

Giovanni Falconi (1817-1900) and the influence of Bartolomeo Panizza in the teaching of anatomy in the University of Cagliari

Marcello Trucas

Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Dipartimento di Scienze Biomediche, Cagliari, Italia

Giovanni Falconi, a pupil of Francesco Antonio Boi (1767-1855) [1] graduated in surgery in 1843 and in Medicine in 1850 [2]. He taught Anatomy for 44 years in the University of Cagliari and became also well known in Italy and abroad, for having invented in 1841 a smallpox vaccination needle, the “Falconian Needle”, which had a great impact in spreading vaccination in the XIX century [2]. By a search in Cagliari Archives I have found the manuscript, dated 1885, of the Treatise with his lectures that Falconi, had to deliver to the “Magistrato sopra gli Studi”. It is a large textbook (672 pp.) that deals not only with gross and microscopic anatomy, but also with neuroanatomy, experimental physiology and surgical physiopathology. Of particular interest are the references to the studies of Bartolomeo Panizza (1785– 1867) [3], pupil and successor of Antonio Scarpa in the University of Pavia. Panizza was a tireless experimenter and performed clinico-pathological studies on both animals and humans [3], regarding vascular absorption, the origin of nerves envelope, the central nervous system, the avascular structure of the hairs and of the Malpighian layer of the epidermis [2]. Panizza was the one who established the first course of microscopic anatomy in Italy [3]. To demonstrate their close relationship, is the fact that Falconi bought in 1864 the first microscopes for his anatomy lab and spent 170 pages (21%) of the Treatise to neuroanatomy and description of cranial nerves [2]. He introduced the didactic approach of Panizza, creating a link between Pavia and Cagliari by carrying on microscopic research on salivary glands and neuroanatomy. Giuseppe Marci, assistant of Falconi, in 1852 was sent to Pavia, for a 6-month internship in Panizza’s lab and, in 1859, the student Ettore Lucchi came to Cagliari from Pavia [2]. Finally, it must be worth noting that the relationship with Pavia is still active nowadays in that, since 1963, the chair of anatomy is held by Anatomists belonging to the school of Antonio Pensa.

References

- [1] Riva et al. (2010) The evolution of anatomical illustration. *J Anat* 216: 209-222.
- [2] Trucas. (2017) *Di vaiolo ed altro*. Bendoo ed., Sanluri
- [3] Sandrone et al. (2014) Bartolomeo panizza (1785-1867). *J. Neurol.* 261(6):1249-50.

Key words

Falconi, Panizza, microscopy, Cagliari, Pavia, smallpox needle.