
British Trade and the Fall of the Spanish Empire – Changing Practices and Alliances of Antony Gibbs & Sons in Lima during the Transition from Viceregal to Independentist Rule (1820-1823)

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Deborah Besseghini



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British Trade and the Fall of the Spanish Empire – Changing Practices and Alliances of Antony Gibbs & Sons in Lima during the Transition from Viceregal to Independentist Rule (1820-1823)

El comercio británico y la caída del imperio español: mutaciones en las practicas y alianzas de Antony Gibbs & Sons en Lima durante la transición entre la colonia y la república independiente (1820-1823)

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- 1 In countless works on Latin American or global social-economic history, the strategic role played by the London firm of Antony Gibbs & Sons during the mid 19th century ‘guano boom’, and later in the nitrate trade, is mentioned. This firm was central in Peruvian and Chilean history and this centrality has become paradigmatic of differing, sometimes contradictory readings of British-Hispanic American relations after independence. For instance, its initiatives, practices and political influence have been considered both as a case of British ‘informal imperialism’ and as proof of the insufficiency of such interpretations¹.
- 2 ‘Informal imperialism’ is, of course, a controversial concept with nearly as many definitions as the number of scholars who have defined it. Based on the interpretation of the main authorities on the subject, Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, in their 1953 article, I have recently proposed defining it as a ‘structuring influence’ exerted by growing empires on weaker countries (or “derelict empires”²), through informal means. In the 19th century, such means were chiefly unofficial initiatives aimed at expanding, for defensive purposes too, the influence of one hegemonic power, or of two

or more rival powers, by creating or supporting, at the least possible cost, economic and political frameworks suited to precise strategic interests of the expanding power or powers³. In this ‘political’ sense, ‘informal imperialism’ in Hispanic America may be considered a response to the crisis of the Bourbon Monarchy, which generated a political void that no great power wanted another to fill⁴. Historians after Robinson and Gallagher, however, have described ‘informal imperialism’ as an economic rather than political phenomenon. We will, therefore, concentrate on a case which could illuminate it as a ‘structuring influence’ in the economic field, leaving the more important political sphere to forthcoming works.

- 3 Christopher Platt, the “more persistent critic of Robinson and Gallagher”⁵, in a 1972 essay stated that only if “deliberate control” on the part of foreign businessmen over local economy is demonstrable, can we speak of ‘informal imperialism’ or, at least, of an ‘economic imperialism’⁶. Intentions (the deliberateness of any action or result) are difficult to verify, though, and even less so if we focus on a group as numerous as ‘foreign businessmen’. We can try, however, to measure the ability of a precise network of foreign merchants to control markets at a given moment.
- 4 Twelve years ago, Matthew Brown issued a challenge to revitalize, re-contextualize, and reexamine informal imperialism through the study of “contact zones” between its agencies and its alleged victims. Culture, commerce and capital are the pillars of a three-dimensional framework useful for evaluating actual or attempted incursions into Hispano-American sovereignties and the degree of “control” derived from them. “For informal empire to exist there must be evidence of commerce and investments which shape political and diplomatic relations” and “a demonstrable role for culture”, which includes the periphery’s “consciousness of an unequal power relation”⁷.
- 5 For the period of independences, the problem arises of just which sovereignty undergoes limitations. Leaving aside the complex question of the idea of sovereignty in the Era of Revolutions, are we talking about the Spanish Monarchy or the new states? For this period of transition, I propose here seeking both the ‘de-structuring’ and the ‘re-structuring’ influence of British commerce on the political-economic system of these territories. The case presented also intends to show how initiatives by British businessmen functioned as crucial vectors of economic change, contributing to the rise of new political and diplomatic balances as well. As Brown writes, attention on “the role of external actors as agents of change in Latin America”⁸ had, in the past, obscured the importance of internal factors of crisis and modernization. During the last thirty years, though, historiography has amply analysed these elements for the independences period⁹. It seems, therefore, worthwhile to underline once again some of the reasons which render these external vectors of change so important.
- 6 Empires, imperialisms and inter-imperial rivalries have contributed decisively to building essential structures for our modern interconnected world. To address the question of ‘globalisation’ in terms of mutual influences, transfers and interconnections could be helpful in establishing a shared ‘cross-cultural’ heritage, but perhaps insufficient to explain the process historically. Focusing on crucial issues of power relations in the international field, and on those among social groups as in the case of some ‘New Imperial History’ and ‘Global Lives’ perspectives¹⁰, is strategic. At a microhistory level, we must deal with the problem of change (in institutions, practices, influences; in the hierarchy of value among identities, alliances, loyalties), taking into

account variations in power relations among individuals as well as among states and communities.

- 7 The case of Gibbs & Sons in Lima in 1820-23 shows how these shifting alliances work, in a moment of change in power relations on an ‘imperial’ level. During the first years of the firm’s involvement in independent South American trade, it was part of both British and Spanish-Creole networks. Its success is therefore, perhaps, a consequence of local ‘collaboration’ – a concept crucial in Robinson and Gallagher’s reading of British imperialism¹¹. What roles did British and Spanish-Creole networks play in Gibbs’ successful entry into local markets? Did the firm exert, at least temporarily, power over Peru’s international and coastal trade? Power has an enabling dimension: that of making others do that which they otherwise could not. Did Gibbs’ initiatives facilitate, in the commercial field, the passage from a Spanish ‘colonial pact’ to a British ‘neo-colonial pact’ in Latin America?
- 8 Most of the literature on the Gibbs family regarding the period before the ‘Guano Era’ concentrates on the firm’s founder, Antony Gibbs (1756-1815), and his – politically relevant – business in Spain, England and Portugal during the ‘French Wars’. Little research has been done on the firm’s connections with Spanish America during the Independence Wars, and little published regarding the first years in Peru and Chile. John Gibbs’ book on his ancestors Antony and Dorothea and their children is a hundred years old, but its chapter on the first years of business in South America is still widely quoted, as alternative secondary sources are lacking¹². We do not claim to exhaustively retrace all of Gibbs & Sons’ activities in America during the crisis of the Spanish Monarchy, although such a study would probably be central to understanding transformations in global trade and commercial networks. Our scope is limited here to reconstructing the initiatives managed from Lima concerning business on the South American Pacific coast during the years between the last months of Spanish rule and the end of San Martín’s Protectorate, when new “rules of the game”¹³ for trade started operating.
- 9 The first dramatic change was how central Valparaíso became to Pacific trade after Chile’s independence. Chilean international trade was largely managed by Britons¹⁴ with the British Navy protecting British trade from Spanish attacks. Once Chile opened direct trade with foreigners, royalist Peru was forced to do the same. Chile acquired importance as a regional naval power, thanks to a squadron largely enlisted abroad. The Chilean squadron attacked Spanish ships and blockaded the coasts of Peru, now forced to trade under foreign protection¹⁵. In short, the Spanish loss of Chile generated new opportunities for British merchants in Peru as well.
- 10 Such was the current context when John Moens (1797-1842), son of the Dutch consul in Bristol, arrived in Lima as Gibbs’ agent. His initiatives will be used here as a guide to exploring that borderland – the little-known yet broad intermediate region in Hispano-American history – situated between the 18th century Spanish global trading system and 19th century international trade dominated by Britain. We will evaluate if and how this case in microhistory clarifies this crucial passage in global economic history. Our work is based on Moens’ correspondence, found in the London Metropolitan Archives, and on documents preserved in the National Archives of Argentina, Chile, Peru, France and Britain.

Trading under Pezuela

- 11 Writing from Madeira on 3 August 1820, Moens described his reluctance to reveal his destination to other passengers on the ship 'Baltic'. A Mr Doran, along with William Phelps and Robert Page of Phelps, Page and Co, a firm trading mostly in Madeira wines with Jamaica (and later with Moens in Peru), were "the only gentlemen I have mentioned I am going to Lima"¹⁶. Moens' mission was related to the heralded opening of British direct trade with Peru. Better then, that the other passengers should believe his destination was Valparaíso where many British and US merchants were heading after independence. Indeed, on the eve of the attack against royalist Peru – the last step in José de San Martín's Continental Plan for 'liberating' South America – any hint of Moens' intentions might have caused him to alter his plans, as it was feared that Chileans would have prevented him from leaving Valparaíso.
- 12 The opening of trade in Lima had been promised months before by Viceroy Joaquín de la Pezuela to Captain William Shirreff of the British Navy. This initiative, as Patricia Marks has noted, was backed by a precise group of merchants, at the center of whom was the Filipinas Company's agent and Gibbs' main contact in Peru, Pedro de Abadia. It was a survival strategy as, after the Spanish loss of Chile and the growing power of the Chilean fleet, Pezuela needed customs revenue to buy military supplies and pay soldiers. He also needed to ensure British neutrality. The independentists had opened direct trade with Britain, while royalist Peru had not. British warships protected British trade with Chile – including arms trade – from Spanish attacks. As a counterbalance, some British trade to Peru had to be protected from Chilean attacks. To a skeptical local elite, Pezuela justified in strong words his intention of using foreign vessels to shield *Limeño* trade:
- There are few who are more resentful of foreigners than I am, because for a long time I have known that, by their support for the independence movements and the copious resources of every kind with which, contrary to the law of neutrality, they have continuously supplied [to the rebels], they have encouraged this destructive struggle, and that without their cooperation the rights of the Monarchy would have triumphed long since. [However,] The law of necessity [...] obliges one to make use of their flag's immunity [...].¹⁷
- 13 Direct trade with foreigners – as well as with independent Chile, profiting the Filipinas Company – became *de facto* possible, with Viceregal permission. An informal agreement was even stipulated with Captain Shirreff¹⁸. However, in 1819, the King of Spain prevented Pezuela from going ahead with such policy¹⁹. Tolerance continued on a case-to-case basis, though, as did Pezuela's promises. One year later both Shirreff and Moens were still convinced that Lima would soon open its market to the British²⁰.
- 14 Moens arrived in Chile on 13 November 1820. He called on McNeile, Price & Co, arranging an advantageous ("on acct. of my being here") 2,5 % commission on the sale of Gibbs' cargoes. The firm would also manage Gibbs' returns from Chile in dollars ("which at present bear a premium of 8 %")²¹. The choice was strategic, as both John McNeile and Richard Price were on excellent terms with Director Bernardo O'Higgins and *libertador* San Martín, leaders of the new independentist regime, to whom they furnished vast supplies of weapons²². McNeile's partners informed Moens of Chilean naval maneuvers along the Peruvian coast²³, commanded by former British Naval hero Lord Thomas Cochrane – dismissed from His Majesty's service in 1814 – whom Moens would soon challenge at a distance. Moens sailed to Lima on the HMS 'Andromache' of

Captain Shirreff, to whom he brought “most particular letters”, receiving in turn Shirreff’s letters to Abadia and Pezuela²⁴. The ship arrived on 20 December, with Lady Cochrane on board.

- 15 Moens promptly sent news of his arrival to Gibbs’ correspondents Pedro Larraga, Lorenzo Lequerica and the partners of the Santiago y Hijo firm, “desiring them to take the necessary steps for my allowing to come onshore”²⁵. Francisco Xavier Izcue, agent of the Filipinas Company, paid him a visit as well, along with Joshua Waddington, connected with Abadia and a partner of Winter, Brittain & Co. – a firm with which Gibbs had done business since 1812 and arms traders to the independentists²⁶. Two weeks later, Moens entered Lima. He was well received by the Viceroy, who warned him, however, to lie low for the moment. Most Britons and US citizens had left Peru because of widespread hostility due to suspicions of supporting Cochrane. Waddington and Richard Price’s brother, Samuel Price of McNeile, Price & Co. (who had arrived with a cargo of quicksilver from Chile) were among the few remaining²⁷.
- 16 Moens first established himself in the home of Larraga²⁸, from whom, as well as from Joaquin Zavala of the Santiago y Hijo firm, received great quantities of bark (quinine) – a Peruvian product with an important market in Europe – that Moens planned to load for Gibbs on neutral ships sailing from minor ports to avoid Cochrane’s blockade²⁹.
- 17 Moens soon received letters from the London firm through correspondents in Panama. This was one of three communication channels with Europe, the other two passing through Valparaíso by sea and Buenos Aires by land. He learned that exporting Spanish dollars from Peru to British India was more profitable than exporting them to England. He had already noted the importance of Chilean copper and silver exports to India (McNeile’s was among the leading firms in this field) and thus recommended that Gibbs open talks with East Indian merchants to set up a return trade through them. He got this information from James Goldie, with whom he was lodging now, and who was the owner of the ‘Lord Lyndoch’, a large English ship which had arrived from Calcutta through a small port south of Callao, to Abadia’s consignment³⁰. Moens was also expecting the ‘Macedonian’ from Canton. A US warship of the same name transported bullion and coins to Gibbs from Peru through McNeile, Price & Co. in Valparaíso and the same company sent dollars to Gibbs on the ‘Andromache’³¹.
- 18 Before Moens’ arrival, an enormous sum had been sent to Gibbs “in Spanish names” on the HMS ‘Tyre’ and ‘Hyperion’. Waddington had “done a good deal” for Gibbs. However, it seems that a resident agent’s work was a whole other story. Moens wrote: “have I been here [...] I should have shipped immensely, and all to your [Gibbs] consignment”³². The ‘Hyperion’ left Peru in November 1820 carrying 2,5 million dollars³³. Thus began a huge flight of capital from Lima, largely on British warships and through a small group of brokers including Moens and, later, after independence, the agents of the first Peruvian loan contracted in London³⁴.
- 19 After Moens’ arrival new registers for money export opened in Lima. British merchants, supported by Pezuela, were shipping money in their own names, thus overcoming also British captains’ reluctance to embark Spanish property during the blockade. Moens helped many Spaniards to transfer their capital to Europe on the eve of the independentist attack, in exchange for substantial commissions and in spite of “many [...] representations that there [was] too little money [left] in the Country”³⁵.

- 20 Meanwhile, the Cabildo offered Shirreff three months' free trade with Britain in exchange for certain guarantees³⁶. He refused. As Moens wrote: "It is [...] too late: the axe is at the root of the tree"³⁷. Viceroy Pezuela was deposed soon afterwards.

Business during Cochrane's Blockade and the Spanish Exodus

- 21 Under Viceroy José de la Serna, Moens persisted in writing to Gibbs that the opening of direct trade between Lima and Britain was imminent, though it is unclear if this was a strategy to reassure the London firm, or an obstinate expectation³⁸. Pezuela's deposition was partially due to his proposal to open trade, and it seemed unlikely that La Serna would officially embrace the same policy, although unofficially the 'law of necessity' had not changed³⁹.
- 22 Trade routes to Spanish American Pacific now passed chiefly through Rio de Janeiro and Valparaíso – not Jamaica and Panama, where Gibbs had important connections. Once their new connections in Chile were consolidated, Moens's further suggestion for the new situation was to establish a house in Rio de Janeiro, which he considered the new equivalent of Jamaica in the old system. He recommended Naylor & Co. as Gibbs' agent in Rio de Janeiro in place of Brown, Watson & Co. Incidentally, George Naylor's partner Henry Kendall would soon become Samuel Price's partner in Kendall & Price of Lima. Moens was also convinced that US trade with Peru would boom after a full liberalisation and wrote to US commercial houses, like Bogert & Zinnland, with which he was in contact through his brother in Holland⁴⁰.
- 23 The market for food supplies was potentially enormous under Cochrane's blockade, but very few neutral ships achieved entry to Callao. Whenever a vessel arrived, its cargo would be sold in a few days – as happened with a US merchant ship carrying abundant supplies, and with an "excellent cargo of wine", imported by Phelps, Page & Co. The British ship 'St. Patrick' from Cadiz, ostensibly in ballast to avoid confiscation, was freighted by the Cadiz firm Barron & McPherson to upload cocoa in San Blas (Mexico). Moens had an interest in the deal and settled a dispute on the charter-party between the merchants and sailors involved, including Izque, agent of Barron & McPherson. The 'St. Patrick' remained several months on the Peruvian coast, later becoming a refuge for Spaniards (as was as the 'Lord Lyndoch'). Only in October 1821 would it leave for Gibraltar, in consignment to Gibbs, Casson & Co⁴¹.
- 24 The Navy guaranteed transport of British property in coins and bullion even under Cochrane's blockade. Moens however, wanted to ship "country production" from Peru aboard British merchant ships. It was initially unclear whether he had the right to do so. British officials held differing opinions on just how to interpret 'neutrality':
- The blockade of this port is now acknowledged but not that of those ports where there is no actual force. I therefore asked Capt. S. if I could, from one of these ports, ship British property [...] in British ships. He said no, that it was by paying duties on these goods that the war could be continued [...], that it would be the cause of more bloodshed etc., that every port was blockaded. But this is impossible and is a sort of neutrality [...] that I do not understand.
- 25 Only a few days later, however, Captain Basil Hall was reassuring Moens, Samuel Price and Waddington that they could "send a ship from every port"⁴².

- 26 Thus began Moens' challenge of Cochrane's blockade. Immediately after arriving in Lima, Moens heard that Cochrane had seized the ships 'Ellice' and 'Suffield', dispatched by the Gibraltar house to Lima and consigned to Izcue, in connection with a Cadiz merchant. From the British point of view, this confiscation was illegal since at Pisco, where the 'Ellice' was seized, the blockade was not recognized. Moens soon wrote to Sir Thomas Hardy, Commander of the British Squadron, and to McNeile, Price & Co, both of whom spared no effort in liberating the ships⁴³.
- 27 Gibbs had one house in Cadiz and another in Gibraltar and from this British possession dispatched Spanish goods for Spanish merchants to Spanish America under the British flag –theoretically contradicting British recognition of Chile's blockade. As Captain Thomas Hardy later wrote to the Admiralty:
- The masters of the detained vessels naturally withhold from me the confession of their cargo being Spanish property [...]; [but] as I am assured that no sufficient proof can be produced here against the cargoes as belonging to Spaniards, enemies of Chili, I conceive I should be wanting in my duty was I not to remonstrate [...]. The information [Cochrane] gets from London [...] is just sufficient to act as he does against the detained ships.⁴⁴
- 28 By mid-March, Moens received news from Chile that the ships would soon be liberated⁴⁵. It might also have been due to the fact that his new acquaintance, John Begg, was a friend and associate of James Paroissien, General San Martín's aide-de-champ. Begg's partner in Chile, James Barnard, was the commissioner of the two confiscated vessels, of which Begg had "the management of the hulls"⁴⁶. On 24 March, he wrote to Paroissien about their seizure. From his letter, we learn that the Ellice's cargo, or at least part of it, was consigned to Richard Price in Valparaíso⁴⁷. Hardy wrote to the Admiralty that "the agents for the cargoes and hulls could better succeed with the persons in whose department these prize causes lie"⁴⁸. Yet, the ships were still under seizure in May.
- 29 Meanwhile, Captain Hardy decided to travel to Valparaíso "in order to conclude this business", which "he took up so warmly"⁴⁹. Moens accompanied him. During this voyage, he heard that Cochrane had collected "the best information from England" and had "a good large book about us [Antony Gibbs & Sons]", "and said [...] to know everything about me"⁵⁰.
- 30 The 'Ellice' and 'Suffield' were finally released. An appeal delayed their departure, however, until September when once again Price intervened⁵¹. After Peru declared its independence, the remainder of the cargo had already lost its value in Lima, due to increased competition. Contrary to what has sometimes been reported, both ships did not return directly to Gibraltar. The 'Ellice' and its cargo were involved in business initiatives managed by Begg in Guayaquil and San Blas, and the ship finally sold for 15,000 dollars⁵².
- 31 Moens headed to Arica, where he planned to embark returns of previous commerce. Cochrane, however, had just arrived and declared the coast blockaded. Moens went to Ilo, Mollendo and Arequipa anyway. He met twice with General Juan Ramírez, commander of the royalist forces, and informed Gibbs that cotton and vicuña wool were to be shipped, as soon as possible, by local merchants, such as Lucas de la Cotera and Martín del Campo, connected to Abadia. To avoid further confiscation, it was decided that local partners would ship goods, along with bullion and coins, when circumstances permitted it⁵³.

- 32 Returning to Lima, Moens wrote Gibbs that the town “must fall”⁵⁴. Resistance would indeed lead to extensive damage. Notwithstanding the blockade, Moens informed Gibbs that he had embarked 85,000 dollars, 1,991 doubloons, and 11 gold bars on the HMS ‘Conway’⁵⁵. He smuggled and in his own name shipped further money for many Spaniards – among whom were Gibbs’ old correspondents Martín de Aramburu and Francisco Suero – in exchange for commissions, sometimes paying “the 8 % regular smuggling duty [...] [which] was raised at 10”⁵⁶. He explained to a skeptical Captain Hall that it was, in fact, British property, as it represented payments for future consignments of British goods. Waddington and Price also shipped money for “their friends”. The HMS ‘Conway’ was loaded with a total of “500,000 or 600,000” dollars⁵⁷. It would transport from Valparaíso to Europe a cargo of bullion and coins, including the ‘Alacrity’ cargo of 600,000 more from Callao⁵⁸.
- 33 The British merchant ships ‘Lord Lyndoch’ and ‘St Patrick’ remained for months in Callao Bay with many Spanish refugees aboard, including Aramburu and Larraga, who had, as many others, given Moens a power of attorney⁵⁹. The ships were only free to sail to Gibraltar (with primary goods to be consigned to Gibbs) once the independentists entered Callao. By the end of July, almost all Gibbs’ *Limeño* friends had left the capital. It was also noted that “circulating specie has almost disappeared”⁶⁰. Moens knew that trade would soon change completely with the massive arrival of other foreign merchants⁶¹.

“In a Month I Expect half Chile”: Trading Strategies after the Declaration of Independence

- 34 The minute the royalist forces left Callao in September, 64 foreign ships – chiefly British vessels from Chile – sailed into the harbour. Two months later, a British Commercial Room was founded on Moens’ initiative. Initially composed of only 13 members – the most ‘respectable’ British merchants – Moens was its president. In other words, as soon as a British community sprang up in Lima, Moens was at its center⁶². San Martín showed great regard for him, both as Gibbs’s agent and as a representative of the British merchants, being in good terms with whom was essential for the liberation campaigns⁶³. During the blockade of Callao, it was even feared that irritating them could provoke the intervention of the British Navy – something Begg had mentioned in a letter to Paroissien⁶⁴.
- 35 Once independence was declared, in a moment of weakness for the Chilean squadron, Moens arranged to conclude the Arequipa business. He agreed with Robert McCall of Stewart & McCall – the Chilean branch of McNabb, Orr & Co. connected to McNeile⁶⁵ – on a commission for the management of the cargo and returns from Aguirresolarte & Co, which McCall shipped to Gibbs in Mollendo on the USS ‘Constellation’. Further money was exported before controls on exports of specie could be established⁶⁶.
- 36 In those crucial days, however, the most massive coin and bullion exports from Peru were made on British warships. The HMS ‘Superb’ transported about 1,100,000 pounds from Lima. Moens alone shipped more than half a million dollars on this warship, chiefly on behalf of Gibbs’ Spanish correspondents. As Moens explained, this would be “the last remittance of this kind”⁶⁷.

- 37 Moens therefore began diversifying his activities, buying up great quantities of staples such as Retania roots (mostly used to treat gums), Balsam of Peru (employed, for example, in perfumery) and bark. The war against royalist forces in the interior would predictably render such material – much valued in Europe – scarce and thus precious. Moreover, as in other independent Hispano-American states, *frutos del país* were exportable almost duty-free⁶⁸.
- 38 Moens decided to specialize in exporting primary products to England while simultaneously developing a significant coastal trade, paying low tariffs, producing cheaper exportable goods and opening new markets for British manufactures. To this end, Moens asked Gibbs to send a second agent to Peru, who could travel along the coast between Valparaíso and San Blas and in the interior, while he managed the business in Lima.
- 39 The Lima house was officially opened in January 1822 under the name Moens, Crawley & Co., although Gibbs' nephew, Charles Crawley, would only move to South America in 1829⁶⁹.
- 40 Moens received manufactures from several British firms: Dunderdale & Co. of Manchester and London, R.G.W. Simpson, textiles manufacturer, Shute & Sons, Munly & Purden, of Birmingham, Fort Brothers of Manchester, Clarke & Sons, the above-mentioned Brittain & Wilkinson and Dixon & Co. He also received goods from central Europe, through his brother's Holland firm, Boer & Moens, and through his father's Hamburg connections, such as Friedrich Meyer & Co. He drafted agreements with East Indian merchants to receive sugar, rice and flour in Peru⁷⁰.
- 41 He created working connections with other British merchants active in Hispano-American Pacific ports, engaging in coastal trade through them. These partners were sometimes commission agents of well-known British firms. This was the case of John Begg, who arrived in Lima in August 1821 after establishing a house in Guayaquil, while his Chilean house managed a global trade including India⁷¹. He even invested in commerce with California (exporting mostly hides) after Mexican independence⁷². Begg was connected to several firms especially in Liverpool, such as John and James Brotherston, W.C. Barnard, Lupton & Co, C.&J. Rawdon. He sent various cargoes – including silver – to Gibbs & Sons in London. Moens also lived and worked with Frederick Bergmann, the representative of Brittain, and later with Joseph Templemann, Winter's nephew and partner in the local firm Bergmann y Templemann, who acted in synergy with Moens as commission agents of Gibbs, while Moens did likewise for Brittain⁷³.
- 42 After Peruvian independence, Robert Page, the first merchant mentioned here, began travelling between Guayaquil, Paita, Piura, Panama and Acapulco, acting as Moens' de facto travelling partner. This may have been a consequence of the new 80 % tariff on foreign wines, which hindered business for Page, Phelps & Co. in Peru. Page bought cocoa from Mexico and Ecuador, imported quicksilver in Pisco for the inland mines, and exported 'aguardiente' from Pisco (paying in Lima a much lower tariff) and raw cotton chiefly from Piura and Cosma, the latter in connection with Escudero, Tavera y Cía, of Miguel Tavera of Trujillo⁷⁴.
- 43 Page offered Moens, as Gibbs' Agent, a fifty-fifty investment share in a cotton mill with a machine for washing cotton. This deal was quite advantageous, as they could buy up raw cotton, wash it, and sell it for higher prices. In addition, it was necessary to find

alternatives to silver (ever more scarce and expensive) as return cargo and likely that European demands for cotton would increase. Moens sent the first samples to London in October 1822⁷⁵. The independentist government granted duty-free status on raw cotton imported for his mill⁷⁶. Page and Moens also made deals near Lima to obtain hides, tallow and horns at a good price. They bought horns at \$40 per ton, while in London their price was £40 per ton: four or five times higher. Hides cost 17 reales in Peru, about 24 reales in Chile and in Buenos Aires almost double. Moens calculated that 200 hides would make a \$4,000 profit in Gibraltar⁷⁷.

- 44 Only a handful of Gibbs' old correspondents remained after San Martín's conquest – for example Abadia, who contributed to the new *Reglamento de Comercio*⁷⁸. In February 1822, shortly before the government seized all remaining Spanish properties, Abadia's partner, José Arismendi, fled on the brig 'Rebecca' loaded with goods bought chiefly from Samuel Price⁷⁹. He left "the affairs in a great confusion and the house much in debt", including to Page, who tracked him down between Panama and Acapulco. Arismendi went to San Blas and from there to Manila, after having written to Lima of his intention to repay all debts. Eustace Barron, of the Cadiz firm mentioned above – a Spanish merchant of Irish-Catholic descent, later active as the British vice-consul in San Blas – left with him. Moens wrote: 'had he [Arismendi] remained in Lima he would have lost his life and all the properties'⁸⁰. In spite of his cooperation with the new regime indeed, Abadia was accused of having royalists contacts in the interior. His arrest caused a scandal that led to his release. He eventually went into exile in Antwerp.
- 45 Moens did business with property confiscated from some of his Spanish 'friends', including Larraga, and was, it seems, on good terms with the anti-Spanish Minister of State, Bernardo Monteaugudo⁸¹. In spite of this, on 21 February 1822, he himself was arrested. The charge was money smuggling on the HMS 'Superb' and 'Creole', although, thanks to a judge who knew and trusted him, he was partially released after 9 days, and completely after three weeks, thanks to a certificate from the Consulado and the good offices of Captain Spencer⁸². His bond was paid by Diego de Aliaga, who would become as important for Moens in this new context as Abadia had been in the old⁸³.
- 46 Aliaga was a *Consejero del Estado*, future vice-president, and a merchant with a vast relational patrimony in Hispano-America. "Having partly the direction of the Mint", he could facilitate remittances to Britain, and this, in Moens' opinion, would allow regular consignments from British manufacturers. Moreover, the new *Reglamento de comercio* privileged local merchants over foreigners (who paid an extra 5 % duty on imports) making trade through Aliaga beneficial for Moens. Aliaga, together with Abadia, was a member of the commission which, based on British example, decided the creation of the *Banco Auxiliar de Papel Moneda* and the emission of paper money: an experiment which lasted only six months⁸⁴. For the amortisation of the paper money, Timothy Anna has noted that, after three months, the only notes given back in exchange for customs discounts, "came from one man": Aliaga. Other merchants ignored this order, probably because they weren't interested in receiving discounts on the little international trade remaining after its quasi-monopolization by foreign merchants⁸⁵.
- 47 An alliance between Aliaga and Moens was advantageous for both. Through his British friends, Aliaga continued doing business after the end of the Spanish system. On the other hand, Aliaga's connections helped broaden Gibbs' business. In November 1822, for example, Moens' new collaborator, Robert Parker, formerly a clerk in the house of

Abadia with experience in Australia, New Zealand and East Indies⁸⁶, wrote from Paita that he had heard quicksilver was selling in San Blas at three times the price in Lima. Moens thus sent him to San Blas. After selling the quicksilver, Parker went to El Realejo in Nicaragua to set up “an establishment” there. All this was done with the collaboration of Aliaga’s *apoderados*⁸⁷.

- 48 Moens continued exporting money, both on warships and on merchant ships. Even though exports of *plata piña* (amalgamated silver) were forbidden⁸⁸ especially after the introduction of paper money Moens and his partners continued buying it, largely near Tacna, transporting it to Lima where its price was higher and often exporting it to Europe⁸⁹.

Trading with Royalist Peru after Independence: The ‘Bristol’ Case

- 49 Moens enjoyed excellent relations with key members of the new Lima regime, but he was also a go-between through whom Spanish merchants continued to trade with South America during the Wars of Independence. After Monteagudo’s fall, he was briefly banished from Lima in March 1823, on the basis of past accusations of smuggling silver on the HMS ‘Superb’, but once again no proof was found. Soon after, he appointed Aliaga and Samuel Duncan (formerly of McNeile, Price & Co.) as agents and sailed to ports controlled by the royalists to ease the ‘Bristol’ business⁹⁰.
- 50 The case of this British vessel is a good example of Gibbs’ ability to move across different political and economic networks, adapting to circumstances. In 1819, Manuel Marcó del Pont – son of the well-known Galician merchant Ventura and nephew of the last Spanish Governor of Chile – obtained a license from Pezuela to import to Lima from Bordeaux or London “lawful and unlawful” goods, paying custom duties in advance⁹¹. In September 1821, Marcó del Pont and Antonio Ibañez signed a contract in London with Antony Gibbs & Sons, for the management of this venture. Gibbs received a commission of 2.5 %, a premium of 4 % on the bills, and could embark goods on his own account. No Spanish name was to appear in the documentation. All the risks were on Gibbs’ side and, moreover, if in the end a Spanish warship were to be used for the returns, Gibbs’ profits would be reduced. Gibbs bought the cargo in England, largely from Huth & Co⁹². The ‘Bristol’ was to be delivered to Moens in Lima, as mentioned in the contract. Due to the uncertain political situation however, it could also be consigned in San Blas, or in “every [Spanish] port of the Southern Sea”⁹³.
- 51 The ‘Bristol’ arrived in Valparaíso in the Austral Autumn of 1822, when Callao had already fallen to the independentists, together with the ship ‘Importer’ with its cargo from London, Cadiz and Gibraltar. By June, a significant part of the ‘Importer’s’ cargo had been sold in Callao. The ship then continued to Paita, where it unloaded local produce and returned to Europe. Beside Gibbs and Aliaga, this deal involved the Lequerica family, Gibbs’ old *Limeño* friends – a case of continuity between the old system and the new⁹⁴.
- 52 The ‘Bristol case’, however, was more complicated than merely unloading Spanish goods on Spanish behalf in a region controlled by independentists. Indeed, by selling her British cargo in independent Lima, she would lose the duties already paid to the Viceroy and face competition from other houses. Moens suggested to the supercargo to

set sail, not for Lima or San Blas (both now independent), but for the Peruvian ports called *puertos intermedios* under Spanish control, such as Mollendo, Arica, Ilo and Quilca. He also ordered him to use Gibbs' power of attorney to establish a house at Tacna, in the loyalist region near Arequipa, on the route from the Pacific to the Potosí mines, and to take "all Spanish property and Spaniards possible onboard"⁹⁵.

- 53 The plan succeeded, in spite of the risks. The ship remained in Valparaíso months, with Gibbs' Spanish partners onboard, always in imminent danger of confiscation. Finally, however, Moens triumphantly wrote to London: "the Bristol is the only ship allowed to trade with the *Intermedios*"⁹⁶. As John Gibbs wrote in his 1922 book on his family, "how with her Spanish taint happened that the Chilean gave her permission is unknown to me"⁹⁷.
- 54 We now know that the 'Bristol's' supercargo received help from the partners of Montgomery, Price & Co (the new title of McNeile, Price & Co.). A member of the firm even accompanied Mardon to Arequipa, helping him to sell the cargo. In sum: a British firm close to the independentist government in Chile helped a British firm suspected of supporting the royalists to trade in royalist Peru⁹⁸.
- 55 We must consider that the 'Bristol' remained at anchor in Valparaíso during the political crisis which led to O'Higgins' fall and the interim Junta, the president of which was Agustín de Eyzaguirre, Price's partner in the *Compañía de Calcuta*⁹⁹. Moreover, the 'Bristol' sailed for the *Intermedios* after Cochrane's departure for Brazil in early 1823, when San Martín, too, definitively left Chile. All this happened during two unsuccessful campaigns launched by Lima's independentists to conquer the *Intermedios*. British Commander George Martin Guise, leader of the Peruvian naval squadron transporting troops to the area, declared he wanted to seize the 'Bristol'¹⁰⁰ but never did.
- 56 Probably, personal connections between the two factions served to ease the 'Bristol' business. Possibly, trade with the royalists was permitted in exchange for bribes¹⁰¹. Perhaps, Gibbs & Sons' presence in the *Intermedios* was not totally at odds with independentist objectives. As in Viceroyal Lima two years prior, indeed, the presence of a Gibbs' agent (a consequence of the firm's Spanish connections) could guarantee the quick establishment of a link with British houses active in independentist South America, thus facilitating a rapid transition from the old system to the new in case of 'liberation', as well as the immediate opportunity of receiving customs revenue to further finance war. Gibbs also provided a way for Spaniards unwilling to live under the new republics to expatriate with part of their capital: perhaps an unofficially acceptable 'compromise' for the independentists, who probably had no desire to govern hostile subjects in the middle of a civil war.
- 57 Moens left Lima in April 1823 on a British warship, bringing the *Intermedios* the Custom House documents testifying to del Pont's payment of the 'Bristol' duties. He remained only two days in Quilca. Foreseeing the royalists' reconquest of Lima, he secured protection for the firm by sending letters to the Spanish General Jerónimo Valdés¹⁰². He then left for Chile, where he met with George Thomas Davy, the second Gibbs & Sons' representative in South America, whose presence made Moens' first departure to Europe possible¹⁰³.

Adapting to the Fall of an Empire

- 58 After Chilean independence, pioneer British firms already established in Río de la Plata and Chile provided international merchants with greater guarantees of success and better political support than those provided by the Spanish partners of firms trading with the Iberian Peninsula. Gibbs quickly and successfully adjusted its alliances and practices, adapting to changes in the dynamics of power between royalists and independentists and between British and Spanish interests on the South American Pacific coast.
- 59 The presence of a ‘grey area’ between royalists and independentists, kept open by a few international merchants based on their countries’ neutrality, permitted a wide range of possible compromises. Theoretically, Gibbs & Sons’ Spanish connections could have been an insurmountable limit in its relations with independentists during the war. On the contrary, however, its Spanish associates continued trading in South America thanks to the firm’s efforts and good relations there, such as those with McNeile, Price, Begg, Brittain, Waddington: “the principal houses in Valparaíso”¹⁰⁴, which also provided weapons and credit for San Martín’s Liberation Army.
- 60 After Peru declared its independence, Moens further modified Gibbs’ trade channels by strengthening alliances with British merchants able and willing to travel along the coast from California to Cape Horn. Such alliances benefited from Hispanic networks to which the firm had access, such as those of Abadia and Aliaga. Spanish and Creole merchants – if not completely disgraced under the new system – sought alternatives to their Spanish allies in order to reorganize connections between global and local trade. Collaboration was useful to both parties, but the balance of power favoured Britain, which had global networks ready for trade, insurance and credit, neutral vessels unassailable by the warring parties and a naval squadron to protect them. Local merchants, on the other hand, were at war, disconnected from their usual partners and creditors in Europe.
- 61 Moens’ initiatives, along with those of his British collaborators in Lima, exerted a certain ‘de-structuring’ and ‘re-structuring’ influence, therefore, over Lima’s international trade and beyond. He had no politico-strategic intentions and, as far as we know, no connection with the British government. The fundamental ‘political’ pillar of ‘informal imperialism’ seems absent in this case.
- 62 The ‘structuring influence’ of merchants is, as we shall see, a necessary condition for successful ‘informal imperialism’. It contributes decisively toward stabilizing the balance of power and as such has political implications. By itself, however, this function is insufficient: it must be accompanied by action on the part of political agents and by some kind of imperial project. We have to work on all these elements, in order to establish whether we can define British influence on the independence process of Hispanic America as ‘informal imperialism’. As I stated at the beginning, this article analyses a case which helps us to understand the role of British commerce, which lies at the center of the debate over Robinson and Gallagher: first in Platt’s work and later in Brown’s. The aim is understanding how this economic pillar of an imperialistic-informal process – which, according to my proposed interpretation, is of an essentially political nature¹⁰⁵ – worked in the independence period.

- 63 Paradoxically, in the case study presented here, there may be a possible correspondence with Platt's more radical and 'economistic' idea of 'informal imperialism' as a "deliberate control" of foreign businessman over some crucial aspects of local economies. A small group of British merchants did indeed play a strategic role in the reconfiguration of international and coastal trade during the first phase of the Independence War in Peru. As a central figure in both Spanish-Creole and foreign merchant communities Moens was largely 'in control' of this process, notwithstanding the difficulties. This control was, in a sense, 'deliberate'. At the London firm they were aware that British neutrality in the Pacific represented a crucial, if temporary, opportunity for trade with royalists and the independentists both. It was a chance to exploit power gained by remaining in the 'grey area'. This was the reason Moens was sent to Lima. He was skeptical of independence, but aware that the Wars of Independence had given his firm unprecedented power over its Spanish and Creole partners, now largely dependent on his help for trade and money exports, and occasionally for their own personal safety. They needed help in making the transition: they were perfectly aware of this. If "the informal empire must be found in the ground and in the mind", as Brown has written, it was probably in the mind of many Hispanic merchants in America, as they pragmatically replaced Madrid with London as their entry point to Europe and Asia. Gibbs & Sons' influence had this 'enabling dimension': it was a crucial vector of change.
- 64 This case, unlike others I have analysed¹⁰⁶, does not lead to an interweaving between British commercial networks and networks of high politics in London. For this very reason it allows us to circumscribe certain political implications of purely economic initiatives, and therefore answer the question posed by Brown. Commerce with Hispanic America, and the arms trade in particular, was a way for Britain to exert her influence on both warring parties, which made it fundamental for each side to maintain good relations with London, in order to avoid her support of the enemy. In other words, British commerce gave concrete force to London's favourite role as 'holder of the balance'.
- 65 As Pezuela teaches us, there are elements to suggest that initiatives by British businessmen and the navy protecting them contributed to Hispanic American independence (by neutralizing the Spanish blockade of the Chilean coasts in the initial phase of the new independent regime, for example) as well as to the financial weakness of the new state of Peru. Merchants and the British Navy, in fact, played a crucial role in the escape of many businessmen together with their capital. In Lima, San Martín could not count on the reserves of the Casa de Moneda because they had been stolen, first by the royalists and later by Cochrane. Nor could he count on private wealth¹⁰⁷. British merchants also smuggled out great quantities of *plata piña*, contributing to the silver shortage. This made paying the troops even more difficult and led to the unsuccessful emission of paper money and other emergency monetary policies, which had long-term negative consequences. In 1826 the mint was managed by a group of British businessmen because the government was unable to repair the damages it had sustained during the war¹⁰⁸. As the independentist armies advanced, British commerce became ever more crucial to financing the war with revenues from customs and short-term loans. This was possible also because of British networks which protected Spanish trade with America, guaranteeing a minimum of continuity in business. When, at the end of 1822, the desperate state of the national businessmen induced the independent

government of Lima to impose a forced loan on the British, the latter threatened to leave the country. Thanks to the fact that they were indispensable they were able to negotiate the payment of a voluntary contribution: if they had all left Lima, it would have compromised the success of what was later known as the 'Kinder loan' (named after a London merchant, linked, through a partner, to McNeile), vital to the continuation of the war¹⁰⁹. This loan had been just negotiated in England, in order to counteract the shortage of money in circulation for which the British were partially responsible.

- 66 All of this strengthened Britain's power to the detriment of other countries that had fewer agents on the ground, like Russia and France, or that appeared more partisan, like the United States. It was believed that only European diplomacy, and in particular British mediation, could end the war. This strengthened British merchants' position in South America, which in turn gave force to Britain's diplomatic role in the difficult yet crucial months between the Congress of Verona and the Polignac Memorandum. The British government had to act carefully, but as to the outcome there could be no doubt. Even Gibbs & Sons, notwithstanding its ties with Spain, in 1822 signed a petition asking to recognize the new republics¹¹⁰.
- 67 Our depictions of British-Spanish American commercial relations in this particular phase of the Wars of Independence is not so different from Platt's, although we have discovered a part played by British networks in Gibbs' success in Peru, which he had overlooked. Platt did indeed recognize the general importance of foreign merchants during the first years of independence, but viewed it as an exception, not as a foundational moment. On the contrary, cases like those presented here, covering the first years of independent Hispanic America, can be useful in providing data on the workings, in the commercial field, of the 'imperial reconfiguration' of the Atlantic World. This reconfiguration represents the beginnings of the modern era, in which a new kind of empire, more firmly anchored in transnational networks of commerce and finance, emerged.
- 68 For Platt, however, temporary and partial control were not sufficient proof for a case of informal or economic imperialism, although it is not clear just how much would be necessary to call it so. Absolute control is infrequent in human relations, though; 'limits' are almost always present. In order to verify the existence of an "imperialism of the businessmen", we should probably look instead for a "deliberate control" of groups and networks linked to the alleged 'imperial' economy, both in a strategic economic field and in a crucial moment of economic transformation, when new "rules of the game" are being established. To test this theoretical proposal, it would take further detailed research into the initiatives of foreign merchants during the Independence Wars in Latin America, of which Moens' actions were significant examples.

NOTES

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4. Blaufarb, Rafe, "The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 112, n° 3, 2007, p. 742-763.
5. Louis, *Imperialism*, p. 235-39.
6. Platt, D.C.M, *Economic Imperialism and the Businessman*, in Owen, Roger; Sutcliffe, Bob, *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, London, Longman, 1972, p. 295-310.
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15. Marks, Patricia, *Deconstructing Legitimacy: Viceroy, Merchants and the Military in Late Colonial Peru*, University Park PA, Pennsylvania State UP, 2007, p. 220.
16. London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), Antony Gibbs & Sons Ltd. Collection, Private Letter Book from South American Partners CLC/B/012/MS19867, John Moens to Gibbs & Sons (hereafter 'Private Letter Book', as all the documents quoted here, unless otherwise specified, are from Moens to the London firm), Valparaíso, 3 Aug. 1820.
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19. Marks, *Deconstructing*, p. 257.
20. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 22 Jan. 1821.
21. *Ibid.* Valparaíso, 13 and 25 November 1820. See also: Lima, 7 April, 9 Aug. 1821.
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26. Gibbs, *The History*, p. 238; Demaria, *Historia*, p. 239-248.
27. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 16 Jan. 1821.
28. *Ibid.* 31 Jan. 1821 (letter to George Henry Gibbs).
29. *Ibid.* 16 and 27 Jan. 1820.
30. *Ibid.* 21 Jan., 6 April, 31 July 1821. Two years prior, McNeile, Price & Co. had imported weapons destined to San Martín’s army in Chile in a ship of the same name. See: Archivo Nacional de Chile, Santiago (hereafter ACN), *Contaduría Mayor* 2530, “Fregata inglesa Lord Lindoch”, Valparaíso, 22 Nov. 1818. On McNeile’s business in Calcutta: *Contaduría Mayor* 2533, various; *Hacienda*, vol. 57, 2 June 1820.
31. LMA ‘Private Letter Book’, Lima, 27 Jan. and 7 April 1821.
32. *Ibid.* 16 Jan. 1821.
33. *Ibid.* 5 Dec. 1820. Graham and Humphreys in their *The Navy and South America* (London, Navy Records Society, 1962), printed a letter referring to 1,5 million dollars, still a considerable sum.
34. E.g. Kinder, Thomas et al., *A Report of The Trial of Kinder versus Everett and Others, in The Court of King's Bench*, London, R. Taylor, 1824, p. 39; Archivo General de la Nación (Perú), Lima, *Protocolos notariales*, vol. 39 (1823), p. 385v.
35. Gibbs, *The History*, p. 396; LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 16 Jan., 8 Feb. 1821.
36. *Ibid.* 27 Jan. 1821
37. *Ibid.* 16 Jan. 1821.
38. *Ibid.* Valparaíso, 17 and 26 May 1821.
39. Marks, *Deconstructing*, p. 320 passim.
40. LMA Private Letter Book, ship ‘Baltic’, 28 July 1820, Lima, 5 Feb., 28 April, Valparaíso, 26 May 1821.
41. *Ibid.* Lima, 6 and 7 April, 16 October 1821.
42. *Ibid.* 8 and 11 Feb. 1821.
43. *Ibid.* 28 April, 30 Aug. 1821.
44. Graham-Humphreys, *The Navy*, p. 340. “I wish our trade was a more honorable one” p. 341.
45. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 28 April 1821.
46. *Ibid.* 30 September 1821.
47. Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, UK (hereafter cited as ERO), Paroissien Papers D/DOb C1/5, James Barnard to James Paroissien, Santiago, 24 March 1821. On successive relations of Paroissien with Gibbs & Sons: D/Dob C1/13, Gibbs & Sons to Paroissien, 3 and 17 April 1823.
48. Graham-Humphreys, *The Navy*, p. 329 (Hardy to Crocker, 2 April 1821).
49. LMA, Private Letter Book, Lima, 28 April 1821, Valparaíso, 17 May 1821.
50. *Ibid.*
51. ANC *Archivo Fernández Larraín*, vol. 39, “Manifiesto [Montgomery, Price & Co.]”. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 30 Aug, 7 Sept. 1821.
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54. *Ibid.* 25 June 1821.
55. *Ibid.* Lima, 15 July 1821.
56. *Ibid.* 23 and 31 (the documents in Spanish, too) July 1821.
57. *Ibid.* Callao, 19 July 1821.
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63. *Ibid.* 1 Dec. 1821 (letter to George Henry Gibbs).
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65. Archivo General de la Nación Argentina, Buenos Aires (hereafter AGN) *Protocolos de escribanos* Registro 3, Stewart, McCall & Co, 5 Oct. 1818; *Protocolos de escribanos*, Registro 4, McCall and Stuart McNeile, 1820; ACN *Hacienda* vol. 16, McNabb, Orr & Co., 30 June 1820.
66. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 31 July, 9, 14 and 30 Aug. 1821.
67. *Ibid.* 29 Oct., 11 and 31 [sic] Nov., 18 Dec. 1821.
68. *Ibid.* 31 July, 6 Nov. 1821
69. Hollett, *More Precious*, 93-94.
70. LMA Private Letter Book, 10 March, 10 May, 17 June, 6 Aug., 14 Sept., 7 Oct. 1822.
71. *Ibid.* 30 Aug. 1821. See also ERO D/DOB B1/1.
72. LMA Private Letter Book, 28 March 1822.
73. E.g. *Ibid.* 17 Nov. 1821; 6 Aug., 10 Sept. 1822.
74. *Ibid.* 18 Dec. 1821, 3 Jan, 26 May 1822.
75. *Ibid.* 17 Nov. 1821, 28 Oct. 1822.
76. *Ibid.* 3 Jan. 1822. In 1812, McNeile had procured similar duty-free status for salt and machines imported for his *saladero* near Buenos Aires (Besseghini, *Irish Networks*, cit.).
77. *Ibid.* Dec. 18, 1821.
78. Marks, *Deconstructing*, p. 327
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85. Anna, “Economic Causes”, p. 676; Proctor, *Narrative*, p. 291.
86. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 27 March 1822.
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88. *Ibid.* 30 Sept., 16 and 29 Oct. 1821.
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90. *Ibid.* 7 Oct. 1822, HMS ‘Aurora’, Callao Bay, 31 March 1823, ‘Tertius’ at sea, 2 Sept. 1822, Manchester, 30 Dec. 1823. See also: Archivo General de la Nación Peruana, Lima, *Protocolos Notariales* 1823, “Poder Gibbs, Crawley, Moens & Co. a los señores Samuel Duncan y Diego Aliaga”.

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94. LMA Private Letter Book, Lima, 20 June, 22 July 1822.
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102. *Ibid.* Gibraltar, 2 Nov. 1823.
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104. *Ibid.* Lima, 26 May 1821.
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107. Anna, "Economic Causes", p. 660-661, 670.
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ABSTRACTS

This paper retraces the changing alliances and practices of Antony Gibbs & Sons' Lima agent during the transition from Spanish to independentist rule. The company's correspondence with London guides us in exploring this moment in Hispano-American history halfway between the 18th century Spanish global trading system and 19th century international trade hegemonised by Britain. It will shed light on that 'grey area' between royalists and independentists, kept open by a handful of international merchants from neutral countries and embracing a wide gamut of possible compromises. Gibbs quickly adjusted the hierarchy among their alliances, in order to adapt to shifting power balances between royalists and independentists and between British and Spanish interests on the Hispano-American Pacific coast. The firm's synergy with British merchants well-connected to the independentists provided it with greater guarantees of success and better political support than those provided by its partners in Spain and royalist America. Such alliances were key in expanding the firm's trade, as was Gibbs' access to pre-existing commercial networks in Spanish America. The company's initiatives became therefore a vector of change between the old system and the new, an informal means of 'restructuring' influence during this era of reconfiguration.

Esta investigación reconstruye las mutaciones en las alianzas y las prácticas del agente en Lima de la casa Antony Gibbs & Sons, durante la transición entre la colonia y el gobierno independentista. La correspondencia con Londres de la compañía nos conduce a explorar este momento de la historia hispanoamericana, a caballo entre el sistema de comercio internacional hispánico del siglo XVIII y el del XIX hegemónico por Gran Bretaña. Arrojará luz sobre ‘áreas grises’ entre realistas e independentistas, mantenidas abiertas por algunos comerciantes internacionales basándose en la neutralidad de sus países. Gibbs ajustó rápidamente la jerarquía entre sus alianzas, para adaptarse a los equilibrios de poder entre realistas e independentistas, y entre intereses británicos y españoles en la costa del Pacífico hispanoamericano. La alianza de Gibbs con comerciantes británicos le brindó mayores garantías de éxito y un mejor apoyo político que los brindados por sus socios en España y en la América realista. Fueron alianzas-clave para la expansión del comercio de Gibbs, como lo fue su accesibilidad a redes comerciales preexistentes en Hispanoamérica. Las iniciativas de la compañía se convirtieron, por lo tanto, en un vector de cambio entre el antiguo y el nuevo sistema, un medio informal de ‘influencia (r)estructurante’ en esta época de reconfiguración.

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Palabras claves: Gibbs, independencia, comercio, redes, Perú, imperialismo informal

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AUTHOR

DEBORAH BESSEGHINI

Università degli Studi di Milano
deborahbesseghini@gmail.com