

The surprising origins of the Tallini surname

When examining the European origins of the Tallini surname, and all the changes the name underwent through the centuries, one reaches a very clear conclusion from the statistical, linguistic, and historical data: that the Tallini surname is probably not native to Italy; probably spread to Italy with the hordes of Attila the Hun; and through migration, eventually spread throughout most of Europe, the Americas, and Australasia.

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There are at least 128 adults with a Tallini surname in the United States. This number comes from landline telephone ownership data, so it is only data about householders. These householders are, in turn, mainly concentrated in the state of New York, but they are also located in many states across the continental U.S., including the New England area, Florida, and California.^{1,2} According to U.S. Census 2000 data, there are about 2.59 persons per household in the U.S.³ This translates into about 332 Tallinis by birth or marriage living in the United States.

In Italy there are at least 195 adults with a Tallini surname according to similar landline telephone data, and Tallinis are concentrated mainly in the province of Rome or *Roma*, but there are a lot of Tallinis even in the province of Frosinone, the province of Latina, and in the province of Florence or *Firenze*. Over five percent of all Tallini surname holders live in the province of Rome.^{4,5} According to the best data I could find, there are about 2.7 Italians per household.⁶ This translates into about 527 Tallinis by birth or marriage living in Italy.

Around the world, Tallinis are scattered all over what the United Nations today calls *Western Europe* (an area roughly comprising France, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Germany);⁷ in Southern European countries like Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro;⁸ in some Eastern European countries such as Poland and Hungary;⁹ and in Northern European countries like Ireland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.^{10,11}

There are also some Tallinis in Asia, i.e. in India and Japan, but these are probably not at all related to the Tallinis of European origin. Moreover, Tallinis are also concentrated in North America (U.S. and Canada), Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina. The greatest concentration of Tallinis around the world can be found disproportionately in Italy, followed by the United States, Argentina, France, and the United Kingdom.¹²

Most Tallinis in Europe outside of the bordering and closely-clustered countries of Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary, probably live in other European countries because of relatively recent immigration. The same can be said of the Tallinis in North America (U.S. and Canada), Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina.

Tallini (or alternatively *Tallino*) is said to be a typical surname of the Italian region of Lazio (which in fact contains the previously mentioned provinces of Rome, Frosinone, and Latina), particularly of the cities of Frosinone, Torrice, and Gaeta (Frosinone and Latina provinces), and

probably comes from the medieval Germanic name *Tallo*, which in turn derived from the medieval term *Tallis* (meaning *downstream*), probably meaning that the founders of the cognomen were valley dwellers, maybe Swiss.¹³ My father's family originally came from Torrice, in the province of Frosinone.

When working on the origins of the Tallini surname, one should understand that the name may have undergone changes in various dialects, or through contracted and diminutive forms, lenitions, or errors due to incorrect transcription. It is therefore thought that the Tallini surname is likely to have risen through *Talini* (or *Talino*), and through this one can find some historical and heraldic information. There is evidence, for example, of a certain *Pietro Talini* among the priors of Pistoia (Tuscany) in 1346. The family is also listed in the Official Noble Italian List as *Talino*, with the title of a noble of Pistoia (Tuscany).¹⁴

It seems that if one inputs the various Tallini surname forms in the *Virgilio ALICE Sapere* search engine,¹⁴ in whatever regions or provinces the *Tallini* surname can be found in the greatest concentrations, one can also find the greatest concentrations of the *Tallino*, *Talini*, and *Talino* surname forms (in Tuscany and Lazio), although the latter *Talino* surname form in Italy now seems to be too rare to have any data at all – the highest concentration of people with the *Talino* surname form can be found, in fact, in the United States today, not in Italy.¹⁵

As the previously mentioned figures show, the Tallini surname is pretty rare in Italy compared to other surnames, other Tallini surname forms are even rarer, and so chances are good that the surname probably originated outside of Italy in either Hungary, Estonia, or Finland, at least according to linguistic tell-tale signs. Looking at where Tallinis are located around the world today, however, especially in the closely-clustered countries of Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary, evidence seems to point to a distinct *Hungarian origin*, probably going back to the early Middle Ages.

But this observation gets even more interesting. If one inputs the various Tallini surname forms in the *Virgilio ALICE Sapere* search engine,¹⁶ one also discovers something of a *pattern*.

The *Talino* form is now rare in Italy, and only frequent today in the United States, so this is probably the most ancient form of the name. The *Tallino* form seems only frequent enough to be found in the Italian statistical data set, so it is probably the second oldest form of the name, and shows the greatest frequency in the province of Venice, in the Rome and Latina provinces, and in the Bari province. The *Talini* form is scattered throughout Italy, and especially concentrated in the Tuscany and Lazio regions, but it never goes more south than the province of L'Aquila, which is still in Central Italy. Finally, the *Tallini* form is also scattered throughout Italy, but mainly in the Lazio region, less so in the Tuscany region, and this form also goes further down south compared to the *Talini* form. So the *Tallini* form of the surname is probably the most recent form of the name, and now the most common in Italy. The *Talini* form is probably the third oldest form.

The pattern that emerges is one of a *virtual corridor* of provinces, with insignificant brakes in between, which start with the province of Venice; find their way through the neighbouring provinces of Ferrara and Bologna in the region of Emilia Romagna, in order to end in the

provinces of Florence (*Firenze*) and Pistoia in the Tuscany region; and finally, the pattern moves more south towards the provinces of Rome, Frosinone, and Latina, where the Tallini surname is most frequent today.

It is probably the case that all the European, New World, and Australasian Tallinis of today, are the ancestors of a group of people who originally came from Hungary, and possibly with the troops of Attila the Hun. The pattern through Italy seems quite clear.

Attila the Hun, who was called “the Scourge of God” by the Romans, was king and general of the Hun empire from AD 433 to 453. Through his invasion of Italy, Attila indirectly caused the founding of the city of Venice, the sacking of numerous cities in the Veneto region, but he stopped at the Po river, and retreated back to his homeland after Emperor Valentinian III sent three envoys (the high civilian officers Gennadius, Avienus, and Trigetius), as well as the Bishop of Rome Leo I, who met with Attila at Mincio in the vicinity of Mantua, and obtained from him the promise of his withdrawal from Italy. It is probable that Attila agreed to the retreat also because Italy had suffered from a terrible famine in 451, and her crops were faring little better in 452, so it would have been impossible, or extremely difficult, for Attila to secure the conquest of his Italian territories under such environmental conditions.^{17,18}

It is also probable than some of Attila's troops, rather than returning to their homeland, opted to settle in Italy, and this could very well be the origin of the Tallini surname there.

There is even a tiny hamlet of *Tallini* in Italy, which belongs to the municipality of Reggello, in the province of Florence (*Firenze*). The hamlet or village of Tallini is 1.01 kilometres from the town of Reggello, rises 335 meters above sea level, and counts 39 inhabitants. It consists of a few houses, a disused farm yard, and a little chapel. The hamlet even has a *Via dei Tallini* (Tallini Street).^{19,20}

However, the greatest “Tallini Street” seems to have been created by the genes of some of the warriors of Attila, who settled in Italy instead of returning to the Danube River, and eventually their ancestors spread throughout most of Europe, the Americas, and Australasia through Tallini — and variant surnames — family lines.

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