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## **Have they really left?**

### **Memory, heritage, and the names of our ancestors. The case of an Apulian family, mine<sup>1</sup>**

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During the span of their life countless people asked themselves the meaning of their own name. What is that sound that other people utter in which we recognise ourselves or that others use to identify us? I myself am no different from others in this regard. One of the funniest exercises I carried out when I started to look inward during my teenage years was to investigate the meaning of my name.

Don Raffaele, a former deputy-parish of the church near home where I grew up was the first to reveal to me the meaning of the name “Giuseppe” (or Joseph in English). He used to say: “Giuseppe, meaning ‘may God add and abound’”. This would cause him to recant a tale of one of his acquaintances with this name who was gifted with a remarkable nose, and he joked about that saying that God really did abound in his case. Meanwhile the study of Latin solved the mystery of “Pio”, and it can easily be translated into English with the adjective “pious”.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Wolfram Aichinger.

I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of my grandparents, Luigi, Loreta, Giuseppe, and Concetta. I want to thank my parents and my uncles and aunts for all the information they shared, and for digging out distant and sometimes very painful memories. I am grateful to Lisa Guastella and Sophie Dale for their tips and suggestions and, finally, to Wolfram Aichinger and his students. Without their curiosity, I would have probably never ventured through this fascinating journey.



**Image 1.** The Di Biase Family in the mid-1950s

Was I content with this information? Yes...but only to a degree. I had finally found out the etymologies of my personal names, but were these the only meaning they held? There are countless meanings we can discover for our names. It can be the generic etymology, but a name can also have a very personal sense not only for those who bear it, but especially for those who bequeath it upon a new-born. A name can also define and enshrine a personal or a collective identity, which tend to be related to religious, territorial, political, or even sport sentiments (just think of how many Diegos there are in Naples, after Maradona).<sup>2</sup> Our parents (or other agents) do not just give us a name. Many times, it's a tale made up of different motives creating a multi-layered story dealing with the emotional, social, religious as well as familial. Names can sometimes, especially in some specific geographical and social contexts, express something more than just a simple "label". As underscored by Claude Lévi-Strauss, names are needed in all societies to identify someone, and they are "toujours significatifs de l'appartenance à une classe actuelle ou virtuelle, qui peut être seulement celle de celui qu'on nomme ou celle de celui qui nomme".<sup>3</sup> A name can be chosen for many different reasons, even just simply because one likes it. In other cases, however, there are roots which are much deeper.

<sup>2</sup> Naming children after an athlete might sound like a very contemporary affair, which awaits further investigation, but Medieval literature and its heroes provided many models (and names) for the parents of their time. An interesting section of a study by Ana Zabalza Seguí on naming practices in Early Modern Navarre analyses the impact of the Council of Trent on name giving, which witnessed a rise of names related to old and new saints at detriment of names inspired by Medieval literature. Ana Zabalza Seguí, "Nombres viejos y nombres nuevos. Sobre la onomástica moderna", in *Memoria y Civilización*, vol. 11 (2008), 105-134.

<sup>3</sup> In any case, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage*, (Paris: Plon, 1962), 245, quoted in Nicole Lapierre, "Changer de nom", in *Communications*, a. XXVIII (1989), n. 49, 149-150.

The name is the sound, the word, associated with each one of us and it is intimately embedded with who we are. This does not prevent several people from changing it and start over and being reborn as someone different to a new life.<sup>4</sup>

I reflected on these features a couple of years ago whilst in Vienna. After speaking at a seminar, I sat at a Viennese café with my friend Wolfram Aichinger and his students and just like customers from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, we discussed the most disparate topics. I ended up talking about the names in my family and realising things I never even reasonably told myself. Wolfram then suggested that I write something about it and, after some research and questions to several relatives of mine, I created a snapshot which I hope to reveal here. I will not go in depth with what the names meant in history, and their significance for human beings, I do not have the space and, even more importantly, do not have the expertise. What I will do however is take you on a journey of how my family use the names. Before starting this trek, I wish to clarify that this paper is based on the most empirical of evidence. The main source being my own personal memories of my grandmother and of the history she passed down to me. I had a very strong connection with her, and I loved to hear about her life in the past. An important contribution also came from other family members such as my mother, uncles and aunts, who recounted many particulars to me while answering my questions.

Personal memories can change throughout time, as well as their perception. As such, I cannot guarantee all the information in this article will be historically accurate, but I checked my sources to identify details which seem similar in nature. However, the investigation I carried out revealed to me many aspects and nuances of my family history of which I was completely unaware, so was able to use it to further enrich this article. It is an experiment I can suggest to everyone, as it delivers unexpected results.

Coming to the sample I used for this investigation, I focused on the maternal side of my family, the Di Biases. I used this branch as it is more numerous (42 members in total) and it offers more examples than my paternal one (13 members), which at

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<sup>4</sup> As Nicole Lapierre stated, the person who changes name “se re-classe en promouvant une nouvelle identité qui s’inscrit et l’inscrit dans une histoire, un milieu, une communauté”. Ibid., 150. This phenomenon especially happens for religious motivations. Despite the Qur’an does not state any need for that, several people who convert to Islam change their name. Writing about shifting identities and conversions in Ottoman Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Gabriella Erdélyi underlined that taking “a Muslim name constituted part of the formal, though very simple rite of religious conversion: after declaring the one-sentence confession of faith, assuming a Muslim name symbolized a break with the past and a rebirth in the true religion”. Gabriella Erdélyi, *Negotiating Violence. Papal Pardons and Everyday Life in East Central Europe*, (Brill: Leiden, 2018), 189. Famous contemporary examples are the American boxer Muhammad Ali (formerly known as Cassius Clay), or the British singer Yussuf Islam, known with his stage name of Cat Stevens and whose birth name is Steven Georgiou. In the Judaic-Christian culture, the change of name also signals the start of a new life or a new course. In the Bible, Jacob is renamed “Israel” by God (Gen. XXXII, 27-28), and in the New Testament the apostle Simon is renamed by Jesus as “Kephas” (“Rock”, Romanised as “Petrus”, see Jn, 1: 42), a name which also symbolised his mission to be the foundation on which Jesus would build his Church. (Mt, 16:18). In line with this concept, even those who embrace some religious Catholic orders change their name, and popes also assume a new name when they are elected.

times I will also refer to.

In this context, “family”, refers to three generations of that family tree, starting with my grandparents, Nonno Luigi and Nonna Loreta, at the top, followed by their children with spouses, and their immediate issue (myself, my siblings, and my cousins).

With this sampling defined and based on my empirical experience and knowledge acquired through friends and acquaintances, there are some ‘rules’ you will see at play in this example which are valid for several families with a similar structure from the same areas within the city of Foggia, Apulia, and its province.



**Image 2.** The Location of Foggia and its province in Italy

Moving onto the main subject under observation in this paper, I have analysed the names under three different categories.

- The first and most prominent category is gathering the names given to remember a relative.
- The second group includes those members of the family whose name originates from a religious devotion.
- The third and residual cluster is made of names given from personal choice.

I approached each of these groups separately, but as there are a lot of grey areas, I tried not to be too rigid. For example, an individual could have a name coming from two different categories, or from a not well defined one. However, before going more in depth, let's start with a conceptual vision of this family below featuring my own version of a classic family tree and hopefully prove useful to help understand the connections.

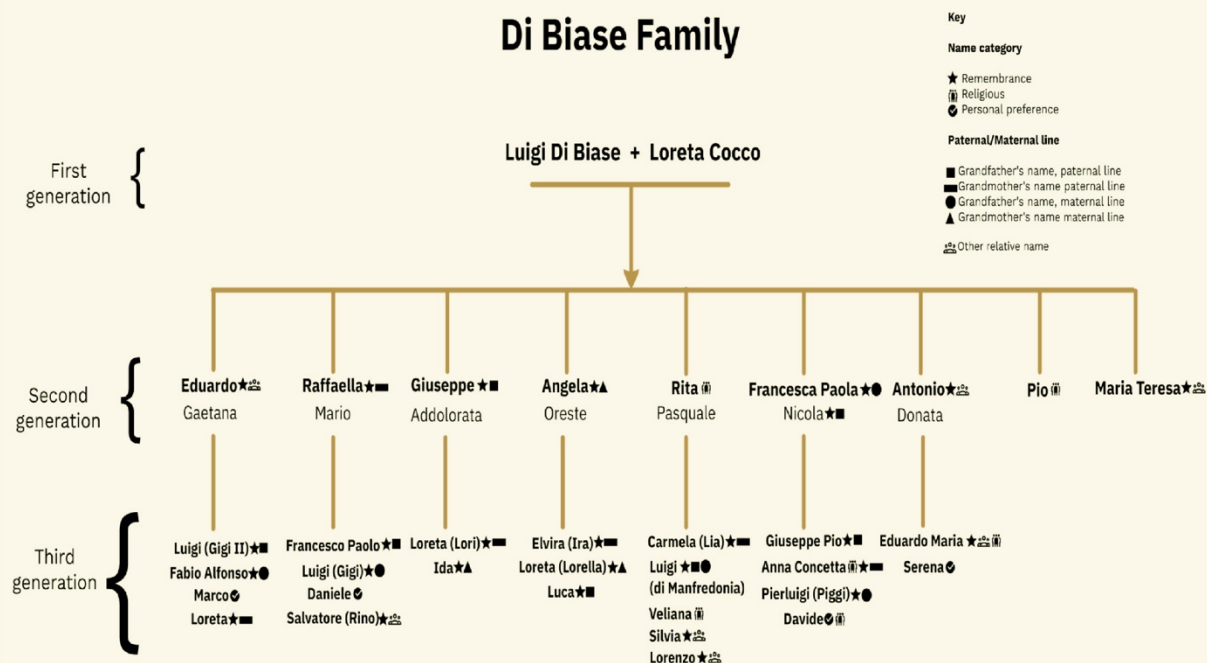


Image 3. The Di Biase Family Tree.

## Names as remembrance

Going back to the reflections I made while explaining the names my parents and relatives chose, one of the things which struck me the most was that in some cases, names are like a stargate which connects the present world with the one of the past. By doing this, we do not simply re-label someone with a familiar name, we try to hold with us those we love and keep a part of them alive, through fresh and young lives, who are (hopefully) bound to survive, and who maybe will do the same with our names once they will have offspring. There is also the intimate appeal to leave a trace of ones' legacy. In an episode of the popular TV show "Friends", one of the characters, the Italian American Joseph "Joey" Tribbiani, expresses his wish that his best friends Chandler and Monica would name one of their children after him, as he "might not have kids. Someone's got to carry on the family name" (not realising that Chandler's son would have a different one).<sup>5</sup>

Let's have a look at the family tree. How many Luigis is possible to find in the third generation? And how many Loretas? There are 4 Luigis (or shall I say 3 and a

<sup>5</sup>The episode is the no. 14, of the Season 9, titled "The One with the blind dates". Earlier in the same episode, Joey along with another character (Phoebe) try to get definitively back together two friends (Rachel and Ross) who keep breaking/making up for the whole duration of the show. The improvised matchmakers state their friends should be a family and have more children (they already had one), and Joey wishes they would name one of them after him. Joey seems obsessed by this thought and he himself is named after his father, Joseph "Joey" Tribbiani Sr., who appears in the episode no. 13 of the first season, titled "The One with the boobies".

half?) and 3 Loretas.

The same names can be found at the highest step. Thus, you can intuitively conclude that the children of Luigi Di Biase and Loreta Cocco named their offspring after their parents. This is common in many parts of Italy, and it is a custom which is still present in my as well as in many other families.

Another detail, which stands out, is that children bearing these two names are among the first-borns, or the first male or female child. In fact, the unwritten rule, I would call it the “Golden Rule”, which subtends this construction is that the first children are called with the name of their grandparents, while more creativity is allowed with the following ones. This custom is also regulated under another aspect, as the precedence is normally given to the names of the husband’s parents followed by the wife’s ones. On my family tree, the incidence of this aspect matches all the first born in the third generation and it only witnesses one exception, though an important one which will be analysed later, in the second generation. Normally, male children would take the name of the male grandparent and vice-versa. My name, for example, confirms this use, as I am named after the father of my father, Giuseppe. Sometimes if circumstances and onomastics allow, a grandchild might bear the name of a grandparent of the opposite gender. An example is my mother, Francesca Paola, who is called like her maternal grandfather, Francesco Paolo.

As the family in the picture is quite united, even though with the disappearance of the first generation and the arrival of the fourth some links became looser, occasions to meet and stay together were, and still are, frequent. In a family teeming with Luigis and Loretas, how does one become recognisable?

Nicknames, or variations of the name, come to the rescue. Let’s take the Luigis. We have (in order of birth and with the names in use within the family):

*First generation:*

- Nonno Luigi

*Third generation:*

- Gigi
- Gigi II
- Luigi di Manfredonia
- Pierluigi or Piggeri

As my grandpa was named Luigi, all the grandchildren called him Nonno Luigi. His children would obviously call him “papà” but would use the term “Nonno Luigi” when referring to him with their own children or nephews/nieces, and the same did my grandmother with her grandchildren. The use of sobriquets was exclusive to Nonna Loreta, who called her husband “Giggino”, or to people from other contexts (relatives from their same generation or friends). I can’t recall a single occasion when



anyone from the second or third generation called him “Nonno Giggino” or “Nonno Gino” or other nicknames. This happens in other families (judging from the experience of some friends of mine) but not in our case. The usage of the full birth name was probably meant to denote a higher authority and “Nonno Luigi” was a granitic name, that even the sweetest cares of a grandfather could not soften. Maybe the severe upbringing of his children crystallised the idea of a much beloved but also strongly respected authority, and this was in turn transmitted to the following generation.

Among cousins, things were much easier. The first to heir my grandfather’s name was my cousin Luigi, the second son of my Aunt Raffaella and Uncle Mario (the first one, Francesco Paolo, was named after Uncle Mario’s father). Luigi was soon commonly called “Gigi”. When Raffaella’s older brother Eduardo had his first son, he called him Luigi as well, but he was soon to be known in the family as “Gigi II”, with the numeral obviously used to avoid confusion with the first Gigi (who never got one). A third Luigi came to the world few years later, but he did not continue the series. His mother, daughter of Nonno Luigi, differently from the rest of the family who lived, and still mainly lives, in Foggia, moved to Manfredonia, a coastal town nearly 40 kilometres away. Thus, the “exotic” provenance of the new cousin became for the family part of his name, so he is called “Luigi di Manfredonia”, a quality his siblings do not share, as there are no homonymous cousins from Foggia. Luigi is the second child of my Aunt Rita and my Uncle Pasquale, but the first son. At first glance, he appears as an ostensible exception to the “Golden Rule”, as he bears the name of his mother’s father. It is not as it seems, because the rule is always in practice, as Uncle Pasquale’s father was also named Luigi. Therefore, his name covers both parents, and this freed a “name slot” for the next potential male born. When this was filled in the early 1980s with my cousin Lorenzo, his parents decided to name him after an uncle of Uncle Pasquale, the brother of his father, who had no children. So, remembrance is still in place, but in this case, it compensates for collateral kin who had no chance to normally have his name transmitted. The other daughter, Silvia, who preceded Lorenzo, is also named after another uncle of Uncle Pasquale, this time brother of his mother, who died when still young. Even in this case, like for my mother, we have an inversion of the ancestor’s name gender.

The last Luigi in the third generation is my brother and third born of Francesca Paola and Nicola, Pierluigi or Piggì. My mother told me she still wanted to name him after her parent, but also wished to vary, as there were already three Luigis. She made precede his name by Pier★ – in full “Piero”, which is a short form of “Pietro” – widely used in Italian to form other names (e.g., Piergiorgio, Piersilvio, Piercarlo, etc. Pierluigi is one of the most common variants).

Moving to Loretas, we have (in birth order and with the names in use in the family):

*First generation:*

- Nonna Loreta

*Third generation:*

- Lorella
- Lori
- Loreta

Also in this case, we see for the first two nieces the use of nicknames, except for the last born. The reason behind this choice is unknown and probably not even informed, but I would exclude the explanation based on the authority and it might be rooted in the wider age gap between my cousin and my grandmother, but this is only a conjecture.

Trying to make sense of this custom and its aims, I asked my mother what are, in her opinion, the reasons behind it. She stated: “this is a tradition, but also a way to remember the loved ones, once they will not be with us anymore”. I would add that the love for a child is the most visceral and deep for a parent, as much as the love of a child for his/her procreators. Thus, this might be a way to have them with us, to call their name once again in those who are the prosecution of our, but also their, genes. This creates curious phenomena, which remind old habits. Let’s take the first part of my name again, Giuseppe, and that of my father, Nicola, who is also the first male offspring (second born) in his branch of our family, which originates from the mountain town of San Giovanni Rotondo. He bears the name of his grandfather, while his great-grandfather was named Giuseppe, so this created a succession of Giuseppes and Nicolas who were all first born children, for at least five generations and probably more. My father said it happened in nearly all the families of his town of origin. These are clear examples of papponomy, the custom to name the first grandson after his grandfather.<sup>6</sup>

The remembrance mechanism also works in different ways. Let’s go back to the Di Biase family tree. Those with a more acute sight, might have glimpsed a name, Eduardo, which occurs twice. The first time is in the second generation, the first son of my grandparents, while the other one is in the third generation and is the first born of Uncle Antonio. Their occurrence is related, but in a non-traditional way and a leap back in time will help to understand it. In 1940s Second World War raged across Europe. Eduardo Cocco, oldest brother of Nonna Loreta, was drafted as well as many other boys of his age to support the Italian war efforts and dispatched to the Greek-Albanian front, where he fell on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1940.<sup>7</sup> Three years later,

<sup>6</sup> Michael Mitterauer, *Traditionen der Namengebung. Namenkunde als interdisziplinäres Forschungsgebiet*, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 38.

<sup>7</sup> According to the database of the fallen Italian soldiers by the Ministry of Defence, Eduardo Cocco was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1918 and died in Albania on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1940, [https://documentazione.difesa.it/Il\\_Ministro/ONORCADUTI/Pagine/Amministrativo.aspx](https://documentazione.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/ONORCADUTI/Pagine/Amministrativo.aspx)



Loreta became a young mother and named her first-born son like his brother. Forty years later, on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1983, Uncle Eduardo suddenly and prematurely passed away. This event led Uncle Antonio to name his first-born Eduardo, in honour of his older brother. In this case, the name also passes through generations, but it changes the subject of remembrance, or, I would more correctly say, it delivers multiple ones, as my uncle Antonio is very much aware of the origin of his brother's name.<sup>8</sup> One should be wary though, that such an occurrence is rare, as the same kind of match could derive from a coincidence, or stem from other reasons.

In the case of Eduardo, we have a peculiar relation which follows the custom of remembrance, but in a different way from the traditional use. Thus, the name of a member of the larger family on the same level of the first generation, for exceptional reasons, moves into the second and cascades into the third due to other exceptional events. Another cousin of mine is named after a brother of my grandmother, Salvatore (Rino). This time he was the youngest brother of Nonna Loreta, who died in circumstances I could not trace back, but probably sudden ones. As Aunt Raffaella had a little boy few months after this loss, Nonna Loreta asked her to name him Salvatore.

All these examples show an attempt to prevent obliviousness and preserve the memory of those who are part of our lives. And it works, as I am writing about them. I probably state the obvious when I say they also show the importance of family as institution in this social and geographical context, with the need to hold the links of the chain in place and reaffirm its structure, where all the generations actively interact with each other. Even in the younger generations, this custom still survives, despite being challenged by globalisation, social changes, and individualism.

## Religious devotion

What about the other names in the family tree?

Remembrance is not the sole explanation, another important element, which has an impact on the onomastics of my family, and I could probably say on the Italian families in general, is religious devotion, that even more than remembrance, is undermined by changes in society and secularism and is relentlessly reducing its influence.

One important example is my cousin Veliana, third born of Aunt Rita and Uncle Pasquale, who is named after the Madonna dei Sette Veli (“The Madonna of the Seven Veils”) patron saint of the city of Foggia. This name denotes not only the devotion to the mother of Christ, but it implies a geographic attachment to the city of origin of Aunt Rita, who, as mentioned above, moved to Manfredonia after her

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<sup>8</sup> Renaming new-born children after deceased siblings can provide comfort and help to overcome a painful loss. Similar practices can be also found in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Spain. Marie Stockinger, “Nachbenennung nach verstorbenen Geschwistern”, in *Avisos de Viena*, vol. 4 (2022), 12-13.

marriage. Although the distance between this town and Foggia is all but remarkable, this name could subtly indicate the attempt of my aunt to mitigate the detachment from her family and from the place where she grew up.

Another case I would like to highlight is that of my sister Anna. Our mother is very devout to Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary and patron saint of the pregnant women. This saint is broadly venerated in the area and to her is dedicated a church nestled in the heart of the “Crocì” neighbourhood in Foggia. As my mother had a first troublesome gestation, she pledged to name *ex voto* her first daughter in the saint’s honour. She kept the promise and to this day she still visits the church and attends the mass every 26<sup>th</sup> of July, on the day the Catholic Church celebrates the recurrence. Were born a girl, I would have that name, as my mother made the pledge while still not knowing the gender. Since the chromosomes took a different direction, she agreed with my father to add to the name Giuseppe also the other name “Pio”. Even in this case, religiosity is the key to understand the reason, as they named me after the Capuchin friar Padre Pio. This saint is a worldwide renowned figure in the Catholic Church. Back then, despite he had not even started to climb the canonisation ladder yet, he was already subject to an intense popular veneration, especially in the province where I was born, as he lived and operated in San Giovanni Rotondo. I am certainly not the only “Pio” from the area, as I personally know many people from who bear this name (curiously, most of the times as complement to another name, like in my case), also in the female variant “Pia”.

The reason for this veneration in the case of my mother also stems from the fact that Nonno Luigi and Nonna Loreta knew the friar personally. Pio was also the name of my grandmother’s last son, who was born premature and died shortly afterwards (Nonna Loreta also risked perishing in this childbirth, but she managed to survive).<sup>9</sup> Nonna Loreta also lost her last daughter at birth, Maria Teresa, named after an aunt of Nonno Luigi.

## Personal choice

Zooming on the third generation, among a total of 26 cousins, only four of them bear names which are not connected to remembrance or religious devotion. These are my cousins Daniele, Marco, Serena and my brother Davide. A quick look at their position in the family tree shows that they appear at the bottom of the lists, as they are those who were left once the names of their grandparents had already been taken. Therefore, their parents felt free to choose names as they pleased.

In the case of Serena, my uncle Antonio said that both himself and his wife liked

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<sup>9</sup> My grandfather told me that when my grandmother gave birth, he was in San Giovanni Rotondo, as he accompanied another friar there. He was completely unbeknownst of what happened, and he learned that from Padre Pio, who informed him that the baby was “with the Lord, but Loreta made it”. I am obviously not implying anything in this paper, only reporting what my grandfather told me and explain the devotion in my family towards this figure.

the name and chose it as there were already three Loretas in the third generation. Same story for Davide, though my mother chose this name not only out of personal taste, but also because it reminded her the name of the notorious biblical personage and King of Israel. Daniele and Marco also enjoyed a freer choice of their parents, once these had “fulfilled the duty” to name after their own fathers their first children.

## Conclusion

In the previous sentence, I added the quotation marks to the verb, because it is not always clear what kind of freedom parents enjoyed when naming their children. Obviously, there is no statutory duty to follow the “rules” emerged in this article, but moral obligation, respect for tradition, pressure from family and society could be hefty and restrict the choice. This feature obviously depends on the specific situation of the relations among the members, enforced or softened by local or social conventions. In the case of my relatives, I had the impression that most of the times they did not feel obliged to name their children like their parents and did it out of love and to honour their name, though the mention of the respect of the tradition suggests a soft but relentless pressure. Obviously, the truth is only known by those who have made the choice.

From the analysis of the 26 names in the third generation, 19 were bequeathed in remembrance of someone (Fabio Alfonso, Ida, Elvira, Luca, and Carmela are also named after their grandparents, but from the non-Di Biase branch of their nuclear family). The highest number of them were names of grandparents, with a precedence for those from the father’s line, which also highlights the patriarchal structure of the family. This Golden Rule proves to be the main policy followed to name children and it is demonstrated in all but one of the seven nuclei (the exception being the children of my Uncle Antonio and Aunt Donata) in the third generation. Michael Mitterauer reminds us that in the European cultures of the past the ancestors of the children’s parents enjoyed precedence. He speculates that at the root of this use there might be the Judeo-Christian tradition stemming from the fourth commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother”. Accordingly, the parents of both partners are taken into account. However, the primacy of the father’s line is often retained, especially when naming the eldest son.<sup>10</sup> Curiously, in this case, the second generation questioned this assumption as Uncle Eduardo was named after the brother of my grandmother, whose death was the waiver to the rule, which was reinstated with the following children, as the first daughter, Raffaella, and the second son, Giuseppe, bear respectively the names of my grandfathers’ parents.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Mitterauer, *Traditionen der Namengebung. Namenkunde als interdisziplinäres Forschungsgebiet*, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 38. The presence of papponomy was common to many ancient Near East cultures, an example is Moise Isaac, “You will be named after your ancestors”: Replicating Israelites Tribal Names in Judean Hebrew Inscriptions as Indexes of Refugee Identity Alignment and Community Cohesion”, PhD diss., (University of California Los Angeles, 2016).

Either way, remembrance plays a primary role and the stress on family links is paramount.<sup>11</sup> As Jacques Dupâquier stated, the study “of naming practices should permit us eventually to detect the existence of more or less tacit rules and more or less hidden family structures”.<sup>12</sup>

Devotional onomastics (or hagiophory) comes second with 5 names, but they are in some sort of a grey area. Religious names were in some cases given to accompany a remembrance name (Giuseppe Pio, Eduardo Maria) or in one case preceding the remembrance name, like my sister Anna Concetta, where the second name is the one of my paternal grandmother.

A blurred definition also occurs for the name of Davide, while the only one purely devotional name seems to be the one of Veliana, though the geographical identity factor might also question this assumption. Finally, four are the names given out of personal preference.

As underscored in the first pages, it is important to remember that the rigidity of these rules, as much as they look carved in the stone, can be also changed, and even reversed according to the situations. A name given out of religious devotion can be perpetuated in the following generations out of remembrance, as well as a name given out of personal preference. An example is the one of Nonna Loreta, whose name was strongly attached to the devotion to the Madonna of Loreto, but its religious significance faded in the third generation, where remembrance had a decisive ascendancy.<sup>13</sup>

As these rules, which are followed in the area in question since at least five generations and maybe even more, are challenged by the changes the Western society is facing, one cannot rule out that new customs will be created. As the focus from the traditional family is blurring, new potential rules could replace, compete, or mix with the current ones. Next generations will tell us the response.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This model shows opposite results with other realities, like the one of the Castellano-leonés village of Pedro Bernardo in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, studied by Aichinger and Plunger, where grandparents only offered a marginal reference for name giving to the third generation, whereas they were often chosen as godparents for the christening of the new-born members of the family. In my extended family (and by this, I mean both from my paternal and maternal sides) instead, grandparents never served as godparents, a role which was more often carried out by aunts, uncles, or friends of the parents. The only case I know is my paternal grandmother being the *madrina* of my youngest brother Davide. What my grandparents, as well as many grandparents from area, share with those of Pedro Bernardo are the function of support to their children’s families and an active presence in the life of their grandchildren. On the study of Pedro Bernardo, see Wolfram Aichinger, Walburga Plunger, “Grandmother, birth assistant, godparent. The importance of grandparents for new-borns in a Spanish mountain village (Pedro Bernardo, Ávila, 1850-1861)”, in *Avisos de Viena*, (forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Dupâquier, “Naming-Practice, Godparenthood, and Kinship in the Vexin, 1540-1900”, in *Journal of Family History*, vol. 6, Issue 2 (Summer 1981), 135.

<sup>13</sup> I was not able to trace back the motivations behind the name of Nonno Luigi.

<sup>14</sup> A very interesting analysis on the changes of the first names, focused on the German case, but in my opinion with several similarities with Italy, has been carried out in Jürgen Gerhards, *Cultural Modernization and First Names*, (London: Routledge, 2017).