

How did merchants seek to circumvent Southampton's monopoly on malmsey and the high custom duties on sweet wines in the sixteenth century?

In the mid-sixteenth century, the once prosperous port of Southampton was in decline. As a key harbour of England and an important source of royal income, Elizabeth I granted a monopoly to the mercantile area as an attempt to regulate and reboot its trade. The monopoly focused on the popular staple commodity of sweet wines, specifically malmsey and also others from certain regions of Europe. Alongside this, Elizabeth I also extended the custom duty on sweet wines to include a larger variety. These royal proclamations acted in a way to exclude the mercantile business focusing on sweet wines in other English ports. This essay will consider two lines of inquiry in exploring the ways in which this excluded mercantile elite sought to circumvent these issues. The first was the short term and illegal solution of illicitly importing the commodity. The second was the more permanent and long term solution, the development of an alternate good which wasn't subject to the monopoly nor high levels of taxation. In order to explore these two areas, a selection of primary sources from across the sixteenth and seventeenth century will be used alongside general trends from the time. A lot of the primary evidence has been transcribed by other historians and mentioned in alternate works. However, this essay will shine new light on the evidence by using it to support arguments which have thus far been largely undiscussed. By assessing the two areas of finding, this essay will consider how the monopoly and customs impacted English illicit trading of goods and also contributed to the increased availability and thus spread in popularity of what we term today as sherry. The emergence of sherry as a result of this monopoly and tax has not yet been alluded to. Having said this, Christ has suggested that measures such as monopolies have helped lead to the development of alternate commodities;¹ and there is evidence to suggest that the same is true for the evolution of sherry.

Malmsey and other sweet wines emerged onto the market during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As sweetened goods were not widely available, malmsey and other wines of this variety proved widely sought-after amongst those who could

¹ G. Christ, 'Did Greek wine become Port? Or why institutional interventions matter (c. 1350 - 1780)', *Quaderni Storici*, 143 (2013) 341.

afford it. Primary sources from the sixteenth century are peppered with references to malmsey, suggesting its abundance and popularity at this time. Statutes and books of trade outlining malmsey in particular and not just using the generic term of 'sweet wines' highlights the demand for it. Statutes put through by Elizabeth I distinguish malmsey from the other sweet wines, suggesting the commodities familiarity and common place during her reign. One such example can be seen in an act of 1562 concerning 'the bringing in of Malmesies and other sweet Wynes by Marchant Strangers'.² Furthermore, the popularity of malmsey in the sixteenth century can be seen within statistics. The average amount of tuns of wine which were imported throughout the reign of Henry VIII has been estimated by Professor Schanz at 9,800 tuns.³ Of this, malmsey makes up 1122 tuns (11.4%) of imports and other sweet wines only 117 tuns (1.2%).⁴ Although it is likely the figures are less than the reality, sweet wine made up close to 15% of the wine trade, which although not massive is certainly not negligible. What is more is that these figures illustrate that malmsey at this time was the most desired of the sweet wines. Thus this evidence demonstrates that malmsey was a pertinent commodity of the sixteenth century and relatively popular amongst the English upper class. Therefore it is unsurprising that Simon outlines that malmsey was shipped all over Europe at different times of the sixteenth century in 'very large quantities'.⁵ This evidence would suggest that merchants from across England, especially in the Southern ports, wanted to engage in this lucrative trade. Although it can be argued that there were times of decline in the trade of malmsey, this happened largely in the reign of Henry VIII and following 1550 there was a revival in the trading of the commodity.⁶ Thus in the latter part of the sixteenth century, which is the period this essay will focus, this evidence suggests that malmsey was a fruitful trade for merchants to involve themselves in.

Alongside the desire for the commodity in England, there was another reason which made the trading of malmsey seem appealing to the mercantile elite of the southern

² The Statutes of the Realm: Volume 4 Part 1 (London: Dawsons,1963) xxvi.

³ A.D.Francis, The Wine Trade: The Merchant Adventurers (London: Adam and Charles Black,1972) 316

⁴ A.D.Francis, The Wine Trade, 316.

⁵ A. Simon, The History of the Wine Trade in England: Volume 2 (London: The Holland Press, 1964) 218.

⁶ A. Simon, The History of, 236.

ports. Several merchants already had established trading networks within the Eastern Mediterranean, making trading in a new good from this area fairly straight forward. The English trade of malmsey was initially dominated by Italian merchants, who were constantly importing the wine from Candia and other areas. From the early sixteenth century, merchants from ports such as London and Bristol started to sail to these Greek islands and compete in the trade of exotic Mediterranean goods.⁷ A significant part of this was to do with their improved ships and also the fact that private Venetian trade had declined at the end of the fifteenth century thus many of these Italian merchants had moved to London.⁸ When demand for malmsey began to rise around the middle of the sixteenth century, the experienced merchants from the southern ports who had engaged in the Mediterranean trade roots could respond to the demand and indulge in the prosperous sweet wine trade. A comparison of secondary sources reflects the fact that malmsey was being imported into England through several ports. As stated, Simon has outlined how he believes that following a period of decline in trading malmsey there was a 'revival of that branch of the wine trade appears to have taken place in England after 1550'.⁹ However, Ruddock has stated that this was a time when Southampton was in economic decay with a very small market for any goods imported.¹⁰ When comparing these two sources it would suggest that the other southern ports such as Bristol and particularly London who weren't in decay would have enjoyed in the prosperous trade of malmsey at this time.

Clearly there was a desire amongst the mercantile elite to import malmsey during the sixteenth century as a result of the sustainable demand for the commodity and southern ports having established trading routes and connections. However, this was severely limited in the middle of the sixteenth century by a monopoly granted to Southampton on the import of malmsey. The reasons behind this were twofold. The Crown around this time were seeking to implement new exactions on international trade in order to benefit their own financial situation.¹¹ Alongside this, Southampton

⁷ A.D.Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 32.

⁸ A. Ruddock, *The Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton: 1270 - 1600* (Southampton: University College, 1951) 231 - 232.

⁹ A. Simon, *The History of*, 236.

¹⁰ A. Ruddock, *Italian merchants*, 232.

¹¹ E. Jones, *Inside the illicit Economy: Reconstructing the Smugglers' Trade of Sixteenth Century Bristol* (Farnham, 2012) 34.

was in economic decline thus a monopoly was an attempt to rectify this and restore its prosperity. The monopoly was initially granted by Philip and Mary and later confirmed by Elizabeth I. The passing of the monopoly is recorded in the statutes of the realm of 1562:

An Acte for the Confirmacon of tres Patentes granted to the Towne of Sowthampton towching the bringing in of Malmesies and other sweet Wynes by Marchant Strangers.¹²

The original charter put forward by Philip and Mary to Southampton from 1554 illustrates the benefits the crown would have received. It states that 'any other port of place of this our kingdom than in the town and port aforesaid under the penalty of paying us, our heirs and successors, triple the duty for the same wines'.¹³ The source demonstrates the clear financial gains to the monarchy through the imposition of this monopoly. It later shows that any malmsey brought into England outside of the port of Southampton would expect to pay the crown an additional twenty shillings per butt of malmsey imported.¹⁴ Therefore as this source illustrates, financial gain to the crown was one part of the imposition of the monopoly.

Alongside this reasoning, Southampton during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century had a flourishing economy as it was the key English port for Venetian merchants. However, after the 1530s this declined as the 'custom for the last few years has been interrupted through certain ills'.¹⁵ These ills mentioned seem to be a combination of factors leading to economic decline. Elizabeth's confirmation of the original charter outlines that without this monopoly the 'said towne and porte of Southt is thereby like to fall in great ruyn and decaye'.¹⁶ This decline can be seen to begin during Henry VIII's rule. In the letters and patents of his rule an entry of 1534

¹² The Statutes of the Realm: Vol 4 Part 1 (London: Dawsons, 1963) xxvi.

¹³ H.W. Giddens (ed.), The Charters of the Borough of Southampton: Richard III - William IV (A.D. 1484 - 1836) Volume II', (Southampton Record Society, 1910) 37.

¹⁴ H.W. Giddens (ed.), The Charters of the Borough of Southampton: Richard III - William IV (A.D. 1484 - 1836), Volume II', (Southampton Record Society, 1910) 43.

¹⁵ H.W. Giddens (ed.), The Charters of the Borough of Southampton: Richard III - William IV (A.D. 1484 - 1836), Volume II', (Southampton Record Society, 1910) 37.

¹⁶ H.W. Giddens (ed.), The Charters of the Borough of Southampton: Richard III - William IV (A.D. 1484 - 1836), Volume II', (Southampton Record Society, 1910) 55.

outlines that the customs on the import of 'various and wine (sweet, not sweet and malmesey)', by denizens was £379/. 43. 8d and those brought in by aliens was £326/. 13s. 11d.¹⁷ Only two years later in 1536, the same report states that the amount brought in by denizens was £321/. 4s. 6.75d. and by aliens £217/. 16s. 1.5d.¹⁸ This represents a clear fall in the amount of income to the crown between the two years, alluding to this fall in the prosperity of Southampton as a port from the 1530s which led to the eventual implementation of the monopoly. This decline was due to a number of factors. As outlined, merchants from other major southern ports had entered and taken a proportion of the Mediterranean trade. Alongside this, London had made a massive improvement to its harbour facilities at this time, which not only meant it was more competitive but also led to several Italian merchants using this as their primary port due to its land connections allowing it to trade throughout the country.¹⁹ The combination of factors led to a steep decline in Southampton's economy, and thus it made sense for the port to be awarded this monopoly.

Thus this monopoly came to exclude the mercantile elites who had up to then had a desire to engage with the trade of sweet wines. This is summarised by the fact that there were immediate attempts by these now excluded merchants to gain access once again to the malmsey trade and thus circumvent the monopoly. When it came to simply petitioning the crown, Ruddock has illustrated how Elizabeth agreed to allow Italian merchants who were based in London to import malmsey into the capital.²⁰ However, the result of their requests was clearly limited as they were still required to pay a fee on each butt of wine imported to Southampton's officials.²¹ The source itself is revealing of this attempt to circumvent the monopoly soon after it was issued in 1566:

¹⁷ J. Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 12 Part 1, January - May 1537* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1890) no. 1003. p. 447 - 477.

¹⁸ J. Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 12 Part 1, January - May 1537* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1890) no. 1003. p. 447 - 477.

¹⁹ L.T.Parker, 'Southampton's sixteenth-century illicit trade: An examination of the 1565 Port Survey', *The International Journal of Maritime History*, 27 (2015) 271.

²⁰ A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, 232.

²¹ A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants*, 232.

October 2nd: 77. Winchester to Cecill. Requests to know what answer he is to give to the merchants of the Venetian ships, as to importation of wines²²

October 3rd: 78. Objections made by the town of Southampton, against the merchants of Venice, that they ought to unlade their malvesies and sweet wines at Hampton, and not elsewhere²³

This source represents the clear demand of the Venetian merchants who had moved to other ports, wanting access to the malmsey trade after the monopoly had been implemented. However, for these merchants this attempt at returning malmsey to its free trade label was of limited success, as the payment due would have made importing the good far less profitable. As a result, these merchants had to seek other ways to circumvent the issue of this monopoly.

The issue of the monopoly was exaggerated following an extension to the customs regulation on sweet wine.

'Be it enacted and declared by this presente Acte, and by thauthoritee aforesayd, That lyke Custome and Subsidie ys of verye right to bee payde, and shall from hensforthe bee payde for suche Sweet Wynes as ys afroesayd, as ys and hathe been accostomed to be payd for Malveseys'²⁴

This stood as a further limitation to the import income of merchants outside of Southampton. Prior to this clarification of the customs duty on sweet wines, the mercantile elite during Mary I's reign was able to engage in the commodity trade by importing sweet wine other than malmsey and claim on the illusiveness of the original statute that these wines lay outside of customs duty to be paid. As Elizabeth's enactment outlines, the customs duty prior to this enactment simply

²² R. Lemon (ed.) *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547 - 1580* (London, 1856) vol XL, no 77, p. 279.

²³ R. Lemon (ed.) *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547 - 1580* (London, 1856) vol XL, no 78, p. 279.

²⁴ H. Hall, *A History of*, 308.

expected payment on those sweet wines which came through the 'Streights of Marrock'.²⁵ The mercantile elite was able to exploit this customs duty due to its lack of specificity on which wine was to be imported, and therefore had the alternate option of importing other sweet wines which were similar to malmsey, or as mentioned above importing malmsey and claiming it was a different variety of sweet wine. Evidence for this mercantile wrongdoing can be seen in the customs account, stating 'eyther by Neccligence, Ignorance or Corruption of the Officers, there hath not been suche Custome and Subsydye receyved'.²⁶ To Elizabeth, these wines should have always paid the same amount of custom as malmsey as they were made from the same 'Nature of the Grape'.²⁷ Examples of these wines which were similar to malmsey included Romaney, Muscadell, Muscadine and Tyre.²⁸ By importing these wines instead, the merchants had clearly managed to circumvent both the original monopoly and the customs duty by using this early modern loophole. Therefore, following this clarification of the level of customs expected by Elizabeth I on the majority of alternate sweet wines, there was a need for a more permanent and long term solution to the issues faced by the merchants in the sweet wine trade.

Examination of petitions from after the time that the monopoly was awarded to Southampton and the customs duties extended, illustrates that a short term solution of the now excluded mercantile elite was to import malmsey illicitly. As Simon outlines, during the reign of Elizabeth I there is very little evidence to suggest that penalties were enforced in order 'to prevent the merchants from bringing sweet wines to Bristol, London, Hull, or any other port'.²⁹ Therefore this leads us to several petitions that show merchants taking advantage of the poorly enforced laws at this time. A petition written in 1562 by the Mayor and Burgesses of Southampton as transcribed by Hall, which recited a grant of Philip and Mary for the monopoly of sweet wines is one example. The petition outlines how:

²⁵ H. Hall, *A History of*, 308.

²⁶ H. Hall, *A History of*, 308.

²⁷ H. Hall, *A History of*, 308.

²⁸ A. Simon, *The History of*, 240.

²⁹ A. Simon, *The History of*, 107.

They of late years seek to land the wines at other places and creeks within this Realm. This was to import the good as well as to avoid Customs due for the wines.³⁰

As this petition written in 1562 demonstrates, the reasoning behind the illicit importation of malmsey was two fold. On the one hand stood the monopoly; importing the sweet wine in this illegal manner was simply a way for the merchants to gain access to the market for this luxury good. The market at this time was prosperous as already outlined. On the other hand, although the monopoly would have pushed the merchants into the illicit trade of malmsey further, it is likely that the long standing custom duties in place meant that illicit importation of malmsey was happening prior to the issuing of this statute, but on a much lower level. The level of custom on malmsey prior to the implementation of the monopoly and extension to other sweet wines had been 13s 4d per tun.³¹ This was to be expected as high duties often existed on luxury products at this time. Therefore, these merchants from ports outside of Southampton who had involved themselves in the trade following its revival in 1550 would have wanted to get around these customs duties. The level of custom suggests that if not explicitly illegally importing malmsey, merchants were likely to have somehow been avoiding the duties and therefore this prior experience may have assisted with circumventing the monopoly. Thus by time the monopoly was implemented, it is likely some kind of illicit trading was already occurring. It is outlined in the petition that the merchants 'doo dayly bring the same wines into this Realme very contemptuously and agaynst the purpose and effects of the sayd grante'.³² What backs this up further is the fact that several historians have pointed to this common trend of illicit trading amongst the mercantile elite during this time. Specifically, Jones has outlined how the smuggling of wine in general as a result of customs duties and other statutes developed in the latter part of the sixteenth century on a 'large-scale'.³³ Thus suggesting that if wine in general was being smuggled at this time, this would either include those sweet wines or give the experience to merchants to do so.

³⁰ H. Hall, *A History of the Custom - Revenue in England: From the Earliest times to the Year 1827*, Vol 1, (London: Elliot Stock, 1885) 310.

³¹ E. Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy*, 193

³² H. Hall, *A History of*, 312.

³³ E. Jones, *Inside the Illicit*, 193.

Several other historians have made claims that colouring of goods was occurring at this time. Although there isn't any hard primary evidence to suggest this was the case in malmsey, the fact it was occurring amongst other goods of a similar origin and expense provides some comparative evidence. One such example is put forward in the work of Oliver Dunn. His work points to an example of a petition of Thomas Watkins against customer John Dowle.³⁴ According to Watkins, Dowle was importing dyes of 'woad' and 'sumacke' as either madder or salt toward the end of the sixteenth century in order to avoid high customs duties.³⁵ The two dyes were luxury items and as with several others at this time cost a significant amount to import. Thus by claiming the goods were a different commodity of a similar appearance, Dowle was avoiding this level of tax.³⁶ This could suggest therefore that the same happened with other luxury goods such as malmsey at this time. In order to get around both the monopoly and customs duties, merchants may have imported malmsey and claimed it was another type of wine which would have been difficult for the custom officer to identify and distinguish. However, this argument is a speculative one due to the lack of primary source material to support it and thus it doesn't carry as much weight.

Although the punishment for illicit trade was not as extensive as it could have been, an option of a legal and thus more straight forward alternative was clearly desirable. The long term solution to the issues of Southampton's monopoly of malmsey and the customs duties, lay in the development of a new product overseas. As Christ has outlined, interventions by the crown 'altered incentive structures and hence triggered coping mechanisms facilitating the adaption to the new situation'.³⁷ The hypothesis of this essay for the long term solution is that the monopoly implemented on malmsey which was worsened by the extended customs duty, led to the evolution of English merchants importing sherry which then became a common commodity. It is outlined as a hypothesis due to the lack of hard primary evidence and use of overall trends and secondary sources. There has up to this time been alternate research

³⁴ O. Dunn, 'The Petitions of Thomas Watkins against Customer John Dowle 1598 - 1600' (BA Thesis: University of Bristol, 2006).

³⁵ O. Dunn, 'The Petitions', 13.

³⁶ O. Dunn, 'The Petitions', 13.

³⁷ G. Christ, 'Did Greek wine', 334.

into the development of port as a result of royal statutes, however none so far into that of sherry. The name 'sherry' itself became a finalised drink much later on than the sixteenth century, however it originated from what was known as sack wine. The particular type of sack wine which sherry developed from was made in Jerez, originally referenced under the blanket term of sherry, then sherris-sack in the seventeenth century and eventually just sherry.³⁸ The hypothesis of this essay focuses on the fact that this monopoly and customs duties encouraged merchants to import this sherris-sack from Jerez as it stood outside the monopoly and customs in existence at this time.

A significant area of continuity identified that supports the hypothesis, lies within the fact that sack wine in general lies outside of Southampton's monopoly on sweet wine. Sack was not of the same category as other sweet wines despite coming from similar areas, as originally it wasn't as sweet. On first investigation this wouldn't seem the case when looking at Henry VIII's initial statutes concerning the pricing of wine. An act from 1536 counts sack as a sweet wine: 'And that no Malmeis Romneys Sackes nor other sweet Wynes shall be sold by retail above xij d. the Gallon'.³⁹ As Simon has outlined however, from 1539 the statutes begin to distinguish between the two, with sweeter wines being priced at 12d. and sack now standing alone at 15d.⁴⁰ Even though this distinction had been made, over the sixteenth century producers of sack did start to sweeten their products, the sherry version of sack being one example of this. So, even as the sack became a sweeter drink and represented a diversification of the sweet wine market, it still stood outside of Southampton's monopoly by being put in its own category by Henry VIII. Alongside the monopoly stood the advantage of sherry within the customs duties. As outlined, Elizabeth I extended the custom laws to include all sweet wines which came through the 'Streightes comonly called the Streightes of Marrock'.⁴¹ This included all of the major sweet wines being produced at this time, as the majority of the good quality ones came from the Mediterranean. However, this meant that those outside this

³⁸ T. Unwin, *Wine and the Vine: An Historical Geography of Viticulture and the Wine Trade* (London and New York: Routeledge, 1996) 254.

³⁹ *The Statutes of the Realm: Volume 3* (London: Dawsons, 1963) 4 Henry VIII cap 17, p 67.

⁴⁰ A. Simon, *The History of*, 207.

⁴¹ H. Hall, *A History of*, 308.

geographical area were in a favourable position, which included the Spanish port of Cadiz.⁴² Jerez, the city in which sherry originated from lay just outside of Cadiz, thus meaning this particular variety of sack was immune to the English import customs. As Francis outlines, this tax advantage was illustrated by the 'enormous popularity of sack'.⁴³ Sherry from Jerez did not become classified in the tax bracket for sweet wines until after 1624.⁴⁴ Although the merchants would have had to pay the duty after the 1620s, there was an extended period prior to this which would have helped establish the sherry trade in England.

The practical elements of producing sherry over malmsey can also be considered to show that it was a good alternative to other sweet wines. A major advantage when it came to the transportation and storage was that the production of sherry was centred on long shelf-life. Sherris-sack is one of the earliest examples of Spanish experimentation of the fortification of wine. Producers realised that fortifying wine allowed for a high sugar content, which alongside the alcohol strength meant that they were not as likely to spoil.⁴⁵ Not only would this be a more attractive proposition for the merchants when it came to transporting the commodity, but also to the consumers as the wine could be kept for longer. Furthermore from 1616, it has been recognised that 'flor' a combination of yeasts that occurs naturally during fermentation in wine from Jerez, started to develop which also helps to prevent the spoiling of this wine.⁴⁶ These factors meant the commodity was more desirable than sweet wines such as malmsey which was relatively perishable. Thus in a practical sense when looking for a solution to statutes in place, the elements of sherry would suggest it was a good alternative. What is unsurprising therefore is that the first references in literature and sources to sack wine, which included sherry, first became very common during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when this monopoly was put into place.⁴⁷

⁴² A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 40.

⁴³ A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 40.

⁴⁴ A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 54.

⁴⁵ T. Unwin, *Wine and the*, 254.

⁴⁶ T. Unwin, *Wine and the*, 254.

⁴⁷ A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 40.

Although primary sources concerning sherry are relatively thin, there is some evidence to suggest the spread of sherry in England throughout this time. The term Spanish wines, which includes sherris-sack, was imported into England following the imposition of the restrictive statutes on other sweet wines. There are examples of this all the way up to the Anglo-Spanish war. For example a 1580 petition mentions the bringing in of these wines, stating 'to be relieved from the payment of the new imposts on certain Spanish and sweet wines brought by them into England'.⁴⁸ However, the war with Spain at the end of the sixteenth century was restrictive on the importation of sherry and thus the sources concerning the commodity begin to thin. Having said this, Simon outlines at this time that some sack was coming into England through attacking foreign ships and that the demand for sack was so great that many merchants from Bristol and London ports actually went to France in order to get hold of the Spanish sacks to then bring to England.⁴⁹ Thus it was after the war during the seventeenth century that the sherry trade could truly flourish, particularly prior to 1624 when it was immune to both the monopoly and customs duty. The custom returns on the total amount of imports were not put together until the years after 1675.⁵⁰ However, prior to this sherry had become a common commodity throughout England, as demonstrated in statutes from across the seventeenth century. Just one example from 1632 is when the wholesale prices for wine were established.⁵¹ Alongside the big wine distributors and categories such as 'Bordeaux wine', Francis shows how sack and sherry receives its own category, being priced originally at £26 a tun and then increased to £32.⁵² This alludes to the fact that sherry was of familiarity to people throughout the realm and illustrates its successful growth as a commodity following the imposition of these statutes.

The final assessment of the effect of Southampton's monopoly on malmsey and the customs duties which followed, brings about a short term mercantile solution of certainty and a longer term hypothesis. Having considered the very clear desire of the mercantile elite from ports outside of Southampton to engage in the sweet wine

⁴⁸ R. Lemon (ed.) *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, 1547 - 1580* (London, 1856) 698.

⁴⁹ Simon, *The History of*, 209.

⁵⁰ A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 317.

⁵¹ A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 54.

⁵² A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade*, 54

trade, this demonstrated the clear starting point of a desire for merchants to circumvent the barriers in this trade. The illicit trading of the good not only provided a short term solution to the issue but also reflects a general trend seen at the end of the sixteenth century concerning smuggling of a whole variety of goods. More importantly and eye-opening perhaps is the idea that the the monopoly and the customs duties, played a role in the evolution of sherry in England. However it is important to outline that this set of evidence used only gives a somewhat sketchy picture. The sources from this time concerning the growth of sherry drinking within England are extremely thin, however a pattern is certainly suggested even if it cannot be fully corroborated.

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