

## Procida and Bourgogne tied together by a double thread

"Like the famous wine": I think that everyone has my surname (not many people in Italy, to tell the truth) said or heard this sentence at least once in its life, maybe to let the surname be written correctly by the interlocutor. "Borgogna", in Italian, is also the name of a color, the particular red shade of that wine, a color that seems to have a quite good diffusion in the commercial field. But I like to imagine that in Procida this word will evoke also other images and other stories.

In the 1880s two Calabrian brothers, Borgogna Santo and Borgogna Pietro Maria, moved to the Island: by marrying women from Procida and making numerous sons - like everyone at the time, they imprinted forever the name of this French Region in the archives and in the texts of the Phlegraean Islands. They came from San Martino di Finita, a small village in the Coastal Mountains of Paola, in the Cosenza area. But how come that Calabrians had a French family name? I've been asking this to myself for years, making different theories, none of them really convincing. Finally, the Treccani Encyclopedia arrived to enlighten me: "In Calabria there are Albanian, Greek and one French-Provencal linguistic colonies". I deepened the research and the past was finally illuminated: their family was of Calabrian Provencal origin.

Provencal of Calabria (in the last thirty years the use of the word "Occitan" became much more frequent and almost the only one used, also in the Italian law for the protection of linguistic minorities; but, for various reasons, I personally do not prefer it) mean something very specific: a long, particular and ancient history. Beginning certainly from the fourteenth century, but some sources report even from before, considerable groups of families of Waldensian religion moved to South Italy, not only in Calabria but also in some areas of Campania and Puglia. Coming from Dauphiné, from other areas of Provence and from the westernmost alpine valleys of Piedmont, in the Cosenza area they established their biggest colony (ten thousand people in the sixteenth century, according to De Boni).

There are no historical documents about the routes followed for these massive migrations, except for two interesting contracts of 1477 for the chartering of two ships that carried entire Provencal families from the port of Marseille to the ports of Naples and Paola. And historians do not provide a univocal version on the causes of migration: either for economic reasons (the regions of origin were overcrowded and resources were scarce) or because of their religion (the Waldensians were considered heretics in the original territories and therefore persecuted). Among the reasons why they chose these areas of South Italy, those who study the phenomenon indicate the favorable demographic and resource situation, the availability and the request of local landowners to welcome new settlers and also, initially, the tolerance towards their cult and their languages and traditions, very different from the local ones.

In Calabria, as proof of the clear difference in customs and tradition and language, they were called "ultramontane" by the local inhabitants, meaning that they came from beyond the mountains of the Alps. The bibliographic material about Waldensian migrations is boundless: to deepen the theme I would suggest to start from the publications of Marco Fratini. If the dates of the arrivals are not all known, one date is surely imprinted in the memory of the Calabrian Provencal community: 1561, the end of Waldensian history in South Italy. In June of that year the Waldensians of Calabria were massacred by the Inquisition and the Viceroy; the peaceful religious tolerance, following the accession to the Reformation, ended also in those areas. The communities in Campania and Puglia were assimilated, in Calabria the few surviving families, Borgogna among them, were forced to convert to Catholicism, but they still maintained the original language and customs.

But we are moving far away from Procida, let's come back to the two brothers. Thanks to the Association "La Grande Famille de Procida & Ischia" and to its research work, I found out that they were both tailors and - despite the family tradition handed down different professions - I think that this is actually very likely: the

Calabrian Provençal had great tradition in the breeding of silkworms and in the textile processing of its derivatives. And maybe it was just because of the processing of the product of "agnulieddo", so widespread also in Procida, that they moved to the Island.

Pietro Maria did not establish roots in Procida: unfortunately his first two Island sons died as infants, however at the beginning of the twentieth century, like so many Procidans of the period, he grafted the characters of the Island (those of the successive daughters had by his wife Filomena) to Brooklyn, where he continued to work as a tailor until his old age. Santo, instead, became Alessandro and he undoubtedly established roots in Procida: all the Borgognas of Procida descend from him. And if his profession was typical of the Calabrian Provençal, the descendants immediately adapted to the economy of the Island. Among his sons: Francesco "Italia", a merchant of calcium carbide for the "lampare". Among his grandchildren: Alessandro "Farinella", owner of a "cianciola" in the Chiaiolella; Michele Scialò (my grandfather), shipowner. And so on, I mentioned only the previous generations that I know and that are closer to me. But recently there were also women and men who cultivated the arts, of literature and cinema, unconsciously renewing the relationship with a well-known French artist and politician of whom we are going to tell shortly.



Ultimately, the families in South Italy that in the ancient times came from Bourgogne have to be identified just in the context that we described before: this Region is close to the Provençal territories and indeed, in a more antique and broader meaning, it included them. What the Inquisition failed to do, it was completed by the emigration of the late nineteenth century: in Calabria who had very far origins from Bourgogne, and carried its name, moved to the Americas and today the surname there is extinct; the stock moved then to the Gulf of Naples and we can say that it was just the two tailors to tie our Island to that far French Region of their very ancient origin. But actually, without knowing it, they did it for a second time: almost thirty years before their arrival in Procida a writer - who came instead directly from Bourgogne, being native of Mâcon - had already laid, first, the foundations of this link between the Region and the Island, publishing a book in Paris that is considered holy for the Procidans. It was 1852, the book is "Graziella" and the author, we all know that, Alphonse de Lamartine.



### **Fabrizio Borgogna**

*I was born in 1983 in Trieste, a beautiful city where the Procidans are very well known and respected. I am proud of my Island origins also in my job, consulting in ports and transport. I cordially thank Pascal Scotto di Vettimo, President of the Grande Famille de Procida, for the opportunity given. For further information about "La Grande Famille de Procida & Ischia" Association: [www.procida-family.com](http://www.procida-family.com)*