

The progress of nautical studies in Southern Italy between 1734 and 1861

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Abstract. The development of the Neapolitan royal fleet and of the merchant marine in the second half of 1700s provided for a good technical preparation for the officers and sailors: therefore, an articulated structure was created for the development of nautical studies. After the arrival of Charles of Bourbon (1734) the Academy of Navy was founded for the officers and a College for Pilots was created in Naples, in the Church of Santa Maria di Loreto (1749). Then in 1770 the Nautical Colleges of Naples and Piano di Sorrento were founded. The progress of the nautical and astronomical studies introduced by illustrious professors who from time to time have used the most famous texts, first Spanish, French and English then also Italian will be studied.

Keywords. Nautical studies, Neapolitan Royal Fleet, Neapolitan merchant marine, officers, sailors

1. Introduction

This text examines the history of nautical education in the Kingdom of Naples between 1734 and 1861. In this period the government promoted the development of the royal fleet and the merchant navy, for which a highly specialized staff was needed. to make long ocean journeys with the help of instrumental navigation that was being perfected in those years.

2. Nautical schools

The Royal Navy Academy.

In 1735 Charles of Bourbon founded the Academy of the Guardas Estendartes de las Galeras or of the Marine Guards, on the model of that of Cadiz, to reorganize the corps of naval officers who were to be placed in command of the fleet that was being rebuilt (Sirago, 2001). At first the Academy did not have its headquarters. But in 1754 a special building was built at the Darsena, equipped with all the most important nautical instruments. A study reform was promoted by John Acton, appointed by the Queen Maria Carolina Director of the Navy. Other reforms took place in the French era (1806 - 1815) when the Academy was transferred to the abolished Monastery of San Severino and Sossio (now the State Archive). In the second Bourbon period (1815-1860) both nautical and astronomical studies were increased, also because with the advent of steam ships the navigation system was changing. After the Unification the two Academies of Naples and Genoa remained in operation, which later merged into that of Livorno, inaugurated on 6 November 1881 (Sirago, 2019).

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The Nautical Schools for Pilots.

In the same period it was thought to organize Nautical Schools for the pilots of merchant ships, for which a school for pilots was created in the Church of Santa Maria di Loreto. However, the need was felt to create "Schools for work" (the future professional institutions), secular and free for the various working classes, as Antonio Genovesi had proposed. Therefore in 1770 the nautical schools of Naples and Piano di Sorrento were founded, in order to create a valid merchant marine, already engaged in new oceanic journeys. In 1784 the "normal method" was introduced, a method that allowed one to teach reading and writing in a few months, and foreign language, French and English were required. Then the nautical school of Procida and that of Palermo were opened. In French times Murat decided to reunite the Neapolitan academy and school in the same building, using the same professors. But the official pupils and the student pilots were in two clearly separated areas. Even in the second Bourbon age the Naples and Piano di Sorrento schools continued to function. Then from the 1930s other schools were opened in Castellammare, Gaeta, Bari with a regulation based on that of the Piano school of 1831 (Sirago, 1999. By now the Neapolitan merchant marine was in full development and was able to undertake regular journeys in Black Sea, in the Baltic Sea and in the Americas (Sirago, 2012).

3. Teachers and textbooks

Teachers

In 1735 the professor of nautical and astronomy Pietro di Martino, who had studied in Bologna, was chosen for the Academy of Marina. Then in the fifties a distinguished mathematician was appointed, Vito Caravelli who was in charge of supervising mathematical, nautical and astronomical studies and also that of drawing up nautical texts and other scientific subjects. Another important professor was Ferdinando Scarpati, born in Meta di Sorrento, the first to sail in the Black Sea, author of cartographic drawings of those coasts, who taught both in the Academy and in nautical institutes and wrote various nautical treatises.

Textbooks

At first the foreign texts were used in the Academy, those of nautical writing by the Spanish Jorge Juan de Santacilia and the English John Robertson and those of astronomy by the Frenchman Jerome de La Lande; then were used those of Vito Caravelli, Ferdinando Scarpati and other mathematicians Neapolitans, which shows the development of nautical studies in the South. The texts used in the Academy and in the Nautical Institutes can be found today in the Library of the Naval Academy of Livorno and in the Library of the Nautical Institute "Nino Bixio" of Piano di Sorrento.

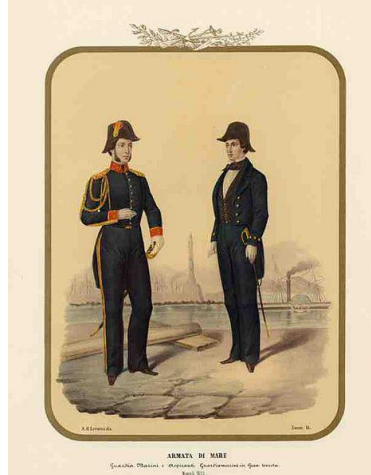


Figure 1. Midshipman and pupil (Zezon)

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