16 and the Royal Chancellery Archive of Valladolid, Fernando Alonso, Olvidados, C 370/3.

considered foreigners in both Biscay and Guipúzcoa. Here we will focus on the highly specific case of ten Catalonian merchants who settled in the Basque Country during the eighteenth century. All of them were from Copons, a farming village close to Igualada that in 1787 had just 468 inhabitants. The village specialised in the cloth business, and between 1700 and 1819 at least 291 of its inhabitants were merchants, trading with or moving to other parts of the Iberian Peninsula as “botiguers” or shopkeepers. At first, some of them worked as temporary cart drivers or freelance or contract suppliers, exporting textiles, spirits and sandals from Catalonia and importing wheat, oil, silk and wool. Later on they became street vendors, before eventually opening shops in a number of different Spanish cities. This did not, however, prevent them from returning to Catalonia to visit their relatives, get married or see their sons and daughters.¹⁴ The ten merchants mentioned above were members of just three families, surnamed Brunet, Ramón and Tomás (Table 1). Moreover, the first two families were related by marriage, substantiating the observation by Assumpta Muset i Pons that intermarriage was very common among Catalonian emigrants.

We have no information about Manuel Tomás Pujol, who was the first to arrive in the Basque Country, turning up in Vitoria in around 1740. The family about which most is known is the Brunet family. Some of its members reported in 1795 that the family had been living in San Sebastián for more than forty years.¹⁵ Francisco Manuel Brunet Casulleras, who was born in 1731 and who married Raimunda Tudo and then, in 1761, María Teresa Segura, arrived in San Sebastián in the 1750s, probably (like most other people from Catalonia) as a street vendor trading in Catalonian cloths and other foreign and Spanish merchandise.¹⁶ Francisco Manuel Brunet Casul-

¹⁴ E. Lluch, *Las Españas vencidas del siglo XVIII. Claroscuros de la Ilustración*, Barcelona, 1999, pp. 106-115; A. Muset i Pons, *Traginers i negociants de Copons (s. XVIII)*, Barcelona, 2004, pp. 21-30, and “El grup de traginers i negociants de Calaf i Copons Durant el segle XVIII”, in *Estudis històrics i documents dels arxius de protocols*, 16, 1998, pp. 303-326.

¹⁵ GAG, CO UCI 2581.

¹⁶ A. Muset i Pons, “Los Vidal, una estirpe de negociantes catalanes de siglo XVIII”, in *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie IV, Historia Moderna*, 11, 1998, pp. 321-342, 327-328.

TABLE 1
Catalonians in the Basque Country (1740-1819)

Name	Arrival date
Manuel Brunet Casulleres	1750
Manuel Brunet Tudo	1780
Francisco Brunet Segura	1790
José Brunet Segura	1790
Pedro Ramón Segura	1760
Juan Ramón Segura	1770
José Ramón Vidal	1790
Manuel Ramón Vidal	1790
Roque Ramón Vidal	1790
Manuel Tomás Pujol	1740

Note: A. Muset i Pons, "Los arrieros y negociantes de Calaf y Copons y su implantación en el Mercado español en el siglo XVIII", in *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 8, 1995, pp. 193-208.

leras counted three sons among his children. All three, Manuel Brunet Tudo (1755-1833), José Francisco Brunet Segura (1766-1844) and Francisco Jaime Brunet Segura (1768-1838), were born in Copons but died in San Sebastián. The eldest, Manuel Brunet Tudo, married María Agustina Vidal, also born in Copons, and José Francisco Brunet Segura married Ramona Josefa Prat, born in Prats del Rey (Catalonia). However, the youngest son, Francisco Jaime Brunet Segura, married Maria Carmen Fernández Arroyave, the daughter of a local merchant.¹⁷ Manuel Brunet Tudo arrived in San Sebastián during the 1780s, while José and Francisco came in the following decade. Although we have no further information about their lives, it is plausible to assume that they followed in their father's footsteps, or at least perhaps the eldest did and then sent for his half-brothers to join him in the Basque port city. This strategy was quite commonly adopted by merchants from Catalonia and elsewhere: sons or young re-

¹⁷ M. Gárate Ojanguren, "La familia Brunet, San Sebastián y América (Presencia catalana en el puerto donostiara, s. XVIII-XX)", in *Boletín de Estudios Históricos de San Sebastián*, 24, 1990, pp. 105-134; and File of Nobility of José and Francisco de Brunet, Churruga Archive, Count of Motrico, 1827.

latives were usually appointed as apprentices under the attentive care of their elders.¹⁸

Although Francisco Manuel Brunet Casulleras apparently arrived in San Sebastián with very little money, he soon had a flourishing commercial business. Records show a company called Manuel Brunet & Co importing Catalanian goods in 1777, but we have no way of knowing if it was run by Francisco Manuel Brunet Casulleras himself or by his son Manuel Brunet Tudo.¹⁹ In any case, during the 1780s Manuel Brunet Riera & Co was established by the merchant's three sons in collaboration with Manuel Riera Vidal, another Catalanian, who was also born in Copons and who married María Brunet Segura, José and Francisco Brunet Segura's sister.²⁰ In 1783 Miguel Formentí wrote to Manuel Brunet Riera & Co of San Sebastián, informing them that rain had kept the mules he had dispatched from delivering his printed calicoes to San Sebastián.²¹ On the eve of the Basque Country's involvement in the Revolutionary Wars (1794), we find these merchants embroiled in their own troubles, as is evident in the reports of a trial in which Bernardo Gomez, a customs administrator from Vitoria, accused Manuel Brunet of not paying the tax due on a shipment of 96 silk stockings.²² In addition to their trade between Europe and Spanish America, Manuel Brunet Riera & Co also imported wine, spirits and clothes from Catalonia, mainly by land. During the eighteenth century, several Catalanian cotton entrepreneurs used the Barcelona-based Gremi de Sant Antoni Abat de Llogaters de Mules (Guild of Mule Hirers) to send their shipments from Barcelona to Na-

¹⁸ A. Muset i Pons, "Los Vidal", *op. cit.*, p. 329. These strategies were common among other communities, even among Basques; see A. Angulo Morales, *Del éxito de los negocios al fracaso del consulado: la formación de la burguesía mercantil de Vitoria (1670-1840)*, Bilbao, 2000, pp. 104-110, and A. Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz y los Países Bajos. Una comunidad en la ciudad de la ilustración*, Cádiz, 2001, pp. 191-204.

¹⁹ GAG, CO LCI 3739, fols. 3-33.

²⁰ C. Aparicio Pérez, *Poder municipal, economía y sociedad en la ciudad de San Sebastián (1813-1855)*, San Sebastián, 1991, pp. 202-207.

²¹ A. Muset i Pons, "Els transports per terra entre Catalunya i la resta de regions espanyoles al segle XVIII", in *Recerques: Història, economia i cultura*, 31, 1995, pp. 73-92, 80.

²² NHA, Consejo de Hacienda, Escribanía Abuin, LEG 34500 / EXP 66.

varre and the Basque Country via Saragossa or Logroño. For instance, in 1783 Joan Baptista Cirés sent a shipment of goods to Manuel Tomás & Son of Vitoria, using the Saragossa-Logroño route. As mentioned earlier, in 1784 Miguel Formentí, a cotton trader from Barcelona, shipped a bundle of platilles (a thin, unfinished cloth) from Barcelona to Manuel Brunet Riera & Co of San Sebastián, through Juan Bonich, via Saragossa.²³ Manuel Brunet Riera & Co had once been associated with Pedro and Juan Ramón Segura, also from Copons, but the company was dissolved in 1784.

Manuel Brunet Riera & Co ran into problems during the French Revolutionary Wars. In particular, in 1794, when French troops seized Irun and San Sebastián, two of the company's partners were there and immediately baled up all their goods and stowed them on two ships. Unfortunately, the wind kept the ships from sailing. One of them finally managed to leave port, but the other was captured and confiscated. The occupying troops ordered the merchants to gather up and sell all their commercial items. The brother who had been unable to escape sold his wares to French buyers and later fled the city after being told that the French intended to send everybody to Bayonne. As a result of the war, Manuel Brunet Riera & Co suffered large losses and its trading house was destroyed. Before the war, the company was worth 2,341,575 *reales de vellón*: 1,000,035 in money and 1,341,540 in goods. After the war its total equity value had been reduced to 437,334 *reales de vellón* (in goods, ready cash and letters of credit); thus, in San Sebastián the company lost 616,374 *reales de vellón* (plus the 154,714 *reales de vellón* owed to it by various residents of the city). Debts owed by the company came to 1,291,540 *reales de vellón*, whereas debts owed to it totalled 1,725,201 *reales de vellón* (Tables 2 and 3). In 1795, after the war, the company petitioned the Crown for a period of grace from its creditors. A Royal Decree granted it a reprieve of two more months in which to reach an agreement with its creditors.

²³ A. Muset i Pons, "Els transports", *op. cit.*, p. 78.

TABLE 2
Debts owed to Manuel Brunet, Riera & Co (1795)

Country	Concept	Reales de vellón
Venezuela (Spanish America)	42 bundles and spirits dispatched to Sebastian Esponda of Maracaibo	10,000
Labourd (France)	In Bayonne	9,112
Guipúzcoa	Some people in San Sebastian	154,714
	In Tolosa	71,523
	In Azpeitia	83,816
	In Segura and Lazkao	23,401
	In Bergara	13,229
	In Arrasate	24,682
	Some temporary resident in Guipúzcoa	112,470
	Some loans granted to Pedro and Juan Ramón	170,000
Biscay	In Durango	17,624
	In Urduña	1,694
	In Balmaseda	32,531
	In Bilbao	48,314
	In Portugalete	12,890
Alava	In Vitoria and Salvatierra	49,946
Navarre	In Pamplona	144,249
Cantabria	In Castro Urdiales	21,648
	In Laredo	22,059
	In Hoznayo	5,759
	In Santander	70,136
Catalonia	Antonio Ginabreda of Barcelona to buy 100 barrels of wine or spirits	117,333
	Total stock	1,725,201

Note: GAG, CO UCI 2581.

As shown in Table 2, Manuel Brunet Riera & Co traded between Catalonia and San Sebastián, redistributing Catalonian products such as wine, spirits and clothes to Spanish America and other places in both the Spanish and French Basque countries, Navarra and Cantabria. Hence, they traded with Catalonian, European and American products, which they shipped across the interior of Spain or

TABLE 3
Debts owed by Manuel Brunet Y Riera & Co (1795)

Company	Place	Catalo- nian pounds	Reales de vellón	Company	Place	Catalo- nian pounds	Reales de vellón
Julia Albanell & Co	Barcelona	1,804		Viuda de Catala	Barcelona	234	
Ignacio Reges	Barcelona	1,282		Francisco Roca & Trenchs	Barcelona	407	
Salvador Rodes	Barcelona	395		Juan Batlle	Barcelona	148	
Juan Aribau & Co	Barcelona	7,465		Casas, Amigo & Co	Barcelona	3,803	
Maria Rosa Bolart	Barcelona	332		Juan Bautista Vidal	Barcelona	1,146	
Francisco Brusosa & Co	Barcelona	3,518		Mariano Llopart & Co	Barcelona	2,640	
Jose Castañer	Barcelona	5,126		Tomás Parera	Manresa	1,040	
Jauma Canet	Barcelona	859		Pablo Miralda & Co	Manresa	11,689	
Ignacio Masvidal & Co	Barcelona	423		José Valles Boladeras	Manresa	5,070	
Juan Rull & Co	Barcelona	728		Antonio Gomis	Manresa	369	
Juan Coll & Co	Barcelona	607		Francisco Ignaci Oms	Manresa	1,463	
Bernat Llorens & Co	Barcelona	1,789		Ignacio Parera & Co	Manresa	934	
Vizens Pujol	Barcelona	284		Francisco Calsina & Garrigosa	Manresa	1,007	
Ribas & Pairo	Barcelona	2,417		Juan Turrens & Co	Manresa	2,158	
Juan Capistrano & Font	Barcelona	125		Viuda de Ramon & Son	Mataro	221	
Desclapes Amat & Co	Barcelona	789		Pere Martir Viladesau	Mataro	672	
Espalters Rosas & Co	Barcelona	4,314		Armengol Ganer & Co	Mataro	93	
Canals & Nadal	Barcelona	767		Juan Castells	Igualada	150	
Jose Sala & Bosch	Barcelona	10,149		Anton Amigo	Igualada	794	
Viuda Ingles	Barcelona	756		Felip Farre & Llopart	Igualada	778	
Nicolas Sivilla & Co	Barcelona	9,075		Jose Amigo & Son	Igualada	296	
Juan Bautista Sires & Co	Barcelona	6,997		Agusti Masmitja	Olot	1,063	
Viuda de Busquets & Co	Barcelona	2,452		Sagrsta Manent & Co	Valencia		
Jose Puix, Torres & Co	Barcelona	4,042		Manuel Joaquin Zubiaurre	Valladolid	5,839	
Geroni Aguila	Barcelona	1,333		Domingo Pescador	Saragossa		
Viuda Fonsare	Barcelona	307		Subtotal		114,520	1,221,540
Casellas & Beltrán	Barcelona	1,263		Cortasola	San Sebastián	70,000	
Unkonwn	Barcelona	3,108		Total			1,291,540

Note: GAG, CO UCI 2581.

by coastal routes to the South of France. The records of another trial let us know the identity of least one of the company's clients and tell us what products she sold in her shop. In 1777, Juana Castera, a French shopkeeper living in Azpeitia (a small Guipúzcoan village 30 kilometres from San Sebastián), reached an agreement with all her creditors, most of them merchants from Bayonne, Bilbao and San Sebastián, allowing her to repay her debts in two instalments. Only two creditors initially held out: Pedro Ignacio Iraramendi, a merchant from Bilbao, and Manuel Brunet (probably Francisco Manuel Brunet Casulleras), to whom Juana Castera owed a small sum of money (3,159 *reales de vellón*). Ultimately, both were obliged to capitulate and sign the agreement. In her shop, Juana Castera mainly sold clothes made of wool, cotton or silk, manufactured in Catalonia, elsewhere in Spain and elsewhere in Europe. She also sold haberdashery, lard, soap, spices such as cloves, saffron, pepper and cinnamon, paper, sandals, chocolate, cocoa from Guayaquil and Caracas, and sugar.²⁴

By contrast, as we can see in Table 3, the Manuel Brunet Riera & Co's creditors were mainly Catalonians. Most of the names on the list belong to the leading Catalonian cotton and clothes traders and wine merchants of the period. They hailed from the principal hubs of the textile industry, including Barcelona, Manresa, Mataro, Igualada and Olot.²⁵ The majority appear in the 1789 to 1808 Almanacs.

²⁴ GAG, CO LCI 3739, fols. 3-33.

²⁵ Ll. Ferrer i Alós, *Aproximació a l'estructura agrària de la comarca de Bages en el segle XVIII i primera meitat del segle XIX*, Barcelona, 1984, unpublished doctoral dissertation, and "El creixement divers de la Catalunya del segle XVIII. Protoindustrialització?", in *Catalan Historical Review*, 5, 2012, pp. 195-209; J.C. MaixéAltés, "El mercado algodonero y la producción industrial en Cataluña (1780-1790)", in *Pedralbes: Revista d'història moderna*, 8, 1, 1988, pp. 365-384; A. Sánchez Suárez, "La indianería catalana: ¿mito o realidad?", in *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 1, 1992, pp. 213-228, and "De la compañía de hilados a la comisión de fábricas. El asociacionismo empresarial en Cataluña durante la crisis del Antiguo Régimen (1772-1820)", in *Pedralbes: Revista d'història moderna*, 8, 1 (1988), 385-394; O. Raveaux and A. Sánchez, "La adaptación tecnológica como factor de localización industrial. Una revisión de las investigaciones sobre la industria de hilados de algodón en Cataluña (1772-1885)", in *Investigaciones de Historia Económica*, junio 2010, pp. 65-94; J.K.J. Thompson, "Olot, Barcelona and Ávila and the introduction of

Some were enrolled merchants, while others were not, such as Ignacio Reges or Armengol Gener & Co, the director of the Royal Company of Barcelona; some were members of the Royal Yarn Factory, such as Juan Rull & Co, Juan Coll & Co, Espalters Rosas & Co, and Jose Sala y Bosch, or else owners of clothing factories not associated with the aforementioned Royal Factory, such as Jauma Canet, Juan Aribau & Co, and Jose Puix Torres & Co.²⁶

During the Peninsular War (1808-1813) the French occupation forced the Brunet brothers to move to Lekeitio (Biscay). At the end of the conflict disagreements arose among the three brothers and José and Francisco set up a new company, José & Francisco Brunet. The company soon became one of the most successful and trustworthy firms in San Sebastián, and the Brunet brothers came to hold some of the highest positions in the local council and purchased several properties both in the city itself and further inland. They also married strategically— such marital strategies were not exclusive to Catalonian merchants, and were indeed very common at the time among all merchant communities²⁷ – and thus forged alliances with leading trading families in San Sebastián, such as the Bermighams, the Echagües and the Collados.²⁸ Throughout the nineteenth century, in addition to its American business, José & Francisco Brunet also kept up its relationship with Catalonia, acting as an agent for Gabriel Salcedo in 1831, for example. It continued to import wine, spirits and textiles, and in 1804 imported and sold 1,018 barrels of Catalonian red wine dispatched on the orders of Don Ignacio Reges of Barcelona (whose name appeared on the list of creditors in 1795) by Larrard & Vignau of Reus from the port of Salou.²⁹ Within the textile industry, the brothers established a cotton factory in Lasarte-Oria

the Arkwright technology to Catalonia”, in *Revista de Historia Económica*, XXI, 2 (2001), 297-333; Lidia Torra, “Comercialización y consumo de tejidos en Cataluña (1650-1800)”, in *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 11, 1997, pp. 177-195.

²⁶ *Almanak mercantil o guía de comerciantes*, Madrid, 1789-1808.

²⁷ A. Bustos Rodríguez, *Cádiz en el sistema Atlántico*, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-219.

²⁸ C. Aparicio Pérez, *Poder municipal*, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-207, 233 and 270-272.

²⁹ Archive of Heriz Family, Pio Elizalde, I, (1795-1836), Private life, Business, Management and correspondence. Biography, Personal documents, 34, 730.

(near San Sebastián) and Jose Brunet set up a spinning factory in Barcelona. A number of other families, such as the Queheilles, also had dealings with Catalonia. In 1831, Compte & Co of Barcelona charged them with recovering a cargo of iron owed to that company by Pascual Isidro Minondo (another merchant from San Sebastián). Coincidentally, José & Francisco Brunet, Pedro Queheille & Sons and Widow of Collado & Sons together monopolised the tobacco trade.³⁰ During the nineteenth century José & Francisco Brunet expanded its business interests to include a bank, a paper factory, shares in the San Sebastián Tram Company and the Gas Streetlights Company, an equipment foundry and a glass factory.³¹

As we can infer from the sample of the Brunet family, and extrapolate to the Tastet family, under the Old Regime a “company” signified a “trading house” potentially involved in a wide array of different businesses, from tax farming to trade activities. Contemporary merchants were supposed to manage their books, raise funds, make balance sheets and draw bills. During the period under review companies’ structure did not change, but their goals and manner of operation did. Throughout the eighteenth century the profit-making objective was the preservation of the family, but from the end of the century onwards the new goals were better negotiation, funds management and an optimal business organisation. Companies became independent organisations, distinct from the trading house and family; they turned into trade partnership ruled by rationality and functionality. The literature has discerned four types of company: “general trading companies” devoted to the wholesale trade; “limited partnership companies”, in which one partner invested money and the other worked as a trader; “limited liability companies” set up for a specific objective, such as to win a tax or supply contract; and “stock companies” without specified trade objectives.

³⁰ C. Aparicio Pérez, *Poder municipal, op. cit.*, pp. 229.

³¹ M. Garate Ojanguren, “La familia Brunet”, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-132; C. Larrinaga Rodríguez, “Los comerciantes banqueros y la industrialización guipuzcoana a mediados del siglo XIX”, in *Historia Contemporánea*, 27, 2003, pp. 838-854.

Most of the companies mentioned in this paper were “general trading companies”, i.e. pure trade partnerships, “self-oriented”, chiefly composed of members of the same family, in which it is very difficult to distinguish between private and family objectives and there are different kinds of capital: cash, goods, credits, partnership work, and prestige and reputation investment. Precisely reputation and trust were the basis of commercial success, and in order to acquire and maintain them large hierarchical networks of patronage were created. Membership of a trade network and good status in it were as important as the skills, knowledge and experience of agents or brokers. As the case of Cadiz demonstrates, in the same port several powerful and stable companies, with important international branches, created by foreign merchants, could coexist with a majority of short-lived firms established for a specific purpose, sale or trip, mostly by Spaniards, who acted as agents for other foreign firms.³²

4. Basque merchants in the Mediterranean

Though located on the periphery, the Mediterranean area was completely integrated into the international trade network, a circumstance which prompted both economic specialisation and complementarity with the Atlantic markets. From the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, the Spanish Mediterranean area became increasingly focused on colonial and Atlantic trade. The decrease in trade from Castile between 1570 and 1590 was

³² A. Angulo Morales, *Del éxito de los negocios*, pp. 102 and 219-233; and “La ‘Buena fama y crédito’ de la casa de comercio. Redes de relaciones mercantiles y empleo de mecanismos de dependencia a finales del Antiguo Régimen”, in J.M. Imizcoz Beunza, *Redes familiares y patronazgo. Aproximación al entramado social del País Vasco y Navarra en el Antiguo Régimen (siglos XV-XIX)*, Bilbao, UPV, pp. 210-216; M. Bustos Rodríguez, *Cádiz en el sistema Atlántico*, op. cit., pp. 436-482; Ch. Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII^e siècle: contribution à l’étude des économies maritimes*, 2 vols., Provence, 1973, 2, pp. 880-885; R. Franch Benavent, *Crecimiento comercial y enriquecimiento burgués en la Valencia del siglo XVIII*, Valencia, 1986, pp. 239-288; C. Petit, *La Compañía Mercantil bajo el Régimen de las Ordenanzas del Consulado de Bilbao 1737-1829*, Sevilla, 1979, pp. 43-72.

compensated for by increased activity along the Barcelona-Genoa axis, based mainly on precious metals. Up until 1550, there were two main routes departing from Catalonian ports: the short coastal route down to various Spanish Mediterranean ports, and the so-called Mediterranean trip from Catalonia to the South of Italy and the eastern Mediterranean. From 1550 onwards, both were superseded by a long coastal trade route between Catalonia and various Atlantic ports in Spain and Portugal. During the eighteenth century, Barcelona, Salou and Mataro formed part of a series of Atlantic networks that shipped spirits and wine not to America, but, rather, to northern European. Valencia was also one of the principal ports in the Spanish Mediterranean, but only until the end of the seventeenth century, when it was supplanted by Alicante, which in addition to being a major port of call for Atlantic ships in the Mediterranean, was also the main point of departure for shipments of Castilian wool from Cadiz to Genoa and Livorno beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. During the eighteenth century, Valencia and Sagunto exported spirits to northern France and the British Channel Islands (Jersey and Guernsey), from where the goods were smuggled into England, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. At the end of the seventeenth century, Alicante was a centre for Dutch trade, even though English merchants controlled all the commercial traffic, a fact that prompted many Italians to settle in Spain's Mediterranean ports. For its part, Marseille became the principal destination for Majorcan oil and the main re-distributor of other Mediterranean and Atlantic products, although it was overtaken by Genoa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thanks to trade in spirits, oil, wine, soap and textiles, as well as to the presence of a Jewish community with ties to kindred communities in places such as Amsterdam, Livorno and Marseille. Genoa and Marseille were the major distribution hubs of the Mediterranean.³³

³³ R. Franch Benavent, "El comercio en el mediterráneo español durante la Edad Moderna: del estudio del tráfico a su vinculación con la realidad productiva y el contexto social", in *Obradoiro de Historia Moderna*, 17, 2008, pp. 77-112.

The relationship between Basque and Mediterranean ports dates back to the Middle Ages. This paper only focuses, however, on the Early Modern Era. In the case of Catalonia, after the discovery of America, merchants from Barcelona and Catalonia were eager to participate in the incipient colonial trade. At the time, Barcelona had more commercial ties with the Mediterranean than with the Atlantic, although its Atlantic connections were essential. While Catalonia's relationship with the Basque Country was not its principal commercial undertaking, as is made evident by the fact that most of the ships arriving in Barcelona from 1498 to 1537 came from Lisbon, Galicia and Andalusia, the same period saw 15 ships arrive there from Bilbao and San Sebastián. Unfortunately, we have no specific data on Basque ships from 1538 to 1741, but during that period the majority of Atlantic ships came from Andalusia and Portugal. During the eighteenth century, Cadiz was in the ascendant, yet ships continued to sail from the Bay of Biscay and the Basque Country to Barcelona and Mataró. From 1741 to 1773, 20 ships arrived from the northern coast of Spain. Atlantic ships traded not only with Barcelona, but also with other Mediterranean ports, such as Marseille, Genoa and Livorno, from where they supplied certain goods to Catalonia. Catalonia exported industrial items, such as glassware, ironware, textiles and leather, as well as agricultural products, including wine, spirits, and fruits and nuts. In turn, the region imported salt fish, wheat, textiles and ironware.³⁴

During the eighteenth century Cadiz, on the Atlantic, became an outer harbour for Mediterranean trade, offering essential services notably to Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa and Livorno. In Cadiz, Atlantic and Mediterranean trade routes and products converged: Moroccan wheat, North American flour and cod, Swedish wood and tar, Basque iron, Catalanian wines, British, French, Flemish and Dutch textiles, and so on.³⁵ Although some Mediterranean regions exported

³⁴ E. Martín Corrales, "La Catalogne et l'Atlantique à l'Époque moderne", in *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 139-172.

³⁵ A. Bustos Rodríguez, *Cádiz en el sistema Atlántico*, op. cit., pp. 60-70 and 364-372.

some specific products to Cadiz and the other Atlantic ports (barley from Sicily, fruit, wine and sodium carbonate from Alicante and Malaga, etc.), trade from the major Mediterranean ports (Barcelona, Marseille and Genoa) was more diversified, as indeed it was in the Atlantic ports, featuring a mix of raw materials and manufactured products destined for both American and European cities. According to Arnaud Bartolomei, the long history of commercial exchanges between Cadiz and the principal Mediterranean ports explains why Cadiz did not decline after commercial freedom was decreed in 1778, despite the fact that Barcelona and Malaga were henceforth allowed to trade directly with America. Moreover, Cadiz was strategically located along the European coastal trade route, midway between Naples and Hamburg or between Marseille and Le Havre. Thus, Cadiz was indeed the most important Mediterranean port, ranking before Malaga, Marseille, Genoa or Livorno.³⁶

During the eighteenth century, few Basques were involved in the trade from Bilbao or San Sebastián to Mediterranean ports; in Patrick O'Flanagan's words, "Africa and the Mediterranean scarcely figured at all in these trading realms".³⁷ However, many of them traded with Cadiz. From Bilbao, but mainly from San Sebastián, Antonio Tastet, Francisco Aldaz and José Vicente Michelena traded with Cadiz, Algeciras, Malaga, Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa and Livorno. Francisco Aldaz and José Vicente Michelena were merchants, natives of Navarre, who had settled in San Sebastián. They arrived there during the second half of the eighteenth century and set up a company that operated from August 1781 to July 1788. However, their trade links with Mediterranean ports pre-date the establishment of their company. For instance, Francisco Aldaz shipped staves and hoops to Malaga under the supervision of Juan Menvielle Westreston & Co and also had a relationship with both Octavio Flor Neumans and Helmelke, two of the leading merchants who traded indirectly with America (Octavio Flor Neumans was recorded as having made a

³⁶ A. Bartolomei, "Cadix et la Méditerranée", *op. cit.*, pp. 173-209.

³⁷ P. O'Flanagan, *Port cities*, *op. cit.*, pp. 267.

profit of 45,000 *reales de vellón* and was a member of the “Maritime Commerce” guild).³⁸ Both had dealings with another merchant from San Sebastián, Antonio Tastet, whose story we will explore shortly. They shared consignments (wheat, flour and coke) and co-owned a number of ships, including “El Gracioso”, “La Aventura” and “La Aparición de María”. Curiously, a closer inspection of their business dealings reveals that they also used the same financial agents as Tastet in some European ports, such as Fermin Tastet in London, Echenique, Sánchez & Co in Amsterdam, Francisco Celestino Berrueta in Madrid, Delessert & Co in Lyon, and Acevedo & Son in Bordeaux. They sent iron to Cadiz, Ferrol and Malaga and traded for textiles, including silk from Valencia. The company was involved in the European trade networks, working with a European merchants’ agent in Spain and drawing bills of exchange on European financial circuits – London, Paris, Hamburg, Genoa and Marseille. The trade from San Sebastián may seem like a minor affair at first, but the case of Aldaz & Co, with assets worth five million *reales de vellón*, belies this notion, especially when we recall that the most successful merchants from Cadiz had assets of fifteen million, those from Barcelona fourteen million, those from Valencia just one million and those from Bilbao only two million.³⁹

Juan Antonio Tastet and his brother Fermin Tastet were born in San Sebastián. Their parents were originally from Bayonne (Juan Tastet and his wife, María Ignacia Gachez, moved to San Sebastian during the mid-1700s).⁴⁰ Whereas Fermin Tastet moved to London, where he set himself up as a merchant and banker, establishing Fermin Tastet & Co, Antonio Tastet stayed in San Sebastián. As mentioned earlier, Antonio Tastet traded all over Europe and North and Spanish America, but he also had substantial commercial and finan-

³⁸ A. Gámez Amián, *Comercio colonial y burguesía mercantil “malagueña” (1765-1830)*, Málaga, 1992, p. 77; M.B. Villar García, “Los comerciantes franceses en la Málaga del siglo XVIII”, in *Baetica. Estudios de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, 31, 2009, pp. 457-478, 461.

³⁹ I. Miguel López, “«Aldaz»: sociedad mercantil donostiarra del siglo XVIII”, in *Boletín de Estudios Históricos sobre San Sebastián*, 39, 2005, pp. 237-286.

⁴⁰ NHA, Estado, 629-1.

cial links with the Mediterranean region, particularly with Algeciras, Malaga, Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa and Livorno. Once again, according to his letter-book, which encompasses correspondence he sent in 1781 and 1782, during the American Revolutionary War (1779-83) or, more precisely, the Anglo-Spanish War, Tastet maintained regular correspondence with his consignees and agents in Cadiz and Malaga. His letters to Malaga went to Don José Manescau & Maury, while in Cadiz his main contact was Dezermeaux & Brockmann.

These agents informed Tastet about freight rates not only in Cadiz, but also in Sanlucar de Barrameda and Malaga. He entrusted most of his trade between Cadiz and Malaga to Dezermeaux & Brockmann. On 10 June 1782 he wrote to them that he was dispatching oak ribs and curves for barrels, riggings, 1,580 bushels of Dutch beans (which he expected to sell in Algeciras or San Roque) and iron from the port of Pasaia to Cadiz, in order to complete a cargo of 350 tar barrels, hoops and other items.⁴¹ Since Tastet had encountered difficulties in the past, he decided to send along an agent, Domingo Castaños, to inform him of the freight rates in Cadiz and Malaga, though he already had agents in both ports.⁴² When Castaños arrived in Cadiz, Tastet ordered him to journey on to Malaga in order to send fruit and wine to London, via Bayonne. Castaños's was tasked with managing Tastet's business dealings in Cadiz and the surrounding area, keeping him abreast of freight and cargo prices and conditions and the best flags to use, reaching agreements with the captains, selecting the cargos and destinations, and giving him all the information necessary to enable the appropriate insurance to be taken out. From Cadiz, Dezermeaux & Brockmann assumed responsibility for one of Antonio Tastet's ships, which was sent to supply the Spanish troops that were besieging Gibraltar.⁴³

⁴¹ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 591.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 654.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 807. On the work of brokers, agents and representatives, see A. Angulo Morales, "La «buena fama y crédito»", *op. cit.*, pp. 210-216.

Alongside Dezermeaux & Brockmann, Tastet had other agents in Cadiz: Pedro Atalay, Juan de Dios de Landaburu and Greppi Marliani & Co. Atalay and Landaburu were consignees, in the dual sense of term, i.e. they were both agents and responsible for receiving the cargo. Juan de Dios de Landaburu was a member of the Basque Guild of Cadiz, and served on the city council between 1796 and 1806.⁴⁴ In May 1782 Tastet dispatched a cargo of boards and staves, as well as tar, from Bayonne to Malaga, via Atalay in Cadiz. He also sent 338 barrels of tar to Landaburu, with orders to sell them to the Royal Arsenal of Cadiz or any private buyer.⁴⁵ Through Landaburu, Tastet also had dealings with several foreign companies, such as Emery brothers of Lyon, Jean Cottin fils & Jauge of Paris, Cayla, Solier, Cabanes, Jugla & Co of Cadiz, but with branches in Genoa or Marseille, and Verduc Kerlogueb Payan & Co of Cadiz and Havana.⁴⁶ In the case of Pablo Greppi, Antonio Tastet took it upon himself to send a certain amount of money to the wife of one of Greppi's captains, who lived in Cestona, a small inland village in Guipúzcoa, near Zumaia.⁴⁷

Pablo (or Paolo) Greppi, a leading merchant in Cadiz, was one of the five sons of Antonio Greppi, three of whom, Marco, Giacomo and Pablo himself, were sent to Amsterdam, Hamburg and Cadiz, respectively. Pablo Greppi set up a company in 1769, in association with Carlo Sigismondo Agazzino from Milan. The company lasted, under different names, until 1808 and acted as an intermediary bet-

⁴⁴ V.E. Martínez del Cerro González, *Una comunidad de comerciantes: navarros y vascos en Cádiz (Segunda mitad del siglo XVIII)*, Sevilla, 2006, p. 126.

⁴⁵ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 63 and 486.

⁴⁶ N. Boddaert, "Una presencia tolerada en el Cádiz del siglo XVIII: los protestantes extranjeros", in *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo*, 1, 1991, pp. 37-54; M. Bustos Rodríguez, *Cádiz en el sistema atlántico*, op. cit., p. 210; G. Dadin, *Commerce et prospérité: la France au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 2005, p. 279; O. le Gouic, "La réorientation du commerce colonial de Lyon au XVIII^e siècle", in *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 119-138; M. Zylberberg, *Capitalisme et catholicisme dans la France Moderne. La dynastie le Couteulx*, Paris, 2001, pp. 127-137.

⁴⁷ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 329.

ween the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, exporting wheat, wool and silk from Genoa in exchange for goods from the American colonies. It had links with Giacomo Greppi in Hamburg and also with Amsterdam, through Marco Greppi, and forged further commercial ties with Trieste, Venice, Livorno, Marseille, Morocco and America (Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras and Buenos Aires). Pablo Greppi focused on importing copper and mercury from Austria to Spain. His knowledge of Cadiz and transnational trade stood him in good stead, and he served as General Consul of Tuscany and Imperial Consul from 1774 to 1791 and also as Consul of the Republic of Ragusa from 1782 onwards. He was a shareholder in the insurance company "Purísima Concepción y San Carlos".⁴⁸

Antonio Tastet sent colonial and European products to Malaga, along with iron anchors manufactured by Santiago Rezabal and Juan Antonio Guilisasti in their Guipúzcoan factories. Tastet paid them in advance and supplied them with the iron and coke required for the manufacturing process,⁴⁹ but perhaps the most common items were wood boards and staves, used to make barrels for exporting wine and other products. Another interesting item of trade was tar from Bayonne, to supply the Royal Store in Cartagena. In return, Tastet sold wine, vinegar and fruit from Malaga all over Europe; for instance, through Manescau Maury & Co, he sent wine and oil to Mr. Laplace of Santander. Most often, the ships hired by Antonio Tastet sailed from Malaga to Santander, Ostend (Belgium) or London, carrying products from the inland areas of Malaga or Andalusia.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ NHA, Estado, 631, 24 and Consejos, 20255, 1. K. Kaps, "Entre el servicio estatal y los negocios transnacionales: el caso de Paolo Greppi, cónsul imperial en Cádiz (1774-1791)", in M. Aglietti, M. Herrero Sánchez and F. Zamora Rodríguez (eds.), *Los cónsules de extranjeros en la Edad Moderna y a principios de la Edad Contemporánea*, Madrid, 2013, pp. 225-235; S. Levati and G. Liva, *Viaggio di quasi tutta l'Europa colle viste del commercio dell'istruzione e della salute. Lettere di Paolo e Giacomo Greppi al padre (1777-1781)*, Milan, 2006; E. Riva, "Da negoziante a gentiluomo. La formazione di Paolo Greppi tra commercio, finanza e diplomacia", in M. Mafrici (ed.), *Rapporti diplomatici e scambi commerciali nel Mediterraneo moderno*, Salerno, 2004, pp. 379-444.

⁴⁹ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 425.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 134 and 150.

Malaga and its hinterland was a prosperous agricultural region, producing mainly wine and fruit (raisins, lemons and almonds). It was also the gateway for products from the Kingdom of Granada. In Velez-Malaga, local merchants controlled agricultural activity on commission from merchants based in Malaga, to whom they dispatched local products on small ships. Afterwards, these products were stowed on larger ships, to be redistributed to various European countries. Consequently, there was a large colony of foreigners resident in Malaga. While most were either Italian or French (in 1765 there were 256 Italians and 183 Frenchmen living in Malaga, accounting for 50% and 37% respectively of all foreign residents), some Britons were also present in both Malaga and Velez-Malaga, attracted by local products such as raisins (popular in Britain for desserts and pastries), sweet wine and citrus fruit, which was used in cocktails and punches. France was another of the Malaga region's main markets, and the city had a sizable French population; 41% engaged in trade either as merchants or dependents. To France, French merchants shipped wine, raisins, spirits, citrus fruit and figs, the most popular destinations being Marseille, Calais and Dunkirk. Many of those who settled in Malaga and its environs were from the French Basque Country and Béarn, which may help explain the good relations maintained with the Spanish Basque Country.⁵¹ During the eighteenth century, there were three categories of merchants in Malaga: wholesale merchants, represented by the "Maritime Commerce" guild; retail merchants, who sold clothes and silk; and haberdashers, who sold colonial goods, spices, ironware, thread, etc. José Manescau Maury & Co was a retail merchant company, although it eventually managed to move up a rung and become a

⁵¹ P. Pezzi Cristobal, "El predominio extranjero en el comercio exportador de Vélez-Málaga durante el siglo XVIII", in M.B. Villar García and P. Pezzi Cristóbal (eds.), *I Coloquio Internacional "Los Extranjeros en la España Moderna"*, 2 vols. (Málaga, 2003), 1, pp. 529-541; M.B. Villar García, "La matrícula de extranjeros en Málaga de 1765", in *Baetica. Estudios de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, 1, 1978, pp. 359-390, and "Los comerciantes extranjeros en Málaga en 1776. Culminación de una instalación secular", in *Baetica. Estudios de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, 19-2, 1997, pp. 191-207.

member of the “Maritime Commerce” guild. José Manescou and Juan Bautista Maury were both from Béarn and arrived in Malaga in around 1744-1754 and 1758, respectively. Juan Bautista (1745-1802) was born in Oloron and in 1765 is recorded as a dependent (accountant) of José Manescou. By 1776 he had become part of the company and from 1781 to 1782 he was a partner, working with José Manescou and, after the latter’s death, with Francisco Manescou. In the years that followed he would become one of the most active agents in direct trade with America and at least from 1791 ran his own company, named Juan Bautista Maury, brothers & Co. He became a member of the “Maritime Commerce” guild and was a landowner, harvester, manufacturer and ship owner, promoter and director of the Ship Owners Company and the Caracas Company. At the time of his death he had a net worth of 8,729,541 *reales de vellón*.⁵²

Antonio Tastet also dealt with other companies in Malaga: Campos & Co and Pat Johan. In the case of Campos & Co, records show a bill of exchange for 9,701 *reales de vellón* in favour of Manescou Maury & Co, which Tastet was waiting to cash. Juan Campos, a French merchant from Béarn, had arrived in Malaga in 1731 and set up a haberdashery.⁵³ He started as a retail merchant, earning profits of 23,500 *reales de vellón*, but in 1776, at the age of 70, he was appointed a member of the “Maritime Commerce” guild.⁵⁴ Pat Johan dispatched the ship “San Michel”, skippered by Captain Brigantine, to Ostend with a cargo of figs, grapes, lemons and oranges consigned to Resumes & Burgee of San Sebastián, but after two stopovers in Portugal it berthed in Pasaia (San Sebastián). The cargo was in poor condition: the citrus fruits were rotten and had to be thrown overboard, though the grapes and figs, which had been stored in barrels or containers of sand, had survived relatively unscathed. Franz Bowers, from Ostend, wrote to Antonio Tastet ordering him to assume

⁵² M.B. Villar García, “Los comerciantes franceses”, *op. cit.*, pp. 457-478; A. Gámez Amián, *Comercio colonial*, pp. 23 and 36-37.

⁵³ M.B. Villar García, “Los comerciantes extranjeros”, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

⁵⁴ M.B. Villar García, “Los comerciantes franceses”, *op. cit.*, pp. 460-461.

responsibility for the cargo. Antonio Tastet advised Pat Johan to travel to San Sebastián in order to sell his products, but it seems that Pat Johan failed to heed this advice.⁵⁵

In Marseille, Tastet's consignee was the businessman Jerome-Michel-Philippe Eden, l'aîné ("the elder").⁵⁶ Marseille was one of the financial centres where Tastet insured his ships, together with Madrid (Francisco Celestino de Berrueta), Bordeaux (Acevedo & Robles & Sons), Paris (Delessert & Co and Acevedo brothers), Amsterdam (Echenique, Sánchez & Co and Rudolph Cramer and Sons) and London (Fermin Tastet & Co). The correspondence between Tastet and Eden mainly concerns financial matters such as freight, insurance and prices. In particular, Tastet would ask Eden about the premiums corresponding to the shipments. Marseille was the principal place where Tastet insured his ships sailing across the Mediterranean.⁵⁷ It was a financial and commercial centre with close ties to Spain, Italy and the Balkans. Spain offered wool, olive oil, leather, *Salsola soda* (opposite-leaved saltwort) and Mexican cochineal, and Marseille reciprocated with clothes from Languedoc, lace from Pay, local hats and shoes, Levantine linens and lingerie, silk from Lyon, and coffee and sugar from American plantations. From the eighteenth century onwards, Marseille was also prominent in the international money business as a ready market for precious metals, closely linked to Lyon, where Antonio Tastet had ties with Delessert & Co, who also had a financial branch in Paris.⁵⁸

Lastly, Antonio Tastet had connections with Gio Batta Moro (Juan Bautista Moro), Moro's brother (who was operating out of Ostend in Tastet's employ), his nephew Miguel Spignolli (Miguel

⁵⁵ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 644 and 732.

⁵⁶ Ch. Carrière, *Négociants marseillais*, *op. cit.*, p. 739.

⁵⁷ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 233.

⁵⁸ G. Buti, "Marseille, la Péninsule Ibérique et les empires américains (1659-1793): 'le soleil des profits se lève aussi à l'ouest'", in *Revue d'histoire maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 211-232.

Espinosa in Spanish), who had settled in Cadiz, Mr. Gandolfo and Girolamo Gimeli, all of whom were from Genoa. Liguria's commercial dynamism hinged on coastal navigation under neutral flags.⁵⁹ Like Domingo Castaños, Spignolli worked as an itinerant agent for Antonio Tastet, Gio Batta Moro and Girolamo Gimeli, loading up ships from Bayonne to Marseille and looking for or buying others. Gio Batta's brother did the same in Ostend, loading cargoes for Cadiz or Malaga, via San Sebastián.⁶⁰ Antonio Tastet, either on his own behalf or as an agent for other merchants, sent American cocoa and wine to Marseille, Genoa and Livorno; in the first case, he always tried to close the deal before the Marseille-bound ships of the Royal Company of Caracas sailed into Cadiz, since their arrival would herald a drop in price⁶¹. We do not know exactly what these ships took from Genoa, but we do know that Genoa exported cereals, pulses, raw materials, hemp, thread, silk, glue, steel, tar and textiles.

5. Neutral crews and trade strategies

Throughout the eighteenth century into the nineteenth,⁶² the crews and captains hired by Basque merchants were essentially Basque, which means that they were from both the French and the

⁵⁹ C. Brillì, "De Cadix À Buenos Aires: commerce et émigration génois dans l'Atlantique ibérique (1750-1830)", in *Revue d'histoire maritime*, 13, 2011, pp. 233-250, 235, and L. Gatti, *Navi e cantieri della Repubblica di Genova (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Genova, 1999.

⁶⁰ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 256 and 651.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 212, 788 and 926.

⁶² Historical Archive of Notarial Protocols of Gipuzkoa (HANPG), 3/0021, 289 v^o – 291 v^o. In 1815, the crew of the brigantine "La Jacinta", alias "La Guipuzcoana", ready to trade from Pasaia to Puerto Cabello in America, via Vigo, came mainly from San Sebastián and Pasajes; a few mariners were from the rest of Guipúzcoa (Hondarribia, Alza or Erñalde), Biscay (Lekeitio and Bilbao), or Galicia (Santiago de Compostela).

⁶³ GAG, CO LCI 4145. From 1787 to 1788, twenty-three out of thirty-five captains (65%) hired by the San Sebastián merchants Juan Bousignac and Pedro de Queheille to trade all over Europe and America were Spanish or French Basque.

Spanish Basque Country.⁶³ They hired out their services, indistinctly, setting sail from the Basque Country or any other Spanish port on either transatlantic or cabotage routes. Occasionally, these essentially Basque crews would also include mariners from Cantabria, Asturias, Galicia or Portugal. Furthermore, the practice of engaging Basque crews and captains was not limited to Basque merchants, for in such ports as Cadiz and Malaga local merchants hired a large number of Basque captains. Most of the captains who traded between Malaga and America were Basque, at least until 1787, when the Nautical and Pilotage School of San Telmo was founded in the city. From 1790 onwards, pilots from Malaga and Catalonia also became common.⁶⁴

However, according to Antonio Tastet's letter-book, during the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783) both Basque and Spanish merchants preferred to hire neutral ships and crews (e.g. Imperial, Portuguese or Genoese). The ships belonging to Antonio Tastet were coastal vessels weighing no more than 450 tons. In 1779, Tastet offered nine of them and donated 11,500 quintals of iron and ammunition to the Spanish Crown, in exchange for (as Rafael Torres has suggested) some commercial advantages.⁶⁵ In 1782, Tastet admitted that during the war he had lost six ships: the "San Nicolás", "Santa Rosa" and "El Provinciano" had been captured by enemy forces in the Pasaia convoy; "El Jenízaro" captured by a privateer from Liverpool near Cadiz; "El Carmen" seized in the Bordeaux estuary; and a new vessel, built in San Sebastián, run aground and destroyed in the same place in the December 1781. He managed to hold onto four other vessels. In a letter to Don José Gálvez, Minister of the Indies, he wrote that even though he had four ships he could not sail them under the Spanish flag, owing to high insurance premiums and fear that crews might be captured. This fear was justified; for instance, British privateers often blockaded the ports of San Sebastián and Bilbao during the war. But this was not the only way war hurt trade;

⁶⁴ A. Gámez Amián, *Comercio colonial*, pp. 33 and 34.

⁶⁵ R. Torres Sánchez, *El precio de la Guerra. El estado fiscal militar y Carlos III*, Madrid, 2013, pp. 53-55.

war also imposed costs in the form of vessels and cargoes lost, expenses incurred to support crew or captains imprisoned in Great Britain (Tastet regularly sent money to them for their upkeep), higher insurance costs, a shortage of vessels, and delays in collecting money from America.⁶⁶

Unlike in the North of Europe, where bad weather and ice brought maritime traffic to a halt from the onset of winter until May (the first ships from northern Europe began arriving in the Basque Country in June), in the Mediterranean maritime traffic continued all year round.⁶⁷ On 18 January 1782, Antonio Tastet wrote to the Royal Company of Caracas, located in Madrid since 1751, offering his ships. He was informed of the Government's intention to allow the Company to trade between Ostend and Louisiana, with a private client from that territory, using the Imperial flag. Tastet offered the Company a deal by which a 170-ton Genoese ship (probably "La Aparición de María"), two 400 and 130-ton Portuguese ships and two 430 and 240-ton Imperial ships, all waiting in Bayonne and Bordeaux, would sail to Louisiana. With any of these vessels, Tastet and the Royal Company of Caracas could supply Cumana or Maracaibo with flour, wine, spirits and other goods, sending them from Bordeaux or Pasaia to one of the Danish islands, e.g. St. Croix or St. Thomas, which had remained neutral in the conflict.⁶⁸ Tastet agreed to take a half, three-quarter or full share of responsibility for the voyage, with an insurance cost of 12% or 14%, guaranteeing that the cargo would reach the French Islands in the same condition as it had been when it left Bordeaux.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 898.

⁶⁷ GAG, JD CO 46, 425 r^o – 433 v^o.

⁶⁸ For more about the Danish islands in the Caribbean Sea, see N.A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John & St. Croix*, Baltimore, 1992, pp. 1-30; H. Jordaan and V. Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean. Continuity and Change", in G. Oostindie and J.V. Roitman (eds.), *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800. Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, Leiden, 2014, pp. 275-308.

⁶⁹ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 197.

During this period Tastet bought and sold several ships, according to his interests and needs. In October 1782 he sold “Nuestra Señora de Oliveiras”, which he co-owned with José Vicente Michelena,⁷⁰ for 80,000 pounds. Although he made a loss on this sale, he went ahead because the dearth of contracts had reduced the value of ships in Bordeaux. He also sold a 280-ton ship that had been built in San Sebastián two and a half years earlier, for 55,000 pounds. He sold both vessels because he needed a bigger ship to transport African slaves from Guinea.⁷¹

Antonio Tastet also owned, in partnership with the Domingo Aldaz and José Vicente Michelena, a ship named “La Aparición de María”, a 170-ton vessel built in Bilbao for 8,500 hard pesos. It was captained by Gio Batta Moro of Genoa and used in the wine trade between Cadiz, Malaga, Ostend and London, with insurance provided by Fermin Tastet. The ship carried boards, staves and tar to Cadiz. On 5 November 1781 Antonio Tasted complained about a delay in the ship’s arrival, but Moro finally wrote to him from Algieras on 25 November.⁷² Tastet was in touch with several Genoese merchants residing in different places. As noted above, he had a good relationship with both Girolamo Gimeli and Miguel Spignolli. On 8 February 1782 Tastet wrote a letter to Gimeli, in response to one sent from Genoa on 25 May 1781, in which he informed his colleague that he had had a vessel in San Sebastián at Gimeli’s disposal, but because of the latter’s delay it was no longer available. He added that if Gimeli were to travel to San Sebastián, he might be able to find him another Genoese ship, which was idle in Bilbao, or failing that, another one in Bayonne. Spignolli was Gio Batta Moro’s nephew and was also his commercial agent. In March 1782 he was in Cadiz looking for a ship. Tastet wrote to him, giving him permission to come to San Sebastián or another nearby port to find one, should

⁷⁰ I. Miguel López, “‘Aldaz’: sociedad mercantile”, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁷¹ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 862-863.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 16, 59 and 63.

none be available in Cadiz. Tastet was waiting for a Genoese brigantine, which he said he would send via Cadiz in order to offer it to Spignolli. If it failed to arrive, and if Spignolli could reach San Sebastián, Tastet promised to try and purchase a 120-ton ship in Bayonne or, failing that, a 170-ton vessel captained by Gregorio Rolando. A short time later, Tastet wrote again to Spignolli, informing him that various merchants from Bordeaux had purchased ships in Bilbao and Bayonne at an excessive price, which demonstrates that demand then exceeded supply.⁷³ Tastet did, however, dispatch 338 barrels of tar to Landaburu, in Cadiz, in a Genoese vessel called “Nuestra Señora de Gracia”, under the command of Captain Bianchi, with insurance of 500-600 pesos.

At the same time, Antonio Tastet shipped wine and oil from Malaga to Mr. Laplace of Santander, on behalf of José Manescau, using the Portuguese ship “San Francisco e Almas”, captained by Vicente Pereira Cruz.⁷⁴ He was also waiting for a Danish ship of 200 *lastres* or 530 tons that had set sail from San Sebastián to Cadiz; he suggested to José Manescau Maury & Co that it be dispatched from Malaga, instead of Cadiz, and to that end he wrote to them enquiring about freight and product prices.⁷⁵

In order to buy Portuguese ships or hire Portuguese crews, Tastet kept in touch with Joao Ardizon. On 9 December 1781 he presented Joao with a proposal for a swap: his large vessel for a smaller one, “La Santísima Trinidad”, currently in Lisbon, the Lataste ship, or one of the 120-ton vessels docked in San Sebastián. To close the deal, each had to choose inspectors to fix the price.⁷⁶ Spain was at war with Britain, and Tastet took advantage of the situation. On 21 January 1782 he wrote to Juan Bukeley & Co, informing them that the British had captured some French vessels from Brest and Bordeaux on route to America. Tastet suggested that Bukeley purchase one

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 256, 321 and 651.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

of these vessels, either empty or complete with cargo (wine, flour and other foodstuffs, and lingerie – they would gather information about the cargo from Bordeaux). If they were interested, he suggested, the purchase could be made through Fermin Tastet & Co on behalf of both of them as equal partners. After the purchase, Bukeley would choose a Portuguese captain and crew and arrange for appropriate insurance in order to dispatch the ship to Lisbon.⁷⁷

Sometimes wine and spirits were shipped from Malaga or Cadiz to America via Tenerife, where Antonio Tastet's consignee was Dionisio Walsh, one of the numerous Catholic Irish emigrants (the Walsh family came from Waterford) who had settled in the Canary Islands since the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁷⁸ Walsh, who had links with Ostend, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Genoa,⁷⁹ was charged with investing the profits from the sale of salt and wine in tobacco, which he was to send to Ostend on Tastet's behalf. On 7 January 1782 Tastet wrote to Walsh, suggesting that he dispatch "La Aparición de María" to Havana. Once the ship arrived in London, Fermin Tastet would send it on to Walsh, taking into account that it was sailing under the Genoese flag. Antonio Tastet offered him the chance of participating in the voyage, with a one-third or one-quarter share. On 12 April Antonio Tastet expressed his gratitude to Walsh for having participated to the tune of 900 hard pesos in 423 quintals of tobacco and salt. The cargo was put on a Venetian corvette that left Tenerife for Ostend on 17 February, finally arriving there in May, according to the information received from London. An agreement was reached with Fermin Tastet & Co, who handed

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁷⁸ A. Guimerá Ravina, *Burguesía extranjera y comercio atlántico: la empresa comercial irlandesa en Canarias (1703-1771)*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1985, pp. 58-68 and 79-83; A. Lorenzo Tena, "Una colonia irlandesa en la isla de La Palma durante el siglo XVIII", in *Boletín Millares Carlo*, 27, 2008, pp. 83-100. For more about the relationships between the Basque Country and the Canary Islands, see also M. Lobo Cabrera, "Relaciones comerciales entre Canarias y el País Vasco", in F. Morales Padrón (ed.), *XV Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana*, Gran Canaria, 2004, pp. 807-814.

⁷⁹ General Military Archive of Segovia, Legajo 1.520, Expediente 12.825 (1774-1778).

over one third of the cargo. From Ostend, the cargo was then dispatched to Walsh, along with staves and iron. At the same time, Tastet was considering dispatching a ship to Havana or Caracas, under the neutral Genoese, Portuguese or Imperial flag, since foreigners were well accepted in Spanish colonies. In May, “La Aparición de María” was in San Sebastián, but Tastet could find no profitable cargo to send to Tenerife and from there to America under the Spanish flag. He was also having trouble finding suitable cannons, and without them insurance would be too high. Consequently, he considered sending the ship from Bordeaux to the French islands, via Havana and Caracas, where he could sell wine at a good profit. To add to his troubles, he was unable to ship iron and staves to Walsh, because he could find no neutral vessel.⁸⁰ This was not the only agreement between Walsh and Fermin Tastet. In 1785 Fermin Tastet & Co accused Diego Barry and Dionisio Walsh of not fulfilling one of their agreements. According to the testimony given by Francisco Dugui, Bautista Descoubert and Bernardo Cologan, the arbitrating judges, in 1782 the Walsh & Barry Company, dissolved in 1785, had sent 25 barrels of tobacco and 12 *orchilla* or cochineal bags on its own behalf, and 170 small barrels of wine and 20 barrels of tobacco on behalf of Fermin Tastet, from Tenerife to Federico Romberg & Co in Ostend⁸¹ on board the Venetian ship “Nuestra Señora del Rosario”, captained by Domingo Scopinich.⁸²

The Canary Islands, and particularly Tenerife, the most populous and commercially dynamic, were essential ports of call and a (legal and illegal) gateway to America, Asia and Africa.⁸³ Most of

⁸⁰ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 171, 435, 559 and 585.

⁸¹ K. Weber and M. Schulte-Beerbühl, “From Westphalia to the Caribbean: Networks of German Textile Merchants in the Eighteenth Century”, in A. Gestrich and M. Schulte-Beerbühl (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society 1660-1914*, London 2011, p. 89.

⁸² Central Municipal Library of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Fondo Documental, Caja 92, 1785.

⁸³ G. Santana Pérez, “Los holandeses y la utilización de Canarias como puerta atlántica durante los siglos XVI-XVIII”, in R. Vermeir, M. Ebben and R. Fagel (eds.), *Agentes e identidades en movimiento. España y los Países Bajos siglos XVI-XVIII*, Madrid, 2011, pp. 329-349.

the trade through Tenerife was stopover trade, i.e. ships from Europe put into port there in order to restock before sailing on to America, Europe, Africa, Asia or Oceania. Of all the ships sailing from Tenerife, 38.01% were bound for America, and 81.25% of these were destined for Spanish America (mainly Havana, but also Caracas, Puerto Rico and Buenos Aires), while 65.27% of all arrivals hailed from the United States. Canary Island wine was the main local export; merchants also exported spirits, tar, almonds, dry figs, *Salsola soda* (opposite-leaved saltwort) and manufactured goods such as hats, clothes and socks. In return, colonial goods such as cocoa, sugar, coffee, tobacco, indigo and leather arrived from Spanish America, along with cereal, flour, salt meat and fish, wood and wax from the United States.⁸⁴

As noted above, on 21 October 1782 Antonio Tastet wrote two letters to the Minister, Jose Gálvez, requesting a permit to dispatch some cargoes from Tenerife to America. He asked to be allowed to dispatch one or two vessels (200-250 tons) from Santa Cruz de Tenerife, or alternatively from Santander or Cadiz, to either Cuba or La Guaira (Venezuela), laden with Canary Island wine and fruit, under the Portuguese or the Imperial flag, on the understanding that they would return to the Canary Islands or another authorised port in order to pay the taxes established in 1778. In his second letter he suggested that the permit be granted under the same conditions as those enjoyed by the Royal Company of Caracas, to enable the vessel to stop in Havana or another island and to carry flour, salt and other supplies to Veracruz or Cuba, for the Army, Navy and inhabitants, despite Anglo-American competition.⁸⁵

In June, Antonio Tastet considered loading a Genoese ship that had arrived in San Sebastián with beans, tar, rigging and oak materials. He wrote to Dezermeaux & Brockmann, enquiring about the

⁸⁴ P. O'Flanagan, *Port cities, op. cit.*, pp. 121-123; G. Santana Pérez, "Bosquejo del comercio canario con América a finales del siglo XVIII", in *Anuario Americanista Europeo*, 4-5, 2006-2007, pp. 271-287.

⁸⁵ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 898.

size of the barrels, the freight for a 150-170-ton or 64-ballast ship from Malaga or Sanlucar, and cargoes from Malaga to (supposedly) the North, chiefly to Ostend, a British port or one of the neutral ports. Finally, on 14 June, he started loading "La Aparición de María", docked in Pasaia and captained by Moro, with oak ribs and staves, beans, iron, tar and hoops. The vessel was ostensibly bound for Genoa, but was actually to go to Cadiz, consigned to Dezermeaux & Brockmann. He also requested their estimate regarding insurance in Cadiz for sending the vessel to the North, without any neutral property guarantee. "La Aparición" was expected to leave Pasaia for Genoa during the second week of July. From Malaga, Tastet was informed that there was an evident shortage of ships, but an abundance of freight, so he recommended that Dezermeaux & Brockmann send "La Aparición de Maria" to Malaga, via Cadiz, in order to pick up a cargo for Spanish or French America, under the Genoese or Portuguese flag. We do not know what happened, but on 26 July Antonio Tastet wrote to Domingo Castaños, in Cadiz, empowering him to change the captain and the flag if he could not come to an agreement with Captain Moro. Tastet recommended that he hire another Genoese, Portuguese or Imperial captain: "... I reiterate that you should change captains, because I do not like to have in my service people who have given me reason to mistrust them...". In the end, Castaños sacked Moro, hired Captain Pablo Alimonda and rechristened "La Aparición de María" "Nuestra Señora de Monte Alegre". Castaños finally arrived in Cadiz, from where he informed Tastet that he had reached an agreement with Dezermeaux & Brockmann to send a vessel laden with salt to Ferrol, from where it would sail on to Ostend with a cargo of leather. Tastet later regretted this agreement, since the ship spent over two months in Ferrol waiting to complete its cargo; this delay proved extremely costly, as he failed to make the expected profit of 300-400 hard pesos. Subsequently, Tastet considered dispatching the vessel from Malaga, laden with fruit and wine, to London via Bayonne. Tastet recommended that Castaños specify his conditions in the agreement: no more than a quarter of the cargo could be fruit; and all port expenses were to be covered by the cargo and its owner.

Finally, given that there was no cargo in Malaga, Dezermeaux & Brockmann decided to dispatch the vessel, laden with fruit, from Seville to Ostend, at 16% per box and 15% convoy tax. Tastet ordered Castaños to load some salt in Sanlucar as ballast. Tastet had the idea of loading it later with 2,000 barrels of spirits and 1,000 barrels of wine from Logroño and sending it to La Guaiara under a neutral flag and with royal permission.⁸⁶

Previously, in July, Tastet had written to Francisco de Sierra, who wanted to contract the vessel “La Ventura”, built in Pasajes and co-owned by Tastet and Francisco Aldaz, stating their conditions. The ship would sail under the Portuguese flag, under the command of Captain Domingo de Oñate, from Lisbon and Cadiz to Buenos Aires or Veracruz, via Bordeaux. The conditions were as follows: First, the ship must load in Cadiz and return with full hold. Second, the freight must be just 90,000 pesos. Third, Francisco Aldaz was to receive half of the cargo fifteen days after its arrival from Spanish America and the other half a fortnight after unloading in any European port. Fourth, loading in Cadiz would take two months, unloading and loading at the destination three months, and loading upon the return to Cadiz one month. Fifth, for each month of delay Francisco Sierra would be paid 7,000 pesos. Sixth, the captain was to receive the necessary money (no more than 8,000 pesos) to cover the crew’s salary, supplies and contingencies, either in Cadiz or in Spanish America. Seventh, the ordinary or port costs (i.e. the cost of licence, register, ballast or cargo), both in Cadiz and in Spanish America, would be borne by the contractor. Eighth, the ship must be in Cadiz no later than October; otherwise the contractor would be free of the freight. Lastly, the owners had to dispatch the ship in Cadiz with a crew of 28 or 36 men, including officers, under the Portuguese flag, with prescriptive passports and sufficient supplies.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 591, 654, 672, 706, 746, 820, 934 and 944. Concerning trust, see X. Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their Overseas Networks*, Woorbridge, 2010.

⁸⁷ San Telmo Museum, Copiador de correspondencia de Antonio Tastet (1781-1782), 681-682.

The vessel “Bon Jesus d’Alem” was insured for 40,000 French pounds in Marseille. This ship was sent from Bordeaux to Genoa and Livorno, via Marseille, carrying cocoa.⁸⁸ Tastet insured his vessels in Marseille and Bordeaux during this period of war at a rate of 15-20% for the cargo and 10-12% for the ship. He had several different ways of keeping abreast of the war. For instance, a letter from France informed him that the Spanish fleet that intended to blockade Gibraltar was two leagues away from Cadiz; and he regularly travelled to France, where he read northern gazettes and newspapers, thanks to which he knew in October that British relief for Gibraltar was imminent.⁸⁹

Lastly, Antonio Tastet also acted as an intermediary for other European merchants. Rivier & Crawley told him of their intention to send a small consignment of cocoa to Genoa and Livorno, preferably in ships from Ragusa or Portugal, rather than Dutch ones. If the vessel docked in Genoa, Tastet would appoint *Rue & Sons* as consignees; if its destination was Livorno, the consignee would be Jos Borter. Tastet warned Rivier & Crawley that a direct trade was unlikely; the cocoa first had to be sent to Cadiz, from where it would be redirected to Genoa and Livorno.⁹⁰

During the 1787-89 food shortage, Basque authorities and merchants were forced to seek supplies not only along the Atlantic coast, in North America and northern Europe, but also in the Mediterranean, particularly Morocco, Naples and Sicily, via Cadiz. This demonstrates that the relationship between the regions was by then in full force. Moreover, during the nineteenth century, merchants from San Sebastián maintained their relations with the Mediterranean regions, especially Catalonia, as well as with France and Italy. In 1811, the schooner “La Providencia” from Bilbao, owned by Juan de Larrea and consigned to Fidel Torrens Montañel & Co of Catalonia, travelled to the Mediterranean after being captured by a French privateer.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 788.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 185, 227, 820, 853.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 926.

⁹¹ GAG, JD AIM 551 and HANPG, 3 / 0021, 5 r^o – 8 r^o.

6. Conclusion

Basque ports were certainly involved in Mediterranean trade networks during the eighteenth century. Although this was not a major part of their business, which focused on Atlantic trade, Basque merchants nevertheless needed Mediterranean products and networks to lubricate the complex gear of their international dealings. Unfortunately, no statistical sources have come to light enabling us to measure the global impact of Mediterranean trade on the Basque economy. Examining the letter-book belonging to Antonio Tastet for the period from October 1781 to November 1782, we find that no more than 5% of his letters were sent to the Mediterranean or refer to that area. Even so, it is almost impossible to calculate the real impact of this trade, especially considering that Mediterranean trade was part of a wider trade network. Given that merchants sourced investments, contracted insurance and entered into transactions in both regions, it is difficult to distinguish Atlantic income from Mediterranean profits. Mediterranean agricultural products and textiles were exported to countries on the Atlantic rim, and colonial products imported in turn. Thanks to these supplies, Basque merchants were able to buy and redistribute exports from the Americas and northern Europe. In this sense, it is important to highlight the close commercial relationship that existed between the Mediterranean and Atlantic areas, regions so tightly interwoven that it is impossible to conceive of one without the other. This gives us a better understanding of the Mediterranean region's role and commercial development during the eighteenth century, which belie crisis theories. Barcelona and other Mediterranean ports had gained such commercial and economic strength that the involvement of Catalonian merchants in the industrialisation of the Basque Country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is hardly surprising. Like its Atlantic counterpart, Mediterranean trade kept Basque industry well-supplied with both capital and raw material.

The role played by Béarnaise and Spanish and French Basque networks should also be highlighted: they provided a framework in

which trust and credit helped to make commercial exchanges easier. Basque merchants usually shared financial and commercial networks and relationships and opened the door to their compatriots. Far-flung communities of Basque (both Spanish and French) and Béarnaise merchants gave their counterparts back home a competitive edge over other ethnic groups and, according to some recent studies, created a powerful lobby.⁹² The Free Trade Decree of 1778 forced Basque merchants and ports to use other intermediary Spanish and European ports for their exports, so that Basque ports focussed more on European trade in the latter part of the eighteenth century, but they did not downgrade their links with Cadiz, which continued to be the first Spanish port. Consequently, Mediterranean trade – within international trade networks – also influenced the modernisation of the Basque economy, nurturing commercial and financial capital and networks during the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth century, providing the necessary tools for the subsequent Basque industrialisation.⁹³

Studies of trade relations during the war have shown just how deep and strong were the links and networks built up during peacetime. Examining these relations, we also learn more about the day-to-day commercial practices of the time, about what merchants wanted, what they feared and the strategies they employed to cope with difficulties. Regardless of borders, Basque merchants (like almost all merchants the world over) were driven mainly by practical considerations and had no objection to hiring crews and ships from other countries. This required a thorough understanding of, and updated information on, freights, wages and other relevant matters. Undoubtedly, the role played by agents and representatives was es-

⁹² O. Alvarez Gila and A. Angulo Morales, “Between Trade, Religion and Ethnicity: The Catholic Church’s Ethnic Institutions in the Spanish Empire, 16th-19th Centuries”, in *Boga: Basques Studies Consortium Journal*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Article 5, 2014.

⁹³ R. Basurto Larrañaga, *Comercio y burguesía*, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99; M.C. Gutiérrez Muñoz, *Comercio y banca. Expansión y crisis del capitalismo comercial en Bilbao al final del Antiguo Régimen*, Bilbao, 1994, pp. 37 and 77; C. Larrínaga Rodríguez, “Los comerciantes banqueros”, *op. cit.*, pp. 831-854.

essential to ensuring the smooth functioning of the networks. These personal, fraternal and commercial links were changeable and based on trust and reciprocity. Ultimately, *quid pro quo* was a guarantee of success. Relationships and connections between different agents had ups and downs, and personal interests sometimes interfered or diverged, whereupon new relationships were forged and new means found. So relationships and connections were not static, but, rather, dynamic, variable social constructions that were adapted according to circumstances and needs.