

The Malanga family of Caposele

First traces in Caposele of the surname Malanga

Even for the surname Malanga, as for other families who settled in our country in remote times, it is not possible to identify documents that indicate the origin with certainty. Currently the surname Malanga has a good presence in Caposele, in Bella (in the province of Potenza, near Muro Lucano), and near Bari, as well as a small but widespread diffusion practically throughout Italy. Up until the 18th century the predominant form was Malanca, then it was gradually replaced by Malanga; the archaic form survives in documents until about 1870. The etymological origin of the surname, therefore, seems to be linked to some malformation or wound that afflicted an ancestor: Mal'anca (bad leg) -> Malanca -> Malanga.

Intrigued, I checked if the surname Malanca still exists today. Strangely, this surname, which I would have expected to be practically extinct, has more or less the same diffusion as the surname Malanga, with an interesting geographical distribution: practically Malanca does not exist in southern Italy. The only small presence is in Rome, perhaps due to subsequent immigration, but otherwise the surname is not present further South of Tuscany, and has two large nuclei in Tuscany, Emilia Romagna and a good presence in Lombardy. Considering that the surname Malanca was definitely present in Caposele, as evidenced by the documents, I suspect that in Southern Italy, where it could have a negative meaning, the surname was transformed into Malanga little by little, until it disappeared completely. In the Centre-North, where the dialect was different, the surname was probably perceived as neutral, and therefore there was no pressure to change it.

Regarding the arrival of the Malangas in Caposele, this must be very ancient: I am pleased to cite the hypothesis reported by the architect Maria Malanga, who was able to count on the historical research carried out by her husband, the former mayor Gerardo Monteverde, author of "Terre di Caposele", and on the family stories told by his father Raffaele. Anyone who is intrigued can read the booklet "Le origini della famiglia Malanga tra favole e realtà" ("The origins of the Malanga family between fairy tales and reality"), written by Maria.

Northern somatic traits (blond hair, blue eyes) are often found in the Malangas: were they perhaps of Norman origin? According to Maria's reconstruction, around 1200 the Malangas were a family devoted to sheep farming and the trade of agricultural products, and they moved around the mountains of Valva-Muro Lucano (Eremita-Marzano mountains), exploiting the corridor offered by the river valley Sele. Even today the surname is present both in the valley of the river Sele, in particular in Caposele, and in the province of Potenza, for example in the municipality of Bella (PZ). In the Caposele area, the first Malanga settlements were in the locality of San Vito (then called Viaria, we are at the time of the Norman conquest), then Chianche and Pianelle, Minuto, and only later Caselle and Materdomini.

The various branches up to the 18th century

The first documents that we have been able to consult in which the Malangas appear in Caposele are the notarial deeds: thanks to them, my friend John Rendfrey has managed to

reconstruct the generations that go from the mid-1600s to the 1800s, when the systematic data of parish registers begin.

In the mid-late 1600s there were no less than five distinct Malanga lineages in Caposele, proving that the surname was quite ancient, and already at that time the family was quite branched. To give an idea, in the Ceres family at that time there were only two distinct branches (see the article on the Ceres family, published in number 105). The 5 strains identified are:

- Lonardo Malanga (born around 1656): he is definitely the most prolific lineage. Most of Caposele's Malanga, with the exceptions I will mention later, descend from him. The branch splits into two starting with his sons Francesco and Antonio, and in the mid-18th century we arrive at the 2 main branches whose progenitors are his two great-grandsons A1) Lonardo Andrea (b. 1755) and A2) Pasquale (b. 1763);
- Giovanni Malanca (b. around 1656): there are numerous descendants, but since he had no sons, the surname has been lost;
- Francesco Malanga (b. around 1685): the branch proceeds directly up to the great-grandson B) Vito Antonio (n. 1772)
- Guglielmo Malanca (b. around 1689): extinct branch
- Marino Malanga (b. around 1690): as for Giovanni, not having had sons, the surname has been lost;

In the previous analysis (see graph), I decided, as I did in other cases, to focus only on the male lines, to follow the surname.

From the 18th century to the present day

Also for the surname Malanga, numerous and ancient, with the progress of the centuries and the increase of descendants, numerous family nicknames emerged, very useful for identifying the specific sub-branch. Here are some examples of nicknames related to the Malanga family:

1. linked to some social connotation: "M'neta" (currency: it was a relatively wealthy branch, endowed with money), Marinone (according to what I have been told, the nickname derives from "Mar a nui" (Bad to us), to indicate a disadvantaged condition. Another hypothesis is that the origin is due to a corpulent ancestor named Maria or Marianna);
2. linked to locality: "r' Lappitu", from a locality in the municipality of Calabritto called precisely Lappitu;
3. nickname, often ancient, of which I have not been able to identify the origin: "Carpatu", "Macchieddu", "Farcone"
4. perhaps the nickname was born due to the external appearance of an ancestor, and was then handed down to descendants: "Cierzu" (with a powerful physique) and "r'la rossa" (or "r' li russi") (with reddish hair), and perhaps "gattarieddu";
5. name of the progenitor of the sub-branch: "Taturicchio" (Salvatore b. 1882);
6. name linked to a work activity: "lu fabricator" (builder, mason), "mulunaru" (miller), "r'lu muonucu" (monk);
7. personal nickname, then extended to descendants: "7 Bello", "Marciano", "Mbeca"

The nickname Cierzu, erroneously associated with a Malanga branch, is actually a nickname "inherited" from another family branch, Salvatoriello, following the marriage of Lorenzo Malanga

(b. 1880) to Antonietta Salvatoriello (b. 1888), whose family had that nickname. Their descendants are improperly distinguished by this nickname, which however continues to be associated with a branch of the Salvatoriello family. Nicknames are usually transmitted via males (and are therefore linked to a surname): this is a case of transmission via females.

There are many nicknames related to the surname Malanga, and I have certainly skipped some: in this case, contact me, I would be happy to add it to the list.

The following main branches certainly deserve more attention, in order of diffusion:

1. "M'neta": the nickname clearly comes from the word "coin". Initially I thought some ancestor had found coins while cultivating his land, but it was explained to me that in reality the nickname wanted to underline the fact that the family was relatively wealthy, even if always in an agricultural context: this means owning a lot of land. It is said that a member of this family, Gerardo "scarpaleggia", confirmed this nickname by giving all 45 grandchildren a piece of land. This is one of the oldest branches: the various "r' M'neta" branches have a common ancestor **Lonardo Andrea A1**, born in 1755, for whom numerous family nicknames have arisen over the centuries. Some more recent nicknames that were born within this branch are: Fabbricatore, r' Lappitu, r' li russi, r' lu muonucu, Macchieddu, Cierzu, Marciano, Mulunaru, 7 Bello, Taturicchiu. See the graph for more details
2. "li russi": it is a sub-branch of the M'neta branch. The name derives from the reddish color of the hair of some components. The oldest ancestor with this nickname is Teresa "la rossa" (1843-1921): her daughter Concetta Ceres married a Malanga, and her descendants took the nickname "r 'la rossa" or "r' li russi"
3. "Carpatu": this branch is separated from the "M'neta" one starting from the mid-1600s: the common ancestor was called Lonardo Malanga, born around 1656. This sub-branch descends from **Pasquale Malanga A2**, to whom he also heads some less widespread collateral branches: Marinone, Mbeca, Scurzieddu, Gattarieddu, and some branches that emigrated to the USA (Andrew Malanga and Amato Thomas Malanga);
4. "Marinone": like the Carpatu sub-branch, it descends from **Pasquale Malanga A2**.
5. "Farcone": this branch is independent from all the other Malangas of Caposele, both M'neta and Carpatu, as it does not descend from Lonardo Andrea A1, nor from Pasquale A2, but belongs to an independent lineage that originates from Francesco Malanga (b. about 1685), great-grandfather of **Vito Antonio B**;

Unlike the previous branches, whose origins are from Caposele, the branch of Gerardo Malanga "lu sant'andrianu" (one daughter married Pasquale Brasiello and another "Faluccio" Grasso) comes, as the nickname suggests, from Sant'Andrea di Conza: the surname Malanga has also been rooted in that municipality since at least the mid-18th century.

The genetic study of heart abnormality

Without wanting to go into details that I leave to the experts, I want to mention the study that is underway to deepen knowledge on a rare genetic anomaly, associated with a form of hereditary disease (laminopathy, linked to mutations of the LMNA gene), which in Caposele is particularly widespread probably due to the numerous marriages between subjects belonging to different branches of the same family.

This genetic anomaly can cause cardiac and/or neurological alterations in both males and females, and can be transmitted indifferently from both the maternal and paternal branches.

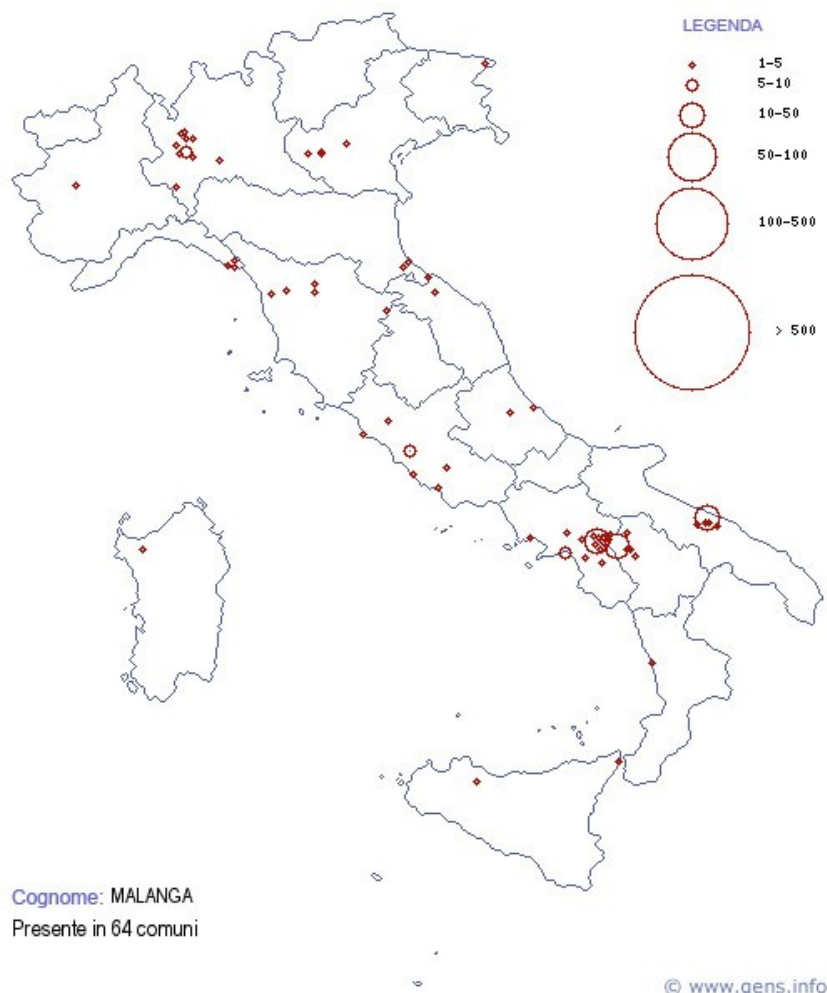
I remember a few years ago when I helped Angelo Maria Sista to link some of the affected family branches together. Following this activity, by carefully studying the tree, he realized that all the affected people, although belonging to different family branches and with different surnames, were united by the same common ancestor: Antonio Malanga, born in the last years of the 1600s and married to Antonia Grillo. From the few available elements, it could be hypothesized that he could be the "patient 0", i.e. the one who was probably the bearer of this genetic anomaly, which was then transmitted to some of the descendants (males or females). Strengthened by this intuition, and the support of various doctors with whom he was in contact (including Dr. Gelsomina Cione, cardiologist), he convinced the doctors of San Raffaele in Milan to start a screening study of the direct descendants of Antonio Malanga, who It is still in progress. The goal is to identify the subjects carrying this genetic alteration in order to intervene promptly, where necessary, with the most appropriate therapy that can improve the course of the disease, especially in the younger generations.

In the article on the Malanga family, published in number 106 of "La Sorgente", I limited myself to the male lines only, to follow the history of the surname, and therefore the analysis is not useful for going deeper into this topic.

Photos

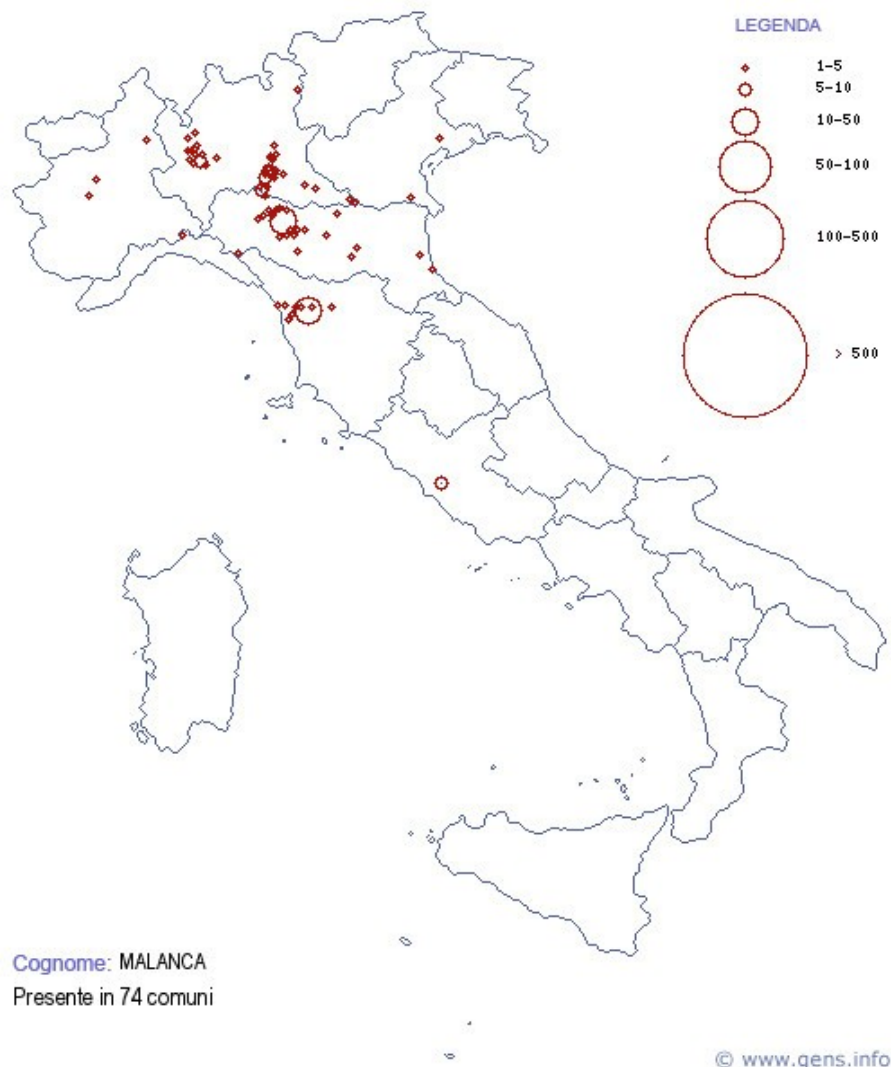
Prioritize photos and captions to use

1. file: diffusione_Malanga_Italia.jpg



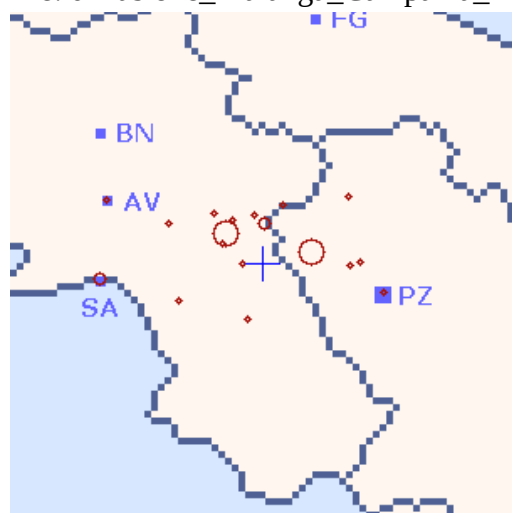
Diffusion of the surname Malanga in Italy: considerable concentration in Caposele, near Muro Lucano, and near Bari

2. file: diffusione_Malanca_Italia.jpg



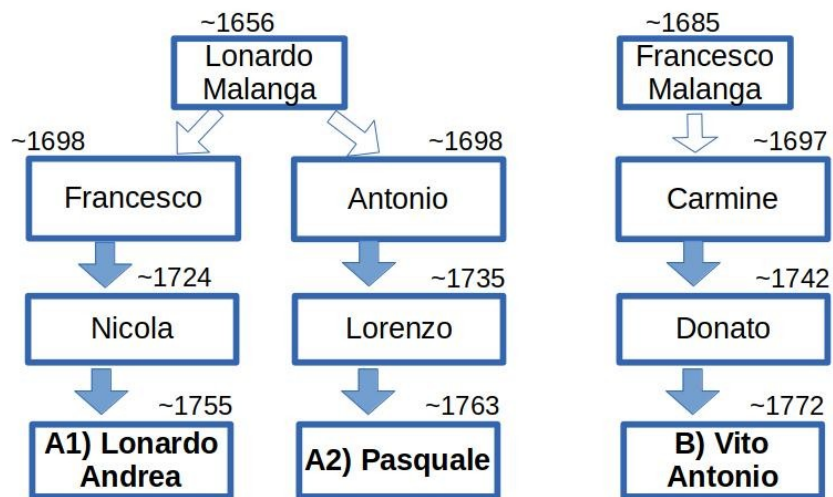
Diffusion of the surname Malanca in Italy: completely absent in the South, despite being documented in Caposele until the mid-19th century

3. file: diffusione_Malanga_Campania_Basilicata.jpg



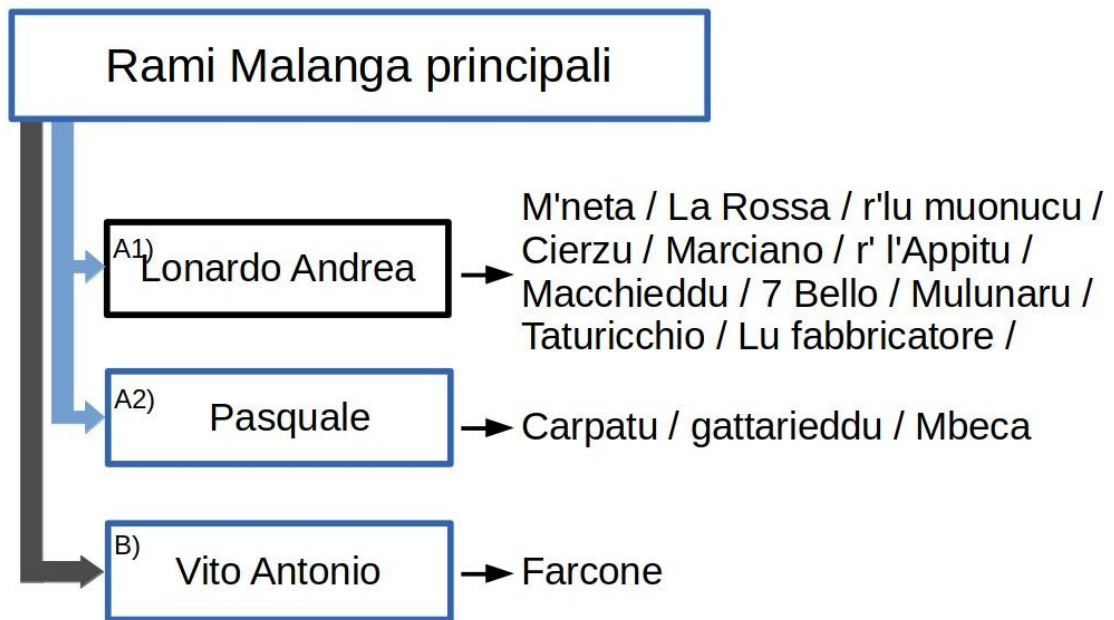
Diffusion of the surname Malanga in Campania and Basilicata: we note the diffusion around the mountains of Valva-Muro Lucano

4. file: graph_articolo_1_origini.jpg



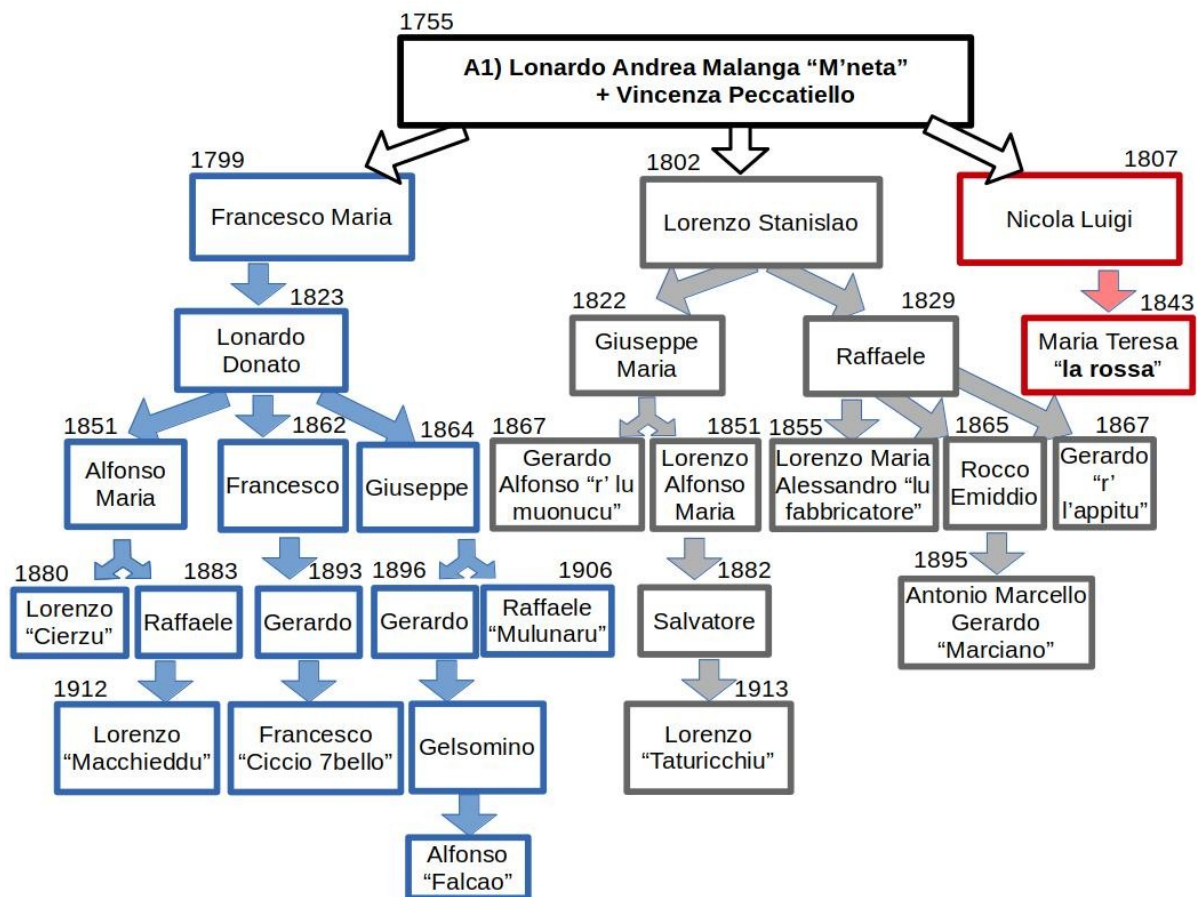
The origins of the Malanga family in Caposele

5. file: graph_articolo_2_rami.jpg



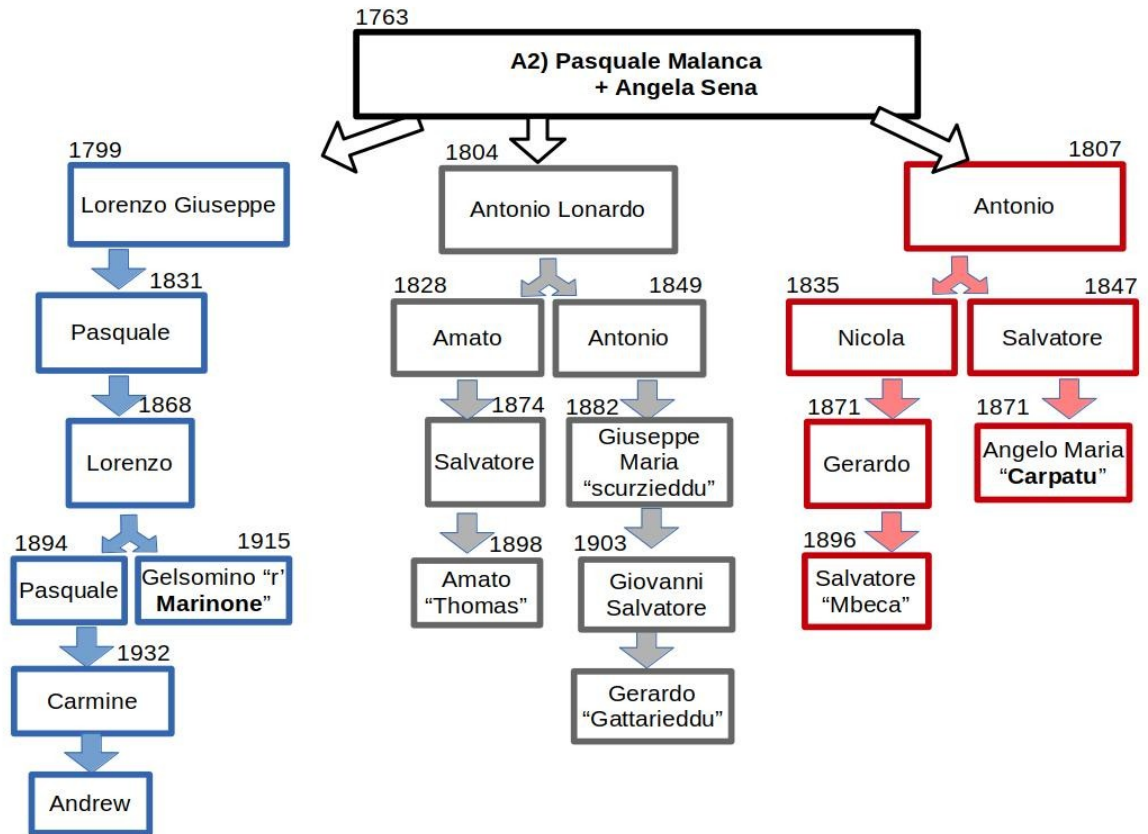
The 3 main lineages present in Caposele in the mid-18th century, on which all those currently present in Caposele depend

6. file: graph_articolo_3_A1_LonardoAndrea.jpg



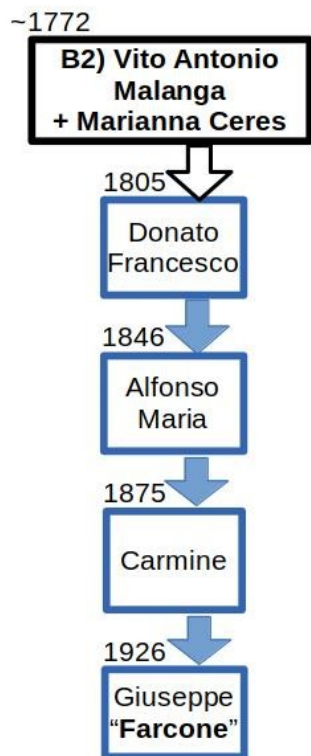
A1) Branch of Lonardo Andrea Malanga ("M'neta" branch)

7. file: graph_articolo_4_A2_Pasquale.jpg



A2) Pasquale Malanga branch

8. file: graph_articolo_5_B_VitoAntonio.jpg



B) Branch of Vito Antonio Malanga

9. file: LeonMalGrazBott.jpg



Leonardo Donato "r' M'neta" Malanga (b. 1823) with his wife Grazia Maria Bottiglieri, seated. Standing behind them is their son Alfonso, who emigrated to the USA

1. file: AntGerMal1895.jpg



Gerardo "Marciano" Malanga (1895-1964)

2. file: SalvMal1896.jpg



Salvatore "mbeca" Malanga (n. 1896)