Names of Slaves in 1480 Palermo, Sicily

by Maridonna Benvenuti

Introduction

These Sicilian names were collected from Armando Di Pasquale's *Palermo nel 1480. La popolazione del quartiere della Kalsa*, Palermo, 1975. The source is a census of the Kalsa quarter in 1479 and was corrected in 1480. According to Di Pasquale, approximately 40% of the Kalsa population was originally neither Palermitan and nor even Sicilian. (Di Pasquale, p 2.) Each item lists the name of the head of the household, and occasionally names of other people in the house. The slaves, or former slaves listed below were heads of their own household.

A list of observations about the names is at the end of this article.

Spelling

To remain faithful to the original text Di Pasquale has almost always omitted punctuation. He capitalized the personal names, surnames, and place names and preserved the initial letters that were already capitalized. He also changed initial 'i' to 'j' when it was followed by a vowel, and changed the final 'j' to 'i'. Lastly, the author added an apostrophe for modern usage to separate joined words in the original text. (op. cit., p.40, fn. 2, translated by Talan Gwnyek.)

Types of Slaves

Slaves (scavi, scave) were categorized four ways, (1) nigru/nigra (black), (2) blanca (white), (3) libertu/liberta and (4) franchi. 'Nigru' included all dark skinned people including Moors (Arabs and Berbers).   'Libertu/liberta' were freed slaves while 'franchi' (other spellings franki, franca, franci) were free but under a contract with their former owners.

Names followed by translations.

Often during the years prior to the census, a toponym, descriptive epithet indicating their origin, or surname was added to the name of head of household. (op.cit., p.2.) There is one name I believe is the name of a slave although the gender is uncertain.

Feminine Names

> Luchia la Nigra liberta.
>> Luchia the Black freed slave.
>
> Madalena di Maurichi[1] liberta et vidua.
>> Madalena, daughter of Maurichi freed slave and widow.
>
> Caterina scava blanca di misser Stefanu di Ponti.
>> Caterina white slave of misser Stefanu di Ponti.
>
> Maria la Scavuna
>> Maria the big (or important) slave.

<u>Masculine Names</u>

Joanni lu Capu nigru libertu
Joanni the Chief (or head) black freed slave
Luca Libertu
Luca freed slave
Paulu lu Scavuni
Paulu the big (or important) slave
Georgi Scavuni
Georgi big (or important) slave

<u>Name of unknown gender</u>

Franci Steva

<u>Observations</u>

If these people had an owner, they were trusted to live apart.
Some slaves chose to work for their former owners.
Their *documentary forms* of names made reference to being a slave or the child of a slave.
Slaves had a hierarchy.
There were four types of slaves.
Slaves were of different races.

<u>Biblography:</u>

Armando Di Pasquale's *Palermo nel 1480. La popolazione del quartiere della Kalsa*, Palermo, 1975.

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Bellestri, Joseph, Basic Sicilian-English Dictionary, 1st American Edition, 1985, Ann Arbor, MI, ISBN 096157703.

Cassell's Italian Dictionary, 1977, Macmillan Pub. Co., ISBN 0025225405

<u>Footnotes:</u>

[1] One explanation of Maurichi might be Caracausi's, s.n. Maurigi, schiavo domestico affrancato 'domestic emancipated slave' [franchi]. Florio's 1611 Italian-English Dictionary , url: http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/ lists s.v. "Affrancare, to enfranchise, or make free".
Schiavo is a modern Sicilian and Italian word for slave.