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## Sicilian Jews and slavery: the case of Jewish community in Messina

### Abstract

Il contributo affronta, tramite l'utilizzo di fonti archivistiche, il ruolo svolto dagli ebrei di Messina nel commercio degli schiavi in Sicilia tra tardomedioevo e prima età moderna. L'obiettivo è una prima ricostruzione dell'inserimento di alcuni componenti della comunità giudaica peloritana nel lucroso traffico di questa preziosa "merce umana" e dell'atteggiamento dell'*aljama* nei confronti di importanti problematiche come la redenzione degli ebrei ridotti in schiavitù.

### The Jews of Messina and slavery

In the last decades historiographic researches have paid attention to the phenomenon of slavery in the Mediterranean area between Middle Ages and Modern Age. In Sicily, placed in the centre of the "Great Sea", slave trade never diminished during Middle Ages. The period marked by an increase of the phenomenon was the Late Middle Ages. Matteo Gaudioso and Charles Verlinden began studying slave trade in Sicily systematically. The research of the first scholar<sup>1</sup> is carried out from a juridical point of view, analysing laws, doctrines and characteristics concerning Sicilian slavery. The study of the Belgian historian<sup>2</sup>, instead, reconstructs through the analysis of some notarial sources from Palermo the phenomenon of slavery in the late medieval period, analysing origins of slaves, prices and social elements involved in this trade. After these researches Giovanni Marrone<sup>3</sup> paid much attention to notarial acts from Trapani, Giovanna Anastasi Motta contributed to studies about the slavery in Messina<sup>4</sup> and Giovanna Fiume carried out several studies<sup>5</sup>. Gaudioso asserted that «non sia esistita località in

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<sup>1</sup> M. GAUDIOSO, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni. Legislazione, Dottrina, Formule*, Catania 1992.

<sup>2</sup> C. VERLINDEN, *L'esclavage en Sicile au bas moyen âge*, «Bulletin de l'institut Historique Belge de Rome», 35 (1963), pp. 13-113.

<sup>3</sup> G. MARRONE, *La schiavitù nella società siciliana dell'età moderna*, Caltanissetta-Roma, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> G. ANASTASI MOTTA, *La schiavitù a Messina nel primo Cinquecento*, «Archivio Storico per la Sicilia Orientale», 2/3 (1974), pp. 305-342.

<sup>5</sup> G. FIUME, *Schiavitù Mediterranee. Corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna*, Milano 2009.

Sicilia, dalla città opulenta al misero casale, dove non esistettero schiavi in numero rilevante proporzionalmente al numero di abitanti. E possessori erano aristocratici, ecclesiastici, mercanti, grossi e piccoli borghesi»<sup>6</sup>. Slave sales took place, in Sicily, «ad usum ferae» and «ad usum machazenorum». According to the first procedure the seller was not responsible for vices and for hidden or plain defects of the slave sold «pro sacco pleno ossibus»; according to the second procedure, instead, the buyer put off deciding about a specific number of defects and vices, if they had revealed in legal terms, he would have used the redhibitory action<sup>7</sup>. Normally the vices and defects, hidden or plain, which led to the right to rescind a contract, were all included in the condition «ad usum machazenorum», namely: «morbo caduco», the vice to «mingere» the bed, the defect of being «fatuo», that is someone so stupid to be useless. In some cases they referred to leprosy, to be idiot, to «gucta» that is melancholy and for women, sometimes, to «mestruis carere»<sup>8</sup>.

A different thing altogether is the question concerning the Sicilian Jews owing and trading slaves. This subject has been recently discussed as historiographical issue by Henri Bress and Angela Scandaliato, the French scholar analysed transactions and trades carried out by the Sicilian Jews in the areas of Palermo and Corleone from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, noticing that members of the Jewish minority took part to the transactions of the first period especially with regard to the trade of Saracen slaves. He pointed out the absence of the Jews in the trade of slaves from Romania, because they were Christian people, in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and a restarting in the second half of the century, in the period characterized by the trade of Tartar slaves and finally a reinforcement in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the trade of slaves from Ethiopia and from Barka mountains<sup>9</sup>. Scandaliato concentrates her attention on the Sicilian Jews trading and owning slaves in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, especially Jewish merchants from Palermo, Trapani, Syracuse, Sciacca and Caltabellotta involved in this activity<sup>10</sup>. The study by Nadia Zeldes on the Jewish slaves resold in Sicily after the Spanish conquest of Tripoli in 1510<sup>11</sup> is interesting,

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<sup>6</sup> M. GAUDIOSO, *La schiavitù domestica in Sicilia dopo i Normanni*, cit., p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.*, p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.*, p. 88-89.

<sup>9</sup> H. BRESS, *La schiavitù in casa degli ebrei siciliani tra Tre e Quattrocento*, «Quaderni Storici», 3 (2007), pp. 679-696.

<sup>10</sup> A. SCANDALIATO, *Schiavi di ebrei ed ebrei schiavi nel Quattrocento siciliano*, «Nuove Effemeridi», 54 (2001), pp. 20-29.

<sup>11</sup> N. ZELDES, *Un tragico ritorno: schiavi ebrei in Sicilia dopo la conquista spagnola di Tripoli (1510)*, «Nuove Effemeridi», 54 (2001), pp. 47-55.

a topic partially discussed by Antonino Giuffrida<sup>12</sup>. A study by Salvatore Fodale<sup>13</sup> focuses on the ransom of the Jewish «captivi» in the field of a wider study on public solidarity and the ransom of slaves in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Late Middle Ages the Sicilian Jewish minority represented about 5% of the island's population, they were protected from monarchy in the name of the specific relationship existing among the sovereign and the Sicilian Jews considered «servi regiae Camerae», property of the monarch to whom they provided loans and grants and a series of services in exchange for protection. Probably in the Sicilian Jewish world slaves made not only household chores but also they acted as “Shabbat goy”, responsible for all the works forbidden by Mosaic law on the holiday. The concept of slavery in Judaism is controversial. A Jew is forbidden by Judaic law to enslave another Jew, but it is not forbidden to own foreign slaves. Slave ownership by Jewish people was legal in Sicily, as long as they were not Christian slaves. Norman law drew upon the Theodosian Code and papal dispositions regulating slave ownership by Jewish people from Gregory the Great onward. Actually a Norman constitution established that the Jews couldn't buy Christian slaves and it absolutely forbade their circumcision, a wicked crime punished with death<sup>14</sup>. *Capitula* by Frederick III of Aragon were very discriminating against the Jews. Articles LIX<sup>15</sup>, LXIV<sup>16</sup>, LXV<sup>17</sup>, LXVIII<sup>18</sup> established heavy penalties for the Jews who prevented Saracen slaves from getting baptized and for anyone who didn't arrange for the baptism of slaves' sons and they forbade Jewish and Saracen people to sell or buy Christian slaves<sup>19</sup> and they forbade Christian slaves to be employed in Jewish

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<sup>12</sup> A. GIUFFRIDA, *Schiavitù e mercato del lavoro nella Sicilia rinascimentale*, «Nuove Effemeridi», 54 (2001), pp. 30-46.

<sup>13</sup> S. FODALE, *Solidarietà pubblica e riscatto dei “cattivi” (secc. XIV-XV)*, «Incontri Mediterranei», 1-2 (2008), pp. 21-47.

<sup>14</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, Leiden-New York-Köln 1997, vol. I, doc. 195, p. 431: «Iudeus vel paganus servum christianum nec vendere nec comperare audeat nec ex aliquo titulo possidere seu pignori detineri. Quod si presumpserit omnes res eius infiscentur et curie servus fiat. Quem si forte ausu [vel] nefario vel suasu circumcidi vel fidem abnegare fecerit, capitali supplicio puniatur».

<sup>15</sup> De fide Catholica et servis saracenis ad fidem Catholicam redire volentibus et poena impediendum.

<sup>16</sup> De baptizando partu servorum, postquam ad lucem pervenit.

<sup>17</sup> Ut nulli saraceno vel iudeo liceat christianum servum emere, vel tenere, et de eo non vendendo infideli et de poena statuta in eo, qui contrafecerit.

<sup>18</sup> Ut nullus christianus habeat familiaritatem assiduam cum iudaeis vel cum eis cum comedat vel moretur in eorum servitio.

<sup>19</sup> F. TESTA, *Capitula Regni Siciliae*, Palermo 1741, vol. I, pp. 78-79: «Cum indignum sit, christianos servos, per baptismatis dignitatem effectos Christi filios et fideles, iudaeis, quos propria culpa suppressit, perpetuae servituti, vel caeteris etiam infidelibus ministrare; itaque volumus et districte mandamus ut nulli iudaeo, aut saraceno, vel alicui alii infideli, baptizatum, vel baptizari volentem emere liceat, vel in suo servitio retinere: quod si quem non dum ad fidem conversum, causa

houses<sup>20</sup>. A just baptized slave should be immediately shown in the market for the nominal price of twelve coins, on the contrary the Jewish owner ran the risk of being sentenced to prison for one year and the slave would be declared free immediately and without ransom. These dispositions highly limited the right of property of the Sicilian Jews who often ran the risk of expropriation and even of being sentenced to death. An exemplary case is that of Abramuchius Sacerdortu from Caltagirone: on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1462, by order of viceroy, the Jew was arrested for a crime «lese maiestatis divine», he had consciously bought from Giovanni Zuppillu from Noto, a Christian female slave for his own use<sup>21</sup>.

The data collected after the archive research about the 15<sup>th</sup> century show that in the big Sicilian cities especially, but also in the small ones, the Jews were involved in Mediterranean slave trade. Researches about Palermo by Henri Bresc acquaint with the substantial participation of Jewish minority's members in the slave trade predominantly managed in the Sicilian capital city by Ketibi, Taguil and de Tripoli family<sup>22</sup>. The French historian points out that «tra il 1385 e il 1440 i grandi nomi della Giudecca palermitana acquistano serve nere o uomini di fatica maghrebini o "selvaggi", "silvestri", sempre infedeli, dai mercanti catalani e siracusani di passaggio»<sup>23</sup>. Bresc notices as well that about 1420 there was a change: the Jews from Trapani bought Saracen slaves from Maghreb, maybe also Andalusian ones, in order to send them to Tunis, ransomed by their relatives or by some charitable institutions<sup>24</sup>. Angela Scandaliato identifies a Jewish Merchant from Trapani, Bulchaira de Sansono acting in Sciacca in 1435, who was involved in selling slaves also to nobles from Agrigento<sup>25</sup>. In Sciacca there were other Jewish merchants from Syracuse, Leone and Sadicis Castellano and Christian Andrea Collorono who

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mercimonii emeret et postmodum factus sit, vel fieri desideret christianus, datis pro eo duodecim solidis, ab illius servitio protinus subtrahatur. Si autem infra tres menses ipsum venalem non exposuerit, vel ad sibi serviendum tenuerit eundem, nec ipse vendere, nec alius audeat comparare; sed nullo dato pretio perducatur ad praemia libertatis; venditor autem, qui servum christianum scienter vendiderit infideli, poenam carceris per annum continuum sustinebit et nihilominus servus ipse praemio gaudeat libertatis, nisi poenas praedictas in alias arbitrari fuerimus commutandas. Si vero servi iudaeorum, non emptitii, sed nati in domibus fuerit eorundem, statim cum baptizati fuerint, eisdem dominis nullo dato pretio, libertatis praemia consequantur».

<sup>20</sup> *Ib.*, p. 80: «Nec christiani iudaeorum ipsorum servitiis in eorum domibus pro mercede aliqua aliquatenus se exponant».

<sup>21</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, Leiden-Boston 2004, vol. VI, doc. 3601, pp. 3299-3300.

<sup>22</sup> H. BRESCH, *Un Monde Méditerranéen. Économie et société en Sicile. 1300-1450*, Palermo 1986, vol. I, p. 473.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*, *Arabi per lingua Ebrei per religione. L'evoluzione dell'ebraismo siciliano in ambiente latino dal XII al XV secolo*, Messina 2001, p. 229.

<sup>24</sup> *Ib.*, p. 232.

<sup>25</sup> A. SCANDALIATO, *Schiavi di ebrei ed ebrei schiavi nel Quattrocento siciliano*, cit., p. 24.

prevalently sold black slaves from Barka mountains and rarely Tartar slaves<sup>26</sup>. About Trapani, Marone informs of some interesting acts. On 15<sup>th</sup> October 1449 Simone Maccayono sold to Jewish Mordachay Cuino from Trapani a «servam albam fetam silvestram de genere araboroum» called Braya and her son called Ammor for the price of fourteen onze coins and fifteen tarì coins cash<sup>27</sup>.

In September 1452 Jewish Salomo Chilfa bought from Pietro di Salonicco from Trapani a Saracen slave called Maometto, who had a scar on his arm, for the price of twelve onze coins and nine tarì coins<sup>28</sup>. In Syracuse, the most important centre of slave trade in the 15<sup>th</sup> century we know about some acts concerning the Jews thanks to the studies by Viviana Mulè on local Judaic community. On 30<sup>th</sup> April 1432 Salomonello Cathalano gave «nomine accomende» to Giovanni Bartolotto, second mate of Venetian galliass of Marco da Oria «quendam eius maurum tripolinum nomine Zayr quod stat pro dublis octuaginta quinque auri tripolini novi»<sup>29</sup>. Bartolotto should take the slave to Tripoli or Tunis to ransom him for the agreed amount. If he didn't get the total amount, he could reduce the price no more than seven dubli coins, on the contrary the slave would have been taken back. The sum earned by his selling should be invested «in piperi in Alixandria»<sup>30</sup>. Contractual clauses were interesting: if the black slave died while he was on the sea or the galley was wrecked or captured by pirates, Bartolotto wouldn't have any responsibility about that<sup>31</sup>. On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1481 Jewish Gaudio de Augusta sold to Paolo Guastella a twenty year female slave from Mauritania called Jasi for the price of twelve onze coins and fifteen tarì coins declaring to receive the money «bancum Marci et Marciani Salomonis»<sup>32</sup>. In September of the same year Salomonello Cathalano was involved again in a slave sale. The Jew from Syracuse gave the sum of nine onze coins to Nicolò Petralbel to buy an Ethiopian slave called "from Barka mountains" «sanum sinserum omnium membrorum suorum etatis annorum xv»<sup>33</sup>. In 1488 Queen Isabella forbade the Jews from Syracuse to trade slaves, but after the Jewish community's protest she revoked the order in 1490, considering the financial loss

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<sup>26</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>27</sup> G. MARRONE, *La schiavitù nella società siciliana dell'età moderna*, cit., p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> V. MULÈ, *Judaica civitatis Siracusarum. Vita, economia e cultura ebraica nella Siracusa medievale*, *Officina di Studi Medievali*, Palermo 2013, p. 98.

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.*

caused to Syracuse. The Queen realized that almost all the inhabitants of Syracuse lived on slave trade<sup>34</sup>.

Now I'm going to dwell upon the analysis of some sources concerning the trade and ownership of slaves by the Jewish community in Messina, not so considered in the studies about the relationship among the Sicilian Jews and slavery so far. Messina for its dominating position in the Straits was «un percorso estremamente vantaggioso per la rotta verso Levante ed il porto rappresentava uno scalo importantissimo»<sup>35</sup> so that in the city set up foreign trade agencies. Carmen Salvo stated that: «Dopo la conquista della Palestina da parte dei crociati, la città costituì la via più breve e sicura per raggiungere la Terra Santa non solo per i viaggiatori siciliani, ma anche per amalfitani, pisani e genovesi. Ciò rese Messina tappa obbligata nei tragitti di lungo corso delle navi che da Oriente e da Occidente, attraverso le rotte allora conosciute, solcavano il Mediterraneo. Inoltre, il benevolo atteggiamento dei sovrani favorì un incremento demografico della parte orientale dell'isola e un concentramento delle attività economiche del governo sul triangolo Palermo-Messina-Siracusa»<sup>36</sup>. On the other hand slavery was a considerable part of trade in the town of Faro since the Norman period, in fact on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1160, William I exempted the inhabitants of Messina from the obligation to buy slaves and clothes at the royal curia<sup>37</sup> that exercised the monopoly in former times<sup>38</sup>. The first news about slave purchase by the Jews from Messina dates back on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1287, Jewish Chackim from Messina, son of Shimaira, bought from a Catalan merchant in Palermo «quandam ancillam albam sarracenam nomine Shemsi» for the price of four golden onze coins<sup>39</sup>.

There were often discussions among the archbishop, or his vicars, and the Jews about slave ownership, in fact religious authority was always ready to take the converted “servants” away from the members of the Jewish community. On 8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *Tra Scilla e Cariddi. Storia degli ebrei in Sicilia*, Roma 2011, p. 401.

<sup>35</sup> E. PISPISA, *Messina nel Trecento. Politica, Economia, Società*, Messina 1987, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> C. SALVO, *Una realtà urbana nella Sicilia Medievale. La società messinese dal Vespro ai Martini*, Roma 1997, pp. 16-17.

<sup>37</sup> C. GIARDINA, *Capitoli e privilegi di Messina*, Palermo 1937, p. 15: «Servos autem et ancillas pannos, vel alias res Curiae de cetero nullus vestrum invitus emere compellatur».

<sup>38</sup> On the slavery in Messina see also G. CAMPAGNA, *La schiavitù a Messina nel Trecento*, in ID. (ed.), *Società, Potere e Libertà. Studi storici dal Medioevo all'età Contemporanea*, Roma 2016, pp. 21-33.

<sup>39</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, vol. I, doc. 268, p. 498: «Eodem [die][...] Firreri, mercator catalanus, consencians etc., vendidit et tradidit Chackim iudeo de Messana, filio Shimaira, quandam ancillam albam sarracenam nomine Shemsi pro unciis auri quatuor ponderis generalis quas presencialiter recepit. Promictens sibi ipsam defendere ab omni persona sub pena dupli ad opus etc., renunciens etc.».

August 1425, the viceroy appointed the abbot of Saint Mary of Roccamadore as judge to settle a controversy between Jewish Czera de Rubino from Messina and the archbishop's vicar. To judge the abbot had only to rely on the advice of legum doctorem Gualtiero de Paternione. According to the petition presented by Czera to the viceroy, he owned «unu servu moru di la insola di li Ierbi» that he had ransomed for the price of one hundred doubloons. The Jew had the slave embarked on the ship of Andrea de Staiti, granting his custody to another coreligionist from Messina, Salvu Nifusi, who led him to Tripoli. Lybian city's alcaide, took the slave away by force exchanging him for a Christian slave called Michele of Alixandru from Stilo, this one came to an agreement with Nifuse and promised to give him twelve onze coins within six months. When the Jew came back to Messina with the Christian slave, the archbishop's vicar had Michele requisitioned detaining him in the archbishopric.

When Czera and Salvo asked to get the slave back, or the money he promised to pay, the vicar answered that the slave was escaped. The Jew complained in his petition about the «dannu grandi et preiudicio» that this event caused him, especially because of the ransom of the Christian slave and he asked the viceroy to oblige the vicar to refund the price of twelve onze coins and thirteen doubloons he had lost<sup>40</sup>. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1474 the viceroy ordered the archbishop of Messina to

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<sup>40</sup> Id., *The Jews in Sicily*, Leiden-Boston 2002, vol. IV, doc. 2176, p. 2058-2059: «Venerabili abbati Sancte Marie Rocheamatoris regio oratori, salutem. Nuper ad nostram personaliter adhiens presenciam Czera de Rubino, iudeus, nobis obtulit et presentavit quamdam supplicacionem tenoris instantis, videlicet: Coram devocione vostra humiliter exponit Czera de Rubino, iudeo de Messana, quod cum ipsu havissi unu servu moru di la insola di li Ierbi, lu quali si havia taglatu et factu pactu di riccitarisi chentu dubli, per ki lu dictu exponenti lu mandau cum la navi di Andria di Staitu et accumulandu ad Salvu Nifusi et dedili unu christianu, nomine Micheli di Alixandru, di Stilu, lu quali Micheli si accordau et per scriptura promisi dari alu dictu Salvu unchi dudichi, infra terminu di misi sei, tunc de vinni et nunc passati, et vinendu lu dictu Salvu in Missina cum lu dictu Micheli prixuni, lu vicariu di Messana mandau unu sirgenti et prisi lu dictu Micheli et tinialu alu archiepiscopatu, et vinendu alu dictu archiepiscopatu lu dictu exponenti, cum lu dictu Salvu per presentari soi scripturi alu dictu vicariu per haviri lu dictu prixuni sindi fugiu da la prixunia in dannu grandi et preiudiciu di lu dictu exponenti ki, ultra hoc, pagau per la porta di Tripuli tridichi dubli, ut est consuetum, li quali dinari lu dictu Salvu putia haviri in Tripuli, ma, per ricactari lu dictu christianu, non li volsi. Pertantu humiliter supplica ki sia vestra merci di providiri et cumandari ki li dicti unci duduchi et dubli tridichi li sianu pagati per lu dictu vicariu, lu quali si volicz prendiri lu christianu di putiri di lu dictu Salvu et lassaulu fugiri senza solucioni nulla alu dictu supplicanti; et ancora ni supplica per li dapni, spisi et interessi, secundu la forma di la scriptura. Cuius supplicacionis tenore precepto, vobis, de cuius fide, sufficiencia et legalitate plenarie confidimus, causas in preinserta supplicacione contentas cum dependenciis, emergentibus et connexis inter predictum venerabilem vicarium ex una parte, et Czera de Rubino, iudeum, ex altera, duximus commictendas, ut tenore cum presenti commictimus vobis imponentes, ut causas easdem, auditis partibus, cum consilio Gualterii de Paternione, legum doctoris, magne regie Curie iudicis, sentencialiter terminetis sentenciamque vestram debite execucioni mandetis. [...]».

sell a slave «nigram» and her three year old daughter, who belonged to Jewish David Lu Medicu before their conversion to Catholicism and that were requisitioned by the prelate from Messina after their christening.

The sum obtained – according to a Pragmatic Sanction by king Martino in September 1407 – should be given to David, furthermore the viceroy urged the archbishop not to sell female slaves for low prices, according to the same pragmatic sanction<sup>41</sup>. Martino's disposition – issued in Syracuse at request of Jewish Samuele Sala of Trapani, ambassador in Africa and member of the court, supported Jewish owners who affirmed that christening was just an excuse to free slaves without paying and it was an act of subversion of property «sub fidei colore» – ordered to give the baptized slave to a Christian in order to be sold and, as acknowledgement of the ancient bond between Christianity and freedom, the slave was given a span of four months to free himself by alms or other ways<sup>42</sup>. On 13<sup>th</sup> August 1490 the viceroy ordered Pietro Isuagles, vicar of the archbishop of Messina, to give to a Christian the converted slave of Aron Faccas «iudeo fisico», who was called Pietro Paolo, in order to sell him to the best price and give the sum obtained to the Jewish doctor. Also this action of the viceroy referred to the Pragmatic Sanction issued by king Martino in

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<sup>41</sup> ID., *The Jews in Sicily*, vol. VI, doc. 4006, pp. 3578-3579: «Ioannes etc., Vicerex etc., Reverendo in Christo patri, regio oratori et commissario dilecto, archiepiscopo Messanensi, salutem. Exposuit nobis reverenter regie camere servus David Le Medicu, iudeus, quod habente eo et tenente quamdam eius servam nigram infidelem cum quadam eius filia annorum trium vel circa, tandem serva ipsa effici voluit christiana simul cum filia, et sic sacrosanctum baptismum receperunt. Sed ipse patronus questus est nobis quod vos postquam serve ipse christicole effecte sunt vos eas iusta regni huius pragmaticam sancionem editam per celebri memorie regem Martinum apud Siracusiam, sub anno domini MCCCCVII, die quinto [l. quarto] mensis septembris, prime inditionis, vendi non fecistis iuxta formam pragmatice memorate. Qua quidem cavetur quod iudeorum servi post iam susceptum baptismum alicui fideli et idoneo christiano per iudeos patronos ipsorum super hiis eligendo protinus consignentur. Qui quidem christianus ad hec electus ut super bona fide et boni viri arbitrio servos eosdem vendere teneatur, absque fraude quocumque precio quo poterit meliori, integro assignato ipsis patronis iudeys. Immo servas ipsas prefati exponentis penes vos destinatis, non sine ipsius dampno et interesse. Quare nobis humiliter supplicavit ut sibi de iuris remedio providere dignaremur. Nos vero huiusmodi supplicationi annuentes ut iuste providimus mature vosque requirimus et ortamur, quatenus servas predictas confestim acceptis presentibus alicui christiano idoneo per dictum exponentem eligendo consignari faciatis, ut illas iuxta formam dicte pragmatice vendat et preciam ipsarum prefato exponenti consignet. Nolumus enim pati ut prefatus exponens et servis suis et precio sit destitutus. Est enim ipse cum aliis regie camere servus quos prosequi tenemur favoribus oportunis. Set si vos forsitan predictas servas preter formam dicte pragmatice viliori precio vendi fecistis, volumus et declaramus huiusmodi vendicionem locum et effectum sortiri non debere, nisi in omnibus et per omnia ipsius pragmatice regie forma servata. Nolite igitur secus agere quanto gracia regia vobis cara est alias opus esset prefato exponenti aliis oportunis remediis salubriter providere».

<sup>42</sup> H. BRESI, *La schiavitù in casa degli ebrei siciliani tra Tre e Quattrocento*, cit., pp. 692-693.

1407 and then confirmed by king John. Furthermore, the viceroy ordered the stratigotus to arrange for this job in case the vicar didn't obey<sup>43</sup>.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 1465 Daniele Susi, his brother Merdoc and his mother Saporita, presented a petition to the viceroy. The Jews owned an Ethiopian slave called Iacobo Tudisco after his christening, he went to the archbishop asking for his freedom without respect for the dispositions obliging him to be resold by a Christian man for a sum that should be given to his owners. The Jews protested and the archbishop instituted proceedings, after the trial he proved the freedman was right. Daniele, Merdoc and Saporita protested again to the viceroy asking him to stop the effects of the archbishop's sentence and at the same time they wanted the slave to be kept by a Christian man waiting for the appeal verdict<sup>44</sup>. Then the viceroy agreed to the

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<sup>43</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2006, vol. VIII, doc. 5324, pp. 4602-4604: «Ferdinandus etc., Vicerex etc., Reverendo viro Petro Isuagles, vicario generali reverendissimo in Christo patris archiepiscopo Messanensis, oratori et fideli regio dilecto, salutem. Como sapiti, essendo vui li proximi iorni icza in presencia nostra et vertendo certa differencia fra vui et mastro Aron Faccas, iudeo fisico di quissa nobili cita, supra unu scavu, olim di ipsu mastro Aron, bapcticzaro, nomini Petru et Paulo, lo quali allegavino esserisi anco, et ipsu mastro Aron allegava divirisi quillo vindiri a christiano et ipsu haviri lo precio; la quali differencia remisimo a lo magnifico regio consiliario dilecto, misser Ioanni di Ansaluni, unu di li iudichi di la regia gran curti, ut apparet in decretatione nostra facta in supplicacione dicti magistri Aron ut infra, Panormi, die VII augusti, VIII indicionis. Ex parte illustris domini proregis, magnificus Ioannes de Ansalone, cui oreticius et vive vocis craculo causa commisa fuit, dictam causam expediat secundum Deum et iusticiam, a lo quali magnifico, essendo stati presentati li scripturi, actento per uno privilegio di li quondam serenissimi recolende memorie re Martino et Martino, patri et filio, dato Siracusie, anno Domini MCCCXVII, die quinto mensis septembris prime indicionis, fu concessa licencia a li iudei di quisso regno di potiri teniri scavi et, si contingissi bapcticzari alcuno scavu di ipsi iudei chi tali scavu, post subseptum bapctismus si divissi dari in potiri di alcuno fidili et idoneo christiano, absque fraude, divissi vindiri tali scavu per quillo meglo precio potissi trovari. Lo quali precio divissi consignari a lo dicto iudeo, cum condicione tamen in favorem libertatis et bapctismi, chi ipsu servu bapcticzato hagia tempu quatro misi potirisi recaptari per elemosina oi qualsivogla altra via. Deinde per lo serenissimo immortalis memorie re don Ioanni, inter alia capitula concessa iudeis, data Barchinone, IIII augusti MCCCCLX. De quibus emanavit executoria data Panormi, X ianuarii XV indicionis MCCCCLXV[II], fu confirmato et declarato lo dicto privilegio. Propterea, volendo chi la iusticia hagia so locu, ad supplicacioni ad nui di czo facta, cum deliberacione dicti magnifici, havimo provisto et per la presenti vi requidimo et hortamo chi di continenti digiati dari lo dicto scavu in putiri di alcuno fidili et idoneo christiano, lo quali, absque fraude, digia vindiri quillo per lo precio chi meglo porra trovari, lo quali preczo digia consignari ad ipsu mastro Aron, ita quod ipsu servu hagia tempu di misi quatro di potirisi recaptari iuxta formam dicti privilegii. Et di czo non faczati pacto aliquo lo contrario, per quanto la regia gracia haviti cara, alias, casu contrarii, comandamo a lo spectabili et magnifici stratigo[to] et iudichi di kissa nobili chita chi digianu exequiri la presenti como ad ipsi fussi principaliter directa».

<sup>44</sup> Id., *The Jews in Sicily*, vol. VI, doc. 3644, pp. 3325-3327: «Iohannes etc., Vicerex etc., Reverendissimo in Christo patri archiepiscopo messanensi, consiliario et oratori regio dilecto, salutem. Ostensa fuit

Jews' proposal to oblige giving them the sum obtained by Iacobo, after deduction of board and clothing expenses, from the day of his christening to the end of the process<sup>45</sup>.

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nobis noviter et reverenter presentata supplicacio seriei sequentis: "Illustris et potens domine domine vicerex etc., pro parte Danielis Susi, tam suo proprio nomine, quam nomine et pro parte Saporite et Merdoc Susi, matris et fratris eius, humiliter et reverenter ipsi illustri signoria vestre exponitur et supplicatur. Cum socia cosa chi li dicti iudei supplicanti, multi anni ica, ut patroni haianu tenutu et possedutu unu loru scavu ethiopu, noviter clamatu Iacobo Tudisco et reductum ad fidem cristianam, lu quali, innanti lu reverendissimu archiepiscopali pretendendu, seu proclamandu ad libertate et, non servata la forma di li privilegii regi chi lu dictu Iacobu divissi stari in putiri di unu christianu et debito ordine vindirisi et lu preciu di ipsu darisi et applicarisi a li dicti iudei in favuri di lu dictu Iacobu, in maximu dampnu, interessi, spisi et lesioni di la iusticia loru, e statu factu processu, conclusa la causa et disputata innanti di ipsu reverendu archiepiscopu et per multu chi ipsi exponenti havissiru dimandatu et continuo institutu a lu spaczamentu di la dicta causa, per multi tempi usandu li remedia di raxuni, haianu factu cedula collectiva protestatoria et appellatoria et presentata ad ipsum reverendum archiepiscopum, lu quali costandu ad ipsu essiri veri li articuli deducti in la dicta cedula per li dicti exponenti, detulit dicte appellacioni et inscriptis reduxi la respota sua adeo chi, ad iusticia di ipsi exponenti, fu factu processu, clausu et per ipsu reverendu archiepiscopu sigillatu et immediate presentate a la illustri signoria vostra, et in putiri di lu nobili referendariu per commissioni di vostra illustri signuria et, reportati licteri de presentacione processus citatorii ad dandum suspectos et alia faciendum, lu dictu reverendu archiepiscopu, oi veru la sua curti archiepiscopali, haia datu sententia oi pronunciatu in favuri di lu dictu Iacobu contra ipsi exponenti, li quali haianu dictu et dichinu la dicta sententia nulla in presenti et per eadem acta et omni actu inde sequenti per virtuti di quilla et si qua est appellamur et di raxuni pendenti la nullitati et appellacioni, ut predicatur, si divi suprasediri in omni cosa, la quali sententia sive la copia haianu presentatu a la vostra signuria, et quilli commissu a lu magnificu misser Iacopu di Pilacza cum altri scripturi, per iustificacioni di quillu chi da supra expostu haiamu, et per ipsu facta relacioni a la dicta illustri signuria vostra. Pertantu li dicti exponenti supplicanu ad ipsa iustissima signuria vostra chi sia sua merci commectiri ad una persuna christiana eligenda per la dicta ecclesiastica persuna, in modu chi, finita la dicta causa, di raxuni vindiri si divira et lu preciu convertirisi a li dicti exponenti, adeo chi ipsi non sianu decepti et ingannati, havendu iusticia et divendu essiri satisfacti di lu preciu predictu, comu per virtuti di li dicti privilegii, capituli et provisioni e statu observatu et patricatu in contradictorio iudicio [...] [...]».

<sup>45</sup> *Ib.*, p. 3327: «Iohannes etc., Vicerex etc., Reverendissimo in Christo patri archiepiscopo messanensi, consiliario et oratori regio devoto et dilecto salutem. Per altri nostri dati Panormi, xxv aprilis instantis indicionis, inter alia vi scrissimu chi, ex quo Daniele Susi, tam proprio nomine quam nomine Saporite et Merdochi Susi, matris et fratris eius, ni supplicaru chi li volissimo fari consignari tuctu quillu et quantu unu loru scavu ethiopu, noviter clamatu Iacobu Tudescu, reductu ad christianam fidem, havissi guadagnatu a die quo fuit baptizatus usque ad exitum cause, permictimu chi lu lucru stassi penes tutam personam, deducto victu et vistitu, idem Iacobo necessario, cussi comu li dicti nostri licteri, a li quali ni referimu, largamenti si conteni. Et perchi, da poi lu dictu Danieli ni ha insistutu et continue supplicatu li volissimo lu dictu lucru passatu fari consignari et farili respundiri di lu tempu futuru usque ad exitum dicte cause, secundu dichi per iusticia divirilu consequitari et eciam per privilegiu regiu et apostolichi iscripti. Nui, auduta eius supplicacione, remisimu la visioni di li dicti scripturi a lu nobili regiu consiglieri dilectu, et unu di li iudichi di la regia gran curti misser Iacobu

Ethiopian freedman Iacobo Tudisco appeared many times in the acts of notaries from Messina: on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1468 he is defined «ethiopus faber» and he undertook to give two onze coins to Jewish Iosep Carbi from Messina in order to buy a certain quantity of iron<sup>46</sup>, he appeared again in a notarial act of 4<sup>th</sup> June 1492 when he appointed Costa Gemilu «de terra Blanci Calabrie» as his nuncio and attorney to get eight onze coins back from Ethiopian freedman Francesco de Puyate<sup>47</sup>.

Also the most eminent members of Jewish community in Messina such as Bonavoglia, Faccas and cettuMaschazen owned slaves, they managed to get many privileges derogating the slavery law as well. On 24<sup>th</sup> January 1440 Alfonso the Good allowed Ysach de la Bonavoglia, Jewish doctor from Messina, to have his slave «de partibus Barbarie»<sup>48</sup> circumcised according to Jewish custom. On 9<sup>th</sup> September 1443 the same Alfonso allowed Iosep Maschazen to circumcise the born son of his Saracen slave<sup>49</sup> and again on 1st October in the same year he allowed Moyse

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Pilaxa, lu quali, informatu de premissis, ne divissi fari relacioni, la quali demum ni fichi et referenduni la continencia di li dicti scripturi per li quali lu prefatu Danieli divi consequitari lu lucru predictu. Et propterea, harum serie, vi requidimu et actente ortamu digiati a lu dictu Danieli, sua matri et fratri fari respundiri di lu dictu lucru passatu et da veniri modo peracto ad esitum cause, dedunchedoli tamen quillu chi racionabiliter bisogna a lu dictu Iacobu pro suo victu et vistitu, debitu et necessariu, auditis partibus, secundu la sua condiconi requedi, et in quistu non differiti ne conveniti per qualsivogla causa».

<sup>46</sup> ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI MESSINA (ASM), *Not. Matteo Pagliarino*, vol. 6/II, f. 575r: «Iacobus Tudescus ethiopus faber civi Messane sponte confessus est se teneri et dare debere Iosep Carbi iudeo civi Messane presenti etc., unciarum duas ex emptionis ferri pro eum emptori habuisse et recepisse a dicto Iosep [...]».

<sup>47</sup> ASM, *Not. Matteo Pagliarino*, vol. 7/I, f. 314r: «Magister Iacobus Tudescus ferrifaber etiopus civis Messane confisus de fide etc., magistri Coste Gemilu ferrifabri de terra Blanci Calabrie sponte secundum iuris formam etc., constituit, fecit et sollemniter ordinavit eius procuratorem et nuntium specialem et ad infrascripta generalem itaquod specialitas etc., eundem magistrum Costa, videlicet absentem tamquam presentem ad petendum, exigendum, recipiendum, recuperandum et habendum a Francisco liberto etiope de Puyate uncias auri octo quod dictus abeo recepte virctute contractus confecti manus mei eius dicti notarii Mathei die xv septembris v indictionis MLXXVI prout in registro continet [...]».

<sup>48</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, Leiden-Boston 2003, vol. V, doc. 2587, pp. 2476-77: «Alfonsus etc., Fideli nostro Yasch de la Bonavoglia, phisico, iudeo, graciam nostram et bonam voluntatem. Cupientes utique et volentes fideles nostros, eos maxime qui erga maiestatem nostram plurima comoda et servicia prestiterunt, nostris graciis prosequi et favoribus, et habentes respectum ad multa grata obsequia qui vos, idem Ysach, nostre celsitudini prestitetis et qui prestare poteritis in antea, auctoritate Domino, meliora, liceat vos libere et impune infrascripte facere possitis, tamen ad omnes dubitacionis et scrupuli materiam tollendam, vobis eidem Ysach licentian et facultatem prestamus quos possitis et sine aliquo danno, pena et ostaculo quocumque circumcidere quemdam vestrum servuum de partibus Barbarie illiusque prepurtium abs[c]idere, prout iudeis mos est facere, ut habilis ipse servus vobis servire valeat et possit [...]».

<sup>49</sup> *Ib.*, doc. 2710, p. 2583.

Bonavoglia, the heirs of his brother Ysach and his stepfather, Bulfaragio Faccas, to circumcise the sons of their Saracen slaves<sup>50</sup>.

Furthermore Jewish communities considered the «redemptio captivorum» such a praiseworthy action that they legitimated the selling of *Torah*<sup>51</sup> scrolls, in Messina there is a document dating back to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1445 attesting this custom: king Alfonso at request of Jewish community from Messina, ordered doctor Moyses Bonavoglia, general judge of Sicilian Jews, to collect a special tax from the Jews in the city to get the money used to free Benedetto Natan, a Jew from Alghero left from Maiorca and caught by Pedro del Bosch's ship and taken to Messina, back. The Jewish slave asked the community from Messina to be ransomed, affirming that he would later give the sum of thirty onz coins disbursed by the Jews from Messina and as a guarantee for this he undertook to stay in Messina until the repayment. A community council met deciding to free the slave by using the money gained giving some silver jewels of the synagogue at pawn, considering the financial difficulties of the *Iudayca* because of certain taxes paid by the Court. Following up the ransom, the slave, held as a hostage at Bonavoglia's, after many vexations from «alcuni personi di malu spiritu» escaped drowning during the journey to Corsica and considering these events some Jews, above all the ones belonging to lower classes, refused to pay, so the notable people in the community petitioned the king to order Moyses Bonavoglia, for his role as general judge, to oblige the unwilling people to pay<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ib.*, doc. 2720, p. 2591.

<sup>51</sup> H. BRESC, *Arabi per lingua Ebrei per religione*, cit., p. 359.

<sup>52</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, vol. V, doc. 2805, pp. 2654-2656: «Alfonsus etc., Dilecto et fideli medico nostro Moysi de Bonavoglia, arcium et medicine doctori, generali iudici iudeorum dicti regni Sicilie ultra farum, gratiam nostram et bona voluntatem. Oblata fuit nobis humiliter supplicatio quedam serieri sequentis: "Sacre maiestati. Per parti de li humilissimi maiorenti di la vostra humilissima Iudeca di la citati di Messina exponitur devotissime quod cum in la ligi di li dicti iudei si conteni ki la redemptioni di li captivi iudei e uno preceptu meritorio plui ca nixunu altru preceptu extrinsecu, adeo quod licet eis vendere corpus legis, idest librum teure, pro redemptionem captivorum, et acciderit casi ki unu iudeu du Lalgir, nominato Benedecto Natan, venendo con sua navecta caricata con sua mercancia et fidata et assecurata per la universitati dila chitati de Maiorica, cum hoc partendosene di fu prisu lo dictu iudeu cum la sua navi per misser Petri di lo Bustu cum la sua galia et fichili fari taglia di riscato; et tandem vinni a Missina lu dictu iudeu cum la galea predicta prisu et mandato per soi licteri ad ortari et caritativamente dimandare ala universitati di la Iudeca di Missina predicta di riscatarilo in reverencia di Deu, et ancora promictia di pagari sou riscattu. Et videndu la pietati di lu dictu captivu una cum loro iudici generali, mastro Moyses di Bonavoglia, fichiro diversi consilii non sulamenti cum lo numeru de li maiurenti, ymmo eciam cum ampliori numero ascendenti ad plui di trentasey personi o vero quaranta, li quali sono sanior et ydoneo pars dicte universitatis. Et avende fu conclusu ki si riscactassi omnino, comu appari per scriptura facta per lo notaru di lu dictu iudici loru generali, et pero ki quillo tempo la dicta Iudeca avia ad pagari certu quantitu di dinari ala curti di la vostra excellentissima maiestati et altri gravicii, per non dari multo

I was able to find an act dating back to 6<sup>th</sup> December 1436 during my researches on notarial records in Messina: Jewish Iuda Isac from Syracuse sold to merchant Antonio de Florencia from Messina a twenty year old «servam ethiopam» called Busa for the price of nine onze coins<sup>53</sup>. When the slave died on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1437 Jewish Iuda Isac wanted his nine onze coins back<sup>54</sup>. On 15<sup>th</sup> November 1474 two Jews from Syracuse were involved in the sale of a slave: Xamuel de Via and Giliotan bought for the price of thirteen onze coins from Gaudio Lo Conti, a Jew from Messina, a faithless Ethiopian slave called Maschamet<sup>55</sup>. On 4<sup>th</sup> March 1477 a Jewish

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caricu ala dicta Iudeca, maxime ki la maiori parti sonno poviri et ministrali, for accordato per li prothi et li maiorenti una cum lo dictu loru iudichi, como pari per scriptura de manu de lo dicto notario loru, ki si prindissero certi iocali argentei dila miskita et fussiru impegnorati ad alcuna bona persona et darinki alcuna cosa di ricanuximento per sui tanto ki la Iudeca fussi allegerita et fachissi tassa per pagari la quantitati di lo dicto riscatto, que muntinu ad summa trenta uncia, o vero chi quillu iudeu fachissi portari sou riscatto, comu promictia, et non fussi allura necessario di pagari la dicta Iudeca lo dicto riscatto. Et supervenendu chi lu dictu Iudeu captivu, lo quali stava suptu fide in la casa de lo dicto mastro Moyses, essendo lu dictu Moyses in li servizi di la vostra serenissima maiestati, provocandeli alcuni personi di malu spiritu, fugiu di la dicta casa et sinde andau con la navi ki si sinversi in mari di Corsica. Et infra quistu, per li causi predicti, si tardau lo ridimiri de li dicti iocali. Ultra hoc alcuni persuni deli popolari, non advertendo alo beneficio di la anima et alla permissioni facta per lo supradicto consiliu, dicino non voliri pagari. Et pero segnuri, quistu ridunda in grandi dampnu di la ecclesia seu sinagoga di li dicti supplicanti. Et pero ki quisto facto specta alo dicto mastro Moyses per la virtute di lo officio lu quali li conchessi la vostra sacra maiestati ki dici costringiri li iudei de quillu regnu secundu loro legi, et in questo precepto sono tucti obligati ad observarilo et maxime ki contrarsi lo vote di la pluy sana et ydonea parti di la dicta universitati ad hoc locum deputati congregati, ka in quissu casu tucta la Iudeca divi contribuiiri, digna la vostra iustissima regali maiestati di comandari, per vestri sacri licteri expressamenti, a lo dilecto mastro Moyses ki digia costringiri omnino a cadascuno pro rata ad pagari lo dicto riscatto et alcuni interesse ki so stati facti in lo pignorari li dicti iocali per riscactarli, et ki facza tali execucioni sine mora per non muntari plui li interesse deli dicti iocali, ut altissimus vos conservet per longissima tempora anni.” Qua supplicatione per nos clementer admissa tamquam iusta, providimus, prout vobis ad quem tamquam generalem iudicem iudeorum ut supra hoc spectat, dicimus, commictimus et expresse mandamus quod, si premissa vera fuerit et aliud non superest in contrarium legitimum, quod repugnet prefatos iudeos renitens, iuxta precepta legis Moysi, adhibitis quibuscumque oportunitis et debitis remediis ad solvendum pecunia dicte redempcionis quemadmodum in preinserta supplicatione continetur et petitur compellatis. Nos enim ultra potestatem quam ex predicto officio iudicatur optinetis ad premissa cum dependentibus, emergentibus et connexis eisdem auctoritatem et vices nostras conferimus et impartimur [...]».

<sup>53</sup> ASM, *Not. Francesco Mallono*, vol. 4/II, f. 568r: «[...] Iudas Ysac iudeus de civitate Siragusie regni Sicilie [...] vendidit ad usum maghazenorum quasi tradidit et assignavit Antonio de Florencia, mercatori civi Messane, ibidem presenti et ementi quandam eius servam ethiopam etatis annorum viginti vel circa nomine Busa, liberam et experitam ad omni debito, questione, molestia et obligacione pro precio unciarum novem [...]».

<sup>54</sup> *Ib.*, f. 568v.

<sup>55</sup> ASM, *Not. Leonardo Camarda*, vol. 9, f. 82r: «Gaudius lu Conti, iudeus civis nobili civitatis Messane, sponte secundum usum maschazenorum Messane vendidit quasi tradidit et habere concessit

doctor from Catania bought from Giovan Tommaso de Rao and Jewish Iacob Bambalu from Messina a faithless Ethiopian female slave called Busa for the price of eleven onze coins<sup>56</sup>.

Interesting notarial records of slave sale from Jews from Messina are kept as well in the notarial fund of the State Archive in Palermo. On 13<sup>th</sup> September 1412 Jewish Iosep Levi Ciminna from Messina sold for the price of ten onze coins a black African slave<sup>57</sup>. On 24<sup>nd</sup> September 1421, another Jew from Messina, Sabet Dinar, sold to Guglielmo de Amaro of Ciminna a thirty year old black slave, coming from Barka mountains, called Busa and her son called Simido for the price of fourteen gold onze coins, and, slave clothes were paid one gold onza coin. It was specified that the slave was sold «cum omnibus suis viciis, gucta, caduca et non mingendi in lecto ex eis penitus exclusis»<sup>58</sup>. On 5<sup>th</sup> December in the same year Giovanni Guillelmu «mercator Valencie» declared to sell to Sali Dari, a Jew from Messina, a bible in Hebraic, in twentyfour books, for the price of twelve onze coins, half cash and half paid with a thirty year old black female slave «montium Barcarum, silvestrem»<sup>59</sup>. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1438 David Maschazen, a Jew from Messina, and Galluffo

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Xamueli de Via et Giliotan iudeis, civibus siracusanis, presentis ibidem etc., quendam eius servum ethiopem infidelem ut dixit nomine Maschamet et operas et servicia persone dicti servi, pro precio et nomine precii unciarum tresdecim [...]».

<sup>56</sup> *Ib.*, f. 614r: «Iohannes Thomasius de Rao et Iacob Bambalu, iudeus cives nobilis civitatis Messane, sponte secundum usum maschazenorum nobilis civitatis Messane vendiderunt etc., causa huiusmodi vendicionis magistro Ysdraeli de < > fisico Greco, civi civitatis Cathanie, presenti, ibidem ementi quamdam eorum servam ethiopem nomine Busa hac operas et servicia persone sue infidelem. Et hoc pro precio et nomine precii unciarum uncedem [...]».

<sup>57</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, Leiden-Boston 2006, vol. IX, p. 5836.

<sup>58</sup> ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI PALERMO (ASP), *Not. Guglielmo Mazzapiedi*, vol. 839, f. 47v: «Sabet Dinar, iudeus, civis Messane, coram nobis sponte vendidit et promisit Guglielmo de Amaro de Chiminna presenti et ab eo sollemniter ementi pro se etc., servam unam nigram montium Barcarum figliatam cum quodam filio masculo vocato Simido et ipsam vocatam Busa etatis annorum xxx vel circa cum omnibus suis viciis, gucta, caduca et mingendi in lecto ex eis penitus exclusis, quam servam cum filio idem emptor ad instantiam venditoris est confessus habuisse et recepisse, renunciando etc., ad habendum pro precio unciarum auri quatuordecim et unciam unam pro vestimentis ita quod sunt quindecim quod precium idem venditor est confessus habuisse et recepisse, renunciando etc. [...]».

<sup>59</sup> *Ivi*, f. 139v: «Iohannes Guillelmu mercator Valencie coram nobis sponte vendidit etc., Sale Dari iudeo civi Messane librum unum vocatum Bliбие completum de xxiiii librorum Bliбие scriptum in ebraycum quem librum dictus Sala est confessus ab eodem Iohanne habuisse et recepisse, renunciando ad habendum etc., pro precio unciarum auri duodecim ponderis generalis quod precium dictus iudeus dedit et solvit eidem Iohanni in hunc modo videlicet: uncias sex in prima rata presencialiter eidem Iohanni assignantur et pro aliis unciis sex ad complementum dictus Sala dedit sibi servam unam nigram montium Barcarum, silvestrem etatis annorum xxx vel circa, quam predictam servam dictus Iohannes est confessus habuisse et recepisse ab eodem Sala, renunciando

Cuynu, a Jew from Palermo, wanted to free Alì, their Saracen slave, on condition that he paid twenty onze coins in monthly instalments of fifteen tarì coins<sup>60</sup>. On the same day Xibiten Muxa, a Jew from Piazza, received ten onze coins to David Maschazen, a Jew from Messina, and to Galluffo Cuino, a Jew from Palermo, to buy a Saracen slave<sup>61</sup>. On 8<sup>th</sup> October 1443 Manuel de Cipro, a Jew from Messina, sold to Antonello Simone Andrea, who bought in the name of his grandfather Tommaso de Magistro Antonio, a thirteen year old black slave from Barka mountains for the price of ten onze coins and fifteen tarì coins. The name's slave was Gallo and he had a defect to one of his right hand fingers<sup>62</sup> and he was bought in the name of Manuel in Polizzi by Xibiten Maltisi *aliter* Tuzu de Ielimo who had bought him from Marino La Matina<sup>63</sup>. In the fund of notaries from Corleone there is an act dating back to 24<sup>th</sup> April 1490 informing us that Catalan Baldassar Incasasaia from Barcelona, and Iona Sansono, Jewish doctor from Messina, exchanged a slave called Abraym for two rolls of clothes from Majorca, one green and the other red, and for two onze coins and nine tarì coins<sup>64</sup>.

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etc., qui Sala promisit sibi dicta serva defendere ab omni etc., et affidavit ea de morbo caduco et mingendo in lecto [...]».

<sup>60</sup> S. SIMONSOHN, *The Jews in Sicily*, Leiden-Boston 2007, vol. X, p. 6695.

<sup>61</sup> *Ib.*, p. 6712.

<sup>62</sup> ASP, *Not. Nicolò Aprea*, vol. 800, f. 44v: «Manuel de Chipri, iudeus, civis Messane coram nobis sponte vendidit Anthonello Simonis Andree, civis Panormi, ementi nomine et pro parte honorabilis Thomei de Magistro Antonio eius avunculi servum unum nigrum montium Barcarum etatis annorum XIII vel circa nomine Gallu cum defectu in uno digito manus dextre ad usum panni est confessus etc., ad habendum pro precio unciarum auri decem et tarenos xv ponderis generalis [...]».

<sup>63</sup> *Ib.*, ff. 44v-45r: «Cum paulo ante Manuel de Chipri, iudeus, vendidit Anthonello Simonis Andree quendam servum nigrum nomine Gallu pro uncias decem et tarenos xv vigore contractus facti manu mei paulo ante propterea die similiter Xibiteni Maltisi, iudeus, aliter Tuzu de Ielimo presenti coram nobis confessi sunt dictum servum emisse in terra Policii a Marino La Matina nomine et pro parte dicti Manuelis ipsumque detulisset ad eius nomen pro tanto dictus Tuzu provisum et se se obligavit eidem Manuel dictum servuum suum binum secundum usum panni [...]».

<sup>64</sup> ASP, *Notai di Corleone, Not. Giacomo de Pittacolis*, vol. 43, ff. 133r-134r: «[...] notus facimus et testamur quod presentes coram nobis in foro terre Corilionis domino Baldasar Incasasaia, catalanus de Barsinonia ex una parte etc., magister Iona Sanson, iudeus phisicus civis ut dixit nobilis civitatis Messane ex parte altera, sponte ad invicem fecerunt et contraxerunt permutacionem subscriptam in hac forma videlicet; quod dictum magister Iona virtutis dicte permutacionis seu cambii personaliter coram nobis ad usum fere, dedit, assignavit et habere concessit per brachium dexterum eidem domino Baldasari presenti et recipienti servum seu sclavum unum turbam nomine Abraym cum omnibus suis morbis et viciis latentibus et manifestis preter de eiusdem morbis videlicet: caduco, mingendi lectum et morbo lebre pro quibus vel aliquo ipse licitum sit dicto domino Baldassarii, eundem servum repudiari et restituere eidem magistri Iona et versa vice loco etc., in cambium dicti servii idem dominus Baldasar, coram nobis presencialiter dedit et assignavit, eidem magistro Iona presenti et recipienti pecias duas panni maiorkini, unam coloris viridi et reliquas coloris rubei in

The members of the community of Messina owned many slaves because on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1467 viceroy D'Urrea authorized the archbishop of Messina, Giacomo Tudisco, to baptize all the sons of Jews' slaves under fourteen years old. The viceroy addressed the prelate from Messina in this way: «Per obviari nui la malitia et perfidia di li Iudei di la Iudeca di quissa nobili citati et tutta vostra diocesi, li quali continuamenti si forzano in dispendiu catholica fidei et persuadiri in la loru perfidia et damnationi li persuni a loru submissi, et maxime li figli di li scavi loru nati in casa, o vero accattati, di anni quattordici in circa; volenduni insuper rendiri conformi ala dispositioni di la liggi canonica cossi ordinanti, havimo deliberato et consulte provisto, et item harum serie vi damu licentia et facultati, pozati de cetero prindiri da putiri di qualsivoglia iudei di vostra diocesi per vui et vostri vicarii, subditi et commissarii, tutti figli di loru scavi in casa oy vero accattati, di etati di anni XIII infra, ut predicatur, et quilli battizzari et fari christiani, et exinde fari consignari lu prezu ali patruni di li ditti scavi, iuxta la forma di loru privilegi»<sup>65</sup>.

Also neophytes, the Jews who accepted to be converted to Christianity not to leave Sicily following up the exclusion order issued on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1492 by Catholic kings, owned slaves. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1492 the neophyte, Ferdinando d'Aragona, *fisico*, bought from *honorabilis* Pietro Gambadauro, a thirty year old «servam moram nomine Fatima» for the price of fourteen onze coins<sup>66</sup>. In the end it is evident how Jewish Sicilian minority played a fair role in slave trade in Sicily and how the Jews used them, as already said, for common housework and also for specific demands linked to “Judaic” religion. Obviously everything was influenced by the peculiar juridical and social position of the Jews in Sicilian life and considering all the consequent restrictions. In spite of the scarcity of surviving documents it is right to affirm that also the members of the Jewish community of Messina played a role as important as other island communities, in this activity favoured by the good geographical position of the town that was an important trade port in the center of Mediterranean Sea.

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extimatas etc., et in pecunia numerata etc., uncias aurei duas et tarenos VIII ponderis et mensuris generalis [...]» see also H. BRESI, *Arabi per lingua Ebrei per religione*, cit., p. 231.

<sup>65</sup> A. AMICO-R. STARRABBA, *I diplomi della cattedrale di Messina*, Palermo 1888, p. 284.

<sup>66</sup> ASM, *Not. Matteo Pagliarino*, vol. 7/I, f. 520v: «Honorabilis Petrus Gambadaurus, civi Messane, sponte vendidit egregio domino Ferdinando de Aragona, neophito, medico fisico, civi Messane, presenti etc., quandam eius servam moram nomine Fatima etatis annorum xxx vel circa, ad usum magazenorum pro precio unciarum auri XIII quas dictus Petrus venditor confessus est se recepisse et habuisse a dicto emptor et econverso emptor dictam servam ab ipso venditori [...]».