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# Naval Recruitment and Basque Resistance in Early Modern Times

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Recruiting sailors posed a problem for all seafaring nations during the age of sail, and the problem was particularly acute in Spain. In addition to periodic warfare in Europe, the government of Spain had to maintain contact with possessions in North Africa and the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, as well as with colonies overseas — from 1492 in the Americas and from 1565 in the Philippines. In the late sixteenth century, Spain's Atlantic trade approached a peak, and, based on the work of scholars who have studied the Atlantic trade, total Spanish merchant shipping would have required some eight to ten times the tonnage for the Atlantic trade alone. Fishing required an unknown quantity of additional tonnage, because some of the same vessels might be used at different times for either commerce or fishing.

Calculating military needs raises a similar problem. The Spanish crown owned relatively few ships but instead relied on embargoed merchant vessels in wartime; one can argue that military needs added roughly 10 percent to Spain's total shipping needs in the late sixteenth century. Assuming that merchant vessels required one crewman for every 8-10 toneladas, and that military vessels required one crewman for every 6-7 toneladas, I have estimated in an earlier article that all of Spain's seaborne commitments arguably required about 35,000 to 40,000 men in the late sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>.

To supply crews for military vessels, the Spanish government relied on voluntary recruitment, plus levies in wartime with quotas assigned in Madrid but carried out by royal and local officials in the coastal districts. The unpredictability of these supply methods presented a continuing problem, however, particularly in areas with the most experienced sailors, such as Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya. In 1605 king Philip III decreed that all mariners in Guipúzcoa should be registered, so that they could be recruited more efficiently in wartime. To make registration more appealing, the king decreed that only registered mariners would have the right to fish or otherwise make a living from the sea, and that registered mariners would be allowed to pursue commercial and fishing voyages unless the king needed their services. Local officials in Guipúzcoa responded to these departures from tradition with a mixture of dismay and polite defiance<sup>2</sup>. They argued eloquently that the decree violated traditions of loyalty and respect that bound local mariners to the crown.

In a numbered list of nine points that emanated from a General Assembly (*Junta General*) held in Guetaria, they made the following points: Mariners of the province had always served the crown loyally and well, «fathers and sons with much shedding of blood ... and this has been their enthusiasm and their natural inclination»<sup>3</sup>. The royal decree violated the «exemptions and liberties, and the great nobility of the said province, which, although not great in numbers, is great in valor and reputation, for which the enemy has, and always will have, fear of them»<sup>4</sup>. In ordering the mariners

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1. PHILLIPS, Carla Rahn: «Maritime Labour in Early Modern Spain», *Research in Maritime History* 7 (Dec. 1994): 1-25; and «The Labour Market for Sailors in Spain, 1570-1870», in *Those Emblems of Hell? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, eds. Paul van Royen, Jaap Bruijn and Jan Lucassen, No. 13 in the series *Research in Maritime History*, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1997, pp. 329-348. The essential source for Spanish shipping volume in the sixteenth century is CHAUNU, Pierre and Huguette: *Séville et l'Atlantique, 1504-1650*, 8 vols. in 12, S.E.V.P.E.N., Paris, 1955-60, although most scholars disagree with the Chaunu's calculations of tonnage. A Spanish *tonelada* or *tonel macho* was a measure of both volume and burden. Although scholars continue to argue about its precise meaning, my calculations begin with the assumption that it is roughly equivalent to the French sea ton of 1.42 cubic meters.

2. Archivo General de Marina (hereafter AGM), Colección Vargas, 1a Ser. (Roman numerals), *tomo* I, doc. 93.

3. «... padres por hijos con mucho derramamiento de sangre... y esta ha sido su afición, e inclinación natural...». The full memorandum can be found in AGM, Vargas, 1a serie (Romana), t. I, doc. 93, fols. 122-125v.

4. *Ibid.*, «... esenciones y libertades, y mucha nobleza de la dicha provincia aunque en numero no sean tantos en valor y reputacion son muchos, a cuya causa el enemigo ha tenido y teme siempre mucho...».

to register, the royal decree «had proceeded without consideration and with great rigor and inconveniences and vexations, which have caused a breach [in relations with the crown]»<sup>5</sup>.

The document went on to say that, if mariners had to be listed and ask permission to sail, the most prominent among them would quit the sea, and their sons would not take up seafaring. As a consequence,

«the construction of galleons and boats would cease, and the men who registered would be poor and needy, and ultimately would turn away from the exercise and art of navigation, finding another way of life, primarily [one that did not require them to ask for license to practice it]; and this would be the cause and occasion for abandoning their property, or selling it, and going away from maritime lands to other parts...»<sup>6</sup>

In short, local officials argued that the decree would drive men from fishing and navigation, which was the main employment of the province. The carrying trade of iron and iron items to Andalusia and the Indies, and for use in the crown's galleons, *navíos*, and other vessels would also cease, causing great harm to the Indies trade and to royal tax collection in the province, due to depopulation. Their predictions could not have been more dire.

In former times, the Guipúzcoan officials added, the king's progenitors (of glorious memory) had instituted measures to conserve the maritime occupations that were vital to the province, and they had done so without registering mariners. When registration had been attempted in the past, «because of reports from ill-informed persons», the results had been similar to the disastrous outcomes predicted in the present case». The crown had therefore rescinded the listing and registration, «considering the great inconveniences that otherwise would result, and could result»<sup>7</sup>. The officials did not date the prior attempts at registration, though one attempt occurred under Philip II in 1583<sup>8</sup>.

Ending their presentation, the Guipúzcoan officials argued that the mariners of the province and their sons only wanted to «preserve ... their very ancient and immemorial liberty», so that they could continue serving the crown as they had always done<sup>9</sup>. To that end, they humbly begged the crown to rescind the matriculation order. The memorandum was signed in Guetaria on November 2, 1605, by four local notables: Don Torrey Arizmendi, Agustín de Lizanza, Domingo de Aramburu, and Juan López de Zarauz.

The 1605 decree and Guipúzcoa's initial response marked only one episode in a long and tense confrontation between the crown and local officials over registering Basque mariners for naval service; it was evidently not the first such confrontation, nor would it be the last. Important principles defined the confrontation on both sides: the authority of the crown to issue decrees and have them obeyed, versus ancient Basque liberties and privileges that also rested on royal decrees. In addition to principles, the confrontation involved implacable realities on both sides: the crown needed a reliable supply of mariners for military service; and the mariners of Guipúzcoa (and Vizcaya) faced competing demands for their labor from the shipbuilding industry, local and long-distance trade, fishing, and royal service. As the drama played out from 1605 to 1607, both sides staked out positions that they would continue to hold for centuries, with important implications for the manning of the Spanish navy.

The crown rejected the Guipúzcoan arguments based on principle and tradition early in 1606 and continued to press for a registry of all mariners in the province. This seems to have led officials in Guipúzcoa to change tactics, emphasizing the depopulation of the province and the large numbers of men who were already serving the king in one capacity or another. They claimed that virtually all of the mariners from the province were already in the navy: some in the Atlantic Fleet; others in the squadron of Guipúzcoa that was in Cádiz in 1606; and some in the forty vessels belonging to the crown that were in the port of Pasages near San Sebastián. Because of these deployments, their own towns were depopulated. In addition, 3,000 citizens in the province had participated in defending

5. *Ibid.*, dated November 2, 1605. «... se haya procedido sin la consideración referida y con rigor y molestias, y vejaciones que han causado quiebra».

6. *Ibid.*, «cesarian las fábricas de los galeones y bajeles y los que alistarén serían necesitados y menesterosos, y finalmente se divertirían de este ejercicio arte y navegación, procurando otro modo de vivir, maiormente por no andar pidiendo la d[ic]ha lizençia; y aun podría ser causa y ocasión de desamparar sus haciendas, o venderlas, e irse de las tierras marítimas a otras partes...».

7. *Ibid.* «...por relaciones de personas mal informadas, mandaron alistar y matricular marineros y soldados en la d[ic]ha provincia, de su parte haviéndose dada causas bastantes como lo son las referidas en los cap[itulos] precedentes, tubieron por bien de escusar su matrícula y lista, considerando los grandes inconvenientes que de lo contrario resultarían, y podrían resultar, y lo mismos ofrescen al presente».

8. Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Secretaría de Marina, leg. 251, letter dated December 26, 1734.

9. AGM, Colección Vargas, 1a Ser. (Roman numerals), tomo I, doc. 93, «...conservar como queda referido su libertad antiquissima e inmemorial...».



the frontier with France in 1606, and the province had subsidized the military campaign with more than 100,000 ducats<sup>10</sup>.

The issue of registration went unresolved for all of 1606 and most of 1607, generating more paperwork than action. The king re-issued the decree establishing a marine registry on October 5, 1607, using language very close to the 1605 version. Guipúzcoan officials responded in kind, sending virtually the same response they had crafted two years earlier<sup>11</sup>. By late November of 1607, the king and his ministers acknowledged that the province would not comply with the the royal decree. Correspondence between Madrid and Guipúzcoa on November 22 dealt with «the question of the registration and the possibilities that it be annulled»<sup>12</sup>. In mid-December, the confrontation ended. A decree from the king to his representative in Guipúzcoa, said that, having studied the response of officials in Guipúzcoa, «I revoke and take as null [the order to register mariners], and thus you should tell the royal overseer and auditor Martín de Arosteguí», a member of the king's Council of War who served as the king's military commander (*colone*) in Guipúzcoa<sup>13</sup>.

In short, Guipúzcoan officials had won the confrontation, using tactics that can best be described as respectful non-compliance. They never refused to obey the royal decree; they simply, repeatedly, and implacably offered reasons why it was impossible to comply. The crown lost the confrontation but did not relinquish the fundamental right to issue decrees and expect to have them obeyed. The royal decree to register mariners remained in effect until another royal decree revoked it.

In the aftermath, naval recruitment resumed its traditional contours, defined by voluntary enlistment and extraordinary levies when the need arose. The 1605-07 confrontation occurred during a noteworthy interval in European history, marked by a lack of generalized warfare. Spain and France had made peace in 1598; Spain and England had ended hostilities in 1604. A twelve-year truce with rebels in the Netherlands would be negotiated in 1609. These unusual circumstances reduced the immediate need for sailors in the Spanish navy, at the same time that the volume of trade between Spain and its American colonies approached a peak, providing a powerful magnet for sailors all over Spain, and an increased flow of revenues for the crown. Given the conjuncture, the crown could revoke its demand to register Guipúzcoan mariners without compromising military needs.

Circumstances changed after war broke out in the Germanies in 1618, followed by a renewal of hostilities in the Netherlands when the truce expired in 1621. For the next several decades, the Spanish Habsburgs would face global warfare in defense of dynasty, empire, and faith, in alliance with the Habsburgs of Austria and various other Roman Catholic states. What became known as the Thirty Years' War would stretch the crown's resources of money and men to the limits and would test the skill and resolve of the young king Philip IV and his forceful chief minister the Count-Duke Olivares.

To organize royal naval forces for conflict and defense, particularly in the Atlantic (*Mar Océano*), the crown ordered the establishment of a marine registry for all of Spain. The registry had two parts, one for men who registered voluntarily (*matrícula particular*), and one for all others who earned a living from seafaring (*matrícula general*). In the decree issued October 31, 1625, the king introduced the list of privileges and exemptions that voluntary registrants would enjoy.

«...know ye, that among other things that I have ordered to put in place and establish related to the augmentation of the seaborne forces and the strengthening of my Royal Navy of the Ocean Sea, I have resolved and order in four sections of the decree issued today on this present date, signed with my hand and undersigned by my secretary, that a special registry be made on the coasts of my said realms, of the people who practice the art and office of seafaring, who voluntarily wish to list themselves in it, that they enjoy the exemptions and prerogatives that are conceded for [such registration]»<sup>14</sup>.

10. AGM, Vargas, 1a serie (Romana), t.I, doc. 93, fols. 125v-126, with a note that it was copied from the Archivo de Guipúzcoa, presumably the historical archive of the province.

11. AGM, Vargas, 1a serie (Romana), t.I, doc. 99, fols. 137-139; and doc. 100, fols. 141-142; doc. 101, fols. 143-146 copied from original documents in the municipal archives of San Sebastián.

12. AGM, Vargas, 1a serie (Romana), t.I, doc. 102, fol. 147, dated November 22, 1607.

13. AGM, Vargas, 1a serie (Romana), t.I, doc. 93, fols. 125v-126; doc. 103, fol. 147. The decree was dated December 17, 1607.

14. «...Sabed que entre otras cosas que he mandado assentar, y establecer, tocantes al aumento de las fuerzas de la mar y refuerzo de mi Armada Real del Mar Océano, he resuelto y mandado por quatro capitulos de la cédula dada oy día de la fecha de la presente, firmada de mi mano, y refrendada de mi ynfrascrito secretario, que se haga una matrícula particular en las costas de los d[ic]hos mis Reynos, de la gente que usa en ellos el arte, y oficio de la marinería, q[ue] voluntariam[en]te, quisieren assentarse en ella, que gozen de las exemptions, y prerrogativas que por ella se concede...». AGS, Secretaría de Marina, legajo (leg.) 276.

Voluntary registrants would be exempt from the seizure of their persons or possessions for debt. They would have the privilege of bearing arms anywhere in the kingdom, even after curfew, and exemption from billeting soldiers and bureaucrats in their homes. Furthermore, the king gave assurance that men who registered voluntarily would not be required to serve on royal ships any more frequently than they had served in the past through levies, nor any more than the mariners who did not register voluntarily. Their only obligation, besides serving the crown at intervals, involved telling whoever kept the registry in their district whenever they planned to be away from their home ports, how long they planned to be gone, the purpose of their absence, and where they could be found.

Although the obligation to report absences restricted the free mobility of the men in important ways, they did not require permission to leave – an important change from the 1605 decree. Moreover, the king promised that voluntary registrants would receive preferential treatment over other mariners on all the vessels in which they served, private merchant vessels as well as royal galleons. The officials of the House of Trade in Seville had responsibility for seeing that the maritime world honored those privileges<sup>15</sup>. In an obvious effort to bring parental pressure to bear on the decision to register, the king also decreed that a father with four sons who registered and served in the royal navy would be exempt from personal taxes during their service. The exemption would continue even if two of the sons died, as long as the other two continued to serve the crown – small compensation for the loss of two sons, but nonetheless generous in context<sup>16</sup>.

Judicial officials (*oidores*) of the Court of Appeals (*Chancillería*) of Valladolid had the responsibility for sending out commissioners to create the registries in the northern districts. In every town they visited, the commissioners were to assemble people knowledgeable about the sea and, in the presence of a notary, to create a list of all local residents with maritime experience. Each man was to be listed by name, habitual residence, marital status, parentage, parish, and (if not legal residents) whether or not he habitually resided in that town. The crown wanted to know the seafaring experience and positions each man had held in the chain of command, whether on merchant, naval, or fishing vessels. The decree also aimed to list those involved in shipbuilding and refitting, and those who had owned or captained vessels propelled by sails or oars. The decree charged the *Chancillería* with enforcing the various provisions of the decree, with a fine of 200 ducats and two years' exile for deliberate omissions. Two copies of the registry were to be made, one to be kept by the local notary for updating, and one for the Council of War in Madrid<sup>17</sup>.

The task of creating the registry seems to have been too much for the *Chancillería*, given other duties and the general resistance that greeted the commissioners, despite the efforts of the Count-Duke Olivares to encourage compliance. Very few mariners volunteered to register, perhaps because they had little confidence that the privileges, exemptions, and assurances would actually be fulfilled, perhaps because of a general reluctance to compromise their freedom as seafarers.

In Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, both reasons seem to have played a role in the failure to comply with the 1625 decree. Martín de Arosteguí, Superintendent of the General Registry on the north coast, asked the king to appoint local men to help in the effort because of the delicacy of local feelings and the need to preserve the «honor and esteem of [the seafaring] profession»<sup>18</sup>. He noted that various towns had reminded him of the traditional methods of supplying men for the navy and had evidently threatened to suspend their efforts in the face of the new decree. Arosteguí also reported that mariners from several towns had in recent years gone off to serve in French vessels, and even in the ships of the rebellious provinces in the Netherlands, and asked for guidance in dealing with them. The members of the Council of War responded that the men who had served in enemy ships should be punished as their crime merited, but they also told Arosteguí to carry out the decree «with all mildness», cognizant of local feeling against it<sup>19</sup>.

Despite such efforts, the 1625 decree, like its precursor in 1605, failed almost completely in Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya, although the king did not rescind it. As the war continued, voluntary enlistments and periodic levies had to suffice to raise men for the navy, as in times past. In 1632 Martín de Valenzagú, the king's Purveyor (*Provedor*) for the navy on the north coast, had responsibility for car-

15. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, *legajo* (leg.) 276.

16. AGM, Colección Vargas, 1a Ser., tomo XXII, docs. 21-24.

17. *Ibid.*

18. «...honra y estimación de esta profesión». *Ibid.*, t. XXII, doc. 21h, letter from Vergara, dated Nov. 20, 1625.

19. «...con toda suavidad». *Ibid.*, doc. 23.

rying out a levy of sailors for the two most important ships in a royal fleet. In writing to local officials in Guipúzcoa, Philip IV observed all the traditional courtesy that the situation required. Addressing local officials as «noble gentlemen of the very noble and very loyal province of Guipúzcoa», he asked them to help Valenzagú carry out the levy quickly and to raise good men fit for service. Promising to pay the sailors an advance of six months' wages for enlisting, half in silver and half in copper *vellón* coinage, the king also assured local officials that the men would receive «the good treatment that is just» in the royal armada<sup>20</sup>. Because Spain's Atlantic trade declined steeply during the war, the navy presumably held more appeal for Basque sailors as a source of employment.

Basques experienced at seafaring always ranked high on the list of preferred sailors, but the government had to recruit them according to traditional methods and through local officials and naval commanders from the area<sup>21</sup>. In addition to volunteers, levies, and the efforts of naval commanders, the Spanish government relied on the active recruitment of vessels and crews from other Catholic powers with a maritime population, such as Genoa, Naples, Malta, and Ragusa<sup>22</sup>. The range of recruitment methods changed little during the wars in the late seventeenth century, as Louis XIV of France tried to gain territory in Europe and to establish its own empire in the Americas, in large part at the expense of Spain.

When Charles II, the last of the Spanish Habsburgs, died without an heir in 1700, he named as his successor a French Bourbon prince: the duc d'Anjou, a grandson of Louis XIV. His accession to the Spanish throne as Philip V thrust all of European diplomacy into disarray, and the newly allied states of Spain and France found themselves at war with most of the rest of Europe in 1701 to defend the Bourbon succession in Spain<sup>23</sup>. The Spanish government had only about twenty ships in its Atlantic fleet during the war and trade nearly ceased, freeing mariners for naval service.

When the war ended with Philip V secure on the Spanish throne, his government was already beginning a thorough overhaul of the government's seaborne forces, which were organized into a national navy in 1714. José Patiño served as the Intendent General of the newly established navy and brought his considerable energy and focus to the task of organizing it<sup>24</sup>. One of his main priorities echoed that of the Count-Duke Olivares nearly a century before: to make naval recruitment more predictable, equitable, and efficient. Once again, a national maritime registry figured prominently in the government's plans, and once again, bureaucrats would confront the resistance of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa as they tried to put the registry into effect.

In the famous treatise called *Theórica y práctica de comercio y de marina* written in 1717<sup>25</sup>, Gerónimo de Uztáriz urged the crown to bring the navy up to a strength of fifty large warships (*navíos*) and twenty smaller warships (*fragatas*), with a total of 3,660 guns and 23,150 men<sup>26</sup>. To prepare those men for naval duty in wartime, Uztáriz argued for government encouragement of commerce and fishing in peacetime, mentioning Holland and England as good examples. Without a supply of experienced sailors trained to the sea through commerce and fishing, he argued, the seventy ships he proposed would be useless<sup>27</sup>.

To keep track of eligible men, Uztáriz proposed the creation of a maritime registry, pointing to France as an ideal model<sup>28</sup>. It is not clear if he knew that the French system, established by Louis XIV and his minister Colbert, relied on coercion and draconian penalties to register the men and ensure that they periodically served in the navy<sup>29</sup>. Nor is it clear if Uztáriz knew that the Spanish government

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20. Document dated July 20, 1632. *Ibid.*, doc. 25, fol. 62, addressed to «Junta Procuradores, cavalleros hijosdalgo de la mui noble y mui leal Provincia de Guipúzcoa».

21. Recruitment documents for 1640, for example, appear in AGS, Guerra Antigua, legs. 3176-78.

22. AGS, Guerra Antigua, legs. 3176-78, 3886.

23. For a good overview of the war, see KAMEN, Henry: *The War of Succession in Spain 1700-1715*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1969.

24. For brief summaries of government naval policies in the early eighteenth century, see LYNCH, John: *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808*, Oxford, England, 1989, pp. 126-131; and OZANAM, Didier: «La política exterior de España en tiempo de Felipe V y de Fernando VI», in *Historia de España*, originally edited by Ramón Menéndez Pidal, vol. XXIX, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1985, pp. 457-466.

25. UZTÁRIZ, Gerónimo: *Theórica y práctica de comercio y de marina*, Madrid, 1717. I have used the 1742 edition from the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-203.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 228-229.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

29. T. J. A. Le Goff provides a masterful overview of the French case in «The Labour Market for Sailors in France», in «*Those Emblems of Hell?*», pp. 287-327, esp. pp. 289-91.

had tried unsuccessfully in the early seventeenth century to create a registry based more on voluntary cooperation than on coercion, failing in large part because of Basque resistance. In any case, with a new century and a new dynasty, Uztáriz presented his ideas as a new approach to an old problem.

Uztáriz had a powerful ally in the person of Don Antonio de Gaztañeta, perhaps the most distinguished Basque naval commander of his day, a man who held the rank of *Teniente General* in the Spanish navy and enjoyed the confidence of the crown under the Habsburg and then the Bourbon monarchy. Gaztañeta brought his prestige to bear on the contentious issue of establishing a maritime registry in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa. In a document dated in the town of Motrico on November 23, 1717, Gaztañeta issued the order for local officials to create a marine registry, together with detailed rules about how to proceed<sup>30</sup>. We can assume that he also used his knowledge of people and customs in the area to see that the order was carried out, but he, too, failed. The decree remained in effect but was met with non-compliance.

Unlike its Habsburg precursors, however, the Bourbon government in Madrid was determined to carry out a survey of the maritime population in Spain, stiffened by the resolve of the king. The Bourbon monarchy had been forced to give up much territory in exchange for remaining in power in Spain, and Philip V and his second wife Isabel Farnese launched a campaign to regain some of the Italian lands. Naval forces would be crucial to that effort, and in 1726 the government renewed its plan to survey and register the maritime population. As in 1625, the government made a distinction between those who registered voluntarily, and those who did not, with privileges and exemptions accorded to the voluntary registrants<sup>31</sup>. The survey was carried out in many coastal districts, though not easily nor without protest. Despite government assurances that registration did not mean immediate service, very few mariners signed up voluntarily. In Cataluña, for example, 897 mariners registered voluntarily, but another 3,059 mariners were listed outside the registry<sup>32</sup>. The same degree of reluctance marked the survey in other districts, although José de Patiño and his subordinates worked diligently to make the effort a success. Even more disappointing, some of the men who registered voluntarily simply disappeared thereafter, and others deserted from active service at the first opportunity<sup>33</sup>.

In the *señorío* of Vizcaya and the province of Guipúzcoa, the situation was difficult but somewhat more encouraging to the government than in the past. When a call went out for volunteers to crew the ship *Santa Rosa* early in 1727, with each man paid 3 *reales* per day from the time he signed up, Guipúzcoa wrote the following to the town of Deva:

«... this ship having to leave shortly, and our concourse in its crew being inevitable, it will be more seemly and better viewed that this be carried out without the hardship of quotas or other provisions that perhaps could hinder the benefits and advantages that I desire for the mariners»<sup>34</sup>

Noteworthy in the language of the note is the use of the first person singular by the writer: in other words, this is the voice of Guipúzcoa, a personification of the province, speaking to one of its towns. This convention, which I have not seen in earlier Basque documents, would be used from then on in correspondence emanating from Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa regarding the marine registry. Even as local officials showed themselves more accommodating to the needs of the crown, they adopted a mode of discourse that put them on equal footing with the king, and –significantly– avoided the need for individual officials to take responsibility for failing to comply with royal decrees.

Local officials adopted the same calculated approach in responding to the renewed order to create a registry of mariners in 1726. According to Guipúzcoa, a letter from Patiño in September of 1726 had contained assurances that the order,

30. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 276. The registration order was dated August 29, 1726, and is printed in SALAS, Francisco Javier de: *Historia de la Matrícula de Mar y examen de varios sistemas de reclutamiento*, Fortanet, Madrid, 1870, pp. 151-156.

31. LARRUGA, Eugenio de: «Historia de la Real y General Junta de Comercio» (multi-volume manuscript compilation in the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota), vol. 9, fol. 202.

32. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 276, documents for a survey carried out between February and April of 1726.

33. Information about attempts to register mariners and carry out levies in the 1720s and early 1730s can be found in AGS, Secretaría de Marina, esp. legs. 251-252, 276-278; AGM-Viso, Matrículas y pesca; and AGM, Colección Vargas, 1st ser. See also SAGARRA, Adelaida and RUPÉREZ, Nieves: «La deserción en la Marina española del siglo XVIII», *Revista de Historia Naval*, 9, no. 35 (1991), pp. 6376.

34. AGM, Vargas, 1a serie (Romana), t. I, doc. 187, dated Jan. 23, 1727, in San Sebastián. «...deviendo salir en brebe este navío y siendo inevitable n[uest]ro concurso a su tripulación, será mas decente y mas vien visto el que se execute sin necesidad de repartim[en]to ni de otras providencias q[u]e acaso pueden dificultan los alivios y conveniencias q[u]e deseo a los marineros».

«in no way opposes the provisos ... in this matter regarding my chartered privileges and established practice, the disposition conspiring only to facilitate [his Majesty's] royal service, with utility for these natural mariners to whom His Majesty desires to dispense the greatest benefits and exemptions...»<sup>35</sup>

Quite possibly, a debate had developed among local authorities in Guipúzcoa about how much, if at all, to cooperate with the registration effort, and whether cooperation would be more useful to local mariners than resistance. Nothing was done immediately to carry out the effort, however. Patiño wrote a letter on March 8, 1727, which Guipúzcoa understood to say,

«that [the king's] royal will is that, without prejudicing my chartered privileges, a registry of mariners be made in my territory in the best form that I would arrange with the commissioner [sent to carry it out], since, it being the royal intention to know at a fixed point [in time] the number of mariners who reside in maritime towns in these kingdoms, [the king] wishes that I contribute to this intent by providing information, by which I will not alter the method and rules with which I have until now facilitated the mariners who have been needed for his royal service: and having disposed that various gentlemen confer with the aforesaid commissioner about this subject, I have composed, according to your dictum, the provisions that Your Grace will see in the attached papers, for whose fulfillment Your Grace will form a book of ... all the mariners of [the king's] jurisdiction...»<sup>36</sup>

Guipúzcoa went on to note that the lists would be updated annually, working through local officials and the *Junta General* of the province. In other words, in 1727 Guipúzcoa agreed to provide the crown with the information required for the registry, but on its own terms and in its own way, not as the royal decree had outlined. Given the continuing need for experienced Basque sailors on royal vessels, the government had no choice but to accept that arrangement, and the list was compiled in 1728.

The crown needed as many experienced sailors as it could find. The English diplomat Sir Benjamin Keene wrote from Seville in 1731 that Spain had «about forty ships of the line, and large frigates, but not sailors even to navigate the half of them ...»<sup>37</sup>. To man those ships and others projected for the future, a maritime registry gained further urgency. This was doubly important as Spain's Atlantic trade increased in volume. Given a choice between serving on private vessels engaged in trade or fishing, or in the navy, sailors would presumably choose private vessels. To shift that choice without using force, the Spanish government devised a system that combined positive economic incentives for those who chose to register for periodic naval service, with negative economic consequences for those who did not. Because the government was chronically short of cash, the positive incentives took the form of exclusive rights to earn a living from the sea, as in the 1625 attempt to establish a registry. These would be the defining characteristics of the system of maritime registration that the government would finally put into place in 1737, after a decade of concerted effort to overcome resistance in the coastal districts<sup>38</sup>.

In the meantime, marine officials continued to rely on traditional levies, administered locally. Those levies also met with resistance, and nowhere more so than in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa. Between March and September of 1733, the government attempted to levy 400 mariners from Guipúzcoa and 300 from Vizcaya, in order to crew six ships of the Squadron of Galicia. In early May, Guipúzcoa produced lists of names for each town, but together they totalled no more than 175 men, most of whom were identified as unfit for service because of age, illness, or injuries<sup>39</sup>. The cover letter for the lists, written by Guipúzcoa in the first person singular, used straightforward and polite phrases and expressed a desire to serve the king but noted the small number of

35. *Ibid.*, «de ningún modo se opongan la providencias q[u]e se dieren en este asunto a mis fueros y practica establecida, conspirando unicamente esta disposición a facilitar su real servicio, con utilidad de estos naturales marineros a quienes desea Su M. dispensar los mayores alibios y exempciones...».

36. *Ibid.*, dated May 5, 1727. «...que su real animo es que, sin perjudicar a mis fueros se haga en mi territorio la matrícula de marinería en la mejor forma que yo discurriere con acuerdo de el mismo comisario, pues siendo su real intención saver a punto fijo el número de la marinería q[u]e se avecinada en los pueblos marítimos de estos reynos, quiere que yo contribuía a este intento en inteligencia, de que esta noticia no alteraré el método y regla con que he facilitado hasta aquí la marinería q[u]e se ha necesitado para su real servicio: y habiendo dispuesto que varios cavalleros confieren este asunto con el referido comisario, he acordado segun su dictamen las providencias que verá V[uestra] M[erced] p[or] los adjuntos papeles para cuya execución formará V[uestra] M[erced] libro de ... todos los marineros de su jurisdiccion...».

37. Keene to Newcastle, Seville, March 2, 1731, PRO, SP 94/107, quoted in LYNCH, J.: *Bourbon Spain*, p. 129.

38. For analyses of the marine registry in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see FERRET, Zeferino: *Exposición histórica de las causas que más han influido en la decadencia de la marina española e indicación de algunos medios para restaurarla* (Barcelona, 1819); SALAS, F.J. de: *Historia de la matrícula*; and PHILLIPS, Carla Rahn: «The Life Blood of the Navy': Recruiting Sailors in Eighteenth-Century Spain», *The Mariner's Mirror* 87, No. 4 (November 2001), pp. 420-445.

39. AGS, Sec. Marina, leg. 251, letters dated May 7-9, 1733.

men in the ports. In many towns, all the fit mariners were either away on whaling voyages or were already serving the crown in the Royal Caracas Company, organized for trade with Venezuela. The few men remaining who were sound in mind and body were caring for widowed mothers or wives and children<sup>40</sup>.

Vizcaya, which had been asked for 300 mariners, responded in late May that the towns would try to comply, but wrote José Patiño that some towns and their populations were in a miserable state<sup>41</sup>. Sailing and commerce had declined greatly, and most of the able-bodied men had shifted into fishing for cod and whales. The only men left in the district were the aged and infirm. Moreover, the government had proposed to pay sailors a three months' advance on their wages upon signing up, whereas the traditional payment was six months' wages<sup>42</sup>.

Manuel de Olarte, the royal official in charge of the levy, had little sympathy for Vizcaya's response and complained to Patiño that the señorío was using any excuse to avoid compliance. For example, he noted, the crown had asked only for able-bodied sailors. Men who had previously served as gunners were not willing to sign up for the lower pay of sailors, and the older boys and young men who might have signed on as grommets were excluded by the wording of the levy. The restrictive wording of the levy, in other words, was one of the pretexts for Vizcaya's reluctance to fulfill their quota.

Olarte admitted that he had no convincing answer when local officials complained that the advance payments promised to the men were inadequate. The crown wanted experienced, able-bodied sailors, and they had to be enticed into service with more attractive terms. With the money advanced, the sailors could provide for their families and also buy a few articles of clothing suitable for life at sea. Sailors were often so poor that they reported for duty clad only in tattered rags; advancing them money to buy clothes would avoid «the deaths and illnesses occasioned by nakedness in previous campaigns», as Vizcaya phrased it<sup>43</sup>.

Olarte had no authority to change the terms of the levy, he reminded Patiño; he only had authority to close the ports, thus preventing sailors from working on other ships. In the past, such action had not persuaded the men to sign up for naval duty. Olarte did not favor using it in 1733 either, judging that «their obstinacy would dispose them to suffer the economic damage of not fishing, rather than changing their custom»<sup>44</sup>.

The government also demonstrated obstinacy in the face of Vizcaya's response, refusing to reduce the number of men levied<sup>45</sup>. Patiño presented the situation as an emergency, noting that without the 300 sailors from Vizcaya the fleet could not sail<sup>46</sup> and did his best to satisfy Vizcaya's concerns about payments to the men. Once the crown sent funds to pay their advance wages, Vizcaya supplied 285 men by early June, despite the reported depopulation of the ports<sup>47</sup>. It is not clear if Guipúzcoa ever complied with the levy of 400 men.

Given the ongoing needs of the navy, and the difficulty of carrying out levies in the Basque region, the government made another effort to register everyone connected to seafaring in the fall of 1734. Vizcaya responded to that effort in a letter written directly to the king on October 31, 1734, using the familiar form of address throughout and arguing against the registry in forceful, though respectful, terms. Far from persuading the king to rescind the registration order, however, this breach of protocol seems only to have strengthened the government's resolve.

Another royal order to register everyone connected with seafaring reached Vizcaya in early December of 1734. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, don Manuel Olarte, as *Comisario de Marina* on the north coast, wrote Patiño that he had received the royal order and the instruction that Don Inocencio de Larena and Don Luis de Ibarra should help him carry out the registration. Don Ynocencio wrote

40. *Ibid.*, letters dated from late April through early May, 1733.

41. *Ibid.*, letter dated May 24, 1733.

42. *Ibid.*, letter dated April 5, 1733.

43. «...de este modo se eviten las muertas y enfermedades q[ue] la desnudez ocasionó las campañas antecedentes». *Ibid.*, letter dated May 24, 1733.

44. *Ibid.*, letter dated April 5, 1733. The phrase used by Olarte was, «... sugetándose su terquedad a padecer el daño, que se les sigue en no pescar, por no alterar su costumbre».

45. *Ibid.*, letter of April 17, 1733.

46. *Ibid.*, reports dated May 26, 1733.

47. *Ibid.*, letters dated from May 31 to June 14, 1733.

from Somorrostro on December 18<sup>th</sup> that, «blindly obeying the sovereign precepts» in the royal order, he would await instructions from Don Manuel Olarte about how he could help carry out the registration<sup>48</sup>. The message was written and signed in tremulous handwriting, suggesting that Don Ynocencio was an old man and perhaps out of touch with the current political generation in Vizcaya.

Others reacted quite differently to the direct royal order. Olarte wrote Patiño on December 20<sup>th</sup>, «I ought to tell Your Excellency that, having sought out the General Deputies to reach an agreement with them and assign the time and form in which the said registration should take place, they responded that the matter could not be resolved until they had met, about which they would advise me...»<sup>49</sup>.

At the meeting the next week, Vizcaya adopted the same stance it had taken the previous October. This time, however, Vizcaya wrote to Patiño, as protocol demanded, rather than directly to the king. The letter, dated December 26, 1734, made the case that the registration was ill-conceived, against all tradition, and likely to have a deleterious effect on the crown's ability to recruit mariners in the *señorío*. The arguments showed a certain similarity to the objections Vizcaya had raised to registration in 1625 and 1726, but they were more lengthy, elaborate, and forceful.

Vizcaya used exquisitely polite and deferential language in addressing Patiño but left no room for negotiation<sup>50</sup>. Marshalling arguments from history and tradition, Vizcaya noted that the registration carried out by the *Chancillería* of Valladolid in 1583 had produced a list of mariners but had also caused great resentment among the loyal towns and villages in the *señorío*. Moreover, because so many men sailed on fishing voyages for cod and whales in summer, and on commercial voyages transporting wool and other goods in winter, the government of Philip II had found it as difficult to raise crews for the navy after the registration as before. More recently, the mandated listing carried out in 1728 had not facilitated levies in 1731 and 1733, and had probably made them more difficult. The implication was clear: forced registration of seafarers in the Basque region was counter-productive, because it practically guaranteed that local officials would not assist government commissioners when the time came to levy sailors. Vizcaya humbly begged Patiño to let the king know that the registration effort worked against the crown's interests and that the king would be best served if he rescinded this unwelcome «novelty».

The principal point at issue seems to have been the loss of power by local officials. With a registry, «the commissioner of marine, on occasions when a levy was necessary, would decide on quotas for the number of men from each port, without the official of my government, Don Luis de Ibarra, nor any other of the natives, having any more role than to help the commissioner with what he needs...»<sup>51</sup>

Vizcaya pointed out that local officials had always cooperated with the king's representatives, without the «inconveniences and prejudicial effects» that the registry would cause. The proposed system would deprive local officials of full participation in the process of levying sailors and make them mere assistants to commissioners sent from the court.

As if to emphasize the negative consequences, Ibarra wrote to Patiño on December 27<sup>th</sup> that, despite his loyalty and his will to serve the crown, it was impossible for him to help Manuel de Olarte carry out the registration, because of his duties as Síndico General of Vizcaya<sup>52</sup>. Ibarra's phrasing, with its combination of humility and resolve, suggests that he was the voice of Vizcaya in its letters to Madrid, and that Ibarra may in fact have been the principal architect of the *señorío's* resistance to registration in 1733-34.

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48. *Ibid.*, letter of December 18, 1734, «...obedeziendo ziegamente los soberanas preceptos; estaré pronto para asistir así que me abise d[ic]ho comisario ...».

49. *Ibid.*, letter dated December 20, 1734. «... devo decir a V[uestra] E[xcelencia] que, habiendo buscado a los Diputados Generales, para ponerme de acuerdo y asignar el tiempo y forma en que se deva hacer la referida matrícula, me han respondido no pueden resolverlo, ynterin que se junten en su rexim[en]to, de que me havisarán...».

50. *Ibid.*, letter dated December 26, 1734.

51. *Ibid.*, «..., y el comisario de marina en las ocasiones de leva proporcione los repartimientos al numero de gente de mar, que hallaré en cada puerto, sin que los de mi gobierno, D[o]n Luys de Ybarra, ni otro de los n[at]urales tenga mas intervención, que coadyubar al Comisario en lo que necesitaré, como ha sido estilo hasta aqui obserbado, sin la consecuencia de tantos inconvenientes, y perjuicios».

52. *Ibid.*, letter of December 27, 1734.

Vizcaya's response to the registration order contained historical precedents for avoiding a registry:

«although, by the magnanimous justification of His Majesty, and by nature, my sons have been grateful and pleased to enjoy absolute exemption from all service that is not specified in Law 4, Title 1, of my chartered rights; they have always distinguished and exerted themselves beyond their possibilities, in providing gifts and voluntary services of money, soldiers, and sailors, with obsequious love and loyalty to the sovereign stimulating them much more than the most restrictive constitution could oblige them. As the lord King Ferdinand the Catholic declared, confirming and swearing an oath to the chartered privileges, in the decree that was inserted in it, the 30<sup>th</sup> of July of 1476, and promising, for the great and loyal services that they have made and will make to the royal crown, that he would not order them, nor press them at any time, nor would he call them to subjection. The custom of serving with so much voluntary and unforced loyalty has constituted the second nature [of Vizcaínos]; and if this is altered with the formal construction of the lists, it could not help but cause very grievous effects on the Vizcaínos' faithful love and constant loyalty, which is so impassioned and venerable with age»<sup>53</sup>.

The unyielding resistance expressed by Vizcaya frustrated Olarte. He wrote to Patiño on December 27<sup>th</sup> that, «the said Diputation having met, under the force of the cited order, which was also communicated to the señorío, they have responded to me that in no way will the said registration be executed, as it seems to them contrary to their laws, and that these hardly docile natives will take this to be a type of servitude contrary to their liberties ...»<sup>54</sup>.

Presumably, the government did not agree with Vizcaya's contention that local efforts to fulfill levies had been sufficient in the past, and there is some evidence that local officials did not assign quotas in an equitable manner. Several towns, including Bilbao and Deusto, had never contributed sailors or money to naval levies, basing their exemptions on custom and privileges, and on the fact that they contributed to other royal initiatives, such as port works and bridges<sup>55</sup>. This was presumably not acceptable to the crown. To remedy such inequities and to assure crews for the navy, a system of registration and regular levies from the lists of registrants continued to be the preferred solution, but gaining compliance from Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa remained difficult.

In addition to levies of Spanish sailors, the government recruited foreigners. Documents from 1734 indicate that sailors in the Spanish navy came from several regions of northern and southern Italy, as well as Malta, Ireland, and even England<sup>56</sup>. Given the willingness of foreigners to serve, it must have been galling to the government not to be able to recruit Basque sailors without an enormous expenditure of time and effort.

In 1735, the English diplomat Benjamin Keene wrote from Galicia that «Spanish ships at [Ferrol] have not got half their complement of men»<sup>57</sup>. Documents from 1735 chronicle the negotiations necessary to levy sailors from Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa for the ships in Ferrol, evidently still in the absence of a registry. Even when local officials could be persuaded to carry out a levy, the men they sent did not always fulfill the government's needs, either in number or in quality. For example, Guipúzcoa sent 228 men from San Sebastián in September of 1735, but two-thirds of them were so unfit for service that they were sent back immediately<sup>58</sup>.

The government had not given up on the establishment of a marine registry, despite the lack of compliance in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, and despite the death in 1736 of José Patiño, the driving force behind Spain's naval reorganization. Registries had in fact been compiled in many coastal areas in Spain from 1726 on, and the royal decree remained in effect. The government issued a new version of the decree on February 9, 1737. This time, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary

53. *Ibid.* «...aunque por la magnánima justificación de S[u] M[agestad], y por naturaleza, han agrado, y gozan mis hijos absoluta exención de todo servicio, que no sea exceptuado en la ley 4. título 1 de mi fuero, s[iem]pre han sobresalido, y se han esforzado, mas allá de su posibilidad, en donatibos y voluntarios servicios, de dinero, infantes, y marineros; estimulándolos mucho más su obsequioso amor, y lealtad al soberano, que pudiera obligarles la mas estrecha constitución; como lo declaró el S[eñ]or Rey Fernando el Cathólico, confirmando y jurando el fuero, en la cédula, que está inserta en el, de 30 de julio de 1476, prometiendo, que por los grandes, y leales servicios, que avian hecho y harian a la R[e]a] Corona, no les mandaria, ni apremaria a ellos en ningún t[iem]po; ni se llamaría a posesión. La costumbre de servir con tanta lealtad voluntarios, y no forzados, ha constituido otra segunda naturaleza; y si se alterase con la formal capitación de las listas, no pudiera dejar de causar muy dolorosos efectos en el fiel amor, y constante lealtad de los vizcaínos, tan apasionados de la ancianidad venerable».

54. *Ibid.*, letter of December 27, 1734, from Olarte to Patiño. «...haviéndose juntado la Diputación en fuerza de la citada orden, que le fue también comunicada al Señorío, para resolver sobre este punto, se me ha respondido que no convienen de ningún modo en que se execute tal matrícula, por parecerles contraria a sus leyes, y que estos naturales poco dóciles tendrían esto a jénero de servidumbre contraria a sus libertades...».

55. *Ibid.*, letter of October 31, 1734, from Vizcaya to the king.

56. AGS, Sec. Marina, leg. 251.

57. Keene to Newcastle, August 18, 1735, PRO, SP 94/123, quoted in LYNCH, J.: *Bourbon Spain*, p. 129.

58. AGS, Sec. Marina, leg. 252, letter of September 19, 1735.

registration disappeared. Anyone who wanted to earn a living from the sea was supposed to be registered and thus to be available for naval service from time to time. In return, the registrants obtained a legal monopoly on virtually all occupations concerned with seafaring, from commerce to fishing and coral-diving, and were urged to report any encroachments on their monopoly.

In March the king established the *Almirantazgo* (Admiralty) to create and run the registry, placing his son prince Philip in charge as the first *Almirante*<sup>59</sup>. The medieval *Almirantazgos* of Castile and Aragón provided precedents for the office, as did the contemporary English Admiralty<sup>60</sup>. The decree promised a long series of benefits and exemptions to all men on the registry, both Spaniards and foreign Catholics. In addition to exclusive rights to practice maritime occupations, the men would enjoy exemption from army levies and the billeting of troops, and special Admiralty courts would judge them in any civil or criminal cases. They would receive the traditional advanced wages when they were called to duty, plus various payments and privileges while they traveled between their homes to their ports of embarkation. The decree also promised generous terms for sailors who were injured at sea, pensions for those who remained on the registry for thirty years, and a continuation of all privileges for registered mariners over the age of sixty, when they were no longer liable to be called into service<sup>61</sup>.

In addition to the registration decree, in July of 1738 the king ordered naval commanders to treat mariners «with sweetness and good form, and [to] issue the strictest orders to captains and senior officers to very particularly fulfill their duties in seeing that ships' officers lay aside the rigor with which they customarily treat mariners»<sup>62</sup>. Legally speaking, sailors in Spain were considered volunteers, and they had legal recourse against mistreatment. The decrees of 1737 and 1738 reinforced their legal standing.

The registration effort was directed by Patiño's brilliant successor, *don* Cenón de Somodevilla, *marqués* de la Ensenada, who served as secretary of the *Almirantazgo*. Beneath him in the bureaucratic hierarchy were Intendants for each of three naval districts: Ferrol for the north coast; Cartagena for the east coast on the Mediterranean; and Cádiz for the south coast. Ensenada, then in his thirties, supervised the registration effort with relentless drive and attention to detail, and he and his subordinates completed the first overall registry of Spain's maritime population by November of 1739<sup>63</sup>. Overall, they registered more than 38,500 men connected to the sea, the vast majority of them sailors.

The Ferrol district contained over 150 major ports from Galicia to the Bay of Biscay, most of them in Galicia. The ports of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa posed the greatest challenge to the registration effort, as they had in the past. Galicia would register nearly 8,000 seafarers of all sorts, Asturias nearly 2,000, and Las Montañas –the area in and around Santander– would register more than 1,200<sup>64</sup>. Vizcaya, after months of protests based on local traditions and claimed exemptions, eventually produced a tally of 113 shipwrights and 2,038 sailors in its seventeen ports, although Don Manuel Olarte wrote Madrid that those numbers were far too low, perhaps twice too low for the shipwrights<sup>65</sup>. The dozen or so ports in Guipúzcoa resisted providing a tally, but figures included in a levy in 1739 estimated that the province was home to about 1,500 seafarers and shipwrights of all sorts<sup>66</sup>.

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59. AGM-Viso, Reales Órdenes, Cádiz, leg. 6457, document dated March 14, 1737. Other documents from the same legajo describe the bureaucratic structure of the *Almirantazgo*.

60. The most thorough discussion of the medieval *Almirantazgos* is MOTT, Lawrence Vanderleck: *The Best Manned Fleet Ever Beheld. The Catalan-Aragonese Fleet in Sicily During the War of the Sicilian Vespers, A.D. 1282-1295*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1999, pp. 118-154.

61. The text of the decree is available in many places. The October 18, 1737 version appears in LARRUGA, E. de: «Historia,» vol. 9, fols. 202-209. The definitive text, dated November 11, 1737, can be found in AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 276; and AGM-Viso, Matriculas y Pesca, legs. 1871 and 1948.

62. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 277. «...para que la marinería sea tratada con dulzura y buen modo, y que hagan los más estrechos encargos a los capitanes, y oficiales mayores, para que celen muy particularmente que los oficiales de mar depongan el rigor con que suelen tratar los marineros».

63. Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion is based on documents in AGS, Secretaría de Marina, legs. 251-254, 276-278. See also AGM, Vargas, ser. 1, tomos I, XXXII, XXXIII. MÜHLMANN, Rolf: *Die Reorganisation der Spanischen Kriegsmarine im 18 Jahrhundert*, Bohlau, Cologne-Vienna, 1975, pp. 179-193, used the comprehensive spreadsheet dated January 21, 1739 (AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 276), for the total registrants. That tally, which included over 27,000 men, was far from complete, however. By the end of the year, another 12,000 men had been added to the rolls. In the analysis that follows, I have chosen the most complete data available for each district in each of the three departments.

64. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, legs. 251, 276, 277.

65. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 277, tally dated Dec. 8, 1738, plus other documents from the fall of 1738.

66. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 278.

The effort in the Basque regions had been so difficult, and the opposition to registration so steadfast, that even Ensenada was worn down. The government made an exception to the national registration decree for Guipúzcoa, in exchange for the promise from local officials that mariners' guilds in each port would keep track of local seafarers and levy sailors for the kings' ships when the crown requested them. In other words, membership in a local maritime brotherhood would be considered the equivalent of registration<sup>67</sup>.

The government's willingness to compromise with Guipúzcoa paid dividends in the short term, at least. Sailors levied from Guipúzcoa in the fall of 1739 were much less likely to desert than sailors from Vizcaya, though both areas showed higher desertion rates than other parts of the Ferrol district<sup>68</sup>.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Galicia   | 2,272 recruits (1.1 percent later deserted) |
| Asturias  | 500 recruits (0.8 percent later deserted)   |
| Guipúzcoa | 250 recruits (5.6 percent later deserted)   |
| Vizcaya   | 350 recruits (35.4 percent later deserted)  |

The *Almirantazgo* was dissolved in 1748, and the three coastal districts were streamlined for greater efficiency, but Ensenada continued to work for naval reform, an effort in which a revised marine registry formed an essential part<sup>69</sup>.

Although the evolving rules for the registration of mariners in all three districts continued to rely on the cooperation of local officials, more power shifted to the central government – everywhere, that is, except Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya<sup>70</sup>. In the revised rules for marine registration, they were simply defined as outside the system. Local officials in Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya agreed to report a tally to the crown each year of the mariners and shipwrights fit for service. When the navy needed men, the government would send an order for a certain number of men to local officials in Vizcaya or Guipúzcoa. Those officials would then recruit the men, «according to the means that seem most compatible with their government»<sup>71</sup>.

At sea, Basque sailors were supposed to receive treatment equal to registered sailors. At home, however, the sailors from Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa were not supposed to fish anywhere but along their local coastlines. Moreover, they did not enjoy any of the benefits accorded to those listed in the national registry. Like other non-registrants who periodically sailed in the navy, however, mariners from Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa who had served a total of fifteen years could claim the same retirement benefits as registrants, if they had never deserted or committed a serious crime. They could also claim a generous pension<sup>72</sup>. Those arrangements remained in effect, with minor variations, as long as the marine registry lasted – into the 1870s.

In short, in the matter of naval recruitment and the means by which it was carried out, the crown and the Basques finally reached an accommodation of sorts by 1751, after a struggle that had lasted more than a century and a half. Through all that time, sailors from Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa continued to serve the crown, often with great distinction, but without agreeing to be registered. Although many areas of the Spanish monarchy resisted maritime registration, Basque resistance, more than any other, was responsible for the government's failure to establish the system before the late 1730s.

The significance of that delay is not clear. With a marine registry in place, would Spain and its navy have been more successful at sea? Would Spanish commerce and fishing have suffered from the government's ability to recruit sailors more efficiently? (That was certainly the claim in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries)<sup>73</sup>. Did the demands of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa improve condi-

67. A document dated Jan. 12, 1739 in San Sebastián, the capital of Guipúzcoa, inserted a royal order that said: «despite the stipulation that mariners who are not registered cannot sail, for those in Guipúzcoa a certification that they are enrolled in the brotherhood of mariners is sufficient». AGM, Vargas, ser. 1, tomo I, doc. 216, fols. 284-285v. The structure of the local registry is discussed in AGM Vargas, ser. 1, tomo I, doc. 187, fols. 246-147.

68. AGS, Secretaría de Marina, leg. 277.

69. The *Ordenanzas de su Magestad para el gobierno Militar, político, y económico de su armada naval*, 2 vols., Madrid, 1748, include *Tratados* I-X. Ordinances dealing with the marine registry technically formed *Título* III of *Tratado* X, but they were not printed in draft form until January of 1751 (AGM, Ms. 1228), and underwent revision for some time thereafter. The 1751 rules will be cited here from a manuscript copy in the Museo Naval: AGM, Ms. 200, doc. 3, fols. 1-34. Related documents appear in AGM, Vargas, Ser. 1a, vol. XXXIV. MÜHLMANN, R.: *Reorganisation der Spanischen Kriegsmarine*, pp. 208-227, includes detailed maps of the new administrative structure.

70. AGM, Ms. 200, paragraphs 7-21.

71. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 221-225.

72. *Ibid.*, paragraphs 85-89. See also Salas, *Historia de la matrícula*, pp. 203-208.

73. ed. Carlos Martínez Shaw, Universidad de Granada, Granada, 1995, pp. 262-266.



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tions for all sailors in the Spanish navy in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, or would they have been better off with a registry in place earlier? The situation was far too complex to give a simple answer to any of those questions.

One conclusion is clear, however. Naval recruitment provided an occasion to test the claims of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa to be treated differently from the rest of Spain. Because of the high reputation of Basque sailors, successive governments were forced to accommodate those claims. Both Habsburg and Bourbon administrations seem to have decided that it was more important to secure the services of Basque sailors on their own terms than to insist upon the prerogatives of the crown and the desirability of applying equal standards to all royal subjects.