

Apothecaries in the State of Burgundy. Their Age of Becoming Master and Their Age of Retirement

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Abstract In 1477 the State of Burgundy from Charles the Bold included the Low Countries (comprising large parts of present-day Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and northern France) as well as the duchy of Burgundy and the counties of Nevers and Burgundy. The purpose of this study is to identify the age at which apothecaries obtained their master degree within the territory of the Burgundian State in the 15th and 16th century and the age of retirement as well. From 30 apothecaries their date of birth and/or their date of decease and/or their first and last mention as active apothecary could be identified. The minimum age of a master apothecary within the territory of the Burgundian State during the 15th and 16th century is about 25 years. Master-apothecaries sons were exempted from the apprentice phase, so they started their master career at a (much) younger age. The average age of decease is 59 years for 25 apothecaries identified, but varies strongly. There was no question of retirement, even not for the well-off apothecaries: the year of decease coincide almost always with the year of actively exercising their profession. From 30 identified apothecaries, 6 of them died not naturally, but as a result of manslaughter, execution or pestilence.

Keywords Master-apothecaries, Burgundian State, Age of obtaining the master-apothecary degree, Age of retirement

1. Introduction

Most studies on the history of mediaeval apothecaries are country-based. But the State of Burgundy included in 1477 (large parts of) Belgium, the Netherlands and France as showed in Figure 1. During the reign of Philip the Good (1419-1467) the administrative cohesion for the territory was strengthened by the foundation and convocation of the States-General in Bruges in 1464. After the Act of Abjuration in 1581 the last link between the Netherlands and Burgundy expired.

The purpose of this study is to identify the age at which apothecaries obtained their master degree within the territory of the Burgundian State in the 15th and 16th century and the age of retirement as well.

2. Methods

2.1. Identification of Apothecaries within the Territory of the Burgundian State

In the 15th and 16th century a systematic administration of guild members did hardly exist: the first guild administrations origin in general from the end of the 16th

century. Identification of apothecaries from the 15th and 16th century has been accomplished based on a wide spectrum of (incidentally) sources, such as appointment agreements between a town-apothecary and the town Magistrate, mentions in deeds of house sale, in heritage arrangements, in account registers from abbeys, churches, noble courts and town councils.

A data base has been compiled by the author, based on publications in the Netherlands, Belgium and France containing apothecaries in 77 towns in the State of Burgundy during the 15th and 16th century. See for examples [1] and for the data base of the Low Countries [2].

2.2. Selection of Apothecaries for this Study

From the 947 apothecaries identified in 77 towns in the State of Burgundy during the 15th and 16th century, those were selected with available data sets for this study:

- year of birth & first mention as active apothecary,
- year of birth & year of decease
- year of decease & year of mention as active apothecary at the end of life.

3. Results

3.1. Co-ordinating Regulations on Apothecary Apprenticeship

Apothecaries, physicians and town Magistrates saw in general the need to regulate the education of apothecaries at

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that time. In the towns of Autun and Dijon the apothecaries took the initiative to establish those regulations, in Beaune and Chalon it was the town Magistrate [3]. And at the same time the central authorities played their role like Emperor Charles V with his placard (“Paccaert op’t stuck der medicyne”) promulgated in 1540 in Brussels [4]. And for the towns in north France the edict of King Charles VIII in 1484 played an important role, establishing the duration of

the apothecary apprenticeship (7 years), the inspections of the dispensary and the verification of weights [5].

3.2. The Apothecaries Career Starting Age

All apothecaries, from which the data set “year of birth & first mention as active apothecary” is known, are represented in Table 1. The average age at a first mention as active apothecary is 25.3 year as showed in Figure 2.

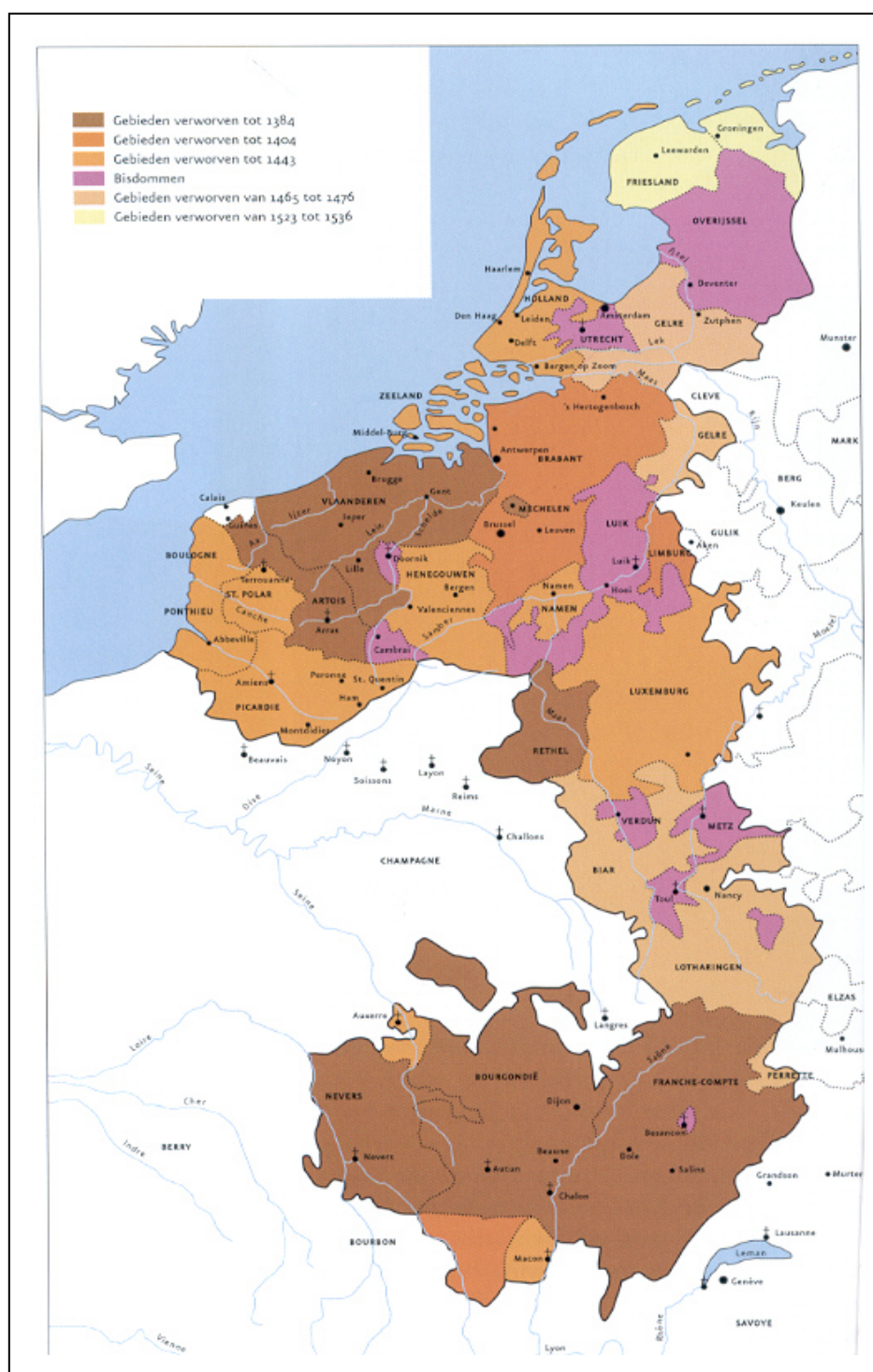


Figure 1. The Burgundian State between 1384 and 1536

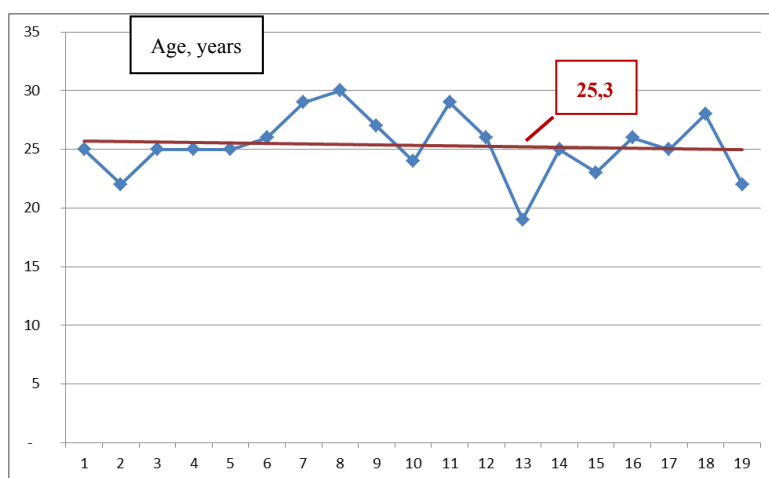


Figure 2. Age and average age of 19 starting apothecaries, mainly in the 16th century

Table 1. Age at the First Mention as Active Master-Apothecary (*=year of birth, FM=year of first mention)

Nr	Town	Name	*	FM	Age
1	Arnhem [6]	Henricus BRANT	1355	1380	25
2	Breda [7]	Goris Jansz van EYNDMER	1505	1527	22
3	Gouda [8]	Frans Gerritsz KEGELING	1513	1538	25
4	Antwerp [4]	Peeter v. COUDENBERGHE	1517	1542	25
5	Tournai [7]	Cornelis van EYNDMER	1524	1549	25
6	Haarlem [9]	Dirck OUTGAERTSZ CLUYT	1546	1572	26
7	Amsterdam [10]	Walich SYVERTSZ	1549	1578	29
8	Alkmaar [8]	Boridt Hendr. MUYDEN	1550	1580	30
9	Amsterdam [8]	Hans MARTENSZ	1554	1581	27
10	Zierikzee [11]	Jan COOMANS	1555	1579	24
11	Amsterdam [8]	Barent Hendr. AVERCAMP	1557	1586	29
12	Breda [12]	Gijsbrecht EELTGENS	1562	1588	26
13	Amsterdam [8]	Pieter G. RUYTENBURCH	1562	1581	19
14	Zierikzee [11]	Lucas Philipsz MESMAKERS	1563	1588	25
15	Amsterdam [8]	Jan Hendricksz LOEN	1564	1587	23
16	Amsterdam [8]	Victor van der KERKE	1564	1590	26
17	Rotterdam [13]	Jacob ANDRIESZ	1567	1592	25
18	Delft [14]	Gerrit Woutersz LIEFTINGH	1569	1597	28
19	Amsterdam [8]	Gerrit SYVERTSZ	1574	1596	22



Figure 3. Valerius Cordus (1515-1544)

3.3. Additional Information on the Apothecaries Mentioned in Table 1

From most apothecaries mentioned in Table 1 more information is found than just the year of birth & the year of first mention as active apothecary, as pointed out hereafter.

Cornelis van Eyndmer, apothecary in Tournai, proceeded against his father, Goris Jansz van Eynmer, apothecary in Breda. In the end they came to an agreement by which the father paid 60 guilders to his eldest son in conformity with his mother's last will.

Peeter van Coudenberghe was born in Brussels on May 16 1517. In 1542 he became citizen of Antwerp and owned a dispensary in the Zilversmidstraat (Silversmithstreet). In 1548 he was the first in the Low Countries to develop a (private) botanical garden with over 600 exotic species. He

improved the *Dispensatorium of Valerius Cordus* (German physician and botanist) with over 400 corrections, published in 1568 by the famous printer Plantin.



Figure 4. Peeter van Coudenberghe (1517-1599)

Walich Syvertsz (1549-1606) had divergent interests: author of “*de Roomsche Mysteriën ontdekt*” (the Roman Catholic Mysteries discovered), grower of tulips and contributor to the book “*Van de Byen*” (About the Bees) by Clutius (1597).

In 1579 Jan Coomans is registered as citizen in Zierikzee, 24 years old, coming from the environment of Liège.

After Breda was captured from the Spanish by the State army, Gysbrecht Jans Eelkens (1562-1641) hid the brass-ware from de Grote Kerk (Great Church) in his dispensary cellar. Thirty five years later after Breda surrendered to the Spanish army commander Spinola, he returned the brass-ware to the church.

Antwerp's Protestant population was given four years to settle their affairs before leaving the city after the surrender in 1585 to the Spanish army of Parma. Lucas Philipse left Antwerp in 1588 and was registered as citizen in Zierikzee. In 1592 he is mentioned in the confirmation register of the Reformed Church as Lucas Philipsz alias Mesmakers.

Jacob Andriesz (1567-1606) is mentioned as citizen in Rotterdam holding a dispensary and acting at the same time as a physician. His dispensary “*de Gulden Vissel*” (the Golden Mortar) was located in the Hoogstraat.

Gerrit Woutersz Liefingh (1569-1624) is mentioned in the account register of the hospital of Delft and in a document where he is excluded from celebrating the Holy Communion after accusing the pastor Henricus Arnoldi.

3.4. The Age at Decease

All apothecaries, from which the data set “year of birth & year of decease” is known, are represented in Table 2. The average age at decease of the 25 apothecaries is 59,6 year with variations from 37 to 91 year.

Table 2. Age at Decease of Apothecaries in the Territory of the Burgundian State (*=year of birth, †=year of decease)

Nr	Town	Name	*	†	Age
1	Arnhem [6]	Henricus BRANT	1355	1422	67
2	Breda [7]	Goris Jansz van EYNDMER	1505	1577	72
3	Gouda [8]	Frans Gerritsz KEGELING	1513	1557	44
4	Antwerp [4]	Peeter v. COUDENBERGHE	1517	1599	82
5	Amsterdam [8]	Gerrit JANSZ	1529	1570	41
6	Vlissingen [15]	Reinier van den PUTTE	1534	1616	82
7	Amsterdam [8]	Jan ELBERTSZ	1542	1581	39
8	Amsterdam [8]	Dirk FREDERICKSZ	1545	1611	66
9	Leyden [9]	Dirck OUTGAERTSZ CLUYT	1546	1598	52
10	Amsterdam [8]	Lambert PRINCEN	1547	1591	44
11	Amsterdam [8]	Harmen JANSZ	1549	1607	58
12	Amsterdam [8]	Walich SYVERTSZ	1549	1606	57
13	Alkmaar [8]	Boridt Hendr. MUYDEN	1550	1641	91
14	Amsterdam[8]	Frederick FREDERICKSZ	1551	1597	46
15	Leyden [8]	Christiaan PORRET	1554	1627	73
16	Kampen [8]	Barent Hendr. AVERCAMP	1557	1603	46
17	Amsterdam [8]	Sybrant EGBERTUS	1557	1594	37
18	Zierikzee [11]	Jason JANSZ	1557	1613	56
19	Amsterdam [8]	Pieter G. RUYTENBURCH	1562	1627	65
20	Amsterdam [8]	Assuerus van BLOCKLAND	1562	1617	55
21	Breda [12]	Gijsbrecht EELTGENS	1562	1641	79
22	Zierikzee [11]	Lucas Ph. MESMAKERS	1563	1639	76
23	Amsterdam [8]	Jan Hendricksz LOEN	1564	1631	67
24	Rotterdam [13]	Jacob ANDRIESZ	1567	1606	39
25	Delft [14]	Gerrit Woutersz LIEFTINGH	1569	1624	55

3.5. The Age of Retirement

All apothecaries, from which the data set “year at decease & year of mention as active apothecary at the end of life” is known, are represented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that the year of decease coincides nearly always with the year of a last mention as active apothecary, in other words a retirement period was non-existing.

Table 3. Difference in Years between the Year of Decease and the Year of Last Mention as Active Apothecary in the Territory of the Burgundian State (\dagger =year of decease, LM=year of last mention, $\Delta=\dagger$ -LM)

Nr	Town	Name	\dagger	LM	Δ
1	Dijon [3]	SANCENOT de BRECEY	1408	1408	0
2	Dijon [3]	Pierre SANCENOT	1421	1421	0
3	Dijon [3]	Guillaume LE FORT	1439	1439	0
4	Arnhem [6]	Henricus BRANT	1422	1422	0
5	Zutphen [16]	Wilhelmus CROECH	1425	1421	4
6	Ghent [17]	Jan van LEYDEN	1432	1432	0
7	Ghent [17]	Jan van SYCLEER	1467	1466	1
8	Ghent [17]	Zegher van WYMEERSCH	1489	1486	3
9	Ghent [17]	Lievin HENDERICX	1490	1490	0
10	Ghent [17]	Jan vanden ACKERE	1503	1500	3
11	Ghent [17]	Quinten de SERAIN	1505	1503	2
12	Ghent [17]	Jacob IMPINS	1513	1513	0
13	Amiens [18]	Jehan de LOUVEGNY	1520	1520	0
14	Breda [7]	Wijnand MICHIELSZ	1535	1533	2
15	Gouda [19]	Reynier PAUW	1547	1547	0
16	Zierikzee [11]	Romb. C. M. van EEGHEM	1554	1554	0
17	Delft [14]	Cors Claesz PERSYN	1556	1555	1
18	Dijon [20]	Philippe Le CENE	1557	1557	0
19	Amsterdam [8]	Jan PERSIJN	1562	1559	3
20	Delft [14]	Michiel DIRCKSZ	1564	1564	0
21	Ghent [21]	Berthelmeeux van de PUTTE	1568	1568	0
22	Ghent [21]	Nicolaes de ZADELEERE	1568	1568	0
23	Breda [7]	Anth. HERBERTSZ HOZE	1572	1572	0
24	Delft [14]	Heynrick MOERMEESTER	1574	1574	0
25	Breda [7]	Goris Jansz van EYNDMER	1577	1576	1
26	Seurre [3]	Jacques TAINURIER	1579	1579	0
27	Leyden [22]	Claes CORNELISZN	1586	1586	0
28	Delft [14]	Cornelis Gerritsz de MAN	1595	1595	0
29	Leyden [9]	Dirck OUTGAERTSZ CLUYT	1598	1597	1
30	Amiens [23]	Antoine PIECE	1598	1596	2

3.6. Additional Information on the Apothecaries Mentioned in Table 3

The last mentions as active apothecary come from a variety of archive sources as showed hereafter.

Master Henricus Brant delivered as court apothecary from 1395 till 1422 to the duchy of Guelders.

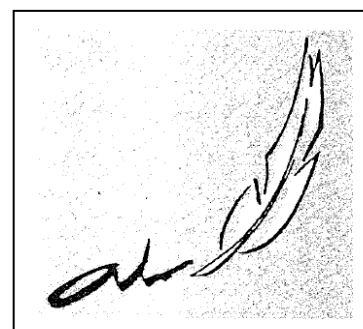


Figure 5. The ex-libris from Henricus Brant, court-apothecary of the duchy of Guelders

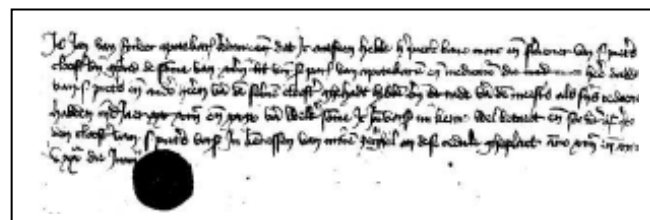


Figure 6. Sealed receipt, dated June 20, 1430 from Jan van Sycleer for delivering medicines to the St. Peter abbey near Ghent. The seal of green wax, with a diameter of 27 mm shows a man with a club and a small lion and has as legend: sigillum Iohannis de sycleus

Sancenot de Brecy kept his dispensary from 1380 up to his death in 1408 in the “Rue au Change” in Dijon. The inventory was made up in that year and his wife Marguerite continued the dispensary. In 1410, his son, Pierre Sancenot, took over the business from his mother. In 1421 he passed away and his mother took over temporarily from 1421 till 1429. Guillaume Le Fort – married with the daughter of Pierre Sancenot – succeeded in 1429 Marguerite. At his death in 1439 the inventory was made up and showed that the family had made a considerable fortune.

In 1421 Wilhelmus Croech was replaced by another town-apothecary in Zutphen, 4 years before his decease.

Jan van Leyden was upper-dean of the merchants and was beaten to death in August 1432 together with other authorities during the weaver revolt in Ghent.

The account register of the town of Ghent reveals the delivery of dragées to the municipality by Jan van Sycleer in 1466, one year before he passed away.

Between 1480 and 1486 Zegher van Wymeersch delivers dragées to the municipality of Ghent. He passed away in 1489. And Levin Hendricx - dean of the grocers in 1478 - delivered in 1490 to the municipality. In 1490/1491 the delivery was done by his widow.

Jan vanden Ackere appears still in 1500 in the infirmary register of the St. Peter abbey in Ghent and his widow sells (2/3 of) the dispensary in 1503. The dispensary of Quinten de Serain in the “Minnemanstrate” in Ghent is still mentioned in 1503 and he passed away in 1505. And Jacob Impins delivers still in 1513 dragées to the municipality of Ghent, who pays the invoice amount to his widow in 1514.

Reynier Pauw – apothecary and burgomaster of Gouda – died in 1547 by a mistake of his servant: he realised too late his servant had given him a medicine from a wrong pot.

Rombout Cools Michielsz van Eeghem was born in Malines and passed away in 1554 in Zierikzee. The inventory of his dispensary was made up shortly afterwards, so he was probably active as apothecary till his death.

Apothecary Cors Claesz Persyn is mentioned to be alderman and burgomaster of Delft during the period 1532-1555. He passed away in 1556.

Philippe Le Cene, being a Protestant, established a dispensary in the haven of refuge Geneva. At his return in France he was executed in 1556 in Dijon.

Berthelmeeux van de Putte – being a Calvinist in Ghent – was condemned to death in 1568 by Alba’s Council of Blood and decapitated in November 1568. The inventory of his dispensary was already made up in December 1567. His colleague Nicolaes de Zadeleere underwent the same fate.

Goris van Eyndmer made up his will in 1576 and died in 1577 in the same house where his dispensary “de Roze” was established since 1535.

Jacques Tenturier - apothecary in Seurre - signed on September 20, 1579 a decree to combat the pestilence epidemic, succumbed some days later and already on October 13, 1579 his successor was appointed: Clément Rampalle from Marseille.

Dirck Outgaertsz Cluyt (Clutius) was apothecary in Delft from 1578 till his appointment as “hortulanus” of the Hortus of Leyden in 1594. In 1597 his booklet “Van de Byen” was published.

Claes Cornelisz lived over 50 years at the “Botermarkt” (Buttermarket) in Leyden and was a wealthy man. He passed away in 1586 and after the death of his wife the inventory was made up on April 4, 1587.

Cornelis Gerritsz de Man held his dispensary “De Spiegel” (The Mirror) at the west side of the “Koornmarkt” (Cornmarket) in Delft. He died in 1595 and his 8 years old

son succeeded him later on, while his widow continued in the meantime.

Antoine Piece lived and worked in the “Mortier d’Or” (Golden Mortar) in the “Grande Chaussée du Blé” in Amiens. In 1596 he is still mentioned as active apothecary and passed away in 1598.

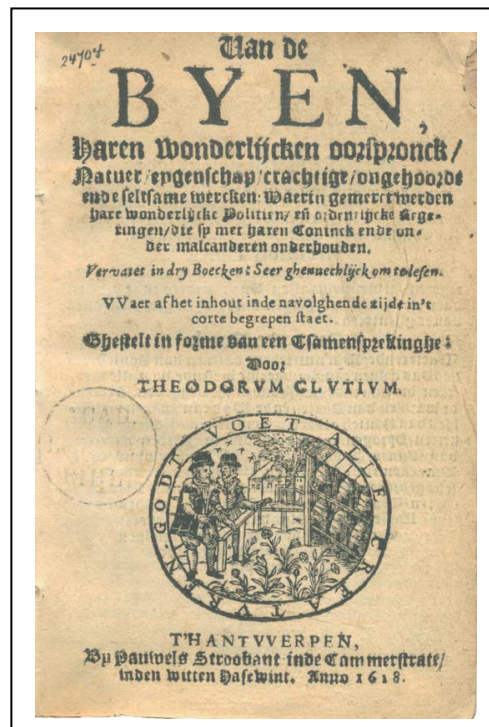


Figure 7. The vignette on the title page of the reprint from 1618 of Van de Byen matches the text of the booklet, written in the form of a dialogue between two men: Clusius and Clutius

4. Discussion

4.1. The Age at Decease

The average age at decease of the 25 apothecaries from Table 2 is 59,6 year with variations from 37 to 91 year. The average life expectancy in the late middle ages is estimated to be 25-27 year. However the infant mortality was extreme high, so older people were not uncommon at all. If we look at the life expectancy once the age of 25 was attained, recent estimations talk about 48 years. The owners of life-annuities in Oudenaarde (East Flanders) – a wealthy group citizens – attained in the early 16th century the average age of 55-60 year. The apothecaries in the territory of the State of Burgundy belonged as well to the higher middle class, so an average age of 59 years at decease seems not uncommon. [24]

4.2. The Age of Retirement

Table 3 shows that the year of decease coincides nearly always with the year of a last mention as active apothecary, in other words a retirement period was non-existing. For 6 of the 30 apothecaries considered, it concerned a not natural (sudden) death: manslaughter, execution and pestilence. But

even for the wealthy and higher class apothecaries (upper-dean, alderman, burgomaster) no indications are found of a retirement period.

4.3. The Apothecaries Career Starting Age

The average age at a first mention as active apothecary is 25.3 year and can be considered as the starting age of a apothecary career in the territory of the State of Burgundy during the 15th and 16th century. This age corresponds for instance with the requirements from the Magistrate of Amiens in 1576 for the education of an apothecary: the age at which the formation starts is 14 or 15 year, the apprenticeship should take 4 years and the following master-formation 6 years. After submitting his master work piece, the journeyman is admitted as master-apothecary to the guild at the age of 24-25 year. Master-apothecaries sons were exempted from the apprentice phase, so they started their master career at a (much) younger age. [23]

4.4. Importance of the Apothecaries Education Period

In order to improve the quality of delivered medicaments (and to eliminate the frequently occurring practices of incompetent people and charlatans), the requirements of the entrance to the apothecary profession became more stringent and were more explicit prescribed in the course of the 15th and 16th century.

The apprenticeship started in general at the age of 15 year and the young apprentice was integrated in the household of the apothecary. He should be able to read and write and later on to understand Latin. During the 4 year of apprenticeship the focus was on developing practical skills including the maintenance of balances and weights, the furnace, the distillation units, the jars and pots and on the other hand on developing practical know-how of the simplicia in the apothecaries garden or directly in the nature.

Once successfully finished his apprenticeship, the master-servant or journey-man started the second phase of his education, sometimes in the same dispensary, sometimes with another apothecary. After 4 to 6 year he was examined before an examination board of town-physicians, the doyen of the apothecary guild and representatives of the town Magistrate. The examination was split in 3 parts [19]:

- the examinee was thoroughly questioned on his know-how of the simplicia and their preparation
- on the understanding and interpretation of physician prescriptions
- and last but not least the examinee should prepare 3 or 4 composed medicaments during one or more days (the master work piece)

After passing his examination, the journeyman was admitted as master-apothecary to the guild at the age of 24-25 year. Master-apothecaries sons were exempted from the apprentice phase, so they started their master career at a (much) younger age. [23]

5. Conclusions

For the territory of the State of Burgundy during the 15th and 16th century, it was found that the average age at a first mention as active apothecary is 25.3 year, which can be considered as the starting age of a apothecary career. Starting at the age of 15 year, the two phase education took 8-10 year and was required in order to improve and guarantee the quality of the delivered medicaments.

From 25 apothecaries identified in this study, the average age at decease is 59 year with variations from 37 to 91 year, not unusual for higher middle class citizens.

It was showed that the year of decease nearly always coincides with the year of a last mention as active apothecary, in other words a retirement period was non-existing, even not for the wealthy and higher class apothecaries. For 6 of the 30 apothecaries considered, it concerned a not natural (sudden) death: manslaughter, execution and pestilence.

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