

**Association Atelier Généalogique,  
18b rue Jules Moulet, 13006 Marseille.  
ateliergenealogique@gmail.com**

**Project : 'A Tale of Two Twinned Cities: Corato and Grenoble'**

**Summary 2017 to 2021 of the 1st and 2nd phases of the project**

The **first phase** of the 'A Tale of Two Twinned Cities: Corato and Grenoble' project (with apologies to Charles Dickens for 'stealing' the title idea) can be summarized as follows:

- 6 years of genealogical research on Corato by myself, James Smith - originally British, immigrated to France, naturalized French - has consisted in the construction of a family tree (of over 22,000 people as of January 2022) and a database domiciled on Google Drive containing over 20,000 photos of authentic records and other documents. Let's just say that this intensive work over 6 years would not have existed without the fact that Francine took 2 DNA tests, which showed that both her parents were of Coratino origin.

In order to learn the methodologies of genetic genealogy, I had to do two online courses with the American group DNAadoption.com. While I do not consider myself an expert in the field, this training was at least enough to convince me that genetic genealogy still struggles to be really effective when the research is done in the context of an endogamous society such as exists in Corato. That is to say, in a place where people mainly intermarried, the current tools of genetic genealogy identify too many cousins to hope to achieve as precise a goal as the identification of biological parents. This is not surprising considering that genetic genealogy was developed primarily for research in the American melting pot, where people move easily from one part of the country to another, to change homes. The methodology has enabled the identification of criminals such as the Golden State Killer, but the tools to break through the genealogical confusion created by endogamy have yet to be developed.

However, the public family tree we have created, the *albero genealogico coratino*, and its database, have become important tools for anyone researching Corato - genealogically, and possibly historically as well. See here for instructions on how to use these tools: <https://www.emigrazione-corato.org/pages/article-html/mode-d-emploi-de-l-arbre-et-de-la-base-de-donnee.html>

These tools are resources for hundreds of researchers who have found them on the major genealogical websites, and have copied the information contained in the *albero*. We also hope that they will verify their authenticity by finding the corresponding records in the database.

- The second part of this first phase of our project was the realization that anyone doing genealogical research centred on Corato cannot avoid considering the historical fact of the Coratino migration as an integral part of that research. This being so,

during a visit to the Municipal Library of Corato in July 2017, we were lucky enough to find a book by the historian Pasquale Tandoi on emigration from Corato, '*Quando i clandestini eravamo noi*' ('When we were the illegal immigrants'). The decision to translate this book was a natural one for Francine and me. Its printing in a bilingual Italian/French version in June 2019 under the title '*Quand c'était nous les clandestins*' was no foregone conclusion, but we were lucky enough to find funding from Rocco Forte Hotels, London, and the Fondazione Casillo, in Corato itself. We had 500 copies printed...and distribution continues to this day, on request.

We are used to saying that the **second phase** of our project started in October 2019, during a first mission to Corato : on this occasion, Pasquale Tandoi's book, which was originally published in 2011 following a collective research in collaboration with the Santarella School of Corato, was presented during an evening organised by the Sporting Club. Following this evening, the decision was made with Pasquale Tandoi and Marina Labartino, our project partner in Corato, to try to delve deeper into the history of Coratino migration, in particular to France, which had been the main destination of Coratini migrants from 1920 onwards.

However, it was found that the necessary resources and framework for writing this migration history are largely lacking, as are some essential genealogical and documentary resources for the constitution of a satisfactory family history, most notably access to the baptismal, marriage and burial registers in the Corato parish archives. During the mission to Corato, we were able to discuss this issue with the priest responsible for the archives, Don Peppino Lobascio. He told us that a request for permanent access had to be addressed to the Archbishop of Trani by an official body, not by an association or a private individual. Thus, the second phase of our project continued as follows, especially during the pandemic:

1. Preparation of a *dossier* for the Archbishop of Trani, in the name of the COM.IT.ES of Lyon (Comitato degli Italiani all'Estero, president : Angelo Campanella, vice-president : Jean-Philippe Di Gennaro, an official body under the authority of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), to request the digitization and putting on line of the parish archives of Corato; this *dossier* was sent in August 2021 ;
2. November 2020: our website, [www.emigrazione-corato.org](http://www.emigrazione-corato.org) (webmaster: Louis Lafranceschina) was put online.
3. 20 to 27 September 2021, there was a second mission to Corato, by a delegation consisting of Jean-Philippe Di Gennaro, Joseph Marzocca and James Smith: again, a meeting took place with the person in charge of the parish archives, Don Peppino Lobascio, with the participation of our partner Marina Labartino; and another with the mayor of Corato, Professor Corrado de Benedittis, to request the digitization and putting on line of the passport applications of emigration candidates from 1920 onwards (which should include the trace of most of the first emigrants to France) ;



Our delegation received by the Mayor of Corato (centre), with the participation of Pasquale Tandoi (far left). We found that the registers containing passport applications are quite small:



Domicilio	Condizione	Località e Stato	Data di emissione	Firma attestata il ritiro del Passaporto	Assistenti
Quaranta 18	brecciate	francia	24/04/1928	Quaranta	
"	brecciate	"	"	Quaranta	
Via Lombardi	"	"	13	Roberto Baccarini	
Via Biaggio	brecciate	"	24	Quaranta	
Rob. Della 27	"	"	13	Quaranta	
"	"	"	"	Marina 27/01	
"	"	"	"	Di Biaggio 27/01	

4. On 24 September 2021, a webinar was broadcast from Corato with the participation of four eminent historians: Catherine Virlouvet, Biagio Salvemini, Mateo Sanfilippo, and Stéphane Mourlane, whose key address focused on the current trend in migration history to rely on the memory and experience of families whose members have emigrated. The presentations of this webinar are still available here: <https://www.emigrazione-corato.org/pages/article-html/webinaire-du-24-septembre-2021.html>

James Smith, Marseille, 19 January 2022

