

## DOCUMENTS ON PLAYING CARDS IN PIEDMONT

Franco Pratesi – 08.10.1994

### The Country and the House of Savoy

As everyone knows, the countries of Savoy and Piedmont now belong to France and to Italy, respectively. The border line is marked by the Alps, a high-mountain region of difficult access, so that the development in population, industries and trade has occurred rather far from it. In the past, however, it was precisely the natural border, with its few passages through the mountains, to be important: their control brought power and incomes from tolls to men in power and money to local people active in transport and trade.

Thus, several small towns flourished on both sides of the Alps, even if no one could reach the dimension of a true capital. Only during the last centuries has Turin become a large town, being now the fourth one in Italy after Rome, Milan and Naples. Due also to its position, Piedmont has been a choice place for many wars and battles. To begin with the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the House of Savoy entered with more success the international diplomacy reaching a certain acknowledgment among the greater nations.

The family that ruled over these countries during the whole time period of interest here (from about 1430 to 1860) was the House of Savoy, which obtained the title of Dukes in 1416, of Kings in 1720 and was then to become the ruling family over the whole kingdom of Italy, until 1946.

During this period the original territory has been maintained and some other regions, first near the border then farther away, have been conquered (directly or, especially in later times, obtained by international treaties). The most important were the acquisition of Sicily in 1720, providing the House with the title of King, and its exchange seven years later with Sardinia. But modifications of the territory had occurred on a lower scale in several occasions: an exhaustive history of Piedmont has to deal with many small provinces, valleys and towns and their state of dependence on, or independence from, Piedmont. The same would happen with French regions at times connected with Savoy.

If we consider the production of playing cards, the question may become even more complex, because card production does not depend on the dimensions of the towns considered; small villages may be big production centres whereas great cities may be completely lacking of card makers. In particular, several remarkable production centres of Piedmont were located in peripheral valleys or in regions which were recently conquered and continued for a while their free production and trade. Particularly rich was the production of some Ligurian towns, and especially Oneglia, the first to come under the Piedmontese government.

### The Collection of Laws

Piedmont was very prolific in laws about the production, taxation and trade of playing cards. It is a fortunate opportunity for us that a comprehensive collection of the laws of the Savoy house was published by Duboin. This huge collection has two sections of relevant interest to playing-cards.

- Felice Amato Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine di materie delle leggi cioè editti, patenti, manifesti, ecc...* Tomo 16, volume 18, titolo 34: *Della gabella delle carte, tarocchi, e dei giuochi*. Torino 1849, p. 501-593

- *Raccolta per ordine di materie delle leggi cioè editti, patenti, manifesti, ecc. ... compilata dagli avvocati Felice Amato e Camillo Duboin proseguita dagli avvocati Alessandro Muzio e Domenico Canonica colla direzione dell'intendente Giacinto Cottin*. Tomo 22, volume 21, capo terzo. Torino 1858, p. 1282-1289.

These are our main sources until 1798. Other collections of laws can be inspected for the following period, when a book with the laws was yearly published. A further search can be carried

out on the original prints kept in Archivio di Stato in Turin, the institution which appears to be the most relevant to this subject.

In the following, a series of relevant laws is listed in chronological order. They are summarised in English and provided with a few original sentences selected from the Italian text of the law, with attention devoted to more important points for the history of cards. As Duboin's collection of laws is more easily available, my study has been based upon it. However, there are at least two reasons why the research should possibly be deepened to original edicts.

First, Duboin has made a selection of his own and he usually avoids repetitions of identical or very similar laws. For cards, the same laws were repeated each five years, or similar time periods, when the contractors changed. Differently from Duboin, we might be interested in such repetitions, where slight differences can be indicative of the actual situation. Second, Duboin does not report the appendix to the edicts, showing specimens of those envelopes and wrappers which can be very interesting items for us.

### **The Archivio di Stato in Turin**

Contrary to most cases, the documents of Archivio di Stato in Turin are spread between two premises and in various collections. The whole body of documents has been "systematically" organised in the 19th century so that it follows an approximate chronological order within a few independent divisions, such as military matters, economic, religious, external and internal matters. This operation occurred in several stages, however, and has not been completed. Searching among the administrative parts, some scattered documents concerning playing cards and games can be found, kept among the files of the first "addizione", the second one, as well as among the files still awaiting to be catalogued. They are mentioned in the following in chronological order among the laws.

However, the real problem is not that one has to sort out the information from an unsuitable system of collecting the documents; even worse than that, we find here and there only an extremely limited number of the original documents, once kept in the archives! And they seem to have been selected by sheer chance. Only laws are actually collected together and can be found in chronological order.

### **Preliminary history before taxes**

We know that the initial spread of cards as a pastime and especially as a gambling tool was very rapid. In about twenty years they had conquered almost every region of the European countries and only some marginal places did not yet know cards at the beginning of the 15th century. The first mentions of cards are obtained by means of laws forbidding their use. Among the first records of cards, Piedmont and Savoy do not represent particularly useful sources. Their nature of mountain regions without any great town is expected to correspond to a rather late spread of the first cards. The best known reference to card playing in the early times (even though it may be half a century later than the actual introduction of the game) derives from the following law.

**17.6.1430 Statute by Duke Amedeo VIII.** It explicitly forbids to play dice and cards. People may use cards for playing, but only under conditions that could not be very pleasant to gamblers: women can play cards as a diversion, but men may only join when women are playing, and the stakes must be nominal – only for pins: *...mulieribus tamen ad recreationem, et viris cum eis jocantibus, ludum cartarum permittimus, dummodo tantum fiat cum spinolis.* This reference did not escape the attention of W.Schreiber and other experts (even if sometimes erroneously quoted as 1480). [W.L.Schreiber, *Die ältesten Spielkarten*, Strasbourg 1937, p. 76.]

Also when printing became a common proceeding, these regions were not particularly active. However, a forgotten book belongs to a short series of editions printed in Mondovì (where the

University of Piedmont had been established) by Torrentino, the renowned printer, who also worked in Florence for the Medici.

**1565 Piscina book.** *Discorso dil S. Francesco Piscina da Carmagnola sopra l'ordine delle figure de Tarocchi. Dedicato al Ill.S.Rettore del Studio del Serenissimo Duca di Savoia.* In Monte Regale: Appresso Lionardo Torrentino, 1565, 27 p. The book represents the first milestone in the extremely rich body of works devoted to the interpretation of tarot. It is of the greatest relevance since it was published more than two centuries before other works of a similar kind. A copy of Piscina's book is kept in Borgomanero library; a first report on it can be found in *The Playing-Card*, 16 (1987) 27-36. The idea of this fully personal reconstruction of the possible meanings of the triumphs derived from the observation of a young lady playing the game of tarot. Also in the following times the game of tarot was the main object of the few Piedmontese books on card games, see below.

### **Records of laws and taxes – concession and incomes**

A remarkable increase in the information on playing cards only occurs about two hundred years after their first introduction. On the turn of the 16th century several countries decided to use cards for increasing the public finances. The new taxation was introduced by several governments, even at considerable distances, in the course of a few decades.

**12.2.1579 Lettera patente di Emanuele Filiberto.** It corresponds to the beginning of taxes on cards in Piedmont. Under the fine of 100 scudi it is forbidden to bring in, hold, sell playing cards except to messer Giovanni Battista Ferrofino or anybody entitled by him. The concession is intended to be valid for the next ten years. A comment must be deserved to this 1579 date, since Piedmont (together, be it surprising or not, with the Papal States) was one of the first countries to introduce taxation on cards.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI, ART. 145 (1583-1715).** Although the series is not complete, this is fundamental witness, containing the original counts of the concession holders. Due to its extension in time, its various documents will be summarised in places corresponding to their date. Document n.1 concerns the very first concession holder, Ferrofino. His counts are also important for their detail, providing some information on the expenses for tools and raw materials used then in card making. There are also kept some copies of laws and sentences. We can note here a few points; for instance a receipt for 4345 dozen packs bought, compared to 6022 dozens withdrawn from the factory. The maker clearly appears of French provenance, having a name of Gioan GIENENCY or something alike. Other masters quoted are Vincenzo GAVRIGLIO and Giuseppe TONSO.

**15.3.1586 Lettera patente di Carlo Emanuele.** Its main contents are the extension of the validity of the concession to the full life of messer Giovanni Battista Ferrofino. He had been a true servant of the House both in peace and in war. In particular, he had carried out some offices in Flanders and he had been responsible of introducing in the country the art of making cards and tarots.

*...et parimente in consideratione della longa e fedel servitù dal 1543 in quà fatta da lui alli Serenissimi di gloriosa memoria Duchi avo e padre nostro sì in tempo di guerra con gran spesa et consumo di tutte sue facoltà et effusione del proprio sangue come ne siamo ben informati, che in tempo di pace in molti altri onorati servitii fatti sì in Fiandra che nelli nostri Stati, dov'è stato impiegato, et anche perché egli è stato l'inventore d'introdurre l'arte e fabbrica di dette carte, et tarocchi in questi Stati nostri,*

...

This statement can be assumed as an indication that before this date cards could only reach Piedmont from neighbouring regions. In the absence of further detail, two are the towns which at once come to our minds: Milan at one side and Lyons at the other. They were two big centres, for population and trade, at a world scale. These appear unavoidable sources if we think of a considerable card consumption – maybe first Milan, then Lyons, which was becoming the greatest European producer. If instead a small-scale production was enough, it may be supposed that Piedmontese card makers had always existed and Ferrofino only introduced a suitable way for a larger-scale production. The question may be essential. As far as I know, we have no Piedmontese card left from times before Ferrofino. A few years later, we find several early examples of the so called Dauphiné pattern – see for instance the Boiseset specimens in *The Playing Card XXI*, p.68-69 – which was to last several centuries. See also the cards from the museum of Issy-les-Moulineaux, reproduced in Fig. 1.

**22.1.1587 Ordine di Carlo Emanuele.** Essentially against dice games. The steps taken for an efficient control over card production and use were many. Here we find the indication for a further step – cards must be sealed. No explicit mention can be found of marks or wrappers, but an envelope must already be there and sealed by the concession holder. Nobody else, unless entitled by the holder, could make, bring in, hold or sell any kind of cards or tarots or any device suitable for producing them.

*Permettiamo però, che per ricreazione si possi giuocare a' tarocchi e carte in ogni luogo, essendo sigillate, acciò non si commetta abuso ed accomprate dal surrogato dal ben diletto nostro M. Gio. Battista Ferrofino, qual surrogato darà licenza di poterle vendere a chi li metterà comodo. Inibendo ad ogni altro d'introdurre, ne far introdurre, tener, ne vender alcuna sorte di carte e tarocchi, ne di cosa da fabricarle, sì nelli nostri Stati, come fuori: ne di giuocarvi, che non siano dalle suddette state sigillate, sotto la sudetta pena e perdita delle carte, applicabile, cioè ...*

### **23.3.1599 Ordine, not found by Duboin.**

**20.5.1603 Ordine di Carlo Emanuele.** After a few years, the duke introduces further means for controlling the use of cards. In many places, particularly Nice and Aosta, the previous laws are not obeyed. Therefore, a new Ordine is written by Carlo Emanuele. The various provinces are explicitly mentioned, indicating that no exception could be justified. Each pack must be sealed and marked with the stamp of the concession holder, now messer Georgio de Georgis.

*... Et perché intendiamo che in molti luoghi et del contado nostro di Nizza e di detto Ducato d'Auosta vi sono dei contravventori a dette prohibitioni nostre acciò non resti ad alcuno escusatione d'ignoranza delle prohibitioni suddette, di nuovo di nostra certa scienza, et con il parer di nostro Consiglio e della Camera nostra de conti, inibiamo ad ogni persona di qual si vogli stato, grado et conditione che si sia tanto nel Piemonte che Vercellese, Canavese, Contado di Nizza, Ducato d'Auosta, Marchesati di Saluzzo et di Ceva, et a tutti altri luoghi del Stato nostro di quà da monti d'introdur né far introdur, tener né vender alcuna sorte di carte et tarocchi né cosa da fabricarli, né giuocarvi, salvo che dal diletto nostro messer Georgio de Georgis surrogato, o da suoi commessi state marcate e sigillate, sotto pena della perdita d'esse carte et di ducento scuti d'oro a chi contravverrà al Fisco nostro...*

**20.11.1605 Manifesto del Conservatore.** We become acquainted that a specific charge had been created as a Conservatore Generale. The factory and the trade required some kind of administrative control and a leader. On this time, his functions are attributed to an already existing public servant, Fabio Argentero Consigliere di Stato, Primo Presidente dell'Illustrissima Camera de' conti di

S.A.S. e suo General Conservatore della fabrica e negotio delle carte e tarochi. The aim is to ensure that the Ordine of 1603 was everywhere obeyed.

#### **16.10.1612 Bando not found by Duboin.**

**1.6.1616 Ordine di Carlo Emanuele I.** Messer Lodovico Zoello, Conservatore, shall care that this new edict will be followed. For legal trade, cards must be sealed with the coat of arms of Savoy house. Information is given on the procedure to follow for updating the old seals on extant new packs. We obtain information on an illegal production of cards – even the name of a maker is kept, Giacomo HOGLIORETO, working near the border.

*... Prohibiamo di nuovo ad ogni persona, benché graduata, di usar, tenere o vender in qualunque città parte et luogo de nostri Stati di quà et di là da monti carte e tarocchi da giuocare che non siano sigillati dell'arma nostra et di farne mercantia salvo che le ne sia data licenza in scritto da essi fratelli De Georgis,...Prohibendo ancora in particolare, oltre tutte le carte forastiere i tarocchi et carte che intendiamo fabrica vicino a questi Stati Giacomo Hoglioreto di Centallo, il quale essendo in quelli ritrovato con tali carte o tarocchi sarà fatto prigionero e gastigato irremissibilmente: ...*

**1.2.1621 Ordine di Carlo Emanuele I.** It has several references to previous laws on the topic, being addressed against gambling in general. Cards must be sealed with the Savoy coat of arms by the concession holder. The old prohibitions are reiterated and the fine increased to one thousand gold scudi.

*... espressamente proibiamo ad ogni persona di qualsivogli qualità e grado, etiamdio soldati et ufficiali, che non ardischino, né presumino all'avvenire di giuocare in qualsivogli luogo delli Stati nostri, massime nelli corpi di guardia, presidii nostri pubblicamente, né privatamente ad alcun giuoco de' dadi, salvo in tavogliere, sotto pena di ... di nuovo proibiamo ad ogni persona di qualsivogli stato, grado e conditione habitante, sì nel Piemonte, che Vercellese, Canavese, Contado di Nizza, Ducato d'Aosta, Marchesati di Ceva e Saluzzo, Contado di Coconato, Valli d'Oneglia e Maro, et in tutti gli altri luoghi de' nostri Stati, tanto di quà, che di là da' monti d'introdurre, né far introdurre, meno tener o vender carte e tarocchi da giuocare, né altra cosa da fabbricarli, meno servirsene, o giuocarne in detti Stati nostri, salvo. che siano marcate e sigillate coll'arma nostra dalli ben dilette Lorenzo, e fratelli Giorgis a quali è concesso e spetta questo negotio, ...*

#### **2.5.1624 Concession to Giovanni Antonio Giorgis.**

**11.12.1627 Lettere Patenti del Principe di Piemonte.** The occasion arrives to revise the whole contract, as Giorgis asks for retirement and his assistant Francesco FRANCO is willing to assume the concession on a life-time basis. Among other information in this change of concession, we see that the price of a dozen card packs increases from 10 to 16 florins and from 34 to 36 for tarots. Without explicit permission, cards cannot be made not only in the whole territory of Piedmont, but also for 25 miles outside. The concession holder and his workers and assistants can carry with them any kind of weapons, notwithstanding the existing law.

*Havendo S.A. per Patenti sue de due di maggio 1624 conceduto al molto diletto Giovanni Antonio Giorgis aiutante di Camera del signor Prencipe Cardinale mio fratello et suoi surrogati facoltà di far introdurre, fabricar, tener, et vender carte e tarocchi da giocare... Hora havendo il detto Giovanni Antonio Giorgis fatto intendere a S.A. et a noi, che volontier havrebbe renunciato al detto negotio mediante la restitutione del denaro già pagato conforme al conto fattone dalla Camera de conti di che siasi S.A. contentata, et habbia perciò dato cura a suoi Ministri e finanzieri di ritrovar partito sopra il detto*

*negotio et fabrica delle carte, e tarocchi, et non essendosi ritrovato maggior partito di quello che ha fatto il bendiletto Francesco Franco del fu Melchior di Centallo, già surrogato da detto Giorgis per molto tempo nella detta fabrica, il quale habbia offerto di pagar ogni anno a quartieri, cominciando due mesi dopo la publicatione dell'Ordine per la licenza nuova, la somma di fiorini trentasei mila moneta corrente... et per le presenti gli accordiamo et concediamo sua vita naturale durante.*

*Li sarà lecito come così li stabiliamo di vender, far vender le carte da dieci fiorini in sedici, et li tarocchi da trentaquattro a fiorini trentasei per ogni donzina di para conforme all'uso rispettivamente atteso massime l'augmento, che ha fatto il scudo d'oro la poca quantità che se ne smaltisce et altre ragioni a parte rimostrateci. ... Inhibiamo ad ogni suddito di S.A. et nostro, eccetto il detto accensatore et suoi, il fabbricare carte e tarocchi dentro, e fuori delli suddetti Stati, salvo lontano da essi Stati miglia venticinque...*

**8.10.1629 Ordine di Carlo Emanuele.** The duke confirms the contents of the lettere patenti signed by his son the 11.12.1627. Francesco Franco di Centallo is confirmed as concession holder for a lifetime. Previous laws are quoted and extended, especially concerning the prohibition of card imports from abroad.

**30.5.1637 Ordine di Vittorio Emanuele I.** Franco, the concession holder, had behaved in an unsatisfactory way. He is first substituted in his functions in a provisional way by Francesco Zavatta, bookdealer in Turin. Later on, the previous concession holder, of the Giorgis family, who had retired, takes the commitment again. In this occasion the whole field is reconsidered and we obtain a more systematic contract. The law on the duties on cards and tarot becomes more organic and the following laws will consider this Ordine as a basis to be followed, unchanged in most parts. Among the several detailed information here contained, we have a short list of cards and corresponding prices (as usually, expressed for dozens of packs): simples 48 soldi, doubles – both “in the shape of France” and “of France” – 70 soldi, tarot of internal production 6 lire, tarot from France 7 lire. In particular French tarots are mentioned and they cost more than local specimens. The concession will be valid for three years, during which the total quantity of cards, whichever the kind and provenance, should not pass the total of 11,000 dozen packs, and 600 for tarot.

*Conciò sia cosa che già dell'anno 1627 li 15 dicembre havessimo deliberato l'accenza, fabrica, smaltimento et negotio delle carte, et tarocchi al diletto Francesco Franco di Centallo già surrogato in tal negotio da Giovanni Antonio Giorgis di Torino attesa la rinuntia per esso Giorgis fattane et ciò per il tempo di sua vita natural durante, il qual Franco non sodisfacendo agl'obligi portati da suo contratto, avesse dato causa al Patrimonial nostro di moverli lite avanti la Camera nostra de' conti, ove dopo alcune propositioni et oppositioni d'esso Patrimoniale avesse repigliato esso contratto con nuovo partito, ne questo tampoco servando, finalmente la detta Camera nostra vedendo che egli mancava totalmente a suoi obligi et che lasciava decadere questo negotio con danno notabile del servitio nostro deliberasse l'anno 1634 li 25 d'agosto senza recesso degli obligi d'esso verso il nostro Patrimoniale di deputare a suo pericolo Francesco Zavatta mercante di libri in questa città residente, per haver cura di questo negotio, il qual Zavatta habi continuato sin al presente et vedendo noi che il sudetto Franco non siasi curato di sodisfare ai suoi obligi et alle pretensioni del nostro Patrimoniale, habbiamo perciò risoluto di privarlo affatto della goldita di tal concessione e censa, et quelle deliberare ad altri, il che havendo presentito il molto diletto et fedel nostro Giovanni Antonio Giorgis di Torino aiutante di Camera del Serenissimo signor Principe Cardinale mio fratello amatissimo anterior accensatore d'esso Franco, siasi risoluto di ripigliare di nuovo a suo carico tal fabrica, censa et negotio, et per esso presentatosi partito ragionevole, c'habbiamo accettato...*

*...e chiariamo cosa lecita al predetto accensatore di vender le carte fabricate in questi nostri Stati, cioè li semplici soldi quarant'otto la donzena di para et le doppie alla foggia di Francia, et quelle di Francia a soldi settanta per ogni donzena di para, et li tarochi, cioè li fabricati ne' nostri Stati a L.6 la donzena di para, et quei di Francia a livre 7 et questo in quanto a detto accensatore solamente.*

*...Volendo l'accensatore sudetto introdurre carte forastiere, overo estrarherne fuori delli Stati nostri, tanto di quelle fabricate in esse, quanto di quelle di Francia o altre, dichiariamo che siano sempre immuni, franche et esenti d'ogni pedaggio, dacito, gabella et censa, et ogn'altro dritto...*

*...La detta censa durerà anni tre prossimi avvenire, quali haveranno principio due mesi doppo la datta di questi, et durante detti tre anni detto accensatore non potrà smaltire più di donzene undeci milla carte, o siano delle fabricate in Piemonte e di Francia, o siano doppie, o semplici, et questo a sua elettione, et donzene seicento tarochi come sopra a sua elettione,...*

It is interesting to find quoted together not only cards coming from abroad and cards produced in the territory, but also cards locally produced according to a French pattern. This means that the foreign pattern was actually needed by local players, at least for given games. At the time, imports of cards from abroad (as their exports) were not forbidden, provided that they were controlled by the concession holder.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI ART. 145. n.2.** Under the name of Francesco Zavata, for the years 1634/35, we find a record of 551 dozen packs from Giuseppe Franco, “operaio delle carte e tarocchi nella presente città”. Similarly 496 are provided in 1639 to Signor G. Antonio De Georgis.

**16.7.1638 Lettere Patenti di Christiane Reggente.** Notwithstanding the previous laws clearly forbidding any smuggling of cards from abroad, big quantities of foreign cards were brought in the territory in an illegal way – especially in Aosta, Susa and Pinerolo. A more accurate verification of the goods is required by custom servants in the three mentioned towns. Any pack to be used must bear two marks, of Savoy House and of the concession holder. A copy of the Ordine with the laws on card duties must be held in view in every custom office as well as in any public room where people play cards.

**20.12.1645 Ordine di Carlo Emanuele.** The concession given to Pietro Ronco and Giovanni Bertolino Quaglia for three years is confirmed. Packs with the stamps by previous holder, Bussone, have to be marked again. The sale price is increased with respect to Georgis prices by half a lira for cards and one lira for tarots on a dozen basis (as already used by Bussone).

**28.12.1648 Ordine** for a new concession, as the orders on following dates, 24.12.1657, 28.12.1660, 24.1.1664, 1.1.1667, 27.3.1675.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI ART. 145** Item n.3 informs us that Cesare Baijno from Marseille obtains the concession for three years (1655/57), at L.3510 yearly. Other names quoted as actually paying taxes or as previous holders are Gaspare Rossa, Giovanni Domenico Grande, Moise Calvo and Baldassarre Vietto.

We also obtain some useful information as to the destination of these taxes. We would expect that the concession holder pays his dues and then the administration and the duke use the money as they want. On the contrary, the concession holders show in their counts many donations to personages of the church and the court (in particular the Chapelan of the Sindone). When they finally produce their counts it happens that the fixed amount for the concession has already been fully distributed and they have moreover to receive some money back from the duke. Such is the case for instance in document n.7, Giacob Israel Moreno holder for 1662/63 (he was holder of the

concession also for 1659/60) has credit of 9764/10 and debt of 9750: he is thus asking for L. 14/10 back.

We find then a Francesco Crosa holder for 1670/72 (the tax being by then L.6600 for three years) but seemingly up to 1679. In these years there is also a sentence against Conte Cromis who had passed as dowry to his daughter his rights to receive part of the incomes.

**13.4.1685 Ordine di Vittorio Amedeo II.** The concession has been confirmed to a Jew, Moyse Calvo from 23.3.1685 to 31.12.1690. Here he obtains that one of the several kinds of cards in use increases its price. While usual cards are sold at 6 soldi for each pack, carte taroccate are stated to be sold at 4 but the actual price will be 5. Thus, in addition to common cards and tarots, another kind of cards were produced, likely with the same crossed lines printed on the backs.

*Havendo la Camera nostra de' conti di Piemonte continuato in accensamento all'hebreo Moyse Calvo, la gabella delle carte e tarocchi da giuoco... Al qual permettiamo di vendere e far vendere le medeme carte e tarocchi, cioè al prezzo di soldi sei,... a riserva delle carte taroccate, le quali abbenché siino nel capo quinto di quelli al prezzo di soldi quattro il para, s'intenderà però tal prezzo, essere di soldi cinque, conform'all'ordinato di detta Camera,...*

**13.4.1685 Camera dei conti – Capitoli della gabella.** According to Duboin, they are practically identical with those of 1691.

**6.4.1691 Camera dei conti – Capitoli della gabella.** These chapters are intended to rule the duties on cards so that no damage will occur to the court, nor to the concession holder. The concession holder is allowed to let cards be made by anyone he wishes on condition that the quality of the cards is not worse than that of cards commonly produced in Lyons.

Here we find also second-hand cards, uncommon in tax contracts. They must be marked again, if still suitable for play; the corresponding mark has to be different from that used for new cards. If the owner of the packs keeps them, the price for obtaining the new mark is 10 soldi for a dozen packs for cards and 20 soldi for tarots. Instead, the owner may chose to sell the old packs to the concession holder at 15 soldi for each dozen packs.

Cards and prices for a pack are: fini 6 soldi, tarocchi 18, carte taroccate 4. (Apparently, the original value of 4 for carte taroccate is maintained instead of the value of 5 which was, temporarily, allowed before.) Moreover, the sale price for second-hand packs is here established as 3 soldi, the half of a new pack. All these prices are intended as maximum values, the concession holder being allowed to sell at lower prices if willing to do so.

In addition to the stamp on the envelope, a mark may be put on every court card of the fini quality, either imported or locally produced. With a single exception, for the customs in Susa, even card packs in transit must be marked and pay some duties.

*2.Sarà lecito all'accensatore, o a chi avrà licenza dal medesimo, di far fabbricare carte e tarocchi, venderle e smaltirle ne' Stati sudetti, dove meglio le parerà; con che però esse carte e tarocchi che farà fabricare per smaltire in essi Stati, non siano d'inferior bontà di quelle che si fabbricano in Lione comunemente. 5.Dett'accensatore e suoi commessi o sublocatari, potranno vender le carte e tarocchi, tanto fini ch'ordinari et usati; all'ingrosso, et al minuto all'istesso prezzo che le ha vendute e poteva vender l'accensatore precedente Moyse Calvo; cioè le carte fine a ragione di soldi sei per cadun giuoco e li tarocchi soldi dieciotto pure per cadun giuoco, e le carte ordinarie taroccate, soldi quattro per ogni giuoco; le carte usate soldi tre per ogni giuoco alla cui rata le venderà anche all'ingrosso, restando ferma però in facoltà dell'accensatore di vender, si le carte che tarocchi, tanto nuovi ch'usati a quel minor prezzo che li parerà, ma non maggiore del sovr' espresso. 6. E per oviare alle frodi che si comettono nell'introduzione delle carte e tarocchi forestieri, et alli abusi dello*

*smaltimento, sarà permesso all'accensatore di far marcare con una marca le figure di tutte le carte fine che farà introdurre o fabricare nel paese, e ciò oltre che il bollo che metterà sopra l'involio d'ogni para di arte e tarocchi,...*

**4.7.1697 Editto di Vittorio Amedeo II.** The concession is now extended again: it includes games and stamped paper. As for playing cards, some new rules are devised. In particular, a new pattern is introduced and every other pack forbidden. This represents the most radical way to solve the lasting problem of smuggling: the use of any other pack of whatever origin can no longer be justified, even by travellers, who are not allowed to bring cards into the territory. The concession holder may change marks, figures on the cards, and sign one card in each pack with the name Abbiatis. Moreover, a real distinction may be introduced for cards of packs addressed to the different provinces; a true distinction in cards is meant here and not, as usual, in marks or wrappers.

*...di permettergli di potere cambiare le marche, figure e stampe delle dette carte e tarochi che di presente sono in uso, e di poter far paraffrare col nome di Abbiatis una carta in cadun giuoco, come pure di distinguere le carte e tarochi che dovranno in avvenire servire per l'uso di caduna provincia de' nostri Stati, per maggior cautela di detta gabella, ...*

**31.10.1697 Atto pubblico di Vittorio Amedeo II.** The collection of duties on cards is put together with many other duties, such as those on salt or post. The total value has much increased and the concession holder now becomes a society of Frenchmen. In the following, the duke does not personally control the matter anymore, nor so does the Camera dei conti. Instead, specific judges and conservatori of the tolls for the whole state are charged of the control. We have initially four of them being together in care to survey the new concessions and to publish names and conditions of subcontractors.

**7.1.1698 Manifesto dei Giudici e Conservatori generali sopra le gabelle.** The general concession holders, De Rhodes, Peisillier and partners, are subcontracting the concession on duties for cards and tarot to Pietro Servant and Pietro Chialmas.

**23.1.1698 Manifesto dei Giudici e Conservatori generali sopra le gabelle.** A new stamp is introduced to be applied on the envelopes. Cards with previous mark will be stamped free for next fifteen days. The new mark will be black as common for cards and tarots but it will be red for bassetta cards.

*... inibiamo a chi si sia dopo la pubblicazione delle presenti di poter usare, né valersi d'altre carte e tarocchi, che di quelle che saranno marcate e bollate nel loro invoglio co'l detto nuovo bollo, qual rispetto alla bassetta, sarà di color rosso, et quanto all'altre carte e tarocchi negro, sotto le pene...*

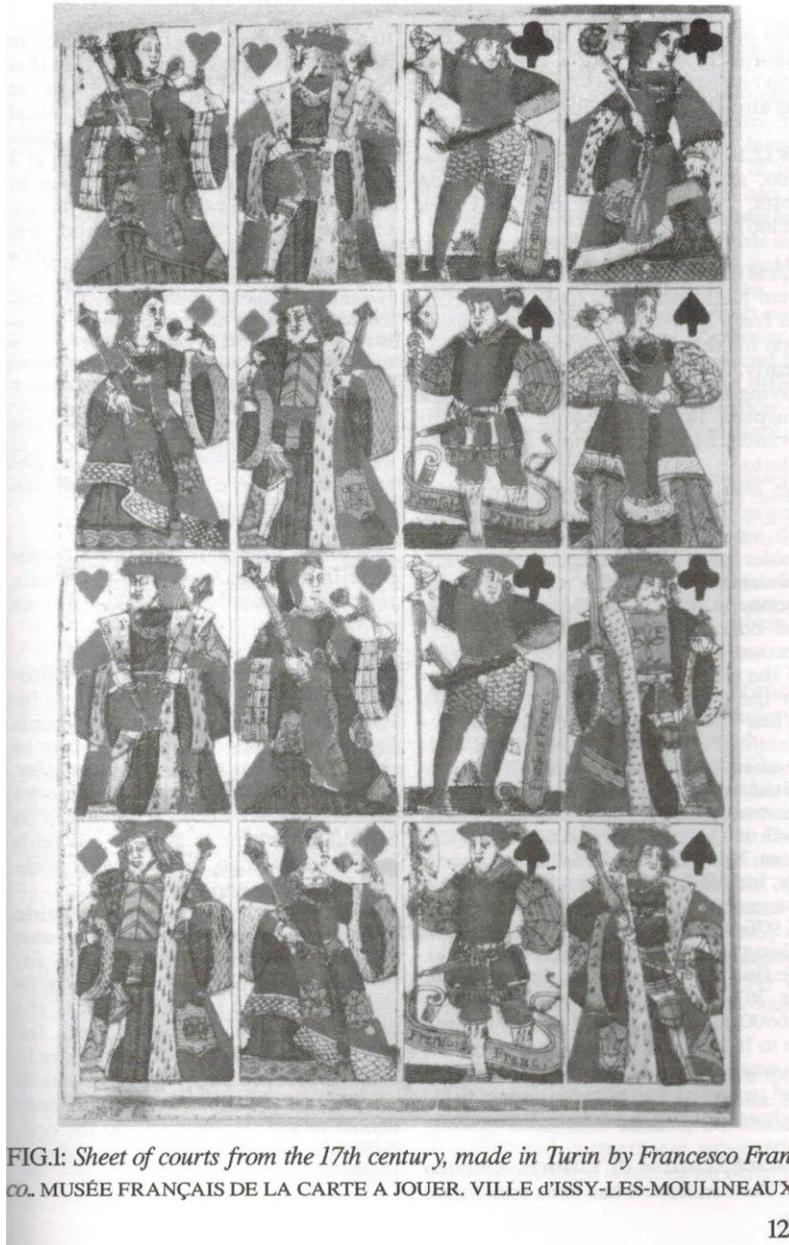
An original way to control gambling while taking profit from it: bassetta is forbidden unless played with its own cards, priced higher than usual.

**22.8.1698 Editto di Vittorio Amedeo II.** The concession holders state that the new pattern, as introduced the previous year, has not encountered the favour of the players. Therefore, there is a risk of losing part of the incomes and they ask to introduce again the earlier pattern. The control on smuggling will be done by other means, such as inserting marks and ciphers on the cards and stamps and seals on the envelopes.

*Havendoci Pietro Chialmas et Pietro Servant sotto conduttori generali delle carte e tarocchi e giuochi unitamente con li fermieri generali rappresentato che la nova forma delle carte e tarocchi introdotta per l'Editto nostro delli 4 luglio, interinato dalla Camera sotto li 22 agosto 1697 non è ben ricevuta nel pubblico, e può col tratto del tempo causar pregiudicio all'accenza; onde hanno supplicato di permettergli di*

*ripigliar l'uso delle carte e tarocchi che si praticava prima di detto Editto, e di aggiungerle alcune loro marche et giffre nel corpo delle figure e loro bolli e sigilli sovra li pachetti e giuochi...*

If a proof of the force of the tradition was needed, this can be one. We are only left with some hesitation whether the defence of the old pattern really was due to love of traditional cards instead of smuggled ones.



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**Figure 1 – Sheet of cards by Francesco Franco, from *The Playing-Card*.**

**CAMERA DEI CONTI ART. 145.** Among many names involved in the concession, one assumes a leading role, holding it continuously from 1679 to about 1697, Moysè Calvo, a Jew. The concession periods are extended to six years and he obtains several renewals. In document n.17 his counts are kept, together with drafts of edicts and new laws.

From further documents of the file, we obtain some other names of holders and dates, even if the counts are no longer so detailed as they used to be; for instance, Giorgio Berrone for 1691/96, but it is his widow to fulfil the commitment from 1694.

**26.1.1701 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** The concession holders for cards are also provided with the concession of the four games bianca, truchi, taglietti and viretto, which were not included in the general concession for games.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI ART. 145.** In the last documents of this file of concession holders, we find for the years 1711/12 a certain Medico Anselmo e compagni; for 1713, Giovanni Colzo and Giuseppe Gentile; for 1714/15, Colomba and Anselmo.

**GABELLE GENERALI – PRIMA ARCHIVIAZIONE - MAZZO 3.** We obtain some general information for the total incomes of the different taxes. Thus we have for Piedmont in 1713, in thousand lire, rounded: Sale 1,501, Tratta e dogana 849, Carne, corame e foglietta 338, Tabacco e acquavita 338, Poste 59, Carta bollata 47, Giuochi, carte e tarocchi 35, bollo candele 14. The total is 3,182 to which one should add L 2,083 from fines. The corresponding totals are 387 for Savoy (among which 331 for salt) and 124 (salt being 51) for Nice. It may be noted the small part provided by cards and games.

We also obtain some information on the countless persons involved (for instance for the year 1727) in collecting these taxes, from towns to villages.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI ART.146.** It contains many records of fines for the years 1712-21.

**11.2.1716 Manifesto del Giudice e conservatore generale delle gabelle unite.** It reports the terms of the new concession on games and cards for next three years, together with the new marks to be applied to every pack. Particular marks are included for bassetta and lanschenetto.

*.. quali carte e tarocchi saranno involti e faciate col bollo e marche in piè del presente impresse... alli giuochi della bassetta e del lanschenetto, salvo con carte dal detto signor accensatore generale per tali giuochi destinate,...*

**17.3.1718 Lettera patente di Vittorio Amedeo.** The documents reported by Duboin essentially concern Piedmont, but a few are related to Savoy. In the matter of our concern, the most important document seems to be this letter, written in French.

*Nous avons été très-humblement suppliés par Pierre Cheminade habitant à Chambéry, de luy permettre d'ériger une fabrique de cartes et tarocs pour pouvoir employer les ouvriers de cette profession qui par manque d'occupation sont obligés la plus part du temps d'aller dans les pays étrangers, offrant en outre de fournir toutes les cartes nécessaires à débiter dans nos Etats, bien faites, et de bonne qualité...*

Pierre CHEMINADE is allowed to establish a factory for making cards in Chambéry, chief town of Savoy. The alleged reason is that several workers have to go abroad for long time periods due to lack of work there. They could instead remain near their homes, and the new factory could provide the total amount of playing-cards needed by Savoy and Piedmont, with full guarantee of good quality.

**29.12.1727 Manifesto del Giudice e Conservatore generale delle gabelle al di quà dei monti.** It is reported by Duboin as a specimen for a new kind of Manifesti, which had become usual at this time and for several decades to follow. The new concession holder for next three years is Pietro Boverii fu Gioanni. As usual, it is forbidden to play with other cards, even in those particular cases in which it had been tolerated previously.

**29.12.1731 Ordine** for a new concession, as also on 22.12.1736 and 15.2.1737.

**GABELLE GENERALI – PRIMA ARCHIVIAZIONE - MAZZO 4.**

FASC. 8. Memoriale by Carlo Sebastiano Dole - After an essay made by Vassallo Bonnet for the factory of cards and tarots for play he asks for the concession at the price of 50 thousand lire. The factory has to continue its production and cards by master card-maker CHEMINADE of Grenoble will still represent the standard for quality. Only paper from local provenance will be used and the condition is required that no new makers will be allowed to enter the market.

FASC. 9. It contains a petition by Vassallo Gian Giacomo Bonnet (or Bonetti, as it is sometimes written) della Penna (Provence) against two sentences. In particular he requires that his expenses must be refunded for a travel from 24 April to 18 August 1737 in Aix, Grenoble and Turin for finding a card-maker and bringing him to Turin.

FASC. 10. It is the most detailed document, with several official opinions. Thus Francesco Maria Renò states that the country is already well provided with factories of card makers since several have been established in Chambery, others in Oneglia, three others in Bordo di Sesia and one recently in Alessandria. Therefore, there is no need of a new factory, nor of abolishing the relatively small imports of French cards, which had the further advantage of being exchanged with Piedmontese rice.

Among the concession holders of the years 1736/40 we find Carlo Domenico Beria, Francesco Maria Renò and Gian Giacomo Bonnet.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI ART. 295.** It contains three registers for the years 1744, 1752 and 1769, respectively. The two last contain indexes which systematically quote the corresponding pages in various books and registers, probably lost.

The first file records the packs as sent to the various sections from 1744 to 1750 in the form of an index-book where we find on the page border the following different items and corresponding taxes:

|                                      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Bassetta per Bordo (Accademia Reale) | L. 13 |
| Bassetta per Lansquinet              | 12    |
| Bassetta per Città                   | 9     |
| Carte per Lansquinet                 | 5     |
| Bassetta per Provincia               | 6/15  |
| Carte picchetto per Città            | 4     |
| Carte picchetto per Provincia        | 3/10  |
| Carte picchetto per la Corte         | 3     |
| Carte triaglie per Provincia         | 1/15  |
| Tarocchi fini per Città              | 10/16 |
| Tarocchi fini per Provincia          | 10/10 |
| Tarocchi fini per la Corte           | 9     |
| Tarocchi triaglie per Provincia      | 5/5   |

The frequency of card shipments is rather different from item to item, from about twice in a month to once in four months. After various steps taken for letting the system work, it may be surprising to find so many different kinds of packs, mostly distinguished for taxation reasons.

**29.12.1746 Manifesto del Giudice e conservatore generale delle gabelle unite.** The concession had been assigned to Giovanni Battista Parodi and Domenico Ermoglio for 15 years starting from 1.1.1743. In August 1746, they had passed the concession to Giovanni Andrea Maggia and partners. The new concession holders ask for a new publication confirming the situation and the laws.

**CAMERA DEI CONTI - N. 901.** This would probably have been for us the most interesting item in Turin archives. It contained sample cards for standard patterns in use at different times. In particular there were kept sets of cards for the years 1747, 1769, 1783, 1785, 1824 to 1832, 1834 to

1842. Together with similar items of popular historical contents, they were passed to the Museo Industriale, a new museum which appears never to have been opened. Minutes, dated 11 June 1872, confirm the passage. Unfortunately for us, it is now practically impossible to trace any of these items. Some other cards are kept in the files of Turin Archives and will be mentioned below. However, it seems that Piedmontese cards should better be searched in private collections and far from Turin.

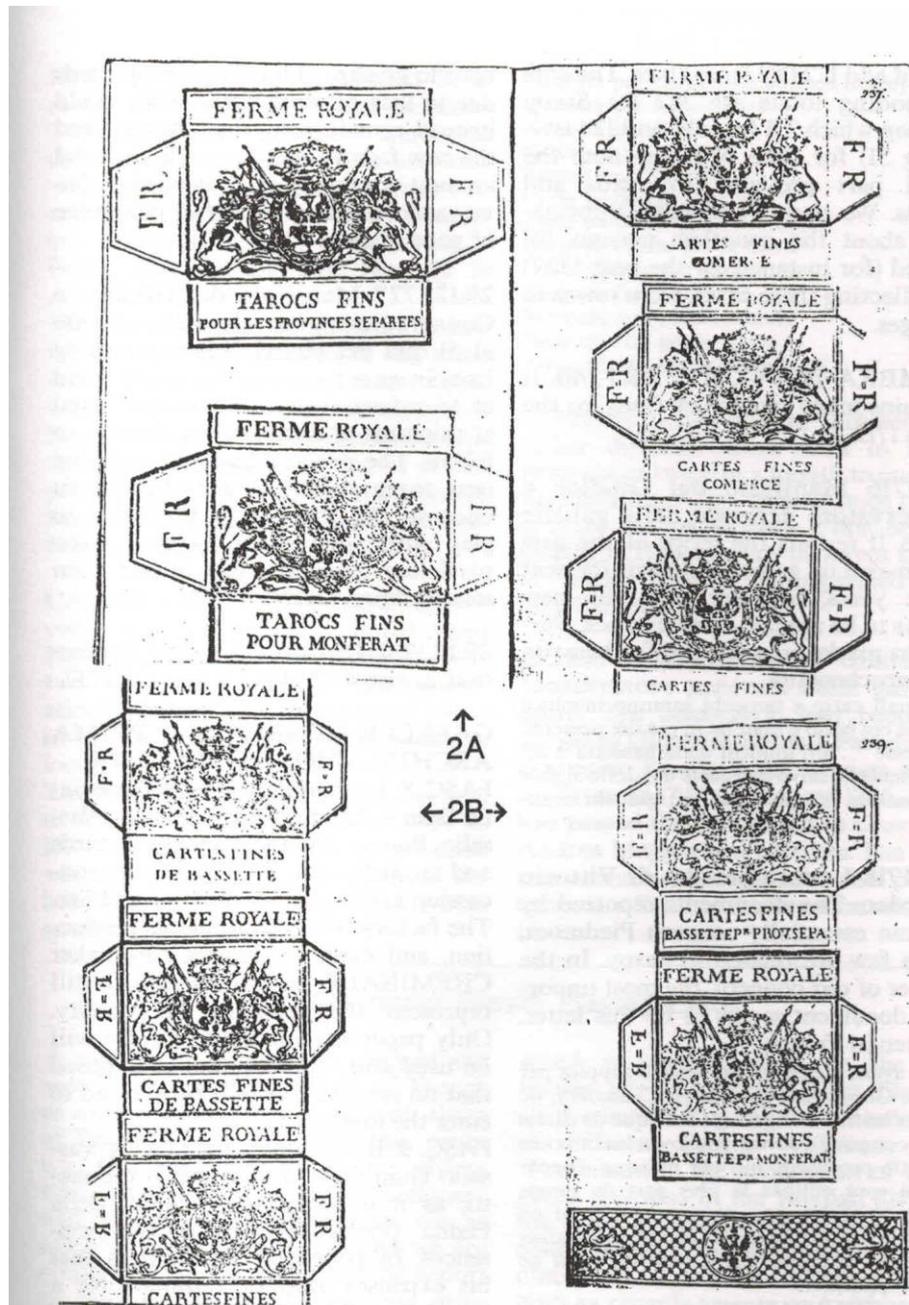


FIG.2: Wrappers selected from among those appended to Manifesto camerale 29.12.1774, according to their destination. (2A) Wrappers for various cards and tarots. (2B) Wrappers for various bassette cards and specimen for the wrapper.

Figure 2 – Piedmontese wrappers, from *The Playing-Card*.

## MATERIE ECONOMICHE – MAZZO DI ADDIZIONE NON INVENTARIATO.

**14.12.1748.** We have the opinion of Procuratore Generale. The concession holders regretted that a certain ZOJA (this family is known to us from other places) had established a new factory for making cards in Montanaro, a village pertaining to the territory of San Benigno Abbey. They asked for help, since this was an attraction for workers of the Turin factory and in any case a source of loss of duties. The answer is that the territory only recently became part of the Savoy state, having been earlier under the Vatican government, and no legal action is possible against the new factory. One should thus resort to economic measures. However, the presence of several plants may increase the quality of playing-cards. We also become acquainted that in addition to the Turin factory there was another in Val di Sesia, which was tolerated even if it caused several problems for collecting duties.

**30.6.1752 Manifesto del Giudice e conservatore generale delle gabelle unite.** Francesco Robert and partners are the new concession holders. Marks on envelopes and wrappers are changed again.

**2.5.1755 Grida della Regia Camera dei conti** (*per gabella carte nelle provincie di nuovo acquisto, smembrate dallo Stato di Milano*). Several provinces had joined Piedmont after having been part of Milan territory. The laws there are finally the same as in the original territories of the Sardinia kingdom, but some differences are kept, especially in the first times. In this case, we hear of particular stamps on the card themselves, likely continuing a Milanese habit. These stamps were of two different locations according to the use of the cards: cards for pubs were stamped on clubs 4 and swords 4 whereas cards for private use were marked on coins 6 and spade 2.

*...le carte bollate con l'infrascritto bollo sopra li quattro di fiori e di spade sono le destinate per detti osti, bettolini, tavernari, offelari e barcaruoli e camere locanti come sovra solamente, e quelle bollate sopra il sei da denari e due di picco, pure qui sott'annotato, avranno a servire per uso comune solamente degli altri,...*

**10.2.1761 Regio Editto Carlo Emanuel.** At this time, many laws existed on cards and they were only valid for given times or territories. Now, it is felt necessary to introduce a new organic text of a law intended to govern the whole matter. It is a detailed law, with no less than 39 points. Free imports or production of cards will be no more allowed to concession holders; they only may sell cards in the territory for which they have obtained the concession. Even the transit of foreign cards is forbidden: such cards must be explicitly authorized in writing by Direzione Generale and for them a duty has to be paid too. The servants at custom offices are responsible of any illegal introduction of cards and must better survey the goods. The Direzione Generale itself, a relevant office of the public administration, will care for the control of card production and of the corresponding incomes. Cards will be of various dimensions according to the games. The means of control are as usual the envelopes of the packs. They are especially printed and stamped. In particular, gambling games such as bassetta require their own cards, with stamps of different shape or colour. Everybody is forced to play with such cards, except for travellers, who stay just overnight in inns or taverns.

*La varietà degli Ordini per l'addietro emanati a riguardo della gabella delle carte e tarocchi e de' giuochi, rendendo assai difficile l'esatta loro osservanza,...* 12. *La direzione generale farà fabbricare e distribuire le carte e tarocchi di buona qualità: saranno altresì della grandezza e lunghezza proporzionate alla diversa specie de' giuochi, e si venderanno alli prezzi sin'ora praticati, il tutto sotto la ricognizione, determinazione e stabilimento della Camera.* 13. *Saranno le carte o tarocchi involti, e rispettivamente fasciati colle marche e bolli, che meglio stimerà la direzione generale,*

*quali verranno notificati al pubblico dal detto Magistrato della Camera con un suo Manifesto. 14 le carte per il giuoco della bassetta saranno fasciate con differenti invogli e marcate della marca e bollo particolare, da notificarsi pure col suddetto Manifesto;... 26. Da questa proibizione resta solamente escluso quel giuoco che dalli forestieri da un giorno all'altro di passaggio alloggiati nelle osterie e locande venisse per modo di conversazione tra di loro esercitato, senza intervento d'altri per ivi giuocare.*

**28.3.1761 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** Wrappers and envelopes are white for triaglie; they are instead of various colours for carte fini, according to the provinces of destination.

**18.12.1763 Regio Editto Carlo Emanuele per le gabelle nelle provincie d'Alessandria, eccetera, terre separate.** Again, new laws have to be promulgated for territories of recent acquisition. The aim is to extend as far as possible to the new territories the same rules given to Piedmont two years before.

**23.12.1763 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** Among other things, it fixes the prices for tarot: for each dozen packs, 10 lire for fini and 6 lire for triaglie.

**7.10.1769 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** The united concession of games and cards (Piedmont, Nizza and Oneglia) is attributed for nine years to Carlo Pezzi; he has some partners, and the signature is Giovanni Battista Moris e compagnia.

*Novennio da principiare col primo di gennaio 1770 a Carlo Pezzi della gabella delle carte e tarocchi e giuochi permessi nel Piemonte, Contado di Nizza e principato d'Oneglia, .. e col privilegio privativo altresì della fabbrica delle carte e tarocchi,.. con essersi dichiarati soci in detto contratto li Giovanni Battista Moris, e medico Giovanni Battista Doria,...*

What subsequently made the situation become difficult to comprehend was the number of these partners holders, since they first shared the total concession, then many sub-holders had control for card sale in small areas.

**MATERIE ECONOMICHE – MAZZO 1° D'ADDIZIONE.** N. 19. 24.11.1769. Several documents concern the application of the new laws even to towns, such as Oneglia, where card production had been already established before they entered the state of Piedmont and it was preserved, free of duties, for many years later on. In principle, the laws were clear enough, but the old practice had continued and several applications were produced to the Court in order to maintain the privilege.

**MATERIE ECONOMICHE – MAZZO 2° DI SECONDA ADDIZIONE.** N. 9. 1769. We have here the summary of the incomes and costs for the last five years 1762-68. That may be useful for acquiring the knowledge of the order of magnitude of the whole matter, as well as the contribution of the various parts of the territory.

*Stato de prodotti ricavati dall'esercizio economico della gabella giuochi intrapresosi dall'Azienda Generale delle Regie Gabelle per li anni come segue:*

|      | Prodotto gab.<br>suddette in<br>Piemonte Nizza<br>ed Oneglia | Prod.vendita<br>carte taroc.<br>agl'accensat.<br>di Casale | Prod.Gab.<br>suddette<br>a Novara<br>e Alessa. | Totale de<br>controssi<br>Prodotti |
|------|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| 1762 | 114284   | 1562   |  | 115846                             |

|                                    |        |        |       |         |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|---------|
| 1763                               | 108087 | 1492   |       | 109579  |
| 1764                               | 141669 | 2028   | 14711 | 158408  |
| 1765                               | 137425 | 2255   | 13095 | 152775  |
| 1766                               | 124131 | 2453   | 12306 | 138890  |
| 1767                               | 153069 | 2922   | 17095 | 173086  |
| 1768                               | 154487 | 3093   | 17095 | 174675  |
|                                    | -----  | -----  | ----- | -----   |
|                                    | 933192 | 15805  | 74302 | 1023259 |
| Piemonte, commune d'anni 7         |        | 133307 |       |         |
| Monferrato, comune d'anni 7        |        | 2258   |       |         |
| Province separate, comune d'anni 5 |        | 14860  |       |         |
|                                    |        | -----  |       |         |
|                                    |        | 150425 |       |         |

**1.12.1772 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** On behalf of the concession holders, Antonio Robba, Giovanni Battista Moris and partners, it is reminded that starting from 1.1.1773 cards used for playing in the provinces coming from Milan state must have wrappers and envelopes according to the specimens joined to the edict.

**29.12.1774 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** The concession of cards and games for Piedmont, Nizza and Oneglia is assigned for the next nine years (starting from 1.1.1775) to Giovanni Richard, Fabio Caroelli and Antonio Robba. The new factory in Turin is mentioned and a list is given of the prices in different provinces. These prices were already current at least in 1769, with same division into three different zones:

- 1) Piedmont: bassetta, 9 lire; fine 3/12 lire; triaglie 2 lire; tarocchi 10/16; tarocchi triaglie 6.
- 2) Nizza and its environment: fini (bassetta included) 2, triaglie 1, tarocchi fini 6, tar. triaglie 3.
- 3) Novarese ecc.: bassetta 6, fini 3, triaglie 2, tarocchi fini 10, tar. triaglie 6.

*... a Giovanni Richard fu Guglielmo della presente città, e così pure a Fabio Caroelli, figlio di Pietro Antonio di Moncalvo e ad Antonio Robba fu Giovanni Battista, abitante in Alessandria, per un novennio da principiare col primo del prossimo gennaio 1775, l'appalto delle gabelle delle carte, de' tarocchi e giuochi permessi... nuova fabbrica... in Piemonte carte di bassetta alle conversazioni e particolari, lire nove; carte fine di picchetto, ombra e commercio, lire tre, soldi dodici; carte inferiori denominate triaglie lire due; tarocchi fini lire dieci, soldi sedici; tarocchi inferiori detti di triaglie lire sei...*

**16.2.1778 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** Due to the death of Gioanni Richard the signature changes in Caroelli e Robba. Correspondingly, new wrappers will be used.

**13.6.1778 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** For the department of Vercelli we encounter its own sub-holder of the concession, Ariotti. He has obtained the subconcession by the concession holders and he will mark the cards to be used in Vercelli with his own mark, as reported at the bottom of the original edict. This represents an additional mark on the wrappers, since usual wrappers and envelopes maintain their validity for Vercelli.

*Richard e Caroelli hanno ceduto e dismesso a favore del ricorrente Raimondo Ariotti la ragione e facoltà di vendere ed esitare carte e tarocchi, ed esercire e far esercire li giuochi permessi nel dipartimento di Vercelli.. il bollo particolare designato in piede del presente;...*

**19.12.1778 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** Antonio Robba and Fabro Carovelli concession holders have leased the subcontract for several Eastern provinces to Balbi for five years.

*...a Paolo Balbi della città di Crema, ed in quella di Novara residente, ... nelle Province dell'alto e basso Novarese, Lumellina e Vigevinasco...*

**23.11.1783 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** New concession.

**22.12.1784 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** It reports a contract for the concession not only of cards and games but also for brandy, chocolate, coffee, vinegar and soft drinks. The territory is limited to the town of Acqui and its environment. Antonio Robba, concession holder for the region of Monferrato leases the subcontract to Gaetano Cavalleri for next eight years.

*...oltre il distintivo tanto intrinseco che estrinseco dalla detta fabbrica generale, avranno pure secondo il solito in una di dette carte e tarocchi l'espressione significativa l'uso per il Monferrato, e porteranno sulla fascia del loro invoglio l'impronto del bollo apposto al piede del presente.*

This corresponds to a third level of concession. First, there are the usual envelopes and wrappers by the main factory; second, one of the cards or tarots must bear a sign indicating the use for Monferrato; third, on the wrapper a new mark – reported at the bottom of this ban, is applied by Cavalleri for cards to be used in Acqui.

**22.12.1786 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** Concession for Eastern provinces, according to Duboin very similar to that of 19.12.1778.

**MATERIE ECONOMICHE – MAZZO D'ADDIZIONE NON INVENTARIATO. 1790.** A project for modifying the prices so that the concession holder will make the required quantity of packs. We also obtain the number of cards sold in that year, in dozens of packs and corresponding prices:

|                       |    |    |         |
|-----------------------|----|----|---------|
| 7354 fine             | at | 8  | 2941.12 |
| 694 triaglie          |    | 5  | 173.10  |
| 2116 tarocchi fini    |    | 25 | 2645.   |
| 258 tarocchi triaglie |    | 20 | 258.    |
|                       |    |    | -----   |
|                       |    |    | 6018. 2 |

The almost tenfold ratio between fini and triaglie sold may be surprising. One might expect the opposite: few cards for the few rich, many cards for the many poor people. One has to take into account, however, that in high society – and in gambling for high stakes – cards were frequently changed. Smuggling apart, cards could better enter the lower classes as second-hand fini than new triaglie.

We find also a list of the costs, divided in two parts: a mean cost for each dozen packs of different qualities (first column), followed by general costs that must be added:

|                       | L.s.d.  | L.s. |
|-----------------------|---------|------|
| fini                  | 1. 5. 6 | 1.13 |
| triaglie              | 10.     | 15   |
| tarocchi fini in 15   | 4. 1.   | 5. 5 |
| id. triaglie          | 2.      | 3.   |
| tarocchi fini in 18   | 3.12. 8 | 5. 5 |
| id. triaglie          | 2.      | 3.   |
| tarocchi fini piccoli | 3. 4. 9 | 5. 5 |
| id. triaglie          | 2.      | 3.   |

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Fitto di fabbrica   | 2500.    |
| Stipendio del Mastro Cartiere   | 1200.    |
| Bosco, carbone, oglio e candelle  | 1300.    |
| Plancie, imprimidure, forbici, filo di lottone, penelli,<br>coppe, spazzette, saponette, scosali, vasi, mastro<br>da bosco, ferragliere, cebraro e simili | 1000.    |
| All'anno  | L. 6000. |

As a result, the proposed prices are as indicated in the second column of the list above.

**29.12.1792 Manifesto della Camera dei conti.** The concession is attributed for nine years to Micheletti, Forno and Fiore. Envelopes are the same as for previous holders, but wrappers and stamps are modified. After a month only packs with the new wrappers and stamps will be acknowledged. Envelopes and stamps are blue for Monferrato, red for other territories.

*...Francesco Micheletti, Pietro Forno e Gaspare Fiore... per un novennio, da cominciare dal primo gennaio 1793, la gabella delle carte e tarocchi e de' giuochi permessi da esercitarsi nel Piemonte,...gl'invogli della stessa forma che hanno avuto infino ad ora, ma verranno cangiate le fascie e bolli, ed apposte nella forma divisata appiè della suddetta supplica, e che resta indicata appiè del presente, colla sola differenza che le carte e tarocchi da distribuirsi nell'alto e basso Monferrato avranno li bolli, ed invoglio di color bleu, e tutte le altre di color rosso.*

**Effects of the French revolution.** The turning of the 18th century is marked, in Piedmont as practically everywhere else in Europe, by the direct effects of the French revolution. Limiting ourselves to cards, the main change was that a common procedure became usual everywhere: the French habit of controlling the paper instead of the printing blocks or the specific techniques used in playing-card production. The transfer of the control on the paper, its watermarks, production, and trade, allowed in many countries the appearance of a lot of new makers. As a result, this short time period is one of the richest in new activities, experiments, and new patterns. However, it is a period for which the study should be better conducted on a larger scale; namely, extended to all of Europe. In our present investigation of typical Piedmontese laws and production, we can pass again to the "new" law of 1815.

**16.5.1815 Regio Editto di Vittorio Emanuele I.** It re-establishes the monopoly for cards and tarots. The tax is of 3 soldi for each pack, 6 for tarot. Half of it may be reimbursed in case of export, if that is duly documented. In conclusion, the ancient system was established again; however, the increased number of card makers remains high even in the following years.

**12.6.1815 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** New wrappers and envelopes are fixed. The colour for tarot is pink.

**17.11.1820 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** The main subject is the definition of new wrappers and envelopes for packs destined to export. The colour for tarot is green.

**8.2.1834 Regie Lettere Patenti di Carlo Alberto.** This is one of the most important laws on Piedmontese cards, and its validity will last until the establishment of the Italian kingdom. Every aspect is controlled, from the fabrication of specific watermarked paper to the sale of card packs. Makers must communicate their address together with the number of blocks and workers employed in the production. Specimens of their cards and tarots must be deposited at Camera dei Conti and updated if modifications are introduced. The four aces must bear name and place of the maker. The

paper is different for producing cards or tarots and has watermarks with the Savoy coat of arms. Envelopes and wrappers must be used and marked according to instructions given by Camera dei Conti. Nobody can sell cards – even if regularly made, packed and wrapped up – unless he is provided with a written licence by Azienda Generale.

*Coloro che intendono di stabilire fabbriche di carte e tarocchi sono tenuti di fare all'Azienda generale delle nostre Finanze la preventiva dichiarazione dei siti dove sarà esercitata la fabbricazione del numero delle forme, e della quantità degli operai che saranno impiegati.*

*Li fabbricanti debbono depositare alla Camera nostra de' Conti li modelli delle rispettive figure delle carte e tarocchi, e delle variazioni che volessero a quelli apportare.*

*Essi debbono apporre il loro nome e dimora sovra li quattro assi di ciascun mazzo di carte e tarocchi.*

*Nella fabbricazione delle carte e tarocchi e per il foglio del davanti di essi, dovrà impiegarsi la carta che sarà somministrata dall'Azienda generale delle nostre Finanze, la quale sarà intrinsecamente marcata con una filigrana portante lo stemma Reale, e diversa pelle carte, e pei tarocchi.*

*Ogni mazzo di carte e tarocchi debitamente fabbricati dovrà inoltre essere involto in foglio di carta portante impresso il nome del fabbricante, ed il numero delle carte e tarocchi, ed essere fasciato con una benda avente l'impronto di un bollo a secco distinto per le carte e pei tarocchi.*

*... Ogni risma sarà composta di n. 494 fogli tutti buoni ed intieri, e sarà del peso di libbre 21 a 22 sia per la prima, che per la seconda qualità. Cadun foglio conterrà n. 24 filigrane per le carte, e n. 15 per li tarocchi, ed avrà oncie otto, punti tre di altezza, ed oncie nove, punti uno di larghezza.*

*...Nessuno può vendere carte e tarocchi, anche regolarmente fabbricati e fasciati, senza averne ottenuto il permesso in iscritto dall'Azienda Generale delle nostre Finanze.*

**16.7.1834 Circolare n. 716 dell'Azienda Generale delle Regie Finanze.** Within the administration, care is required to record in each place the local production of cards and to control it from a quantitative point of view so that the employee can indicate any suspicious deviation from average production. Part of the fines can be devoted to the most careful agents.

*6. Cadun Contabile, nel cui distretto esisteranno fabbriche, dovrà tenere un registro, ossia brogliasso, ove si annoterà il movimento degli artieri per riconoscere in ogni tempo se la fabbricazione della quantità di carte e tarocchi sia sempre corrispondente al numero dei suddetti artieri, per informare in caso contrario la rispettiva Direzione delle ineguaglianze da cui potrebbesi arguire di frode per parte dei fabbricanti.*

*18. Nelle disposizioni penali della legge, e nel modo di stabilire le diverse contravvenzioni, gli Agenti demaniali possono ravvisare un mezzo di far palese il loro zelo pel Regio servizio, e l'Azienda oltrecché terrà in molto conto le diligenze che saranno per adoperare i Contabili nella rigorosa esecuzione dei Sovrani comandi, non ommetterà di far quelle presenti al superiore Dicastero, perché a seconda della maggiore o minore entità delle rilevate contravvenzioni venga promossa qualche ricompensa a favore degli Agenti che si saranno distinti da prelevarsi sulla tangente delle multe riservata dall'art. 38 a favore del Fisco.*

**2.8.1834 Manifesto della Regia Camera de' conti.** Details are provided for paper, watermarks, envelopes, and wrappers, both for cards and tarots.

1. Il foglio del davanti della carta per la fabbricazione dei tarocchi, è di color bianco, ed è intrinsecamente marcato con una filigrana rappresentante uno scudo rotondo con croce, sormontato da Corona Reale, accostato da due palme sporgenti.

2. Il foglio del davanti della carta per la fabbricazione delle carte da giuoco, è altresì di color bianco, ed è intrinsecamente marcato con filigrana, che raffigura uno scudo rotondo coll'armi di Savoia, sormontato da Corona Reale, accostato da due palme rientranti.

3. Le bende per le carte da giuoco sono in carta rosa, con fregi all'intorno in forma di stelle, e nel centro in forma di rosoni.

4. Le bende pei tarocchi sono anche in carta rosa, con fregi all'intorno in forma di greca, e nel centro in forma arabesca.

5. Il bollo a secco per le bende delle carte da giuoco mostra uno scudo colla croce di Savoia, intorniato dal collare dell'Ordine Supremo della Ss.Amnunziata, e posto entro ad un manto sormontato dalla Corona Reale, colla iscrizione all'intorno, dicente: Regie Patenti delli 8 febbraio 1834.

6. Il bollo a secco per le bende dei tarocchi mostra uno scudo con croce rossa accantonata da quattro teste di moro bendate, sormontato da Corona Reale, intorniato dal collare dell'Ordine Supremo della Ss.Amnunziata, coll'iscrizione attorno, dicente: Regia Autorità.

**ARCHIVIO SISTEMATO – MAZZO 418.** There is a mixture of documents, as for instance the following ones.

- A series of authorisations to produce cards, dated 1.1.1833 and 1.1.1834 for Genova, Oneglia, Albenga. N. 6 is Fratelli Giuseppe and Francesco SOLESIO.

- Card makers in Savoy in August 1834: Jean Bevilland at Annecy, Jean-Marie CHABOUD at Rumilly and Claude CARRAJAT at Chambéry.

- An opinion is reported about the small incomes from card taxes in Savoy: L. 3293 for 1836, 3426 for 1837 and 3891 for 1838. Tarots are stated to have a very small spread in Savoy. Savoy has about a half million inhabitants, that is about 1/6th of the total. Now, its card consumption is much less than 1/6 and only two makers are active, in Chambéry and Annecy, respectively. One of the reasons may be the better cards produced in Geneva, also due to a better quality of the paper employed. Of the Genevean production, three samples of pip cards are enclosed in the file.

- For the years 1843/44 we have a document from makers VERGNANO, SBODIO and VIASSONE. They affirm that the better quality of foreign cards must be attributed to the better quality of the paper used in the production. A preliminary project is set forth for a new law for collecting taxes directly from the makers.

- Reams of paper used - 1850: 1156 for cards and 406 for tarots, 1851: 1109 and 433; 1852: 1477 and 553. The total is 5134 for three years corresponding to L. 262,358. Each ream produces 128 packs of cards and 95 of tarots. The price of each ream, taxes included, depends on destination and quality: fina carte 53, fina tarocchi 46, ordinaria carte 58, ordinaria tarocchi 51. It is stated however that carta fina has practically no sale.

- In 1853, the makers are 30; Bosio and Vergnano have ceased production since two years; Remondino, Bosio, Magnani work only foreign patterns, without taxes. For the years 1850-52 the greatest production can be attributed to Faustino Solesio at St. Francesco d'Albaro, who pays L. 65876 total, namely 21959 pro year. The production however is much lower for many others and only a dozen makers pay more than L. 1000; all the rest pay less than L.1000 pro year. A transcript of the main data (number, name, place, initial date, taxes paid) may be of interest.

|                      |        |      |      |
|----------------------|--------|------|------|
| 1. Francesco SBODIO  | Torino | 1838 | 6998 |
| 2. Fleury CORBAND    | Torino | 1847 | 7828 |
| 3. Alessandro OLETTI | Torino | 1837 | 9472 |
| 4. Antonia LANDO     | Torino | 1838 | 9511 |

|                              |               |      |       |
|------------------------------|---------------|------|-------|
| 5. Giovanni ROSSI            | Torino        | 1847 | 2770  |
| 6. Bernardo FORTONE          | Torino        | 1844 | 2658  |
| 7. Giuseppe ROSSI            | Torino        | 1850 | 922   |
| 8. Alessandro VIASSONE       | Torino        | 1843 | 6001  |
| 9. Maria CAVANNA ved.BIGLIO  | Vercelli      | 1848 | 2856  |
| 10. Maria Giuseppa RIVA      | Vercelli      | 1850 | 9819  |
| 11. Claudio CARAJAT          | Chambery      | 1834 | 915   |
| 12. Giuseppe CALLIGE         | Annecy        | 1844 | 157   |
| 13. Nicola NOVARO            | Oneglia       | 1835 | 353   |
| 14. G.Battista FERRERO       | Cuneo         | 1852 | 289   |
| 15. Domenico BATTARELLI      | Mondovì       | 1848 | 1008  |
| 16. Francesco FANTINI        | Ghemme        | 1842 | 1769  |
| 17. Maria CANTONE ved.ZENONE | Borgosesia    | 1840 | 617   |
| 18. Antonio DEGRANDI         | Borgosesia    | 1851 | 119   |
| 19. Andrea CASTELLAN         | Borgosesia    | 1852 | 167   |
| 20. Giacomo ROTTA            | Varallo       | 1849 | 1526  |
| 21. Giovanni PARETI          | Balmussia     | 1852 | 185   |
| 22. Faustino SOLESIO         | S.F°d'Albaro  | 1844 | 21959 |
| 23. Costantino BOSIO         | Sanpierdarena | 1835 | 71    |
| 24. Giorgio VERGNANO         | Torino        | 1838 | -     |
| 25. Lorenzo REMORINO         | Sanpierdarena | 1835 | -     |
| 26. Gerolamo BOSIO           | Sanpierdarena | 1850 | -     |
| 27. G.Battista MAGNANI       | Voltri        | 1850 | -     |
| 28. Giuseppe DELUCHI         | Sanpierdarena | 1851 | -     |
| 29. Domenico ROSSI           | Asti          | 1852 | -     |
| 30. Giuseppe ALIZIERI        | Savona        | 1853 | -     |
| 31. Marcello VIARENGO        | Cuneo         | 1853 | -     |

This document, dated 25 July 1853, is signed L.Andreis.

- A letter by VERGNANO dated 11 July 1853 - He had expected that in the given conditions in two or three years the whole card market of Piedmont would collapse, particularly owing to the offer of French cards; now he has realised that a few days had been enough.

- There are records of the assignement of red paper for wrappers of cards and tarots and some specimens of it.

- Other documents record the payments for watermarked paper; others list the deposits kept in the customs.

- The file contains further documents, in particular authorizations for the sale of cards and records of fines.

**ARCHIVIO SISTEMATO – COMMERCIO – REGNO D'ITALIA - N.3183. 2.FASC.** A few files, collected according to the place of provenance; only left from: Bologna, Cuneo, Novara and Torino. All the documents are from the years 1856 to 1866. In particular, there are,

- Many licences to sell cards.

- Records of fines and applications not to pay them, often supported by some official certificate by local authorities that the person is poor and honest.

- In Turin four makers have printed cards on paper without watermarks. In particular Giuseppe BELTRAMO in August 1857.

- On December 1859 Pellegro BRUSCAGLIA puts back into service the Voltri factory, near Genova, already used by his father.

- On 5 April 1860 authorization is requested for passing the activity from Francesco SBODIO to Angela RAVASCA, born GAIA. There are seven blocks, six for tarots and two for cards, one worker and one apprentice. To this requests other older documents are appended: on 20 July 1857

Francesco SBODIO asks for re-establishing his factory. His licence had been sold to Alessandro VIASSONE the 24 April 1838 until 1840. There is moreover a licence to Francesco SBODIO dated 10 October 1839, since the 17 September 1839 Alessandro VIASSONE had sold to Francesco SBODIO all his tools and blocks: 1 for card courts (24), 6 for tarots (15 cards for each one), 1 for Aces of the cards (24 aces).

- Alessandro VIASSONE as one of the makers of the capital asks on 11 May 1860 for a change of wrappers for packs to be sent abroad.

- On 12 November 1860 Giovanni Vincenzo PAGLIANO applies for continuing the production of playing-cards in Casale, already kept by Serafino BATETTA. That will be done in the house of Batetta, the only workshop, with two boys (garzoni lavoranti), and with three blocks for cards and eight for tarots. Copies are sent to Archivi Generali and are enclosed, see figure.

**Passage to the Italian Kingdom.** We have thus reached the end of this study, set in correspondence with the year 1861, foundation of the Italian kingdom. It is logical to study separately the new national taxes. However, it must be noted that Turin kept its role of central authority for card taxes in Italy. That lasted also later on, when the capital of the kingdom was transferred, first to Florence and then to Rome.

### **Patterns of playing cards in Piedmont**

We would like to extract from this review some useful indications for the cards themselves. Apart from the usual lack of cards which are really ancient, for Piedmont we have an additional difficulty in deducing information on and from playing cards. In other countries, it often happens that stamps on some surviving cards can be deciphered and provide precise datation and other useful information. The control on card trade was instead based in Piedmont on the envelope in which the cards were sold, on the stamps printed on it and on its wrapper, which often had to bear the signature of contractors and the stamps of subcontractors. From these ancillary items, indications might be extracted as for the actual destination of the cards, often determined by the colour or some inscription. The question is that if to find out ancient cards is not an easy task, to find out their wrappers may be even worse. As known, old cards are often found in bindings of books, or some similar application in which they were used after their life as a playing-card or even instead of it. It is almost impossible that our The chances of finding a pack with its original envelope and wrapper are rare or next to impossible.

Both Piedmontese cards and tarots have attracted the attention of several experts. The late Sylvia Mann, in particular, has established a few Piedmontese standard patterns. Unavoidably these were based on relatively recent items and the suggestion of further standard patterns may follow the discovery of more ancient cards coming from Piedmont. Taking into account that Lyons was for centuries the biggest production centre for cards on a world scale, it may not be surprising if countries so near as Savoy and Piedmont were among the first to be conquered by its production. Even for tarot, we have explicit indication of imports from France; however, it is not very plausible that Piedmont needed a French support to develop its own tarot tradition. As for cards, we have not yet gained a clear view of the introduction of the so called Dauphiné pattern, which later reached also the state of Milan. In fact, I could find no evidence as to its existence prior to Ferrofino, or whether it was developed in Turin at that time.

### **Card games in Piedmont**

Another essential topic is the reconstruction of the games which were preferred by Piedmontese players in the past centuries. Probably, the whole region should be considered in parts, taking the mountain valleys separate from Turin and the main towns. In particular, the 18th century saw a great progress of card playing and gambling everywhere and Piedmont was no exception, even if

Turin was probably more strictly controlled by the police than other capitals. Gambling was common not only in the towns and among nobles; it suffices to consider several memoirs by Giacomo Casanova on gambling by travellers and practitioners in the mountain inns (with payment occurring in money or in kind).

Useful evidence on the games may be gained by examining specific books of rules. Starting from the middle of the 18th century, the main sources of them in Italy were Bologna and Milan. No “complete” book seems to have been printed in Turin, so it appears that the Piedmontese could avail themselves of the books printed in Bologna, in Milan, and – better than any other town in Italy – in Paris. The local production was mainly devoted to single games and to that of tarot in particular.

Let us first consider the editions on tarot that followed the book by Piscina, already mentioned. A simple list is enough, since most of them have been studied in depth and fully described by Michael Dummett in his fundamental works.

- *Primi elementi e regole del giuoco de' tarocchi*. Torino: Soffietti 1787, 102 p.

- *Regole inalterabili per tutti i giuochi di tarocco detti di commercio* di Carlo O... Torino: Stamperia Reale, 40 p.

- *Almanacco per l'anno 1831 contenente le regole inalterabili per tutti i giuochi di tarocco detti di commercio*. Torino: Gaetano Balbino, 40 p.

- *Prammatica del giuocatore di tarocchi ossia regole indispensabili per gli Amatori di simile passatempo. Trattatello raccolto e compilato da L.B.* Torino: Giacomo Serra e compagnia. [1845] 32 p.

- *Il giuocatore di tarocchi al tavoliere Operetta divisa in due parti raccolta ed ordinata da L.B. Parte prima. Grammatica del giuocatore ossia primi elementi del giuoco. Parte seconda. Prammatica ossia regole indispensabili per gli Amatori di simile passatempo*. Torino: Giacomo Serra e compagnia. [1846] 60+32 p.

Tarot was thus the main subject, and also in later years it was the centre of the attention, as indicated by a curious work in Piedmontese language,

- C.C. Tarocaire *La partia a taroch an quatr*. Torino 1880.

The game of tarot was apparently a traditional one in Piedmont, and there it has remained until now. Certainly, in the 20th century Turin is better known for bridge and canasta, with some important contributions to the Italian specific literature. In the mountain valleys the game is however played to-day in a manner which probably is not very different from that played in the same region a half millennium ago. And a part of Piedmontese tarot packs is still produced for the game, different from the great majority of tarot packs.

Whist and bassetta, of course, have also been dealt with, as follows:

- *Traité du jeu de whist traduit de l'anglois d'Edmond Hoyle*. Turin: Fr. Reycends et Guibert, 1765, 112 p.

- *Le truffe del giuoco della Bassetta, ossia l'arte di conoscere e difendersi dai giuocatori d'avvantaggio*. [Torino] 1802, 71 p.

*Giuochi d'azzardo*. Torino: Arnaldi 1850, 18 p.

## Conclusions

Piedmontese laws on cards and tarots have been reviewed, starting from their very beginning and until the foundation of the Italian kingdom. Afterwards, Piedmontese cards and tarots have maintained their own characteristics, but taxation has become an Italian question and as such is better studied separately. Several archival documents of different kind have been taken into account. It is easy to note that the whole reported material is not as systematic as we would have liked it to be. That is only in part a fault of mine. In particular, we are faced by various levels of the legislative powers, from Editto, to Lettera patente, to Manifesto camerale. The choice of the documents described here greatly depends on the preliminary choice made by Duboin when

publishing his collection of Piedmontese laws in the middle of the 19th century. At times, his selection has been found unsatisfactory and original archival documents have been examined, but this could not be the rule. Thus, a painstaking part of the work remains to be done for getting a complete framework for the whole subject of Piedmontese laws interesting the history of playing cards.

The line of development of the concession on cards and games was as follows: in the course of time, the production of cards became more and more the centre of a monopoly system. Concession holders that in the beginning could freely import and produce cards had finally their commitment transformed into a license for sale. This needs not imply that their relevance became slight, since they also obtained the control over most of the gambling games to be played. At last, the concession on cards merged with several others, such as those on salt, tobacco, and brandy.

This increasing power of the concession holder was counterbalanced by another trend: the leasing of part of the concession to subcontractors who controlled smaller and smaller parts of the territories. It appears that public notaries were not inactive – so many contracts had to be drawn. In the end, the central administration could not avoid assuming control over the concessions. We can, by the way, appreciate that not everything worked well: all too often we find a new concession in place before the previous one reached its expiry date.

Continuing research on the original edicts can provide information on the actual dimensions of the cards, on the basis of the specimens of envelopes usually present at the bottom of each concession edict. Unfortunately, nothing can be deduced in this way on the actual aspect and pattern of the cards themselves. For the last goal, which finally seems to be the most relevant to card historians, other paths have to be followed, for instance searching in private collections the milestones which are still lacking for reconstructing the whole evolution of the Piedmontese pattern both for cards and tarots. I did once see a collection of this kind, while visiting a friend of mine. Its owner will soon describe his cards and their history, much better than I can.

### **Acknowledgements**

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