



Chapter IV

Patarino's Commune Natale of Castellaneta



The Patarino's *Commune Natale di Castellaneta*

In the 1990s, when I was in my twenties, I remember asking my father where our family immigrated from in Italy. His response was or sounded like, “*Taranto*”, which I thought for many years was our family’s native town. In 2004, when I started my genealogy research, I began researching Taranto, which is both a city and a province in the Puglia region of Italy (Taranto became a province in 1923 and Puglia a region in 1927). I soon learned that at the turn of the 20th century, people from southern Italy did not identify themselves as citizens of the newly unified Kingdom of Italy (Italy was unified in 1861) but identified themselves as members of their local areas. Historically, the city of Taranto was an important principality and military seaport, but it was not yet a “region” nor a “province” when my family immigrated to the United States in 1912, so why would my great-grandfather identify his family as immigrating from Taranto? After several more months of research, I realized our family emigrated from the small commune of Castellaneta, located northwest of the city of Taranto. It was not until 2022 that I realized that the geographical area in the “heel” of Italy was a historic and ancient area from 1261 to 1860, known as ***Terra d’Otranto* or Land of Otranto**, which included the commune of Castellaneta. This was the ah-ha moment when I realized that my great-grandfather Vincenzo had told my grandfather and my father that **our family immigrated from “d’Otranto”**, not “*Taranto*”, which he considered his home region.



Historic map of the Terra d’Otranto from late 19th century

During my research of Castellaneta, I came across the Italian website, www.maldarizzi.it. This was another ah-ha moment where I realized that I had found a local citizen registry listing all the people that had lived in Castellaneta and showed the ancestral links between our family in the United States and our Castellaneta ancestors. This website was managed by Riccardo Maldarizzi and includes information on the people who lived in Castellaneta from the late 15th Century to the early 20th Century. In 2020, the registry included approximately 363 people using the surname Patarino in Castellaneta from 1482 to 1910. Using the Registry, I was able to trace my great-grandfather **Vincenzo Patarino**, who immigrated from Castellaneta to the United States in 1912, back generation-by-generation to **Giovanni Patarino who was born in Castellaneta in 1482** (see our detailed generation-to-generation lineage in Chapters V-A and V-B).

It is interesting to note that by the year 1500, families using the surname **Patarino** are known to have been living in the southern Italy regions of Puglia and Calabria. Since our family emigrated from the commune of Castellaneta to the United States, Castellaneta would be considered our family's ***commune natale or native town***. In 2023, according to cognomix.it, there were approximately 64 people with the surname of Patarino living in Italy with the highest concentration of 14 Patarino's living in Castellaneta.

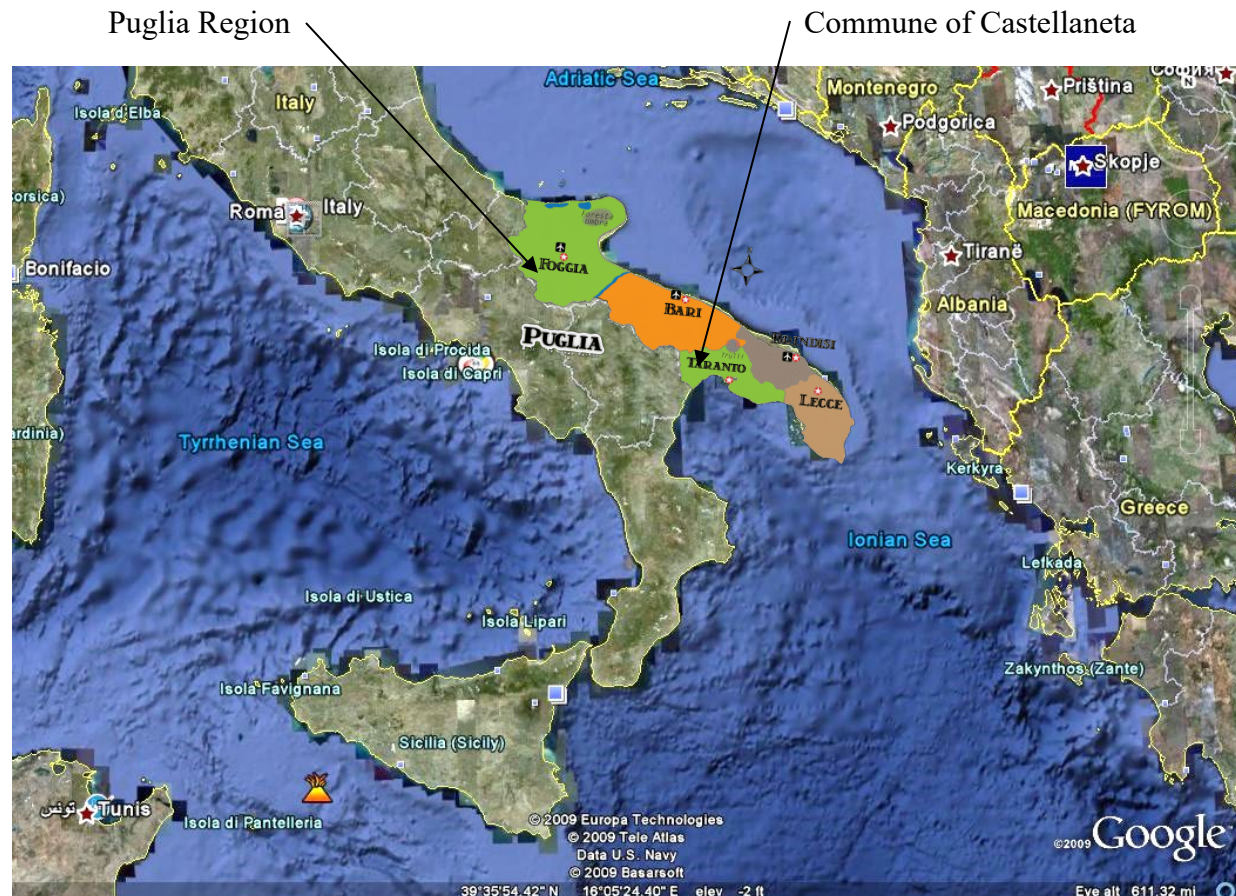


The old town of Castellaneta sits on the edge of the ravine

To understand our family history and what it means to be a Patarino, we must be more familiar with the commune of Castellaneta, our native town. The values that our ancestors lived for over 500 years in Castellaneta and possibly much longer based on our genetic lineage (see the end of Chapter V-B for my Ethnicity Inheritance graphs) formed distinct characteristics in the succeeding generations. Our family's innate traits of strength, endurance, resilience, and adaptability are part of our "southern sense, an intuitive sensibility of the broader world and how to deal with it, and how to adapt to it" as described by Paul Paolicelli in Under the Southern Sun (see Forward). Our ancestors in Castellaneta lived a measured life surrounded by family where together they had to endure and survive many challenges and thrive as individuals and a family. The ancient town of Castellaneta near the Ioan Sea is a special and mystic place and certainly helped form our family's character and what it means to be a Patarino.

Southern Italy, Puglia Region

In the late 19th century, southern Italy was perceived by many Europeans as a sort of cultural wasteland with cities inhabited by “masses of poor, lazy, half-savages”. Even the upper classes were generally seen as a “boorish lot with little refinement”. Few cities other than Naples were ever visited. The countryside was overrun by “savage brigands” and the peasants lived in conditions far worse than anywhere else in Europe. Many Europeans even refused to acknowledge that southern Italy was part of Europe (American Institute of Southern Italian Studies). Thanks to the book, **Under the Southern Sun** by Paul Paolicelli (see Forward to this *Storia*), we understand that southern Italians had and has a rich and vigorous culture that included a “southern sense”, an intuitive sensibility of the broader world and how to deal with it.



The Puglian region of southern Italy forms the heel of Italy’s “boot” (about 30 miles wide) and extends to the north (about 220 miles long). The region is known for its whitewashed hill towns, centuries-old farmland, and hundreds of miles of Mediterranean coastline bordering the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea. The capital of the Puglia region is Bari and the region’s population in 2022 was about 4 million. The Taranto province in Puglia is at the southwest side of the region and its capital is the city of Taranto with a population in 2022 of about 460,000. There are 29 *communes* or towns in the province including the commune of Castellaneta located in the province’s northwest corner. **The November 11, 2013, issue of National Geographic Magazine considered the region of Puglia as a “2014 Best of the World’s 20 Destinations”.**

Commune di Castellaneta, Citti del Mito



The commune of Castellaneta is the “**City of Myth**” in the heart of the *Parco Regionale delle Gravine or Ravine Regional Park* with the old town area standing on the precipitous edges of a ravine, which at this location is 145 meters deep and 350 meters wide. The commune is 245 meters above sea level and had a population in 2022 of about 14,000; during the Middle Ages, it had a population of about 4,000. The ravine is one of the most magnificent *Apulian* ravines in Italy; it was formed by flood waters about one million years ago and has foot paths which meander at breathtaking heights. The ravine’s obvious defensive value explains why the houses of the old town were massed on the ravine’s edge, where they were well protected in ancient times from attack. At the bottom of the ravine is the **Lato River**, which flows to the Ionian Sea ten miles away. (www.prolococastellaneta.it; www.comune.castellaneta.ta.it)



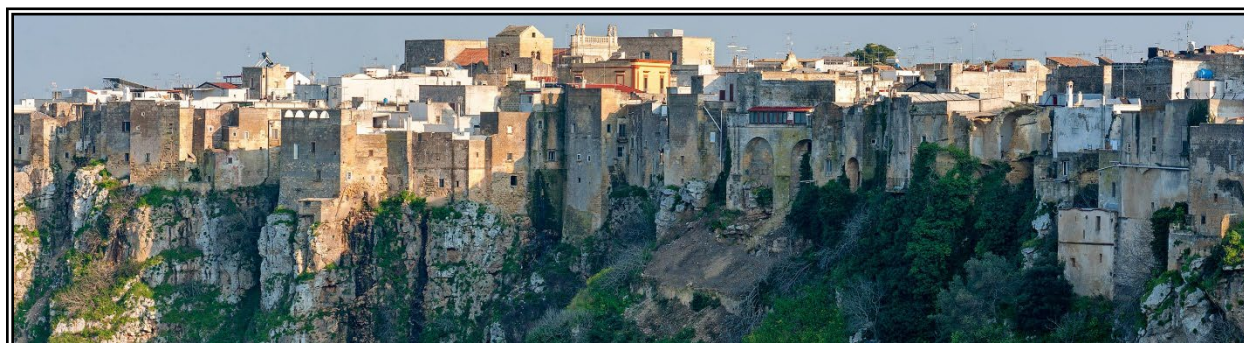
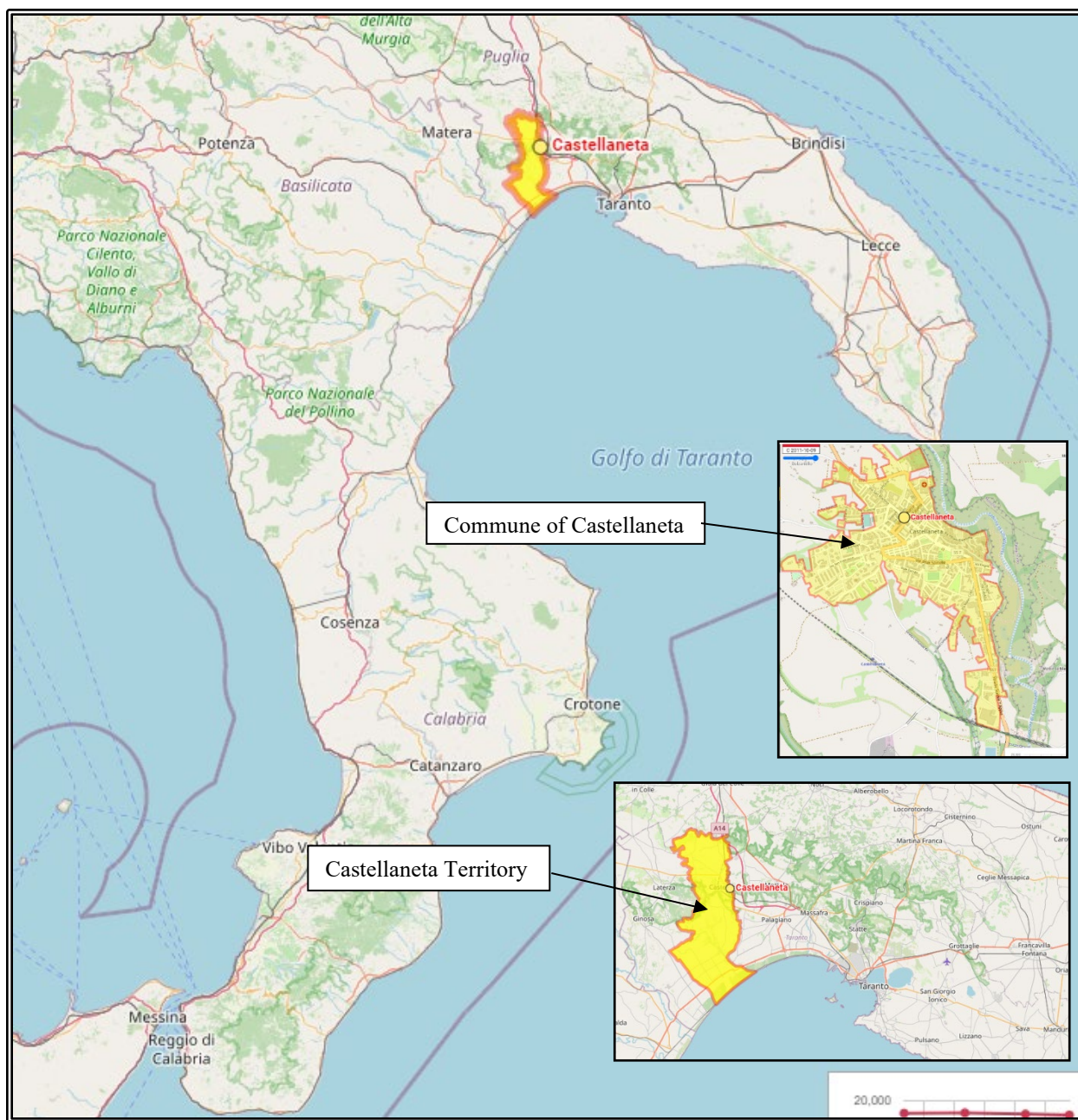
Lato River Castellaneta

Taranto Ravine or Gravina

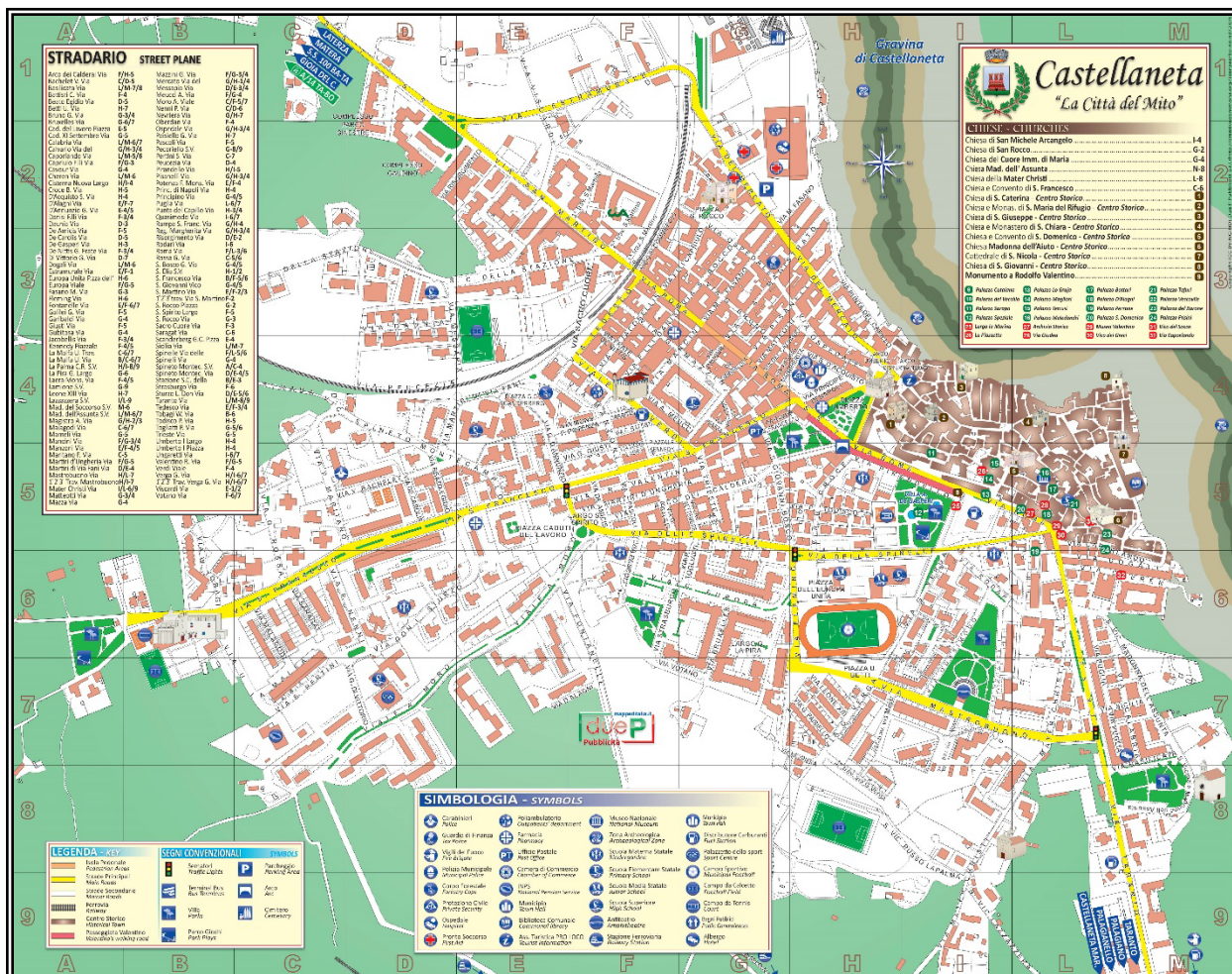


18th century map of Castellaneta in southern Italy

Location Map (https://www.citypopulation.de/en/italy/puglia/taranto/073003__castellaneta/)



Castellaneta360.it provides a realistic and detailed 3D model and 360-degree tours of the commune's churches, monuments, and history.



CASTELLANETA PER TE

CULTURA MUSICA ARTE GASTRONOMIA

ESTATE 2019

LUGLIO

5 LUGLIO
MEMORIAL «D. TERRUSI»
AUDITORIUM COMUNALE - 20.00
CASTELLANETA
ASS. PROLOCO «D. TERRUSI»

20 - 21 LUGLIO
FESTA DELLA LUNA
LUNGOMARE EROI DEL MARE - 21.00
CASTELLANETA MARINA

DAL 20 AL 31 LUGLIO
FIERA DEL MARE
LUNGOMARE EROI DEL MARE - 21.00
CASTELLANETA MARINA

22 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA
«IO MI SALVO DA SOLA» CON
RITA DALLA CHIESA
EPISCOPIO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

DAL 22 AL 25 LUGLIO
CORSO DI PRESEPISTMO
PALAZZO CATALANO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA
ASS. AMICI DEL PRESEPE

23 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA
«PASSIONE» CON
PAOLO CREPET
PALAZZO CATALANO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

24 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA
«IO MI SALVO DA SOLA» CON
GIORGIA BENUSIGLIO E
DANIELA POGGI
PALAZZO CATALANO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

24 LUGLIO
NOTTE BIANCA DEI BAMBINI
PIAZZA KENNEDY - 20.00
CASTELLANETA MARINA

25 LUGLIO
STRA-CASTELLANETA MARINA
CASTELLANETA MARINA

26 LUGLIO
QUADRIVIO IN CONCERTO
«UN'ALTRA MUSICA»
EPISCOPIO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

DAL 26 LUGLIO
AL 28 LUGLIO
APULIA VOICE
PIAZZA KENNEDY - 21.00
CASTELLANETA MARINA

27 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA CON
STEFANO MAMMUCCI
RENZO RUBINO
DIDATO
PALAZZO CATALANO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

28 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA
«SCOTTO SCORTA» CON
PAOLO BORROMETI
GIUSEPPE ANTOCI E
SANDRO RUOTOLO
CASTELLANETA MARINA - 19.00

28 LUGLIO
GARA DELLE 7 CHIESE
CASTELLANETA
CLUB RUNNER '87

29 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA
«DETECTIVE DELL'ARTE» CON
ROBERTO RICCARDI
PALAZZO CATALANO - 19.00
CASTELLANETA

30 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA
«BAR TOILETTI» CON
MARINO BARTOLETTI
PALAZZO CATALANO - 19.00
CASTELLANETA

30 LUGLIO
SERGIO CAMMARIERE
IN CONCERTO
PIAZZA M. IMMACOLATA - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

30 LUGLIO
CICLOPASSEGGIATA
CASTELLANETA MARINA

31 LUGLIO
RASSEGNA LETTERARIA CON
FRANCESCO CARINGELLA
PAOLO TRINCIA
PALAZZO CATALANO - 21.00
CASTELLANETA

31 LUGLIO
DO POV'R DISGRAZIET
ANFITEATRO COMUNALE - 21.00
CASTELLANETA
ANSPI - CUORE IMMACOLATO DI MARIA-

SETTEMBRE

14 - 15 SETTEMBRE
STREET LIKE A RAINBOW
CASTELLANETA MARINA
ASS. ARACNEA

CASTELLANETA MARINA

**ASSOCIAZIONE DISTRETTO URBANO
DEL COMMERCIO DI CASTELLANETA**

WWW.CASTELLANETA.GOV.IT
[#VISITCASTELLANETA](https://VISITCASTELLANETA)

Pictures of Castellaneta



In 2022, Giles Michael Patarino with his wife Stacia visited Castellaneta and took the photos on the next two pages. Giles is the grandson of Egidio Antonio Patarino who was born in Castellaneta in 1908.







Chiesa San Micle Arcangelo in the 1930s and in 2022 adjacent to the Piazza Umberto I

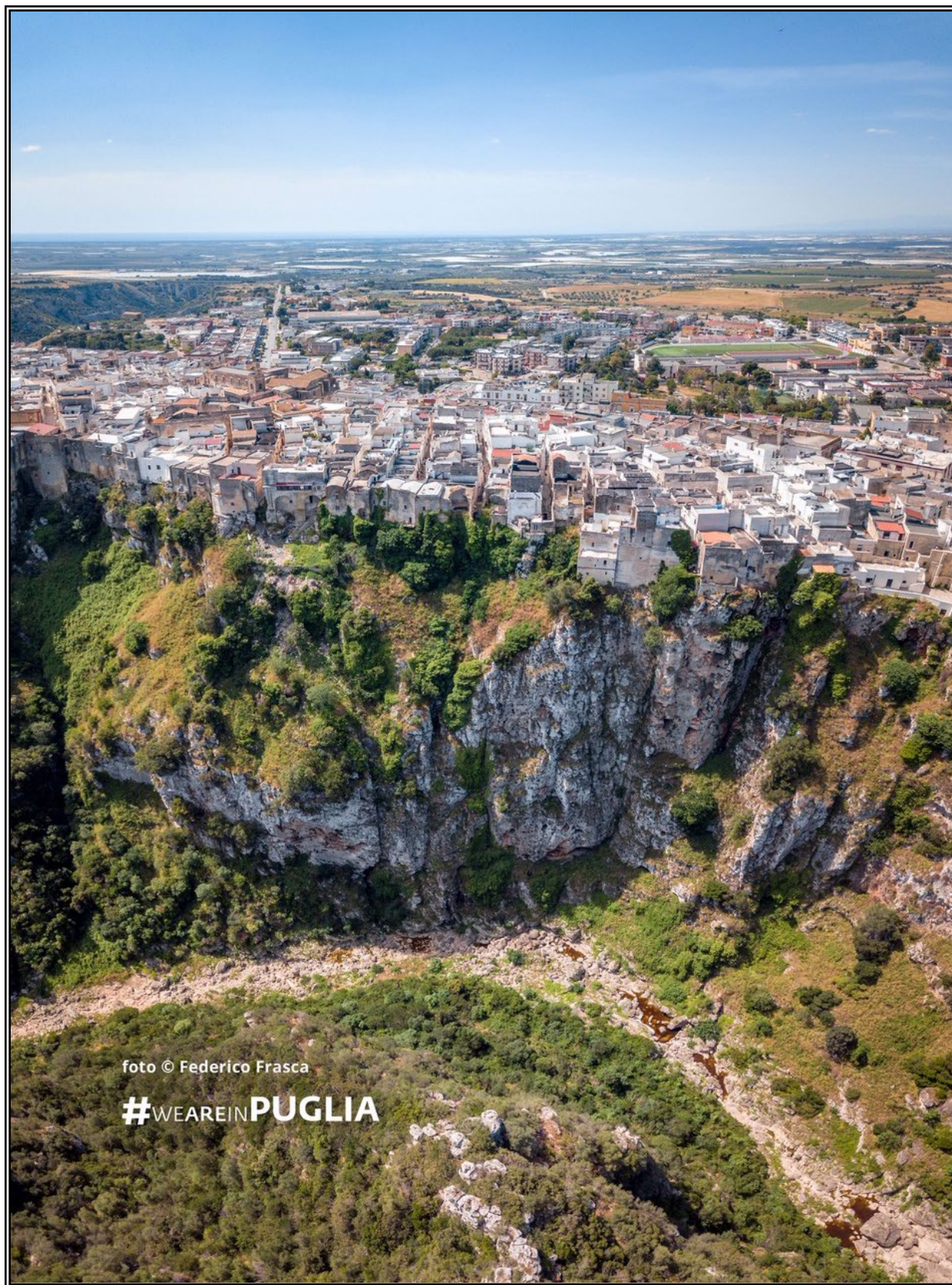


Rainbow over the Gravina and the old town of Castellaneta



Castellaneta Cultural Music Summer Festival





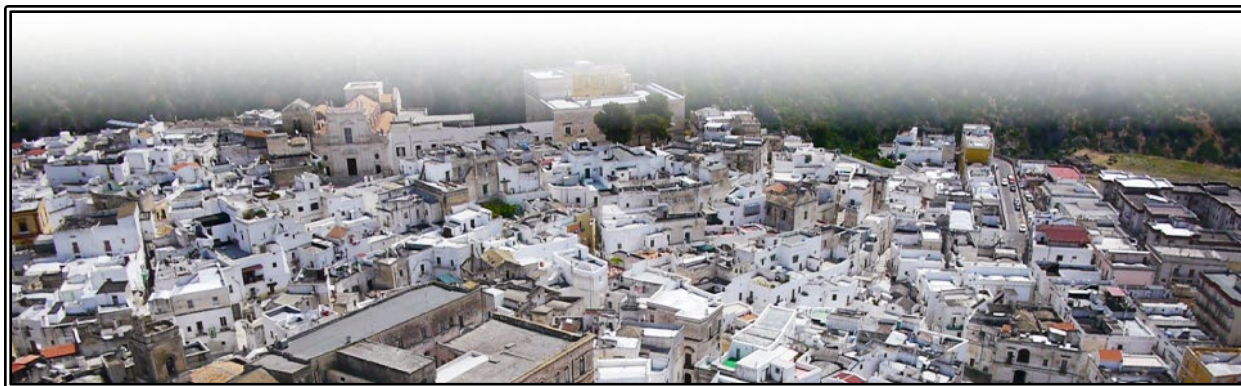
Castellaneta at the edge of the Ravine and the dry Lato riverbed below



Photos looking north toward Castellaneta



Photos looking south from Castellaneta to the Ion Sea about six miles away



In the immediate foreground is the roof of *Chiesa San Domenico* or Church of St. Domenico



In the foreground is the *Palazzo di Baronale* or the Baron's Place on the edge of the *Gravina*



Castellaneta at the edge of the Gravina



Early 20th century photo showing the wall surrounding the Old Town area



Mid-20th century photo showing the *Via Capo Orlando*, the south road along the ravine



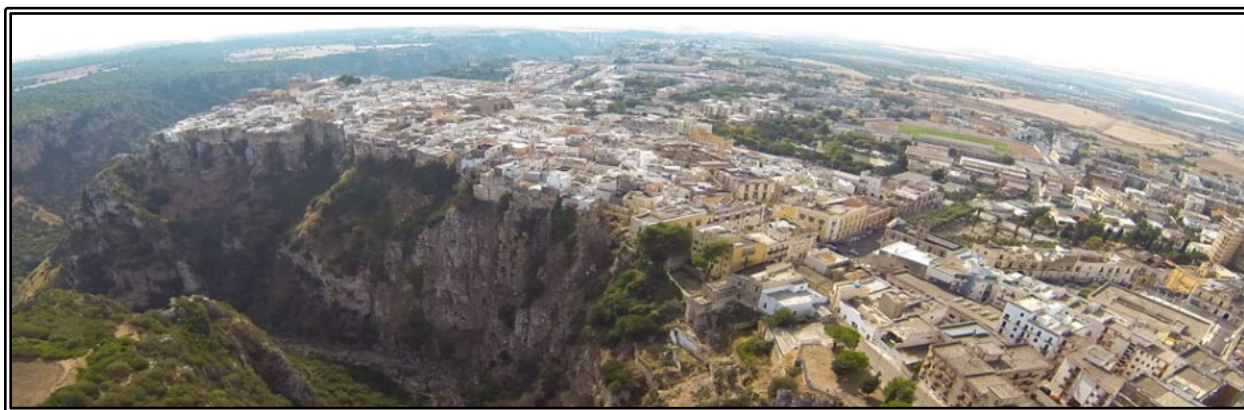
Mid-20th century photo taken from the *Gravina* looking at the *Palazzo di Baronale*



Early 20th century photo of *Via Roma*, the main road into the old town



Narrow Streets



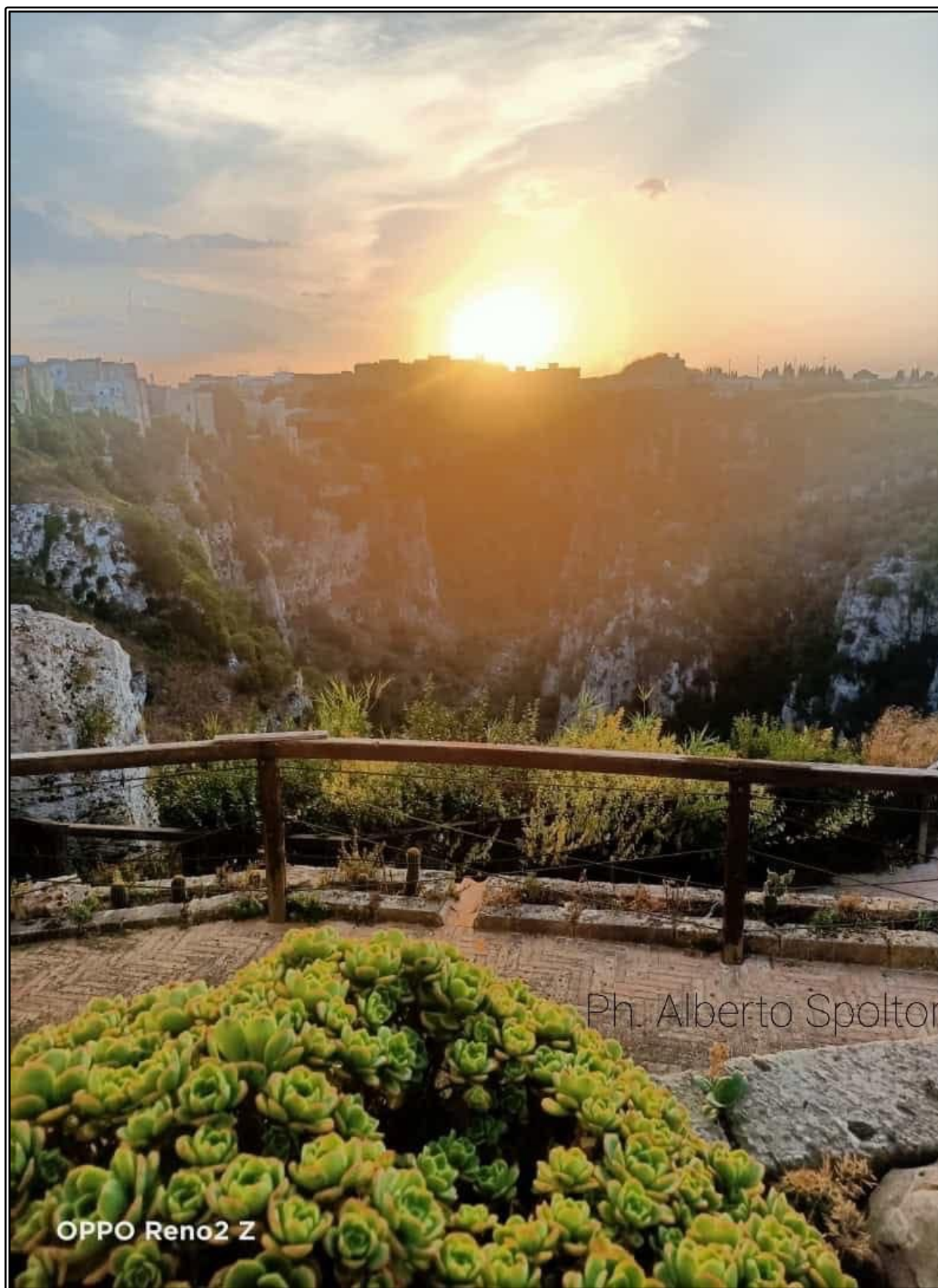




Old town area of Castellaneta during winter (a rare snowfall for this climate)

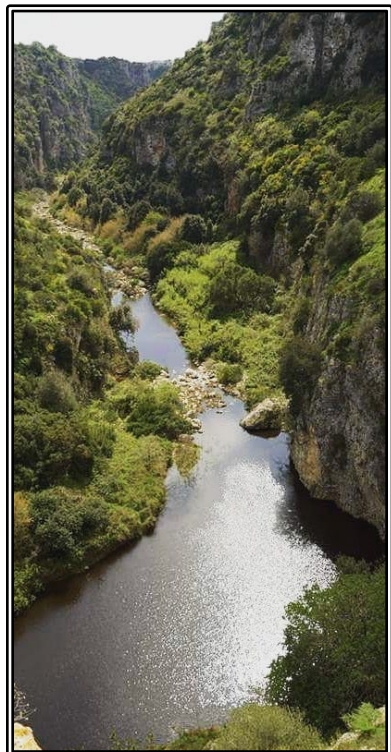






OPPO Reno2 Z

Ph. Alberto Spoltor



Castellaneta's Historical Old Town

The old town area of Castellaneta dates back to medieval times with narrow streets and alleys built to allow only one person to pass at a time, which helped prevent attacks inside the town. The town used to be surrounded by an imposing ring of thick walls and gates to restrict passage into the town, which were removed in 1841. The town and surrounding area contain many ancient churches reflecting the town's importance. In the 11th century, the town was the official seat of the Bishop of the Diocese of Castellaneta. **The patron saints of Castellaneta are Santa Nicola and Santa Francesco.** Below is a 1702 *toponomastica* engraving of Castellaneta by Giovan Battista Pacichelli, which identifies historical structures in the old town area.



Image Content:

1. *Duomo*
2. *Pal del Vescoco*
3. *Pal del Barone*
4. *S. Chiara*
5. *S. Dom*
6. *Piazza*
7. *Seggio*
8. *Riformati*
9. *Cappuccini*
10. *S. Michele*
11. *S. M. del Pesco*
12. *S. M. del Soccorso*
13. *S. Lucia*
14. *Mater Jesu Chrifti*
15. *Porta Granda*
16. *Porta Piccola*

Image Content Translated:

1. *Duomo di San Nicola* or Cathedral of Saint Nicholas (13th century)
2. *Palazzo di Vescovo* or Bishops Palace (18th century)
3. *Palazzo di Baronale* or Barons Palace (9th century)
4. Church of Saint Chiara (13th century)
5. Church of Saint Domenico (18th century)
6. The Town Square
7. Seat (could this be the seat of the Bishop?)
8. Reformed Church
9. *Convento dei Cappuccino* or former Capuchin Monastery
10. Church of Saint Michael the Archangel (18th century)
11. Church of Saint Maria of Pesco
12. Church of Saint Maria of Soccorso (13th century)
13. St. Lucia (this is a rock church in the ravine)
14. Church of Mater Jesus Christ (17th century)
15. Large Door into the Town
16. Small Door into the Town



Chiesa Convento St. Francesco



1-Cathedral of St. Nicolas



3-Barons Palace-ancient castle
home to the Norman Barons



2-Bishops Palace-historical
seat of the Bishops



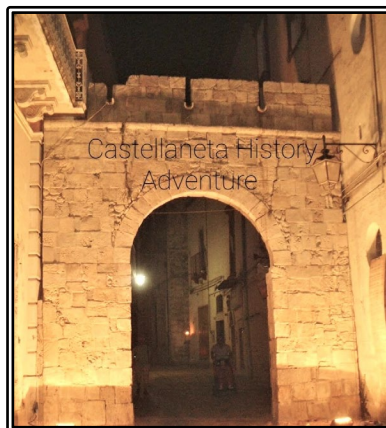
Cathedral of St. Nicholas



5-Church of St. Domenico



4-Church of St. Chiara



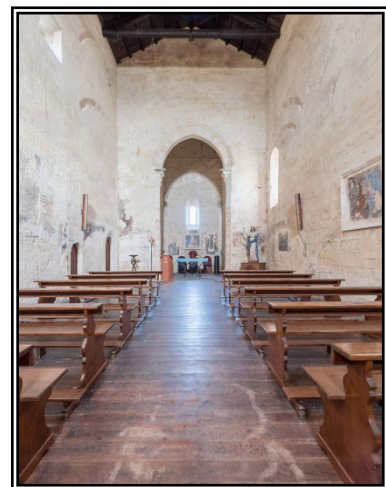
15-Large Gate



Crypt at St. Michael



10-Church of St. Michael



11-St. Mary of Pesco

The Land of the Olive Tree

The Puglia region is famous for its olive harvesting and olive oil production and has over 60 million olive trees providing around 40% of Italy's olive oil production and is the largest single production region of olives in the world. Olives have been cultivated in Puglia for over 3,000 years and was always known as "green gold." The first trees in Puglia were brought by the Greeks in the 8th century BCE, which soon became crowded with Greek colonies. Historically, olives were used for food, lighting, cosmetics, healing, and as a boiling weapon. The olive tree is one of the world's oldest symbols and represents peace (the olive branch given to resolve conflict), harmony (hope), strength (lives through fires and emerges stronger), endurance (longevity), resilience (can withstand harsh weather), and adaptability (can survive poor soils). The olive tree reminds us of our own human capacity to endure and thrive amid challenges.

The *Via Appia* was built by the Roman Empire in the 4th century and passes through Puglia and close to Castellana. The road was built not only for soldiers to get to the port of Brindisi in Puglia but also to transport olive oil from the region back to Rome. In ancient times, olive oil was the equivalent of crude oil today and a person could become wealthy based on its high demand. The climate in Puglia was ideal for olive groves because of its dry weather. In Castellana, ancient oil presses can be seen in the caves under the old town used to protect the precious olive oil (see *Amici della Gravine* and the *Sotterranea* tour in this Chapter).



One of the oldest olive trees in Puglia is about 30 miles from Castellaneta in *Piana degli Ulivi Millerari*. The tree is over 3,000 years old, and its olives are currently used to produce Terre d'Otranto PDO Extra Virgin Olive Oil.



This ancient olive tree above and is called “*Il Grande Vecchio*” or “The Great Edler.” The supporting stones under the tree were already there in the 1800s. (epicureangloexchange.com)



The twisted truck of an olive tree

A BRIEF HISTORY OF APULIAN OLIVE TREES

2500 BC - 270s BC
Olive trade became dispersed in the Mediterranean basin due to the **Phoenicians** and **Greeks** prominent maritime commerce.

266 BC - 27 BC
The **Roman Republic** expanded the olive cultivations in Puglia, as it became a highly valuable commodity. They used it as medicine, as food, as a fuel source for light, in soaps and in their beauty regiments.

400s AD - 550 AD
During the **Early Middle Ages**, there was a big decline in the distribution of olives due to the bulkiness of the containers.

1000 AD - 1600 AD
The olive oil trade became very valuable once again with large shipments coming and going from the ports of Brindisi, Gallipoli, Otranto and Taranto. **Venetian, Tuscan, Genoese, Russian, English and German** warehouses were installed in order to sustain the demands.

1590 AD - 1680 AD
A long cycle of low temperatures lead to a large decline in production of olives. The changes in climate caused a big plant crisis and famine in all of Italy including its peninsula.

2013
The Xylella Fastidiosa Bacteria is discovered in olive trees near Gallipoli.

5,000 BC
The first traces of olive consumption in Puglia were discovered in the Torre Canne excavations. Olive pips were found fused into **Neolithic** rock.

280 BC
Olives were found in **Messapian** tombs and ossuary near Gallipoli. They were buried with the bodies and would also be moved to the ossuary with the bones as food for the person's final voyage.

27 BC - 286 AD
The Puglia region supplied the entire **Roman Empire** with olive oil. These trees were so highly regarded that tearing one down could be punishable by death.

550 AD - 1059 AD
With the rise of municipalities and monasteries, the **Byzantine Empire** restored the olive groves. The Apulian oil trade was relaunched by the **Venetian** navigators.

1559 AD
A **Spanish Viceroy** Parafran De Rivera ordered a construction of a road from Puglia to Naples, Calabria and Abruzzo to allow for the faster transport of the olive oil.

Late 1600s
The agricultural economy recovered and once again the olive groves flourished + dominated the Apulian peninsula.

2021
The Xylella bacteria has spread and continues to devastate the groves. 22 million of the 60 million olive trees covering 9 million hectares have been infected with Xylella. 6.5 million trees have died.

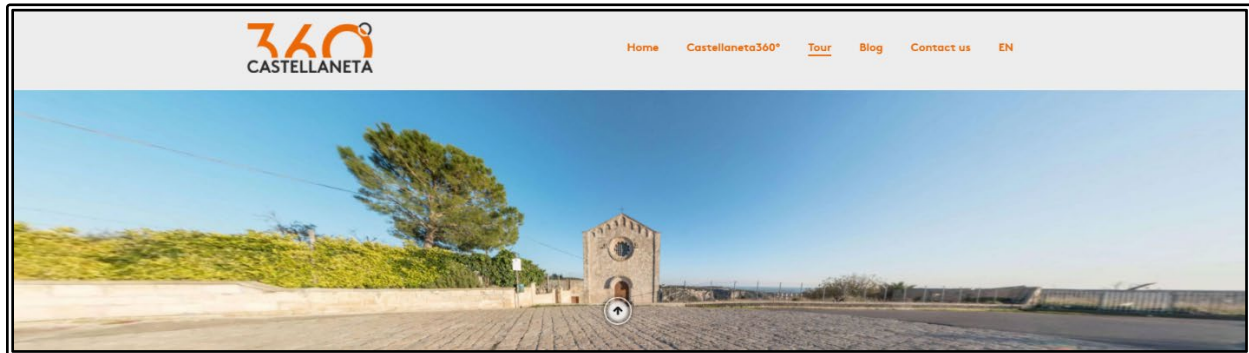
The Olive Tree Project

The history of Puglia Olives (theolivetreeproject.com)

Chiesa dell'Assunta and the Summer Solstice

First called the **Church of Santa Maria del Pesco**, today it's called the **Church of the Assunta**. The church in Castellaneta was built at the end of the 14th century in the Romanesque style. "According to legend, the upper church was built by a ship's captain in honor of the Virgin of the Assumption, who with her radiance showed him the way and saved him from a storm" (www.madein Taranto.org/chiesa-assunta).

Every Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year, sunlight penetrates through the central rose window and after a slow journey across the interior of the church, the light is positioned in the center of the apse. This shaft of light is a representation of the Virgin's radiance, like a lighthouse, guiding the captain and other lost souls to safety. The Cultural Association *Amici delle Gravine di Castellenata*, or Friends of the Ravine, presents an annual "Waiting for the Solstice" event for the public to experience this extraordinary occurrence.

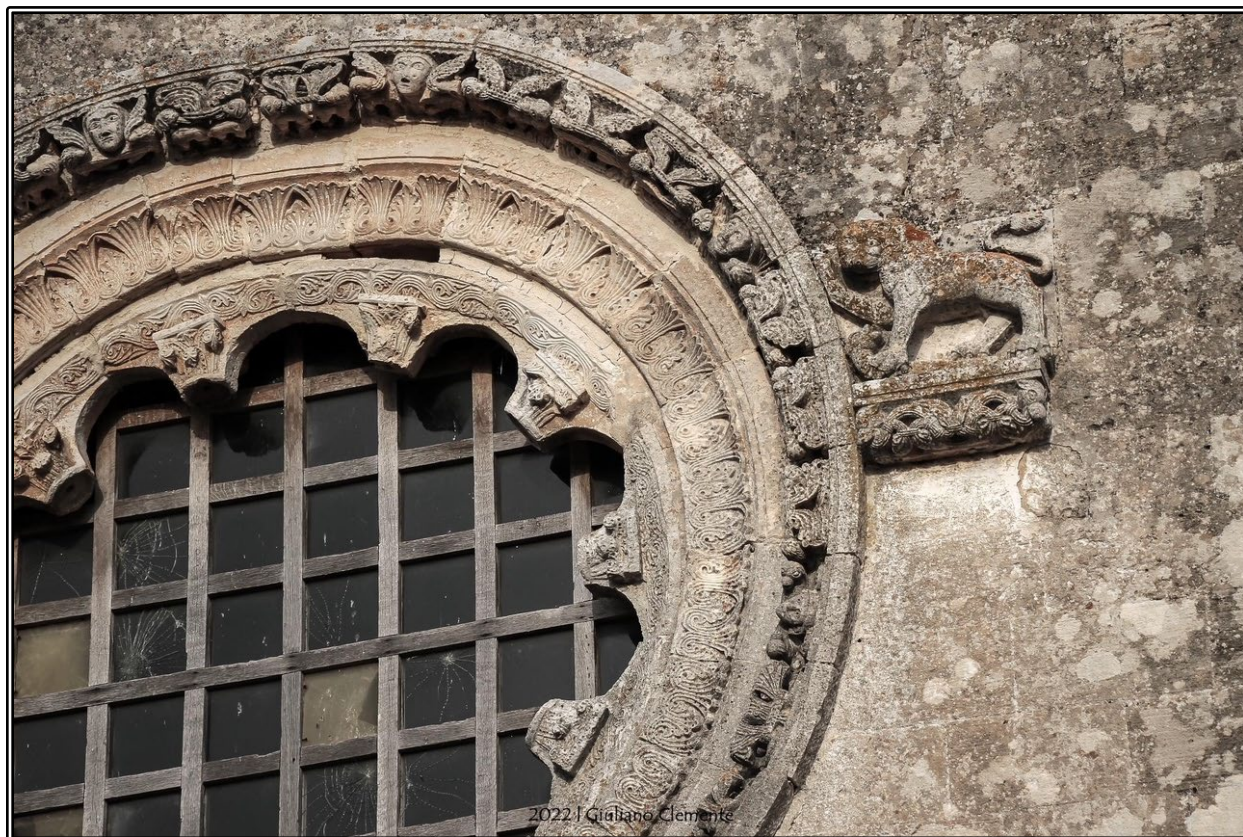




The light from the rose window moves across the interior of the church during the Summer Solstice

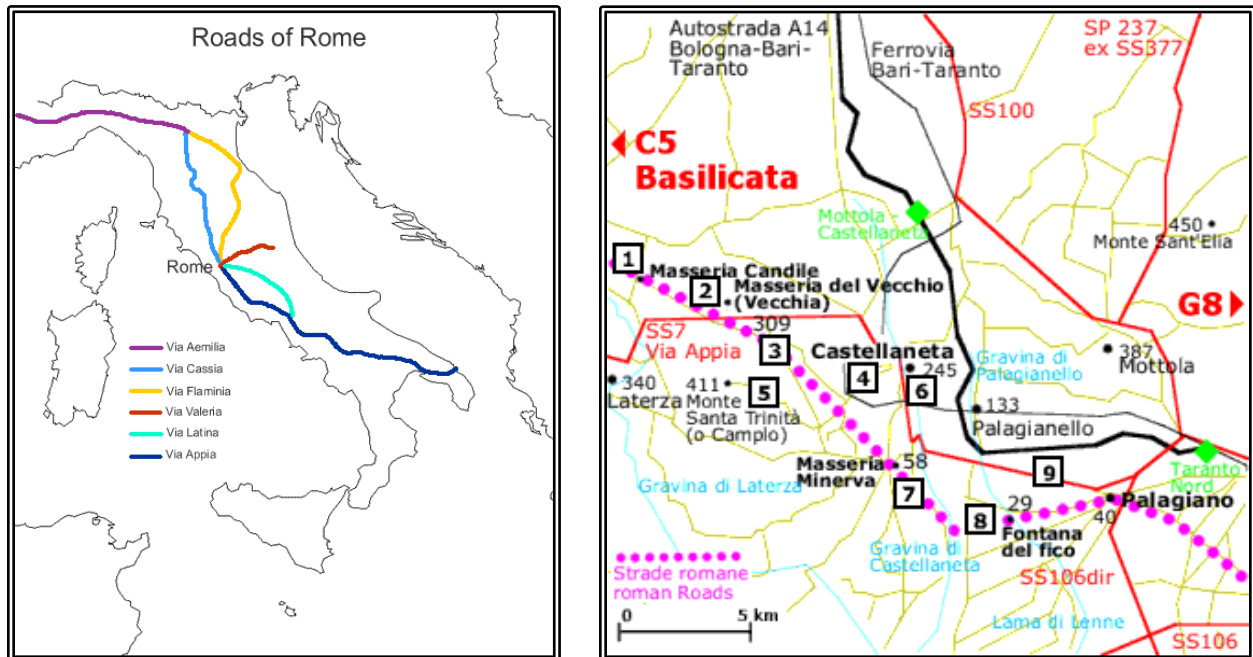


The Church of the Assumption sits on the edge of the ravine



The Roman Appian Way

The commune of Castellaneta is located about one mile east of the Tarentine branch of the Roman *Via Appia* and was a few miles from a stopover station known by the ancient name of “*AD Canales*”. The Appian Way was a road built by the Romans in the 4th Century as a main route to transport troops and military supplies from Rome to the port city of Brindisi on the Adriatic Sea. The expression, “all roads lead to Rome” refers to these roads that were built all over the Roman Empire. The road was built as a leveled dirt road upon which small stones and mortar were laid and then topped off with tight-fitting, flat interlocking stones.



“Discovering Roman Roads”, Italy, Apulia, Quadrant G7, straderomane.it

A *Castellum Unitum* or United Castle on the Ravine

The first sign of a human presence in Castellaneta dates to the Bronze Age (2000 to 1000 BCE) where the inhabitants lived in rock caves alongside the *Gravina*. In the 8th century, the area was formally colonized by the Greeks and due to continuous raids by Muslim Saracens, a settlement was established called *Castanea* on the edge of the ravine. In the 9th century, Muslim Saracens intensified their raids along the Italian peninsula and sacked and destroyed almost all the settlements in the area. It is theorized that the origin of the Castellaneta name came when the inhabitants then joined in a *Castellum Unitum* or United Castle on the edges of the ravine, creating a fortified town with defensible walls to protect the community.



Native town of Rudolph Valentino

Castellaneta was the birthplace of the 1920s silent movie star and sex symbol, Rudolph Valentino (1895-1926), who was born **Raffaello Piero Filiberto Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antognuola**. After failing to enroll in the Italian Naval Academy, he went to school and earned a certificate in agriculture. Valentino immigrated to the United States in 1913 when he was 18-years old. His big break came in 1920 when he first played a Latin lover in the Hollywood movie, "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." Valentino was a world-wide movie star and died at 31-years old in 1926 from peritonitis. The commune of Castellaneta commissioned a statute of Valentino by the artist Luigi Gheno under the guidance of architect Nicola Cantore and unveiled it in 1961; it is located along the *Via Roma* in the old town area. Visit the *Museo Rudolfo Valentino* or Valentino Foundation in Castellaneta.

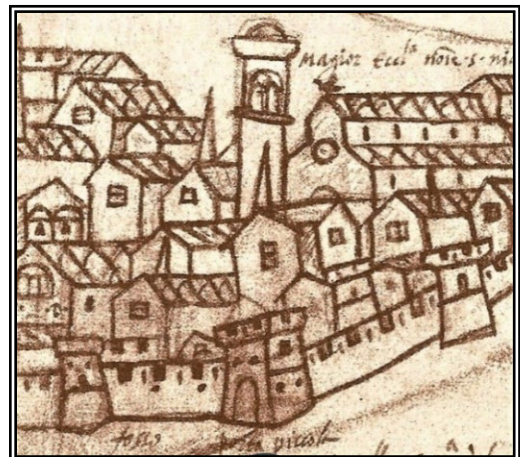


The Ancient Town Walls and Doors

The old town area of Castellaneta was originally surrounded by an imposing ring of thick walls with two doors to restrict passage into the town, the ***Porta Piccola*** and ***Porta Grande***. The ancient walls started at the garden of the *Palazzo di Baronale* or Baron's Palace and descended the slope to the *Porta Piccola* or Small Door. In some areas of the old town, there are still significant traces of the ancient walls with gardens and patios defined by the back of the original walls. At a wide stretch of the road into town, there are still traces of two of the wall's towers. In one garden (see below), you can still see the shape of the wall's base, which used a more durable stone material. In modern times, the walls were not needed and selectively demolished so the stone could be used in the construction of new buildings. The last parts of the wall were demolished in 1841. (*L'antica muraglia e la Porta Piccola*, di Aurelio Miccoli, *ViviWebTV*)



The remains of the ancient wall tower base



Porta Piccola

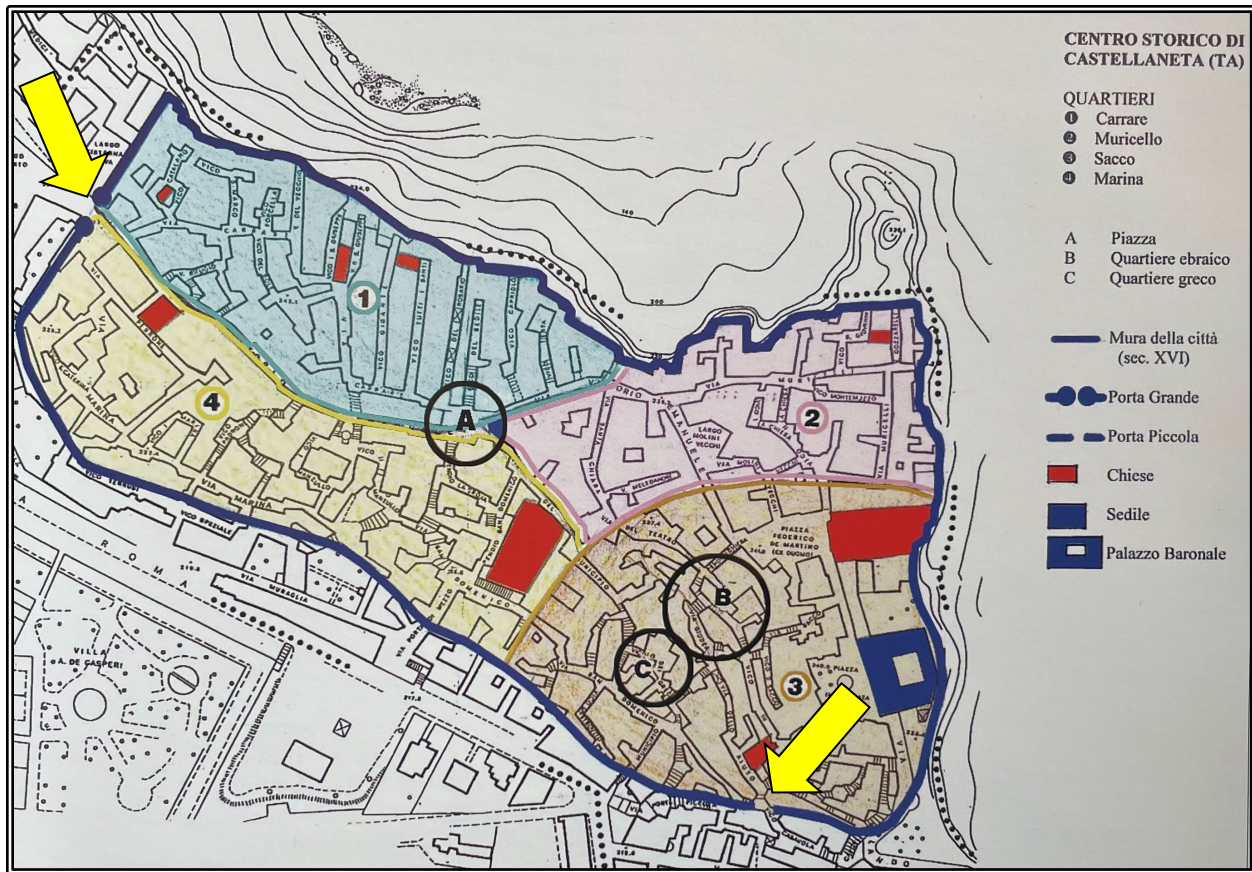
The *Porta Piccola*, or Small Door, was the door of service and was used by the people to return to the town while the *Porta Grande*, or Large Door, was known as the Great One and was reserved for the superior classes and was preceded by a bridge over a moat. The doors were mentioned in a parchment dated 1258, which called the main door to the town "*necata*". In Latin, the verb "*necare*" indicates killing, which could suggest that outside the door "evildoers" were executed and hung on the walls as a warning to those that entered.



Porta Grande (Porta Necata)

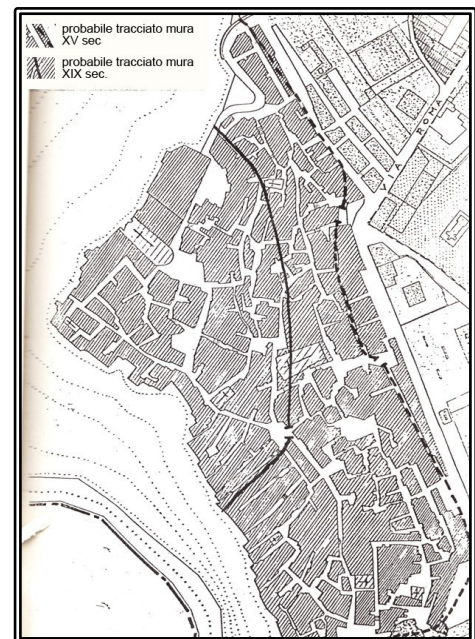
1702 Toponomastic Graving

Porta Piccola



Plan of the historic center of Castellana Grotte with the city walls, *Castellana Grotte città del mito*, by Miccoli, 2008, p.29

At one time, there were two circles of walls built around the town of Castellana Grotte, which were several feet thick and about 32 feet tall. The pictures above and to the right show the location of the first and second circle of defensive wall surrounding the town; the first circle was probably built around the 6th century and the second circle built around the end of the 15th Century. The construction of town walls represented a great economic effort for a small community, but it would have also been a source of income due to the levies collected from goods passing through the doors. The defensive wall's doors were equipped with moats and draw bridges and were manned by guards under the command of a *Mastro Giurato* who opened and closed the doors, safeguarding the residents from enemies or ill-intentioned people, especially at night. The rhythm of each day was marked only by the tolling of the town bells, which rang at sunrise and sunset.



In 2021, Castellana History Adventure (Facebook Page) identified the presence of a **Porta Postierla or Postern Door** in the defensive wall surrounding the town. A postern was a secondary door or gate in a fortification such as a town wall or castle curtain wall and in the

event of a siege, could be used as a sally port allowing the defenders to make a sortie on the besiegers (Wikipedia: Postern). The Castellaneta Postern Door was found without damage and was located close to the Small Door in a slightly tucked away location. It was a hidden, narrow gateway to the town allowing the passage of only one person at a time so it could be easily defended. It would have been used as an exit or entrance in case of attack, but it was also used as the so-called “*porta dei ritardatari!*” or “door for latecomers!”.

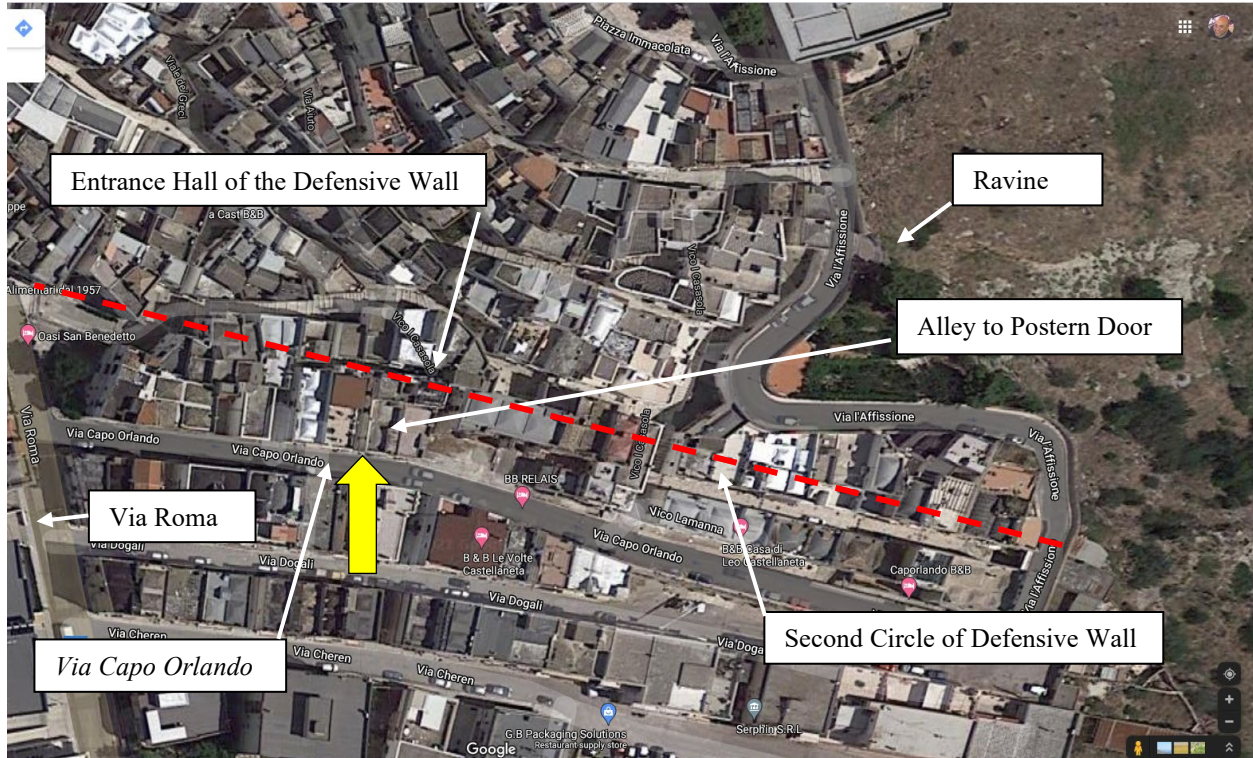


When the doors to the town were opened, the peasants went to work in the fields outside the town and the merchants went to work inside the town to sell their wares. At sunset, the closing of the doors was announced by order of Castellaneta’s *Mastro Giurato* followed by three strokes of the *campanaria torre* or bell tower. In 2019, it was discovered that there was an ancient bell tower belonging to the second circle of defensive wall and that was leaning against the convent of San Domenico. The picture at left shows the base of the old bell tower with the original stone used for the defensive wall with the Church of San Domenico behind it. (“*Il Ritrovato Torrione Medievale*” or ‘The Rediscovered Medieval Tower’, *Amici delle Gravine di Castellaneta*, June 17, 2019)

The tower bell was called “La Starrita” by the people of Castellaneta because it helped people to find their way back to town from the countryside even in absolute darkness. At times, the peasants lingered in the fields and were not able to return to town until after the heavy wooden Large and Small Doors had been closed and bolted and the drawbridges raised. This would typically mean they would spend the night outside the walls without protection. The peasants of Castellaneta would not have to lose heart because they would then approach the Postern Door and communicate to the guard in charge who they were and ask to be let in. The guard would then lower a ladder or rope from the Postern, which was located at a higher level than the ground. It’s no coincidence that the historic expression remains, “*fusc’ ch’è nott*” (“run, accelerate your pace, because night is looming” and you could find the town gates closed).

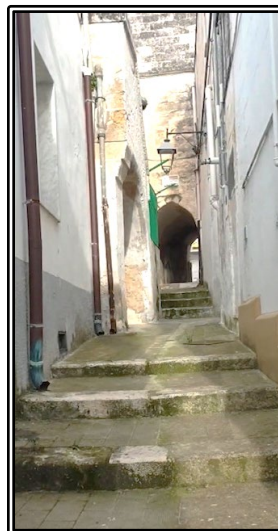
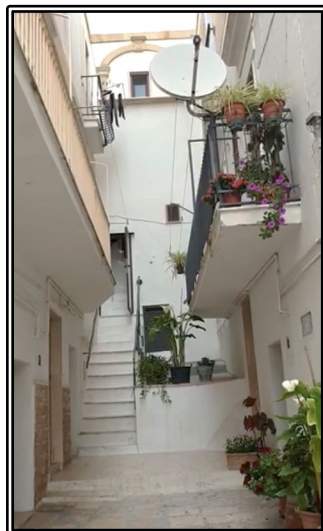
The location of the Postern Door can be found by taking the current road *Via Caporlando* to a side alley with a narrow staircase that would have been perpendicular to the ancient defensive wall (note the staircase was probably built after the wall lost its defensive function). If you follow the staircase you will find a small door that was the Postern. Beyond the door is a small room (housed within the thickness of the walls that were about 5 feet thick), which housed the guard, who from a still present slot, could watch for any latecomers. To the right of the door is a narrow patrol path with steps that followed the entire perimeter of the wall. In times of enemy attack, the patrol path allowed for dropping of large heavy stones from the top of the wall.

The information and pictures on the Postern Door were obtained from the article, “One of the most important discoveries of recent years: the door for latecomers”, Castellaneta History Adventure Facebook page, May 23, 2021, by Martina Tinella, www.facebook.com.



“ENTRANCE HALL OF THE DEFENSIVE WALL IN THE PAST EQUIPPED WITH SIX LOOPHOLES” [English translation]

Loopholes refers to narrow slit openings in the thickness of the defensive wall to allow visibility and use of weapons from inside, which were typical for medieval fortifications.



Photos of alley off *Via Caporlando*, narrow stairway to Postern Door, and alley to the defensive wall patrol path

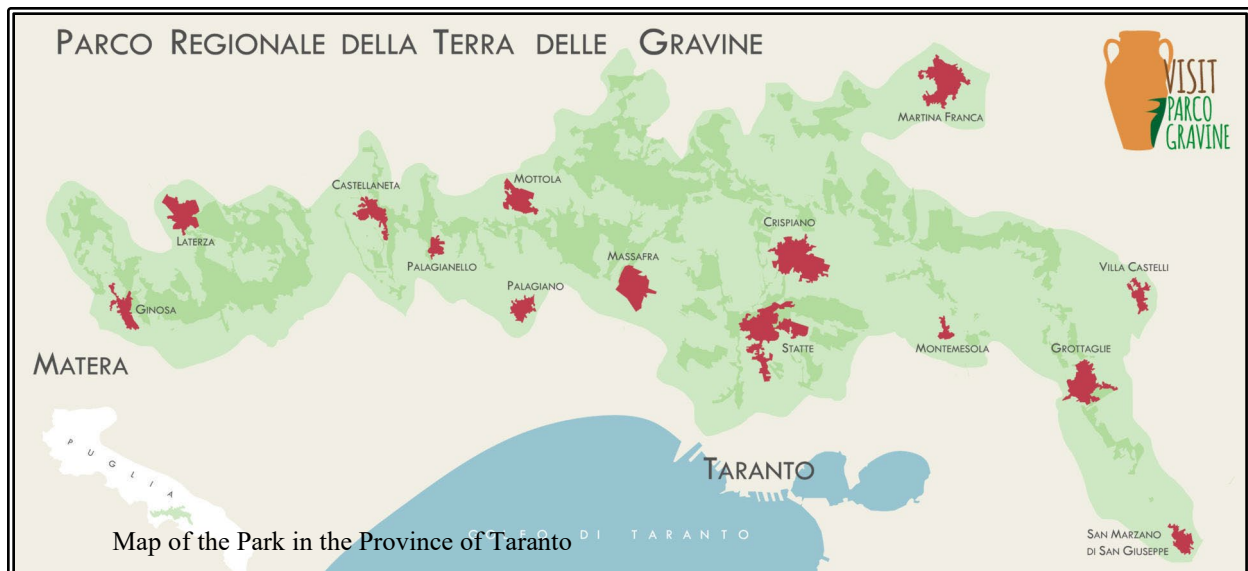
Parco Regionale delle Gravine or Ravine Regional Park

The **Ravine Regional Park**, also known as the “Land of the Ravines”, is a 988-acre sub-region within the Puglia region and was established December 20, 2005. It is spread across thirteen communes and is interposed with geological phenomenon characterized by blades and ravines which were carved by rainwater into the limestone rock over millions of years. The *Gravina* is the most majestic natural canyon landscape in Western Europe and includes archeological sites such as villages and churches carved into the stone from the Medieval, Hellenistic, and Paleolithic ages. The old historical town of Castellaneta stands on the precipitous edges of the ravine, which at this location is 145 meters deep and 350 meters wide. The Park was established to legally protect the area’s historic landscape, cultural human settlements, agro-forestry, and the preservation of habitat, flora and fauna. The website www.pereghegis.it includes detailed information of the ravines and offers tours of the area.

For more photos and information regarding the ravine and the history of this area, go to: 1) www.parcogravine.com; 2) www.wikipedia.org/wiki/gravina (geologia); 3) www.periegesis.it, “Journey through the history of the agricultural landscape of Taranto” (*Viaggio nella storia del paesaggio agrario del tarantino*); or 4) search, “Parco Regionale delle Gravine”.







***Amici della Gravine* or Friends of the Ravine**

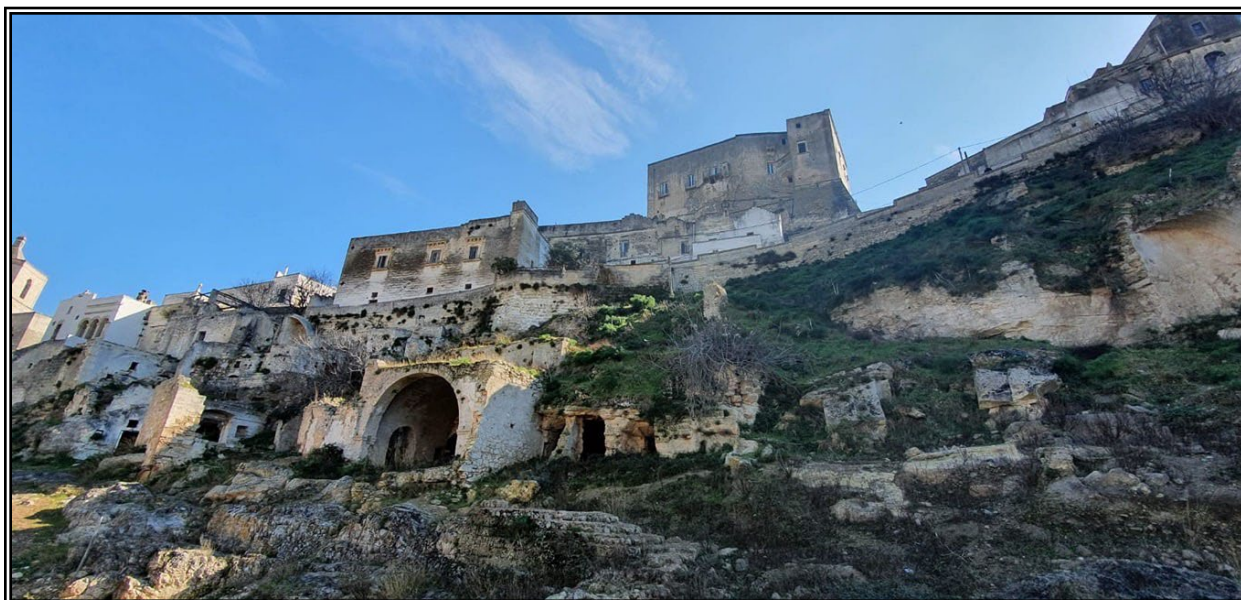
The ***L'Associazione Culturale Amici della Gravine of Castellaneta*** or the **Friends of the Ravine of Castellaneta Cultural Association** was formed in 2015 by a small group of people with a passion for nature to share their knowledge of the Ravine Regional Park, “The Grand Canyon of Puglia”, the largest ravine in Western Europe and a precious regional asset. The Association has grown to include leading group excursions of the ravine, historic church tours, and Castellaneta *sotterranea* or underground tours. Ravine tours include walking, climbing, bird watching, anthropology, photography, viewing cave church frescoes, and discussing territory history and the religion of the Byzantine monks. Underground Castellaneta, buried for more than 300 years under more modern buildings, includes tours of tunnels, secret passages, houses, churches, stables, woodsheds, and cellars with wells and cisterns. For more information, visit the website www.amicidellagravinedicastellaneta.it.

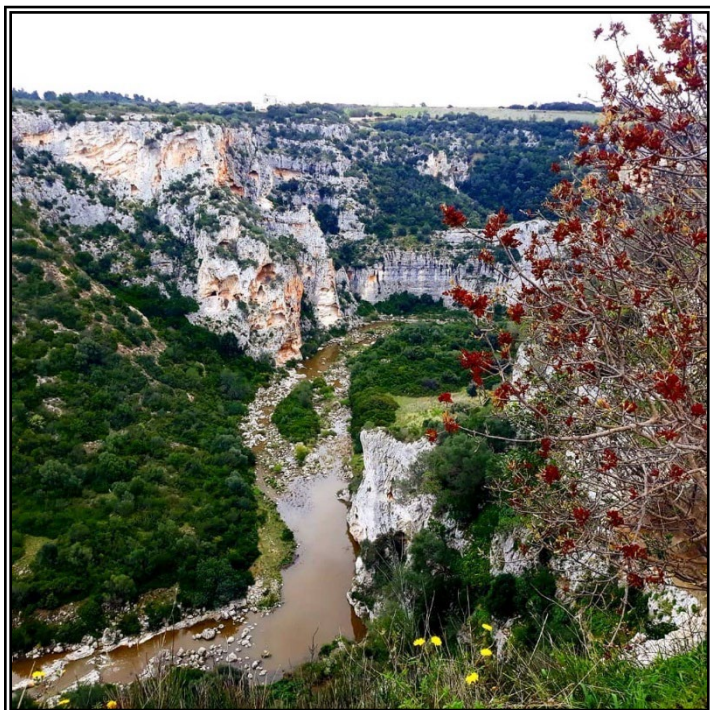




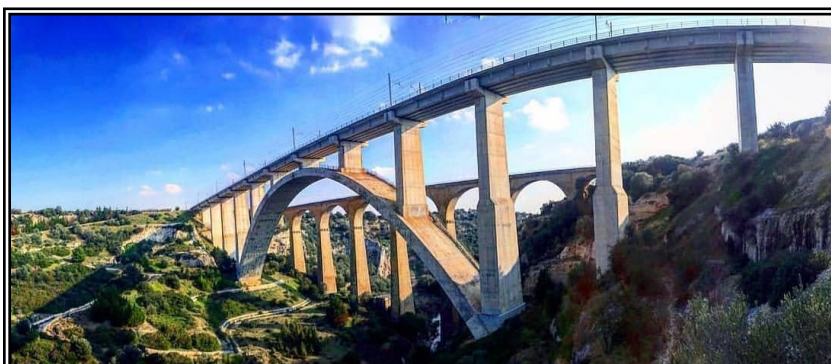
“Walk in the land of the Ravines”

**360° tours of Castellaneta
Castellaneta360.it**



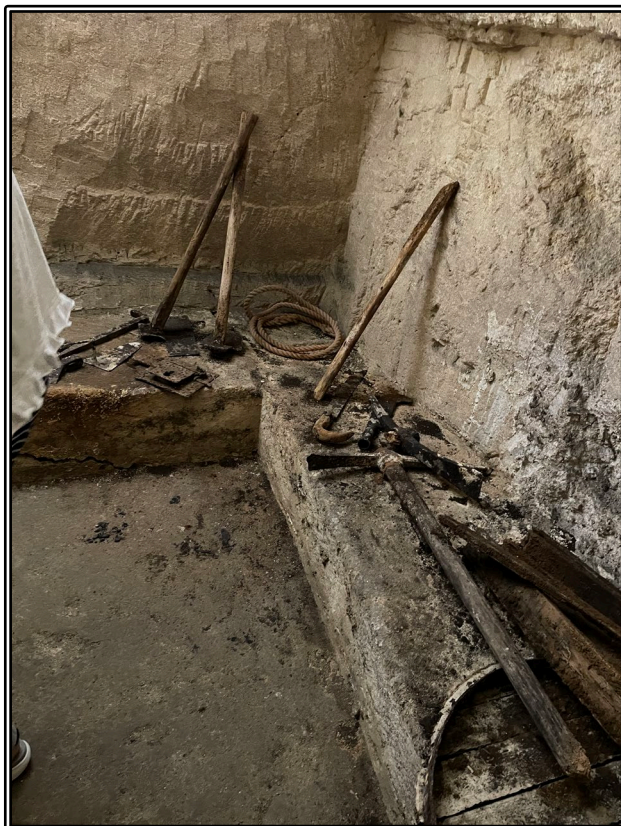


Photos of the Ravine, the ancient subterranean rooms under the old town, the high bridge over the Ravine connecting Castellana to the south, and the ancient churches, tombs, and caves in the sides of the Ravine.





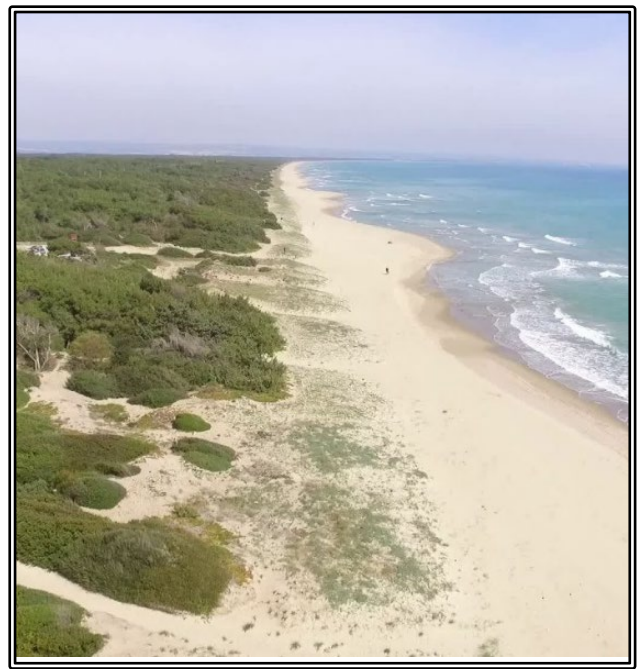
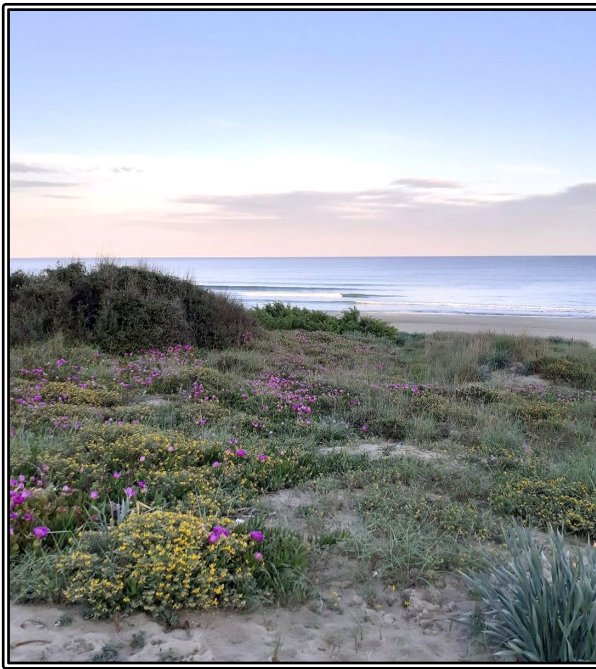
Giles Michael Patarino and family in 2022 took a tour of underground Castellana with Rocco and his staff



Castellaneta Marina Beach

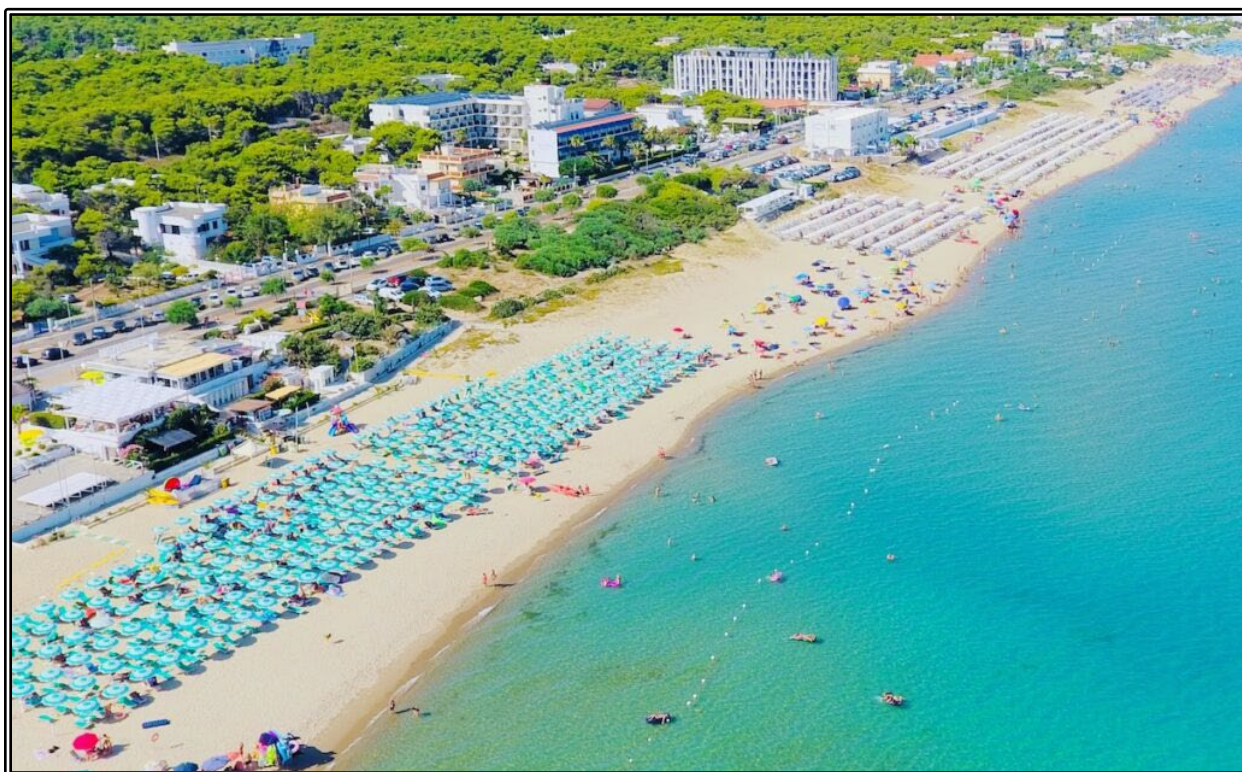
About 10 miles from the Commune of Castellaneta, Castellaneta Marina is located on the white sand shorelines of the Ionian Sea, surrounded by coniferous woods and a Mediterranean macchia, a shrubland biome consisting of densely growing evergreen shrubs.

Founded in the 1960s, this summer destination includes shallow white sand beaches, turquoise crystalline water, popular tourist resorts, villas, golf courses, amusement parks, restaurants and private villas. The Castellaneta Marina beach is world renowned for its beauty and annually earns the “Blue Flag” certification from the Foundation for Environmental Education for its clear waters. (Note that the Patarino Masseria is about 4 miles from the beaches, see Chapter V-A.)





Via Lungomare Eroi del Mare in the 1950s, this road runs adjacent to the beach for several miles



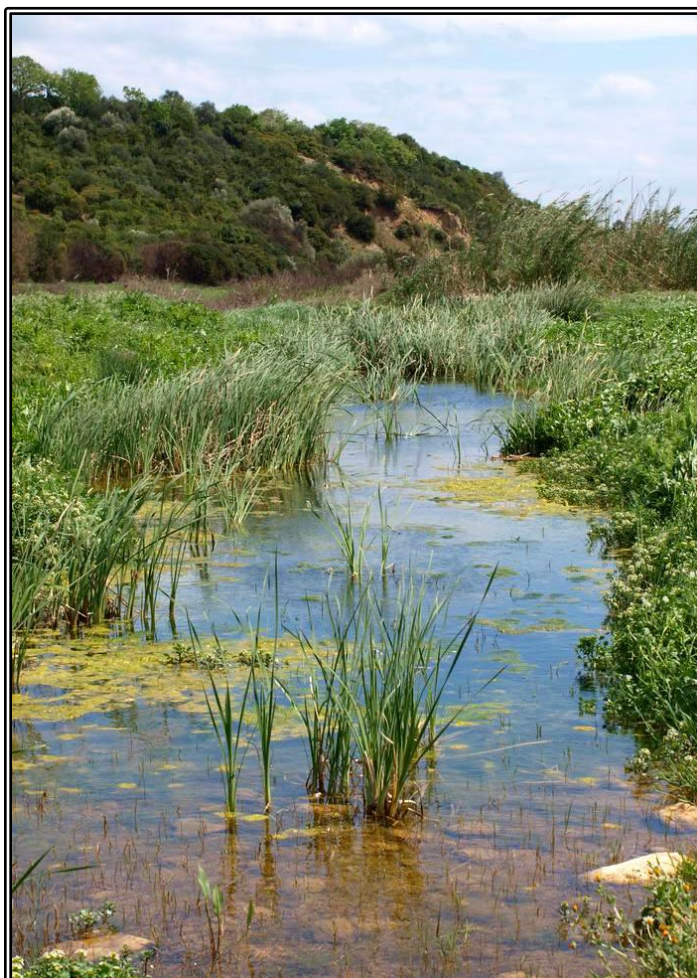
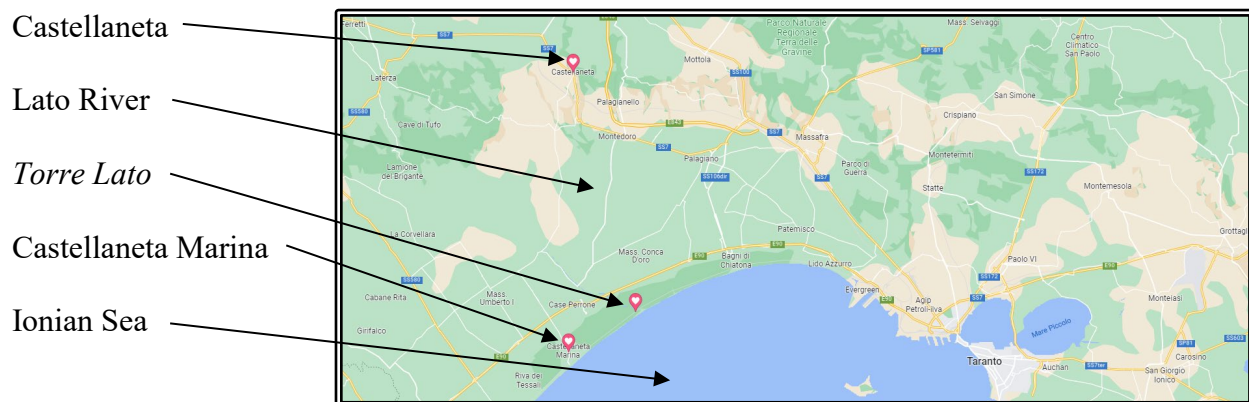
Torre Lato

The *Lato Fiume* or Lato River runs below Castellaneta at the bottom of the ravine and empties just east of Castellaneta Marina into the Ionian Sea. At the mouth to the Lato River stands the ancient **Torre Lato or the Lato Tower** (mondimedievali.net), which was built in the 16th century at the bend in the Lato River and was used as a warning system to sight ships for the defense of the coast from pirate and Ottoman/Saracen raids. There were about 366 watchtowers built up and down the coast with about sixty still standing today. In the Castellaneta territory, the *Torre Lato* defended not only the people living along the coast but also the area's lucrative industry in the extracting, processing, and exporting of salt for income.

The watchtowers usually had two soldiers stationed at the top of the tower who kept a continuous look out over the sea for ships creeping up to the coast for an invasion. When ships were sighted, the soldiers would uncover a fire at night and smoke by day to signal the towers down the coast to assemble troops before the ships arrived. The towers typically included a cannon, guns, and other weapons to delay the attackers. Imagine the soldier's fear of seeing a mast, which could mean a coming massacre.



This 1741 map shows the towers and guard posts along the Ionian Sea coast in the *Parte de Terra di Bari* or the Province of Otranto (Terra d'Otranto; “*Mapa che dimostra la Provincia d'Otranto sua Riviera Maritima Torri e Posti di Guardia*” 1741-1742, *Castellaneta città del mito*, by Aurelio Miccoli, 2008, p.17)



Il Saco di Castellaneta

The annual *Il Saco di Castellaneta* event on February 23 marks the historic Sack of Castellaneta in 1503 and is a pillar event in the history of the town. The event celebrates the day when the Castellaneltani citizens avenged their town from its French occupation during the Italian Wars.



The Italian Wars (1499-1504) was a series of conflicts between the Spanish King Ferdinand II of Aragon (also known as Ferdinand the Catholic) and the French King Louis XII over Ferdinand's control over the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples. After a year of conflict, Ferdinand and Louis signed a secret treaty in November 1500 giving France control over parts of the Kingdom of Naples, which included the city of Naples, the *Terra di Lavoro* (which included the modern regions of Lazio, Campania, and Molise), and the region of Abruzzi in the north while Ferdinand kept control of the regions of Calabria and Puglia (Apulia) in the south. The territories in between, including the valuable *Capitanata*, were to be shared along with their income.

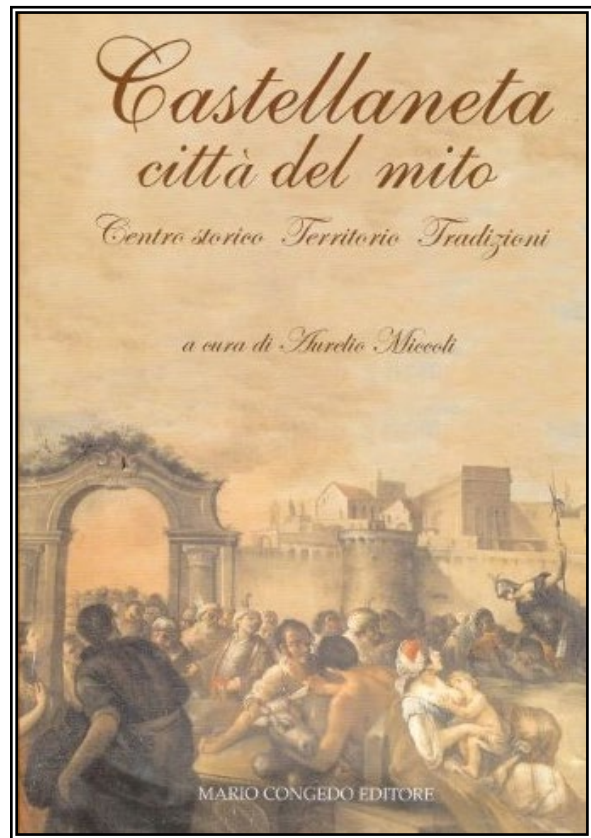
The *Capitanata* was an ancient area in southern Italy that included a 1000-year old network of shepherd routes linking Abruzzi and Puglia for the *transhumance* (seasonal movement) of large flocks of sheep (see map below showing the *Capitanata* route).

The shepherds drove their flocks from the northern mountains of Abruzzi to the southern winter grazing grounds of Puglia and paid an annual fee for use of the routes and the southern pastures and to sell their animals and their shepherding products at the Foggia annual fair. Once the fee was paid, the shepherds could then return to their hometowns. The huge amount of the transhumance was the leading income from the area's economy, with an office established solely for its management called the *Regiae Dohanae Menae pecudum Apuliae*.



The French wanted the sole control of the transhumance income, and soon after the secret treaty was completed, it fell apart when Louis directed his army, led by **Louis d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours**, to claim possession of the *Capitanata* and occupy the entire region of southern Italy, which included the region of Puglia. The French soldiers quickly established garrisons throughout Puglia including in the commune of Castellaneta.

In the True Story of the Sack of Castellaneta, by Pietro Loglisci, he reveals the story of *Sacco di Castellaneta* from the personal testimony of a young French Benedictine monk, Jean d'Auton, who was a war reporter designated by King Louis XII during the Italian Wars ("The Sack of Castellaneta" told by Pietro Loglisci, ViviWebTv, February 22, 2019, www.viviwebtv.it). In April 1502, the Castellanetans were housing 50 French spearmen and had negotiated their own safety by providing the garrison with food and housing for a monthly payment of gold coins.



After ten months of occupation and abuse suffered upon the people and tired of waiting for payment from the French soldiers, the Castellanetans went to find help from Spanish soldiers in the area.

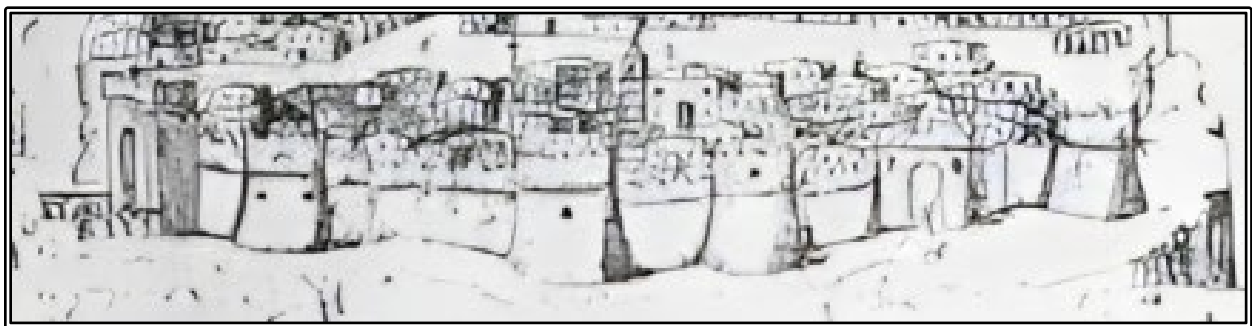
"According to various Spanish sources, [the French soldiers] had violated the honor of young women and married women, squandered supplies of food, beaten some of the inhabitants, extorted the town's districts and surrounding territories, and because of their bravado and antagonization of the people, they were no longer disposed to suffer the harassment and unleashed the ire of the citizens towards the French soldiers."
(translated, The Anti-French Revolt and the Siege of Castellaneta Described in the

Chronicles of Spain, The events that shook the city between February 12 and 24, 1503, by Antonio Moretti and Domenico Tamburrano, 2022)

On February 23, 1503, they secretly let the Spanish into town through the **hidden Postern Door**, and then the Castellanetans armed with sticks and stones, surprised the French garrison with an ambush at night while they were sleeping, disarmed the French soldiers, stripped them of their garments, and brought them to the Spanish soldiers. According to the Spanish Chronicles, forty French soldiers were killed and another sixty captured, tied up, and put in underground prisons. The Castellanetans then raised the raised and flew the Spanish flag over the town.

When Nemours heard that Castellaneta had revolted, was lost, and held captive soldiers, he immediately marched his army to Castellaneta and besieged it deploying cannons around the town. At the sight of the cannons, the Castellanetans were terrified and fell prey to panic, and the cries of the terrified women and children could be heard shouting for surrender. The Castellanetans moved to meet with Nemours to end the siege. They offered thousands of pounds of gold in exchange to save their lives and property. But because of Nemours' hatred of the Castellanetans, he demanded three times the amount and threatened that if he didn't receive the money within an hour, he would set the town on fire, and slaughter everyone without mercy.

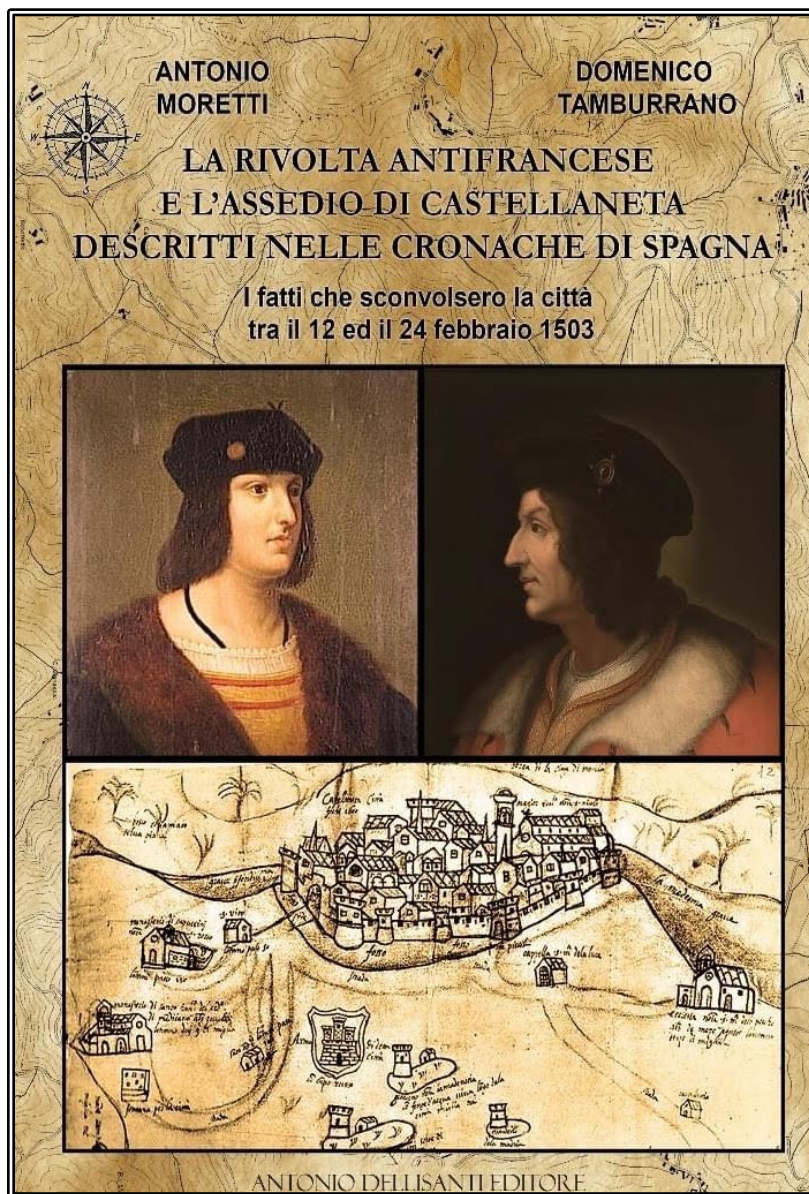
It needs to be noted that Castellaneta was not equipped with artillery or other arms for defense, but it had natural defenses. The town was surrounded by high cliffs of about 500 feet on two sides and about a 30 feet high wall made from carparo, that included a deep moat (*carparo* is a quarried fine grain golden-beige coral sandstone, that was good for construction, monuments, pavers, stairs, and other ornamental uses). The town was also located on a natural terrace, with a slight climb to the town's walls, which added to its natural defenses. The only main doors into the town were the *Porta Piccolo* or Small Door for the town's people going out to the agricultural fields, and the *Porta Grande* or Large Door for nobles and visitors, which was assessed by a drawbridge over the moat (which can be seen on the drawing below, *Carta Giovan Battista Pacichelli, Castellaneta fine XVII Secolo*).



The Castellanetans taken by despair, were encouraged by the Spanish soldiers and urged to fight for their children, homes, and to entrust themselves to the hands of God. When they didn't pay the money, the French fired two cannon shots with great fury into the town and into the Large Gate. Through screams, sweat, and blood, they resisted the French siege. The Castellanetans came out on the wall and threw stones and pieces of wood on the soldiers. Some hurled themselves against soldiers climbing the walls on ladders and showed lots of courage. With the help of the Spanish soldiers and the Castellanetans aggression, they managed to save the town.

“Fear was converted to despair and the citizens felt better to suffer the extreme ruin than to undergo the conditions that the insatiable French dictated and therefore fortified the walls with large beams, and equipped with bags filled with wool for dampening the impact of artillery balls, they valiantly supported the assault, making a hail of rocks rain on the enemy and dropping from the top of the heavy walls of rafters, which messed up the assailant’s rows and killed and badly injured many. -Cav. Mauro Perrone”
(Castellaneta History Adventure, Facebook Page, February 23, 2021)

After the expulsion of the French from Castellaneta, which was the leader of the Spanish reconquest of southern Italy, it was followed by the progressive expulsion of the French from Lecce, Nardo, Mottola, and not only Puglia, but all of Italy. For their heroic resistance, the Commune of Castellaneta was awarded the title of *fidelissima civitas*, or most loyal town, by the Spanish King Ferdinand II.

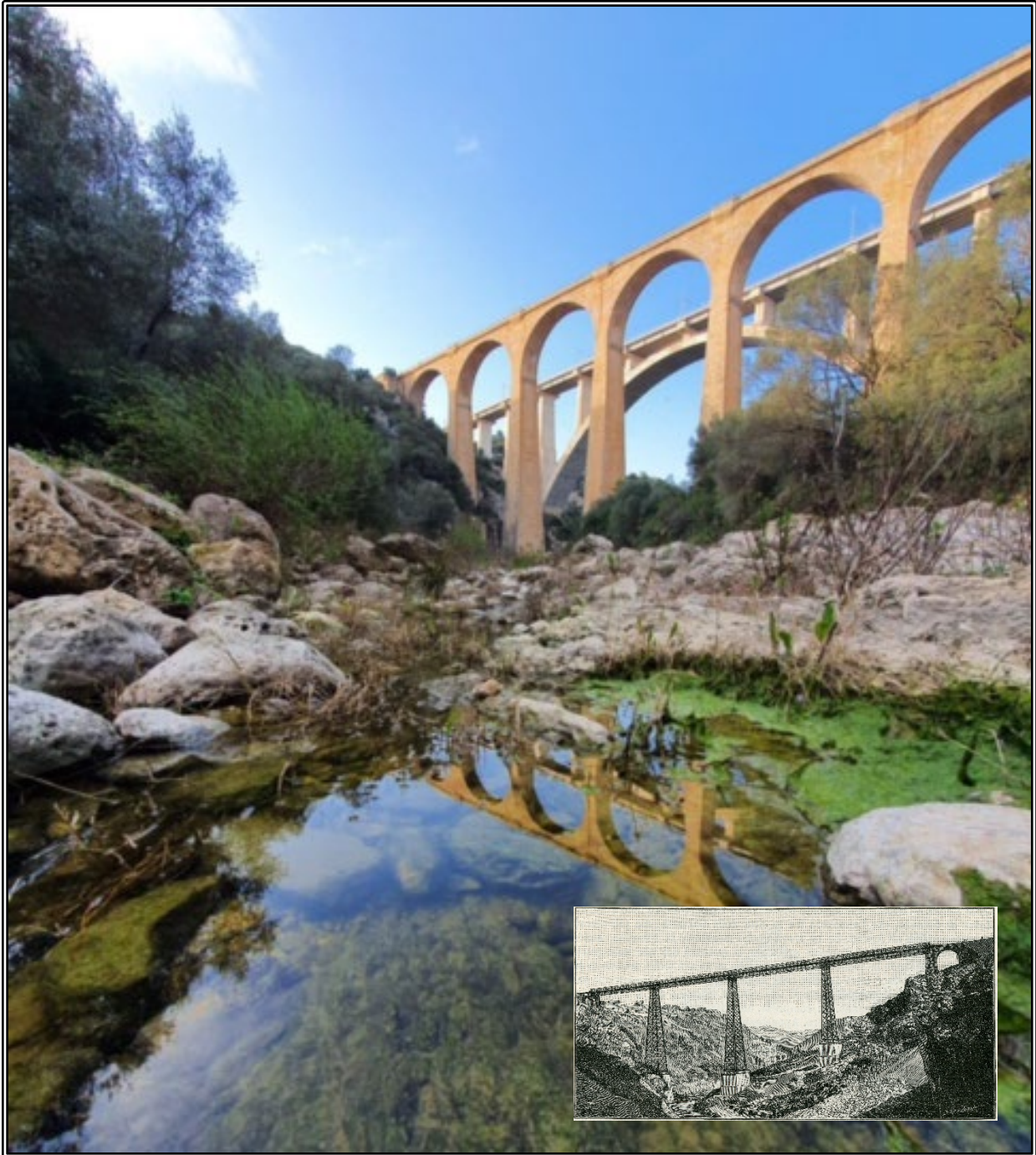


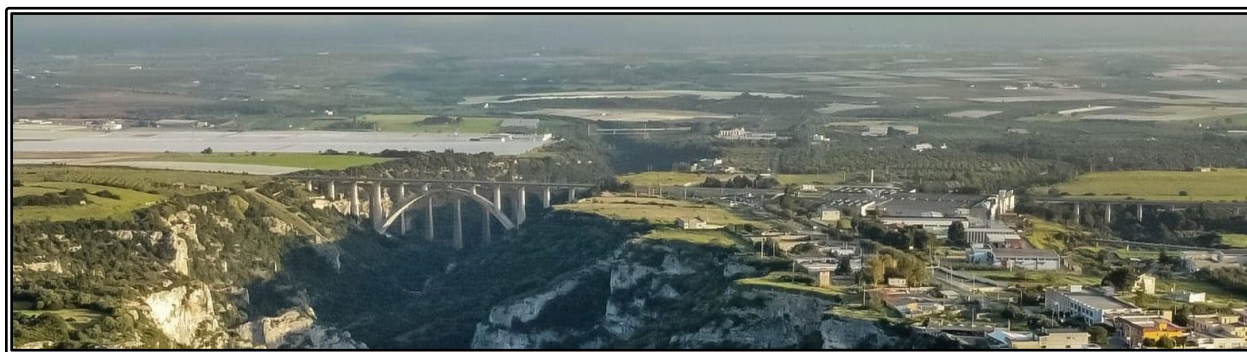
From the sack of Castellaneta rose the *legend of the treasure of the French*. The story was told by the last descendant of the D'Alagni family to live in the historic building (*Palazzo d'Agni*) located at the heart of the town, a small distance from the convent of the Dominican fathers and the Church of San Lorenzo, which stands over numerous underground rooms. According to the D'Alagni family, part of the building was occupied by the French soldiers stationed in Castellaneta. They hid the fruits of their raids and spoils of war in the dungeons below the building that they used to torture the Castellanetans. Many people have searched for the treasure to no avail.

(The Anti-French Revolt and the Siege of Castellaneta Described in the Chronicles of Spain, The events that shook the city between February 12 and 24, 1503, by Antonio Moretti and Domenico Tamburrano, 2022; this book is in my personal collection)

Castellaneta Bridges

The Castellaneta bridge is 350 meters long and at a height of about 80 meters above the Lato River at the bottom of the Ravine. It was rebuilt three times in 1868, 1929, and 1997. The original bridge was built in the 1860s as a single line for slow moving trains and built with wrought iron trusses. As the trains became heavier and faster, it was replaced by a brick arched bridge in 1929 with six piers and seven arches over the ravine. The third bridge was built in 1997, next to the old bridge but a little higher using reinforced concrete with large arched spans.





The Castellana bridges



The 1929 bridge from the bottom of the ravine



The 1929 bridge under construction

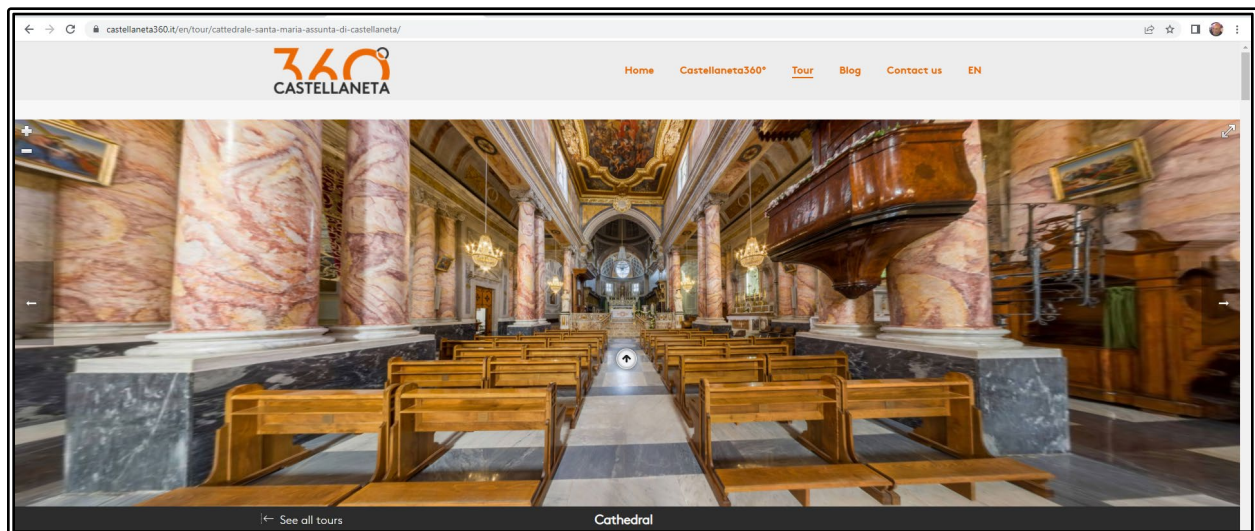
The Cathedral of St. Nicholas and the Diocese of Castellaneta

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Castellaneta is a suffragan of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Taranto. The diocese currently includes thirty-five parishes in the communes of Castellaneta, Ginosa, Laterza, Massafra, Mottola, Palagianello, and Palagianio.

The Castellaneta Episcopal See, the area of a bishop's ecclesiastical jurisdiction and denotes the "seat" of the bishop's authority, was created about 1088 when the southern peninsula of Italy was invaded by the Normans and the Lord of Castellaneta granted to the diocese several monasteries and churches to control.



The original cathedral was built in the late 11th century and was dedicated to *Santa Nichols*, the patron saint of Castellaneta (Saint Nicholas was born in the 3rd century and later became the basis for Santa Claus). In the 14th century, the cathedral was rebuilt following the Apulian Romanesque style and dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the cathedral was renovated in the new Baroque style, which erased almost every trace of the original structure. The cathedral was built at the edges of the ravine and at the highest point of the ancient town center with its profile visible from every point in the commune. In the 12th century, Benedictine monks settled in the area and established rock churches in the sides of the ravine. The monks were not under the jurisdiction of the Bishop, and when the monks tried to reign in the insolent and quarrelsome bishops and priests, who had concubines and were usurers (lenders of money at high rates of interest), it resulted in forceful actions by the bishops.



The Annual *Natale e Castellaneta*

The annual *Natale e Castellaneta* or Christmas event from December 4 to January 6, takes place in the old town area of Castellaneta which is decorated with Christmas lights and includes street markets and exhibitions and Santa rappelling down from his sleigh (www.vivacastellaneta.it).

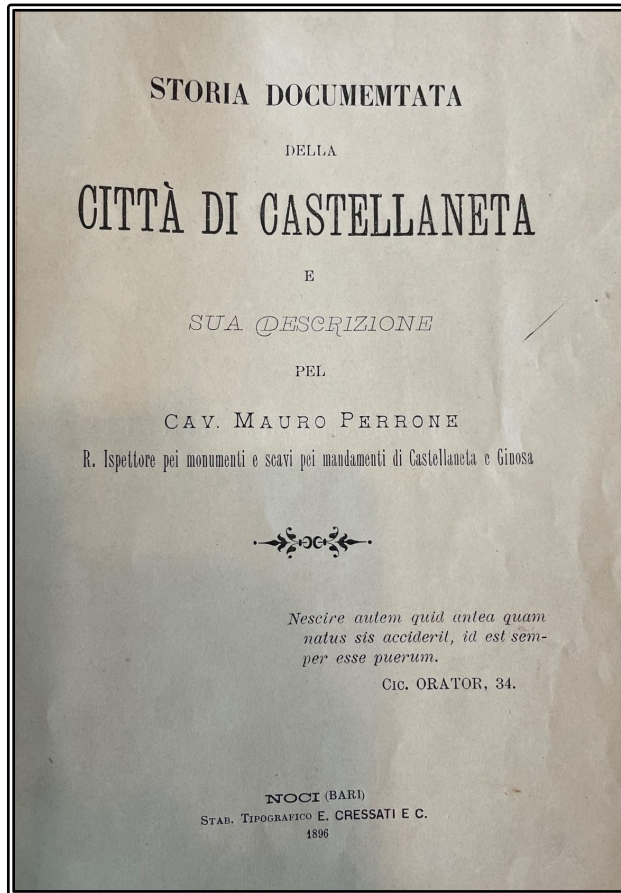


The Annual *Festa dei Santi Patroni di Castellaneta*

The annual *Festa dei Santi Patroni*, or Feast of the Patron Saints of Castellaneta, is celebrated every second weekend of May and is a three-day festival of lights, parades, music, street markets, and fireworks celebrating the town's Patron Saints Francesco and Nicholas.



Chapter End Notes



In my personal book collection, I have an original, signed copy of the *Storia Documentata della Città Di Castellaneta* or The Documented History of the City of Castellaneta, by Cav. Mauro Perrone, published in 1896.

It is considered the authoritative history of the commune of Castellaneta and is cited in many publications, books, and websites. In 2022, I had portions of the book translated into English and I utilize several quotes in this *Storia di Cognome Patarino* to help understand the history of our family in Castellaneta.

