

Illness and Disability in Twelfth and Thirteenth-Century Notarial Documents in Medieval Toledo

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Introduction

The contractual documents of purchase and sale of lands, donations, wills, deeds and other common contracts of the Mozarabs (Arabized-Christians) living in medieval Toledo (1085-1391) are extensive and include a wide variety of people with across-the-board needs for which they have sought a legal remedy. Although principally a Mozarabic corpus, the collection of contracts represents and includes a broad cross-section of society living in this historically pivotal city (Beale-Rivaya, Fairchild Ruggles 77-106). The Mozarabic community living in Toledo is considered to have been an ‘agent of cultural transmission’ and therefore responsible for transmission of the Andalusí culture and language into what became known as Christian Spain (López Gómez 171-75). Their documents are symbolic not only of the transition from Muslim Al-Andalus to Christian Spain, but also give us insight into the real-time everyday interactions and events of transitional Toledo after the year 1085 AD between peoples of different cultures, religions, backgrounds and identities.¹ Although the purpose of these agreements is to redact formal economic transactions, they include many examples of informal and especially oral language use, and provide glimpses of the social interactions between the parties involved (Galmés de Fuentes 135-51).

The practice of using an ‘apodo’ or nickname by which they are commonly identified, is a long-standing tradition in Hispanic culture. Javier Leralta dates the origins of this tradition in the Iberian Peninsula to the times of the Visigoths when, he sustains, the Visigothic leaders were not chosen through blood lineage, but rather earned their position through their qualities, interests, and relations. The result of the process of nicknaming subsequently created a façade or public persona, a simple referent whose function was to encapsulate that person’s entire identity (Epalza and María Jesús Rubiera 129-33). Within the contracts of the Mozarabs (Arabized-Christians) of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Toledo the tradition of nicknaming, rather than using a person’s legal name or full name, was a common practice. The consequence of the inclusion of the nickname in a formal legal document was two-fold. First, the consistent use of an informal moniker in a formal context has the effect of transforming and fossilizing said name into official and legitimate last names used for identification in legal contexts. Second, the act of writing a nickname proffers the opportunity to glimpse how the Mozarabic community in Toledo interacted with all of

¹ Al-Andalus is the name for the geographical area in Iberia under Arab Hegemony.

the other communities (i.e Muslims, Jews, Francs, Gallegos etc...) co-existing in this city.

While the use of nicknames with relation to origins and religious association found in the Mozarabic documents of Toledo has been discussed previously, nicknames and references concerning illnesses, disabilities, physical traits and the treatment of death have not received the same attention (Beale-Rivaya, Olstein). There are also very few scholarly works that centre on the medical practices in Medieval Toledo (Álvarez de Morales and Ruiz-Matas 33-38). Additionally, there is no mention of people with disabilities or illness in the Mozarabic documentation in any of scholarship to date.² Thus, while there is a very thorough understanding of the ethnic and cultural composition of Toledo during this period, little is known as to how a person with a disability or a remarkable physical trait might be treated within this community.

The present study records and discusses context of usage each instance of a nickname related to disability, illness, physical deformation, and death found in the contracts of the Mozarabs of Toledo to describe the transformational process by which a nickname appearing in such circumstances takes on a legally binding value and is transformed into a recognizable and inheritable last name. Through these nicknames, we can come to understand the progression of the creation of an onomastic at the same time as adding another layer to our understanding of the interactions between the various communities of post-reconquest Medieval Toledo.³ Finally, this paper affords a case study into how illness and disability were regarded in Medieval Iberia, and especially post-reconquest Toledo.

Nickname Types

The *apodo* or nickname selected often reflected the most marked or seemingly unusual feature of the person or the reign. The nicknaming process was usually passive and selected for the person rather than by the person in question. In this way, the nickname is a mask imposed upon the person based on his most visually striking feature.

There are many nickname ‘types.’ In Toledo, a person might be identified with regards to his:

(1) origin: *Galician-Rodrigo*, son of Pedro Gallego⁴

(2) religious association:

*The Jewish person-Aben ¿Balqueto? el judío*⁵

² There are works that deal with this topic within other communities unrelated to the Mozarabs such as Bliss, Wilson and Metzler.

³ The documents referred to are housed in the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid and in the Archivos Catedralicios in Toledo and have been previously transcribed in their entirety (González Palencia). The documents referred to in this paper will be from the González Palencia collection.

⁴ Document GP 81, October ¿1166? All the documents are numbered and identified as they were originally by González Palencia (1926). GP heretofore stands for González Palencia.

⁵ Document GP 70, December 1162.

The Muslim-Mariem la musulmana⁶

The Mozarab-Aben Omeya el mozárabe⁷

The Mozarab-Martín ben Salama ben Abihocha, conocido por Martín el Mozárabe⁸

(3) profession:⁹

Confectioner-Justa, hija de Martín Repostero¹⁰

The Butcher-Mariem la musulmana, esposa que fue del Abdí el carnicero¹¹

The Sandal Maker-Alcarrac (alpargatero)¹²

The Fisherman-Dominga, hija de Domino Petrez el pescador¹³

The Clothes Cleaner-Alí ben Gálíb el tintorero¹⁴

The Carpenter-Temam el carpintero

The Innkeeper-Lázaro Sancho el tabernero¹⁵

The Fisherman-Don Razak el pescador¹⁶

(4) social status in post-Reconquest Toledo:

The captive-Juan, el cautivo¹⁷

In addition to the above categories, there are nicknames referring to a disability, illness, physical trait, or even death.

Nicknames Related to the Medical Professions

Although Toledo is considered a center for intellectual thought, translation, and transmission in Medieval Iberia it does not seem to be at the forefront of medical advances or medical activities. There are only two references to people working or associated with the medical professions within the documents of the Mozarabs. The first reads: ‘Sale of an uncultivated vineyard [...] adjoining to the South with the

⁶ Document GP 82, May 1167.

⁷ Document GP 152, February 1181.

⁸ Document GP 153, February 1181.

⁹ For more regarding professions as nicknames in particular see Fransson, David Postles ed., Hooke & Postles eds.

¹⁰ Document GP 63, September 1160.

¹¹ Document GP 82, May 1167.

¹² Document GP 83, July 1167.

¹³ Document GP 85, April 1168.

¹⁴ Document GP 95, October 1170.

¹⁵ Document GP 116, February 1175.

¹⁶ Document GP 152, February 1181.

¹⁷ Document GP 120, August 1175.

uncultivated land of Estéfano el *boticario*.¹⁸ A *boticario* or pharmacist was the person who mixed and combined herbs and spices for medicinal purposes and administered these concoctions to the patient. The second person is identified only as ‘The surgeon’: ‘Sale of a house [...] at which sale were present Juan Pedro el albañil- *the bricklayer*, criado-*servant or protégé* of the surgeon.’¹⁹ In this case, the witness to the contract Juan Pedro el albañil-*the bricklayer*, criado del cirujano- *protégé* of the Surgeon is identified by first name (Juan Pedro), profession (el albañil-*the bricklayer*), and profession (*protégé* of *the cirujano-surgeon*). The surgeon’s name is never given. It must be concluded that the identity of the surgeon was commonly known. Should there be a dispute regarding details of the contract, presumably, each person involved must be identifiable and reachable for future clarifications. The ability to easily identify someone in case of a dispute or a question on a contract was crucial especially in a city such as Toledo that had large immigration from both the Northern Christian kingdoms and the South.²⁰

Álvarez de Morales and Ruiz-Matas (33-38) have argued that there was little medical development or sophistication in Toledo in the eleventh Century and that, due to political reasons, the scientific method practiced in other places at the time never took deep root in this city. Thus, the medical practices were ‘essentially Mozarabic,’ meaning that the doctors and surgeons who did practice medicine were Mozarabic and members of that small tight-knit community. The small number of medical practitioners referenced in the large corpus of documents reflects the realities of the broader medical options at this time. The inclusion of the moniker only, therefore, clearly demonstrates that in this community there is no need to provide the given name of the surgeon since he is easily identifiable even for legal purposes.

Nickname for Purposes of Clarification

The use of a moniker in Medieval Toledo goes beyond just informal identification. The purpose of these is really for clarification of a person’s identity for purposes of future confirmation of the facts in a contract, should the need arise. While there are few nicknames related to members of the medical profession, there are more that refer to a physical disability such as blindness, deafness, or muteness. Consider: don Pedro Bayán el ciego- *the blind* and Domingo Martín el sordo-*the deaf*.²¹ The circumstances surrounding the individuals’ disability are not given, nor are their living conditions expanded upon in the contracts. The main issue, and the reason the monikers are included in the contracts, is to identify landowners beyond any measure of confusion.

¹⁸ Document GP 22, September 1134: “Venta de una viña inculta [...] lindante al S. con tierra inculta de Estéfano el *Boticario*.”

¹⁹ Document GP 81, October ¿1166? : “Venta de una casa [...] estuvo presente a la venta Juan Pedro el Albañil, criado del Cirujano.”

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Document GP 236, March; Document GP 534, July 1239.

The nickname related to disability is tagged onto the name and has the effect of clarifying or specifying exactly who were the parties involved. This strategy is functional and practical in a community where family members often share names. The naming structure of [Name+son of Father's name] is common in both the Arabic and Romance. Thus, a person may be known as 'Domingo son of Domingo' and his son, the same. Given that Domingo is a very popular name at the time, having additional information as to which 'Domingo' is being referenced was crucial. One way to avoid confusion is to specify or clarify exactly which Domingo is implicated. Given that a surname (very often 'son of [Father's name]) is insufficient, a nickname tagged onto the end of the name provides that just this clarity. The nickname in the cases studied here happens to be related to disability, but one could easily insert any other nickname 'type' (i.e. Juan Domínguez el vinatero-the *winemaker*).²²

The manner in which monikers related to disability are used and structured is the same as the structure and function to monikers related to professions or religious identification or origin. One may expect a moniker related to a disability to be accompanied with references to that person's limitations. Although one cannot decipher tone from a written document, there is no independent evidence within the documents or the structures of the names to indicate that people with disabilities in the Mozarabic community are treated differently or are excluded, marginalized or separated from the rest of society in medieval Toledo. On the contrary, there is evidence to suggest that a person with a disability who needs special care and cannot live independently would also have been treated with respect and retains some of his rights even while under guardianship. Such is the case in the contract dealing with the care of María la Muda- *the mute*. The contract reads:

Receipt approved by don Micael García in favor of the priest don Pedro Lázaro and his colleague don Beltrán, testators of the priest don Lope, of the church of San Lorenzo, of 16 mizales of Alfonsí gold, that he had sent to be given to María the Mute: 10, for the debt he held with her, declared in her will, and the other six remaining for her good will. Don Micael confesses having received them in order to keep them for or on behalf of María the mute, thus being forced to keep her in his house, to feed her and dress her, during the time period he desires; and should she leave his house, he must give her the cited amount.²³

²² Document GP 739, January 1189.

²³ Document GP 1078, May 1211: "Recibo ortorgado por don Micael García a favor del presbítero don Pedro Lázaro y de su colega don Beltrán, testamentarios del presbítero don Lope, de la iglesia de San Lorenzo, de 16 mizcales de oro alfonsí, que había mandado éste dar a María la Muda: 10, por una deuda que tenía con ella, declarada en su testamento, y los seis restantes por su voluntad. Don Micael confiesa ahora recibirlos para guardárselos a María la Muda, obligándose a tenerla en su casa, a alimentarla y vestirla, durante el tiempo que él quiera; y cuando ella salga de su casa, a darle la citada cantidad."

The emphasis of this contract is not the disability but rather Maria's rights and her guardian's obligations towards her. The disability is mentioned only as a matter of fact to explain the need for a guardianship but it is not treated in any special way. Granted, this contract may be a special case. Maria obviously has a certain amount of wealth and can afford care. A person without means would probably have had to rely on the generosity of family members. However, since the contracts in question deal specifically with landed or people with capital to interchange, the life of a less affluent person cannot be surmised. Further, the pattern of the contract related to Maria the Mute is very similar in structure to that of marital contracts or that of a nun's dowry to her parish. This supports the hypothesis that overwhelmingly what the documents of the Mozarabs show is that people with disability in this community are not outcast, but rather, evidence suggests that every effort is made so that they may continue living in familiar surroundings after the death or separation from their primary provider. It is also clear that the care of a person with disability does represent a financial burden and given this economic challenge, there is a need to ensure a person's care through a contract and outlaying of payments to a guardian. Barring the financial incentive, María la Muda would probably have encountered severe living difficulties due to the limitations for employment or other economic activities which would have enabled her to be independent.

Nicknames Commemorating Extraordinary or Life-Changing Events

A person may be born with a disability or they may become disabled due to extraordinary events. There may be circumstances of such a great impact causing a person to acquire or be assigned a nickname alluding to said to said event. Two contracts cite people whose names refer to events warranted them to be permanently marked through a moniker: *the poisoned one*, and *the stabbed one*.

Document GP 1136 reads:

Amira, daughter of R. Abraham the money changer-*el cambista*, Ben casares, and her husband R. Josef ben R. Mosé ben Hayón, [...] Ben R. Abraham ben Aquica, in the amount of 92 mizcales [...] a vineyard property of aforementioned R. Josef, [...] adjoining with the vineyard of a Christian known as Son of the rock worker-*Pedrero* [...] that is now called house of R. Yahia ben Tazaret; in part with the house of Mar Saadia the clothes-cleaner ben the Christian-*el saraceno*, known as Pipión, and in part with the house of R. Josef ben Durá, known as the *envenenado- the poisoned one*.²⁴

²⁴ "Amira, hija de R. Abraham el Cambista (s.b.f.), ben Casares, y su esposo R. Josef ben R. Mosé (d.e.p.) ben ¿Hayón?, venden a R. ¿Aarón? Ben R. Abraham (d.e.p) ben Aquica, por la cantidad de 92 mizcales [...] la viña propiedad de R. Josef citado, [...] limita además con la viña de un cristiano conocido por Hijo del Pedrero [...] es ahora llamada casa de R. Yahia ben

Josef ben Durá is known in the community as *the poisoned one*. The manner in which the moniker attributed to him is treated within the documentation mirrors exactly that of any other nickname type. There is no elaboration in the contract to explain how Josef ben Durá became poisoned or whether this occurred by accident or through an intentional act. The nickname, ‘the poisoned one,’ probably refers to the most memorable event in that person’s life and was also something was memorable for the community as a whole. Poisoning was not unknown in Toledo. For example, in 1075, there is another recorded case of poisoning (Junceda 105-28). What may be extraordinary about this case is that the person survived the poisoning and that fact warrants the ‘honorable’ mention of the subsequent moniker.

Don Domingo Andrés, the nicknamed *Moxad* was also probably named after an impressive event that caused him to become ill.²⁵ In Spanish, the term ‘moxado’ generally means to be wet. Colloquially, however, it can refer to someone injured by a sharp or stabbing weapon. There would not have been anything memorable or ‘nickname worthy’ about being wet. Thus, presumably, Domingo Andrés was stabbed by a sharp object, perhaps a knife or a sword. Being stabbed would, like being poisoned, also not have been too unusual in Medieval Toledo. Throughout the tenth century Toledo changed hands several times and the community was embroiled in several battles campaigns against other Christian kingdoms and also to against Muslim territories in the South. Many would have been wounded and died in these battles as a result of being stabbed sharp objects. The fact that Domingo Andrés is known by this moniker, indicates that there must have been something remarkable about his circumstances. He may have been the only one to survive such a stabbing in a long time, or to survive a deep or particularly gory stabbing. Both the monikers ‘evenenado’ and ‘moxado’ are selected to mark the most significant aspect of these peoples’ lives. The incorporation of these nicknames into a legal contract legitimizes a colloquial and informal manner of speaking. The act of writing the moniker in a contractual document both literally and symbolically congeals the nickname so that it becomes part of the official naming system. Subsequently, these two individuals will always be associated with their nicknames.

Death is another life-changing event that often warrants the assignment of a nickname. Death, how it is dealt with, and the subsequent distribution of patrimony is a central theme to many of the contractual documents of the Mozarabs as many are wills. Most were produced and notarized before the death of the interested party. A typical will is formulated as follows: Testament of [Name], ill of health, sound of mind, believer in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One only God, whose mercy

Tazaret; en parte con la casa de «Mar» Saadia el Tintorero ben el saraceno, conocido por ¿Pipión?; en parte con la casa de R. Josef ben Durá, conocido por «El envenenado»...”

²⁵ Document GP 740, June 1196: “Testimonio que otorga don Domingo Andrés, el apodado ¿Moxado?, por el que afirma que él ha hecho donación al convento.”

or compassion he awaits.²⁶ There are some wills that were written and notarized *after* the death of the person in question. In these cases, the witnesses testify to what they heard the dying or ill person say.²⁷ The witnesses declare that the person in question was ill, but most importantly of ‘sound of mind’ when stating their last wishes. Being declared of sound mind was important for the testimonies to have legal force. In these wills, the person is often referred to as ‘difunto.’ His new status of ‘deceased’ becomes part of his identity and the term ‘difunto’ (deceased) acts like a nickname or even a last name just as those related to illness, disability, or physical characteristics.

²⁶ Document GP 1020. January 1192: “Testamento de doña Cristina, hija de Andrés. Después de expresar el temor a la muerte y de declarar su enfermedad corporal y su capacidad intelectual, y su fe en el Padre, en el Hijo y en el Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, que se compadecerá de ella, manda que [...]”; Document GP 1021, March 1195:

Testamento de doña Orabona, hija de Salvador ben Fadl, enferma de cuerpo, pero en su juicio y entendimiento, creyente en el Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, una sola Eternidad [...]”; Document GP 1024. June 1211: “Testamento de don Rodrigo Salvatores, hijo de don Salvador, hijo del alguacil don Juan Micaelis, sano de cuerpo, en su completo juicio, creyente en el Padre, en el Hijo y en el Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, en cuya misericordia espera, y temeroso de la muerte, inevitable para todas las criaturas. Manda [...]”

²⁷ Document GP 1032, February 1275: “Testimonio que dan doña María, esposa que fue de Domingo Petrez, de Alnefarí, y su *nuera* doña María, esposa de su hijo don Salvador, por el que declaran que doña Loba, esposa que fue de don Julián Petrez de Bargas, mandó llamar a ella y a su hijo don Salvador a casa de éstos el segundo día de la fiesta de San Nicolás, y se dirigió doña María a casa de doña Loba y le dijo [...] y doña Loba estaba entonces postrada en cama y enferma, de la enfermedad que murió, pero en todo su juicio y entendimiento.” Document GP 1012, December 1125: “Cuando enfermó el presbítero Mair Abdelaziz ben Sohail de la enfermedad que lo llevó al sepulcro, mandó se escribiera su testamento, y confió la ejecución de su contenido en manos de Annaya el Presbítero, de Mair Cristóbal de San Martín y de Yahya ben Aldelkerim. Y la copia de este testamento es como sigue: En el nombre de Dios piadoso y misericordioso.-Esto lo ordenó como postrera voluntad de presbítero Mair Abdelaziz ben Sohail, hallándose en estado de salud, de capacidad legal y de buen grado, creyendo en el Padre, en el Hijo y en el Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios [...] y se verificó la adjudicación de la expresada viña como propiedad sagrada en la citada Catedral, imponiéndose como condición al clero de la dicha iglesia que el nombre del indicado presbítero, Mair Abdelaziz ben Sohail, figuraría entre la lista de nombres de los canónigos muertos en la referida Catedral, según la categoría y rango de ellos.” Document GP 1014, December 1161: “Esto es lo que dispuso como última voluntad, encargado su ejecución o cumplimiento, según se indicará luego, el alguacil y alcalde Domingo Antolín (Dios aumente su gloria) cuando se hallaba enfermo en su cuerpo, pero cabal en su juicio e inteligencia, creyendo en el Padre, en el Hijo y en el Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, y prestando firme asentimiento a lo que anunciaron los Apóstoles y expusieron los Santos Padres [...]”

Document GP 1015, June 1177: “Testament given by don Selma ben isa Elsafar and his brother Joanes, in which they affirm that Pedro ben Suleimán el Masriqui, known as the Medinés, told them that his will was the following.”

Document GP 1013. May 1156: Will of Arnald Çequín: “Fearful of death, that which no one can escape, sick in body but healthy in spirit, affirming the religion, and believer in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and only God, he orders the following ... another mizcal for his protegé Pedro el Moreno...”

Just like any other moniker, the term ‘difunto’ also goes through the transformational process from being a mere nickname to being intimately associated with the name. One could insert any other nickname type into that very same position or slot i.e., García de Camarena, *carnicero-butcher* or García de Camarena, *el tuerto, the cross-eyed*, or García de Camarena, *difunto*. The systematic inclusion of the term ‘difunto’ in a contractual has the effect of giving it legal power and, as a result, ‘difunto’ becomes a legitimate tool for identification and contrast, for example, with another person who may share the same name but may not be deceased (i.e., Domingo ben Domingo vs. Domingo ben Domingo el difunto).

The use of the term ‘difunto’ as a nickname in this manner is not isolated but rather is a repeated pattern across the documentation. Difunto is often treated as just any other moniker for specification and identification. Consider the following excerpt: ‘Testimony of Domingo ben Salut, of Munio, son of Miguel ben Abilhasán ben Albazo, *difunto-deceased*.’²⁸ The inclusion of ‘difunto’ transforms the name and also the identity of the person in question. Miguel ben Abilhasán ben Albazo is now permanently known along with this tag at the end of his name. The result is the creation and imposition of a new identity.

The Transformational Process

Many of the attributes alluded to via the nicknames refer to something that is especially conspicuous about the person’s physical appearance, such as hanging skin, having crossed-eyes or walking with a limp. To illustrate, the father of Doña Eulalia, is known as *el pellejo*, the one with the hanging skin.²⁹ Eulalia’s father must have had a lot of hanging skin from his throat or neck. Generally, the neck seems to be an important trope in the nicknaming scheme as it appears repeatedly. The neck seems to be an important emblem and their many different neck ‘types.’ For example, another nickname directly related to the neck or throat is *garganta* (literally throat).³⁰ *Garganta* or *Gargantera* appears along with the following names: “doña Eulalia, known as *Gargantera*,” “doña Eulalia *la Gargantera*,” and “Pelayo *Garganta*.”³¹ In the case of Pelayo, the word *garganta* may refer to his having a thick throat or, more likely, as having something unusual about his voice. In modern Spanish, someone with a particularly good singing voice is referred to as having a good ‘garganta.’

While the above instances are quite literal, they refer to the exact body part in question, the reference may be more obscure and subtle. The choice of nickname seems to be very meaningful and often the result of a deliberate selection. Compare doña María, granddaughter of the nicknamed *Collo Alba*, and don Pascual, grandson

²⁸ Document GP 168, May 1183.

²⁹ Document GP 101, March 1172: “Venta de una casa en la colación de Santiago [...] otorgada por Vicente Domingo el Bizco;” Document GP 490, April 1228.

³⁰ Document GP 183, August 1186.

³¹ Document GP 559^a, November 1242 and; Document GP 594, May 1255.

of *Collo Albilllo*.³² *Collo* refers to the throat or neck. *Albillo* is a term referring to wine. If one extends the definition of *collo* and *albillo*, the moniker suggests that Pascual is the grandson of someone who is known as a drinker. An alternative to *collo albillo* could have been *borracho* meaning drunken. The selection of *collo albillo*, which is more obscure than ‘drunken,’ suggests that the case being referred to goes beyond mere drunkenness and is, therefore, in comparison, a much more pejorative term.

While *albillo* is pejorative, *Alba* has more positive connotations. *Alba* refers to the dawn, in particular, the bright white light at sunrise. María *collo alba* could have had a particularly long white neck. Presumably, this neck, as opposed to the neck with hanging skin would have been attractive. This is not the only example of a flattering moniker. *Serrana* (Dominga la Serrana) is another example of a deliberately chosen nickname that reflects more thoughtful process than just assigning a quickly chosen nickname.³³ *Serrana* refers to either someone who comes from the ‘sierra,’ the mountain, or in the colloquial it also refers to someone who is particularly attractive.

A selective nickname may be at the same time symbolic and humorous, obscuring whether it is referring to a conspicuous physical characteristic or jokingly alluding to something else, like a profession. Consider:

Sale approved by doña Solí, wife of person who was Micael de Golpejares [...] of a house situated in the same neighborhood that was known as property of Domingo Micael *Boca de Sábalo* (mouth of fish), the fisherman, and of his wife doña Colomba [...] widow of Domingo Micael *Boca de Sábalo*.³⁴

Contrast with: “Sale of a vineyard [...] Martín Domingo el *Pescador*- the fisherman.”³⁵ A ‘sábalo’ is a fish from the same family as sardines and ‘boca’ means mouth. In the first case, it seems that Domingo Micael –*boca de sábalo*– has both a mouth shaped like a fish and he is a fisherman. In the second document, Martín Domingo is clearly just a fisherman. The use of ‘boca de sábalo’ may be a good-humoured manner to refer to the fact that Domingo Micael could have a particularly large or pouty mouth. The objective is to compare Domingo’s appearance to that of

³² Document GP 217, September 1191: “Venta de un tercio pro indiviso de una casa [...] Otorgan la venta doña María, nieta de María, apodada ¿Collo Alba?”

Document GP 228, September 1192: “Venta de una casa con su corral en la colación de Santa María la Catedral... al O. con casa de don Pascual, nieto de ¿Collo Albillo?”

³³ Document GP 210, July 1190: “Venta que otorgan don Raimundo... a favor de don Domingo Petrez, sobrino de don ¿Quematero? el Carnicero y de su esposa Dominga la *Serrana*.”

³⁴ Document GP 673, July 1283: “Venta que otorga doña Solí, esposa que fue de don Micael de Golpejares [...] de una casita sita en el mismo barrio que se conocía como propiedad de Domingo Micael ¿Boca de Sábalo?, el pescador, y de su esposa doña Colomba [...] viuda de Domingo Micael Boca de Sábalo.”

³⁵ Document GP 711, September 1292.

the fish he fishes. The animal imagery is not an exceptional strategy. Other people in the documents of the Mozarabs are also identified as having animal-like features like don Esteban ben Idrís, son of Pedro, son of Mayorí, known as the ass.³⁶ In the case of Mayorí, the ass, no other information is given about him in the contract but presumably, since he accepts the use of this moniker in a legal document, to be read and used in perpetuity, he must have not perceived it as an insult. Thus, it is very likely that it was tagged on him in a more affectionate manner than it would at first appear.

Overall, the nicknames *collo alba* and *collo albillo*, *garganta*, *serrana*, *boca de sáballo* reveal that nicknames are not assigned half-hazardly but rather a nickname may be very select. A moniker may be descriptive, slightly insulting, as in the case of ‘albillo,’ complimenting as in the case of ‘alba,’ or even humorous.

Another physical area that commonly appears in nicknames is that of the eyes, as in the cases of Vicente Domingo el tuerto-*the cross-eyed*, Benedicto Petrez el tuerto, and don Mateos el tuerto.³⁷ There is no indication as to why these people became cross-eyed but it is probably due to congenital problem rather than an after birth event. There are clear examples where the deformation is not congenital. Consider the case of Alda la tuerta- *the one eyed*. Without further information, it would be reasonable to assume that Alda may have also been cross-eyed just like Vicente, Benedicto, or Mateos, but the notes on the contract specifically mention “desgracia del ojo” (misfortune of the eye).³⁸ Thus, Alda’s appearance must have been altered due to an accident, or misfortune that befell her after birth.

A nickname about a physical attribute may also be used to jokingly and symbolically refer to the person’s personality as in *cabezo*. ‘Cabeza’ or ‘cabezudo’ can allude to the person having either a ‘big head,’ a ‘hard head,’ or having an inflexible personality. The variations that of ‘cabezo’ that appear are like ‘Eseunelas, wife of don Martín, son of don Micael el *cabezudo*, and ‘don Gonzalbo, son of Martín Petrez, and his wife María Martín, daughter of Martín *Cabeço*.³⁹

A nickname may also refer to the person’s overall size and shape. A person may either be ‘short and stinky’ or ‘very tall and thin.’ Many are known for having a small cube like shape (*Cubo/Cubito*) as in the names of: Juan Juanes, nicknamed Juan Cubito; don Domingo Román, son of don Juan Domingo el Cubo; don Pedro Cubo; Martín Petrez, son of don Pedro Domingo el cubo.⁴⁰ Another way of saying that someone is small is using ‘rechicho’ meaning ‘extremely small.’ In this example, ‘don Gonzalbo Rechicho’ seems to be fortunate enough that the nickname has converted into

³⁶ Document GP 747, September 1212: “Donación que otorga Micael Esquerdo, apodado el Bacal, a favor de su nuera [...] lindante con viñas de don Esteban ben Idrís; de Pedro, hijo de Mayorí, llamado el asno.”

³⁷ Document GP 156, October 1181; Document GP 539, October 1240.

³⁸ Document GP 128, December 1176.

³⁹ Documents GP 612, December 1261; Document GP 649, November 1275.

⁴⁰ Document GP 111, March 1174; Document GP 541, February 124; Document GP 550, February 1242; Document GP 556, July 1242.

a full family name pattern and does not necessarily refer to him but rather one of his ancestors. Presumably, Gonzalbo Rechico would have been shorter than don Sancho Chico (Small).⁴¹

On the other hand, in medieval Toledo, there must also have been particularly tall people as in the cases of Esteban ben Said el Longo (*the long one*) and Domingo Juanes el Longo.⁴² Another term referring to height is that of ‘zancudo’ as in don Fernando and doña María, sons of Juan Petrez, called *zancudo*.⁴³ Zancudo can refer to having ‘zancas largas’ –zancas meaning legs (it specifically refers to long bird legs). In the dictionary of the Real Academia Española, one of the entries for zancudo says that it is used to refer to the ‘leg of a man or other animal, that is particularly long and thin’.⁴⁴ Zancudo, is a nickname for *long-legged*. Verdugo meaning “a tall thin sword” may also be a simile for height as in: don Sebastián Domínguez el Verdugo.⁴⁵ Granted, there are several other meanings for *verdugo* which may also fit this situation i.e., a *verdugo* can also be a very cruel person who punishes without pity.

Lameness (Juan Domínguez el cojo-*the lame*; el cojo llamado-*the lame known as* Domingo Rubio) is another common trope amongst these documents.⁴⁶ In these examples, the purpose of including a nickname in a legal document becomes explicable. The consequences of including a nickname, something usually reserved for the informal sphere, along with a given name on an official legal document is more far reaching than just to differentiate between two peoples and avoid future confusions. Nor is the nickname used casually. The inclusion of a nickname in an official document has a transformational effect on the naming structure as a whole. As we have already seen, the selection of the nickname is extremely important as it is used as a descriptor of the whole persona. It goes beyond just describing if someone has a fondness for alcohol, for example, it describes the degree of enthusiasm. A nickname may also tell us a little bit about the person’s life circumstances; if they were born with a deformation or if something happened to them, such as being poisoned, being stabbed or losing sight in one eye. In the case of “el cojo llamado (the lame known as) Domingo Rubio,” the structure given name, last name, nickname is reversed. Domingo Rubio is first, and foremost, known as ‘el cojo,’ *the lame*, and then by his given name. By proposing the nickname it becomes the main identifier for this person. His given or legal names become secondary to the persona created by this prepositional structuring. The result is that not only is a nickname used to help identify or give a little more information of a person but it also legitimizes its use in formal contexts. Thus, something that previously would be considered an informal moniker becomes

⁴¹ Document GP 244, September 1193; Document GP 963, October 1283.

⁴² Document GP 200a, August 1188; Document GP 789, November 1247.

⁴³ Document GP 203, November 1188: “Venta que otorgan los hermanos don Fernando y doña María, hijos de don Juan Petrez, llamado Zancudo.”

⁴⁴ “Pierna del hombre o de cualquier animal, sobre todo cuando es larga y delgada”

⁴⁵ Document GP 653, May 1277.

⁴⁶ Document GP 739, January 1189; Document GP 1030, May 1266.

legalized. It takes on legal weight and validity. Just as in the case of the surgeon, who did not need to be named, in this case, the moniker ‘lame’ seems sufficient or at least the main manner in which Domingo is identified and known. Another example where a nickname completely engulfs the person is the case of *Barba Roja*-Red Beard.⁴⁷ A red beard must have been something unusual in medieval Toledo and noteworthy. In this case, it was so outstanding that the person does not even have a first name, as in *Juan*-John Barba Roja, but rather he is known just by his physical attribute. The use of the nickname exclusively in a contractual document grants this nickname legal legitimacy.

Lack of hair or having little hair is a widespread theme as in the name Martín Calvo-Bald.⁴⁸ While many nicknames are descriptive, the structure and how they are used shows the transformational process that many nicknames underwent. Compare the name Martín Calvo with contemporary names such as Michael Schumaker (Shoemaker) or José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (Shoemaker). Neither of these contemporary personages is a shoemaker, but someone in their ancestry presumably was. Martín Calvo’s name is structured as First Name, Nickname/Surname. Martín may not actually be bald, but rather, someone in his family must have been. Metzler argues that:

Conventional historical opinion posits that, “byname were not *generally* transformed into hereditary surnames [...]for English records at least, whether an individual with a disabling byname was so named as individual (i.e. in direct reflection on a real, observable physical impairment) or was named following the surname fashion, which obscures individual characteristics [...] the significance of the byname or emerging surname as a direct reflection of some (physical) characteristic is no longer relevant—it is unlikely that by 1379 John, Thomas and William all had crooked limbs in actuality. (Irina Metzler 280)

An emergent surname may reflect a past deformation, disability, or physical characteristic but not accurately represent the current state of affairs. In the cases recorded in the documents of the Mozarabs, the name Calvo seems to have been decoupled from its original role as an informal, common nickname and completely legitimized taking the position of a surname. Calvo appears in other names in the same manner as well as with don Pelayo Calvo and when identifying Ana, the daughter of Pelayo Calvo.⁴⁹ Thus, the nickname calvo has been transformed into a proper surname that is passed on from one generation to the next.

⁴⁷ Document GP 193, October 1187

⁴⁸ Document GP 78, January 1166.

⁴⁹ Document GP 105, May 1173; Document GP 80, September 1166: “Venta de un majuelo [...] que linda con majuelo del Sevillano, el Carnicero, judío; al O. con otro que era de ¿Hamam? El Albañil, judío... otorgada por Yehudá ben Am-Daud el judío a favor de don Pelayo Calvo.”

On the opposite end of the spectrum to Calvo, *the bald*, there is Pedro Martín Cabello, *the hair*.⁵⁰ Again, *cabello* has been decoupled from the nickname that would suggest that Pedro Martín either had long hair or had a lot of hair. In this case, Cabello has clearly completed the transformational cycle and been inserted into the ‘last name’ slot. This is not an unusual pattern. Recall Domingo Micael *Boca de Sábalo*, or María *Collo Alba*. In each of these cases, the nickname has been incorporated into the last name slot and taken of that function completely.

The process of becoming a full last name is multi-faceted. Consider the structures of the names of doña Dominga la *Crespina* and Juan Pedro, the nicknamed *el Rizdaquí* –the *very curly haired* and recall Dominga la *Serrana*.⁵¹ *Crespina* usually refers to the net or weave that women used to put up their hair, but it may also refer to the ‘*melena*’ which is the *mane*, referring to having a lot of long hair. These cases lack the almost mandatory phrase ‘known as.’ The names are structured: Name (last name) *article* nickname. This structure seems to be a previous step in the cycle to complete last name insertion. A nickname must first be assigned, then a person is ‘known as,’ then she becomes ‘la’ or ‘el’ (the), and finally the nickname becomes integrated into the last name. Consider Don Esteban ‘son of Juan Estefaniz *el rubio*–the Blonde and compare the structure of this name to other ‘rubios’ such as ‘don Martín, son of Domingo Rubio; priest don Rodrigo, son of don Domingo Rubio; Pedro Rubio; Juan Rubio; and the Lame known as Domingo Rubio.’⁵² In some cases ‘rubio’ appears as ‘el rubio,’ (Estefaniz *el rubio*) the article indicating that the nickname has not completed the transformational process and is still a nickname. In other cases ‘rubio’ appears alone (Domingo Rubio), suggesting that in these, the nickname has completed the process and converted into a full surname. The two types can and do co-exist. There is no trace of a diachronic progression from ‘el rubio’ to just ‘rubio’ in the documentation, but it is clear that this process occurred. While ‘rubio’ is quite a popular nickname, there is only one example of a ‘brunette:’ doña Bruna.⁵³

In the cases of ‘calvo,’ ‘cabello,’ ‘crespina,’ ‘serrana,’ ‘rubio,’ and ‘rizdaquí,’ the names have taken on a formal and legitimized role by being post-positioned directly after the first name. Consequently, nicknaming is not a marginal colloquial tradition, but many, if not most people, are known by their names, their professions, and or, their nicknames; thus, nicknaming is a central feature for the identification of a person in medieval Iberia and an important tradition in medieval Toledo.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Document GP 97, August 1171 and Document GP 164, September 1182.

⁵¹ Document GP 544, June 124: “Sale of a house [...] approved by doña Dominga la *Crespina*.” Document GP 111, March 1174.

⁵² Document GP 202, September 118; Document GP 789, November 1247; Document GP 653, May 1277; Document GP 805, March 1198; Document GP 1030, May 1266.

⁵³ Document GP 739, January 1189.

⁵⁴ Document GP 80.

Conclusion

The use of colloquialisms and inclusion of informal language registers in the formal contractual documents of the Mozarabs of Toledo reflects the wide variety of people living in medieval Toledo and gives us a glimpse into daily interactions of the period. Through the very mundane tradition of naming and identifying people for purposes of a contract, the documents reveal how people within this community referred to and addressed each other. The inclusion of apodos, monikers, or nicknames in the contracts and the use of clear and familiar language coupled with predictable formulaic legal expressions serve to make the documents functional and actionable in Medieval Toledo. In a community where many names were shared between generations, the use of an apodo serves to specify the exact parties involved. These contracts are encased in legalese but become actionable precisely through the inclusion of informal language such as a moniker related to a profession, origin, or, the focus of the case study presented, disabilities, illness, and even death.

The use of this dual-register system ultimately transforms the language and especially how names were structured. It can be observed how a nickname superposed to the proper name in many cases. A nickname would then be absorbed, through frequent and repeated use into the cognomen position. The process underwent the following multi-faceted pattern: (1) a moniker was selected and was used consistently with the name in question; (2) the nickname began to be used with the definite article *el* or *la* next to the last name; (3) the nickname is finally inserted into the last-name position. The process of converting a nickname into the permanent last name of a family resembles that of converting a father's name into a last name ('son of, first name of father' became 'Dominguez', 'Fernández,' 'Martinez' [ez-is a morpheme to indicating 'son of']); as well as the conversion of professions into last names ('zapatero,' 'carnicero'); or origin or place names were ('Juan Toledo,' 'Domingo León,' 'Diego de Guadix').

The nickname associated with a person was not ad-hoc or half-hazard. It was often selected or appointed to a person based in his most prominent or remarkable physical feature. That nickname may then be passed on from one generation to the next, helping in the transformative process (Metzler). The quality highlighted through the nickname may be based on having survived a remarkable or life-changing event (i.e. *Moxado*, *Difunto*), having an observable physical trait (*rubio*, *cojo*, *tuerto*), or practicing a special profession (*cirujano*). Further, it is generally assumed that the "appellation was passively received rather than actively chosen" (Metzler 284). The selection was thoughtful and at times could even include humorous descriptions and word plays (*boca de sáballo*).

In so far as treatment of someone with a disability or an exaggerated physical characteristic is concerned, this collection of documents reveals that people with these characteristics were treated in a very matter of fact fashion. There does not seem to be

any effort to exclude, isolate, or distance these people from the rest of the general community.

Finally, the treatment of people who have passed is particularly interesting. Someone who is dead can acquire a nickname (namely *difunto*) after death and he will be known in association with this term in perpetuity. The result of this repeated reference to a person who is 'difunto' makes that term function just like any other nickname and it becomes the façade of that person. The measure of including these façades or public persona in a notarized document converts the simple referent into an encapsulation that person's entire identity, shifting this tradition from the informal sphere to the formal one.

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