

Marseille, France, February 2019

## **Corato and Grenoble: A Tale of Two Twinned Cities** (origins of the project)

*(with apologies to Charles Dickens)*

### ***From individual quest to collective exploration***

#### **Preamble**

##### **Emigration at the origin of the twinning**

Though Corato (Apulia, Italy) and Grenoble (Isère, France) share a common history, they have only been twinned since 2002 following a protocol of friendship signed in 1982. The municipality of Grenoble records that ‘...A first wave of *coratini* immigrants arrived in France in 1921-1924 just after the 1914/18 war, to help with reconstruction (in Grenoble) and flee famine in Apulia. A second wave took place in 1947 when many *coratini* arrived in Grenoble in search of work. These successive waves of immigration have resulted in today’s strong *coratini* presence in Grenoble.’ The number of descendants of the first immigrants from Corato is not known precisely, but they can probably be counted in their tens of thousands in Grenoble, Dijon, Chambéry, even in Marseille, while the population of Corato itself is estimated at 48,000.

##### **Emigration as part of the project**

The starting point of this project is the putative immigration of the parents of Francine, who was born in Marseille in 1936, and adopted five years later. Genealogical research for her biological parents began in 2013, but it was not until 2016, after DNA tests, that it was shown that her 2 parents were from Corato (or possibly from surrounding areas).

Whether Francine's parents did, in fact, emigrate or not, the process of genealogical research required a historical grasp of *coratini* migration, and it was deemed necessary to place Francine's birth family in a chronological context in order to examine hypotheses concerning the emigration of her parents. We also sought to understand what her parents had gone through. Doubtless, like thousands of other *coratini*, they chose the pain of leaving their home city and country in order to escape misery and fascism. They would then have sought work in their adopted country, all the while confronting racism and difficult living conditions, in order to find a new life and hoped-for prosperity. Throughout our research, we have been careful to consider family histories in the light of all aspects of emigration, including the possibility that some emigrants may have returned to their country of origin.

##### **Translation and publication of 'Quando i clandestini eravamo noi' ('When we were the illegal immigrants')**

The timely discovery in July 2017 of a book produced by the Santarella School of Corato allowed us to trace the history of *coratini* emigration. We therefore decided to translate it into French and have it published in a bilingual version so that its content would be accessible to the greatest number of descendants of *coratini* who had emigrated to France.

The funding requested for this project is intended primarily for the printing and distribution of this book in a bilingual version. The translation faithfully respects the text of the original version published in 2011. The objective of the book was to facilitate students of the Santarella School becoming acquainted with various aspects of emigration from Corato, while at the same time accustoming them to the rigours of research, and drawing a parallel with present-day immigration. An introductory note to this bilingual version of the book points out

that the translation was done within the framework of genealogical research being conducted to trace Francine's origins.

### **The linguistic dimension of the project**

It was quite natural that this genealogical research should have a linguistic dimension: in the face of the uncertainty concerning the identification of her birth parents, it appeared to us that Francine could also find her origins by learning the Italian language and discovering the culture of her parents. We are aware that many *coratini* immigrants in France have taken a different path in that their language of origin, in particular, has been all but forgotten, even if there has remained in their hearts a fondness for the culture that was left behind.

Having discovered the Domaine du Trouillet in Ardèche, we learned about the desire of its owner, Roberta Petrini, to promote the presence at her establishment (which is similar to an Italian *agriturismo*) to descendants of Italian immigrants, especially from the two major cities of Marseille and Grenoble. Very often, people wishing to learn Italian today are of Italian origin. Thus, by proposing to Roberta to organize Italian courses (conducted by Silvia Maiorani, who was Francine's and my own first Italian teacher ...) our project met Roberta's half way, maintaining the hope that descendants of *coratini* emigrants would be among the participants of these courses and that we could meet them there. After all, the Domaine du Trouillet is only 2 hours away by car from Grenoble ...

### **Contribution to a genealogical project in Corato**

Of course, this research could have remained strictly confidential. However, over a period of 3 years, thousands of hours have been devoted to the development of a family tree in which the task at hand was to locate the parents of Francine according to the methodology and tools of genetic genealogy. So, the number of people in this tree having exceeded 15,000, authenticated by more than 14,000 referenced photographs of civil records, we wanted to make this real database available to *coratini*, be they from Corato itself or from other countries where the descendants of the original immigrants live today.

### **Purpose of the project**

At the heart of this genealogical and linguistic project, two questions: firstly, will it correspond to an interest on the part of contemporary *coratini*—both Italian and French—in family history, in which emigration and naturalization play an important part? (During our genealogical research, we met 'online' many descendants of *coratini* migrants who were curious to know the fate of a lost relative ... or, in the usual way, to retrace their family history as far back as possible in time).

Secondly, will the project identify *coratini* witnesses who can shed light on Francine's birth parents? Our ultimate goal is that Francine's biological family—be they in Grenoble or Corato—will recognize Francine as one of their own.

## Summary of the overall project, 'A Tale of Two Twinned Cities'

The development of the overall project will be done in 4 stages :

### Stage 1: Implementation of “Italia in Ardèche”, ‘weekend immersions' into the Italian language and culture

"Come and practice, perfect and savour Italian in a magical place in the heart of the Ardèche hills where Italy has found its place.

Roberta the owner, Simona the chef and Silvia the teacher will be delighted to pamper you for two days through the language, culture and cuisine of Italy!

On the menu: games, recipes, workshops, walks, tastings, discovery of the regions of Italy, films ... obviously all in Italian! ...”

The courses are open to all, provided that you speak a little Italian and you accept that the Italian language is used as if one were in Italy where nobody speaks French.

The Domaine du Trouillet ( [www.letrouillet.com](http://www.letrouillet.com)) is located near Alboussière in the Ardèche, half an hour from Valence, west of the Rhône.

The first 'course' took place from March 29 to 31, 2019. The next one will be in March 2020. For practical details, see

here: [https://www.facebook.com/italiainardechetrouillet/?epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/italiainardechetrouillet/?epa=SEARCH_BOX)

### 2nd stage: printing of 500 copies of the bilingual book in Corato, 'When we were the illegal immigrants'.

This bilingual booklet of about sixty pages is the result of research conducted in Corato in 2010 under the direction of the historian Pasquale TANDOI and professor Maria LOBASCIO. Well documented with statistics, and illustrated with contemporary photos, it tells the story of emigration from Corato, (Apulia, Italy) from the beginning of the 20th century to 1959 : first towards the USA, then to France and particularly to Grenoble, to Argentina and later to East Africa. The migrant pioneers from Corato are often named, thereby increasing the genealogical significance of the book.

According to the decades covered, one discovers how these *coratini* were discriminated against in comparison with Northern Italians right from the moment they arrived at Ellis Island in the 1920s; how they were treated as "criminal" emigrants in the American press, how they became "Italians abroad", under the fascist regime, then, adorned with entrepreneurial virtues, "settlement colonists" in Cyrenaica in Libya , from which they were driven out by Gaddafi in 1969. While Grenoble is the city where one finds the largest community of *coratini* immigrants in the world, the post-war period sees a new Eldorado opening up to them, Venezuela, a country with which Corato still maintains a strong link.

The book provides an excellent overview of emigration from Corato, describing its evolution to various places around the world, according to fluctuating opportunities and political constraints.

The printing in 2019 was done by Tipolito Martinelli, in Corato, who also printed the original edition in 2011.

### Step 3: Setting up a genealogical project in Corato

During a trip to Corato in 2019, it is proposed to hold a public meeting, under the auspices of the newspaper LO STRADONE, followed by a week of individual meetings with interested people. The program of the meeting will be as follows :

- Presentation of a family tree of 15000 people, 90% of *coratini*, posted on Ancestry.it
- Establishment of a database of over 14,000 photos of referenced civil records, accumulated during the building of the aforementioned family tree
- Presentation of a file listing the *coratini* naturalized in France (extracted from the work of Maurice Loisel, 'List of people who acquired or lost French nationality from 1900 to 79' , Ministry of Social Affairs and National Solidarity, Paris, published between 1943 and 1983)
- Presentation of the search for Francine Canepa's biological parents.

### Step 4: Digitization of the burial records in the archives of the parish of Corato, kept at the Santa Maria Maggiore church

The baptismal records from 1582 to 1930 and most of the marriage records from 1585 to 1934 were digitized in 2008. A total of 128 registers were digitized : at least 38,000 photos of 76,000 pages containing approximately 500,000 authentic records. The photos were copied on about 200 CDs (kept in Corato), as well as on a hard drive belonging to the church. Due to lack of time, the burial records were not digitized.

The digitization was carried out in April 2008 by the Grenoblois Pierre Marzocca, whose father emigrated from Corato in 1925. Pierre, founder of the association 'Chemin à l'Envers' ( [pierre.marzocca@sfr.fr](mailto:pierre.marzocca@sfr.fr)), also runs the [Clic-Archives.fr](http://Clic-Archives.fr) company, with whom he has spent the last 4 years marketing a digitizer that he designed himself.

The digitization was done at the request of Don Gino Tarantini, custodian of the Corato church archives, who was concerned to spare the original records the wear and tear of handling and thereby preserve them for posterity. It was done within a rigorous contractual framework, which defines the conditions of use of the records. In the words of Pierre Marzocca, published on the site of a Geneanet forum on July 15, 2014 : " The digitization was done at the request of the priest responsible for the archives and I signed an agreement with him (with authorization from the bishop of Trani), with very strict conditions including: not to disseminate these records on the internet nor to lend, sell or give copies of complete registers; on the other hand, this work can be consulted at the headquarters of the association (at times detailed on the website of the City Council of Le Cheylas. If you cannot travel there, I can do the research for you and send you any documents needed by email. The consultations, searches, and sending of copies of documents are completely free of charge, and there is no subscription charge."

The project will provide a digitizer, and will train a person to digitize the death records of the Corato parish archives. In France, the dissemination of records on request will continue to be done by the Association 'Chemin à l'Envers', in Le Cheylas (30km from Grenoble).

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**Budget to August 2019****Funding expected**

Printing of 500 copies of the bilingual book

'When we were the illegal immigrants' :

.....1250 Euros

Rocco Forte Hotels  
(Masseria Torre Maizza, Puglia)  
1000€ (accepted)

Layout.....250

Fondazione Vincenzo Casillo  
1000€ (accepted)

Distribution...1300

Municipality of Corato 800

Archival Digitizer 420

Municipality of Grenoble ...800

Other expenses 380

**Total : 3600 Euros**