

HOMOPHONIC TRANSFORMATION OF TOPONYMS: SOME EXAMPLES FROM ANDALUSI ARABIC AND A NEW INSTANCE FROM PLA DE L'ESTANY

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Resum

És sabut que amb el pas de l'àrab a les llengües romàniques, diversos topònims d'origen àrab varen sofrir un procés de transformació d'acord amb algun nou significat que pogués ésser entès pels usuaris de la llengua receptora. Aquest treball analitza alguns casos de transformació popular per homofonia, amb especial atenció als noms de lloc que deriven de l'existència d'aigua (*al-^cuyūn*) i que sovint vas ser confosos amb "lleons" i en proposa un de nou –Lió– al Pla de l'Estany.

Paraules clau: romandalusismes, toponímia, homofonia

Abstract

It is a well-known fact that with the substitution of Romance languages for Arabic many Andalusí place names were given a new interpretation and, accordingly, a new shape through folk etymology, relative homophony being one of the most salient factors governing the process. The present paper gathers and analyses some instances of such homophonic reinterpretations and also suggests a similar origin for the Catalan place name Lió (Pla de l'Estany, Banyoles), which, just like some other *-lleó* and *-lió* toponyms, might derive from the Arabic *al-^cuyūn* 'the springs'.

Key Words: Andalusí Arabic, place names, homophony

* Unless otherwise specified, the English translation of texts and quotations is by PangurBàn Ltd.

As far as toponymy is concerned, it is necessary to remark that things should not be unnecessarily complicated: toponyms are related to landscape characteristics, geographical features, the presence of water, the native flora and fauna, the exploitation of natural resources, defensive systems and roads, craft production and trade centres, human settlements, habitation models, surroundings, economic activity, the religious life of the inhabitants, the abandonment or depopulation of a previously inhabited area, etc... Moreover, many toponyms derive from anthroponyms, which exhibit a wide variety of forms. Hence, place names arise from the people, just as they always and everywhere have. Thus, the etyma of toponyms of Arabic origin should not be sought in dictionaries of classical Arabic, as many scholars still do.

Carne Barceló, an expert in the study of the cultural heritage of the toponymy of Arabic origin in the Valencian Country, has rightly noted that the etymological science responsible for the research of place names is relatively new, because it demands

comprehensive and wide-ranging philological knowledge, mastery of other sciences (geography, history, economics), expertise in the social changes in the analysed territory or territories, and the availability of many written ancient forms of place names.¹

In my opinion, this last requirement is essential. It is precisely for that reason that the most useful and convincing studies are those that gather the maximum number of variants for each toponym, especially the oldest forms, such as the work of Joan Coromines (1965 and 1989-1997) for the Catalan territories, and that of the aforementioned Barceló for the Valencian Country (1982, 1991, 1995 and 2010).

The availability of the oldest forms is extremely important since, when the language from which they derive falls into disuse and is forgotten, people modify the original meaning of place names and relate them, through homophony, to some word of the substitutive language, which, frequently, has nothing to do with their original sense. That is the case of many toponyms, regardless of their origin. For instance, several apparent references to fruits such as Meló (Catalan for 'melon'), Melons, [Coves] del Meloner, Puig Meló or Montmeló, actually derive from the Latin *melonum*, which in turn alludes to badgers, abundant in the area; or Petra, the Turó de la Peira, la Pera, [Sant Miquel] de Pera (*pera* is Catalan for 'pear') and their various compounds that refer to the stony nature of the area (from the Latin *petra*).

I will analyse here some of the toponymic distortions that derive from Arabic, on the understanding that, in fact, Andalusians spoke a language that was the result of the symbiosis of the Neo-Arabic

¹ 'amplis i variats coneixements filològics, domini d'altres ciències (geografia, història, economia), control dels canvis socials del territori o territoris que s'analitzen i poder disposar de moltes formes antigues escrites dels noms de lloc.'

dialects imported by Muslim invaders and the several Romance linguistic varieties of the remaining Hispano-Gothic population. It is well known that this symbiosis did not produce a single language, but an ensemble of variants that has been rightly defined by Corriente (1977) as ‘dialectal bundle’.

The transformation of these loanwords is even easier to understand, as I previously noted, from the moment the original language is no longer prevalent. Still on the apparent references to fruits, a first example stemming from Arabic would be the numerous names of peaks today known as ‘Cirera’ (Catalan for ‘cherry’), that under no circumstance derive from the presence of these fruits in such places but instead must be related to medieval defensive systems (BALAÑA 2002). These Catalan ‘Cirera’ have their analogous in the toponyms Siresa, in Huesca, and Ziritza, in Navarre, none of them substituted with the name of the fruit of the cherry tree in their respective languages. I would like to remark here that Balaña suggested the etymon *hirāza*² or ‘watch place’, and that this etymological proposal has been, in my opinion, properly amended by Corriente, who puts forward the more plausible *sirāja* or ‘place from where luminous signals are emitted’.³ In turn, the town of Oliva (Catalan for ‘olive’), in Alicante, which already appears as *‘Aur(a)ba* in several medieval Arabic chronicles, has nothing to do with the fruit of the olive tree, but is instead related to the family name of the Berber Awruba⁴ tribe, which, as it is well known, settled in the Andalusian territory.

A remarkable case of homophonic deformation is the name of the town of Altafulla (Tarragonès), which has nothing to do with *fulla alta* (Catalan for ‘high leaf’) nor with the marginal inscription found in a medieval *capbreu*⁵, which, allegedly, would indicate that the record continued on the following page, *altra fulla* (Catalan for ‘another page’), as has also been suggested. Its etymon, the Arabic *al-tahwīla*, is not at all related to botany but corresponds to an agrarian measure, as its current use *-tafulla-* in the Valencian Country still shows. Another curious case is that of Silla (l’Horta), which is not a Castilianism that refers to a piece of furniture⁶ but a derivation from the Arabic *al-sayla*, ‘place in where a valley is flooded, stream’ (BARCELÓ 2010).

If we now turn to the alleged references to the presence of certain animals in certain places, we can mention the cape of Gata (Spanish for ‘female cat’), which has nothing to do with felines, but is an Andalusian adaptation of *Qābta*, from the Latin *capita*, which means ‘peak’, ‘cape’ or ‘headland’. As for the name of the village Gata de Gorgos, it cannot stem from the same etymon due to the fact that, according to Corominas (*Onomasticon*, s.v. Catadau), ‘it does not stand at the end of anything or anywhere nor at the lower end’.⁷

² For editorial reasons, I have omitted transliteration, which any Arabist can replace without difficulty.

³ The corresponding entry in COROMINES 1989-1997, q.v., authored by J. F. C., indicates that it derives from ‘the name of the fruit or that of the tree’.

⁴ Throughout this paper, the proposed etyma, except otherwise specified, were put forward by Joan Corominas.

⁵ Translator’s Note: In medieval Catalonia, *capbreus* (from Latin *caput breve*) were documents that recorded the peasant’s recognition of a lord’s rights and the revenues obtained by his agents.

⁶ TN: *silla* is Spanish for ‘chair’.

⁷ ‘no es troba al cap de res ni d’enlloc ni tampoc al cap d’avall’.

Some time ago, an excellent essay (HERNÁNDEZ GIMÉNEZ 1963) demonstrated that the Arabic diminutive for ‘mountain pass’ –*buwayb*– had been transformed into the word ‘buey’ (Spanish for ‘ox’) in the peninsular geography. Consequently, the oronyms that nowadays include the words ‘buey’ and ‘bou’ (Catalan for ‘ox’) are totally unrelated to the alleged presence of these quadrupeds. Portbou (Alt Empordà) cannot be associated to this bovine origin either, because, according to Coromines, the second part of the name is a distortion ‘from the Latin *bœu*, used in the Costa Brava and the Alt Empordà to describe a submarine cliff or a submerged rock against which the waves break dangerously during rough sea conditions’.⁸

No wolves scratched in Gratallops (Priorat);⁹ the toponym derives from *garāt al-āws* or ‘the caves of the wolf’ (BALAÑÀ 1990, q.v.), whereas Cantallops (Alt Empordà)¹⁰ probably owes its name to the presence of these carnivores, that is, to the Andalusí Arabic *qaʿa al-āws* (BALAÑÀ 1990, q.v.). According to Coromines’ proposal for other current toponyms starting with Cata-,¹¹ the first part of this compound echoes the Andalusí Arabic *qaʿta*, which, according to the *Vocabulista* by R. Martí (CORRIENTE 1989, q.v.; DOZY 1932, II, 372) means *pars* and, in particular, *pars loci* or ‘part of a place’. In this way, by adding a parasite /n/, people transformed a ‘place of wolves’ into ‘singing wolves’, although these animals are known not for singing but for howling.

Another case of mistaken animal habitats is that of the town of Cabra (Spanish and Catalan for ‘goat’) in Cordoba, whose name derives from the Iberian Egrabo or Igabrum, with the loss of the initial vowel. Probably the same happened in Catalan with the toponym Cabra del Camp (Alt Camp). On the contrary, the toponyms Cabrenys, both Cabreras (one in Anoia, the other in Maresme) and Cabrils (Maresme) must be related to caprids, and derive from the Latin *caprentius* and *caprarius*, meaning ‘he who guards the goats’ and ‘place of goats’ respectively.

The existence of what we call ‘travelling toponyms’, that is, those that have borrowed their names from other villages, is also known. The most likely reason for this fact is that people who abandoned their place of origin brought along the place name when they settled in a new location. As I have recently mentioned, the town of Cabra is an example of this relocation of toponyms, as is also the name of the town of La Granada (Alt Penedès) (BRAMON 2012) that originates in the famous Andalusian city. Another example, also from the Arabic, can be identified in a neighbourhood of

⁸ ‘del llatí *bœu*, usat a les costes braves i a l’Alt Empordà en el sentit de precipici submarí o roca submergida que, amb maror, trenca perillosament.’

⁹ TN: place name composed of ‘Grata’, Catalan for ‘scratch’, and Llops, Catalan for ‘wolves’.

¹⁰ TN: place name composed of ‘Canta’, Catalan for ‘sing’, and Llops, Catalan for ‘wolves’.

¹¹ COROMINES, *Onomasticon*, s.v., Catadau, which includes the Valencian toponyms Catamarruc and Catarroja. Moreover, according to BARCELÓ, 2010, q.v., the first part derives from the Arabic form *Qābta*, derived in turn from the Latin *capite*, although in 1982 he also suggested the etymon *parcel·la* (Catalan for ‘plot of land’) for the Arabic toponym.

Mataró (Maresme), named La Cirera as a remembrance of someone who had previously lived in one of the aforementioned places that emitted luminous signals.

On another note, it is well known that several toponyms derive from anthroponyms, some of them quite famous. That is the case of Buseit (la Marina Alta), which originates in a certain *Abū Zayd*, or Bufalí (la Vall d'Albaida) deriving from an *Abū Khālid*. Another group of toponyms that also stems from Arabic anthroponymy are those related to the names used within the family context, such as Bràfim (Alt Camp), which derives from *Ibrāhīm*; Bòquer (Mallorca), from *Bakr*; Salomó (Tarragonès) from *Sulayman*, or Redovà/Redován (Baix Segura), from *Ridwan*. La [Pobla de] Mafumet (Tarragonès), which derives from *Muhammad*, also belongs to this subgroup.

At this point, it is interesting to note the possibility of contamination or confusion with regard to the Catalan word *mas*, meaning 'farmhouse'. That was the case of Sant Feliu de Codines (Vallès Oriental), where there is a farmhouse, Mas Fumat, named after somebody who, in turn, bore the name of the prophet of Islam: a piece of information kindly suggested by Dr. Vernet, who researched that origin of the country house and found it spelled *Maffumat* in medieval documents. Unfortunately, I do not recall the provenance of the documentation he assured he saw, but he also specified that a fire had affected this particular country house a long time ago. This fact makes the transformation of its original name into its current denomination even more understandable.¹² Perhaps the same can be said of its homonymous in the town of Roses (Alt Empordà), where nowadays there is a residential area also named Mas Fumats, which, curiously enough, suffered a fire in 2003.

One of the most abundant group of toponyms originated in Arabic anthroponymy are those derived from filiation, that is, those starting with the term *ibn* and/or its plural *banū*, 'sons', followed by the name of the father. In this way [Coves de] Vinromà (la Plana Alta), descends from *ibn Ruman*; Vinaixa (Garrigues), from *banū ʿĀʾiša*; Vinarós (Baix Maestrat), from *banū ʿArūs*; Benissa (Marina Alta), from *banū ʿIsā*; Benicarló (Baix Maestrat), from *banū Gazlun*; Benifassà (el Baix Maestrat), from *banū Hasan*; Binicalaf (Minorca), from *banū Khalaf*; Binissalem (Majorca), from *banū Salam* and Biniaixa (Minorca) from *banū ʿĀʾiša*. This list (which could be much longer), allows us to note how the toponyms starting with filiations generally produce different results depending on their geographical location: Vin- in Southern Catalonia and in the current province of Castelló, Beni- and Bena- in the central and southern territories of the Valencian Country and Andalusia, and Bini- in the Balearic Islands.

In my opinion it is worth adding here that some toponyms that belong to this group could be the result of euphemisms, such as Benimassot (el Comtat) or Benissoda (la Vall d'Albaida) (EPALZA 1991) that would respectively derive from *banū Masʿūd* and from a possible feminine *Saʿūda*. These

¹² TN: The author is hinting here at the fact that *fumat* is Catalan for 'smoked'.

anthroponyms meaning ‘happy’ would have been used in the Andalusí period, also due to their similarity or homophony, as substitutes for the true Arabic term *sūd* that means ‘black’. Hence both anthroponyms could have actually designated black-skinned people. Were this hypothesis true, it would hint at the settlement of black immigrants in the Valencian Country.

However, we should also note that toponyms starting with filiation do not always belong to this group, since sometimes the Arabism is only apparent and, consequently, they could be the result of a confusion with the Latin term *pinna*, which hints at the existence of a ‘pinnacle’. One of the most emblematic place names in that regard is, undoubtedly, the Benicadell peak that separates the Albaida Valley from the region of the Comtat, and corresponds to the *pinna Cadiella* from the *Poem of the Cid*, which clearly refers to an orographic feature. Some other examples of this confusion could be Benissid/Benassid or ‘pinnacle of the lord’, in Alicante (EPALZA 1990), which in that case would have nothing to do with a tribal name. In its turn, Binarrisc (Marina) would derive from *penna risku* (*risco* is Spanish for ‘crag’) (COROMINES 1989-1997), whereas also according to Coromines, Castrossit (Alta Ribagorça) derives from the Latin *castrum sectum*, meaning ‘slit castle’ and not ‘cid/lord’. To explain this discrepancy between criteria, the great etymologist states that ‘an Arabism is unthinkable in the northern gorges where it is located, and more so a post-anthroponymic name after the Cid Campeador’.¹³

In this sense, it is also possible that the toponym Benifallet (Baix Ebre) alludes to a *roca Falletera* (Falletera Rock) or *penna Falletera* (Falletera Peak) that the charter of settlement of Tortosa (1149) places at the current location of the city (MASIP I FENOLLOSA 1981). However, most researchers consider it to be a filiation toponym derived from the anthroponym *Khalīd* (BALAÑA 1990, COROMINES 1989-1997 and BARCELÓ 2010).

Nevertheless, and as a reminder of the caution that should be exercised in this field, we must note that the town of Penàguila (l’Alcoià), whose name seems to allude to a crag where eagles were abundant¹⁴ could evince the opposite pattern, since it is repeatedly mentioned in medieval Arabic documents as a tribal settlement of the *banū ‘Ādila*, which contradicts the initial supposition (BARCELÓ 1991).

Another curious example of a popular transformation is the name of the current town of Cabassers (Priorat), sometimes still misspelled as Cabacés, which appears as Abincabacer in a document of 1158 stating that the prior of Vallclara ceded ‘locum de Valle Clara qui antea Abincabacer dicebatur’ to the bishop of Tortosa. It seems as if the new toponym, a calque of the name of the French abbey of Clairvaux, disappeared while the primitive name prevailed. Whatever appearances may suggest to those unaware of the history of this town, its name is not related to basketry.¹⁵

¹³ ‘en les nòrdiques afraus on es troba és inconcebible un arabisme, i no ho és menys un nom post antroponímic, del Cid Campeador.’

¹⁴ TN: place name composed of *Pena*, Spanish for ‘crag’, and *águila*, Spanish for ‘eagle’.

¹⁵ TN: *cabassers* is Catalan for ‘basket makers’.

On a different matter, there is a group of toponyms such as Maçanet (la Selva and Alt Empordà), Massana (Andorra, Alt Urgell, Rosselló, Anoia, Berguedà, Majorca, etc.) and other derivatives, which allegedly stems from the Latin word for ‘apple’, *mala mattiana*, however, it seems more coherent to explain their origin from the Andalusian term *manzal sanīq* or ‘fortified place’ more suitable to its geographical location in the frontier, controlling the roads (BALAÑA 1990, q.v.). If that was the case, all these toponyms should be spelled with an /s/ instead of a /ç/.

To conclude, I will analyse a series of toponyms that indicate the existence, or better still, the abundance of water in a certain location. In Arabic, water springs are usually named with the term *‘ayn*, plural *‘uyūn*, which means ‘eye-s’ in a purely anatomic sense. This relationship also holds for Catalan and Castilian, as testified by the place names Ull de Ter and Ojos del Guadiana,¹⁶ which respectively indicate the birth of both rivers.

Regarding its use in the singular form, that is, referring to the existence of a water spring indicated by the Arabic term *‘ayn*, I would like to point out a peculiar case: that of the current complex of Santa Catalina, in Murcia, which is part of the massif of the mountain chain of Carrascoi. In my opinion, the name of Santa Catalina is originally related to the Andalusian Arabic expression *qa‘ta al-‘ayn*, which means ‘fountain lot’, due to the existence of an important fountainhead. As I have already noted above when dealing with the toponym Cantallops (and could be also argued for other current toponyms beginning with Cata-), the first part of this compound mirrors the Andalusian Arabic *qa‘ta* meaning ‘part of a place’. Therefore, as I see it, it is quite possible that over time the Andalusian term *qa‘ta al-‘ayn* was distorted and finally perpetuated as *catalina*.

At the foot of this orographic complex, there were several fountains and caves inhabited by hermits (CAMPS SÁEZ 2004). The water of one of them, in the area of Ondoyuelo, became highly prized and was attributed healing and even miraculous properties, especially when, in 1492, a hermitage was built, which was later the origin of the Sanctuary of Fuensanta, dedicated to the Virgin of the same name.¹⁷

Nevertheless, this was not the only spring in the mountain, and a request by Juan Mercader to the *Concejo* (‘council’) of Murcia is recorded on 4 June 1437 (NIETO 1996, 415-419)

The grace and donation of the water spring, known as Fuen Santa, near the orchard of this city, along with some beds of wasteland which are the limits of the aforementioned Fuente Santa, to build a house and make an orchard out of those beds for which the aforementioned water would suffice. So that thou, and other good people with thou, commit your lives there to the service of our Lord God.¹⁸

¹⁶ TN: *ull* is Catalan for ‘eye’; *ojos* is Spanish for ‘eyes’.

¹⁷ The religious tradition of the place is attested by the presence of an Iberian sanctuary named ‘de la Luz’ (ROS SALA), and the remaining foundations of the paleo-Christian basilica of Algezares.

¹⁸ ‘gracia e donación de la fuente de agua manantial, que es cerca de la huerta de esta çibdad a que disen la Fuen Santa en uno, con çiertos bancales de tierra yerma que es costa de la dicha Fuente Santa, para que pudiesedes

At the same time, and related to the subject of popular homophonic distortions, I suspect that, on 18 May 1443 (*XV Kal. Junii*) when Pope Eugene IV granted the Franciscan convent settled in this location its foundational bull, the convent was named Santa Catalina¹⁹ precisely due to its similarity to the ancient and distorted toponym. The text of the aforementioned bull (HÜNTEMANN 1929, p. 320, no. 677) specifies that the convent was built

in fundo cuiusdam possessionis ‘de la fuent-santa’ vulgariter nuncupatae in termino loci Murciae, Cartaginensis dioec. consistenti.

Although the bull does not mention whether the convent was dedicated to Catherine of Siena (dead in 1380) or to the virgin and martyr of Alexandria (4th century), it must have been to the latter, for the saint of Siena was a Dominican tertiary, and there has never been any house, convent or province in the history of religious orders dedicated to a saint from a different order. Furthermore, an image representing the philosopher of Alexandria with the attributes of her martyrdom testified to this dedication since the 16th century at the altarpiece of the main altar of the convent’s old church. Subsequently, the statue was placed on the church’s facade and is nowadays situated at the entrance of the chapel (FUENTES 1883, pp. 90-104).

Turning back to the primitive etymology of the place -related to the existence of water, as I suggest- the official Franciscan chronicler of the province of Cartagena (ORTEGA 1740, I, pp. 56-61) later records that

The original name given to the convent was not the current Santa Catalina del Monte, but Santa Catalina de la Fuen-Santa, due to a fountain with the same name located nearby.²⁰

Therefore, the growing religious complex remained as Santa Catalina. It is currently named *Fraternidad Franciscana de Santa Catalina del Monte*, and since the seventies of the last century is the Formation House of the Franciscan Province of Cartagena.²¹

It is very difficult –if not impossible– to relate the name of the Franciscan complex to the existence of a fountain, named in the Andalusi Arabic language, without knowledge of the history I have just summarized.

fazer e hedificar en ella una casa e fazer los dichos bancales de aqyello que la dicha agua bastase una huerta. e continuar ally vos e otras buenas personas con vos, vuestras vidas a servicio de Nuestro Señor Dios’. I am indebted to Francisco Víctor Sánchez Gil, Franciscan from Murcia, for this account and the three that follow, as well as for his kind suggestions with regard to them.’

¹⁹ *Catalina* is the spanish name of the women saints of Siena and Alexandria.

²⁰ ‘el título que se dio a este convento, en lo primitivo, no fue el que ahora tiene de Santa Catalina del Monte, sino el de Santa Catalina de la Fuen-Santa, por una fuente que de este nombre, vemos cerca de este sitio.’

²¹ The complex is located 5 km from the city of Murcia, in the spot of Verdolay, in the municipality of Santo Ángel, which together with the Alberca, is under the jurisdiction of Murcia’s City Council. Franciscan students from all the Franciscan Provinces in Spain study philosophy and theology there.

I must finally underline that Coromines (*Onomasticon*, s.v. catalí-ina) gathers the toponyms El Catalí, La Catalina and Les Catalines, in the Valencian Country, stating that they must come from

the Arabic *qattanīn*, which mainly means ‘cotton industry, factory or cotton manufacture’ and from *flassades* (Catalan for ‘blankets’) with the usual dissimilation to /l/ of the first /n/.²²

He adds that the term was also a family name in fourteenth-century Murcia, as its *Repartiment* (1272) shows through the record of a legacy ‘that had belonged to Martín Pérez *Alcatán*, new Christian’, who ‘subsequently decided to impersonate a Castilian and named himself without the conspicuous *Al-*: Martín Pérez *Catán*’, quoting from the edition by Torres Fontes (TORRES FONTES 1960, p. 178, ll. 34-36).²³ However bold my proposal may be, it is very difficult for me to agree with Coromina’s suggestion, which would imply the existence of cotton manufacturing.

Numerous toponyms in the Hispanic territories derive from the plural, *‘uyūn*, which means ‘fountains or springs’ of water. In Catalan, the final /n/ is usually lost in such cases, reappearing in the feminine, the plural, and its derivatives, as in the case of *mesquí* (Catalan for ‘mean’), *mesquins*, *mesquinesa*; or *racó* (Catalan for ‘corner’), *racons*, *raconada*; or even *cotó* (Catalan for ‘cotton’), *cotons* and *cotonada*. Thus, the indicators of fountains or springs, *al-‘uyūn*, have been gradually and popularly transformed and even confused with the more or less homophonous terms *lleó*’ and *lleons* (Catalan for ‘lion’ and ‘lions’, respectively). That is how compound names such as the hybrid *Montlleó* (name of a town in the Segarra region and a river in the Alt Maestrat), *Massalió* or ‘fountain inn’ (*Mazaleón* in Castilian, in the Matarranya region), and *Castuleió*, or ‘chestnut by the fountains’, in Majorca, appear. In Castilian, which usually keeps the final consonant of Arabic loanwords, we find the analogous *Monteleón*, *Monleón* or *Gibraleón*, the latter with an epenthetic or parasitic /r/.

Several simple toponyms also belong to this group, such as the town of *Alió* (Alt Camp), a category to which I add now –cautious, yet convinced!– the place name of *Lió*, a neighbourhood to the north of *Banyoles* (Pla de l’Estany), which in the *Onomasticon Cataloniae* appears as ‘probable imitation of the name of the city of Lyon’, although this entry is authored by J. F. C. and not Coromines. Roman habitation structures, as well as medieval burials, have been found in *Lió*, but there is no evidence of a settlement in this location.

Two objections could be raised to the etymological proposal I am putting forward here. On the one hand, the consecration act of the church of the monastery of Sant Esteve de Banyoles (957),

²² ‘l’ àrab *qattanīn*, que principalment significa ‘cotoneria, fàbrica o fabricació de cotó’ i de ‘flassades’ amb la normal dissimilació en l de la primera n.’

²³ The *Repartiment* in which Martin Perez de Alcatan is mentioned is the *Repartimiento Quinto*, from 1272. TN: The *Repartiment* is the book in which the king’s scribes recorded the pledges of properties at the completion of a conquest.

in which the possessions of the monastery are recorded, lists, among others, the following properties (CONSTANS 1985, vol. I, doc. no. 37):

et de villare qui vocant Perdudus [els Perduts, Serinyà] cum fines et termines suas, et de ipsos villarunculos qui vocant Pugolos [Pujals], cum fines et terminos suos, et de villare Dioni cum fines vel termines suas.

We must note that the mention to the *villare Dioni* is not accompanied by the Latin expression *qui vocant*, which means ‘named’ or ‘known as’. Since Latin, the language in which the document is written, does not express the genitive (possession or belongingness) with the preposition *de* but through declension, I think that the scribe inadvertently included the characteristic *de* of the Catalan genitive, linking it with the toponym –Lió <*al-‘uyūn*–, which lost the final /n/ thus resulting in Dioni.

The second ‘objection’ appears in the Papal Bull by Pope Benedict VIII, which confirms, in 1017, the possessions of the monastery of Banyoles, mentioning (CONSTANS, 1985, vol. I, doc. no. 54)

Villam Leonem cum terminis ed adjacentitiis suis et cum ipso stagno et cum ipsa fonte et cum ipsas piscatorias.

Hence, the objection solves itself, since finally... here comes the lion! Which, as we have just seen in other cases, refers to an antecedent of Arabic origin related to the abundance of water. Even if we were not aware of the existence of numerous aquifers in Lió, near Banyoles, the mention above of its pond, its fountain (today known as ‘de les Mercès’) and its fisheries would reinforce the true origin of its name. In case someone thinks that this *Villam Leonem* could point to the name of the owner of the village, we must remark that the owner is never indicated in the accusative.

This paper has briefly reviewed the main popular distortions suffered by several toponyms of Arabic origin. If I have referred to several theses, often contradictory, which are not always explained by their supporters with the cordiality or neutrality required, it was with the purpose of showing that, regarding toponymy, it is very difficult to ‘cast out nines’ in order to figure out the correct answer. Caution and humility are necessary in a field always slippery. If toponymic science is known to be difficult and misleading, we have just seen that it can even entail more dangers of distortion than previously thought, and that it is not always indicative of the true characteristics of a place. In other words, and quoting a colleague and friend, Th. Loinaz: the study of etymologies is a traitorous science and toponymic etymology is the Judas in the bunch.

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