

Genealogy research in Corato with available 18th-century records and limitations without access to the complete parish records: case studies and future prospects

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ABSTRACT

Last year, two valuable resources for *coratino* genealogy research were published online: the 1754 *catasto onciario* and the parish indexes for baptism and marriage records. These resources have allowed me and many genealogy enthusiasts to research our *coratino* roots multiple generations further back than those found in the earliest civil records (1809); in many cases, the parish indexes – together with the *catasto* – are sufficient to paint a complete picture of a family over several generations. Sometimes, however, researching more distant generations is impeded by the lack of complete information or inability to distinguish similarly named individuals found in these records. I present several case studies of *coratino* families that utilize all the resources currently and potentially at our disposal. In particular, I show how one goes about bridging the gap between civil records (beginning in 1809) and the *catasto onciario*, as well as reconstructing more remote generations prior to the *catasto*. I first illustrate an exceptional case where individuals are uniquely named, readily found in the *catasto* and parish indexes, and all descend from one person whose patrilineal ancestors can be traced to the late 1500s. Next, I present a case where there is a generation missing between civil records and the *catasto* and it is necessary to consult complete parish records – which are currently not available online – to bridge this gap. Finally, I demonstrate how variations in names introduce an additional layer of ambiguity that also cannot be resolved without complete parish records. These examples serve to illustrate what can be accomplished with access to complete record sets, but becomes difficult or impossible with incomplete, incorrect, inconsistent, or inaccessible records. We hope that it will be possible to digitize the remaining parish registers and for these records to be made freely accessible to individuals of *coratino* descent all around the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Giancarlo Mainardi is a graduate student in New York City with a background in mathematics and physics. His interest in genealogy is rooted in a longstanding fascination with local history and drive for solving various kinds of puzzles and sharing knowledge. He has been researching his family history for over three years; several of his ancestors, including his *coratino* grandfather, immigrated to New York during the 20th century. During the last year, he has been part of a group of correspondents with the Atelier Généalogique organization, comprising individuals of *coratino* descent across multiple countries (including Italy, the United States, and Brazil) – some of whom Giancarlo initially met through FamilySearch – and headed by James Smith (Marseille).

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CASE 1: ALL LINES CONVERGE, NO HOMONYMS

When tracing one's *coratino* roots, the resulting family tree may contain various branches in which the same surnames occur repeatedly. This begs the question of whether, and how distantly, those individuals are related. In a highly endogamous society, pedigree collapse is inevitable in generations that can be reconstructed with available records. Conversely, some surnames are less common, and it is often easier to ascertain if and how everyone in a town is related in such a scenario. One such case is the Craco family of 18th century Corato, a family which my collaborator Rafael Caterina and I have studied extensively.

Civil records

Most Italian genealogy research begins with a dive into civil records (*registri dello stato civile*), which are readily available for the Province of Bari¹ on Portale Antenati (1809–1900 images) and FamilySearch (1901–1910 images; 1809–1900 indexed information). In April 2025, FamilySearch completed indexing of all available civil registers for the Province of Bari from 1809 to 1900 inclusive using AI. This offers considerable time savings when searching for names and dates, as opposed to browsing the handwritten indexes in the Antenati records.

When searching for the surname Craco in records from Corato on FamilySearch, both as the surname of the primary person on record (to directly construct the Craco family tree) and as the mother's surname (to trace more distant links via female lineage), we find that everyone born before the beginning of civil records but for whom a marriage or death record exists belongs to only a handful of couples. Table 1 (below) lists the individuals found through this search.

Name	Birth year ²	Death year	Father	Mother	Spouse
Domenico Craca	Est. 1809	1872	Cataldo Craco	Grazia Torelli	Rosa Lasorsa
Maria Antonia Craco	Est. 1806	1809	<i>not stated</i>	<i>not stated</i>	<i>none</i>
Giuseppe Craco	Est. 1805	1831	Cataldo Craco	Grazia Torelli	<i>none</i>
Maria Greca Craca	Est. 1795	1875	Luigi Craco	Rosa Ardito ³	Serafino Olivieri
Giuseppe Craco	Est. 1790	1857	Luigi Craco	Rosa Ardito ⁴	Angela Olivieri
Isabella Craca	Est. 1787	1840	Luigi Craca	Rosa Ardito	Giuseppe Donato Lops
Lucia Craca	Est. 1787	1864	Luigi Craco	Rosa Ardito	Cataldo Arbore
Cataldo Craco	Est. 1771	1841	Giuseppe Felice Craco	Rosa Palumbo	Grazia Torelli
Arcangela Craca	Est. 1764	1835	Giuseppe Felice Craca	Isabella Caputo	Vito Domenico Cialdella
Benedetta Craca	Est. 1751	1811	Domenico Antonio Craco	Rosa Parisi	Vincenzo Mastrolillo

Table 1. Individuals with the surname Craco in Corato who were born prior to civil records for whom a death record exists.

In addition to the individuals found in civil records and their parents, there were several others with the surname Craco who lived during the 18th century and who presumably were deceased prior to 22 January 1809, the start of civil recordkeeping: Grazia Craco (m. Francesco d'Oria), Nicola Craco (m. Giuseppe di Caterina), and Lucrezia Craco (m. Vincenzo Soldano). To determine if and how these individuals lacking civil death records are connected requires an examination of older records: the parish indexes and the *catasto onciario*.

¹ This refers to both the present-day Metropolitan City of Bari and the province of Barletta–Andria–Trani.

² Estimated from death records. When a marriage record is available, it generally references the correct birth year (the difference between the subject's age and marriage year) or (beginning in 1835 in Corato) gives an exact birth date.

³ Maria Greca Craco's 1814 marriage record correctly identifies her parents, but her 1875 death record does not.

⁴ The indexed information for Giuseppe's death record on FamilySearch incorrectly includes his wife's name in place of his mother's. I also note that users cannot submit corrections for AI-indexed records on FamilySearch. This demonstrates the need to consult the original records on Antenati to ensure correctness and consistency when building one's family tree.

Parish indexes and *catasto onciario*

Because of the relative rarity of the surname Craco, together with the dates estimated from civil records, a researcher would fancy their chances of finding all the individuals named above in the parish indexes and *catasto onciario* and in turn constructing a substantially complete family tree until at least the early 18th century.

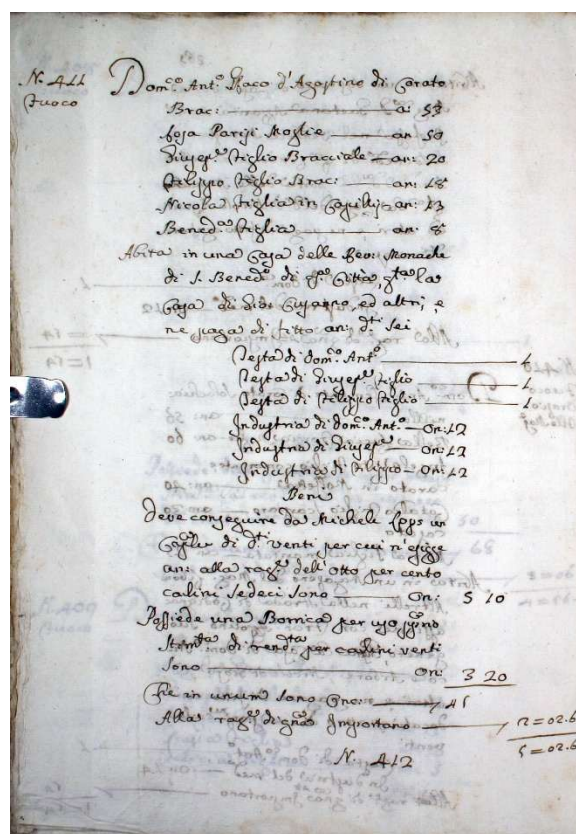


Figure 1. Family of Domenico Antonio Craco in the *catasto onciario*.

In the *catasto*, only one *capofamiglia* (head of household) bears this surname, Domenico Antonio Craco.⁵ His entry (Figure 1) names his wife Rosa Parisi, several children, and his father Agostino. This is the oldest couple of those referenced in Table 1; as there were no other Craco families in Corato at the time, it is a reasonable assumption that the Giuseppe Felice and Benedetta named above are the same individuals as Domenico Antonio's children in the *catasto*. The other children in this family are not referenced in Corato's civil records, indicating that they moved to other towns, did not have children alive in 1809, or died without ever having children. Luigi Craco is notably absent from the *catasto*, implying that he was likely born after 1754. For individuals born after the *catasto* and deceased prior to civil records – which I refer to as the “missing generation”, one must hope they have no homonyms⁶ in order to identify them without access to complete parish records. When such a gap arises, it is not possible to reconstruct more distant generations, even though it is certain that such older relatives are named in the *catasto*. I will demonstrate a “problem case” when this occurs later in this article.

⁵ The heads of house in the *Catasto* and their spouses are indexed and searchable at <https://radicialtamurgia.it/viewer/>; the indexing was done in collaboration with Rafael Caterina, who subsequently created the linked website.

⁶ I use the term homonym to refer to individuals having the same first and last name.

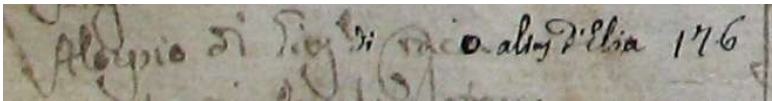
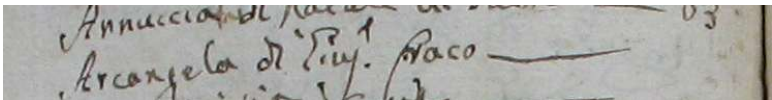
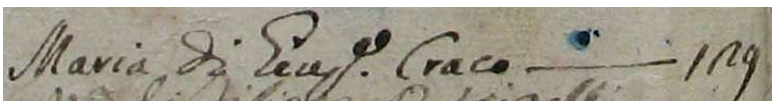
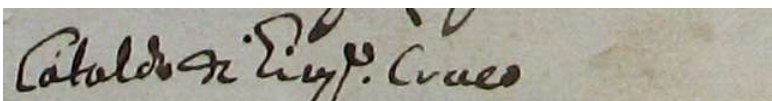
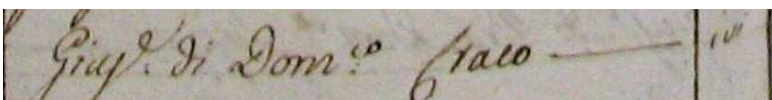
Baptism index entry	Volume	Page	Year
	8	176	1762
	9	63	1767
	9	129	1770
	9	232	1774
	7	39	1733
	7	292	1746

Table 2. Entries in the baptismal index for Giuseppe Craco, his sister Benedetta, and his four children. Among them are Luigi (the “missing generation” between the *catasto onciario* and *stato civile*) and a hitherto unknown sister Maria who I presume did not survive until 1809.

Fortunately, there is only one matching entry in the indexes for Luigi (Aloysio) Craco. He was a son of Giuseppe Felice and in turn a grandson of Domenico Antonio (Table 2). This also places him as a sibling of Cataldo and Arcangela. Although the baptism indexes do not name the mother, and the death records of Cataldo and Arcangela name different mothers, I believe that the most reasonable assumption is a transcription error and that “Rosa Palumbo” and “Isabella Caputo” were the same person, as there is no entry in the 1753–1789 marriage index suggesting that Giuseppe Felice married twice. However, without additional sources, the name of Giuseppe’s wife cannot conclusively be determined: the marriage indexes only name the groom and the possibility that Giuseppe remarried outside Corato cannot be discounted, given that marriages often occurred in the bride’s parish and the surnames Palumbo and Caputo are widespread in the region. Everyone else in Table 1 is also readily found in the parish indexes, confirming their filiation and their actual birth year; some of their corresponding entries are shown in Table 2. I am sure of their correctness because there were no homonyms – especially for Giuseppe and Luigi – that could also plausibly be matched to the *stato civile* records and thereby introduce ambiguity to this research.

At this stage, it is apparent that everyone named in Table 1 descends from Domenico Antonio Craco, and anyone with the surname Craco (or the variant Craca) in Corato named in more recent civil records – whose family resided in Corato for multiple generations – in turn descends from him as well. The only individuals left to connect are the three oldest women. Thanks to the searchable index of the *catasto*, we find that Grazia and Nicola were already married and living with their husbands, and also a reference to another possible relative, an older Benedetta Craco. Lucrezia is not found at this stage, suggesting that she was already deceased, though the relative rarity of the surname Soldano (that of Lucrezia’s husband and children) – appearing only once in the *catasto* index (excluding significant spelling variations) – makes for a quick search for her daughter Anna.

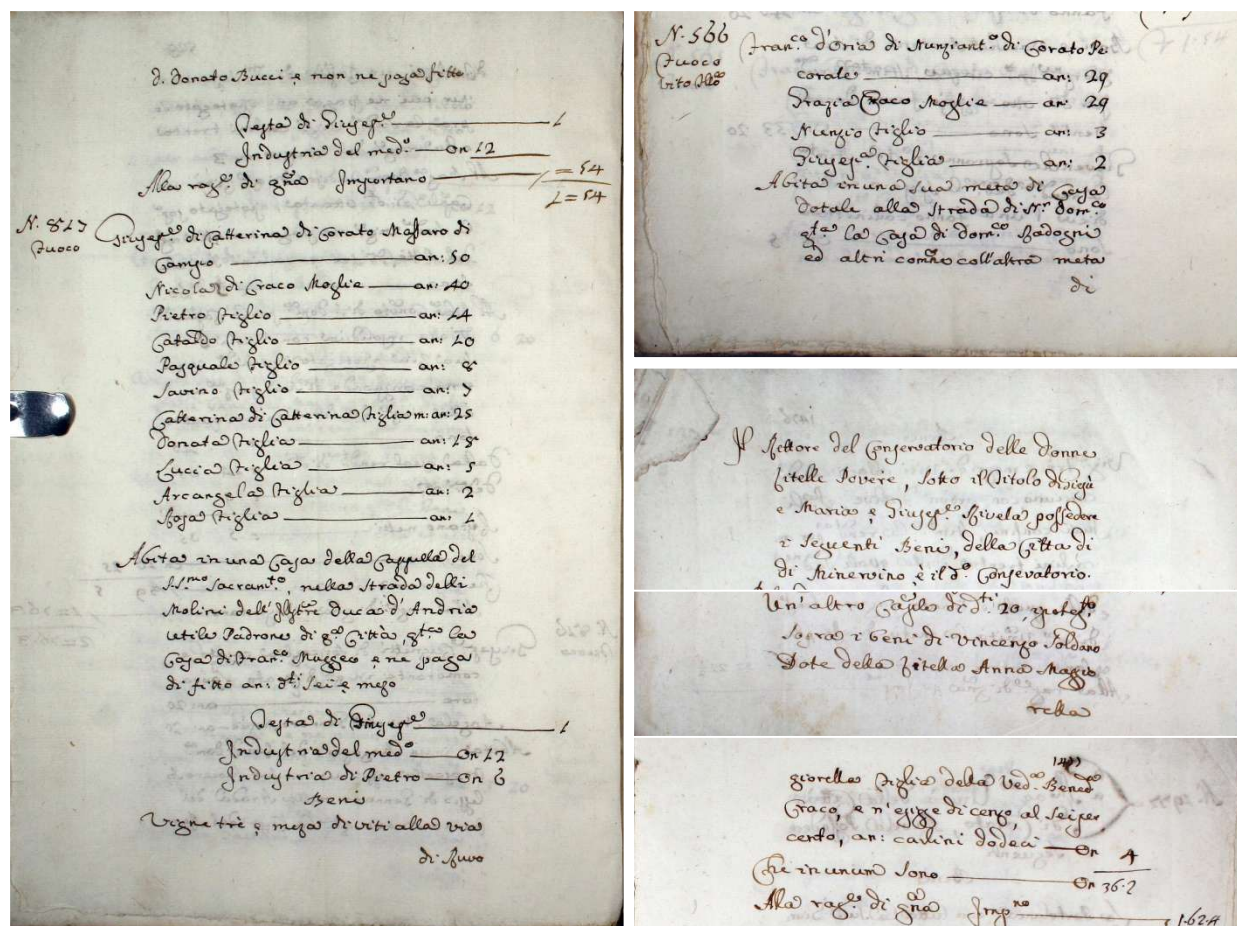


Figure 2. Families of Nicola Craco and Giuseppe di Caterina (left), Grazia Craco and Francesco d'Oria (top right), and the widow Benedetta Craco in the *conservatorio delle donne zitelle povere* in the *Catasto Onciario*.

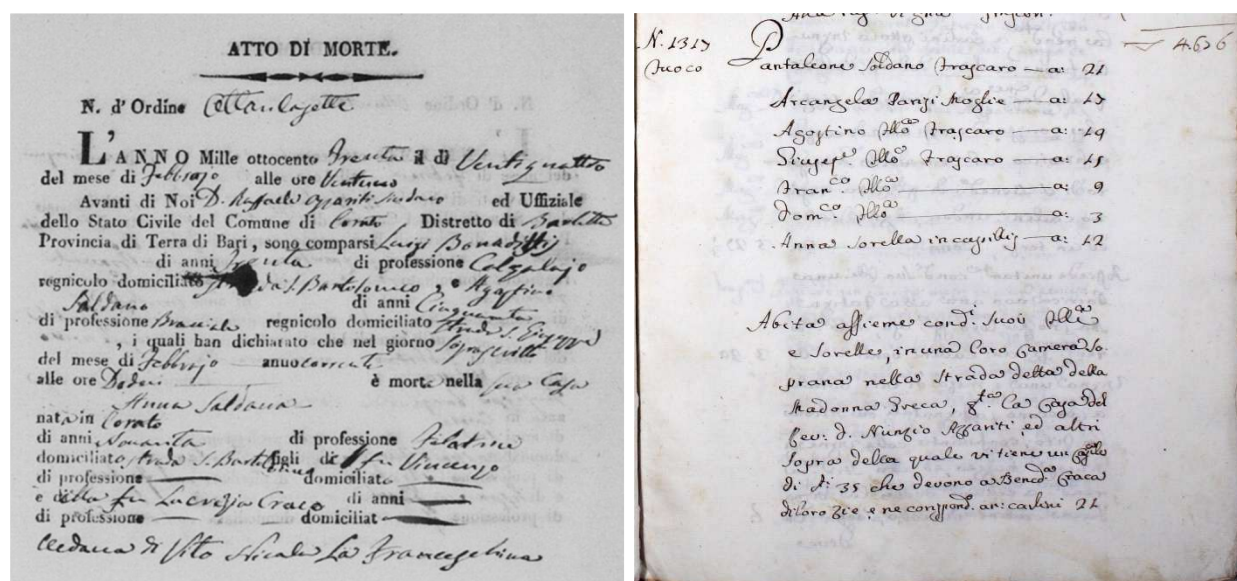


Figure 3. Civil death record of Anna Soldano (left) – Lucrezia Craco’s daughter – and her family’s entry in the *Catasto Onciario* (right).

The *catasto* references the Soldanos' aunt Benedetta Craco (Figure 3), presumably the same person found in Figure 2. Benedetta's entry in turn appears to reference Vincenzo Soldano – Anna's father.⁷ This is very strong evidence that Anna's mother was indeed Lucrezia Craco. As both Vincenzo and Lucrezia are absent in Figure 2, and there are no other Soldano families in Corato, I am nearly certain that both died prior to 1754. Even so, these records establish a link between Lucrezia and Benedetta; if at least one of them is found in the parish indexes, both may be linked. The final step to prove (or disprove) a connection between these oldest individuals (Figures 2–3) is to search the older baptism indexes (Table 3).

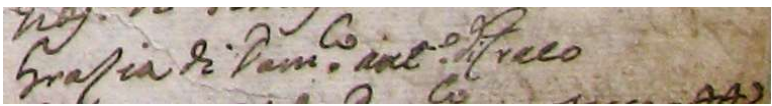
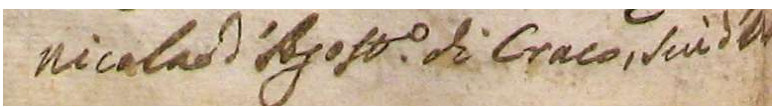
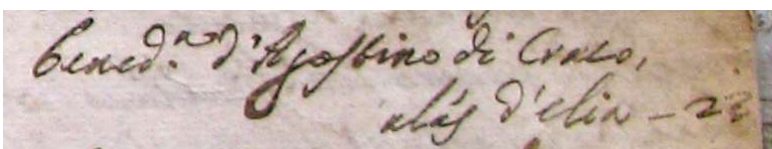
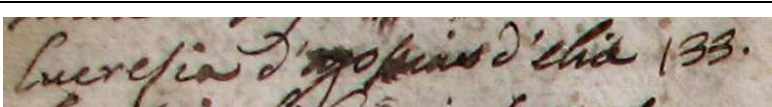
Baptism index entry	Volume	Page	Year
	6	446	1729
	6	278	1717
	6	236	1715
	6	133	1708
	6	47	1702

Table 3. Entries in the baptismal indexes for the individuals named in Figures 2 and 3, who are found to all connect to Agostino (di) Craco. Some of them were also known under the surname d'Elia.

Grazia Craco, wife of Francesco d'Oria, is found to be another daughter of Domenico Antonio, who was not listed as *figlia maritata* in the *catasto*. (I have yet to determine why married children are sometimes but not always named in their parents' entry in the *catasto*.) The four oldest individuals are all children of Agostino (di) Craco, who also went by the name (alias) Agostino d'Elia. It appears that the surname d'Elia was sometimes used during the 18th century (Table 2), though it was the primary surname of earlier generations of this family (as Domenico is only found as Domenico d'Elia in the baptism indexes). In this case, we are lucky that the indexes clearly indicate the usage of both surnames for the same family, and so a researcher looking for additional siblings, cousins, or ancestors may search the indexes for both Craco and d'Elia. A further search of the volume 6 baptism index leads to the discovery of seven more children of Agostino who either moved away from Corato or died prior to 1754. One would need to consult marriage or death indexes for this period (if not complete records), or possibly *catasti* for neighboring towns, to determine the fates of these missing family members.

We conclude at this stage that Agostino Craco was the progenitor of everyone with the surname Craco referenced in the earliest *Stato Civile* records. Given Agostino's absence from the *catasto* and presumed advanced age, it is safe to assume that he was deceased prior to 1754. The same can probably be assumed for his wife, who is not referenced anywhere in the *catasto* and is not identifiable from the indexes.

⁷ Anna's death record is found at https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua256991/0ZG8vGD

Preceding generations

The final phase of this research is to determine how far back one can trace Agostino's patrilineal ancestors in Corato. We may be also able to determine whether the Craco (d'Elia) family was originally from another town – the indexes sometimes name the father's hometown if he was not from Corato, and the total absence of a surname from earlier indexes likely indicates migration – and perhaps how the family name evolved over time.⁸

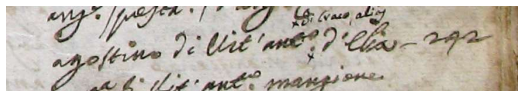


Figure 4. Entry for Agostino d'Elia in the baptism indexes.

Agostino was born in 1680 (volume 5, page 242). There is no other plausible entry for Agostino in the indexes. As he is identified as Agostino d'Elia, with an apparent later addition of "di Craco", one may conclude that his family used the surname d'Elia at the time of his birth; "di Craco" was either a surname that was adopted by later generations or potentially indicates migration from Craco, a ghost town in today's Province of Matera.



Figure 5. Entry for Vito Angelo (Vitantonio) d'Elia in the baptism indexes.

Agostino's father, Vitantonio (or Vito Angelo) d'Elia, is found in volume 4 (page 197), indicating that the family had older roots in Corato and did not migrate during the mid-to-late 17th century. I assume this is the correct person because this is the closest match to Vitantonio and his filiation is consistent with the pattern of the eldest son being named for his paternal grandfather. Additionally, the parish indexes from this time omit exact years of birth; based on several annotations in the indexes and records available in the Atelier Généalogique's online database,⁹ one can estimate that Vitantonio was born around 1650.

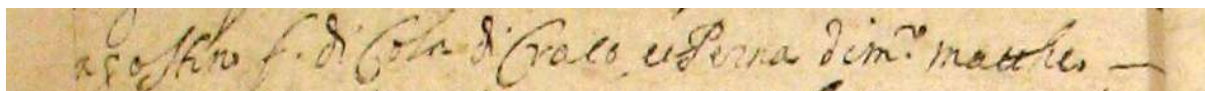


Figure 6. Entry for Agostino di Craco (the other Agostino's paternal grandfather) in the baptism indexes.

Curiously, Vitantonio's father is not found to be Agostino d'Elia (as expected per Figure 5), but rather Agostino di Craco. This older Agostino was born in the early 1610s, near the beginning of volume 3. This index also does not list exact birth years, and many page numbers are not visible due to tight page binding, though the names of the newborns' mothers are stated unlike all baptism indexes from volume 4 onward. As further evidence for this relationship, Vitantonio had a brother Nicolo (volume 4, page 197) who was presumably named for his paternal grandfather, Cola. The older Agostino was the son of Cola di Craco and Perna di Mastromatteo. Cola's baptism record is not found in the indexes, implying migration (Cola, from Craco) and/or that he was born prior to the inception of parish records in 1582. This marks the end (or, temporally, beginning) of our research on the Craco line.

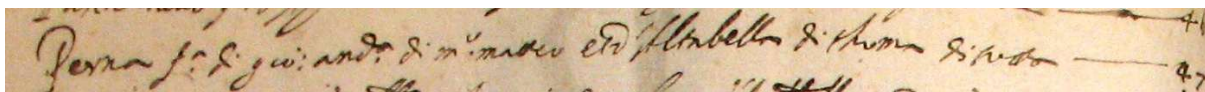


Figure 7. Entry for Perna di Mastromatteo in the baptism indexes. She is the oldest ancestor in the Craco line who may be found in the parish indexes, born only several years after baptisms started to be recorded.

However, there is a plausible entry for Perna near the beginning of volume 1 (page 47; early-mid 1580s), allowing us to identify her parents – Giovanni Andrea di Mastromatteo and his wife Altabella di Zezza – and

⁸ This research was initially conducted by Rafael Caterina and shared in an email dated 17 May 2025.

⁹ The database includes about 150 individual parish records along with a spreadsheet maintained by Rafael Caterina that cross-references them in the parish indexes.

as a bonus, her maternal grandfather Thoma (Tommaso) di Zezza. This allows us to extend this line two more generations, and assuming 30 years per generation, estimate that Thoma was born around 500 years ago!

Through the indexes alone, we have successfully extended the Craco line four generations (six, if we include Perna's maternal grandfather) beyond the oldest individuals alive in the *catasto*. I must, however, reiterate that this is a best-case scenario: a single homonym or ambiguous surname would render researching more distant generations impossible. Additionally, there are three consecutive generations in which the mother cannot be identified from the indexes; rendering only Domenico Antonio's patrilineal great-grandfather discoverable among his eight great-grandparents. One would need to consult the complete baptismal records referenced in Figures 4–7 to identify these missing ancestors.

Following is a descendency chart of the Craco family summarizing our findings:

- Cola di Craco (before 1582) m. Perna Mastromatteo (about 1584)
 - Agostino di Craco (d'Elia) (about 1614) (*wife unknown*)
 - Vitantonio (Vito Angelo) d'Elia (about 1650) (*wife unknown*)
 - Agostino d'Elia (Craco) (1680) & Lucia Antonia Mazzillo (about 1684)¹⁰
 - Domenico Antonio Craco (1702) m. Rosa Parisi (1704)
 - Grazia Craco (1728) m. Francesco d'Oria (1723)
 - Felice d'Oria m. Teresa Pilato
 - Cataldo d'Oria m. Marianna Spadavecchia
 - Savino d'Oria m. Maria Filippa Arbore
 - Giuseppe Felice Craco (1733) m. Isabella Caputo / Rosa Palumbo (about 1737)
 - Luigi Giuseppe Craco (1762 – 1806) m. Rosa Ardito (1768 – 1842)
 - Arcangela Craco (1767 – 1835) m. Vito Domenico Cialdella (about 1758 – 1828)
 - Cataldo Savino Craco (1774 – 1841) m. Grazia Torelli (about 1776 – 1829)
 - Filippo Craco (1736)¹¹
 - Lucrezia Nicola Craco (1741)
 - Benedetta Craco (1746 – 1811) m. Vincenzo Mastrolillo (about 1742 – 1799)
 - Rosa Mastrolillo m. Domenico Diasparro
 - Cataldo Mastrolillo m. Grazia Leone
 - Maria Mastrolillo m. Ilarione Maldera
 - Giuseppe Mastrolillo m. Maria Martinelli
 - Lucrezia Craco (1708) m. Vincenzo Soldano (about 1704)
 - Pantaleone Soldano m. Arcangela Parisi
 - Agostino Soldano m. Donata di Caterina
 - Anna Soldano m. Vito Nicola la Franceschina
 - Giuseppe Soldano
 - Francesco Soldano m. Angela di Gennaro
 - Benedetta Craco (1715) m. Domenico Antonio Maggiorella (about 1711)
 - Anna Maggiorella
 - Nicola Craco (1717) m. Giuseppe di Caterina (about 1704 – 1773)
 - Pietro di Caterina m. Maria Tarricone
 - Pasquale Felice di Caterina m. Angela Rosa Grillo
 - Savino di Caterina m. Maria Mallardo
 - Lucia di Caterina m. Paolo Pagano
 - Rosa di Caterina m. Nicolò Iannone
 - Arcangela di Caterina m. Michele Leuci
 - Domenico di Caterina m. Antonia Scaringella (first wife); m. Maria Pisicchio (second wife)
 - Francesco di Caterina m. Angela Malcangi
 - Cataldo di Caterina m. Antonia Mangano

¹⁰ I know the name of Agostino's wife from his daughter Nicola's baptismal record, which is in our database. However, additional parish records would be required to rigorously prove a link between her and the other Craco family members.

¹¹ Filippo had at least two children who migrated to Andria. I exclude them (and their descendants) from this analysis because they are not found in Corato's parish indexes after 1764 or civil records (as used to compile Table 1).

CASE 2: A MISSING GENERATION AND HOMONYMS

I now present a case study of a family where there is a missing generation between the *stato civile* and *catasto onciario*: one branch of the Patrino family. While researching a town such as Corato, which had both high endogamy and a relatively high population, one often finds multiple homonyms around the same age living at the same time, some of whom even have homonymous fathers. This is compounded by the fact that children often are named for relatives by southern Italian naming customs: the firstborn son and daughter are usually named for their paternal grandparents, and the second-born son and daughter are usually named for their maternal grandparents, which often results in homonymous cousins named for their common grandparent.

Due to widespread diffusion of the surname Patrino (as well as its variants Petrone and Patroni), researching this family is particularly challenging. Being able to distinguish homonyms is crucial for correct research: when civil records are available, there is generally sufficient information to do so, but if not, the only resource allowing one to do so is the complete parish registers, which are currently unavailable online and also cannot be easily accessed in-person in Corato.

Civil records (generations 1–2)

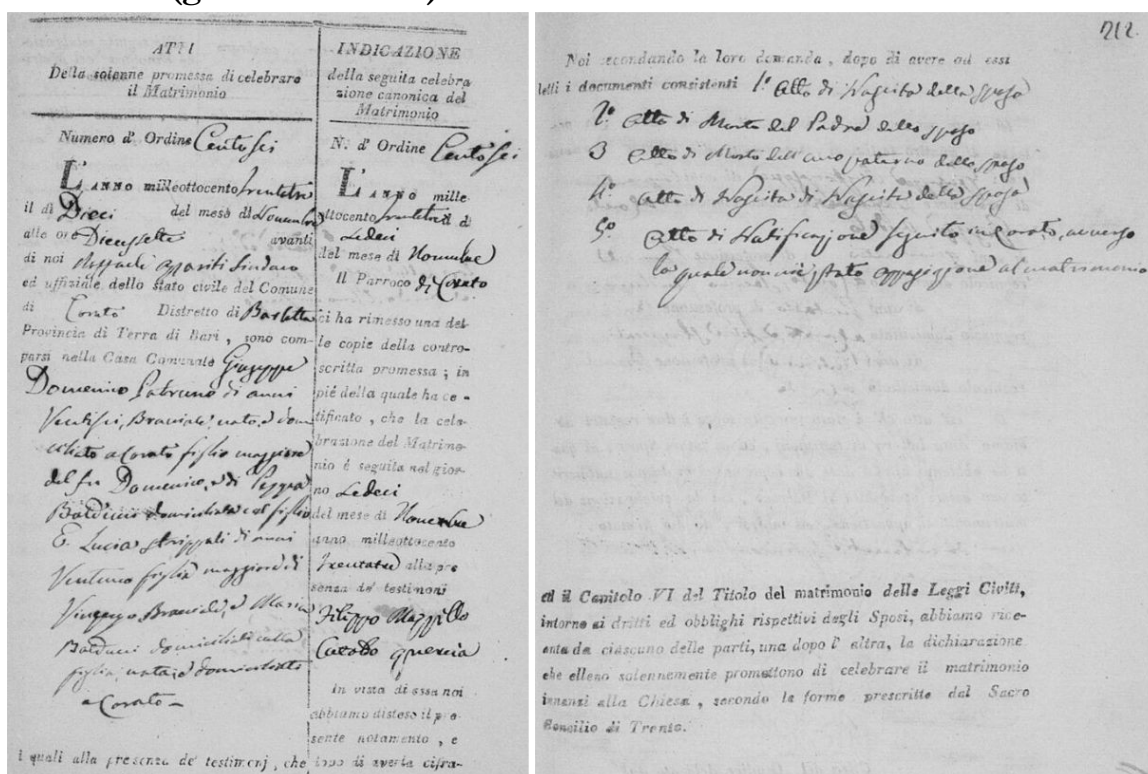


Figure 8. Civil marriage record between Giuseppe Domenico Patrino and Lucia Strippoli (1833).¹² On the left is the first page, naming both spouses, their ages, occupations, places of birth, and parents; on the right is the second half of the second page, naming the supplemental acts that were referenced at the time of marriage but are not consultable online.

We begin with the 1833 civil marriage record between Giuseppe Domenico Patrino and Lucia Strippoli (Figure 8). Giuseppe was the son of the late Domenico Patrino and the still-living Peppa Balducci and was 26 years old at the time of his marriage. This implies a birth year of 1807 (or possibly 1806) – before the beginning of civil recordkeeping in 1809. Unfortunately, no supplemental documents (*processetti*) are available for Corato – or any town in the Alta Murgia region – before 1866. In addition, marriage records between 1820 and 1834

¹² https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua256929/0MboEBD

provide neither dates nor names of relatives on such documents that were required at the time for the marriage to proceed. All that can be ascertained at this stage are the birth years of both spouses and the fact that both Giuseppe's father and paternal grandfather were already deceased.

A logical next step to research Giuseppe's family is to seek his father's death record and the names of his paternal grandparents, as well as records for any siblings or cousins that may contain additional clues. Searching for Domenico's death record yields several hits, but none of them name his wife Peppa Balducci. Viewing each of the images on Antenati confirms that they are indeed not the death records of this Domenico Patruno.

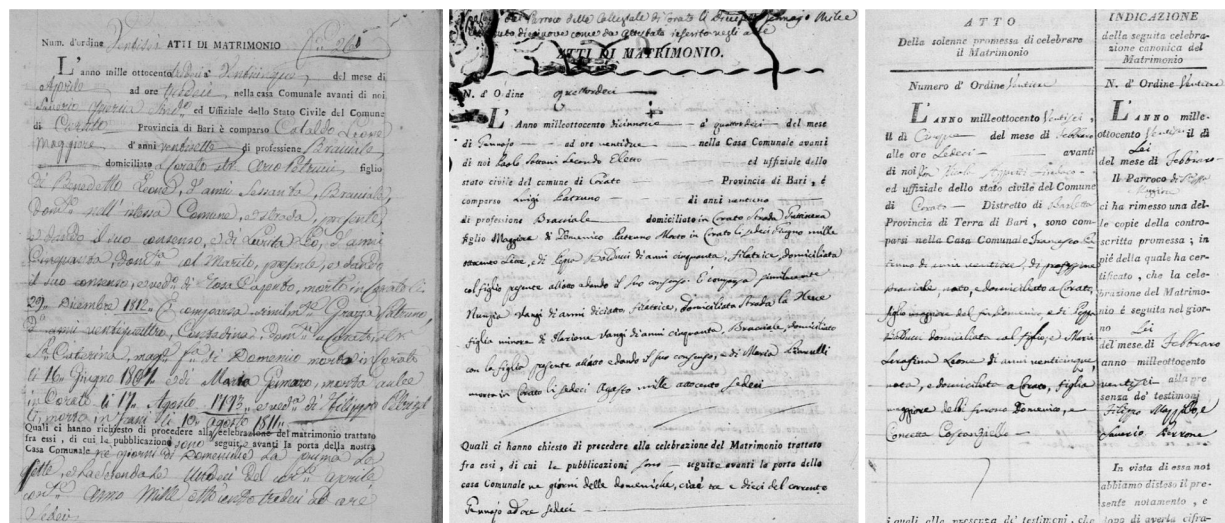


Figure 9. Civil marriage records of Giuseppe Patruno's (potential) siblings: Grazia (left),¹³ Luigi (center)¹⁴ and Francesco (right).¹⁵ They similarly state the names of both spouses, their ages, occupations, places of birth, and parents, though Luigi's marriage record also specifies the death date of his father Domenico.

However, there are marriage records for two of Giuseppe's siblings (Figure 9): Francesco (born 1803, married 1826) and Luigi (born 1798, married 1819). The former record does not provide any additional information but the latter states that Domenico died on 16 June 1807. Lateral research – i.e., researching not only one's direct ancestors, but also their siblings and sometimes spouses and cousins – is a powerful tool for identifying missing relatives and dates. In this case, lateral research into Giuseppe's siblings allowed us to find the death date of his father, confirming the absence of a *Stato Civile* death record for him, which renders it somewhat more difficult to reconstruct more distant generations.

Curiously, there is also an 1813 marriage record for a Grazia Patruno whose father Domenico died on the same day and who had a different mother who died many years earlier. At first glance, this suggests she was Giuseppe's half-sister and that Domenico had another wife, though relatives' death dates on marriage records are sometimes incorrect or confused with homonyms.

At this stage, we know that Giuseppe had at least two brothers and that their father Domenico died before the start of civil recordkeeping. He may also have had a half-sister, Grazia, though civil records alone are not sufficient to conclusively prove or deny a relationship: it would be necessary to compare their baptismal records, which would unambiguously name both parents as well as both grandfathers. In addition, we cannot discount the possibilities that one of the marriage records indicates an erroneous death date – due to a mistake made when searching for documents in the 1810s¹⁶ – or that there were two different people with the same name

¹³ https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua284418/5x4PKOa

¹⁴ https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua256915/5x4RVp3

¹⁵ https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua256922/wQJrqb8

¹⁶ I have found erroneous references to homonyms when researching other towns whose *processetti* are consultable.

who died on the same day. It would be necessary to consult the burial registers to unambiguously identify who died in 1807.¹⁷ These registers have not, however, been digitized.

Parish records (generations 2–3)

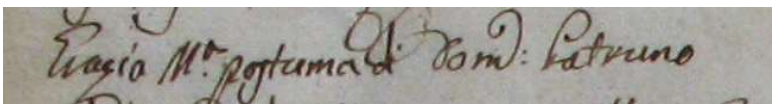
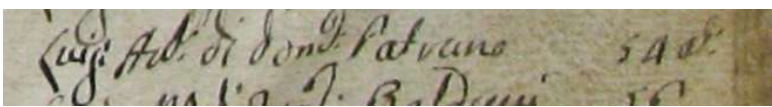
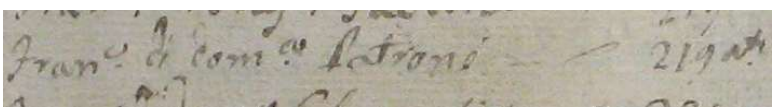
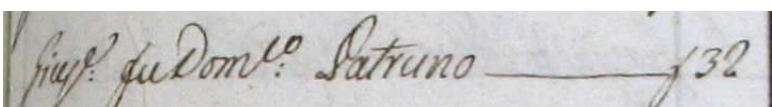
Baptism index entry	Volume	Page	Year
	11	2	1789
	12	54	1798
	12	219	1803
	13	32	1807

Table 4. Entries in the parish indexes (baptism volumes 11–13) for the children of Domenico Patruno whose marriage records are shown previously.

The three or four children of Domenico Patruno are readily found in the baptismal indexes. Giuseppe's entry indicates that he was born posthumously – after the death of his father – validating the 1807 death date. Curiously, Grazia's birth is indicated to have also been posthumous, implying either her father was a different Domenico and thus she was not Giuseppe's half-sister, or an error was made in the index. The parish indexes only name the father of the baptized; only the complete records name the mother and (usually, for records from 1723 or later)¹⁸ the grandfathers. Conclusively identifying the grandfathers would allow us to determine whether Grazia's father and Giuseppe's father were the same Domenico Patruno.

It is also plausible that there were additional children who died in infancy given the age gaps between the known children. Searching for them is somewhat challenging, though, because there were several homonyms of Domenico Patruno at the time (without knowing the mother, we cannot determine to which family they belong) and the indexes are sorted by first name (they can only be searched efficiently when the first name is known).

I try my luck seeking Domenico in the parish indexes. Given the ages of his children, it seems reasonable to assume he was born in the 1750s or 1760s. This search yields at least six possible records (Table 5), which at this stage cannot be distinguished, rendering it impossible to proceed further and link Domenico to his ancestors who were alive at the time of the *catasto* without access to the complete parish records.

As a starting point, Domenico's marriage record and/or Giuseppe's baptismal record are the best places to look to identify Domenico's father. Giuseppe's baptismal record (listed in Table 4) is unambiguously listed in the volume 13 baptism index, and there is only one plausible entry for his father Domenico in the volume 5 marriage index. I obtained both records from Pierre Marzocca: he digitized Corato's baptism and marriage registers in 2008, though the church has not granted authorization for the online publication of these registers or the completion of digitization work.

¹⁷ Many burial records at least name the spouse of the deceased, which would suffice in this case.

¹⁸ This cutoff is estimated from studying the parish records currently available in the Atelier Généalogique database. The oldest record naming the newborn's grandparents (barring sporadic exceptions) is from February 1723.

Giuseppe's 1807 baptismal record (Figure 11) perfectly corroborates the information found in his father's marriage record, confirming that his paternal grandfather was indeed another Domenico Patruno. Only one of the candidates for Domenico Jr.'s baptismal record in the indexes in Table 5 – the one dated 1762 – names a father Domenico and it states that Domenico Jr. was also born posthumously. This is not a surprise, as children were usually not named after living parents, though it reveals the sad truth that two consecutive generations of Patruno never knew their birth father.

We may attempt another search of civil records to find siblings of Domenico Jr. and potentially the death record of his mother, in hope of identifying her without further consultation of the parish records. In theory, it may be possible to use the process of elimination by matching the homonyms to civil records: for instance, any Domenico referenced in civil records who had children born after 1762 is necessarily not Domenico Sr., as this is irreconcilable with Domenico Jr.'s posthumous birth. This search comes up empty, however, as all candidate records contradict what has thus far been established, leading to the conclusion that Domenico Jr.'s mother and any potential siblings were also deceased prior to 1809. Similarly, there were two people named Domenico Patruno who were heads of their households in the *catasto*, and several more who were younger and living in the household of their father or other relatives. It is thus also impossible to uniquely identify Domenico Sr. from the *catasto* alone. Because Domenico Jr. was born after the *catasto*, died before civil recordkeeping began, and there are multiple individuals who could plausibly be his father in the *catasto*, the only way to bridge the gap is through complete original parish records.

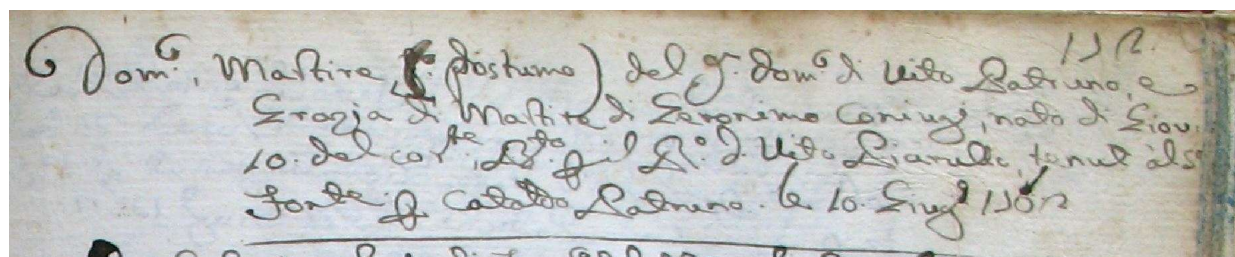


Figure 12. Baptismal record of Domenico Patruno, born posthumously to the late Domenico Patruno and the living Grazia di Geronimo. Both of Domenico's grandfathers are also named and indicated to still be alive at the time of his birth.

Domenico Jr.'s baptismal record (Figure 12) is the sole extant source that connects him to his mother, Grazia di Geronimo, as well as his grandfathers, Vito Patruno (paternal) and Martire di Geronimo (maternal). I also note that the existence of homonyms meant that correctly identifying Domenico Jr.'s father – only possible with the parish records in Figures 10 and 11 – was necessary before I could request his baptismal record and identify his mother and other relatives (Figure 12).

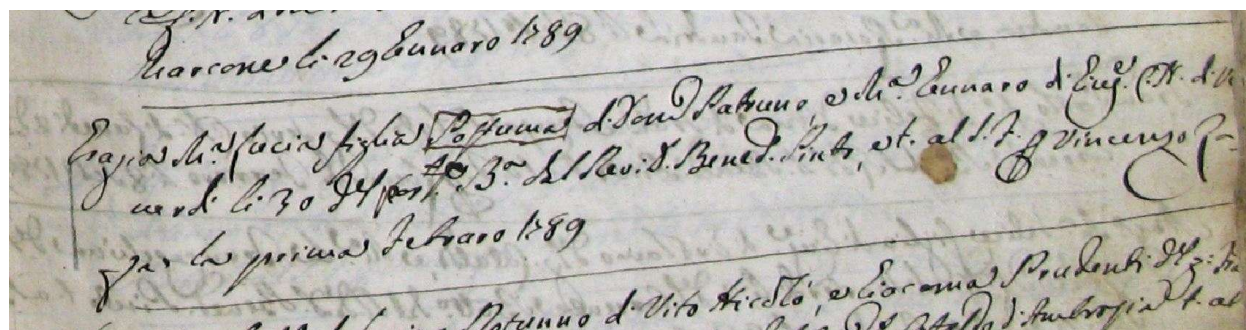


Figure 13. Baptismal record of Grazia Patruno, born posthumously to the late Domenico Patruno and the living Maria Gennaro. Maria's father is named but Domenico's father is not. We may conclude that Grazia does not belong to Giuseppe's family, but there is not enough information to unambiguously place her in another family either.

To close the chapter on Domenico Jr., Grazia Patruno's 1789 baptismal record (Figure 13) reveals that she was indeed born posthumously. Her father thus was necessarily a different Domenico Patruno and she was not a half-sister of Giuseppe, Francesco, and Luigi. This demonstrates that Grazia's marriage record confused

Domenico Jr. with a homonym who died in 1788 or 1789 shortly before Grazia was born. The other Domenico's father, however, is not identified; it would become a matter of guess and check through the baptismal and marriage records to determine his filiation and to which family in the *catasto* he is related. The discovery that Grazia is not Domenico Jr.'s daughter demonstrates a limitation of attempting to construct more distant pre-1809 generations using only civil records: death dates recorded many years after the subject died are less likely to be correct, especially if they may be confused with those of homonyms (in this case, two people named Domenico Patruno died about 18 years apart, both before their last child was born). A similar phenomenon is even observed in more recent records: those recorded close to an event (birth dates on birth records) are typically accurate, whereas those recorded many years later or reliant on secondhand information (ages on death or census records) are more prone to mistakes.

The identity of Domenico Jr.'s first wife is also now an open question; his marriage record (Figure 10) does not name his late wife. As the 1753–1789 marriage index often omits the groom's filiation and never names the bride, it is not sufficient to answer these questions.

Catasto onciario (generations 3–4)

At this stage, however, I have enough information to search for Domenico Jr.'s parents and grandparents in the *catasto onciario*. Given that both of his grandfathers were alive in 1762, I expect to find both of them in the *catasto* as the heads of their households and in turn learn the names of Domenico Jr.'s aunts, uncles, and potentially grandmothers and/or other relatives, and find them I do (Figure 14).

Family	Name	Age	Relationship
Vito Patruno (N. 1505)	Vito Patruno	40	Head of household
	Bened. (sua moglie)	36	Wife
	Dom. figlio Bracci	16	Son
	Vincenzo figlio	12	Son
	Cataldo figlio	8	Son
	Luca figlio in capellu	10	Son
	Nicolas figlio in capellu	13	Son
	Ant. figlio mantato	25	Son
	Abita in una casa di Margherita		Residence
	Abita in una casa di Margherita		Residence
Martire di Geronimo (N. 1053)	Martire dom. di Girolamo Torcasso	55	Head of household
	Ruffina (sua moglie)	50	Wife
	Cataldo figlio Torcasso	15	Son
	Leonardo figlio	13	Son
	Prigione figlio	10	Son
	Bojard figlio	4	Son
	Abita in un sottano dotale, sitadale		Residence
	Strada di Federico Patruni		Residence
	La casa di Antonio Tujaro, ed altri		Residence
	Destadi Martire	1	Destadi

Figure 14. Families of Vito Patruno (left) and Martire di Geronimo (right) in the *catasto onciario*. The information in Domenico Jr.'s baptismal record allows him to be linked to these families, in which one sees that his parents were roughly in their teenage years, living with their parents, and not yet married. His aunts, uncles, and grandparents are all named, as well as his granduncle and patrilineal great-grandfather. I also note that the surnames di Geronimo and di Girolamo were used interchangeably, an important consideration when researching this family in the parish indexes.

In a previous article,¹⁹ I demonstrated that all relationships stated in the *catasto* are only with respect to the head of house. In particular, one cannot always assume that the head's wife is the mother of the head's children, so additional records are required to conclusively determine mother–child relationships.

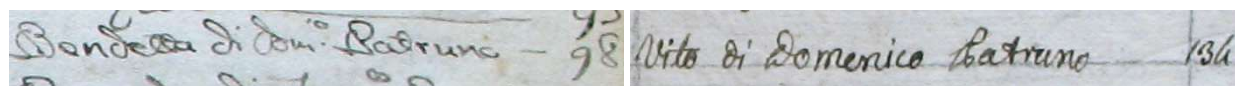


Figure 15. Entries for Domenico Jr.'s siblings in volume 8 of the baptism indexes.

On the Patrino side, there are no civil death records for any of Domenico Sr.'s siblings, which would allow me to cross-reference the *catasto* to conclusively identify his mother and which of his siblings had children. I next turn to the parish indexes again, finding that Domenico Sr. married in 1758 (volume 4, page 27) and that there were two (and only two) more children born to Domenico Sr. (Figure 15): Benedetta (1758) and Vito (1760). Although the indexes only name their father, traditional Italian naming customs dictate that the firstborn daughter is named for the paternal grandmother, and the firstborn son is named for the paternal grandfather. Based on this information, it seems a reasonable assumption that Benedetta Cino was indeed Domenico Sr.'s mother, which could be confirmed with his baptismal record.

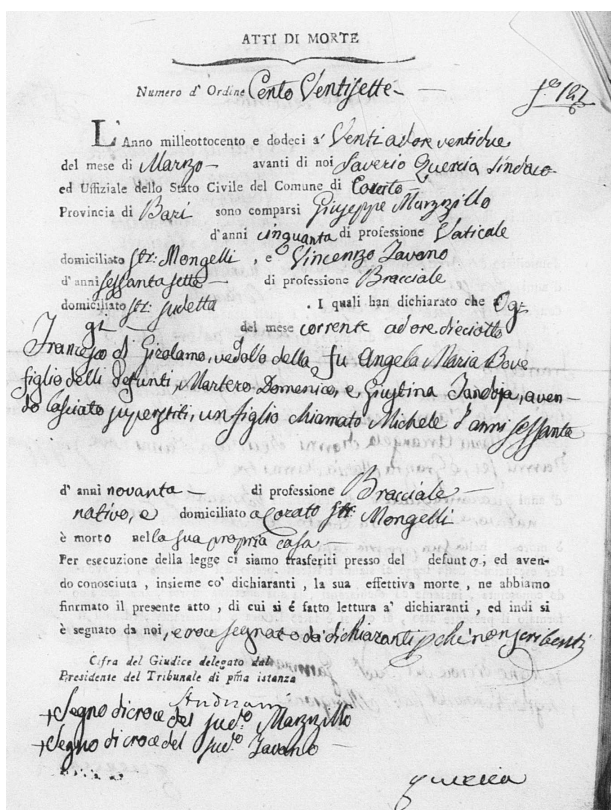


Figure 16. Civil death record of Francesco di Geronimo, Grazia's older brother, which confirms their mother's identity.²⁰

Conversely, the family of Martire di Geronimo is a more straightforward case to resolve. Although the civil death record of Grazia (Domenico Jr.'s mother) is not found, given that she died before 1809, her older brother Francesco (who already lived separately from his parents in 1754) lived until 1812 and his death record (Figure 16) names the same parents – Martire di Geronimo and Giustina Tandoi. This demonstrates the continuity of their marriage between Francesco's birth (1729) and the *catasto* (1754), allowing one to reasonably

¹⁹ Mainardi, Giancarlo. (June 2025) "Analyses of Corato's catasto onciario and parish indexes". Circulated by James Smith in an email dated 9 July 2025; not published on the Internet.

²⁰ https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua284428/LoEaZKm

conclude that all of Martire's children born in this interval were also Giustina's. I thus confidently conclude that Giustina was Grazia's mother, even without Grazia's baptismal record (1739).

Parish indexes (generation 5)

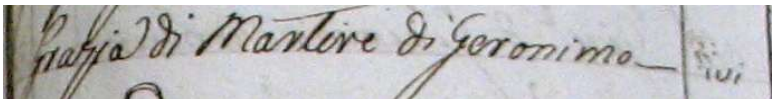
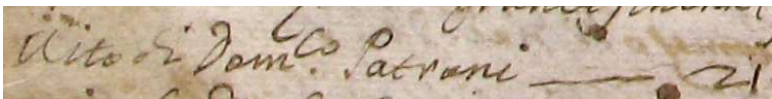
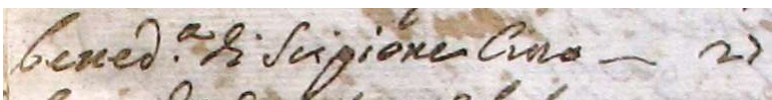
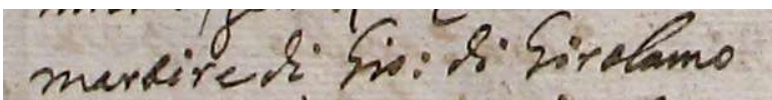
Baptism index entry	Volume	Page	Year
	7	187	1739
	6	21	1701
	6	27	1702
	5	415	1697
	6	49	1703

Table 6. Entries in the parish indexes (baptism volumes 5–7) for Domenico Jr.'s mother and grandparents. These records would allow a complete reconstruction of his tree to at least his great grandparents' generation. I also discover that the surname Patrano for this family is an evolution of the older surname Patrani.

Through the parish indexes and *catasto*, all of Domenico Jr.'s great-grandfathers may be readily identified (Table 6); his grandparents are all uniquely named or enough information is otherwise provided to identify them unequivocally in the indexes. I am also tentatively able to identify one great-grandmother, who is named in the *catasto* entry for Martire di Geronimo's brother Biaso, though this mother–son relationship is not rigorously proven. Domenico Jr.'s hitherto unknown great-grandmothers were most likely deceased prior to 1754 and are presumably not named anywhere except on the complete parish records. We thus can only continue researching Domenico Jr.'s pedigree in the male lines – and even then, only as long as there are no homonyms named in the indexes.

I did not, however, find Domenico di Vito Patrano anywhere in the parish indexes between 1720 and 1740. This is not the only time I failed to find someone ostensibly born in Corato in the indexes. Given that baptism volumes 6 and 7 (1700–1753) appear to be complete (i.e., not missing any pages)²¹ – my theory is that Domenico Sr.'s birth was recorded under a different name. Baptismal records from this time period frequently state two or three given names for the newborn, though only one of these names is recorded in the index. Occasionally, the name recorded in the baptism index and the name recorded on other records might be different, in which case it becomes difficult to find them in the indexes and impossible to verify such findings without consulting the complete records. I examine cases such as these more closely in the next section.

²¹ There are several index pages and/or records missing from some of the other baptism and marriage volumes.



Figure 17. Family tree of Domenico Jr., spanning from his children (generation 1) to his great-grandparents (Generation 5). All birth years (except Domenico Sr.'s), and all death years in the first three generations, are exact.

I now present the family tree of Domenico Jr. spanning from his children to his great-grandparents, wherein everything comes together and several gaps are still visible (Figure 17). The death dates of Domenico Sr. and Grazia di Geronimo were respectively obtained from the marriage records of Maria Giuseppe Patruno (Domenico Jr.'s niece, married in 1843)²² and Vincenzo Quercia (Domenico Jr.'s maternal half-brother, married in 1815).²³ Through a careful examination of civil records and the parish indexes, as well as process of elimination (which is greatly facilitated when there are few or no homonyms), I am reasonably certain that these dates are correct, though the details would be the subject of several more pages of analysis. Among the outstanding gaps, in addition to the hitherto unknown identities of many female ancestors (as in the Craco case study), are death dates from generation 4 (Domenico Jr.'s grandparents) onwards;²⁴ they were born long enough before civil records that they were certainly deceased by 1809 (i.e., because they would be more than 100 years old) but would not be referenced in *processetti* as their children were generally past marriage age by 1812 and their grandchildren by 1835.²⁵ The only way to fill these gaps would be with the digitization and publication of the parish burial records, or at least their indexes.

²² https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua256939/LNlvYy7

²³ https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/ark:/12657/an_ua284420/LDbgQ3E

²⁴ The 1754 and 1770 death dates in Figure 17 are upper bounds; the 1762 death date is a lower bound.

²⁵ These are the earliest years for which parents' and grandparents' death dates are respectively noted on Corato marriage records. Civil registers for other towns may span different years or provide different amounts of information useful for reconstructing more distant generations.

CASE 3: NAME VARIATIONS

Different birth name

The failed search for Domenico Sr.'s birth record in the previous case study highlights another issue that can only be resolved with unrestricted access to as many sources as possible: the case of nontrivial name variations and discrepancies between a person's birth name and commonly used name. Of course, this issue also occurs when studying more recent records, though for individuals born after the beginning of civil recordkeeping, there are typically at least two or three civil records available (birth, death, and marriage) to resolve any potential ambiguities with a person's name or filiation. I present two examples of name discrepancies that are not noted in the parish indexes, for which access to the complete parish records is required to correctly identify people found in the *catasto onciario* and research their ancestors.

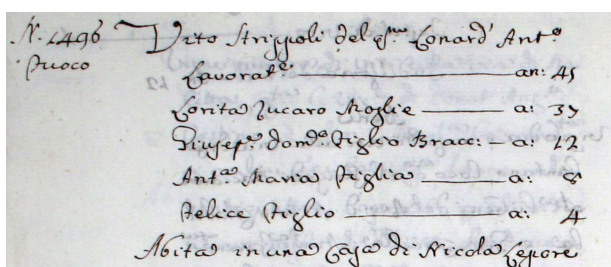


Figure 18. Family of Vito Strippoli in the *catasto onciario*.

One such case, which I discovered in the Atelier Généalogique database, is found in the family of Vito Strippoli. His son, Felice, was around four years old in 1754, suggesting a birth year of 1749–1750. However, there is no entry for Felice di Vito Strippoli born in the late 1740s or early 1750s in the baptism indexes. I might assume Felice was either born in another town (if the family relocated briefly) or born under a different name. In the latter case, however, there are no obvious indications of where else to look in the indexes. As the parish indexes are not computer-indexed and searchable, it would be necessary to find all of Vito's children, at which point one might assume that Vito's son with an age similar to Felice's in 1754 – if such a person existed – is the same person as Felice. Fortunately, his baptismal record is in the Google Drive database.

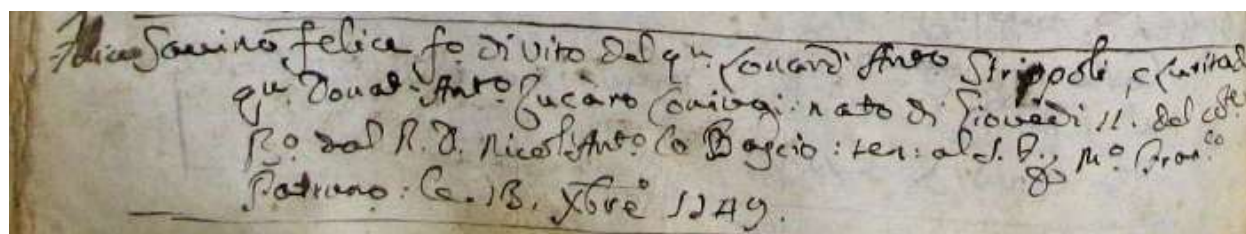


Figure 19. Baptismal record of Savino Felice Strippoli.

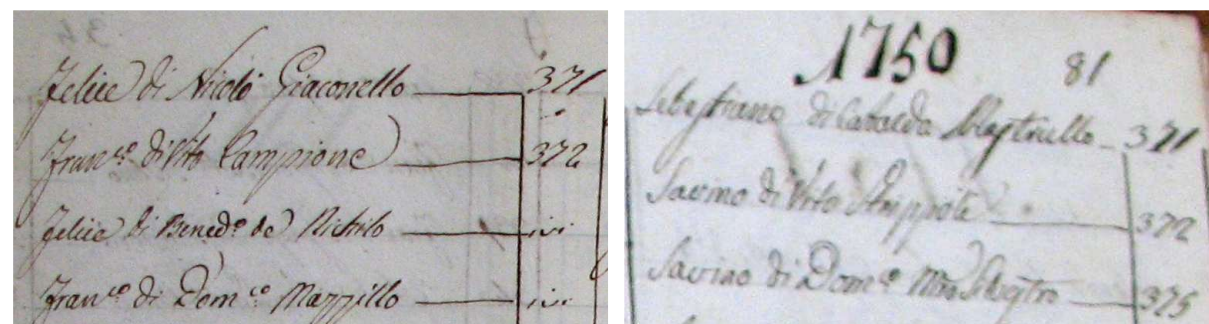


Figure 20. Excerpts from the volume 7 baptism index, illustrating that the baptism in Figure 19 was only recorded under the name Savino (right), and not under Felice in the place we would expect (left) after examining the *catasto* (Figure 18). Note that the year is also slightly off on the right: a December 1749 baptism is noted under the 1750 heading.

We discover that Felice's birth name was Savino Felice. Only the name Savino was recorded in the baptism index. It appears that Felice was an alternate first name or middle name that became the name by which he was most commonly known (as evidenced by other records in the Google Drive database). A researcher who is unaware of the name Savino would make a lucky guess of Felice's birth year at best; otherwise, this would seem to be a case of a randomly missing person.

At the time of this writing, out of over 200 *coratino* ancestors born before 1809 in my first nine generations,²⁶ roughly 10% of them appear to be missing from the baptism indexes. This leads me to conclude that cases resembling that of Felice Strippoli occur frequently enough to pose a problem for researchers and to expect a 10% failure rate (higher, if I include indistinguishable homonyms) when seeking people in the indexes.

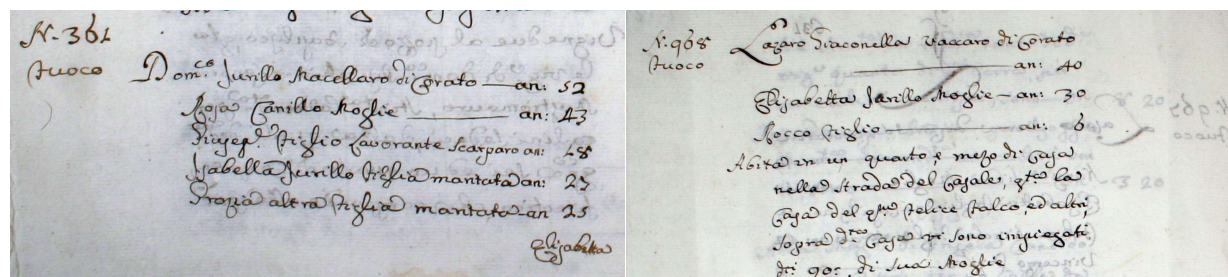


Figure 21. Isabella Jurillo in the *catasto onciario*, in her father's household (left) and husband's household (right).

Similar-sounding or incomplete names

Another case, similar in nature but with enough clues to identify the baptismal record to continue researching, is that of Isabella Jurillo and her mother. She appears in the *catasto onciario* twice: in her father Domenico's household as *figlia maritata* and in her husband Lazzaro Giaconella's household (Figure 21). At first glance, one potential source of confusion is that Isabella had a younger sister named Elisabetta (aged about 17; not shown on this page) yet herself went by the name Elisabetta. The presence of Isabella's son Rocco (aged about 6) allows us to conclude that she is the older sister listed in her father's household, for an 11-year age gap between mother and child is unreasonable.²⁷

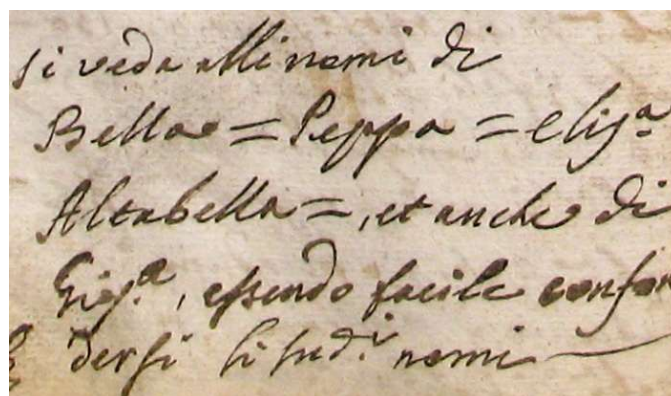


Figure 22. Comment in the volume 6 baptismal index regarding possible confusion of similar-sounding names.



Figure 23. Entries in the baptism indexes for the older and younger Jurillo sisters: Peppa (left; 1724, volume 6, page 380) and Elisabetta (right; 1737, volume 7, page 123).

²⁶ My count excludes those who I have not yet identified and those who I am sure were originally from other towns.

²⁷ Upon researching this family further, it turns out that Rocco Giaconella and the younger Elisabetta Jurillo were born only six years apart, confirming that the older "Elisabetta" (Isabella) was his mother.

CONCLUSION

Completeness of records vs. reliance on luck

When researching our *coratino* roots, we are fortunate to have access to a number of invaluable resources – indexed civil records, the parish indexes, and the *catasto onciario*. Table 7 summarizes the information that can and cannot be found in each type of record. These resources are often, but not always, sufficient to construct a mostly-complete family tree reaching as far back as the late 1600s, provided that one can correctly match individuals found in civil records to families found in the *catasto*. It is also sometimes possible to research further generations of the direct paternal lines of the people found in the *catasto* utilizing the parish indexes, as demonstrated for the Craco family. Conversely, the oldest generations in the *catasto* pose a limit to one's research if the individuals found therein cannot be identified in the parish indexes, whether due to indistinguishable homonyms or unknown alternate names. In some unlucky cases, such as that of the Patruno family, there is a missing generation between civil records and the *catasto* that can neither be pieced together from information found in the parish indexes alone nor resolved with a brute-force search of the *catasto* and indexed civil records. One cannot hope to continue researching such a line without additional resources.

Enthusiasm towards current and future research prospects

We are optimistic that these limits could be overcome with the publication of the already-digitized baptism and marriage records, which span from 1582 (not long after the mandate of the Council of Trent) to the 1920s (all records for individuals born before 1926 – over 100 years ago – are not subject to Italian privacy laws), and digitization and subsequent publication of the burial registers. The online publication of the *catasto* and parish indexes has already sparked increased enthusiasm in researchers of *coratino* descent across Italy and around the world as we study our family's history and migration and make connections with distant relatives. Some of my collaborators within and beyond the Atelier Généalogique organization are among distant relatives whom I first met through FamilySearch.

This heightened enthusiasm will naturally result in a much greater number of requests for complete, authentic parish records, which may exceed the response capacity of one individual or a designated group of volunteers. Moreover, while it is straightforward to request records when one already knows (or can make an educated guess for) an individual's birth year and filiation, it is sometimes not possible to identify the correct record in the indexes without first consulting other records – as was the case for Domenico Patruno Jr. and Anna Rosa Cannillo. The recurring problems of ambiguous filiation or identity, which require multiple steps or may involve guessing and checking, are best tackled when one can directly consult the records and efficiently sift through them (i.e., browse a series of candidate records, download potentially correct ones, and make note of incorrect ones). Record requests made with incomplete information have a much lower chance of succeeding. Conversely, convenient access to these records would allow the Atelier Généalogique and collaborating organizations to index them – i.e., record vital information in a searchable database – as FamilySearch has done for Corato's 1809–1900 civil records. This would greatly help researchers overcome many of the limitations of the handwritten indexes and facilitate quick searches.

Safeguarding irreplaceable historical records

In addition to the untapped research potential of digitization and publication of the complete parish registers, there is also great archival value in taking these steps. As things currently stand, the digitized parish registers are only accessible by a few individuals worldwide, and the undigitized burial registers only exist as hard copies in the church in Corato. If a disaster were to strike Corato – such as a flood, fire, or earthquake – any undigitized records may be damaged or lost permanently, rendering the information contained within undiscoverable. Records in many towns throughout Italy have already suffered a similar fate. For instance, the French assaulted the neighboring town of Andria and set fire to the cathedral in 1799, which caused all historical documents

stored there to be destroyed²⁸ and thus renders pre-1799 genealogical research in Andria beyond individuals named in civil records and the *catasto onciario* impossible. It would be a tragedy for such a fate to befall Corato, or indeed any town, and result in troves of historical records being lost to time.

Some parishes and dioceses across Italy have already made their records publicly available online and we hope the same can be done for Corato. This would enable researchers and enthusiasts around the world to trace centuries of their family's lineage and migration and tell each family's story to the greatest extent possible.

SUMMARY OF CORATO'S RECORDS

Table 7. Summary of various resources for *coratino* genealogy currently and potentially at our disposal.

Record	Years & availability	Age	Parents named?	Other relatives
<i>Atto di nascita</i> (civil birth)	1809–1900 (Antenati) 1901–1910 (FamilySearch)	Exact birth date	Both parents, as well as whether they were alive	Paternal grandfather (sometimes) Maternal grandfather (sometimes)
<i>Atto di matrimonio</i> (civil marriage)	1809–1900 (Antenati) 1901–1910 (FamilySearch)	Exact (birth date also cited in records from 1835 onwards)	Both parents of both spouses, as well as whether they were alive	If not a first marriage, previous spouse usually named
<i>Pubblicazione di matrimonio</i> (marriage banns)	1866–1900 (Antenati) 1901–1910 (FamilySearch)	Exact (birth date also cited in 1866–1874 <i>richieste</i>)	Both parents of both spouses, as well as whether they were alive	If not a first marriage, previous spouse usually named
<i>Allegati (processetti) di matrimonio</i> (supplemental documents)	1866–1910 (FamilySearch)	Exact (extract of birth or baptismal record included if available)	Both, as well as whether they were alive (if deceased, death records usually not found among the <i>allegati</i> in this era)	If not a first marriage, death record of previous spouse included if available
<i>Atto di morte</i> (civil death)	1809–1900 (Antenati) 1901–1910 (FamilySearch)	Approximate	Both, as well as whether they were alive, though sometimes for old decedents, one or both parents is misidentified or missing	Spouse, as well as whether they were alive Living children (sometimes) If married multiple times, sometimes previous spouses are named
<i>catasto onciario</i> (Note: all relations described here are with respect to the head of household (<i>capofamiglia</i> .)	1754 (Google Drive) (Note: though the catasto was published in 1754, some information within is several years older and not everyone born after 1751 is included.)	Approximate	Father: sometimes; also not consistently noted whether alive Mother: only if alive, widowed, and living in the same household	Wife (if alive); <i>Capofuoco</i> (if not the <i>capofamiglia</i> , his father or older brother living elsewhere); Unmarried children; Sometimes, young (under ~35) adult children living elsewhere (<i>figlio casato</i> or <i>figlia maritata</i>); Stepchildren (<i>figliastri</i>) Siblings (if living in the same household, sometimes also named elsewhere on the page) Occasionally, other relatives such as a grandmother, aunt/uncle, or grandchild are found living in the same household.
Baptism index (parish)	1582–1930 (almost all complete) (all on Google Drive)	Exact birth year (date not included)	Both parents (1582–1636) Father only (1636 onwards)	None (Very rarely, one or both grandfathers)
Marriage index (parish)	1753–1810, 1831–1832, 1836–1838, 1860–1862, 1868–1883, 1888–1920, 1921–1934 (partial) (all on Google Drive)	Not given	Father of groom only, as well as whether he was alive, though many 1753–1807 entries also omit him	None – not even the bride is named.
Baptism (parish)	1582–1930* Email request or in-person consultation only (Note: Births less than 100 years ago subject to privacy laws)	Birth date (exact)	Both parents, as well as whether they were alive	Paternal grandfather (usually, from c. 1723 onwards) Maternal grandfather (usually, from c. 1723 onwards) Grandmothers also found in some late-1800s and 1900s records
Marriage (parish)	1582–1934 Email request or in-person consultation only	Not given (pre-1810) Exact (later)	Father of groom (usually, from c. 1723 onwards) Father of bride (usually, from c. 1723 onwards) Mothers also found in some late-1800s and 1900s records	None If not a first marriage, widowhood indicated but previous spouse not named
Burial (parish)	None digitized, in-person consultation only	Not given (pre-1810)	No (pre-1810)	Spouse, if married Sometimes, a widow's death record does not name their predeceased spouse

²⁸ D'Avanzo, Vincenzo (2020). Barbangelo, un immigrato di prestigio. *AndriaLive.it*.
<https://andrialive.it/2020/11/22/barbangelo-un-immigrato-di-prestigio/>