

Silvia Margherita Corino Rovano

Università degli Studi di Torino, Italy

ORCID: 0000-0002-6223-9717

silviamargherita.corinorovano@unito.it

**VILLELMINA AMAXIA VIRI SUI FREDELICI.
IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES IN MIDDLE AGE
PIEDMONTESE ROLLS**

**VILLELMINA AMAXIA VIRI SUI FREDELICI. ŚREDNIOWIECZNE
STRATEGIE IDENTYFIKACJI OSÓB NA PODSTAWIE
PIEMONCKICH LISTÓW SĄDOWYCH**

Abstrakt: *Johannes filius Petri*: ta strategia nazewnictwa reprezentuje jeden z głównych średniowiecznych sposobów oznaczania osób, zwłaszcza w dokumentach administracyjnych o charakterze fiskalnym. W rzeczywistości osoba jest z pewnością czyjąś córką lub synem, a kobieta jest córką lub żoną mężczyzny. W szczególności kobiety często nie są nawet określane z imienia, a jedynie jako żony, córki i matki mężczyzn. W XIV-wiecznym spisie sędziowskim z Turynu (północno-zachodnie Włochy) zidentyfikowano alternatywne strategie, które nie tylko wskazują na bliskie relacje rodzinne, ale także na inne średniowieczne role, takie jak *amasia*. W niniejszym artykule zbadano pośrednią nazwę tego źródła sądowego i porównano formuły stosowane dla mężczyzn i kobiet.

Słowa kluczowe: antroponim, kobiety, oznaczenie uzupełniające, *amasia*, źródło sądowe

Abstract: *Johannes filius Petri*: this naming strategy represents one of the main medieval ways of designating people, especially in administrative documents of a fiscal nature. In fact, a person is certainly someone's daughter or son and a woman is a man's daughter or wife. Women, in particular, are often not even referred to by a first name but only as wives, daughters and mothers of males. In a 14th Century Turin (Northwestern Italy) judicial roll, alternative strategies have been identified and they not only indicate close family relationship, but also other medieval roles such as *amasia*. This paper inquiries the indirect denomination of this judicial source and compares the formulas used for men and women.

Key words: anthroponym, women, complementary designation, *amasia*, judicial source

This research is part of a wider study into female names in Medieval Piedmont. At that time Piedmont was part of the Savoy county, which comprised part of modern day South-west France, the eastern part of Switzerland, Piedmont, and the Aosta Valley.

The source of the research is a selected group of administrative accounts of the Savoy county of two places in north-western Italy: 14th Century Turin, the main city of Piedmont, and Lanzo, a village in a Franco-Provençal valley among the mountains not far from the French border.

The administrative accounts, *chatellanie accounts*, are parchment rolls of taxation (trade and business). When it comes to those from Turin, we are referring only to judicial accounts, which are quite rare among sources in the area in the same period.¹ Their distinctive peculiarity is that they record an unexpected number of females, thus allowing the study of female names, which are often overlooked in other administrative sources of medieval Italy and consequently neglected in studies about names.

It goes without saying that the women mentioned in the selected documents were involved in criminal actions either as victims or as perpetrators.

In administrative documents women are mostly represented by a complementary designation referring either to the father or the husband: in a family relationship the woman is considered either as wife or daughter. This is a consequence of female role in medieval society, since women's participation in the patrimonial aspects of life was usually mediated by other family members. The same situation applies to children or, in general, to people who could not fulfil an effective social role.

This kind of naming is used not only for women who own taxable assets, but also for those who were involved in criminal actions, thus testifying that it was a common method of referring to women.² Historians do not find it strange (Barbero 2020, VII): it is nothing but a consequence of the role played by women in the society of the time as stated:

lo scopo è di far capire fin dall'inizio un aspetto fondamentale della società medievale: i ruoli sociali sono appannaggio degli uomini; le donne hanno un ruolo che non dipende da loro – a meno che non siano donne eccezionali, capaci di costruirsi un destino fuori del comune, [...].³

The opportunity to have a large number of mentions of the fair sex in an administrative context allows us to observe an unconventional naming strategy that

¹ The rolls chosen in Turin are n. 2 (1299-1302) and n. 4 (1314) (ASTO = Archivio di Stato di Torino, *Conti di castellania, Torino*, r. 2 (1299-1302), r. 4 (1314)); the rolls chosen in Lanzo are the first (1306 – 1307), n. 15 (1343 – 1345), n. 19 (1350 – 1351), n. 24 (1358 – 1359), n. 32 (1364 – 1365) (ASTO = Archivio di Stato di Torino, *Conti di castellania, Lanzo*, r. 1 (1306 – 1307), r. 15 (1343 – 1345), r. 19 (1350 – 1351), r. 24 (1358 – 1359), r. 32 (1364 – 1365)). The rolls of Turin are quite long, so for Lanzo it was necessary to have more rolls (and thus names) to compare the two realities.

² Another study in the region (Papa 2010) found only three women all represented by a complementary designation.

³ “The aim is to make people understand first of all a fundamental aspect of medieval society: social roles are the prerogative of men; women have a role that is not up to them - unless they are exceptional women, capable of building a destiny out of the ordinary, [...]”. [The translation is mine].

goes beyond the mention of wife or daughter. Indeed, it includes other relationships and shows a more pragmatic or even seemingly liberal way to identify women.

Among 401 women mentioned in the documents, 142 complementary designations have been identified in Turin, 105 in Lanzo.

In most examples they are mentioned as *uxor* or *filia* in line with the tradition:

Receptit ab **aleysina uxore petri richiardi** pro rebus emptis a iohanne guildo precio [...] (ASTO, Lanzo, r. 24).

Receptit ab arnaudo cherrerio quod carnaliter cognovit johannam **filiam** iohannis damdis tamen eius voluntate (ibidem).

In a complementary designation we can identify two women as daughters in a coordinated expression:

Receptit [...] pro tera empta ab **alaxina et jacobina filiabus johannis coraxinj** precio [...] (ASTO, Lanzo, r. 15).

The daughter is not necessarily part of a male kinship; there can be a daughter and her mother, as in the case below where the relationship is between women mentioned with their first names:

Receptit de villelmo de buazano percuxit **margarotam filiam agnexone** condempnata eadem arenga (ASTO, Torino, r. 4).

On the other hand, there are no explicit mentions of mothers of women; instead, the complementary matronymic designation is made through a woman's mother of her son:

Receptit de **elena matre johanini canavessani** quia dixit impropere alexine canavessane mortem fratris sui (ASTO, Torino, r. 4).

A natural daughter can appear simply as it is:

Receptit de jacobo capra qui [...] cum **elena filia naturali petri de vayro** condempnato eadem arenga (ASTO, Torino, r. 4).

Since most of the anthroponyms in our *corpus* come from the *banna*, they are relationships between adults (men and women) and as a consequence, the woman often appears as *uxor*.

In Turin the onomastic formulas that use first name + *uxor* + name of the husband are 89, in Lanzo 76.

The practical advantage of this naming convention is obvious: it is much easier to identify the person responsible for a crime, especially if the crimes committed are multiple. The following example of *Vaudrata* represents this clearly:

Receptit a **vaudrata uxore berthinj dorerij** quia dixit verba iniuriosa uxori bertholinj syli (ASTO, Torino, r. 2).

Receptit a **vaudrata uxore berthinj dorerij** quia emit granum contra ordinamenta (ibidem).

There are forms of denomination that seem a Chinese box, for example a woman who is the wife of a man, who is the son of someone, who is in turn the son of another man:

Receptit a **johannina uxore taurini filij petri de albo filio urietai bufa** pro rebus emptis a petro de abo precio [...] (ASTO, *Lanzo*, r. 15).

Although such designations manifest a certain redundancy and, at first glance, may seem unjustified, in everyday Italian language saying “the son of the son of ...” still indicates someone whose name does not come easily to memory.

In another occurrence of complementary designation, the only tangible parental link between the two main women (*Jacobina* and *Agnexia*) is expressed using the family name of two men (*zarelli*):

Receptit de **jacobina filia alaxina ferruere uxori frederici zarelli** que dixit verba iniuriosa **agnexe filie condam johannis zarelli** (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

Thanks to the family name *zarelli* we can reasonably deduce that *alaxina* and *agnexia* are somehow related; however, this kinship is not expressed by relating the two women themselves. Furthermore, we can suppose that *Johannes Zarelli* and *Fredericus Zarelli* were also related, but what their relation was, is a shot in the dark.

On the other hand, we see through the Chinese box a sort of genealogy where *Alaxina Ferruere* is *Jacobina*'s mother, but we have to be careful not to assume that *Jacobina* is necessarily *Fredericus*' daughter.

The marital relationship persists even if the husband is deceased. In this case between *uxor* or *filia* and the husband's name appears *quondam*, *condam*, etc., e.g. .:

Receptit de **agnexona uxore condam alberti de castro novo** qui percussit de pugno jo ermeniardi condemnata [...] (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

Receptit a vuillelmino albi de covaczolio pro re empti a **jacobina filia quondam michaeli revellj** precio [...] (ASTO, *Lanzo*, r. 32).

The woman appears with her first name + *condam* + male name without mentioning whether the woman is a daughter or a wife:

Receptit ab eodem hemerono pro se et **cicilia condam jacobi grandi** pro permutatione duarum peciarum prati [...] (ASTO, *Lanzo*, r. 15).

Nevertheless, we must remember that, until recently, in Italian notarial documents an equivalent expression of *condam* was used. It was relatively normal to specify a relationship with a dead father with the codified expression *del fu* (the modern version of *condam*).

It is obvious that the relationship with a deceased man can be specified directly with a proper expression. In this *corpus* there is only one widow that can be recognized at a glance, considering *relicta* as synonym of *vidua* ‘widow’:⁴

Receptit a **biatrisia** relitta quondam petri hugueta pro tutela sibi data liberorum suorum (ASTO, Lanzo, r. 32).

The complementary designation in case of women can be very rich and includes different kinds of family relationships. In fact, it is not limited to the *status* of wife or daughter, it can also involve a link to other female relatives (sister, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law of a man or a woman). It must also be noted that there is no significant difference between the two locations, whether it be the plain (Turin) or the mountain (Lanzo), e.g.:

[...] **johannete** sororis dicte^s alaxine precio [...] (ASTO, Lanzo, r. 15).

Receptit de johanne galiane qui percuxit de manu **bellonam nepotem volati** (ASTO, Torino, r. 4).

Receptit de uxore peronini coidetij et **benevenuta eius cognata** pro rixa habita inter ipsas (ASTO, Torino, r. 2).

Receptit a **jacobina nuru petri verneti** pro rebus sibi in soluto datis de bonis dicti petri precio [...] (ASTO, Lanzo, r. 15).

Receptit de segnorina uxore gandolfi ferrarij et **biatrixia eius nuru** qui proiecerunt [...] (ASTO, Torino, r. 4).

[...] jaquemetus pignati de ala propter eius contumaciam . quia percuxit **perona avunculam anthonij michaellis** [...] (ASTO, Lanzo, r. 24).

In the whole compound of documents were found to be consanguineous:

8 sisters, 1 nephew, 2 sisters-in-law, 2 mothers (of males), 1 daughter-in-law, 1 aunt.

The picture that emerges is broad and the possibility of identification can be extended to other forms of family relationships. This is not surprising when we consider that the documents were written by secretaries whose first concern was the identification of people to obtain (sometimes even grab) money that would have been owing to the county coffers.

This spectrum of identifiers can include a generic declaration that indicates only a relationship of kinship:

Receptit a **rivayria familiarj domine morande** condempnata per eundem judicem (ASTO, Torino, r. 2).

The identification is not only conveyed through consanguinity; it rather seems that a pragmatic attitude is used in considering relationships in their simplicity. It is less surprising if we consider that the same still happens nowadays in small

⁴ In accordance with Du Cange (1883-1887: s.v. *relicta*. Retrieved from: <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/RELICTA> (access: 1/10/2021)).

⁵ Anaphor.

villages where everyone knows everything about their neighbours, to say nothing about the gossip. It is also evident that in small communities privacy hardly exists (or existed) and women appear in a multiplicity of relationships.

A concubine is then appointed:

Receptit a **iohannina concubina**⁶ **morelli saltorum** pro verbis iniuriosis dictis bruneto mantaxerio (ASTO, *Lanzo*, r. 24).

One punishment mentions a relationship that today we can maybe call unmarried partnership, here explicated with a very pragmatic expression as a matter of fact: *que stat cum*:

Receptit de papono porcelli qui terxit spatam contra allonam et **agnexinam que stat cum fornerio illorum de ruvore** condempnato per dictum iudicem eadem arenga (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

We also observe that in the expression *illorum de ruvore* there is an indication of belonging to a family group introduced by *ille* in the plural genitive and an expression of provenance expressed by *de* + toponym. *Ruvore* is the extant town Rivara, not far from Turin.

In a Turin account (but not in those from Lanzo) we found the word *amasia* (*amaxia*). It is, indeed, a recognized legal institution, mentioned in the *Statutes of Vercelli* as *Ameresse*, *amatrix* and in some medieval systems it provides for punishment: «Vir uxoratus qui Amasiam teneat, puniatur et condemnetur in libris xxv. imper. et ipsa Amasia publice fustigetur».⁷ Also in the town of Lucca in Tuscany the role of the *amasia* is close to the idea of a dishonest life.⁸

It is possible that it was used as a *praxis* of identification in Turin, because if it were a punishable crime, it would have been mentioned in the documents themselves:

Receptit a **dicta biuffa amasia vyeti de panayrolio** quia cepit vines et [...] (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 2).

Receptit de **johanna amasia giraudeti** quia dixit verbum injuriosum mateldine uxori dicti giroldeti (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

Receptit de **cristina amaxia fratris bruni** que butavit biatrisiam de yporegia (ibidem).

Receptit de jacobina zacella quia habuit rixam cum **villemmina amaxia viri sui fredelici** (ibidem).

⁶ *Concubina est, quæ cessantibus legalibus instrumentis, unica est et conjugali affectu tenetur* (Du Cange 1883-1887: s.v. *concubina*. Retrieved from: <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/CONCUBINA> (access: 1/10/2021)).

⁷ *Stat. Pallavic.*, lib. 2., cap. 41., p. 107 (cfr. Du Cange 1883-1887: s.v. *amasia*. Retrieved from: <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/AMASIA> (access: 1/10/2021)). *Amasia* is mentioned also in the first edition of *Dizionario della Crusca* translated in Italian as *amanza* 'beloved woman' (retrieved from: <http://www.lessicografia.it/Controller?lemma=AMANZA> (access: 1/10/2021)).

⁸ See the TLIO dictionary (<http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/index.php?vox=002282.htm>) and the *Statuto suntuario della città di Lucca del 1362* (http://pluto.ovi.cnr.it/box/docfil/220614/TY-dossier_filologico/TY-doc_ufficio_filologico/TY-citato/TY_citato.pdf) quoted in TLIO.

The mention can avoid the primary element:

Receptit de alaxona uxore bertolini bastardi pro rixa habita cum amaxia **magistri banduini** (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

The expression *amasia* is the only disambiguating element in a dispute between two women who are both called *Johanneta* but who play two profoundly different roles in the regards of the same man. Possibly they fought bitterly for him, as sometimes can happen between wife and lover, and their romance is forever preserved also thanks to the complementary designation:

Receptit de **johanneta** amasia **giraudeti caligari** que percuxit **johannetam** uxorem dicti **giraudeti** condempnata [...] (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

Receptit de **johanneta** uxore dicti **giraudeti calieri** que percuxit amaxiam **ipsius giraudeti** predictam [...] (ibidem).

Other expressions of relationship are also structured as complementary designations. These are the ones that sink into the medieval tradition between profession and personal juridical *status*, e.g. the servants, the nurses or bridesmaids. In some cases, residency with the employer or restrictions on personal freedom can occur in regard to servitude, a *status* that goes way beyond the simple profession.

One of the words used is, therefore, *famula* ‘servant’.⁹

Receptit de **perona** famula **magistri johannini** que traxit unum lapidem contra blondam uxorem rape (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

This condition is not solely devoted to women: we have a «pomero olim famulo philiponi sili»¹⁰ and in Lanzo a «famulo curie»¹¹.

A particular case is that relating to the determination of the role of the *bayla* (or *baiula*),¹² a role which appears in four contexts:

Idem libravit per easdem litteras **bonete** baiule **filie dominj** pro suo salario (ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4).

Receptit a manuello joreldo quia cepit res **alaxine** baiule **thome biscoti** (ibidem).

Idem libravit **gentone** baiule **filie domini et domine** per litteras domine de mandato (ibidem).

Receptit de **ysabella** bayla **domine perone** que percuxit johannem alamannum (ibidem).

We believe this to be a nursing home or some form of domestic service. This case can be considered an in-between, because there is also the mention of a salary, which is indicative of a profession, but the appearance of the structure of the sentence would support the interpretation of the word as a complementary designation;

⁹ Du Cange 1883-1887: s.v. *famuli*. Retrieved from <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/FAMULI> (access: 1/10/2021).

¹⁰ ASTO, *Torino*, r. 4.

¹¹ ASTO, *Lanzo*, r. 24.

¹² *Italix Nutrix, famula, ancilla; unde nostris olim Balle et Baille* (Du Cange 1883-1887: s.v. *baila*. Retrieved from: <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/BAILA> (access: 1/10/2021)).

furthermore, the nanny or the bridesmaid are quite special professions and above all they are activities through which the woman is permanently recognized.

In conclusion, the absolutely prevalent complementary designation must be understood first as a conjugal or filial relationship with a male. He is usually the one who owns the women's goods or is otherwise recognized in the community as a real onomastic referent. This custom of identification depending on historical tradition, circumstances, and necessity, ends up including other forms of kinship, which do not match the usual conception of this matter.

The explicit mention of the *amasia* relationship, together with other recognized factual situations, suggests a highly pragmatic attitude towards personal links. Debt collectors seem very closed to real social kinship.

Women, the great absent in historical records, are perceived in a larger dimension and their designation is eventually based on existing relationships; they show an unexpected coherence to everyday life with all of its imperfections and quirks, or ambiguities between identity and profession. In any circumstances they are somehow related to men.

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