Old and New Ceramics: Manufactures, Products and Markets in the Venetian Republic in the 17th and 18th Centuries

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Abstract
This contribution aims to draw up a map of ceramics production sites in the Venetian area from 1600 to 1800, bearing particular attention to institutional and informal devices allowing local production to adapt to European markets trends and innovations.

The paper investigates the logics of privileges allowance to private entrepreneurs outside of the guilds framework, conceived probably as a protection for offer more than for demand: they had to do with the exploitation of natural resources at a local level (water, raw materials), and of the services of a labor force accumulating specialized skills working in close contact with foreign invited artisans.

The defence and seizure of industrial expertise was in fact the object of enduring court cases between manufacturers fighting to retain and attract highly qualified workers. These were the actual agents of innovation exchange among European, Italian and regional production centres. Continuous exchange and imitation allowed Venetian privileged firms to keep positions in secondary European markets providing most of the demand for local production.

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ceramics, guilds, privileged firms, Venetian Republic

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1. Some questions.

This contribution aims to trace the changes which took place in the manufacturing of ceramics in the Venetian area during the 17th and 18th centuries. It will highlight the mechanisms that enabled local production to adapt to European market trends.

In the latter part of the 17th century, the urban guilds of boccaleri produced only low-quality pottery and were the sole importers of valuable foreign products. In the following decades, new factories producing fine majolica in small and medium sized towns on the mainland like Bassano, Nove and Angarano were granted privileges and exemptions. However, the rapid evolution of the market and the products themselves during the 18th century challenged the trade policy of the Republic, which favoured these local enterprises in order to hamper the import of foreign wares. Local manufacturers in Nove, Este, Treviso and Venice responded to the changing tastes of an increasing domestic demand imitating the forms produced in Faenza, Lodi, Savona and Delft, and later china and crockery produced in

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1 Boccaleri or scudeleri was the Venetian word for artisans producing pottery.
Saxony and in England. They even went as far as exporting to the Levant and to the German area, at least until the end of the ancien régime.

The mobility of skilled labor force allowed innovations in products and processes to circulate between European, Italian and regional centres during the 18th century, enabling Venetian-State manufacturers to maintain their share in domestic and marginal foreign markets. Petitions and lawsuits provide evidence that the only way to keep industrial secrets was to attract qualified workers and then prevent them from leaving.

Using these sources and notarial deeds, local historians have reconstructed in detail the history of single manufacturing centers; while art historians have provided an accurate description of the objects that have been preserved, which helped to date their evolution, ascertain their provenance and estimate their distribution. On these grounds, it is now possible to establish the development of regional production and the market against the background of the evolution of ceramics in Europe, and to attempt to provide an answer to some questions about the history of Venetian ceramics.

What were the reasons for the early decline of the boccaleri and what steps did the Republic of Venice take to further new manufacturing ventures? What investments were needed to promote an industry where labor skills were the decisive factor? What was behind the change in taste and demand for ceramics in the turbulent century of the Enlightenment? These are some of the problems which this study will try to solve following the ups and downs of ceramic production in the Venetian Republic during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

2. The early decline of a guild.

The circulation of ceramic pottery in the Venetian area can be traced back to the first half of 14th century. Previously, kitchen utensils and bowls

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2 See Bellieni, Per la storia della ceramica a Treviso; Stringa, La famiglia Manardi; Stringa, ‘La ceramica a Nove’; Stringa, ‘La ceramica di Angarano’.
3 Ericani and Marini (eds.), La ceramica nel Veneto; Cozza, La produzione ceramica veneta; Ericani, Marini and Stringa (eds.), La ceramica degli Antonibon.
4 Some contributions can be found in in Caizzi, Industria e commercio della Repubblica veneta, 153-157; Fontana, ‘Distretti specializzati e grandi imprese’, 525-530.
made of wood, copper, pewter, or glass, were used; while painted or enameled *(ingobbiata)* terracotta was mainly used for the external decoration of buildings. The production of dishes in ceramics involved also technical innovations like the introduction of the *mezzamaiolica*, which could also be graffito\(^5\). From the 14th century onwards, the use of ceramic pottery increased, although it did not completely replace plates and bowls in pewter, which still appeared in many 17th-century probate inventories.

In the 15th century low-quality graffito ceramics were imported to Venice from Valencia. The import of this type of pottery was the only one authorized, because Spanish ceramics were used as goods of exchange in the trade with the Levant and with continental Europe, while the State kept for itself the exclusive wholesale rights. The Venetian guild of *bocaleri* or *scuteleri*, instituted in Venice in 1301, maintained instead the exclusive right for the retail trade of *mezzamaiolica* ceramics in general. Guild members had the right to sell pottery directly in the public market in St. Mark’s Square; consequently, in the 14th century, the kilns were concentrated in that area. During the Renaissance, in the process of urban restructuring the craftsmen were driven out of the city center, where the smoke from their kilns was no longer tolerated, towards the area of Dorsoduro and then in the 17th century to the extreme western periphery of the city\(^6\). It was, however, a matter of gradual and spontaneous moves; evidence that the production of ceramics was less important for the city economy than glass manufacturing, whose dimensions had convinced the Venetian authorities in 1291 that it was necessary to transfer all the glassmakers to the island of Murano.

In the mainland cities, the production of ceramics developed a little later. From the 14th century there are traces of the presence of *bocaleri*, often foreigners, in Padua, where they were not organised in a guild, and

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\(^5\) It is useful to clarify here the meaning of some technical terms used in the text. *Terracotta* is a porous ceramics, made of clay with metallic compounds (red earth). This could be covered with a silico-alkaline, or a leaded, waterproof transparent varnish, called *invetriatura*. The unfired clay piece was first soaked in diluted white earth in order to plaster it *(ingobbio)*; the plaster could be decorated by scratching it (graffito) or coloring it with non-blending paints, then covered with transparent varnish and finally fired at 1650° F, so producing the *mezzamaiolica*. In the early modern age the terracotta *ingobbiata*, painted and *invetriata* was generically called *cristallina*, in order to distinguish it from the *maiolica*.

\(^6\) The statute of the *bocaleri* guild was published in Monticolo and Besta, *I Capitolari delle Arti veneziane*, for the location of kilns, see Alverà Bortolotto, *Storia della ceramica a Venezia*, 14-17.
later in Treviso, where there was a ‘schola scodellariorum’, and in Verona, where they associated with the analogous guilds of glassmakers and brickmakers. The Venetian bocaleri maintained the right of free trade for their products in the mainland cities, often moving there temporarily. On the other hand, craftsmen from the mainland and from abroad could install their kilns in Venice by paying an admittance tax. However, in 1455 Venetian authorities forbade the bocaleri from Padua and Treviso from moving to Venice.

In the first half of the 16th century, the introduction of majolica wares in the Venetian area brought about remarkable changes in the organization of this industry. Majolica (named after the island of Majorca, from where its technique of production was imported to Italy in the 13th century) was a much better material for dinner services and offered greater possibilities for decoration than mezzamaiolica.

Majolica had been produced since the 13th century in Central Italy, where the main centers of production were Urbino and Faenza. But until the end of the 15th century, thanks to the effectiveness of the ban on foreign ceramics, mezzamaiolica dominated in the Venetian area. It was only in the 16th century, after the brief annexation of Faenza to the Republic from 1504 to 1509, that the importation of majolica from Romagna increased to such an extent that the Venetian guild was forced to develop production of this ware. The Venetian majolica had initially monochrome blue decorations, typical of the so-called ‘berrettina’ ceramics; in the second half of the 16th century it adopted polychrome decoration in order to imitate Chinese

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7 On guild regulations and on craftsmen mobility between Venice and Mainland in Late Middle Ages, see Munarini, ‘La produzione più antica’, 20 and 24-26. The 1455 decree is quoted in Bellieni, ‘Graffita tarda e graffita a stecca a Treviso’, 172.
8 The maiolica was made of clay pieces fired once (biscotto) and then covered with tin-based enamel. On the dried enamel the craftsmen spread colors which resisted at high temperatures, and were incorporated in it during a second firing at 1750°F. In this way the glaze assumed a glass-like consistency and was fused to the terracotta below, waterproofing it. The use of tin-based enamel eliminated the need for leaded varnishing, which left the colors leaking during the firing, and so improved the decorative result.
9 From 1504 to 1509, following the treaty between Faenza and Venice, Faience maiolica could be freely traded on the Mainland, but it could only transit through the city of Venice. After the Agnadello battle and the loss of Faenza, some refugees from Faenza after making a payment joined the Venetian guild of bocaleri; see Alverà Bortolotto, Storia della ceramica a Venezia, 19-20. Faience maiolica still continued illegally to be traded on the Mainland, and they were allowed to be sold at the Padua fair; see Guarnieri, Fornaci e fornacai a Faenza.
10 The blue-grey enamel in use in Venetian majolica was called ‘berrettino’, that means ash-grey. This particular color was obtained by adding a small amount of cobalt to the enamel, in order to cover the slightly yellow tones due to the presence of traces of iron in the material. On the long-lasting inability to find specific terms to define the blue color, see Pastoreau, Bleu: histoire d’une couleur.
porcelain, which was greatly admired in the Renaissance courts and whose circulation increased progressively with the expansion of trade in the Far East.

The blossoming of Venetian majolica in the sixteenth century coincided with the marginalization of craftsmen on the mainland, where some continued to produce *mezzaiolica* for the local market, while others switched to the retail trade. It was only at the end of the century that majolica began to be produced in Padua, Verona and Treviso, mainly by craftsmen who had served their apprenticeship in Venice or abroad. In the same period also a new kind of white majolica from Faenza, called *latesini*, became extremely popular with the public. The numerous failed attempts to imitate *latesini* and the numerous import concessions granted, despite bans, clearly indicate the difficulty that local producers encountered in trying to prevent the sale of these imported *latesini*.

From the end of the 16th century, craft manufacturing of ceramics in Venice and in the Mainland appears to be in difficulty, due to a change in demand for new imported ceramic wares on the part of the aristocracy. In the same period, probate inventories show that the urban middle classes continued to show a preference for pewter utensils. The 1630-31 plague made the situation still worse and in the main centers of the mainland the production of majolica either declined or was abandoned. Also in Venice, from the second half of the 17th century, the *bocaleri* guild was no longer able to respond to the changes in the urban market demand: in 1665 a decree allowed foreign ceramics to be introduced into Venice granting nevertheless the exclusive right for the retail trade to the potters’ guild so that the Venetian *bocaleri* became retailers rather than artisans.

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12 The *latesini* were a pale blue, thin *maiolica*; on the meaning of the term and the disputes on the origin of the pieces found in the Venetian area, see Stringa, ‘Riaperta dopo cinquant’anni la disputa dei latesini’, and Ericani, ‘La manifattura Manardi’, 244-245 and 251-254.
13 In 1580, Alvise de Berthi q. Marchior obtained from the city Council of Treviso the exclusive right for the production and trade of *latesini* in Treviso for 50 years, but there are no traces of the survival of this factory in the 17th century. See Bellieni, ‘Maiolica a Treviso’, 230-231.
14 I thank Francesco Vianello for allowing me to read his transcription of probate inventories from Padua and Vicenza.
16 The guild’s petition and the Senate decree are transcribed in Alverà Bortolotto, *Storia della ceramica a Venezia*, 380-381.
The decline in the production of ceramics in the second half of the 17th century encouraged the Republic to stimulate private initiatives outside the corporative framework, in an effort to stem the flow of foreign majolica, imported not only from Faenza, but also from Lodi\textsuperscript{17} and Savona\textsuperscript{18} (the so-called \textit{latesini} made ‘in the Genoese way’). The subsequent development of ceramic production outside the main cities should then not be interpreted as a spontaneous escape from constraints imposed by guilds, but rather as the result of an increasingly explicit policy which aimed at dealing with the inability of craft production to keep up with recent technical developments. Considerable capital and new technical skills were in fact needed in order to catch up on foreign competitors.

The irreversible decline of the \textit{bocaleri} guild was sanctioned in 1754 by a decree that allowed the duty-free entry to Venice of ceramics from the mainland, cancelling all the guild’s privileges\textsuperscript{19}. At that time, membership of the guild was reduced to forty poor workers, thirty sellers and only two kiln owners\textsuperscript{20}. The decline of the \textit{bocaleria} in the mainland cities had begun even earlier.

\section*{3. Manardi’s exclusive right on majolica.}

The first known privilege for manufacturing majolica was granted directly by the Senate to the Manardi family from Bassano, who in 1669 obtained the exclusive right to produce and trade \textit{latesini} throughout the State\textsuperscript{21}. It is worth looking more closely at their enterprise, not only because it was the first example of how the production and trade of ceramics were organized outside the guild structure but also because it played a key role in attracting specific skills in an area that was to become the main ceramic pole in the Venetian mainland.

\textsuperscript{17} See Lise, \textit{La ceramica a Lodi}.

\textsuperscript{18} See Labò, ‘La ceramica di Savona’.

\textsuperscript{19} A first Senate decree of May 27, 1752, was confirmed by a proclamation of the Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia and the Deputati alla Regolazione del Commercio on September 11, 1754, approved by the Senate on December 6 the same year; at the same time, the \textit{bocaleri} guild was granted the exclusive right to the retail trade of everyday ware imported from the Sottovento (the Italian Adriatic coast), that were used mainly in the taverns. Alverà Bortolotto, \textit{Storia della ceramica a Venezia}, 391.

\textsuperscript{20} On the guild’s decline in the late 18th century, see Alverà Bortolotto, \textit{Storia della ceramica a Venezia}, 392-399.

\textsuperscript{21} The Manardis’ petition, the report of the Provveditori di Comun and of the Bassano local authority, and the Senate decree of May 1669 are published in Stringa, \textit{La famiglia Manardi}, 99-101.
The privilege was granted just a few years after the decree allowing Venice to import majolica from abroad. In ceramics, the fact that early on guild members turned to retailing meant that the distinction between the role of guilds and that of privileged manufacturers was clearer-cut than in other industries: they were alternative, and not complementary modes of production. The fact remains that boccaleri from Padua and Treviso provided the Manardis with skilled workers who continued their craft tradition in a new geographic and organizational context.

The location of the Manardis’ production can be explained by the availability of raw materials and hydraulic power in Bassano, which was also situated at the crossing of land and river routes going in north-south and east-west directions. This area was in fact rich in red and white clay. From the nearby Asiago plateau the timber needed as fuel was easily shipped to the river Brenta. This was navigable from Bassano to its mouth, making it possible to transport the pottery by boat to Venice. The presence of running water favoured also the installation of mills that could be used to grind the raw materials needed for the production of ceramics.

The Manardis were a family of soldiers, whose members since the first decades of the 17th century had been in charge of the militia of Bassano and in the second half of the century entered the city Council. Ottaviano Manardi (1595-1644) enriched the family by means of his and his sons’ good marriages, and by investments in real estate. At his death, his son Francesco (1619-1701) acquired a operational ceramic workshop in Bassano borrowing 491 ducats from Girolamo Cappello, a Venetian nobleman in charge of important government offices, who owned real estate and mills in the Bassano area. Manardi was Cappello’s trustee in Bassano, and Cappello also leased him the building where he lived and the mill where he started grinding the raw materials to produce ceramics. The investment of capital belonging to the Venetian nobility indicates that the Manardis’ enterprise is to be viewed in a wider context than merely on a local scale; probably the

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22 In other industries, privileged manufacturers entered in the guild at the end of their temporary exclusive right, contributing in this way to circulating the innovations they introduced. See Belfanti, ‘Guilds, Patents and the Circulation of Technical Knowledge’, 569-589; on guilds’ role in general see Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change’.
Cappello family played a role also in protecting their business from the interference of tax authorities and in favouring the grant of privileges and exemptions\textsuperscript{23}.

In the following years, Francesco Manardi bought some plots rich in white clay in Romano, and obtained the right to extract clay in the Pove area, north of Bassano. It was only at the end of the 1660s, with the assistance of craftsmen from Padua, Faenza and Lodi who were skilled in making enamels and mixing colours\textsuperscript{24}, that production was converted from \textit{mezzamaiolica} to majolica. In 1669 the Senate granted the privilege for \textit{latesini} to Ottaviano (1650-1684), Sforza (1656-1687) and Zorzi (George, 1653-1732) Manardi, Francesco’s three young sons.

In order to produce fine majolica, it was essential to have good-quality \textit{saldame} at their disposal\textsuperscript{25}. In 1670, Francesco Manardi acquired on leasehold a plot on the hills of Marostica, where he discovered a deposit of this material, and obtained the monopoly for its extraction. Tin and lead, needed for the enamel, and the ingredients of the colors were imported through Venice, where, in partnership with a merchant, an agent managed the warehouse which stocked the raw materials and from where the products were sold to the city’s shops. The products were also sold in two shops in Bassano, dispatched on wagons and distributed by pedlars all over the mainland. Archaeological findings and probate inventories indicate that products were mainly an imitation of the most fashionable shapes for wide consumption. There is no proof that the high-quality pieces of the same period conserved in private and public collections, sometimes attributed to the Manardis, were actually produced in Bassano\textsuperscript{26}.

In 1676, for unknown reasons, but shortly after receiving a huge inheritance from a rich uncle on his mother’s side, Francesco Manardi leased the manufactory to independent renters, supplying them with raw materials.”

\textsuperscript{23} In 1653 Girolamo Cappello was Procuratore di San Marco. On the Manardis’ economic rise and on their relationship with noble Venetian and Mainland families, see Stringa, \textit{La famiglia Manardi}, 15-25.

\textsuperscript{24} On the workers’ origin, see Stringa, \textit{La famiglia Manardi}, 47-52.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Saldame} was a siliceous sand used in the composition of varnishes and enamels for majolica. On the origin of the raw materials, the destination of products, and the documents on the exclusive right for the extraction of \textit{saldame}, see respectively Stringa, \textit{La famiglia Manardi}, 36-39, 46, docc. 5-7.

\textsuperscript{26} On the Manardis’ production, see Stringa, \textit{La famiglia Manardi}, 61-90; Ericani, ‘La manifattura Manardi’, 247-254.
materials at a fixed price and subleasing them the mill. However, the owners themselves continued to make sure the business kept on yielding profits, by means of acquired privileges and exemptions. In 1692 Francesco Manardi together with his brother Odoardo (ca. 1635-1698) and his son Zorzi asked for the renewal of the expiring privilege and for its extension to the new type of *latesini* decorated in relief ‘in the Genoese style’. In order to produce this kind of majolica, he also declared he had recently hired a Genoese craftsman. The following year the Senate extended only for a further 12 years the exclusive right which also included the new types of wares\textsuperscript{27}.

The rapid turnover of renters in the following decade was a sign of growing problems, due to the difficult agricultural situation in those years, which diminished the demand for ordinary pottery, but also to the lack of male successors in a family where military tradition was still influencing inheritance strategies\textsuperscript{28}. Francesco died in 1701, and his brother Odoardo in 1698. His only surviving son, Zorzi, was a priest, and on the death of the father left his fortune to Odoardo’s still under-age daughters. Francesco’s two other daughters went married with well-off young men from Bassano, who in turn were involved in the activity without much success.

Production was entrusted in 1698 to Bonin Apollonio, whose son Valentino married Francesco’s daughter Cecilia the same year. Nevertheless, in 1701 the Apollonios were accused of delaying payments and above all of jeopardizing the business by putting at risk the renewal of the privilege and altering the quality of the products in order to save on the enamel mixture. The factory was then rented by Iseppo Sale, a public notary who was in his turn Francesco’s son-in-law since 1685, and was appointed as executor at his death. But in the first decade of the 18th century, new difficulties in domestic and foreign trade arose because of the War of the Spanish Succession, which jeopardized exports to Lombardy and meant that Bassano

\textsuperscript{27} The petition, together with the favourable opinion of the Provveditori di Comun, and the following Senate decree of July 1693 are reproduced in Stringa, *La famiglia Manardi*, docc. 8-10.

\textsuperscript{28} For a chronological list of the lessees, see Stringa, *La famiglia Manardi*, 53-55. The average level of wheat prices in Bassano was in the 1690s 50% more than the 1686-1690 average: see Lombardini, *Pane e denaro a Bassano*, 62.
was on the route of the Imperial troops in 1704. In 1705, the petition submitted by the daughters of Odoardo and his sister Camilla with her daughter, asking for the renewal of the exclusive privilege, emphasised the difficult situation. It took the Senate two years finally to grant it.\(^{29}\) In this period many workers moved to Venice, where they are listed among the members of the boccaleri guild.\(^{30}\)

Things did not improve in the following years, so that in 1708, when Iseppo Sale declined the renewal of the lease, the Manardis had to make more generous concessions in order to convince two of their employees to take over the contract. Nevertheless, they soon needed to involve in the management a richer partner, Filippo Costa, who after their own renunciation maintained the lease until 1731, when Gio Antonio Caffo took his place. In 1714 Costa stipulated on his own a contract with the noblewoman Lucrezia Molin Memo for the use of two mills built on the opposite bank of the Brenta in 1710, when an exceptional flood had irreparably destroyed the Cappellos’ mill.

In 1719 the Manardis did not ask for the extension of their exclusive right for latesini: the non-renewal of the privilege was probably due to the decline in the quality of the products. The first decades of the 18\(^{th}\) century were in some ways a period of transition for Venetian ceramics. The difficult years between the 17th and 18th centuries saw a remarkable transformation in the domestic market. The demand for local majolica of good workmanship imitating Faenza, Lodi and Genoa pottery decreased. At the same time, the nobility was turning to the white and blue china imported by the East India Company in the 17\(^{th}\) century, which had also been produced in Europe: since 1709 in Saxony, since 1717 in Vienna and from 1720 to 1727 also by Vezzi in Venice (as we will see in a following paragraph). This change in aristocratic tastes influenced also the preferences of the middle classes. As pieces of china were still extremely expensive,

\(^{29}\) Stringa, _La famiglia Manardi_, 58; Ericani, ‘La manifattura Manardi’, 246. On the Imperial army passing through Bassano, see Maccà, _Storia del territorio vicentino_, II, 258.

\(^{30}\) Stringa, _La famiglia Manardi_, 50; Alverà Bortolotto, _La ceramica a Venezia_, 382-387. Iseppo Solvetti, who rented the Manardis’ factory from 1679 to 1691, even became ‘Gastaldo dell’Arte dei Boccaleri’ [Chamberlain of the boccaleri guild].
they resorted to Dutch imitations in majolica produced in Delft, which invaded in those years the Venetian market creating problems for local producers. The Manardis were then forced to limit their production to inferior pottery, which as it was inexpensive could still find an outlet in the local market.

4. Southward, along the river.

The rise and decline of the Manardis’ enterprise contributed to the increasing number of “pestasassi” (stone-grinding) mills, kilns and pottery shops in the Bassano area, which gradually led to shift ceramic production southward, to the outlying hamlet of Rivarotta and then to the neighbouring town of Nove. This process involved different actors, and we need to follow their deeds in order to understand the social and institutional mechanisms regulating the diffusion of manufacturing activities.

Zuanne Moretto, a mason, in the 1680s ran a pottery shop in Rivarotta, on the border between Angarano and Nove on the right bank of the river Brenta. In 1686 Moretto obtained from Count Roberti, a noble land owner, a loan of nearly 300 ducats in order to build a stone-grinding mill, taking advantage of the right to use the waters that Roberti had just obtained from the Provveditori ai Beni Inculti. In 1694 he granted Moretto another loan of 108 ducats, against the alienation of the house and land which he rented back on leasehold. With the second loan he built a kiln to produce plates in *cristallina*. When Zuanne Moretto died the following year, one of his two sons, Andrea, built up a new factory and another mill a thousand feet south, coming to an agreement with his brother Giacomo to ensure that the family business would not be split up. In 1706 Giacomo died, and in 1719 his son Gio Maria entered into a 12-year agreement with Gio Batta Antonibon from Nove, who promised to bear the expenses needed to

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31 On the role of Dutch imitations of china, and of European imitations of Dutch majolica, see Freestone and Gaimster, *Pottery in the making*.
enlarge the factory he directed until 1722, then renting it to his uncle Andrea Moretto.\(^{33}\)

Antonibon was a wealthy non-aristocratic landowner. In 1709 he had married Pasqua Caffo, who was a relative of both Iseppo Sale and Gio Antonio Caffo, in turn renters of the Manardi’s factory.\(^{34}\) In 1722 Antonibon obtained the water rights allowing him to build a stone-grinding mill of his own in Rivarotta, near Moretto’s second factory. A few years later he began experiments in order to produce majolica, employing former Manardi’s workers and appointing as director Domenico Maitelli from Lodi.

The diffusion of ceramic production in the environs of Bassano was then in part due to the informal and kinship ties connecting the Manardis to other families, who needed in their turn to build new sound relationships with the noble families who controlled capital, water rights and mills, or to find an independent access to those same assets. From this point of view, the presence in Rivarotta and in Nove of the running waters of the Isacchina canal was decisive in making it possible to build new stone-grinding mills and to develop a new ceramic pole south of Bassano, on the right side of the river.\(^{35}\) Nove took its name from the ‘nove’ (new) houses built on the dry bed of the Brenta in the territory of Marostica in the 14th century. Its population had increased remarkably in the second half of the 17th century, and in 1701 it finally obtained its separation from Marostica.\(^{36}\) Antonibon’s initiative is to be seen in the light of this recently acquired autonomy, which offered greater freedom of movement for those who, though not noblemen, had capital to invest in a sector where there was ample room for new ventures thanks to the crisis of the Manardis.

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33 In 1719 Gio Maria Moretto’s factory employed 4 laborers; see Stringa, *Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa*, 36-40.
34 Gio Antonio Caffo (1670s-1759) in 1731 took over from Filippo Costa the lease of Manardi’s factory, and succeeded Costa also as the lessee of the mills in Angarano, then owned by Francisco Gradengo, a Venetian nobleman whose assets Caffo himself managed in Angarano and who inherited them when Lucrezia Molin Menter died. In 1735 he opened a factory on his own. On his family and relatives, see Stringa, *La famiglia Manardi*, 93-94.
35 The Isacchina canal was a natural branch the Brenta formed moving its bed during the 13th century. It was then regulated when the ancient bed of the river was populated, since 1339; see Macca, *Storia del territorio vicentino*, II, 242.
36 Once separated from Marostica in 1602, the commune of Nove was annexed again to its administration in 1632, after the plague; Macca, *Storia del territorio vicentino*, II, 246. Its population grew from 1,060 inhabitants in 1647 to 1,337 in 1687, according to the data collected from pastoral visits by Vianello, *Seta fine e panni grossi*, 285.
After building in 1728 his own factory in the center of Nove, Antonibon began in 1729 to sell his majolica to retailers in Bassano and to dispatch wagonloads of wares to Venice and to the free fair of Padua. In 1732, he obtained from the Senate the authorization, later renewed for ten years, to open a shop in Venice, customs exemptions for purchasing raw materials in Venice and the right to trade his products throughout the State. He also was granted tax exemptions for foreign laborers he was hiring, and an interdiction for all his workers to leave his employment to carry on the same job in other factories37.

In the same years, Gio Antonio Caffo acquired a building in Bassano which he restored in order to set up, in partnership with the merchant Lorenzo Mauro, the production of majolica on his own using the raw materials ground in the Gradenigo mills he had rented some time before. When the contract with the Manardis expired in 1735, he asked the Senate to be allowed to continue production independently, obtaining in his turn customs exemptions and the authorization to open a shop in Venice. Exemptions had been granted in 1734 also to Chiara and Francesca Manardi, Odoardo’s daughters and last heiresses of the family, who together with the latter’s husband, Francesco Morelli, directly managed the factory for an other decade38.

The crisis of the Manardis’ business in the 1720s induced the Senate to issue in 1728 an edict promising fiscal exemptions to anyone who was able to produce majolica and china, in an effort to limit the growing imports of foreign ceramics39. The new policy adopted to stimulate the development of high-quality ceramics did not include grants of exclusive rights such as the one the Manardis had enjoyed for 50 years. As a matter of fact, the edict was explicitly intended to favor the increase of ventures in competition with one another on the domestic market, which customs exemptions opened to the trading of all manufacturers’ products. Antonibon’s factory was by far the largest among the three petitioning to benefit from the exemptions, and

37 A summary of Antonibon’s petition, of the opinion of the Cinque Savi and of the Senate decree is in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 177.
38 Stringa, La famiglia Manardi, 55, 58-59.
39 See the edict in Stringa, La famiglia Manardi, doc. 19.
in a decade he ousted the other competitors and achieved a virtual monopoly in the production of majolica.

After trying to counter Antonibon by hiring some of his workers, in 1742 Caffo finally sold him all the products and the materials in his factory and the shop in Venice. In the same year, the Manardis’ factory finally closed down for good. In Rivarotta, since Andrea Moretto’s death in 1728, Gio Maria Moretto had managed both the cristallina kilns. He also opened in 1735 a shop in Bassano to sell, together with his pottery, Antonibon’s majolica. But in the early 1740s his factory ran into difficulties. As it was not exempt from customs duties, local tolls hindered the trade of his products in the home market. These economic difficulties and the resulting insubordination of workers made his debt towards the Robertis untenable. In 1745 he finally moved to Treviso, where he continued his ceramic trade, and leased his own kiln in Rivarotta to Gio Maria Marinoni from Angarano who then bought it in 1752.

The closing of Moretto’s factory illustrates the growing difficulties encountered by the manufacturers of cristallina with the new legislation, which definitely favored high-quality production, granting tax and customs exemptions only for imports-substituting majolica and china. While stimulating market integration and the resulting increase in the manufacturing of higher quality products, the empirical mercantilism of the Venetian ruling class contributed to confining the production of pottery for wider consumption to artisans scattered throughout the territory, who bore the brunt of taxation.

5. The rise of Pasquale Antonibon.

The remarkable development of Antonibon’s manufacture in the 1730s was derived from his success in imitating Dutch majolica from Delft, which reduced its importation into the Venetian State. To do this,
Antonibon recruited skilled workers, mainly from other local factories, but also from Venice, Lodi, Milan and France, and used their skills to produce majolica wares with the new decorative features the market required.

When Gio Batta Antonibon died in 1737 his son Pasquale took his place. In the early 1740s he introduced, beside the white and blue Delft-like wares, many-colored decorations and more complex moulded forms. The number of workers grew from 35 in 1740 to 104 in 1754. The virtual monopoly his factory reached in this period in the production of fine majolica was mainly due to the strict rules imposed on workers’ mobility which prevented the circulation of technical secrets.

As we have seen, the privilege granted by the Senate in 1732 put a four-year ban on workers who wished to transfer to other manufacturers, unless they had been dismissed. In 1740 Girolamo Colonna, who owned a kiln in Venice, tried to attract some workers from Nove, but his attempt failed. More dangerous was a plan hatched in 1742 by Antonio Gasparini, a brother-in-law of Pasquale Antonibon. He tried to steal moulds for the majolica, and to acquire information on the composition and the measurements of the kilns. He also persuaded some laborers to have themselves dismissed so that they could move to his factory. Pasquale Antonibon’s complaints convinced the Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia to issue a decree imposing stricter discipline on workers. This decree was read in the public square in Nove and officially sent to Gasparini.\footnote{This episode is reconstructed in detail with a complete summary of available records in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 20-21, 179-180.}

This kind of labor regulation, together with circumscribed territorial exclusive rights later granted, was in fact intended to block what we would call a ‘district-like’ effect, and to establish artificial barriers to entry allowing manufacturers to reach an optimal scale for rapid technological change sustainability.

In the following years Antonibon, who was the only manufacturer of majolica left in the Venetian Republic, developed a wide range of products, from tiles for decorating buildings to countless objects for household use. Pedlars sold the wares in Northern Italy and in German markets, and...
consignments were sent to Constantinople and the Levant, to the fair of Sinigaglia, to Ferrara, Bologna, Romagna and Lombardy.\textsuperscript{43} A second shop in Venice, bought from Caffo, was added in 1742 to the first, and warehouses were opened in Bassano, Mantova, Trento and Udine, and in the 1750s also in Adriatic cities, in Rovereto and Naples.

The circulation of Antonibon’s wares was justified by their fair price and their fashionable decorations and forms. He introduced moulds using silverware and precious metal objects as models, showing a certain awareness that the consumption of ‘new luxury goods made from relatively unexpensive materials opened new markets for consumers’\textsuperscript{44}. From this point of view, the introduction of mould-working was very important, and Pasquale Antonibon petitioned several times to obtain exclusive rights over this technique as he claimed he was the first to use it in the Republic. However, he was never granted by the Senate an official privilege, in spite of the favorable opinion of the Savi alla Mercanzia\textsuperscript{45}.

The main problem for Antonibon was that competitors could easily steal the moulds he acquired at great expense from Lodi. But Venetian authorities were reluctant to grant him exclusive rights, which might have limited the emergence of other manufacturers able to hinder foreign competition. Their attitude was the result of a new policy in granting privileges, which in mid-18\textsuperscript{th} century, aimed at increasing initiatives and strengthening developing industries.

The crisis of Antonibon’s virtual monopoly in majolica was mainly due to this new policy, and to the rapid evolution of products and processes in the production of ceramics. In 1746 the Senate granted exclusive rights for majolica ‘made in the Lodi style’ to Cereghini from Brescia, still

\textsuperscript{43} Ceramic pedlars were called ‘tramontini’ from their place of origin, Tramonte, near to Cividale in Friuli. The information on sales are taken from Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 21.
\textsuperscript{44} Berg, ‘From imitation to invention’, 11; for a discussion on this problem see also Goldthwaite, \textit{Wealth and the demand for art in Italy}, 249.
\textsuperscript{45} The petitions Antonibon presented on September 3, 1744, then part of the wider application for the renewal of his privilege on May 6, 1751, and again on September 11, the same year, are summarized in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 180-182. Antonibon never obtained the exclusive right he asked for, as Caizzi mistakenly claims, \textit{Industria e commercio}, 154.
limiting his rights to the Venetian Lombardy. In 1751 Giovanni Maria Salmazzo, the son of a former employee of the Manardis, petitioned the Senate for customs exemptions for the mainland and for permission to open a shop in Venice to trade the majolica he had begun to produce in Bassano with a painter and a turner dismissed by Antonibon. Salmazzo’s petition just preceded the application for the renewal of the 20-year privileges Antonibon submitted the same year, where he asked also to be granted an exclusive right on majolica for an area with a 20-mile radius round Nove.

The Senate recognized the quality of Salmazzo’s production, whose enamel was a bit darker than Antonibon’s, but more resistant to heat, and, backed by the Deputati al Commercio, granted him the privilege he requested. At the same time, it coherently denied Antonibon any exclusive right, while extending for ten years his customs and tax exemptions and authorizing him to open a third shop in Venice. The decision was explicitly justified with the argument that the presence of ‘several manufacturers operating in the same sector benefits the quality of products, guarantees continuity and stimulates competition’.

Antonibon was also denied the renewal of the right to forbid his employees to work for other manufacturers. In this way, one of the grounds on which he had based his monopoly no longer existed; in other words he lost the control he had acquired on the training and circulation of skilled labor. He soon applied again in order to obtain the exclusive right for a smaller area and the renewal of limitations to the mobility of labor, but for the moment in vain.

6. Power and craftiness.

At this point events precipitated. In 1752 Antonibon started expensive experiments in china production, built a new kiln ‘made according to the Saxon style’, and hired Saxon and French technicians.

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46 Caizzi, *Industria e commercio*, 155; the existence of majolica manufacturers in Brescia is explicitly acknowledged by Antonibon in his 1752 petition; see Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 181.

Though his efforts in producing porcelain were not immediately successful, they enabled him to develop the ‘a piccolo fuoco’ (small fire) decoration, a new technique introduced a short time before in Strasbourg and Marseilles in order to fix polychrome paintings on majolica by means of a third firing at a lower temperature\textsuperscript{48}. At the same time, conflicts arose inside the factory; Antonibon asserted troubles were instigated by foreign workers (from Lombardy and Piedmont) who incited the workers against him, and even threatened him directly. Violence culminated in September 1754, when a turner was killed.

It is important to underline that these acts of violence and Antonibon’s efforts to develop china production are documented in notary deeds in which his workers and some influential witnesses, such as the governors and the parish priest of Nove, swore on his request and in his presence to tell the truth. These deeds are enclosed in the memoranda Antonibon sent to the Inquisitori di Stato reporting the acts of violence that took place in his factory. There are no reasons to doubt the truth of these statements, but it is worth noting that as a result of the workers’ mutiny, and of his experiments in china production, the Senate granted Antonibon in 1755 the privileges it had repeatedly denied him a few years previously: the interdiction for his workers to move to other factories, the official approval of new internal regulations and the exclusive right on majolica production in a 5-mile surrounding area\textsuperscript{49}.

In the meantime, Giovanni Maria Salmazzo had to sell and rent back on leasehold his own kilns in order to obtain the money he needed to increase production. His main problem was Antonibon’s relentless competition in enticing his workers. In 1756 Salmazzo obtained the Senate’s approval of internal regulations, shorter but similar to Antonibon’s. He was not, though, able to survive for long, since in 1759 his name was no longer included in the list of the ‘Capitali di mercanzia’ (merchants’ capitals) of

\textsuperscript{48} The ‘a piccolo fuoco’ processing made it possible to apply on finished majolica paints which do not resist at high temperatures, baking decorated pieces a third time at 1,100° F in a muffle oven (equipped with a gate or a box separating the pieces of majolica from the oxidizing effect of fuel and air); this technique had been used for a long time in the production of jewels.

\textsuperscript{49} Deeds and evidence produced by Pasquale Antonibon are summarized in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 182-185.
Bassano. Salmazzo’s petitions throw a different light on what he calls Pasquale Antonibon’s ‘genio altiero e feroce’ (haughty and fierce genius) and on the means, ‘l’autorità e l’industria’ (power and craftiness), he used to assert de facto the exclusive right the Venetian authorities had at first denied and finally only in part granted him50.

Gio Maria Marinoni was the main victim of the decree the Senate issued granting to Antonibon the exclusive territorial rights for majolica with a 5-mile radius around Nove including Rivarotta. In 1752 Marinoni had bought Gio Maria Moretto’s factory, and from 1750 to 1755 his son, Baldissera, in partnership with Giovanni Battista Viero, an agent of Antonibon, ran a shop owned by Antonibon in Mantua. In one of the memoranda he submitted in 1754 to the Inquisitori di Stato, Antonibon indicated Baldissera Marinoni as the troublemaker in his factory, together with the nobleman Roberto Roberti51. The privilege finally granted to Antonibon in 1755 forced Marinoni to limit his own production to cristallina, prohibiting the production of majolica in Rivarotta. Antonibon’s supremacy and its crisis even excited resentment and claims farther afield. In 1752 four kiln owners from Treviso made complaints that they could not compete with the majolica made in Nove, which barred their access to the high-quality ceramics market52. In fact, as already said, Gio Maria Moretto worked in Treviso from 1745 to 1762, but only in the 1760s, after Giovanni Battista Antonio Rossi alla Fiera’s ill-fated attempt to start up china production, the manufacturing of majolica was finally set up in this city by his namesake Giovanni Rossi, as we will see later on53.

In the 1750s Este, a town to the south of Padua, became another important center for ceramic production. In 1752 Gio Batta Brunello started manufacturing cristallina for everyday use and in the second half of the decade began producing majolica with the aid of some workers who had moved from Nove54.

51 Count Roberto Roberti inherited the credits on the former Moretto’s manufacture and was indeed Marinoni’s emphyteuthical landlord.
52 Lorenzetti, Maioliche Venete del Settecento, 22.
54 Ericani, ‘Le manifatture atestine del Settecento’, 391.
In the same years, foreign competition became stronger: a new majolica manufacture was established in Milan by Pasquale Rubati, and the importation of ‘a piccolo fuoco’ decorated majolica from Marseilles seemed inexorable

From the second half of the century, with the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763) and the resulting dispersion of German ceramists, the ‘china fever’ spread to Venice, encouraging old and new manufacturers to invest a considerable amount of money in its production, whose costs were still exorbitant. This race for china contributed to reopening competition in ceramics within the borders of the Venetian Republic. However, china production in Venice could boast an antecedent in the short period of Vezzi’s activity. Because of its specific characteristics, it seems right to speak about it here, making a digression in the chronological narrative of this essay.


China was first manufactured in Venice by Giovanni Vezzi (1687-1746) in 1720, using his father’s money. In 1727 he closed the factory down, succumbing to low profitability and to the high costs of production with its very high ratio of rejected pieces, problems common to all china manufacturing at that time. The production of china commenced in Europe sometime after 1708. In that year, the alchemist Johann Friederich Böttger accidentally discovered the secret raw material employed to produce Chinese porcelain, kaolin, and set up in Meissen the first European china factory, protected and directly financed by Frederick August II, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. In 1718 Claude Du Paquier set up in Vienna a china factory under the protection of the Habsburgs, thanks to the defection of a kiln-minder from Meissen and to his associate, Cristoph Konrad

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55 Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 24; in their report to the Senate, covering Antonibon’s petition, the Savi alla Mercanzia wished he would improve the quality of production by means of introducing also the Marseilles-style decoration.

56 Hard porcelain was produced from a paste of kaolin (aluminium hydrate silicate, found as a white refractory clay, not fusible; its name is derived from the Chinese kao-ling, hill) and feldspar (a fusible aluminium silicate). This paste, baked once, gave a white, not-porous bisque, which was then glazed with a feldspathic varnish deeply amalgamated with the paste at 2,550°F. A third baking at a lower temperature could be used to fix polychrome decorations.
Hunger, an enameller who had learnt the composition of the paste directly from Böttger. In 1720 Hunger moved to Venice, where he began to collaborate with Vezzi, who undertook to finance the enterprise investing up to 50,000 ducats from his family’s assets 57.

In spite of his success in producing hard porcelain, Vezzi obtained neither protection nor grants from the Republic, which distinguished his enterprise from other European china factories: they all received a royal seal of approval and were openly supported with public money. It was the case of the royal factories founded in France, in Chantilly in 1725 and in Vincennes in 1738, or of the Marquis Ginori’s in Doccia, which in 1735 obtained the protection of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The reasons for the Senate’s refusal to support Vezzi are not clear. Probably, caution towards a production that was extremely expensive and almost new for Europe went together with a certain suspicion of Vezzi himself. Vezzi was in fact the son of a speculator who had acquired the title of Venetian nobleman a few years previously and he was not expected to use his position in order to obtain privileges for his business. But in Giovanni Vezzi’s story the distrust his father Francesco showed was decisive too. In 1727 Francesco forced him to destroy his kilns in exchange for the cancellation of the debts contracted in the previous seven years.

Francesco Vezzi (1651-1740) was born in Udine. In his youth he moved to Venice to work as a goldsmith’s apprentice. He grew rich by money changing, married the daughter of a wealthy wine trader, and purchased a palace in Venice and a villa in Nervesa, near to Treviso. In 1710 he obtained the title of Count from Charles III of Spain, and in 1716, during the Corfu War between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, was finally able to buy a Venetian title for 100,000 ducats. In 1719 he moved to Vienna and granted his son Giovanni power of attorney on all family assets in Venice. His presence in Vienna suggests he could have had a role in convincing Hunger to leave the Du Paquier’s factory and to move to Venice.

57 On Vezzi’s manufacture, see Stazzi, Porcellane della Casa Eccellentissima Vezzi; Melegati, Giovanni Vezzi e le sue porcellane.
In 1720 a company was set up by Hunger, who was the technical director, by Giovanni Vezzi, who paid in advance for its establishment, and by two other noble associates, who paid for their shares in proportion to the profits. Once the high-temperature kilns needed to produce china had been built in the Giudecca, they started working with kaolin smuggled in from Saxony as enamel with the help of a German merchant.

In 1722 some financial problems arose: Francesco Vezzi revoked Giovanni’s power of attorney, forcing him to get into debt with himself, with his uncle Giuseppe Vezzi and with his cousins Antonio and Francesco Zanoni from Udine. In 1724 Francesco also transferred to Giovanni all he had invested in the business in order to avoid unlimited responsibility for any further debts incurred by the company. The following year the Zanonis asked Giovanni Vezzi to pay off the debt of more than 7,000 ducats they had lent him. This meant that he had to sell many of his personal belongings, including his library.

A disagreement in management brought about the dissolution of the partnership with Hunger, who returned to Saxony: in 1724 Vezzi got rid of him and decided to run the company alone. The factory was moved to new premises next to the Madonna dell’Orto church and a new kiln for the third baking of china pieces was built with the aid of two German technicians, enabling Vezzi to improve the chromatic range of decorations. Vezzi coped with a shortage in the supply of Saxon kaolin by resorting to the lower-quality but cheaper ‘white clay’ quarried in the Tretto Mount, which since the 16th century had been used for soft porcelain and majolica. In 1726 he opened a shop in St. Mark’s Square to retail the pieces of china his factory was producing on a large scale. By this time, debts had soared so high that an injection of fresh capital was needed.

It was again Francesco Vezzi who offered in 1727 to pay off the creditors, but on condition that his son destroyed the kilns and closed down the factory. Giovanni Vezzi was left in possession of thousands of pieces.

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58 Cristoph Konrad Hunger was then employed by the Danish government, who in 1737 wished to set up a manufacture of china, and again in 1744 he helped to establish the Imperial Russian Manufacture in St. Petersburg.

59 Soft porcelain is made from a paste containing more fluidizer than hard porcelain. It is baked at 2,250°F and shows less resistance and hardness.
mostly still to be painted. He went on selling them in the St. Mark’s shop at least until 1733, and probably used them also to pay off in kind his workmen. Muffle ovens needed to finish decoration with a third firing were no problem in Venice, and so, as well as Vezzi himself\textsuperscript{60}, many other ceramists continued for a long time working on china pieces manufactured in the 1720s. In fact porcelain produced in Vezzi’s factory but decorated in very different styles circulated in Venice for decades.

Vezzi’s short entrepreneurial adventure had important consequences for ceramic production in Venice. Firstly, the huge quantity of wares left unsold on the closing of the factory influenced the market by encouraging Venetian \textit{bocaleri} to devote most of their time and fuel to the decoration of the large amount of unfinished china pieces available. Secondly, the 1728 edict, promising concessions to anyone who was able to improve majolica or to produce china, arose from the need to stimulate enterprises that Vezzi’s experience might have discouraged. The oddest aspect of Vezzi’s story is that china-production techniques, introduced in Venice in the 1720s, seem to have been lost in the following years, perhaps because of the abundance of porcelain available. Thirty years later, manufacturers who attempted to produce it needed the help of foreign technicians.

In the following decades, while on the mainland Antonibon was making a name for himself with majolica, in the capital city the glass-makers Giovanni Antonio and Pietro Bertolini from Murano tried repeatedly to produce a viable imitation of china. In 1738 they obtained the exclusive right for \textit{lattimo}, a white, opaque glass-made paste, which looked just like porcelain but could not resist heat and knocks\textsuperscript{61}. Again in 1752 they were granted new privileges in order to start manufacturing ‘majolica’ imitating china, which was probably a ceramic paste very similar to soft porcelain.

\textsuperscript{60} In 1747 Giovanni Vezzi’s heirs gave to the consul of Naples in Venice the formulas and the materials needed to compound china paints, which probably Vezzi did use until his death. They were later used in Capodimonte; Melegati, \textit{Giovanni Vezzi e le sue porcellane}, 20.

\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{lattimo} glass was obtained from a vitrifiable mixture with lead, tin and manganese lime added; on the production of \textit{lattimo} glass by the Bertolini, see Alverà Bortolotto, \textit{Storia della ceramica a Venezia}, 120-123.
However, their experiments were not commercially successful, and in 1769 their privilege was cancelled. In the early 1750s also Antonibon tried in vain to produce china with the collaboration of French and German technicians. It was, however, the arrival from Meissen of Nathanael Friederich Hewelcke and his wife Maria Dorotea, fleeing to Udine at the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War, that made it possible to recommence china production in the Venetian State. On March 1758, the Hewelckes were granted a 20-year exclusive right for the manufacture of porcelain and customs exemptions on raw materials and products, while their workers were forbidden to move abroad. They started using only ‘white clay’ from Tretto for their china, avoiding the expensive kaolin imports that were said to have ruined Vezzi; they, however, still had some difficulty in paying off the high installation costs, estimated at 10,000 ducats.

In 1761 the couple was forced to move to Venice, where they found a new backer in Geminiano Cozzi. They stayed in Venice for two years before the poor returns drove the creditors to demand the confiscation of the raw materials and products, and in August 1763 their factory closed down. The Seven Years’ War was over, and the Hewelckes went back to Saxony; however, their main creditor a short time later took on their enterprise, using the equipment and raw materials he had obtained from the sequestration.

7. The diaspora of ceramists.

In 1762, before the Hewelckes’ manufacture closed down, Pasquale Antonibon submitted a two-fold petition for the renewal of the 1755 privileges and the introduction of a protective import duty on foreign majolica, as well as the permission to produce china notwithstanding the exclusive right granted in 1758 to the Hewelckes, given their limited

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62 The Bertolinis continued in the following decades to produce white (lattimi) and colored glass enamels. On Pietro Bertolini’s ‘libro de’ secreti’ (book of secrets) and its purloining in 1786, see the reference in Trivellato, *Fondamenti dei vetrai*, 203.

success\textsuperscript{64}. On this occasion, he produced a report on the economic conditions of his factory, and a set of china samples as proof of the success of his ten-year experiments. However, the origin of the china pieces Antonibon sent to the Cinque Savi is debatable, and some experts suggest they could have been produced by Vezzi in the 1720s and then decorated in the ‘a piccolo fuoco’ kilns built in Nove in the early 1750s\textsuperscript{65}.

The Savi alla Mercanzia supported Antonibon’s demands in their report to the Senate, which renewed his privileges, raising from 8 to 20 grossi for 100 libbre grosse the duties on foreign majolica and granting him permission to produce porcelain in competition with the Hewelckes. The description of the Nove factory that Antonibon presented on that occasion gives an idea of its size: it employed 136 workers and a hundred pedlars, was equipped with four large kilns and a dozen smaller ones, and its current assets were estimated at 80,000 ducats, excluding fixtures, the mill, moulds and fittings worth more than 27,000 ducats. Since 1759 Antonibon also owned the earth quarry in Romano that was once the property of the Manardis, and several plots in Nove, Marostica and Angarano that he acquired using the increasing profits from his business\textsuperscript{66}.

Whether or not the 1762 china pieces were made in Nove, it is a fact that in the following years Antonibon undoubtedly produced porcelain, in spite of the illness that kept him away from the factory from 1763 to 1765 which resulted in episodes of indiscipline and the desertion of workers. This, as we shall see, was at the same time a cause and an effect of increased competition. According to a statement Antonibon himself inserted in a later petition, the key to china making was brought to Nove by Lorenzo Levantin, an employee he had expressly sent at his expense to work in Vincennes in order to obtain information on the working procedures

\textsuperscript{64} The petitions Antonibon submitted to the Cinque Savi on May 10 and September 7, 1762, a description of his factory, the Savi’s report, and the following Senate decree of May 1763 are all summarized and partly transcribed in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 186-188.

\textsuperscript{65} The attribution to Antonibon of the china pieces he presented in 1762, now in the Musée National de la Céramique de Sévres, was first questioned by Lane, \textit{Italian Porcelain}, 32; Raffaella Ausenda subscribes Lane’s opinion in the catalogue included in Ericani, Marini and Stringa, \textit{La ceramica degli Antonibon}, caption n. 207-209.

\textsuperscript{66} Antonibon was not so lucky in his attempt to start manufacturing oilcloths ‘made in the Bolognese style’: he invested in this enterprise a 20,000 ducats capital, which in 1762 were reduced to 8,000 because of bad management by the director, who absconded after the detection of a cash deficit. Antonibon himself made reference to this unsuccessful attempt in a statement enclosed in the September 1762 petition, quoted in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 187.
adopted in the French Royal Factory. The presence in Nove of other famous modellers working on porcelain, from Jean Pierre Varion to Pietro Lorenzi, has more to do with its subsequent distribution rather than with its initial production stage.

In 1768 Antonibon declared to the Cinque Savi he had 6,000 pieces of china available, and asked permission to sell them in Venice; in the same petition, he made a request for a 20-year customs and tax exemption for porcelain, new regulations against workers’ desertion, and the same money subsidies granted a few years before to Geminiano Cozzi in Venice. The Senate only partially acquiesced to Antonibon’s requests, refusing him any financial contribution.

After the Hewelckes’ manufacture had closed down in 1763, their enterprise in Venice was resumed by their backer, Cozzi. In July 1765 he submitted a petition asking to be granted customs exemptions and subsidies for the production of china he had started the previous year, using the equipment confiscated from the Hewelckes, in the premises Moisé Coen q. Salomone subleased him in the San Giobbe neighborhood. Cozzi was born in Modena in 1728 and had moved to Venice in 1754, together with his younger brother Vincenzo and his older sister Domenica. In Venice he married Antonia Caterina Sauli. Although he had considerable initiative, he did not have a large amount of capital: it is probable that he had to use on credit the money he had lent to the Hewelckes, because following their bankruptcy he was forced to leave Venice for a while in order to escape his

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67 Jean Pierre Varillon (Varion), a modeller from Paris, worked in Savoy in the 1750s. He moved to Nove in 1757, and there he married Fiore (Fiorina) Fabris from Bassano. With her he moved again in 1765 to Bologna and then to Este. Lane, *Italian Porcelain*, 25, infers that Varion worked from 1749 to 1752 in the Vincennes Royal Factory from the presence of a ‘P.V.’ in its list of laborers, but Ericani, ‘Le manufacture atestine del Settecento’, 409, considers ‘this conjecture ‘fanciful’. The date of Varion’s arrival in Este is also doubtful. Probably he was working there in Brunello’s manufacture from 1772. In 1778 Varion started a china factory in Este in partnership with Franchini, after a short interval in Rivaorta working in the Marinoni’s manufacture, directed by his brother-in-law Giovan Battista Fabris. When Varion died, his wife went on with his work in Este, starting a firm with Antonio Costa, another former laborer of Antonibon.

68 Pietro Lorenzi, from Cadore, experimented in Venice with soft-porcelain paste, this way discovering the composition of hard porcelain. He was hired by Antonibon in 1762 to knead the paste, then he moved to Cozzi’s manufacture, but left him in 1765. In 1766 he was back in Nove for a short time. In the same year he moved to Trieste and purchased there from Giacomo Ballerti a factory of majolica, where he started producing English-style earthenware, and which he ran until 1797. For further information, see Alverà Bortolotto, *Storia della ceramica a Venezia*, 133; Stazza, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 45.

69 Cozzi’s petition, the report of the Cinque Savi, and the Senate decree of August 1765 are described in detail by Stazza, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 35-37.

70 For a biography of Geminiano Cozzi, see Garzya Romano, ‘Cozzi, Geminiano’, 561-563.
creditors. Nonetheless, his several and not always lucky ventures nearly always obtained the favor of the Venetian authorities.

The privilege the Senate granted him in 1765 clearly shows the respect Cozzi enjoyed. Besides customs exemption on the Tretto ‘white clay’, and the five-year prohibition for his workers to move to other manufacturers, he was also assigned a one-off of 400 ducats to build a mill, and a 20-year monthly subsidy of 30 ducats, justified by his waiver of customs exemptions on some ingredients he preferred not to declare.

However, Cozzi’s success was not due just to the support of the Venetian authorities, but also to the difficulties of his main competitor, Antonibon, who fell ill just when Cozzi was trying to take over the monopoly of the Hewelcke. Antonibon’s factory in Nove was left in the hands of the directors and suffered a haemorrhage of workers, moulds and materials.

In 1765 Pasquale Antonibon, once recovered, sued his employees, accusing them of breaking the law which forbade them to do the same job for another manufacturer. The proceedings illustrate the life of many ceramists from Nove in this period. Many were simply recorded as ‘wandering through the world’, but Giuseppe Fing was known to have set up a majolica workshop on his own in Bologna, and Gaetano Detti helped to start a similar venture in Rome. Seven painters, five turners, a modeller and a kiln-minder moved to Cozzi’s factory, but as Antonibon had dismissed

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71 Baroni, ‘Nuovi orientamenti’, 376, cites a short reference to Cozzi’s flight from a draft of the report of the Cinque Savi on Cozzi’s petition. The reference disappeared in the final version of the report.

72 Cozzi’s china manufacture produced not only statues and coffee and dinner sets, but also refractory stoves for the Venetian Mint and the ceramic bricks, which were used to build the public brick works in Sant’Elena and the Suáer brothers’ factory of cream of tartar (potassium bitartrate). Cozzi started also a company with a merchant from Belluno in order to produce charcoal using the beechwood of the Cansiglio Wood, for which he was granted the logging rights; another company was set up with the Galbians brothers for coral fishing off the Dalmatian Coast, and still another for tobacco cropping in Nona, near to Zara. He asked also the Senate for the monopoly on several inventions he never exploited, mostly concerning new materials or surrogates. See Stazzi, Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi, 11-13.

73 The location and the building time of the color- and paste-grinding mill are not clear: in 1765 Cozzi stated it would be built in Noale, but in 1766 he asked for fiscal exemption on a horse-drawn grinder in Campolongo, and finally in 1769 he was using some water mills on the Sile river in Treviso. See Stazzi, Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi, 36, 45, 53.

74 The payment of the subsidy was accelerated starting from December 1766, increasing it to 120 ducats a month for 5 years: see the petition and the Senate decree in Stazzi, Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi, 49.

75 The directors of the Antinbon’s manufacture were called ‘agenti’, and in the 1750s and 1760s they were Giovanni Coletti, Domenico Maitelli and Giovanni Battista Viero; Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 32.

76 A list of the laborers who left Nove was drawn up by Gio Batta Brunello from Este (one of Antonibon’s main competitors). It includes less then 40 people, mostly foreigners, and is published in Baroni, ‘Ceramiche veneziane settecentesche’, 219-220; in Stazzi, Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi, 141; in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 189.
many of them for insubordination, Cozzi was able to claim that he took them on in order to stop them from moving abroad. Others moved to Este, where Gio Batta Brunello was enlarging his enterprise. His brother, Giuseppe Brunello, was still working for Antonibon in Nove. From Nove he removed some moulds and models, handing them over to some fellow workers who had moved to Cozzi.\footnote{Barioli, 'Brunello, famiglia', 562.}

The appointment of Gio Batta Brunello as inspector on behalf of the Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia during the trial throws light on the way the interests converged of all those who took advantage from Antonibon’s absence from the factory. His direct competitors, Brunello and Cozzi, were joined by his workers, anxious to make the most elsewhere of the skills they had learned in Nove, and by the Venetian authorities, interested in a proliferation and in an eventual specialization of the existing factories. Antonibon’s temporary difficulties, in fact, helped not only to consolidate Cozzi’s position, but also the growth of the ceramic production in Este and Treviso, and the survival of the former Moretto factories in Rivarotta, which went on producing *cristallina* under the direction of Baldissera Marinoni and Giovanni Battista Viero, one of Antonibon’s directors.\footnote{Giovanni Battista Viero (1712-1778) was a director of the Antonibon’s factory from the early 1750s; previously, he had run a shop selling in Bassano the majolica made in Nove, and then another shop in Mantua, in partnership with the same Baldissera Marinoni whose father bought Gio Maria Moretto’s factory. In 1761 he acquired the other factory in Rivarotta from Andrea Moretto’s heirs, but went on working also for Antonibon, who in 1765 accused him of a supposed underhand agreement with Cozzi. See Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 32.}

The remaining paragraphs follow the subsequent development of ceramic production in Venice and in the mainland, which in the last decades of the century saw an increase in the number of manufacturing centers, as shown in Map 1. The conclusion will then summarize the evolution of ceramics in the Venetian Republic in the long term and its significance for broader historical issues that concern both the economic policy of Venice and the workings of preindustrial manufacturing in general.

8. **Cozzi in Venice.**

Though in 1765 it granted Cozzi a non-exclusive right for china production, the Senate delegated to the Cinque Savi the task of avoiding
conflict with Antonibon’s majolica factory, implying that the two manufacturers should each opt for some form of specialisation. However, Antonibon’s 1768 petition for tax and customs exemptions for china made this solution impossible. The Savi chose then to promote free competition between Cozzi and Antonibon.

Both Antonibon’s petition and Cozzi’s counter claim stressed the advantages the other enjoyed in the matter of customs duties and transport expenses, which were supposed to affect respectively production in Venice and on the mainland. Both asked for equal conditions, ‘so that all manufacturers have to do is compete only in the perfection of the work’. In this perspective, privileges should work as a means of creating a domestic market, overcoming obstacles made up of existing rules and impediments to commerce. Competition between the two manufacturers increased when, in 1769, Cozzi started producing majolica ‘in the way they made it in Marseilles’, using the kiln for the third-firing decoration of china. Thanks to improved productivity due to the introduction of majolica, the factory flourished, despite the increase in the costs of china production through a rise in the price of the kaolin, which Bortolo Facci had the exclusive right to quarry from the Mount Tretto and which he sold to both Cozzi and Antonibon.

The shortage of the most important local raw material made Cozzi’s production more expensive than foreign china, while international competition in majolica was also becoming more aggressive. The solution Cozzi put forward in 1769 was an increase in import duties on foreign majolica and china, and a partition of the domestic market between him and Antonibon. In January 1771 a fire seriously damaged his factory in San Giobbe, partly destroying the kilns, which Cozzi quickly rebuilt investing

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80 Cozzi’s manufacture employed 45 workers in 1766, and 82 in 1769. In 1765 Facci sold him the ‘white earth’ for 46 lire a carro (approximately 1 ton); the price rose to 60 lire in 1767 and to 80 lire in 1768; in 1770 Cozzi made a contract for a five-year supply which he renewed in 1775, fixing a price of 100 lire. In turn Cozzi sold the material to the Doccia china factory, in Tuscany; Stazzi, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 53-54. Antonibon paid for the kaolin in 1769 140 lire a carro, a price probably including the transport to Nove; see the report the Deputato alle Fabbriche made in August 1769, summarized in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 191.
another 5,000 ducats. The incident convinced the authorities to agree to some of Cozzi’s requests, while definitely excluding any interference from competition among domestic manufacturers. The Senate raised import duties on ceramics81 and transferred the sums from the additional customs duties to Cozzi, who was also entrusted with the supervision of foreign products in order to avoid customs swindles. Financial support from the state enabled Cozzi to find new backers who lent him a sum of nearly 29,000 ducats, in order to carry on the enterprise82.

In the following years the financial situation of the factory failed to improve, in spite of the recovery in the sales of china after the fire. From 1773 to 1776 the profits from majolica halved, because of an increase in the importation of new earthenware ‘made in the English way’, introduced into Venice at the beginning of the decade83. Difficulties became evident in 1777, when an accountant, Giustino Pasquali, was entrusted by the creditors to check the accounts in order to ascertain Cozzi’s financial reliability. As a result of his evident inability to abide by deadlines for payments, Geminiano Cozzi’s company had to close down. A new company was created by Cozzi himself, his brother Vincenzo and Bonaventura Marinoni. The Cozzi brothers kept the technical direction of the factory, but forfeited any remuneration and left to Marinoni the management of any income. Marinoni entrusted the accountant, Pasquali, to give priority to the yearly liquidation of debts84.

81 The Senate decree of May 1771 introduced a 23-ducats duty on every 100 *libbre sottili* of foreign china, and an 11-ducats one on every 20 *libbre* of imported ceramic bricks; it raised also from 20 grossi to 4 ducats and 4 grossi (100 grossi) the duty on every 100 *libbre grosse* of majolica introduced in 1763. See Stazzi, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 55.

82 Marquis Aleduse Buzzaccarini from Padua lent Cozzi 11,000 D, Count Spiridion Peruli 7,500 D and 10,300 were borrowed from Bonaventura Marinoni, on whose relationship with the Marinonis from Angarano there is no information; Stazzi, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 63.

83 Earthenware ‘in the English style’ was made from the new ceramic paste Josiah Wedgewood from Stafford in England made in 1725 by mixing silica lime to clay. The white paste resulting could be painted directly after a first 1850°F baking, and then glazed with a lead varnish: the whole process implied lower costs then majolica production. For its lightness and suitability to third-firing decoration, the paste could also acceptably emulate porcelain, and its malleability allowed perfect and delicate forms, both for sculpture and for moulding in series. See Barker, *William Greatbatch, a Staffordshire potter*; Wedgewood exported his products ‘through sophisticated mercantile networks established in the first instance to sell luxury imported porcelain’; Berg, ‘From imitation to invention’, 25; Young, *The genius of Wedgewood*, 10-12.

84 Marinoni paid another 3,700 D, and became the owner of 10 carats (out of 24); the Cozzi siblings owned the remaining 14 carats, 2 of which were pledged against Buzzaccarini’s credit. Count Peruli provided the company with another 7,000 D more as an external backer. Marinoni and the Cozzis were liable for company agreements. See Stazzi, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 64.
Even though financing the new company cost Cozzi the control over its financial management, it allowed him to invest in the production of English-style earthenware, which Pietro Lorenzi had started making in 1776 in Trieste. In 1780 Cozzi was able to make a request for the exclusive rights for earthenware, applying at the same time for a public loan of 30,000 ducats, and soliciting the banning of china imports. In August 1781 the Cinque Savi extended his customs exemptions and granted him the monopoly in the production of earthenware in Venice and a 4-ducat premium for every 100 libbre sottili of exported ceramics. They also banned for a decade the establishment of new china factories in the Republic, imposed new duties on European china, and barred the importation and sale of Oriental china, giving the chincaglieri (ceramics retailers) two years to dispose of their stock85.

In the meantime, only the direct intervention of the authorities was able to limit Bortolo Facci’s new claims. When his contract with Cozzi expired in 1780, he nevertheless raised the price of Tretto kaolin up to 110 lire a carro. New difficulties came from a fall in china sales in the 1780s, due in part to increased competition from other Venetian manufacturers and in part to the continuous illegal import of porcelain. In 1784 Cozzi’s factory had a stockpile of 118,000 unsold pieces of china, most of which were out of fashion. Marinoni feared for his capital and in September 1784 he requested the liquidation of the company. The Cozzis were once again able to run the factory on their own, but they still had to pay off their huge debts in extended instalments86.

In the following years, other manufacturers were granted exemptions for earthenware, and the kaolin from the quarry on Mount Tretto showed signs of running out. In June 1791, Geminiano Cozzi gave up his rights to the factory in favor of his brother Vincenzo. In 1792, Vincenzo was granted the privileges of the previous companies. The military and political events

85 The petition submitted by Geminiano Cozzi and his partners in April 1780, and the more modest requests then presented as suggested by the authorities, who officially gave their consent on August 1781, are described in detail in Stazzi, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 73-76. After 1781 only Cozzi in Venice, Antonibon in Nove, and Fiorina Fabris in Este were allowed to produce china in the Venetian State.
which brought about the fall of the Republic hastened its closure, although production continued for just a few more years after 1797.

9. **Close to Venice, close to Nove.**

In the 18th century, Cozzi was then the only manufacturer of majolica, china and earthenware in Venice. But on the mainland there were many others.

Cozzi’s success had some side effects in Treviso, where the manufacture of china started at the end of the 1750s by Giovanni Battista Antonio Rossi, had a short life. The outcome of the petition he submitted in 1759 is not documented, but his attempt was halted just when Cozzi started manufacturing and established his mills in Treviso. In 1766 another Giovanni Rossi started producing majolica on the same premises. In 1768 he employed 38 workers, but although he was granted the customs exemptions provided to majolica manufacturers, he soon ran into financial difficulties, and in 1771 Giovanni Maria Ruberti bought the factory. Under his direction, its activities developed and in 1777 employed 60 workers.

The main ceramic center on the mainland was obviously Nove. In August 1773 Antonibon was again granted the customs and fiscal exemptions he had enjoyed since 1755 and the regulations prohibiting his workers to move to other manufacturers were also renewed. These privileges were also extended to the china he had produced on a large scale since 1768. Yet the Senate withdrew his exclusive right for majolica production within the five-mile radius from which he had benefited since 1755. This measure was an effect of the new general policy, aiming to get rid of manufacturing monopolies. Pasquale Antonibon was probably expecting it, and it is likely to have influenced his choice to lease the

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87 Stazzi, *Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi*, 121-123, puts the closing down of the San Giobbe factory some years before 1812, the date on which other authors traditionally agree. He doubts Geminiano Cozzi’s widow, Maria Antonia Sauli, could in fact continue working after her brother-in-law was dead in 1804. In 1793 however Geminiano asked for the cancellation of the handover to his brother, but withdrew this claim in 1794.

88 Bellieni, ‘Manifatture a Treviso nel Settecento’, 370-377. Following Luigi Baiolo’s inventory of the Treviso Museum archive, Ruberti would be just an altered form of Roberti, the noble family from Bassano whose members formerly backed the Morettos. No documents, however, support this charming supposition.
majolica factory to one of its directors, Giovanni Maria Baccin\(^9^9\), in the first months of 1773. Of course, it was also Pasquale Antonibon’s health problems and the age of his young son Giambattista, who only in 1784 entered into possession of the family assets, that obliged the owners’ family to withdraw from direct control of ceramic manufacturing\(^9^0\).

Baccin rented for 29 years the factory with the mill in Rivarotta and the earth quarries, paying a yearly fee of 612 ducats added to which were payments in kind. In 1774 he also rented for 8 years the china factory, and handed over its management to his brother Gerolamo\(^9^1\). At the same time, the loss of the territorial monopoly opened the door to competition from Rivarotta, where Baldissera Marinoni immediately started producing majolica with the help of some workers who had left Antonibon in 1765. In 1775 Marinoni died, and in 1776 his widow Ippolita Meneghini entrusted the direction of the factory to Giovan Battista Fabris, who had worked as a turner and modeller first for Antonibon, then for Brunello in Este. He was also the brother-in-law of Jean Pierre Varion, who introduced china manufacturing in Este\(^9^2\). With the help of Varion and other workers from Nove, Fabris planned to start producing china. So in February 1778 Ippolita Meneghini submitted a petition asking for the same customs and tax exemptions for porcelain granted to Cozzi and to Antonibon, and for the right to sell china in the shop she already owned in Venice.

The Cinque Savi carried out an investigation in order to assess the quality of the production and the financial solidity of the factory, as well as

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\(^9^9\) Giovanni Maria Baccin and his brother Gerolamo worked a long time for Antonibon before moving in the mid-1760s to Cozzi in Venice and then to Padua, where they were employed by a certain Alessandro Gabbian. They were back in Nove in the second half of the 1760s and regained Pasquale Antonibon’s confidence: Giovanni Maria in 1770 was appointed to the direction of the majolica section, which he rented in 1773; Girolamo directed the china section his brother also rented from 1774 to 1782, and went on directing it when it was back in the hands of Pasquale Antonibon’s son Giambattista and of his associate Francesco Parolin. On both the Baccins, see Barioli, ‘Baccin, Giovanni Maria’, 42-44; updated information based on new documents in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 34.

\(^9^0\) Mariacher, ‘Antonibon, famiglia’, 516-517, does not give either Pasquale Antonibon’s or Giambattista’s dates of birth; he reports that in 1770 Pasquale Antonibon handed over to his mother the manufacture, but this information is not confirmed by Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 192, who cite only the 1784 donation \textit{inter vivos} from Pasquale Antonibon to his son.

\(^9^1\) Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 24-25; the rental deed is published in Stecco, \textit{Storia delle Nove}, 187-188. The rental of the china section is documented in the report of Andrea Calichiopoli, the Deputato alle Fabbriche who in 1778 inspected Antonibon’s and Marinoni’s factories. His report is published in Stringa, \textit{Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa}, 60-62 (doc. 13).

\(^9^2\) On Giovan Battista Fabris, see Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 34; Stringa, \textit{Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa}, 60-62 (doc. 13); on his presence in Este, working for Brunello, see Ericani, ‘Le manifatture astigene del Settecento e dell’Ottocento’, 391.
any eventual disloyal competition it could create for other manufacturers. Baccin’s complaints about the desertion of skilled workers, and the doubts the Podestà of Vicenza expressed on the reliability of local authorities’ statements certifying the financial basis of the factory, made it necessary for the Deputato alle Fabbriche Andrea Calichiopoli to make an inspection in Rivarotta and in Nove in July 1778.

Calichiopoli ascertained that there were two kilns in function, and not four as stated, and that no china kiln existed. He brought also back some china pieces, which the Venetian *chincaglieri* appointed as experts judged to be inferior to Antonibon’s. The Marinoni widow appealed complaining that the inspection took place when only imperfect pieces were available; so a second examination was carried out in her Venetian shop. The majolica found there was of good quality, but lacked any mark: it was therefore impossible to ascertain who actually produced it. Noting this, the Cinque Savi concluded that ‘even if the Marinoni widow had the capital, which she has not, the skills the experts were unable to find, and the established factory of china which was not found, nevertheless the privilege she asked for would not be granted in the present conditions’, since competition for skilled labor between her and Antonibon was unavoidable. In March 1779 the Senate consequently denied her the exemptions and permissions she had requested, while allowing her to continue working.93

This episode illustrates the way the Venetian authorities decided whether or not in practice to grant a privilege to a manufacturer and it was the occasion for producing a great deal of documents supplying information on the scale and the internal structure of both factories in Nove and in Rivarotta.

Calichiopoli’s report, in fact, provides evidence that in 1778 Antonibon’s factory, leased to Baccin, employed 120 workers in the majolica section and 30 in china production. The total production for a year

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93 ‘Se anche la Marinoni avesse i Capitali che non constano, la industria che non fù dai Periti commentata e la Fabbrica piantata di Porcellane che non si rinvenne, ciò nonostante non comparirebbe nell’attual stato di cose esaudito il di lei ricorso’: see the complete transcription of the documents concerning Ippolita Meneghini Marinoni’s petition in Stringa, *Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa*, 55-66 (docs. 8-20); the quotation from p. 66 (doc. 19).
was worth approximately 40,000 ducats and was traded in the two shops in Venice, as well as those in Padua, Vicenza, Verona and Trento; all over the mainland, in Romagna and in the Habsburgs’ dominions, it was distributed by fifty pedlars, and it was also shipped to the Bolzano fair, in the dominions of Este and in the Levant. In Marinoni’s factory, 55 workers produced in a year cristallina and majolica worth around 18,500 ducati, and it was mainly traded in the mainland even if commercial contacts were under way with Trento, Rovereto, Mantua, Trieste and other ‘Austrian’ places. This growth was, however, the result of the effort to acquire the exemptions the Senate finally denied in 1779: the additional costs due to internal customs prevented production from being competitive in the regional market, forcing Ippolita Meneghini to give up the manufacture of majolica. In 1781 she sold to Baccin for 1,000 ducati all the raw and finished pieces of majolica she had in stock, and undertook to limit production to cristallina.

Shortly afterwards Giovan Battista Fabris left its direction and in 1783 he rented for five years from Giuseppe Viero the factory his father Giovanni Battista acquired in 1761 from Andrea Moretto’s heirs. From 1774 to 1778 it had been idle as a result of an agreement between Giovani Battista Viero and Baccin, but the death of the former allowed his son to start the kilns working again and then to lease them. The 1783 contract authorized Fabris to produce majolica, china and earthenware, excluding cristallina (in order to avoid competition with the Marinonis). Fabris was probably the first manufacturer to produce earthenware ‘made in the English style’ in the area between Nove and Bassano. However, he gave up the lease in advance in 1786 to Baccin, who rented the factory for fifteen years, introducing into the contract an explicit clause prohibiting the production of majolica and earthenware. One year later, this stipulation was accepted also

94 The data Calichipoli collected are showed in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 194, Table 1.
95 Stringa, Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa, 60-61 (doc. 13).
96 The information is drawn from Stecco, Storia delle Nove, 188, still without any indication of the source; but Giovanni Marinoni, while purchasing in 1789 the manufactur from his brother Valentino, committed himself to keeping the 1781 agreements between his mother and Baccin, confirmed in 1788; in 1781, the family assets were divided at the request of the two older Marinoni children and Ippolita Meneghini Marinoni with the younger ones, Gaspare and Valentino, continued to run the factory. See Stringa, Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa, 66-68 (docs. 21-22).
by the associates Baccin took into partnership. Among them there was Giuseppe Viero himself, who was also employed as a director in Baccin’s factory at Nove.  

10. English-style earthenware on the mainland.

In the second half of the 1780s, Gio Maria Baccin succeeded in preventing the manufacturers from Rivarotta from endangering the virtual monopoly he enjoyed at a local level in majolica and china. But he feared also competition from Este, where Brunello, with Varion’s help, had started producing soft porcelain in the second half of the 1770s. After a short stay in Rivarotta, where he assisted his brother-in-law Giovan Battista Fabris in his attempt to start china production in the Marinoni factory, in 1778 Varion was back in Este again. There he entered into partnership with the sculptor and engraver Girolamo Franchini to produce figurines in soft porcelain. At Franchini’s factory he also experimented with English-style earthenware, with little success up to 1780. When Varion died in 1781, his widow Fiorina Fabris joined Antonio Costa, a former employee of Antonibon, in a company on their own, which was granted customs exemptions for china and earthenware. However, they never produced earthenware, and china production ceased when Fiorina Fabris died in the second half of the 1780s.  

From August 1781 the Cinque Savi prohibited for a decade the establishment of new china factories: only Antonibon, Cozzi and Fiorina Fabris were entitled to produce it. When Franchini in March 1782 submitted his own petition for a privilege, he was therefore granted customs exemptions only for cristallina, majolica and above all the ‘extra fine’ earthenware he made with the clay quarried in the nearby Euganean Hills. In 1785 Fiorina Fabris and Costa gave up their privilege for earthenware: as there were no other contenders, Franchini could then ask for a 15-year

97 On Fabris’ factory and its take-over, see Marini, ‘Le fabbriche minori a Bassano, Angarano e Nove nel Settecento e nell’Ottocento’, 361; Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 34.  
98 Varion in 1780 presented some earthenware samples in response to an investigation of the Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia; in 1781, Costa and Fiorina Fabris are likely to have presented pieces made in other manufactures, since in 1785 Costa stated he never produce earthenware; in 1789 he was left alone and manufactured only cristallina: Erciani, ‘Le manifatture astenine del Settecento e dell’Ottocento’, 400, 409; see also Stazzi, Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi, 75.
exclusive right on its production for the Padua district, which the Senate granted in May 1785\textsuperscript{99}.

The petition Domenico Brunello submitted on April 1787 did not reverse this situation. In 1778 Brunello had inherited from his father, Gio Batta, the factory of maiolica and soft porcelain: in order to be able to carry on the production of soft porcelain he asked for official permission to manufacture what he called ‘mezza porcellana’ (half-porcelain). The Savi denied him this right pointing out that the problem could become ‘metaphysical’: Brunello’s demand threatened to jeopardize both the ban on new china factories and Franchini’s exclusive right for earthenware, which could not be easily distinguished from the ‘mezza porcellana’\textsuperscript{100}.

In Nove, Antonibon’s china factory returned into the hands of the owner, Giambattista Antonibon, when Gio Maria Baccin’s lease contract expired in 1782. Giambattista Antonibon then took into partnership Francesco Parolin and obtained from the Senate the renewal and the extension to the new company of the privileges he had been granted in 1773. In 1787 the china factory employed 39 workers and its yearly production, mainly sold in the domestic market, was worth approximately 11,300 ducats\textsuperscript{101}.

Baccin continued running the majolica factory, which in its turn reaped the benefits of the renewal of the privilege granted to Antonibon in 1782. He also experimented with English-style earthenware, assisted by a former employee of Antonibon’s, Pietro Poatto, who had worked in Trieste in Lorenzi’s factory and there had learned its manufacturing technique. In 1786 Baccin submitted a petition asking to commence production also in a new factory on his own in Nove, and was granted a 15-year exclusive right

\textsuperscript{99} On the 1781 ban on new china manufactures, and both Franchini’s petitions, see Stazzi, \textit{Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi}, 76, 105; the 1782 decision of the Cinque Savi granting Franchini the customs exemptions for all ceramics but china is published in Ericani and Marini (eds.), \textit{La ceramica nel Veneto}, 473-474. On Franchini, see also Arbace, ‘Franchini, Girolamo’, 115-116.

\textsuperscript{100} On Brunello’s rejected petition, see Stazzi, \textit{Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi}, 106.

\textsuperscript{101} The 1782 petition, and the following Senate decree are summarized in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 192. For the number of workers and the value of production, see \textit{ivi}, 195. On this manufacture, see also Biavati, ‘Giambattista Antonibon e compagno Francesco Parolin’, 26-29.
for earthenware in a ten-mile surrounding area, except for other factories already ‘established and functioning’\textsuperscript{102}.

In the following years Baccin introduced in his majolica and earthenware production new moulded forms imitating Strasbourg and Marseilles trompe-l’oeil models. In 1791 he was granted permission to build a stone-grinding mill on his own in the place of an ancient water-power hammer he had acquired for 600 ducats in 1781 with its water rights\textsuperscript{103}. This enabled him to grind on his own the raw-materials his factory needed. When his lease contract with the Antonibons expired in 1802, he then went on producing earthenware on his own until 1805, when he leased his factory to the Toffanin brothers. In 1802 the Antonibons leased in turn all their majolica, china and earthenware factories to Giovanni Baroni\textsuperscript{104}.

In the last decade of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, the political and economic situation radically changed. Antonibon’s customs exemptions were renewed again from 1793 until December 1794, when a reform of the customs system cancelled all manufacturing privileges, suppressed export and inland duties, and relieved taxes on raw materials\textsuperscript{105}. It is difficult to assess the effects of this reform on ceramic manufacturing, because they inevitably intertwine with the consequences of the political situation in the following years. Certainly it helped to renew competition between production in Nove and Rivarotta.

In 1787 Valentino Marinoni was freed from his mother’s restraints and in 1789 sold his factory producing cristallina to his elder brother Giovanni for 5,240 ducats. In 1793 it was seriously damaged by fire, and in 1796 Giovanni Marinoni, in spite of the compensation he was granted, was

\textsuperscript{102} Baccin’s petition, the report of the Cinque Savi, and the May 1786 Senate decree are summarized in Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 192-193. The only other active manufacture in the area was at that time Antonibon’s one, leased to Baccin himself until 1802: his exclusive right should expire precisely in 1801, but was cancelled by the 1794 reformation.

\textsuperscript{103} Marini and Stringa, ‘La “fabbrica privilegiata” Antonibon’, 34.

\textsuperscript{104} Giovanni Baroni was from Rossano Veneto, and died in 1811. His son Paolo went on running the manufacture until 1825, when Giambattista Antonibon started running it on his own again. See Stringa, \textit{Il Museo della Ceramica}, 29.

\textsuperscript{105} The Senate decrees of December 1794 and April 1795 followed up a proposal of the Deputati alla Regolazione delle Tariffe Mercantili, and sanctioned unification of customs duties and the suppression of privileges. See Stazzi, \textit{Le porcellane veneziane di Geminiano e Vincenzo Cozzi}, 115; see also Lanaro, \textit{I mercati della Repubblica Veneta}, 120.
forced to sell the stone-grinding mill to Giuseppe Viero\textsuperscript{106}. However, Viero was bound by the 1787 partnership contract with Baccin, and could not produce majolica: so, he lost no time in selling the mill to Count Roberto Roberti. In 1794, when Baccin’s exclusive territorial rights were annulled, Roberti was allowed to establish a majolica factory in Ca’ Boina, in the vicinity of Nove. In 1802 also the partnership binding Viero to Baccin expired, and the former was able to recommence manufacturing on his own in Rivarotta. He bought in turn a building in Ca’ Boina, thus acquiring the right to mark on his majolica the name of ‘Nove’ as its place of origin\textsuperscript{107}.

Political and market changes in the last fifteen years of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century also fostered the development of ceramic manufacturing in the mainland cities to the detriment both of Cozzi, who in Venice met increasing difficulties, and of the smaller centers like Nove or Este, which had sustained development during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. In fact, the abolition of inland customs and the cancellation of privileges allowed a greater mobility of raw materials and labor, favoring the choice of locations closer to the city markets.

Urban consumers demanded inexpensive but fashionable wares, and found in the English-style earthenware a product which satisfied a wide range of different requirements. The resistance and malleability of the new ceramic material made it possible to produce it in series; and the most popular wares were also decorated in series.

In 1788 Carlo Vicentini dal Giglio established a factory of earthenware in Vicenza, and at the end of the 1790s Andrea and Giuseppe Fontebasso started the same kind of production in Treviso. Both adopted the new working methods developed in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century for earthenware production, allowing them to employ on a large scale the skills of the surviving boccaleri, who for two centuries had managed to make ends meet.

\textsuperscript{106} The damages resulting from the fire were assessed at 3,700 D, and Marinoni was granted by the Cinque Savi a 10-years annual contribution of 100 D in order to enable him to rebuild the manufacture. See Stringa, \textit{Antica fabbrica di cristallina e terra rossa}, 46, 72 (doc. 23).

\textsuperscript{107} On Giuseppe Viero’s vicissitudes, see Marini, ‘Le fabbriche minori a Bassano, Angarano e Nove nel Settecento e nell’Ottocento’, 361.
by producing *cristallina* and ‘mezza majolica’\(^{108}\). Both were able to resist the economic and political troubles of the early years of the 19\(^{th}\) century, developing further earthenware production for popular consumption with simpler forms and quicker serial decorations\(^{109}\).

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11. **Conclusive remarks.**

Ceramic manufacturing was among the few industrial activities which survived the terrible meteorological, economic and political crisis that hit the Venetian area in the first decades of the 19\(^{th}\) century. Opinions attributing its 18\(^{th}\)-century development to State protection would then at first sight appear to be mistaken\(^{110}\).

Undoubtedly, the privileges the manufacturers were granted allowed them to resist competition from new foreign products on the home market, and after all exports towards German markets and the Levant were not determinant in their growth. However, in interpreting the centuries-long evolution of Venetian ceramics, we must keep in mind that consecutive waves of innovation and changes in fashion-driven demand affected its manufacturing. Difficulties in withstanding competition from majolica from Faenza, Liguria and Lombardy in the 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) centuries, and from Delft in the 18\(^{th}\) century, showed a clear gap between domestic supply and a demand following European fashion. Granting privileges was then a consistent measure aimed at getting round both the inadequacy of guild production and capital holders’ reluctance to invest in a non-competitive sector.

Indeed, the early and ill-fated attempt to establish china production in Venice in the 1720s suggests that the Republic mercantilist policy was

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\(^{108}\) Some pieces of the last years of the 18\(^{th}\) century suggest that both Vicentini dal Giglio and Fontebasso are likely to have produced also china, besides earthenware, before the fall of the Republic. Still, there is no other evidence of china manufacturing in this period in Vicenza and Treviso, and many experts are sceptical about it. On Fontebasso, see Bellieni, ‘Manifatture a Treviso nel Settecento’, 377-378; on Vicentini dal Giglio, see Ericani, ‘Le manifatture Vicentini da Giglio e Sebellin di Vicenza’, 410-415, and Mottola Molfino, *L’arte della porcellana in Italia*, 58.

\(^{109}\) See Cecchetto, Magagnato and Stringa, *La ceramica popolare veneta dell’800*.

probably too cautious and led Venetian authorities to refuse any concessions to productions lacking a guaranteed turnover. They evidently gave priority to manufacturers producing goods which were new for Venice but well-known in the international market, and massively imported from abroad. The imitation and adaptation of foreign productions was therefore apparently considered the only way to innovate. It is clear that this view took for granted technological backwardness and in fact made the situation worse\footnote{It is possible to say that in the Venetian context imitation not always became product innovation (as Berg, ‘From imitation to invention’, argues). Still, it played a key role in allowing Venetian ceramic industry to keep up the pace with technological changes and to survive institutional ones.}

In the second half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, the market was divided between a demand on the part of the aristocracy for high quality china, and a wider demand for good-quality and fashionable majolica. From this point of view, the introduction of the English-style earthenware marks an important turning point, which influenced the subsequent evolution of the market. The new ceramic paste suited a wide variety of requirements, and its quality and cost did not depend on the material, but on the refinement of forms and decoration, which imitated china perfectly. What’s more, earthenware allowed new economies of scale and a working organization which were compatible with the need to place side by side top- and low-grade production with the objective of improving efficiency.

The geographical dynamics of the production of ‘new ceramics’ (china first, and then earthenware) are an indication of the important role of skilled workers, technicians and artists in the selective circulation of new materials. What is striking is the small number of people involved and the close connexion between their presence and the setting up of new factories, as showed by the detailed biographical data here presented. The best example is perhaps what art historians have defined as a ‘style koine’ in the production of soft-porcelain figurines Varion started between Nove, Rivarotta and Este\footnote{Marini, ‘Le fabbriche minori a Bassano, Angarano e Nove nel Settecento e nell’Ottocento’, 355.}.

The study of the circulation and reproduction mechanisms of technical knowledge could also explain the discontinuous history of
Venetian ceramics, which challenges any linear vision of technical progress. Once again, the most striking case is the loss of the key to china production when Vezzi closed down.

As we have seen, privileges could be interpreted as a measure to get round the deficiencies of a production controlled by a guild which failed to meet the requirements of the market. However, the system of privileges was unable to reconcile the need to spread innovation and the manufacturers’ alleged right to limit the mobility of technicians and workers they trained. Not by chance, most of the quarrels the Cinque Savi were called to settle concerned workers who had abandoned their employer. The arbitrary decisions Venetian authorities often took were an attempt to assess, case by case, the reasons of each party, because, unlike in the guild apprenticeship system, there was nothing similar which could insure both workers and employers against opportunism113.

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113 The importance of apprenticeship in explaining the working of guilds has been pointed out by Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change’, 688-698.


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