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**Barbers and Surgeons in the “medical marketplace”
of the Fifteenth-century Corleone**

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Barbers and Surgeons in the medical marketplace of the Fifteenth-century Corleone*

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Abstract

The article analyses the role of surgeons and barbers in the fifteenth-century Corleone, royal town in the hinterland of Sicily with a pretty rich economy based on agriculture and sheep-breeding. The documents reveal a rich and complex medical marketplace where the barbers went into partnership with other barbers or with surgeons. Furthermore, surgeons and barbers invested in the real estate market, traded wine, wheat and animals, had slaves. In Corleone there were also barber-surgeons from Naro, Palermo, Caltabellotta and renowned surgeons of Polizzi, with whom barbers of Corleone could train. In the notarial acts the same person could be qualified as *magister*, barber and surgeon, however according to the patients the skill of the practitioner was more important than his qualification.

Keywords

Medicine; Sicily; Corleone; Middle Ages.

Riassunto

L'articolo analizza il ruolo di chirurghi e barbieri nella Corleone del XV secolo, centro demaniale dell'entroterra siciliano, con un'economia agro-pastorale abbastanza fiorente. Emerge l'esistenza di un "medical marketplace" ricco e composito, nel quale i barbieri operavano in società con altri barbieri o con i chirurghi. Inoltre, chirurghi e barbieri investivano nel mercato immobiliare, commerciavano vino, frumento, animali e possedevano schiavi. A Corleone lavoravano anche barbieri-chirurghi di Naro, Palermo, Caltabellotta e i rinomati chirurghi di Polizzi, con i quali i barbieri potevano svolgere il loro tirocinio. Nei documenti notarili la stessa persona può essere definita *magister*, barbiere, chirurgo, del resto per i pazienti l'abilità dell'operatore medico era più importante della loro qualifica.

Parole chiave

Medicina; Sicilia; Corleone; Medioevo.

1. Physicians, surgeons and barbers in Sicily. - 2. Medical practices and socio-economic status of barbers and surgeons in the fifteenth-century Corleone. - 3. The varied activity of the barber Gaspare de Burello and the social climb of the surgeon Antonio de Garlano. - 4. The surgeons of Polizzi and the medical

* In Sicily the standard unity of currency was the *onza*; one *onza* was worth 30 *tari*, one *tari* 20 *grani*. A *salma* was a measure of weight equivalent to c. 275 kg.

marketplace of Corleone between professionalization and popular medicine. - 5. *Conclusions.* - 6. *Bibliography.* - 7. *Curriculum vitae.*

1. *Physicians, surgeons and barbers in Sicily*

In the eighteenth century the Italian surgeon Carlo Burci distinguished three different historical periods: the old one when the physician was also a surgeon, the second one, “[...] in cui il medico, fatto vanitoso del suo sapere e sdegnoso dell’opera della mano, abbandonò la stessa chirurgia agl’ignoranti, ai barbieri, ai ciarlatani”¹, the third period, i.e. the contemporary one, when the combination of medicine and surgery returned (Cosmacini, 2003, pp. VII-VIII).

It wasn’t a new idea. In the twelfth century Lanfranco da Milano analysed this topic in the *Chirurgia magna*, according to a long tradition that included the Salernitan School of Medicine, Teodorico Borgognoni, and his teacher Guglielmo da Saliceto. Lanfranco criticized the proud surgeons who had left some traditional treatments, like bleeding and cauterization, to barbers and women. In his opinion, to reform the teaching one had to reveal the mistakes of the empiric surgeons “ignorant of the basis for the procedures this surgery has produced” (Mc Vaugh, 2006, p. 79). In Kira Robison’s opinion, “This reflected the traditional split in formal medical education between “theoretical” and “practical” medicine, “book learning” versus hands-on-practice, the text versus the knife” (Robison, 2014, pp. 178-179).

In the sixteenth-century Palermo the physician who treated internal illnesses was called “medico di urina”, because he made his diagnosis by examining the urine, instead the surgeon who treated wounds, sores, and fractures was called “medico di piaga”, he didn’t analyse urine or practice internal medicine. Surgery was considered an empiric matter, less difficult and important than physical medicine that implied a deep theoretical knowledge and allowed to make diagnosis and prescribe therapies. Surgeons performed different kinds of operations, but also barbers could operate (Pitrè, 1992, pp. 127-129).

The division between physicians and surgeons was born in the Middle Ages. The job of the physician was clearly explained by Egidio of Corbeil (1140-1223) in his book *Carmen de urinarum iudiciis et de pulsibus*. Maybe it circulated in medieval Sicily; the Library of the monastery of Monreale kept a copy of the book of Egidio de Corbeil, annotated by Gentile da Foligno, printed in Venice in 1494 (Garufi, 1902, p. 154).

In Sicily surgery was taught privately, through a training that allowed the apprentice to learn the job, receive books and surgical instruments, and have a

¹ “when the physician became proud of his knowledge and disdainful of the manual work, and abandoned the same surgery to ignorant people, barbers, and quacks”.

professional curriculum that could be used in the medical marketplace (Santoro, 2015, pp. 115-116). The inventories of books transcribed by Besc show that in fourteenth-century Sicily the most widespread surgery handbooks were the XIIIth and XIVth century classics: *Cirurgia* by Guglielmo da Saliceto, *Chirurgia magna* by Bruno da Longobucco, and *Chirurgia* by Guy de Chauliac. There was only a copy of the works by Lanfranco da Milano, Teodorico Borgognoni, and Pietro d'Argellata (Besc 1971, p. 38)². According to all the authors present in the Sicilian inventories studied by Besc, a good physician had to combine theory and experience, because “book learning gave a physician the proper theoretical framework in which to place his surgical training” (Robison, 2014, pp. 179-180). Bruno Longobucco clearly explained the surgeon’s job: “ricongiungere le cose separate, separare quelle congiunte contro natura ed eliminare il superfluo³” (Agrimi, Crisciani, 1980, p. 167). Pietro d'Argellata thought that “surgery had to be grounded in medical science”, but physicians were more important than surgeons (Mc Vaugh, 2000, p. 295).

In the first half of the fifteenth century in Sicily practitioners needed a special licence that could be valid in all the Kingdom, in a city, a *terra*⁴, or a medical branch, not only to practice the noble and titled physical medicine, but also to perform surgical operations (Santoro, 2011, pp. 144-147)⁵.

In 1398

actendentes grave dispendium et irrecuperabile dampnum quod solet ac posset contingere ex impericia tam in phisica quam in cirurgia praticantium non licenciatorum nec approbatorum in solemnibus studiis nec examinatorum per electos medicos nostros⁶

and considering that arrogance combined with ignorance could damage his subjects, Martin I appointed *protomedicus* of the Kingdom of Sicily Blasco Scamacca, *magister in artibus et in medicina licenciatus medicus*. The king authorized Blasco to condemn those who worked as practitioners without a licence. He had to work with a judge of the *Magna Regia Curia* or a qualified jurist, to punish physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and barbers. No one could

² On the quoted authors see Mc Vaugh, 1995, pp. 243-255.

³ “to put together separated things, to separate the unnaturally joined ones and to eliminate the unnecessary ones”.

⁴ In Sicily a *terra* was a town belonging to the king that didn’t have an archbishop.

⁵ Cutting was the main operation of the medieval surgeon, who did manipulations, set fractures and dislocations, stopped bleeding, treated infections, eased the pain with external applications, cleaned and dressed wounds, Hunt, 1992, p. XI.

⁶ “because of the serious waste and irrecoverable damage that can usually come from incompetence in medicine and surgery of trainees who neither have a license, nor have been proclaimed with a ceremony nor have been examined by our selected doctors”.

work as physician or surgeon without the approval of the *protomedicus*. He also had to condemn apothecaries and *barbitonsores* who made a mistake *cum hec duo officia medico famulentur* (because these two jobs serve the physician). The key word of this sentence is the verb *famulor*, which contains the idea that apothecaries and barbers had to help the physician. He was the only one who could make diagnosis and give therapies, i. e. the most difficult stages which brought about the recovery of the patient⁷.

In the *capitula* addressed to physicians, surgeons, apothecaries and barbers, promulgated in Catania in 1429 with the consent of the viceroys Nicolò Speciale and Guglielmo Montagnans, *protomedicus* Antonio de Alexandro, *arcium et medicine doctor*, reasserted that nobody could practice medicine and surgery without a written licence⁸.

Giovanni de Salomone and Nicolò de Brancato, surgeons of Palermo who had obtained the royal licence after the examination of the *protomedicus*, respectively in 1421 and in 1404, could operate throughout Sicilia⁹. The city jurors could authorize citizens to work as surgeons for their good reputation, without passing an exam, but this permission was valid only in the city or *terra* where it had been allowed.

In 1422 the jurors of Palermo issued a public notice in which they established that no one, man or woman, could *practicari et medicari in chirurgia* (practise surgery) without the licence of the city jurors on pain of a 4 *onzas fine*¹⁰, as a result, the surgeons with a royal licence had to show it to the jurors to obtain its transcription in the acts of the *Corte Pretoriana*¹¹. The same year the praetor and jurors of Palermo gave their fellow citizen Antonio Royra, surgeon of catalan origin, *tamquam benemerito* (as meritorious), the licence to practise surgery in Palermo, “quia in arte et pratica medicinali sciencie chirurgie te expertum et ydoneum invenimus fidedignorum testimonio comprobante”¹². The surgeon swore on the New Testament to work *bene et diligenter*, not to ask *soluciones immoderatas*, that is exorbitant fees, and to fix his fee “inspecta paciencium condicione et facultatum et temporum qualitate”, i.e. according to the economic condition of the patients, the time he had spent, and the difficulty of the treatment¹³. Besides, the praetor and jurors of Palermo took on Antonio de

⁷ Archivio di Stato di Palermo (ASP), Real Cancelleria (C), reg. 33, fol. 40r-v; reg. 34, fol. 47r-v.

⁸ *Ibi*, C, reg. 61, fol. 96r; Protonotaro (P), reg. 30, fol. 107r.

⁹ Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo (ASCP), Atti del Senato (As), reg. 29/34, fols. 11r-12r.

¹⁰ *Ibi*, reg. 29/33, fol. 14r.

¹¹ *Ibi*, reg. 29/34, fols. 11r-12r.

¹² “because we consider you expert and suitable in theoretical and practical medicine and in surgical science as trust-worthy witnesses have confirmed”.

¹³ Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo (ASCP), Atti del Senato (As), reg. 29/34, fol. 8v.

Luparello as municipal surgeon for his good name until they liked, with an annual salary of 12 *onze*¹⁴.

In 1445 the viceroy Lope Ximénez de Urrea authorized the notary Gerardo di La Rocca to practice surgery and treat fistulas throughout the Kingdom of Sicily for life, after swearing on oath in front of the captain of his *terra*, whose name isn't mentioned in the document. The viceroy gave the notary the licence because he had been informed that

cum quadam recepta vobis per socerum vestrum dimissam, mediante tamen vestri industria, aptitudine et sufficiencia ac adiuvantibus aliis libris artis chirurgie, circa curam canceris seu mali nominati noli me tangere vel fistule bene et optime gessisse gentisque de presenti multas et diversas personas de huiusmodi nefari morbo mirabiliter curando et ad totalem sanitatem penitus deducendo, ex quibus curis in eadem terra signanter beneficium oritur universale¹⁵.

So his renowned skill allowed the notary to treat fistulas, with a prescription passed on by his father-in-law, not only in his *terra* but throughout Sicily¹⁶.

Because of their skill in using scissors and razors, the barbers cured teeth, incised abscesses and buboes, sutured wounds, bled, treated dislocations and set broken limbs (Naso, 1982, p. 136). Wounds treatment became more sophisticated in the fourteenth century, when Henry de Mondeville introduced surgical innovations based on immediate suture and dry dressing. Then Guy de Chauliac's work, translated in many languages, was "a medical foundation for the surgical treatment of wounds" throughout Europe (Tracy - DeVries, 2015, pp. 11-12)¹⁷.

In Sicily barbers could obtain a licence from the viceroy to practice surgery without passing an exam, thanks to their well-known skill (Santoro, 2011, p. 148). Some of them were specialized in the branch of surgery *que sectio seu incisio testicularum dicitur et curacio herniarum*, i.e. scrotal incision and hernia treatment (Santoro, 2015, pp. 111-112). For example, in October 1405 the barber Nardello, of Neapolitan origin, new citizen of Palermo, committed himself to treat Riccardo, son of Giovanni Puzara of Gangi, "de infirmitate testiculi, cum

¹⁴ Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo (ASCP), Atti del Senato (As), reg. 29/34, fols. 8v-9r.

¹⁵ "with a prescription your father-in-law left you, but also with your skill, preparation, suitability, and the help of other surgical books on the treatment of cancer, that is the illness called 'don't touch me' or fistula, you behaved better and better by treating wonderfully, in present days, many and different people that had this awful illness, and by healing them completely, these treatments produced widespread benefits especially in this *terra*".

¹⁶ ASP, C, reg. 83, fols. 507v-508r.

¹⁷ On wounds treatment in Anglo-Saxon England see Banham – Voth, 2015.

adiutorio Dei“(a testicular illness, with the help of God), for a one *onza* fee to pay after the recovery of the patient. The barber had to provide Riccardo with food, a bed, medicines, and his *magisterium*. The operation was successful because in July 1406 *magister* Nardello declared that he had received his fee and the notorial deed was crossed out¹⁸. After all, since the thirteenth century Latin surgical tradition recognized the possibility of operating inguinal hernia. Bruno Longobucco thought that a major chronic hernia couldn't be cured with medicines. Teodorico Borgognoni described three different ways of operating hernia “understood as a mechanical problem of blocking an opening” that couldn't be treated with drugs (Mc Vaugh, 2001, pp. 321-324).

The *capitula* of 1429 forbade the new *barbitonsor* to bleed without having been examined by the *protomedicus* or his delegate, on pain of a one florin fine. Besides, the *barbitonsor* could not bleed children or people aged more than sixty years, feverish or sick, without the opinion and approval of a physician on pain of a one *onza* fine¹⁹. To bleed in a safe way, as well as the age, the practitioner had to consider the habit of the patient to be treated, his health conditions, and the seasons, because cold made blood more viscous, heat weakened people (Mitchell, 2004, p. 194).

The restrictions imposed on the barbers in the practice of bloodletting in the fifteenth-century Sicily were rooted in the wide theoretical debate of the professors, who had tried to apply the speculative analysis to practical technique. In the fragment *Expositio supra antidotarium Nicolai*, Jean de St Amand faced the problems concerning phlebotomy by asking some *questiones* and comparing the old texts of the Medical School of Salerno with the new ones. He pointed out that bloodletting had become a widespread treatment and its practical application was in the hands of the *barbitonsores* with a poor or non-existent training.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the barbers, “health ‘professionals’ who were closer to the masses”, were the first basic level of a complex and elaborate health-care system. Physicians and surgeons did not give up the practice of phlebotomy, that was still a medical activity included in the municipal contracts, but barbers began to play a major role. Unprofessional phlebotomy could cause different problems like the smell of rotten bloodshed into the streets, the unpleasant view of the containers in which the blood was collected, barbers who made bloodlettings on the street in front of people. Consequently, a rivalry between the barbers and the other categories of practitioners began; physicians and surgeons highlighted the doctrinal

¹⁸ ASP, Notai (N), I, reg. 451, fol. 42v.

¹⁹ ASP, C, reg. 61, fol. 99v; P, reg. 30, fol. 109r.

foundation of this simple medical practice and the risks of its incorrect application.

According to the surgeon Henry de Mondeville, before bloodletting, rich and noble men and prelates asked the physician for advice, otherwise ordinary people the barber. While the latter practised only therapeutic bloodletting, the physician also performed preventive phlebotomy on healthy people in spring or at the beginning of summer to avoid “the appearance of illness caused by repletion”. Since the physicians had left bloodletting to the surgeons because they thought it was worthless, and then the surgeons had abandoned it to the barbers for the reason that it was an unprofitable and not very prestigious practice, bloodletting became a common and routine *operatio manualis* in the hands of the barbers (Gil-Sotres, 1994, pp. 118-122).

In Santoro’s opinion, in Sicily the lack of clearly distinct professionals profiles, the absence of impermeable barriers between surgeons and barbers and the possibility of obtaining the license for good reputation created an open network (Santoro, 2015, p. 112).

Until the late fifteenth century also in Piemonte the boundaries between barbers and surgeons weren’t well defined, because surgeons did not have a qualification and in the sources the word *cerusicus* and *barbitonsor* were often confused. While in the towns the number of physicians and surgeons was high, instead in the villages often the only health worker was the barber who had a modest social and economic position (Naso, 1982, pp. 136-141).

The situation was different in Valencia, where since the thirteenth century barbers created a confraternity and their socio-political role became so important that in the first half of the fourteenth century they participated in the municipal council. Step by step their job became similar to the surgeons’ one and barbers could get a social enhancement. However, the inventories of their assets clearly show that, in this unequal group, socio-economic differences were remarkable and many barbers tried to increase their revenue by carrying out complementary activities, in order to supplement their income more than to reinvest the money earned (Ferragud, 2011, pp. 33-41).

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Valencia became the most populous city of the the Crown of Aragon and the barbers had more opportunities to improve their social level, but their number raised so much that living together became difficult, tensions grew, and sometimes clashes and episodes of violence blew up (*Ibi*, pp. 56-57).

The number of barbers compared to physicians and surgeons increased throughout the Crown of Aragon, and their role in the healthcare system was so important that they became “a real umbrella that covered most medical and

theurapeutic practices” (Ferragud, 2015, p. 164) and “a highly dynamic and very heterogenous group that rose up through the social class system” (*ibi*, p. 165).

In England the Company of Barbers included surgeons, barbers, and barber-surgeons. Physicians were respected and admired, instead surgeons struggled to obtain social recognition and be differentiated from barbers. In the fifteenth-century London they tried to create a college of physicians and surgeons to check every kind of medical licence and practice, but this attempt failed for the opposition of the powerfull barbers’ guild and the insufficient number of physicians and surgeons compared to the medical needs of London (Butler, 2015, pp. 245-246).

2. Medical practices and socio-economic status of barbers and surgeons in the fifteenth-century Corleone

Corleone was a pretty big *terra* in the hinterland of Sicily, strongly conditioned and shaped by the so-called Lombard culture, brought by immigrants of northern Italy (Mirazita, 2003). In the fifteenth century its economy was based on agricultural and pastoral activities, above all the cultivation of wheat and grapes²⁰, and the sheep-farming that fueled a thriving tanning business (Ridulfo 2018, pp. 92-108). The interest of barbers for the trade of agricultural products is shown by the business of Antonello de Raynerio, *magister barbitonsor* who sold wheat in 1418,²¹ and of Federico de Castronovo, *magister barberius* who produced and sold wine between 1404 and 1409²².

In 1398 the *universitas* (city) of Corleone, very attentive to public health, exempted physicians, surgeons and “*scolarum magistri in gramaticali sciencia periti*” (school teachers expert in grammar science) domiciled in Corleone from all taxes, especially royal levies, until it liked, because they treated and advised all the inhabitants, including the poor²³.

The notarial registers of Corleone, kept in the *Archivio di Stato* of Palermo, allow to reconstruct the profiles of the surgeons and barbers who lived and

²⁰ See Bresc, 1994, 1995 and 997.

²¹ ASP, N, V, reg. 16, w.n. (without number). In 1418 Antonello de Raynerio had to receive the following amounts of money for the sale of wheat: one *onza* from Antonino Philippo of Randazzo, inhabitant of Corleone, (5 October), one *onza* from Gerio de Russimanno (12 October); 26 *tari* for two *salme* of wheat from Todisco de La Pisana (4 November); 28 *tari* from Domenico de Assero (18 November).

²² Federico de Castronovo sold one barrel of white wine for 18 *tari* (ASP, N, V, reg. 30, fol. 76v; 29 October 1404). He also bought a vineyard called *La Planta* and a land with trees, in the *contrada* Celsi for 4 *onze* (*Ibi*, reg. 31, fols. 193c-194r; 26 February 1407); four barrels of red wine and two empty barrels for one *onza* and 18 *tari* (*Ibi*, reg. 31, fol. 143v; 27 July 1409).

²³ *Ibi*, reg. 13, fols. 20v-21r.

worked there in the fifteenth century, and to set these jobs in a particular social and economic context.

In 1404 the aforesaid *magister barberius* Federico de Castronovo took on the apprentice Andrea Pastore, who was over 15 years old, with the permission of his stepfather Mazullo de Sorba. During the three-years apprenticeship, the boy had to live in Federico's house, work in his barbershop, and carefully do all the required work. In turn, Federico had to teach Andrea barber's craft and supply him with food, drink, shoes, two new doublets, and a hooded cloak of Catalan cloth every year²⁴.

Three notarial acts show that Federico didn't limit himself to work as a barber, but he also treated sores and wounds. In November 1405 Federico de made a contract with the notary Tommaso de Bonavia who had a sore *in eius ventre prope inguinagula*, i.e. in his groin. The barber committed himself to healing the notary by the end of April 1406 "cum magisterio eius persone et rebus suis medicinalibus" (with his craft and his medicines), for one *onza* and 6 *tari*. Given the frequency of relapses, the contract specified that, if the patient recovered before April and the sore reappeared, Federico would have to treat and heal him again by the end of September. The patient had to pay the sum of money agreed only after his complete recovery. The treatment also included a specific diet and the patient had to avoid the indigestible food listed by Federico²⁵.

According to Avicenna's Canon "wounded persons needed to eat well in order to let new flesh grow" (van't Land, 2014, p. 101) Since the thirteenth century dietetics achieved therapeutic value, and physicians started to offer the patient a proper diet. Between the thirteenth and fourteenth century, literature on diets spread first in Italy and France, then also in Germany, England, Hungary, and Poland. The diet began to be considered one of the main factors to prevent and treat illness, together with the air quality (Nicoud, 2006, pp. 239-243). Food education produced the formulation of a diet to follow every day, and the birth of a real health education (Idem, 2017, pp. 63-68).

In April 1407 *magister* Federico committed himself to treat Nicolò Marinario, who had a leg sore, with a contract similar to the one he had stipulated in November 1405. Probably the case was less serious, because the parties agreed that the patient had to pay 18 *tari* by September. The barber had a 6 *tari* advance *pro medelis emendis* (to buy medicines), he would have received the balance only after healing the sore. Federico undertook to cure Nicolò "bene, solíciter et

²⁴ ASP, N, V, reg. 30, fol. 93v. The apprenticeship contract was drawn up in Corleone according to a traditional pattern we can find in the notary acts of Palermo in the fourteenth century (Corrao, 1983, pp. 137-139).

²⁵ ASP, N, V, reg. 31, fol. 40r.

diligenter (...c) um medelis, unguentis et aliis rebus necessariis”²⁶. Also in this case the patient had to refrain “a rebus comestibilibus sibi inutilibus secundum regullam sibi dandam per dictum magistrum Fridericum per scripturam fiendam per manus ipsius magistri Friderici”²⁷.

The third patient treated by Federico was Simone de Parisi, who had been beaten to blood by Marino de Chiminna and was wounded in his leg. In June 1407 Simone forgave the crime, provided that Marino gave him 21 *tari* for the working days he had missed, and 15 *tari* for the medicines and treatment he had received from *magister* Federico²⁸. In a violent society, barbers had to treat people wounded with knives, swords, and spears, by stopping bleeding, suturing and bandaging wounds, relieving the pain, and prescribing a diet (Ferragud, 2011, pp. 46-47). Although the injury of Simone had not been inflicted with white weapons the treatment should be similar.

A document with no date (probably issued in the first half of the fifteenth century) attests the high fees and the skill of the surgeons of Corleone. Tumuchio de Turchio treated *personaliter* the wounds and sores of Parisio, who was close to death, working day and night for a month *cum maximo labore* (with the utmost effort). After healing Parisio the surgeon had to receive a 4 *onze* fee, if the patient died half the fee. Tumuchio was able to save Parisio’s life “operantibus primo Christi gracia interveniente et inde magisterio et laboribus dicti magistri Tumuchii”, and had 4 *onze*²⁹.

The life of Franco de Brixa, *magister chirurgicus*, is interesting and well documented. The surname shows that his family was originally from Brescia. Franco earned the esteem of his fellow citizens so in the notorial acts he was called *providus vir* or *circumspectus vir*. The surgeon invested in real estate and restored run-down houses in the quarter San Pietro, where the loggia of the *Curia baiulare* (the institution that ruled the town) stood (Ridulfo, pp. 211-212). In March 1411 the monastery of Santa Maria del Bosco gave Franco two unsafe semi-detached *domuncule* (small houses) in emphyteusis for 29 years, for an annual *census* (rent) of 6 *tari*³⁰; in November 1412 Franco obtained the *domuncule* in perpetual emphyteusis³¹. Afterwards, he bought a house, almost in ruins (next to another house of his own) from the priest Bartolomeo de Thoro, for 6 *onze*, without stipulating a notorial act. The notary drew up the purchase

²⁶ “well, attentively and carefully (...) with medicines, ointments, and other necessary things”.

²⁷ “from food considered useless for him, according to a diet *magister* Federico would have written down and given him” (ASP, N, V, reg. 31, fol. 204r).

²⁸ *Ibi*, fol. 215r-v.

²⁹ “first of all with the grace of Christ and then with the skill and dedication of the aforesaid *magister* Tumuchio” (ASP, N, V, reg. 82, fol. 151v).

³⁰ *Ibi*, reg. 16, w.n.

³¹ ASP, Tabulario di S. Maria del Bosco (Tsm), parch. 564.

contract in December 1418 (i.e. after four years), when the rich surgeon had already restored the houses³². In September 1417 Floddemilli, wife of Antonio de Pascalis, gave Franco in perpetual emphyteusis a destroyed and useless *casalinum* belonging to the monastery of Santa Maria del Bosco, next to the town walls, for the *census* of one *tari* and 10 *grani* (the same amount of money Floddemilli paid to the monastery)³³.

The surgeon's will allows us to know his private life. He married Allegranza and had a son named Bartolomeo who was his universal heir. The testator appointed guardians of his son and executors the above-mentioned Bartolomeo de Thoro, vicar of Corleone, and *magister* Antonio de Monte, who in 1424 drew up the inventory of all the assets kept in Franco's house. First of all, they mentioned his small library which included ten medical books *ad opus artis fisice et cerugie* (on medicine and surgery), the moral work *Disticha Catonis* and a *Summa* or *Regulae* by *magister* Teobaldo (Bresc, 1971, pp. 148-149). Medicines, syrups and *confeciones* (compounds) were kept in *buxule* (boxes), *oglaroli* (small pitchers), jars, *burnie* (majolica vases) and *marzapani* (wooden boxes), put in the shelves of two pine wood wardrobes (one closed with an iron bolt, another without lock), in a *repositorium* (cupboard) with pine wood boards, and in a chest with two large drawers. Surgical instruments were inside a *cufetta* (small wicker bag). Among the containers of medicines we can mention a *cannata* (jug) of Nicosia full of rose honey and a lead bell with rose water. The elegant wardrobe of the late surgeon included a camlet cloak, a red doublet, a blue cape, and four hoods³⁴.

Franco de Brixa died in 1424, i.e. the first year in which the documents report information on the medical activity of Andrea Spallitta, *magister barberius*.

In September 1424 Andrea undertook to heal within five months Polidamo, natural son of the knight Berengario Inbiyagna, who had a shinbones illness, for 2 *onze*, the patient had to pay only if he had been healed. The contract specifies that the treatment could last even a month and a half more than expected, and some experts from Corleone had to certify the healing of Polidamo³⁵. Andrea took in perpetual emphyteusis a two-story shop in the public squares of the quarter San Pietro from noble Laurino de Diana, for one *onza* and 3 *tari*, because he wanted to work in the commercial area of Corleone³⁶. The activity was booming and in 1428 Andrea took on Aloisio Martino for a year. Aloisio committed himself to work in the barbershop and to live with Andrea. He had

³² ASP, N, V, reg. 16, fols. 69r-70r.

³³ ASP, Tsm, parch. 590.

³⁴ ASP, N, V, reg. 21, w.n., edited by Bresc, 2014, III, pp. 789-791.

³⁵ *Ibi*, reg. 6, fol. 205r-v.

³⁶ *Ibi*, reg. 60, fol. 124v.

to receive half the price of all the *staglate* (cauterizations), and to give his employer all the income *extra dictas staglatas*. Aloisio could use *omnia ferramenta necessaria* (all the necessary instruments) for free and had to pay the rent only *pro sui porcione* (for his part)³⁷.

In 1439 Andrea, now called *magister chirurgicus*, became so skilled that Alfonso V of Aragon exempted him from every levy, contribution and loan imposed in Corleone by the *Curia Regia* or by the town, because his job was useful and necessary *rey puplice terre predictae* (to the commonwealth of this town) and he had to live in Corleone to practice surgery and treat patients³⁸. Notwithstanding the royal concession, Andrea left Corleone and in 1448 he was *civis Panormi*. Three years before leaving he sold his *tenimentum domorum* (a housing complex) in the quarter San Giuliano, where he probably lived, for 6 *onze*³⁹. In 1451 *providus vir* Andrea Spallitta, called again *barbitonsor*, gave Andrea Scaturro in perpetual emphyteusis the shop he had before received from Laurino de Diana, for the *census* of one *onza* and 3 *tari*⁴⁰.

Also the Palermitan barber Bernardo Stagno worked between Palermo and Corleone. His father was *magister* Simone, who died without making a will. On demand of Bernardo, *magister* Galvagno de Paulichio and Giovanni di Lu Gambinu, friends of the late Simone, drew up his inventory in front of the judge of the *Corte Pretoriana* of Palermo. It only included few objects related to the job of barber, inherited by Bernardo⁴¹, who probably decided to work in Corleone to make a breakthrough. He operated on Amico Gallastro, who had some wounds *in inguinagla sua* (in his groin) for 24 *tari*. The barber was still treating Amico in October 1441, when the patient gave him a credit of 18 *tari*, to pay at least a part of the fee. In addition to the mobility of the barbers surgeons, we have to underline their habit to work together. In November 1441 Bernardo Stagno rented the house-shop where he lived to *magister* Matteo de Argento, who came from Naro, from December 1441 to August 1442, for one *onza* and 6 *tari*. In the shop there were some barber furnishings, that is: “*tramizata tabolarum duobus bacilis*” (boards with two basins) a chair, a small grindstone and a wardrobe. Bernardo maintained the possibility of living and working in the

³⁷ ASP, N, V, reg. 6, fol. 305/309v.

³⁸ ASP, C, reg. 74, fols. 382v-383r.

³⁹ ASP, N, V, reg. 69, w.n. Andrea had the *tenimentum* in perpetual emphyteusis from the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena for the annual *census* of 18 *tari*.

⁴⁰ *Ibi*, reg. 60, fols. 124v-125r.

⁴¹ ASP, N, I, reg. 1127, fols. 12v-13r. The inventory has been edited by Bressi Bautier - Bressi, 2014, IV, 1183.

shop, dividing rent, expenses and income, but keeping two-thirds of the *lucrum medelium* (profit from medicines)⁴².

In 1444 Matteo de Argento was so ill he decided to make his will, carefully describing the tools of the new barber shop he had rented from *magister* Simone de Randacio for 14 *tari*. There were *stugium unum* (a case) with seven razors, three pairs of scissors, three combs, two grindstones, two benches, nine towels, three *chierie* (chairs), a big knife, a “*filanum* (?)”, *cutam unam de artis* (whetstone). There was also a tabernacle, whose image is unknown, that surely was an important form of protection for the barber-surgeon and his clients. Among his debtors there was a deceased foreign woman who owed Matteo 9 *tari pro medelis* and had pledged a cape (left with the notary Giacomo de Karissima). It clearly shows the medical activity of the barber. After moving from Naro to Corleone, the barber didn't marry, but he had a lover, the *mulier* Garita, defined *eius amica* (his friend); he condoned her a debt of 21 *tari* and left her a mattress and a sheet. Matteo nominated universal heir the *maramma* (fabric) of the *matrice* (main church) of San Martino, left two *gonnelle* (dresses), two *giubboni* (surcoats) and all his shirts to the poor of Christ for his soul. He decided that his executors had to sell his colored cape, to use 10 *tari* and 10 *grani* for masses of St Gregory, according to a widespread tradition of the fifteenth-century Corleone (Mirazita, 2006, pp. 47-51), and to give the rest to the church of San Martino, where he wanted to be buried. He left two *tari* to the church of San Giovanni Battista of the Jerosolimitan Order, the same amount of money to the church of San Leoluca, provided that the friars participated in the funeral⁴³. After making his will, the barber recovered and began to differentiate his activities more and more. Among the form of investment of Matteo de Argento we can mention the rent of a *fundacum seu ospicium* (a storehouse with a inn) of the noble Nicolò de Diana in the large square of the quarter San Pietro, from 1452 to 1456, for 14 annual *onze*. It was a building with houses, rooms, stables, pieces of furniture and a fountain, that hosted foreigners, animals and, sometimes, prostitutes⁴⁴. Matteo entrusted the management of the *fundacum* to his brother Antonello and in 1454 went into partnership with Novello de Belvissum of Naro and his son Pino, who had to work in the *fundacum*, supply it with stray and pay 50% of the rent and wood. He also went into business with Andrea de Genua, who had to supply barley and pay half the rent⁴⁵. The same

⁴² ASP, N, V, I, reg. 18, fol. 15r-v. On the tools of barbers and surgeons see Bresc, 2010, pp. 517-519.

⁴³ ASP, N, V, reg 54, fols. 221r-222r.

⁴⁴ *Ibi*, reg. 61, fol. 15r-v; reg. 70, w.n. On the *fondaci* inside the walls of Corleone see Ridulfo, 2018, pp. 58-65.

⁴⁵ ASP, N, V, reg. 62, fols. 94r and 132v-133r.

year Matteo agreed to marry *mulier* Perna, vergin and daughter of the late *magister* Perino di La Niella and his wife Garina, according to the Greek customs based on the separation of assets (“*iura communia que vulgariter dicitur a la grigista*”). The priest Andrea de La Niella, uncle of Perna, promised the groom 7 *onze* and a light blue dress of cloth *belui* (of Beauvais) that cost one *onza*⁴⁶. Between 1458 and 1474 Matteo sold wine and wheat. Together with Miano di Lu Munti, Matteo rented a tavern with two attics where one could store up to 150 *salme* of provision, in the quarter San Martino, for 3 annual *onze*⁴⁷; he sold 20 *salme* of new wheat to the *secretus* of Corleone⁴⁸; bought barrels of white and red wine to sell retail⁴⁹; sold all the must of his vineyard in *contrada* (district) *Pozzo di Crimone*⁵⁰. Matteo owned a tavern with partition walls and a *dammuso* (a barrel vault) next to the *Porta Magna di li Burzeri* and the walls of Corleone, with a *census* of 21 *tari*⁵¹. In 1468-1469 Matteo rented a shop in the quarter San Martino to *magister* Guglielmo Bunecto for 12 *tari*, provided he could live in the shop and work as a barber, otherwise, Guglielmo would have given him 18 *tari* more for the rent. If Guglielmo had taken on a worker in his shop, he had to divided the profit with Matteo. Matteo had to restore the shop as long as he continued to work there⁵².

3. *The varied activity of the barber Gaspare de Burello and the social climb of the surgeon Antonio de Garlano*

Providus magister Gaspare de Burello, who came from Caltabellotta, was barber, surgeon and show organizer. The relationship of Gaspare with the barber-surgeon Matteo de Agrigento is demonstrated by his presence as witness at the drafting of Matteo’s will in 1444⁵³. The barbershop of Gaspare recalled not only the roman ones, where barbers shaved beards and played musical instruments, but also the barbershops of the eighteenth century, where barbers drew out teeth, bled, treated bone fractures, sores, and wounds (Pitrè, 1992, pp. 139-140). In 1446 Gaspare worked at full speed and decided to take on the apprentice Bartolomeo de Malicia for two years, with the consent of his father Oberto. Gaspare undertook to teach the young apprentice the art “tam

⁴⁶ ASP, N, V, reg. 71, fol. 6r-v.

⁴⁷ *Ibi*, reg. 64, fol. 157v (9 June 1458).

⁴⁸ *Ibi*, reg. 74, fols. 71v-72r (28 May 1461). He received an advance of 4 *onze*.

⁴⁹ In August 1464 he bought four barrels of white and red wine (*Ibi*, reg. 74 bis, w.n.); in November 1468 eight barrels of white wine (*Ibi*, reg. 76, w.n.).

⁵⁰ *Ibi*, reg. 76, fol. 204r (31 August 1467).

⁵¹ *Ibi*, reg. 82, w.n. (15 May 1474).

⁵² *Ibi*, reg. 76, fol. 23r-v.

⁵³ *Ibi*, reg 54, fols. 221r-222r.

barbitonsarie quam iocularie, ut vulgariter dicitur la arti de la barbiria et di la iocularia"⁵⁴. The art of *iocularia* consisted in entertaining people by playing musical instruments, with jokes and mime shows⁵⁵. In Sicily the tax of *iocularia* was paid by the Jews of Agrigento and Palermo, when they organized parties to celebrate weddings and births (Sardina, 2011, pp. 175-177; Idem, 2003 , p. 424). In the first year of training Bartolomeo had to receive a third of the money earned as a barber, in the second year half the money. Instead, Bartolomeo had to take a quarter of the profits earned by him and his employer *in arte iocularie* either inside Corleone or *extra*. So the barber and his apprentice had to perform their ludic activities also outside Corleone and Bartolomeo had to go with Gaspare "ad faciendum dictam artem iocularie" (to perform the aforesaid ludic activities) in other towns⁵⁶.

In Gaspare's testament, made in February 1447 because of a serious illness, we can find important information on his life. His father was *magister* Palamidisio, his brother's name was Baldassare, so we can imagine that the family had a special devotion to the Magi. The barber married Angela according to the latin customs of Caltabellotta, which provided joint property, and had a minor daughter, Isolda, that he made universal heir. In Caltabellotta he had a *casalinum*, a garden and an enclosed land, in Corleone a vineyard in *contrada* Maddalena⁵⁷, a house in the quarter San Giuliano in the *ruga di li Volti*; a *tenimentum domorum* with a shop in the quarter San Pietro (with a *census* of one *onza* and 18 *tari* to Antonio de Florencia). His standard of living was good, in fact he owned two slaves Antonio e Agrissa, from Mountain Barca, in Cyrenaica (Verlinden, 1977, p. 237; Gaudio, p. 32)⁵⁸, nine beasts of burden (some of them in partnership) and a mule with saddle and bridle he used to ride for work. His medical practice is proved by the total sum of 25 *tari* he had to receive from three Jews and the barber-surgeon Antonello de Garlano with whom he had sold medicines⁵⁹, and by the total credit of 18 *tari* and 10 *grani* his patients owed him⁶⁰. Instead his job as entertainer is documented by the sum of one florin Andrea Fazilario owed him *pro iocularia*. Probably this activity also

⁵⁴ ASP, N, V, reg. 56, fols. 229v-230r.

⁵⁵ Du Cange, 1843, III, under *joculari*.

⁵⁶ ASP, N, V, reg. 56, fols. 229v-230r.

⁵⁷ Among the assets listed in his will there were three barrels of white wine and one of red wine.

⁵⁸ On the black slaves trade in the Mediterranean Africa see Heers, 1981, pp. 89-93.

⁵⁹ The goldsmith Macalufo owed him 18 *tari*, Xua one *tari*, Iosep de Tripoli and Antonello de Garlano 6 *tari*.

⁶⁰ Perna and Nicolò de Monte owed him 3 *tari* and 10 *grani*; Michele de Petralia 6 *tari* for his son's medicines; Federico de Xarriano 3 *tari* for the medicines of a foreign woman; Francesco de Pace 6 *tari* for the medicines of a Maltese and of the *puer* who lived in his farm.

included the organization of archery competitions given the presence of four crossbows, described in detail by specifying material (one was wooden, three of steel), the parts that composed them, and their conditions (two were under repair in Palermo and Castronovo). He gave barber tools to his apprentice Michele de Firrerio (two razors and a pair of big scissors), his father (a copper basin, two whetstones, two grindstones and nine wooden boards), his brother Baldassarre (three new razors), his brother Antonello de Latino (a small case with its contents), his nephew Petruccio de Latino (a big case). He left 10 *tari* and 10 *grani* to celebrate masses of St Gregory the day of his funeral in San Martino, where he wanted to be buried in a *fovea* (a pit). He donated 3 *tari* each to the *maramma* of San Martino and to the monastery of Sant'Agostino, provided that the friars participated to his funeral⁶¹.

Like his colleague Matteo de Agrigento, Gaspare recovered and in August 1448, in perfect health condition, he sold his slave Antonio for 13 *onze*, maybe because he needed money after a period of inactivity due to his illness⁶².

Between 1452 and 1458 four documents attest his medical activity. Gaspare treated Filippo de Mauruchio of Palermo *in spalla seu gubito* (shoulder or arm) in society with Thomuchio de Pictore and his son Paolo, for one *onza* and 15 *tari*. The patient had to pay the aforesaid *medici et magistri* within July 1452, before leaving Corleone⁶³. In May 1455 Luca de Camarda committed himself to pay to Gaspare de Burello, *magister chirurgicus*, 24 *tari* within Christmas *pro medicina et magisterio* because he had treated Matteo, son of Giovanni Dulceni⁶⁴. In August 1458 Nicolò Quaglino declared that he had to give one *onza* and 26 *tari* to Gaspare de Burello and Thomuchio de Blasi “*pro medelis factis et operatis in persona dicti Nicolai olim exenti infirmus in blachio (sic)*”⁶⁵.

Barbers treated wounds inflicted during fights that degenerated *usque ad sanguinis effusionem* (to bloodshed). The victims could remit the crime if the accused paid medical expenses, that of course depended on the severity of the wounds. In June 1455 Ximenes Durante, who had injured Giovanni de Odo, undertook to pay one *onza* and 3 *tari* to Gaspare *ex medellis operatis et factis in persona Ioannis de Odu*⁶⁶. In addition to the job of barber-surgeon, Gaspare

⁶¹ ASP, N, V, reg. 57, fols. 133v-136r. He chose as executors the priest Guglielmo de Castillino and the notary Enrico de Pictacholis. Among the eight witnesses appear four priests, a deacon, a *magister* and a notary.

⁶² *Ibi*, reg. 59, fol. 90r.

⁶³ *Ibi*, reg. 61, fols. 75v-76r.

⁶⁴ *Ibi*, reg. 37, fol. 314v. His mother Perna, wife of Giovanni de Guglielmo, acted as surety for Luca de Camarda.

⁶⁵ “for medicines and treatments of Nicolò who once had an arm illness” (*Ibi*, reg. 64, fol. 195r).

⁶⁶ “for medicines and treatments given to Giovanni de Odo” (*Ibi*, reg. 63, fol. 83r-v). Antonio Cristarilla wounded Benedetto Chichiu, so his father pledged to pay 11 *tari* for each month

continued to buy beasts of burden⁶⁷ and grew grapes in the vineyard of the fief Piano della Curia⁶⁸, that he had in emphyteusis from noble Paolo Pullastra, Guglielmo Spatafora, and Bernardo de Bandino. Between 1456 and 1459 Gaspare collected rents, grazing and cultivation rights, as proxy of the aforesaid noblemen⁶⁹.

In 1462 the barbershop of Gaspare was in the central *contrada* San Martino⁷⁰. Between 1453 and 1464 Gaspare hired workers coming from different areas of Sicily (Caltagirone, Cammarata, Bivona) to do various kinds of work, also in the vineyards⁷¹. The most interesting contract is the one stipulated in October 1464 between Pietro de Lauria, *alias de Palermu*, and Gaspare de Burello, called *providus magister chirurgicus*. The worker had to hoe in the vineyards and to do every kind of work, except the harvest, for a wage of 3 *onze* and 18 *tari et furnimentorum consuetorum* (food, clothing, and sometimes accomodation). Pietro was a patient that Gaspare had treated together with *magister* Giovanni di Lu Toru, and he still had to pay one *onza* and 24 *tari* “pro medicina facta per dictos magistros in persona dicti Petri”, i.e. for the treatment of Pietro, so this sum of money was deducted from the total wage⁷². Gaspare was eager to improve his surgical skills, so in 1467 he teamed up with *nobilis et honorabilis* Nardo de Blasio, *magister cirugicus et expertus*, who undertook to teach him *artem medicarie et cirogie*⁷³.

Between 1459 and 1470 Gaspare sold a vineyard for 10 *onze*⁷⁴, a *domuncula* in the quarter San Giuliano, next to another house of his own, for one *onza* and 15 *tari*⁷⁵; a bay foal for 2 *onze*⁷⁶. The barber-surgeon was still alive in July 1479, when he appears in a document as witness⁷⁷.

of treatment (ASP, N, V, reg. 71, fols. 42v-43r). In 1460 the Jew Gauzo Sala, beaten and wounded by *magister* Nardo de Dragna, had to receive one *onza* from *magister* Giovanni, brother of Nardo, for medicines and doctor's fee (*Ibi*, reg. 66, fol. 180v).

⁶⁷ *Ibi*, reg. 61, fol. 32v; reg. 63, fols. 87r-v and 98r-v; reg. 74, fol. 77r-v.

⁶⁸ *Ibi*, reg. 63, fols. 71r-72r and 101r-102r; reg. 65, fols. 44r-45r; reg. 64, fol. 40r; reg. 71, fols. 3r-4r; reg. 102, fol. 159r.

⁶⁹ *Ibi*, reg. 65, fols. 70v-72r.; reg. 73, w.n.

⁷⁰ *Ibi*, reg. 67, fol. 90r. The shop of Gaspare was next to the one of notary Giovanni de Gambotta.

⁷¹ *Ibi*, reg. 61, fol. 38r-v; reg. 74, fols. 13r e 60v-61r.

⁷² *Ibi*, reg. 75, w.n.

⁷³ “medical and surgical skill” (*Ibi*, reg. 76, fols. 148v-149r).

⁷⁴ *Ibi*, reg. 66, fols. 24v-25v (5 October 1459). The vineyard was in *contrada di La Oliva* or *di La Magdalena*, near the valley called *Lu Valuni*. Gaspare paid a *census* of one *tari* and 10 *grani* to the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena.

⁷⁵ *Ibi*, reg. 77, fol. 32v (17 October 1469).

⁷⁶ *Ibi*, reg. 68, w.n. (6 January 1470).

⁷⁷ *Ibi*, reg. 102, fols. 164v-165v.

The career of the surgeon Antonio de Garlano is also interesting. Called *providus vir, honorabilis magister, magister chirurgicus*, Antonio had a house in the quarter San Pietro⁷⁸ and a vineyard in *contrada* Piano della Curia⁷⁹. He bought 9 *salme* of wheat, 3 *salme* of barley, 15 oxen, and some agricultural tools from Bartolomeo Quaglino, for 32 *onze*⁸⁰. Antonio made use of slaves and wage-earners. He bought three black slaves: Lucia for 10 *onze*, and two men from Mountain Barca, Bonavventura for 11 *onze*, and another one, of which we ignore the name, for 10 *onze*⁸¹. Among the wage-earners of Antonio we can mention Pino di Lu Munti di Bivona⁸², who had worked for Gaspare de Burello⁸³, and Simone de Siragusia of Caltabellotta who committed himself to work for Antonio from March to August 1464, for 4 annual *onze* and the usual *furnimenta*⁸⁴. Probably Simone was hired by Antonio because he couldn't pay the exorbitant fee of 3 *onze*, that in 1459 the surgeon had asked him to treat some injuries and sores so serious to be defined mortal⁸⁵.

Among the patients treated by Antonio we can mention Bartolomeo de Manco, beaten and wounded in the head, who forgave his aggressor in exchange for the refund of medical expenses and missed working days⁸⁶. In 1466 Antonio undertook to treat Garita, a prostitute of Catania beaten and wounded in the head and face by *magister* Antonio Maza, *usque ad sanitatem, licet quod Deus solus sanat langores bene solcite*, for one *onza*⁸⁷. Antonio's fee was expensive and the patient who didn't pay could have his possessions confiscated. In 1470 Giovanni de [Curugna] of Alcamo had to pay Antonio de Garlano 2 "onze ex medicaria facta in eius corpore et specialiter in capite"⁸⁸. In July 1488 Antonio had three days to sell a *barracame* (a cloak) of Pietruccio Boniohanni who owed him 15 "tari ex medela et pro expensis" (for medicine and expenses)⁸⁹.

⁷⁸ ASP, N, V, reg. 102, fols. 24v-25r (5 June 1476).

⁷⁹ *Ibi*, reg. 75, w.n. (6 February 1466). In July 1488 Antonio bought a *palmentum* in ruins in the same *contrada* (*Ibi*, reg. 89, fol. 98v).

⁸⁰ *Ibi*, reg. 76, w.n. (20 December 1468).

⁸¹ *Ibi*, reg. 74, fol. 62r-v (29 April 1461), fol. 64v (23 February 1463); reg. 76, w.n. (18 May 1469).

⁸² *Ibi*, reg. 76, fol. 4r (11 August 1467).

⁸³ *Ibi*, reg. 74, fols. 60v-61r (23 February 1463).

⁸⁴ *Ibi*, reg. 74 bis, w.n.

⁸⁵ *Ibi*, reg. 73, w.n.

⁸⁶ *Ibi*, reg. 74, fols. 14v-15r.

⁸⁷ "until healing, although only God can treat illness in a good and careful way" (*Ibi*, reg. 75, w.n.). If Antonio Maza was arrested for the injuring, Garita would have to give Antonio de Garlano 12 *tari* more.

⁸⁸ "for treating with medicines his body especially his head" (*Ibi*, reg. 68, fol. 21r-v).

⁸⁹ *Ibi*, reg. 88, w.n.

We conclude focusing briefly on Antonio's private life. He married Perna, daughter of Paolo *Lu Campanaru*, a wealthy man from Salemi, and administered her properties⁹⁰. He had a natural son named Cristoforo de Garlano⁹¹. His daughter married Paolo Maringo, member of a well known family of Corleone⁹². He was juror in 1484-1485 and 1488-1489⁹³, and since 1479 was qualified as *nobilis*.

4. *The surgeons of Polizzi and the medical marketplace of Corleone between professionalization and popular medicine*

In fifteenth-century Sicily the mobility of physicians and surgeons was a quite widespread phenomenon, there were Greek, Maroccan, Catalan, and Portuguese surgeons (Santoro 2015, pp. 124-125). Besides, the cleverest Sicilian surgeons moved inside the island to increase their profit by operating or teaching.

In western Sicily there was the renowned surgeon Leonardo de Blasio, called Nardo, from Polizzi, who had learned his job from Lorenzo Furnaynu, *magister* of Florence. He didn't restrict themselves to practise medicine, but he also taught privately, transmitting his knowledge. In 1447 Leonardo was in Sciacca and undertook to teach Giovanni de Grosso how to treat shinbones and sores, to tie arteries and to use simple and composed medicine (Trasselli, 1977, pp. 272-273).

In 1463 surgeon Nardo de Blasio was in Corleone, where he promised to treat at his expense Giovanni Arcuza, who lay in bed because of a leg illness, for one *onza* and 12 *tari*⁹⁴. As we said, in 1467 Nardo made a contract with Gaspare de Burello to teach him

⁹⁰ In January 1469 Antonio chose as proxy noble Federico de Montaperto of Agrigento to go to Palermo and receive from the *secretus* 15 *onze* due to his father-in-law on the customs tax (ASP, N, V, reg. 76, w.n.). In May 1478 Antonio, on behalf of his wife Perna, and Giovanni Lu Campanaru transferred the royal right of 4 *grani* to Santa Maria di Gesù of Corleone for two years (*Ibi*, reg. 102, fol. 122v).

⁹¹ *Ibi*, reg. 86, fol. 91r (25 January 1486).

⁹² *Ibi*, reg. 86, fol. 23r-v (22 September 1485).

⁹³ *Ibi*, reg. 86, fol. 41r-v; *Ibi*, reg. 89, w.n.

⁹⁴ *Ibi* reg. 74, fols. 83r and 86v. In the document we read: "ut vulgariter dicitur ki sia ben sana di lu intutu et ki sianu ben sani li plaghi" (as they say in vernacular it had to be healed inside and outside).

artem medicarie et cirogie gambarum, videlicet ut vulgariter dicitur alazari li vini et lu spara drapu, eo modo et forma prout docuit dicto magistro Nardo magister Laurencius Furnaynu bene, perfecte et sine fraude⁹⁵.

Gaspare had to pay Nardo 3 *onze*, 6 *tari* and one *grano*, only if the surgeon taught him *dictam artem bonam et perfectam* (the aforesaid good and perfect skill), and if he made money thanks to Nardo's teaching. Nardo did not have to limit himself to give theoretical lessons, but he had to train Gaspare "ad faciendum artem cirugii videlicet expediendo insimul cambas et alias protusiones"⁹⁶ for two years throughout Sicily. They got into a partnership in which Nardo had to receive two thirds of the profit, Gaspare a third. If Gaspare treated a patient alone he would have given Nardo half the profit, instead if Nardo treated a patient alone he would have given nothing to his partner. Gaspare had to write down the sums he had earned *pro medicaria* in a special notebook, in order to draw up the accounts with *magister* Nardo. Furthermore, Gaspare couldn't teach anyone "dictam artem di lazari li vini et lu spara drapu", until the end of the society, on pain of a 10 *onze* fine to pay to his teacher⁹⁷. So the main medical practices were the ligature of the arteries, i.e. tying tourniquets to stop bleeding (Cosmacini, 2003, p. 66), and the application of a *sparadrappu* (a cloth soaked in a medical ointment) to bring the edges of wounds and sores together and heal them⁹⁸.

At the end of the fifteenth century another surgeon of Polizzi worked in Corleone. He was *magister* Michele de Rinaldo who undertook to treat Antonio Faxillaru, that was nearing death because of a *fistula trapananti* (piercing fistula) behind his left shoulder. His father Nicolò entrusted Antonio to the surgeon *pro homine mortus* (like a dead man) and gave him surgical instruments "ad operandum cirogiam et artem suam cirugie" together with his wife and daughters. Michele operated on Antonio and healed him, but "propter disordinaciones et anegres perpetratas et habitas per ipsum Antonium ad pristinum statum fuit versus et est impressus"⁹⁹. In the surgeon's opinion the relapse was due to *anegres*¹⁰⁰, that is necromantic arts practiced by Antonio's

⁹⁵ "the skill to treat and operate on legs, i.e. as they say in vernacular to tie the veins and (to use) a medical cloth, in the way *magister* Lorenzo Furnayu had taught *magister* Nardo, well, perfectly and without fraud".

⁹⁶ "to practice surgery i.e. to treat together legs and other protusiones".

⁹⁷ "the skill to tie the veins and (to use) a medical cloth" (ASP, N, V, reg. 76, fols. 148v-149r).

⁹⁸ Mortillaro, 1862, under *sparadrappu*; Piccitto, Tropea, Trovato, 2002, under *sparatrappu*.

⁹⁹ "because of disorders and necromancies done and suffered by Antonio who returned and now is in the previous condition".

¹⁰⁰ If we remove from the words *anegres* and *anegrístias* the prosthetic vowel <a>, a non-etymological word-initial vowel that in Corleone we can also find in the surnames (*Abrixa*,

family who had used the surgical instruments given back by Michele after the operation. In July 1482 Nicolò entrusted his son to the surgeon again to treat him and gave Michele the surgical instruments he needed, for a 2 *onze* fee, to pay within a year after Antonio's full recovery. Michele undertook to heal fistula *cum Dei auxilio et adiutorio* (with God's help and assistance), to remark that he did not rely on black magic but on God. If the patient wasn't healed due to non-compliance of the prescribed therapy, or if he got worse because of *anegrístias* practiced by his parents and daughters, the surgeon would have received his fee anyway¹⁰¹. Necromantic rites were considered a form of demonic magic, practiced by clerics and laymen; we can also find necromantic spells in medical books of the fifteenth century (Kieckhefer, 1993, pp. 198-201). For example, we can mention the ms. 849 of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek of Munich, written in Latin in the middle of fifteenth century (Kieckhefer, 1998), and the ms. it. 1524 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France of Paris, written in vulgar Italian in 1446, recently published, that includes treatises of astrology, necromancy, magic, and medicine (Gal, Boudet, Moulinier-Brogi, 2017).

We can set between medicine and magic the craft of the *chiravulus*, who was specialized in finding, handling, killing or sending away with spells and prayers poisonous snakes. He also treated people and animals bitten by snakes (Pitrè, 1900, pp. 352-355). His skill was essential in the Sicilian countryside where vets couldn't be easily found. In notarial documents the word *chiravulus* is often used without specifying his practices, that could also include other kinds of healing (Bresc, 1986, I, p. 157; II, p. 621). In Corleone we find *magister chiravulus* Andrea de Avunda, who in 1408 bought a vineyard in *contrada Bistiole* for 10 *onze*¹⁰², and ten years after sold all the most of his vineyard¹⁰³.

These practices could be dangerous because they lack scientific basis and sometimes were correlated with magic. In the field of traditional medicine, at the end of the fifteenth century we can mention the society between two barbers and a surgeon who separated their spheres of competence. In September 1492 *magistri* Giuliano Rubeo, Salvo de Graciano and Meni Frusteri entered an annual partnership to practice *artem barberie sive tonsure* and work together in a barbershop. Everyone had to pay one third of the rent and to receive one third of the profit. The partners had to work every day in the shop, but Giuliano

Anazano, Aponzono), we obtain the words *negres* and *negrístias*, linked to necromancy, Bresc, 2018.

¹⁰¹ ASP, N, V, reg. 103, fol. 71r.

¹⁰² *Ibi*, reg. 31, w.n.

¹⁰³ *Ibi*, reg. 16, w.n. (3 October 1418).

could not shave clients and had to give his partners a third of the profit from his surgical activity¹⁰⁴.

The good reputation of a practitioner didn't depend on the possession of a licence and the citizens could ask public authorities to prevent the activity of a licenced physician considered incompetent, as a case reported in Corleone in 1488 clearly shows. After passing an exam, the Jew physician Graziano Medici received from the *protomedicus* Gaspare La Mendula the licence to work throughout Sicily. Antonio de Ingno, lieutenant of the *protomedicus*, went to Corleone where some inhabitants protested "de medicacione mala [...] et de malis medelis exhibitis" (about bad treatments...and bad medicine done) by the Jew physician. After an investigation *de malegestis* (about wrong-doing) the lieutenant confiscated the *provisio* (license) of the physician who protested and asked to get his license back¹⁰⁵.

5. Conclusions

In the varied socio-economic background of the fifteenth-century Corleone, both barbers and surgeons treated sores, wounds and fractured limbs, gave medicines and prescribed diets. Barbers also entertained clients with different kinds of shows, included shooting competition with crossbow.

Surgeons invested the proceeds of their working activities in the real estate market, by buying and restoring houses. Barbers rented *fundaca* that hosted foreigners, traded wine, wheat and beasts of burden, hired wage-earners and used slaves. Maybe, like in Valencia, some barbers didn't invest money to speculate, they only supplemented money earned as barbers and surgeons. Anyway barbers tried to enhance not only their economic situation but also their social prestige.

While in the surgeon's inventory there are books of medicine and surgery, in the barber's inventory we don't find any book, because medical knowledge was transmitted orally and the barber did his apprenticeship with another barber, who was often his father. In fact the job was handed down from father to son. However, Gaspare de Burello, son of a barber, did two years of training with a surgeon of Polizzi, and undertook not to reveal the tricks of the trade to avoid competition.

In addition to the renowned surgeons of Polizzi, also barber-surgeons from Naro, Palermo and Caltabellotta worked in Corleone, because of the increasing demand for their medical services. The barbers associated to run together shops where they shaved beard, cut hair, stitched and dressed wounds and treated

¹⁰⁴ ASP, N, V, reg. 82, fol. 217v.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibi*, reg. 88, w.n.

external diseases. If the society was formed by barbers and surgeons in the contracts their activities were clearly differentiated.

The solutions offered to health problems were so varied that we can apply to Corleone the idea of medical marketplace, because the patients had different choices to face and solve their health problems (Robison, 2014, pp. 180-181). There was also a *magister chiravulus*, specialized in the care of snake bites and we report a case of negromantic medicine, practiced by the unwary members of a family that used surgical instruments without any competence and endangered the life of their relative.

Successful surgical operations, high fees, economic well-being and social regard of the barbers of Corleone, called *providi magistri*, show us that they were able to successfully treat their patients. The inhabitants of Corleone often could't distinguish a surgeon from a barber-surgeon, so in notorial acts Gaspare de Burello and Andrea Spallitta are qualified as *magister barberius*, *magister cirurgicus* or only *magister*.

The presence of a so rich and complex medical marketplace didn't affect the link between science and faith, that the documents clearly highlight with the wordings: "cum Dei auxilio et adiutorio, or operantibus primo Christi gracia interveniente et inde magisterio et laboribus, or quod Deus solus sanat languores bene, solicite". They underline the impossibility of healing without the help of God who bestowed on some men the *donum scientiae* (the gift of science), i.e. the ability to use their knowledge to understand the functioning and disorders of the human body and to treat people (Agrimi, Crisciani, 1980, p. 30). In Corleone surgeons tried to distinguish themselves from the extemporary healers and underlined the link between God and the medical profession, that dated back to the *Christus Medicus* of St Augustine and in late Middle Ages was revived to point out the deep relationship "between medical practitioners and the divine" (Butler, 2015, p. 253).

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