

Navigating the life of Gabriel Ciscar



Ajuntament d'Oliva



Navegant per la vida de Gabriel Ciscar

the man

NAVIGATING THE LIFE OF GABRIEL CISCAR



Gabriel Ciscar was born March 17, 1760 in the thriving city of Oliva. He was the second son of Pedro Ciscar Fernández de Mesa and Rosa Ciscar i Pascual. The Ciscar family came from Tortosa, and had been settled in Oliva since XV C.

Gabriel's family was linked to Mayans brothers: Gregori, great enlightened, and Joan Antoni, Valencia University dean.

As Gabriel wasn't the eldest, nor the heir, he had to start professional studies. After primary studies in Oliva, he moved to Valencia to study secondary education and got his A levels at St Andrew's school.

Later, he entered the University to study Law, but an incident blocked his project. At Christmas time, the students would organise a traditional celebration consisting of rejecting the attendance to classes. Due to unknown reasons, his uncle Joan Antoni, who was the dean, accused him of being the leader of the uprising and punished him with three days imprisonment in a university cell. Deeply affected, he decided to leave university and entered the Midshipman Academy in Cartagena in October, 1777.

When he was 27, he married Ana Agustina Marquina in Cartagena. The family was marked by illness and early death of most of their children, this obviously meant constant suffering for Gabriel, who was prone to illness by nature. Finally, his wife died May 13, 1816, when the couple was living in Oliva, where Gabriel had been exiled by Ferran VII.

A year later, when he was 57, he got married for the second time with Teresa Ciscar d'Oriola, one of his relatives, in Santa Maria la Major, Oliva. They had two daughters, Josefa and Rosa.

Navegant per la vida de Gabriel Ciscar

the seaman the scientist

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After leaving València University, Gabriel Ciscar entered the Academy of Cartagena as a midshipman in 1776. This is how he started a brilliant career as a prestigious seaman and scientist worldwide.

In 1778, on board of “San Juan Bautista” vessel, he did his first training trip round Sicily and part of the Adriatic. On his way back, he fought some Algerian pirates. That same year, he got the position of sub lieutenant and the next year, in 1779, being on board of “San Gil” vessel, he captured several English vessels in a blockade trip to Gibraltar.

Between 1780 and 1783, he went on an expedition to America, taking part in the occupation of Pensacola (Florida). During his stay in Cuba, he combined the post of engineer assistant with different topographical expeditions in the Gulf of Mexico, In August 1783, the fleet came back from Cuba and Ciscar arrived in Cartagena to attend the first year of Major Studies. In October, he changed from student to teacher and started giving navigation classes in Cartagena Academy.

From then on, he combined teaching with investigation and the publishing of works related to teaching. In 1785, his Plan of Studies for the Assistant Officers in the Midshipmen Company. Between 1785 and 1788, he was named headmaster of the Midshipmen Academy.

During the 1790s, he revised and published “Jorge Juan’s Admiralty Exam” and he was in charge of editing a course of sea studies and other different treatises. He also travelled on scientific missions in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. In July 1789, he was named Naval Artillery Provincial Commissioner of Cartagena.

In August, he was designated by a Royal Order, the Spanish representative of the international commission on weights and measures, assembled in Paris. Between October 1798 and July 1789, he worked there. When he came back, he presented to Charles IV the first copy of “Basic Report on the new decimal weights and measures”, printed in 1800.

Back in Cartagena again, he was named second General Naval Artillery Major and, soon after, General Commissioner of the whole brigade. Two years after, the Navy Minister asked him to write a course of basic studies for the Midshipmen academies. Published in 1803, it became the official text in all the naval academies in Spain and other countries.

In 1807, he was given the Cross of the Order of Charles III and presented the plan of major studies commissioned by the Admiralty Board.

Navegant per la vida de Gabriel Ciscar

the politician the regent

NAVIGATING THE LIFE OF GABRIEL CISCAR



Gabriel Ciscar's political career started May 23, 1808 when the people in Cartagena revolted to protest against the abdications of the Spanish monarchs in Baiona.

As a high position and respectful person in the Old Regime, he put his prestige as a scientist and soldier at the service of the liberal cause. He soon moved to national politics as a member of the General Military Board in Aranjuez, where he stood out due to his professionalism and political commitment. These qualities brought him to be proclaimed Political and Military Governor of Cartagena.

In 1810 he was designated Navy Minister, a post he finally never held. That same year, he was named member of the II Regency, where he worked firmly and faithfully in spite of difficulties. His coming out of the Regency at the end of 1812, meant a personal liberation.

In 1813, he settled in another Regency, as he was considered as being in favour of liberal reforms and the modernisation of the country.

Ferran VII coup d'état in 1814 restored absolutism and prosecuted the members of III Regency. Gabriel Ciscar, being accused of liberal and regent, was imprisoned for fourteen months and exiled in Oliva until 1820.

With Riego's liberal revolt, he went back to politics and was proclaimed State Counsellor.

In June, 1823, in front of the advance of the Santa Alianza (Holly Alliance), the Courts formed a new Regency, and Gabriel Ciscar was the one in charge of organising the move of the king, the government and the Courts to Cadis.

Finally, in October 1823, Ferran VII abolished constitutionalism and repression against liberals started.

Ciscar got to save his life thanks to a French vessel that took him to Gibraltar, but he arrived there ill and poor. On top of that, in 1825 he was condemned to death in Sevilla, a fact that obviously meant a blow to his honour.

Once exiled, he abandoned Politics, and his health got worse and worse till he died August 12, 1829, six months after arriving in Gibraltar.

In 1860, after two frustrated attempts, his remains were finally moved from Gibraltar, where he spent his last years exiled, to San Fernando, and buried at The Illustrious Spanish Seamen Mausoleum.