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Hagiotoponyms in Catalonia (Spain)*

A study of the general scope and geographical distribution of religious place names

1. Introduction

I propose undertaking an empirical study of the presence of religious place names (hagiotoponyms or patrociny names) within the toponymy of Catalonia. My starting point for this is a very simple consideration: a hagiotoponym is a place name that alludes to a *holy* or *sacred* place; and, by extension, a hagiotoponym is a place name that alludes to any aspect of religion (MOREU-REY 1965: 89, 1982: 95).

As a general rule, and at least among European countries, the significance of their hagiotoponymy, or religious toponymy extends well beyond a simple consideration of its taxonomy; that is, a concern for the problem of classifying toponyms. Indeed, hagiotoponyms provide us with a wealth of qualitative information about very basic aspects of a region's history. And, furthermore, albeit indirectly, religious place names provide us with information about important aspects of that region's geography. On this point, the words of ENRIC MOREU-REY, recognised as one of the first scholars to take an interest in the hagiotoponymy of Catalonia, are particularly apposite. In referring expressly to the historical value of religious place names in Catalan toponymy, he writes: "The information that can be derived from the presence of hagiotoponyms is highly valuable, because, in general, the devotion expressed for a saint can be perfectly framed in a given epoch or period of our history. In Catalonia, for example, most of its hagiotoponyms can be traced to the first half of the Middle Ages." (1982: 96).

To date, studies of the hagiotoponymy of Catalonia have taken a predominantly historical focus and adopted an approach that can be described as above all thematic. In other words, they have, in the main, undertaken analyses of documented evidence and have, typically, examined the introduction of a given religious invocation (understood in its broadest sense and considering all possible implications). A good example of this approach (in Catalonia) is provided by the case of *Sant Martí de Tours*, as discussed by MOREU-REY in his thesis (1967). Thus, the central concern in his study is the 470 places (of great diversity, ranging from villages, churches, chapels and other buildings even to moorland) identified with a toponym formed with an invocation to

* Sincere thanks are due to Iain Kenneth Robinson for his linguistic assistance.



Sant Martí. But the author aims to do much more than simply analyse these 470 names: after locating them on the map, he converts them into “reference points” from which he draws a range of different data (archaeological, geographical, ethnographic, bibliographic and historical) that are related, directly or indirectly, to these places. By so doing, the author seeks to build up sufficient information to be able to offer a reliable interpretation of the problem he seeks to solve: that is, providing a detailed understanding of the chronology of the devotion to *Sant Martí* in Catalonia (a chronology directly influenced by the historical vicissitudes of the age), its importance for the society of the age and an explanation for the differences in the diffusion of this invocation from one place to another in Catalonia. In short, the hagiotoponymic study conducted by MOREU-REY, which focuses on a specific invocation, gradually becomes a unique means of reconstructing history, in its broadest sense, within the framework of a given region and society.

Here, the analysis I propose undertaking is quite distinct. My aim is to study the hagiotoponymy from a geographical perspective (that is, emphasising the distribution of this type of toponym throughout the region), and focusing on its present-day significance (rather than on its historical importance). However, I should stress that when I speak of a place name’s “significance”, I allude to its relevance as a toponymic element endowed with spatial meaning (and which can be depicted on a map) and capable, therefore, of transmitting specific information about a given place.

In conducting this study I have drawn on a number of relatively new sources of information which have facilitated my analysis greatly: I refer, specifically, to the official gazetteer of Catalan toponymy (henceforth NOTMC).¹ In the 2009 edition of this source a total of 52,700 toponyms are included; of these, I calculate 3,121 are hagiotoponyms (that is, 5.92%).

Basically, my analysis centres on a study of this set of 3,121 toponyms. I am interested in understanding the characteristics and the most notable features of this set of names, highlighting the most frequent invocations and the particular

¹ Its full Catalan name is “Nomenclàtor oficial de toponímia major de Catalunya” (NOTMC), published in September 2009 by the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government); now in its second edition, it consists of three volumes (first edition 2003). The concept of “toponímia major” (principal toponymy) refers to the set of place names included in the official topographic maps drawn at a scale of 1: 50 000. These then are the principal place names in the region, both spatially and geographically: from mountain ranges, hills and main rivers and their tributaries to towns, villages and other types of settlement. Not included among the principal toponymy, as is pointed out in the section outlining the methodology used (Nomenclàtor I, XVIII), are certain categories of names that are not easily defined spatially, such as moorland and woodland, and the areas known in Catalonia by the name *partides de terra* (a traditional land division in Spain that particularly concerns rural space).



elements of the region's geography to which the names make reference (single standing buildings, the nuclei of a settlement, relief features, river courses, or other elements). This is complemented by an epigraph in which I study the relevance of Catalan hagiotoponyms formed from the invocation to *Sant Martí*. Finally, I include a section of conclusions that seeks to make a number of basic reflections on the subject studied here.

2. A brief note on the importance of Catalonia's hagiotponymy

Catalonia, which since the introduction of the 1978 Constitution has acquired the political status of an autonomous community within the Spanish state, is a historical nation with deep roots in the Christian tradition. In fact, its incorporation within the territory of the Roman Empire (undergoing a comprehensive process of Romanization from the end of the 1st century BC) and its subsequent assimilation within, first, the Visigoth (after the 5th century) and, later, Carolingian dominions (after the 8th century), facilitated the diffusion and progressive hold over the lands of Christianity and its institutions—specifically via the Catholic Church. The period from the 9th to the 12th centuries was particularly important in the political construction of Catalonia, to the extent that it was during these years that its process of territorial unification and institutional independence was achieved. At the same time, it was the period in which Catalonia became a “frontier territory” (within the so-called *Marca Hispánica*), standing as it did between the Carolingian and Muslim Empires, and during those years it experienced a major reorganisation of its settlement pattern and the colonisation of its lands, a process in which the monasteries and churches played a leading role. For all these reasons, it is of little surprise that in these centuries hagiotoponyms took root in Catalonia, a process that was characterised by two main features: a) the greater prevalence of hagiotoponyms in the north and east of the country, coinciding with the area of earliest agrarian settlement and colonisation (see the map of religious place names in MOREU-REY 1967: 5, for further details); and b) the co-existence of a medieval ecclesiastical colonisation with other forms of colonisation; a co-existence that would favour, in practice, the diversification of Catalan toponymy, which was already very diverse, as COROMINES points out (1965: 7–30).

A present-day example of the significance of hagiotoponyms within Catalan toponymy can be seen by examining the names of the region's municipalities. In Catalonia, there are currently 947 municipalities, each with its corresponding name. Of these names, 112 are hagiotoponyms; that is, 11.83% of the total. Their characteristics and prevalence are very uneven (and, to a certain extent, mirror the main traits described below for Catalan hagiotponymy as a whole): 89 are male hagiotoponyms (79.46%), while 23 are female (20.54%). Among the former, the most frequent invocations are to *Sant Martí* (8 cases),



*Sant Pere*² and *Sant Feliu* (6 cases each), *Sant Joan* (5 cases) and *Sant Jaume*, *Sant Julià*, *Sant Llorenç* and *Sant Vicenç* (4 cases each). Among the latter, *Santa Maria* (7 cases) and *Santa Coloma* (4 cases) stand out above all the others.

Questions concerning the region's hagionymy acquire considerable social significance in Catalonia, related in all probability to what is known in Spain's contemporary history as the religious question (that is, the tension between ecclesiastical power and civil society, which on a number of occasions has resulted in open conflict). Evidence of this is the debate caused by changes to municipal names when they involve a religious invocation; that is, when a hagionym is affected. Historically, the most illustrative case in this regard was the "secularisation" of the hagionyms of the Catalan municipalities during Spain's revolution and civil war (1936–1939), which the author has examined elsewhere (TORT 2007).³

3. An initial analysis: male and female hagionyms

It is certainly significant that more than two thirds of the hagionyms in Catalonia (2,246 to be specific, or 71.96% of the total) are invocations of male saints. The remaining 875 (28.04%) correspond to female hagionyms.

First, I should point out that I do not intend to examine here the reasons for this imbalance in the hagionyms by gender, although there must have been historical and religious reasons for this development. However, the approach adopted in this study, which seeks above all to understand the present-day reality, prevents me from considering questions with a marked chronological component.

Below I look at each set of hagionyms in turn in order to establish a basic characterization of their make-up.

3.1. Male hagionyms: general considerations

The 2,246 male hagionyms are formed from a total of 138 invocations, of which only 44 appear ten or more times as place names. These 44 invocations account for 1,802 hagionyms (that is, 80.23% of the total), and are distributed as follows: *Sant Pere* (193 cases, 8.59%), *Sant Miquel* (181 cases, 8.06%), *Sant Joan* (155 cases, 6.90%), *Sant Martí* (137 cases, 6.10%), *Sant Jaume* (82 cases, 3.86%), *Sant Salvador* (82 cases, 3.65%), *Sant Antoni* (61 cases, 2.72%), *Sant Julià* (54 cases, 2.40%), *Sant Feliu*, *Feliuet*, *Fèlix* or

² These six cases become seven if we consider the toponym *Santpedor*, a name formed from a hagionymic base (*Santpedor* < *Sant Pere de l'Or*).

³ For a historical reference on this question, see PAU VILA 1979.



Felip (50 cases, 2.23%), *Sant Roc* (49 cases, 2.18%), *Sant Sebastià* (49 cases, 2.18%), *Sant Bartomeu* (39 cases, 1.74%), *Sant Vicenç* (39 cases, 1.74%), *Sant Esteve* (38 cases, 1.69%), *Sant Cristòfol* (37 cases, 1.65%), *Sant Llorenç* (34 cases, 1.51%), *Sant Marc* (34 cases, 1.51%), *Sant Andreu* (33 cases, 1.47%), *Sant Jordi* (31 cases, 1.38%), *Sant Pau* (31 cases, 1.38%), *Sant Romà* (31 cases, 1.38%), *Sant Sadurní* or *Serni* (31 cases, 1.38%), *Sant Quirze*, *Quiri*, *Quir* or *Quirc* (30 cases, 1.34%), *Sant Genís* (27 cases, 1.20%), *Sant Climent* or *Climenç* (23 cases, 1.02%), *Sant Ramon* (23 cases, 1.02%), *Sant Francesc* or *Francisco* (20 cases, 0.89%), *Sant Isidre* (18 cases, 0.80%), *Sant Ponç* (18 cases, 0.80%), *Sant Josep* (16 cases, 0.71%), *Sant Iscle* (14 cases, 0.62%), *Sant Just* (13 cases, 0.58%), *Sant Marçal* (12 cases, 0.53%), *Sant Nicolau* (12 cases, 0.53%), *Sant Baldiri* (11 cases, 0.49%), *Sant Cugat* (11 cases, 0.49%), *Sant Grau* (11 cases, 0.49%), *Sant Gregori* (11 cases, 0.49%), *Sant Quintí* (11 cases, 0.49%), *Sant Cebrià* (10 cases, 0.45%), *Sant Cosme* (10 cases, 0.45%), *Sant Diumenge*, *Domènec*, *Domí* or *Domingo* (10 cases, 0.45%), *Sant Mateu* (10 cases, 0.45%), *Sant Valentí* (10 cases, 0.45%).

A number of interesting features are worth mentioning in relation to the distribution of these 44 invocations. First, there is the pre-eminence among them of four names: *Sant Pere* (193 cases), *Sant Miquel* (181), *Sant Joan* (155) and *Sant Martí* (137). Taken together they account for 666 occurrences, which is equivalent to almost 30% (or 29.65% to be exact) of all the male hagiotoponyms in Catalonia. Second, there is the surprisingly poor showing of certain names that have enjoyed and continue to enjoy considerable popularity as first names in Catalan society: such is the case of *Sant Josep* (16 cases), and even *Sant Jordi*, with slightly more uses (31 cases) but still relatively few compared to the main four. By contrast, certain saints' names of more restricted use (when considered from a more general point of view) stand out because of their high number of occurrences: this is the case, for example, of the invocations to *Sant Salvador* (82 cases), *Sant Julià* (54 cases), *Sant Roc* (49), *Sant Sebastià* (49), *Sant Llorenç* (34), *Sant Marc* (34) and the variants of *Sant Feliu* (50) and *Sant Quirze* (30).

The remaining 444 male hagiotoponyms are formed from invocations to a total of 94 saints, none of which is referred to on more than nine occasions. Of these, 42 figure just once in the gazetteer. The detailed list of these invocations (included below) provides further evidence of the nature of Catalonia's hagiotponymy and highlights the need to study them in the local context in which they occur.

The following saints' names appear: *Sant Adjutori* (1 occurrence), *Sant Adrià* (4), *Sant Agustí* (5), *Sant Aleix* (2), *Sant Alís* (4), *Sant Amanç* or *Amand* (8), *Sant Ambròs* (2), *Sant Ampèlit* (1), *Sant Aniol* (5), *Sant Antolí* (1), *Sant Aventí* (2), *Sant Beado* (1), *Sant Benet* (9), *Sant Berger* (1), *Sant Bernabé* (9), *Sant*



Bernat (4), *Sant Blai* (8), *Sant Boi* (2), *Sant Bonifaci* (2), *Sant Briç* (1), *Sant Camil* (1), *Sant Cap* (1), *Sant Carles* (2), *Sant Celdoni* (1), *Sant Celoni* (1), *Sant Cels* (1), *Sant Clem* (1), *Sant Corneli* (8), *Sant Crist* (9), *Sant Cristau* (1), *Sant Cristol* (1), *Sant Dalmau* or *Dalmai* (3), *Sant Daniel* (6), *Sant Donat* (3), *Sant Elies* (5), *Sant Elm* (1), *Sant Eloi* (4), *Sant Ermengol* (8), *Sant Esperit*⁴ (4), *Sant Eudald* (3), *Sant Eugini* (1), *Sant Fermí* (1), *Sant Ferran* (2), *Sant Ferriol* (4), *Sant Formatge* (1), *Sant Fost* (1), *Sant Fruitós* (9), *Sant Gabriel* (3), *Sant Gaietà* (1), *Sant Gallard* (1), *Sant Germé* (1), *Sant Gervàs*, *Gervasi* or *Girvé* (6), *Sant Gil* or *Gili* (4), *Sant Guillem* (2), *Sant Guim* (4), *Sant Hilari* (6), *Sant Hipòlit* (1), *Sant Honorat* (4), *Sant Ignasi* (1), *Sant Ildefons* (1), *Sant Jeroni* (7), *Sant Llätzer* (7), *Sant Lleïr* (3), *Sant Lliser* or *Llíser* (2), *Sant Llobí* (2), *Sant Llogari* (2), *Sant Llop* (7), *Sant Lluís* (2), *Sant Magí* (8), *Sant Mamet* (9), *Sant Marcel* or *Marcell* (4), *Sant Mauri* (1), *Sant Maurici* (8), *Sant Maximí* (1), *Sant Medir* (6), *Sant Mer* (4), *Sant Moí* (1), *Sant Mori* (1), *Sant Muç* (2), *Sant Narcís* (2), *Sant Nazari* (9), *Sant Nofre* or *Onofre* (6), *Sant Oleguer* (1), *Sant Onís* (1), *Sant Pare* or *Santpare*⁵ (8), *Sant Patllari* (3), *Sant Pelai* (1), *Sant Pelegrí* (5), *Sant Pius* (1), *Sant Pol* (8), *Sant Pou* (3), *Sant Prim* or *Prims* (2), *Sant Privat* (2), *Sant Procopi* (2), *Sant Rafael* (1), *Sant Romanç* (2), *Sant Ruf* (1), *Sant Sadovè* (1), *Sant Salvi* (1), *Sant Segimon* (3), *Sant Semison* (1), *Sant Sepulcre* (2), *Sant Silvestre* (5), *Sant Simeó* (1), *Sant Simó* (1), *Sant Simplicí* (3), *Sant Sixt* (1), *Sants Metges* (4), *Sant Telm* (1), *Sant Tirs* (3), *Sant Tomàs* (5), *Sant Tou* (3), *Sant Urbà* (2), *Sant Valerià* (1).

3.2. Female hagiotoponyms: general considerations

The 875 female hagiotoponyms present among the principal place names of Catalonia include 625 names linked to female invocations (or to the names of saints) and 250 names corresponding to the Virgin.

It should be borne in mind here that in the Catalan tradition of onomastics the usual form of dedication to the Virgin is via the expression *Mare de Déu* ‘Mother of God’: *Mare de Déu de Gràcia*, *Mare de Déu de la Bovera*, *Mare de Déu de la Devesa*, *Mare de Déu de les Fonts*, *Mare de Déu del Far*, *Mare de Déu del Remei*, *Mare de Déu del Roser*, etc. However, the expression is not exclusive, as it coincides frequently with that of *Santa Maria*. But given its toponymic importance and its widespread use throughout Catalonia, we discuss it in more detail below.

⁴ Strictly speaking this is not an invocation, but the hagionymic form used in referring to the Holy Spirit.



⁵ Likewise, not strictly speaking an invocation. In the Catholic Church, the allusion to *Sant Pare* ‘Holy Father’ is equivalent to an allusion to the Pope, or the head of the Church.

Significantly 524 occurrences of female saints' names (the equivalent of 83.84% of the 625 names with a female invocation) correspond to the fifteen names listed below: *Santa Maria* (185 cases, 29.60%), *Santa Magdalena* (67 cases, 10.72%), *Santa Margarida* (46 cases, 7.36%), *Santa Eulàlia* (34 cases, 5.44%), *Santa Llúcia* (33 cases, 5.28%), *Santa Anna* (26 cases, 4.16%), *Santa Bàrbara* (26 cases, 4.16%), *Santa Creu* (26 cases, 4.16%), *Santa Fe* (21 cases, 3.36%), *Santa Cecília* or *Cília* (19 cases, 3.04%), *Santa Eugènia*, *Eugina* or *Eugínia* (15 cases, 2.40%), *Santa Coloma* (14 cases, 2.24%), *Santa Cristina* (11 cases, 1.76%), *Santa Agnès* (11 cases, 1.76%), *Santa Susanna* (11 cases, 1.76%).

Of particular note in the list is the pre-eminence enjoyed by *Santa Maria*: 185 occurrences, representing almost 30% of all cases. The invocation that follows this in the list, *Santa Magdalena*, only occurs on 67 occasions—approximately, two-thirds fewer. In relative terms, the pre-eminence of *Santa Maria* is much greater than the highest percentage recorded by the male hagiotoponyms. Recall that the most frequently occurring name, *Sant Pere*, accounted for just 8.59% of male saints' names.

However, if we ignore *Santa Maria* for a moment, it is significant that the most frequent occurrences in the female hagiotoponymy are fairly similar to the most frequent figures recorded among the male names: *Santa Magdalena* accounts for 10.72%, and *Santa Margarida* 7.36%; figures that do not differ greatly from 8.59% and 8.06%, the percentage values that head the male ranking.

The other names occur fewer than ten times (and, in fifteen cases, only once). What should be noted, however, is the great diversity of names: up to a total of 32, which are listed below to illustrate the particular nature of Catalan religious place names: *Santa Afra* (1), *Santa Àgata* or *Àgueda* (5), *Santa Blanca* (1), *Santa Brígida* (1), *Santa Càndia* or *Càndida* (5), *Santa Caterina* (8), *Santa Digna* (2), *Santa Elena* or *Helena* (7), *Santa Engràcia* (2), *Santa Escolàstica* (1), *Santa Florentina* (1), *Santa Francesca* (1), *Santa Isabel* (1), *Santa Joleta* (1), *Santa Justa* (2), *Santa Llogaia* or *Llocaia* (6), *Santa Madrona* (8), *Santa Marina* (4), *Santa Marta* (1), *Santa Obina* (1), *Santa Oliva* (1), *Santa Pau* (1), *Santa Paulina* (1), *Santa Pellaia* or *Pelaia* (4), *Santa Perpètua* (5), *Santa Quitèria* (2), *Santa Rita* (2), *Santa Rosa* (4), *Santa Seclina* (3), *Santa Tecla* (1), *Santa Tereseta* or *Teresita* (2) and *Santa Victòria* (1).

4. On the thematic nature of Catalan hagiotoponyms

In this section I analyse an aspect of the hagiotoponymy that can be considered quite novel: the kind of referent to which the name alludes or, in other words, the material concept that embodies its spatial and territorial meaning. Here, I



am concerned with answering the following question: what object is actually designated by the hagiotoponym?

The question is by no means banal. It is very much related to the consideration raised at the beginning of this discussion: a hagiotoponym can be understood in a narrow sense, but also more broadly (and, in this latter case, the scholar of hagiotoponymy faces an even more complex problem). As early as 1960 FRANCISCO MARSÁ warned of the ambiguity surrounding this situation: “The vacillating concurrence of a saint’s name with the denomination accorded that place is not exclusive to the type of toponym under discussion, but rather it affects hagiotoponymy in general. The link between the hagianym [or *saint’s name*] and another toponymic element, occurring through the dedication of a church or parish, often creates an area of uncertainty.” (1960: 84).

To what extent is it possible to delimit this *area of uncertainty* by means of toponymic analysis? It is, without doubt, a complex task. But, for the purposes of this study, the use of a source such as the NOTMC facilitates affairs. It should be stressed here that all the toponyms included in the gazetteer are characterised according to a given geographical element (from a total of 17 possible concepts).⁶ And, while for 52,700 toponyms this is a somewhat restricted conceptual framework, it is nevertheless useful for providing general classification guidelines.

For the purposes of this study, and given the impossibility of undertaking an exhaustive analysis of all the hagiotoponyms included in the NOTMC, I focus my attention on the hagiotoponyms formed from the most frequent invocations: four for male saints’ names (*Sant Pere*, *Sant Joan*, *Sant Miquel* and *Sant Martí*), and three for female saints (*Santa Maria*, *Santa Magdalena* and the hagiotoponyms formed with the expression *Mare de Déu*). Likewise, in conceptual terms, I have reduced the possible categories of classification (or geographical concepts) for these toponyms to just five: religious buildings (churches, chapels and hermitages); settlements or elements of a settlement in general (grouped or individual); relief elements (mountains and relief features in general), hydrographical elements (rivers and smaller fluvial courses) and a final category of other concepts. Above and beyond this somewhat schematic nature, the five categories chosen do enable me to offer an initial picture of the “thematic distribution” of the hagiotoponymy of Catalonia today.

4.1. The nature of male hagiotoponymy

As indicated, I concentrate on the hagiotoponyms formed from the four most frequently occurring male invocations: *Sant Pere*, *Sant Miquel*, *Sant Joan* and



⁶ For the details of these concepts, see NOTMC, Índex, p. 9.

Sant Martí. The classification of these occurrences by category gives the following results (in absolute and relative figures):

a) Hagiotoponyms formed with *Sant Pere* (193 cases, 8.59% of all the male hagiotoponyms). Religious buildings: 102 (52.85% of the total); the settlement and its elements: 35 (18.13%); relief elements: 32 (16.58%); hydrographical elements: 18 (9.33%); other: 6 (3.11%).

b) Hagiotoponyms formed with *Sant Miquel* (181 cases, 8.06% of all the male hagiotoponyms). Religious buildings: 97 (53.59% of the total); the settlement and its elements: 26 (14.36%); relief elements: 26 (14.36%); hydrographical elements: 22 (12.15%); other: 10 (5.52%).

c) Hagiotoponyms formed with *Sant Joan* (155 cases, 6.90% of all the male hagiotoponyms). Religious buildings: 69 (44.52% of the total); the settlement and its elements: 31 (20%); relief elements: 32 (20.65%); hydrographical elements: 16 (10.32%); other: 7 (4.52%).

d) Hagiotoponyms formed with *Sant Martí* (137 cases, 6.10% of all the male hagiotoponyms). Religious buildings: 67 (48.91% of the total); the settlement and its elements: 38 (27.74%); relief elements: 15 (10.95%); hydrographical elements: 14 (10.22%); other: 3 (4.48%).

4.2. The nature of female hagiotponymy

Here, I concentrate on the two female invocations that occur most frequently, *Santa Maria* and *Santa Magdalena*, and on a specific consideration of the hagiotoponyms constituted with the expression *Mare de Déu*.

a) Hagiotoponyms formed with *Santa Maria* (185 cases, 21.14% of all the female hagiotoponyms). Religious buildings: 128 (69.19% of the total); the settlement and its elements: 24 (12.97%); relief elements: 11 (5.95%); hydrographical elements: 11 (5.95%); other: 11 (5.95%).

b) Hagiotoponyms formed with *Santa Magdalena* (67 cases, 10.72% of all the female hagiotoponyms). Religious buildings: 43 (64.18% of the total); the settlement and its elements: 7 (10.45%); relief elements: 10 (14.93%); hydrographical elements: 7 (10.45%); other: —.

c) Hagiotoponyms formed with the expression *Mare de Déu* (250 cases, 28.57% of all the female hagiotoponyms). These toponyms present quite distinct behaviour. Thus, virtually all the occurrences (241 of the 250, i.e. 96%) correspond to “religious buildings” (that is, churches, chapels and hermitages), while only nine names are associated with “other concepts”. The main distinction to be made in this group is between the hagiotoponyms associated with a religious element (for example: *Mare de Déu de Fàtima*, *Mare de Déu del Roser*, etc.), which represent a total of 82 cases (32.80% of the total), and



the hagiotoponyms associated with a toponymic element (for example: *Mare de Déu del Castell*, *Mare de Déu de la Font*, *Mare de Déu de Carrànimà*, etc.), which represent the greatest number of cases (168 occurrences, 67.20% of the total).

4.3. A concluding note on the nature of Catalan hagiotponymy

A general appraisal of these results highlights the tendency of Catalan hagiotponymy to present (in terms of its thematic nature) a dual orientation: on the one hand, a (predominant) orientation towards what has traditionally been its genuine “semantic field”, i.e. the names of specific religious buildings; and, on the other, an orientation towards or a link between the hagionyms and other “toponymic elements” (features of relief, hydrography and settlement), in line with the reflections of MARSÀ noted above. Among these other toponymic elements, those linked with features of a settlement record fairly high percentages (27.74% in the case of *Sant Martí* and 20% in that of *Sant Joan*); also of significance, are the percentages related to relief features (20.65% in the case of *Sant Joan* and 16.58% in that of *Sant Pere*). By contrast, the percentages related to hydrographical elements are, in general, lower (with a maximum prevalence of 10.32% in the case of *Sant Joan* and 10.45% in that of *Santa Magdalena*).

In general, more conservative behaviour is seen (or, rather, behaviour that is reactionary to change) in the female hagiotponymy compared to that recorded in the male. Among the former, the prevalence for the denomination of religious buildings accounts for 64.18% of occurrences in the case of *Santa Magdalena* and 69.19% in that of *Santa Maria*. Among male toponyms, by contrast, it fluctuates between 44.52% for *Sant Joan* and 53.59% for *Sant Miquel*.

The reasons for this difference in behaviour lie outside the scope of this study; however, I would venture that perhaps they are related to their respective chronologies (for example, a later introduction into the territory of the female invocations). Likewise, I would venture that this might also be the reason why the hagiotponyms formed with the expression *Mare de Déu* show an almost absolute correspondence with religious buildings and, in turn, a minimal tendency to be linked with other elements of the toponymy.

5. Case study: hagiotponyms formed with *Sant Martí*

In the preceding pages this study has provided an overview of Catalonia’s hagiotponymy (as a subset of its present-day toponymy considered at a general level throughout the Catalan region, in the framework of what I have referred to as its “toponimia major”) and of the main features of its geographical distribution. It is interesting, at this juncture, I believe, to complete



the study with a brief examination of one specific case study: hagiotoponyms formed from the invocation of *Sant Martí*. Reference was made to this case in the introduction, as it was one of the first invocations to be studied systematically in Catalonia. And, for this reason, it serves as an interesting counterpoint, given the detail it offers, for the more general overview provided up to this juncture.

The study of the invocation of *Sant Martí* and its importance in Catalan toponymy began with the research undertaken by FRANCISCO MARSÁ into the historical relevance of this name among the villages and settlements of Catalonia (1960). The scholar recorded a total of 46 toponyms with this invocation, serving as the name for groups of dwellings and for settlements, and he noted that their distribution in Catalonia was far from homogenous. Specifically, the name was found to concentrate in the north and northeast of Catalonia, near to the border with France, and that this concentration coincided by and large with certain ecclesiastic districts: the dioceses of Vic, Girona and Barcelona, on the one hand, and those of Solsona and Urgell, on the other (that is, the central area of the region referred to by historians as *Catalunya Vella*, or “Carolingian Catalonia”). The main conclusion MARSÁ drew from his observations was related to the historical process of colonisation of these lands; in other words, the introduction of a new model for the settlement and farming of the land, which historians refer to as the “medieval repopulation”. This process took place in these dioceses between the 9th and 10th centuries and the hagiotoponymy of the period serves as evidence of the construction of these new settlements. For MARSÁ, the specific invocation of *Sant Martí* allows us to determine quite clearly the areas of Catalonia affected by this process of colonisation and repopulation around the year 900.

MOREU-REY took his analysis of the importance of this Catalan hagiotoponymy, linked to *Sant Martí*, much further (1967). The 470 places identified by the author are indicative of the detailed nature of his study; above all if we compare this number with the 46 toponyms analysed by MARSÁ (associated solely with settlements or groups of dwellings) and with the 137 place names identified in this study (forming part of the “toponimia major” of Catalonia). MOREU-REY’s research is characterised above all by the innovative nature of his cartography: the detailed map that he drew to illustrate his findings which allowed him to draw his most relevant conclusions about the historical and geographical diffusion of hagiotoponyms formed with *Sant Martí* within Catalonia. By way of summary, the scholar makes the following observation: “As for what affected the chronology and geography of the devotion to Sant Martí, the map reveals a marked density of places of worship in *Catalunya Vella*, that is, the lands conquered from the Moors before the 11th century; this contrasts with the scarce number of such invocations in *Catalunya Nova* (the southern lands of the provinces of Lleida and of Tarragona), in the kingdom



of Valencia and the Balearics. These findings are highlighted on the map if we consider the approximate frontiers of the territory re-conquered between the years 850 and 950. (...) Sant Martí is the most frequently occurring invocation, following that of Santa Maria, in the bishoprics of Girona, Elna-Perpignan and Solsona (accounting for between 9 and 12% of all the ancient parishes), and the second in that of Seu d'Urgell." (1967: 6).

I feel that MOREU-REY's "geographical reading" of his data is also important because of its innovative nature. Here, he provides possible interpretations of his data, keys that can provide insights into the characteristics of the geographical setting occupied by the places linked to the devotion to *Sant Martí*. I speak, for example, of his references to altitude (that is, the high or prominent sites occupied by the settlements) as realised in toponyms such as *El Puig*, *Puigbò*, *La Mota*, *Peralta*, *Sacosta* and *La Serra*; to strategic sites of defence, in names such as *Miralles*, *Sarroca*, *Montserrat*, *Guàrdia*, *El Far* and those formed from references to *Castell* 'castle' or *Torre* 'tower'; and he refers, also, to aspects related to the highways, using toponyms such as *Estrada*, *La Portella*, *Pontons*, *La Clusa* and names formed from *Pont* 'bridge'.

In practice, I believe that the approach taken by MOREU-REY, in adopting an open interpretation of the hagionymy, can be of great interest to us today: methodologically, because his study is founded on a rigorous empirical approach that is well-defined in both space and time; and, scientifically, because, far from restricting himself to a simple analysis of hagionyms, his multifaceted study takes a broad approach, open to all possible interrelations and connections. It is here that I believe the most innovative aspect of his work can be said to lie.

6. Conclusions

Hagionymy is a branch of onomastics of many and varying interests. Appearing initially as a fairly limited, conservative field of study in terms of its research possibilities and its highly specialised researchers, the adoption of a broader approach has served to emphasise its potential as a more general area of study. Two reasons, I feel, make it potentially attractive: the universal nature of hagionyms (to the extent that these names, beyond their initial function and value as denominations, eventually generate toponyms of a wide open thematic spectrum), and the intrinsic aptitudes observed in hagionymy for establishing connections and correspondences with names of all types.

In Europe, hagionymy as an object of study has acquired particular importance. The fact that Europe was the setting for the development and consolidation of Christianity from antiquity, and the far-reaching influence that this religion has exercised, at many different levels, on the life of the



peoples and cultures of the continent, make it easy to understand why today hagiotoponyms, in general, still have such weight of significance (despite the progressive secularisation of society) in the toponymy of Europe. The specific case of Catalonia is, in relation to this question, very much a reference point: the data used in this analysis indicate that approximately 6% of toponyms (at least, among what I have referred to as the “toponimia major”) are hagiotoponyms. The undertaking of comparative studies in different countries, involving analyses of this type, should provide interesting findings in the future. The growing availability of data-bases of statistical sources of onomastics, adequately organised, should be of great assistance in this work.

Finally, I should stress the need to establish methodological diversity in the studies of hagiotponymy by way of principle. If historical analyses have traditionally predominated, the academic development of onomastics is opening up new paths of analysis and offering new possibilities for research. In this study, albeit a somewhat introductory approach, I have sought to make this point evident. An emphasis on written documents and the systematic exploration of the archives continues to be, in many ways, an indispensable task. But we should not lose sight of the qualitative value of the information inherent, on numerous occasions, to the new toponymic sources (be it statistical in form or derived from an exploitation of a data base). Its innovative character, and the connections that it can frequently establish with immediate reality (and which are often impossible to obtain via other sources), constitute an aspect worthy of the greatest attention.

Official gazetteers

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