

Common Naming Patterns Being A Brief Guide to Bynames In the Major European Languages And Cultures Commonly Encountered in the SCA

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Introduction to Personal Names

Parts of names

In the majority of European cultures, personal names contain two basic kinds of name element: given names and surnames.

The **given name** is so called because the family bestowed it upon the child at birth or christening. Given names may be traditional names in the culture, saints, heroes, honored relatives, and so forth. The pool of given names differs from culture to culture. For example, *Giovanni* is the characteristically Italian form of *John*; the name *Kasimir* is almost uniquely Polish; and use of the name *Teresa* did not spread outside of Spain until very late in the SCA period. Because given names vary so much by place and period, describing them adequately is beyond the scope of this article. However, many collections of given names are available online at, among other places, the Medieval Names Archive (“MNA”).

Surnames are the second major category of name element. Today’s surnames are inherited family names, but for most of the SCA period, surnames were not inherited by those to describe an individual and distinguish him or her from other individuals with the same given name. Such surnames are called **byname**s.

Byname Origins and Meanings

To understand how bynames originated, imagine that you lived in Amsterdam around 1300. You are listening to a friend sharing local gossip about a man named *Jan*. Now, one out of every ten people living in Amsterdam is named *Jan*, so how will you know which one your friend means? Is it big *Jan* who lives at the edge of town? *Jan* the butcher? *Jan*, the son of

Willem the candlemaker? You need additional information about who Jan is to identify him, and that is what a byname does.

Bynames show up all over Europe in four basic flavors:

Patronymic: a byname that identifies a person's father. There are other bynames of relationship, but the patronymic is by far the most common of these in Europe.

Locative: a byname that identifies where a person was born, lives, or has an estate. These can be formed using a proper place name, or a generic feature of local geography.

Occupational: a byname that identifies a person's trade or occupation.

Nickname: a byname that describes an individual's personality, character, dress, physical appearance or other outstanding trait. These are not chosen by the bearers of the descriptive byname, but by friends, family, neighbors, or enemies, and become known through frequent use.

Grammar and Culture

The use and relative frequency of each kind of byname varies from culture to culture. For example, locatives are the most common kind of byname in English, but are almost non-existent in the Gaelic-speaking cultures (Ireland and Scotland). Besides knowing the kinds of bynames, there are issues of grammar important in constructing a name. Each language has its own rules of grammar, with certain expectations. Concern for correct grammar is needed most often with patronymics and nicknames. In some languages, these bynames must match the gender of the person who bore the name. Svensson and Svendsdóttir both apply to children of Sven, but it's clear that one child is a boy and the other is a girl.

There can also be a matter of case, an issue that is difficult to explain if you have not studied a language other than English. In many languages, including earlier forms of English, nouns became *inflected* — in other words, the endings of words will change depending on how it is used in the sentence. Of particular interest for constructing names is the **genitive** — or possessive — case.

Finally, in some languages there are rules for changes in spelling and pronunciation under certain circumstances. In Gaelic, for example, bynames may exhibit **lenition**, a softening of the initial consonant that may be reflected in the spelling of the name. These various issues of grammar often require an expert to get them just right, because the rules of grammar change over time, and can vary from place to place. Even the particular names themselves went in and out of fashion as culture and taste changed.

Period Practice

For most of our period, and for most cultures in Europe throughout the period, people were known by a single given name and a single byname. Many people want to register two given names because it “sounds right,” but that would not have been true to the medieval ear.

Today, it is standard practice to name a child with two given names (first and middle) and an inherited surname. But in period, people were known by only a single given name. If a name had three elements, it was usually because two bynames of different types were used. In these cases, one of the bynames was usually a locative or patronymic style.

Another key point is that names were typically completely constructed in a single language. A name is not a persona story. Some people invent complicated persona stories, and feel that this creativity must be reflected in their names. Although cultural cross-contact might have brought a Byzantine Jewess into contact with a Flemish merchant, it is improbable that any of their children would have names detailing the account of how the parents met. How many people do you know that have such names?

Furthermore, people who were related to each other did not necessarily share a last name until somewhat late in period. A byname describes an individual, and people known as “the cobbler” might only share the same profession, not the same family. Likewise, in most times and places husbands and wives did not share a byname, except in cases of incest. Sven Anderssen’s wife Inga would not be called Inga Anderssen unless her father’s name, coincidentally, was also Ander (but even then, her byname would have had a feminine construction), but not because she was married to Sven. More likely, she would be known by her own familial lineage, or might be called Inga Svenswyf, if her relationship was more significant to her friends and neighbors than her parentage.

Finally, there are some sources to avoid. These include, but are not limited to: most baby name books, fiction — especially science fiction and fantasy novels — and sourcebooks for role-playing games. Each of these sources has its own use, but they are seldom concerned with the same issues that are important for SCA name registration; namely that of documenting usage of a name element used by people in a given culture prior to 1600.

Period Names by Culture

Welsh

Constraints of time and space prevent me from doing justice to the popular Welsh culture. Suffice it to say here that the surname book *Welsh Surnames* by Morgan and Morgan is quite useful, as are the many articles by Tangwystyl verch Morgant Glasvryn (Heather Rose Jones), Harpy Herald.

Irish and Scottish Gaelic: [Given] + [Nickname (opt.)] + [Patronymic]

The language spoken in Ireland and in the Highlands and Western Isles was the same for the first half of the period, and only began to separate around the 14th century. Although other languages were spoken in Ireland and Scotland, most people want an Irish Gaelic or Scots Gaelic name rather than one in one of those other languages. Gaelic had a change in spelling conventions around 1200, so early and late period Gaelic names will be spelled differently.

A good place to start in constructing a Gaelic name is “Quick and Easy Gaelic Bynames” by Effric neyne Kenzocht (Sharon Krossa) at <http://www.medievalscotland.org>, as well as her article “Scottish Names 101.” Each article gives background to be considered, as well as clear instructions and advice on when to look for more information.

A note about “Gaelic” versus “Scots”: In addition to Gaelic, there was a lowland culture in Scotland that spoke Scots, a language related to English. Scots names are spelled differently and sometimes constructed by different rules than Gaelic. For Scots bynames, *The Surnames of Scotland*¹ is a good source.

Patronymics: In most circumstances, Gaelic people were recorded with a patronymic byname based on the name of their father or another male ancestor. The standard patronym is formed using *mac* (for a man) or *ingen* (for a woman, followed by the genitive form of the father’s given name. In women’s names, the patronymic will often need to be lenited, and both of these factors may need the help of an expert to determine. After about 1200, the word *ingen* was spelled *inghean*, so there are spelling changes that occurred over time to consider.

In Ireland, it was also possible to identify a person by clan membership rather than a literal patronymic. For men, *ua* was used before about 1200, and *ó* after that date, followed by the genitive form of the given name of the ancestor for whom the clan was named. For women, the corresponding particles are *ingen ul* before 1200 and *inghean ul* afterward. Some Irish had both a patronymic and clan affiliation name, in which case the patronymic came first. They could also have a two generation name that included both their father’s and grandfather’s names.

Nicknames: When nicknames were used (and they weren’t all that uncommon), the nickname was used along or placed before the patronymic. Therefore, “Big Duncan son of Farquhar” could be called either *Dunnchadh Mór* or, more fully, *Dunnchadh Mór mac Fearchair*.

Locatives and Occupationals: These types of bynames are almost non-existent in Gaelic. They are so rare that generalizations can’t be made, except to say that people didn’t use them.

Old Norse: [Given] + [Nickname (opt.)] + [Patronymic]

Old Norse was the medieval language of Scandinavia and lands settled by the Norse (“Vikings”), Danes and Icelanders before about <date>. The premier source of information about names in Old Norse is a pamphlet appropriately titled *The Old Norse Name*, but usually called by the name of its author, Geirr Bassi, by heralds. The book includes helpful information about how grammar in Old Norse affects the assembly and spelling of bynames as well as pronunciation.

¹ Black, George F., *The Surnames of Scotland: Their Origin, Meaning and History*, (New York: The New York Public Library, 1986).

Nicknames: The nickname is a frequent component of Old Norse names, but is optional and might have changed at various times in an individual's life. As with other cultures, nicknames were descriptions used by other people to describe an individual. They were not selected by the individuals who bore them.

Patronymics: All individuals had a literal patronymic, unless they were slaves. For a man, the patronymic is formed by adding **-son** to his father's name; and for a woman by adding **-dóttir**. Because of this, brothers and sisters would have different bynames. The children of *Sveinn* might be *Ketill Sveinsson* and *Sóveig Sveinsdóttir*.

English: [Given] + [Byname] + [Byname (opt).]

By far the most useful book on English bynames is Reaney and Wilson's *Dictionary of English Surnames*,² with a lengthy introduction to English surnames and then an alphabetical list of surnames with dated citations. The excellent "Introduction to Medieval Bynames" by Talan Gwynek and Arval Benicœur³, with many illustrative examples, and is more concise than the Reaney & Wilson discussion. **The most common bynames can be found through the end of the 16th century.** Some 16th century records include by an inherited surname and a literal locative, and since most surnames originated as locatives, this can look like a double locative. Otherwise, when a double byname appears, a patronym or nickname usually precedes the locative.

Patronymics: In England, patronymics were formed in different ways at different times. Old English patronyms added **-ing** or **-sunu** to the father's name. Later, possibly due to Scandinavian influences, the ending **-son**, **-daughter**, or **-wyf** came to replace the former endings. Finally, these endings virtually disappeared from written records during the 12th to 14th centuries, to be replaced by **fitz-** names, where **fitz** means "son," although records of that time more frequent use the Latin form **filius/filia**. This does not mean that spoken forms changes — only that preferences of the scribes writing the records may have changed.⁴

There are also patronymics formed from a given name followed by an **-s**, e.g., Williams and Jones; and there are patronymics formed from a father's pet name. The influence from the

² Reaney, P. H., & R. M. Wilson, *A Dictionary of English Surnames* (London: Routledge, 1991; Oxford University Press, 1995). The first edition was called *Dictionary of British Surnames*.

² Talan Gwynek (Brian M. Scott) and Arval Benicœur (Josh Mittleman), "A Brief Introduction to Medieval Bynames (WWW: privately published) <http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/arval/bynames/>

³ Id.

⁴ The practice of writing tax rolls and other documents may have come because of two reasons: First, in the early Middle Ages (1100 to about 1300), many scribes were taught to read and write in monasteries. Second, during the early period, Latin was the universal language which allowed individuals from the world over with each other somewhat like English is becoming today. — *ed.*

Scottish and Irish introduced **-mac** names into English, and the Welsh introduced some patronymic surnames like Powell.

Locatives: These make up the largest group of English bynames and, later, surnames. Early locatives typically used the preposition **de**, followed by the name of a town: John *de* York or Gilbert *de* Gaunt; or else they used **ate** or some other preposition followed by the name of a local geographic feature: Geoffrey Atteford; William ate Clyff; Robert atter Smythe, Edward Bithewelle. During the 14th century, the preposition was frequently dropped from the name, and after 1400 prepositions were no longer used. Another common kind of locative identifies the region that a person is from: Scot, Flemmyng, Norman, Devenschy, which derive from names of large areas.

Occupationals: An occupational byname in English could describe a person's profession: Alan le Smyth, Hugh Cobeler. It could also name an item associated with a person's trade instead of the occupation itself: John Chese (cheese), Godwin Prison.

Nicknames: There are a wide variety of interesting and unusual nicknames in English. These often describe a person's appearance or character, but can just as well be deliberately opposite of a person's actual description. That is, some named Bigge could be a large man or a very small man who only acted big. Many nicknames describe hair color, distinctive clothing, or behavior, but there are many other kinds of English nicknames besides these.

German: [Given] + [Byname]

German includes two major language regions. Along the northern coast of Europe are the Low German dialects, while southern Germany, Austria, and Switzerland fall into the High German dialects. Today's standard German is, essentially, High German, which became dominant only after the 16th century and the publication of Martin Luther's Bible. Each region has its own peculiarities of spelling, so it is worthwhile to pay attention to geography when searching through name articles.

There are many fine books on German bynames, but most of them are in German. On the more widely used books is Bahlow's *Dictionary of German Names*, which is the title of the English translation. Bahlow has also authored a book on first names, so it's important to note which volume one has. A lengthier work on German bynames is the two volumes by Brechenmacher. Like Bahlow, bynames are arranged alphabetically, but not always in the way that one would expect. For instance, names beginning with the letter "T" are indexed among the "D"'s, because of spelling variations in period names. Because of this, some creative hunting is sometimes required.

Germans typically used a single given name and a single byname, though all four types of bynames were used. Inherited surnames were in use by the 14th century, though literal bynames can still be found in the 15th century.

Patronymics: Most German patronymics consist of the father's given name with no modification to spelling. However, in some regions, an ending (such as **-l**, **-er**, or **-z**) would be

added to the father's name or a pet form of the father's name to form the patronymic: *Heinzel, Menzel, Jenkner, Kunze*. Some endings are characteristic of certain regions: the suffix *-ing* in Westphalia, and the endings *-s* or *-sen* in lower Saxony.

Locatives: The most familiar kind of locative in German uses the preposition *von*, followed by the name of a town: *Ulrich von Bremen*. When the place name is usually preceded by the definite article, it may be included in the byname: *Siffrid von dem Schwarzwald* ("from the Black Forest"). For a local geographic feature, the preposition *an* or *zu* will be used: *Albrecht an dem Ende* (at the end of a street or town), *Hans zu dem Tobel* ("From the valley"). The article may be contracted in these names: *von dem* → *von an dem* → *zum*.

Occupationals: As with English names, an occupational in German might be the name of a profession, but it could just as easily be the name of an object associated with the profession. Examples of the former include: *Schmidt* ("smith"), *Flaschner* ("flask maker"), *Pfeilschyfter* (the person who attached arrow shafts). Examples of the latter include: *Joppe* ("jacket," meaning a tailor), *Schmalz* ("lard," for butcher). Early occupational bynames often appeared with the appropriate article (*der* for a man or *die* for a woman), but the use of articles disappear in the later part of the SCA period.

Nicknames: Germans crafted numerous interesting nicknames, principally based on personality, appearance or clothing: *Stammler* ("stutterer"), *Dove* ("deaf"), *Luchterhand* ("left-handed"), *Mager* ("thin"), *Glatthaar* ("straight hair"), *Vöge* ("skillful"), *Brodangst* "short of bread," i.e., poor), *Grönemouwe* ("green sleeve"), *Graurock* ("gray jacket), and many, many more besides.

Dutch: [Given] + [Byname]

Dutch is a language spoken in the Netherlands and related to German. There are many dialects of Dutch, the most famous of which is Flemish, the dialect spoken in Flanders. Dutch derives from the Frankish dialects used in the time of Charlemagne, but it is changed considerably since then. Many features of Dutch also occur in Low German, the dialects spoken on the northwest coast of Germany, so it may, at times, be appropriate to consider Dutch spellings when choosing a northern German name.

The Dutch used all major forms of European bynames with some frequency, but each person had only a single byname. Such bynames were literal throughout the SCA period — inheritance did not begin until the 19th century when Napoleon declared it to be. Dutch names underwent a radical shift in the 13th century, so all the information you find below will not apply before about 1250. The most readable source in English about Dutch names is *Lemmen's Names from the Netherlands*. The serious drawback of this little book is that name elements are not dated, and no distinction is made between names that originated in the Renaissance versus names from the Napoleonic period. The MNA links several fine

articles, including “Flemish Names from Bruges,”⁵ which includes countless names of guild members, with bynames.

Patronymics: Most Dutch patronymics attach either *-zoon* or *-soen* (masculine) or *-docter* (feminine) to the genitive of the father’s name. Since the genitive is typically formed by simply adding *-s* to the name, this is easy to do. The son of Jan might be *Pieter Janszoon*. However, an *-s* is not added if the name already ended in one (*Claes* → *Claessoen*). An *-x* is added if the name ends in *-c* (*Dirc* → *Dirxsoen*); and some names (especially short names) add an *-en* instead (*Koen* → *Koensensoen*).

In a number of different dialects, there are cultures and places in the Netherlands when other endings were used. For instance, in Flanders, it was more common to simply use the genitive of the father’s name, usually by just adding an *-s*. The Dutch also used “metronyms”

Locatives: Dutch locatives are formed with the preposition *van* followed by the name of the town. *Daniel van Oesbrouc* would be someone who lived or was born in Oesbrouc. For names of local features, the definite article *de* (“the”) is included, but must match the gender of the following noun: *Pieter van den Broucke* (“from the brook”), *Cornelis van der Donc* (“from the cellar”), and *Willem van de Keere* (“from the turning”) are all examples of this. When locatives are formed from the name of a region or ethnicity, this pattern changes: *Vrederic Hollander*, *Mathijs die Lombairt*, *Elias die Jode*.

Occupationals and Nicknames: These other kinds of bynames sometimes took the article *de*, and sometimes didn’t. Knowing when to use the article is a matter of understanding Dutch grammar; and there are no easy rules, though occupational bynames are more likely to use the particle than nicknames. A man could be called *de Wit* (“the white”), *Jonge* (“young”), *de Groet* (“the big”), *Borstelman* (“brush maker”), or *de Cuyper* (“barrel-maker”).

Northern Italian [Given] + [Given opt.] + [Byname] + [Byname opt.]

Because Italy was not a single country, but instead separate and independent city-states, it is impossible to describe one pattern as typical for all of Italy. In particular, there seems to have been significant differences between naming practices of northern and southern Italy. This isn’t very surprising when you consider that southern Italy was ruled by Normans and Spaniards more often than by Italians.

Until recently, there was almost no information currently available in the SCA on names in southern Italy (south of Rome), but this is no longer true. Some articles are quite extensive, though, such as the *Tratte* and *Castrato* data from Florence (Herlihy). In addition to the many articles available at the MNA, many people make extensive use of *De Felice’s Dizionario del Cognomi Italiani* (“Dictionary of Italian Surnames”). This book is very reliable for what it contains, but lacks dated citations. It has a nearly comprehensive list of modern

⁵ Luana de Grood (Loveday Toddekyn), “Flemish Names from Bruges.” (WWW: Privately published) <http://www.s-gabriel.org/docs/bruges/>.

surnames that is very useful for finding out meanings and origins. Like everywhere else, the most common northern Italian a single given name and single byname.⁶

Patronymics: Italian patronymics are formed in one of three ways. One way is to simply use the father's given name unmodified, so that *Marcello's* daughter might be called *Bianca Marcello*, but this method of forming the patronymic is very rare. A more common way is to change the final vowel of the father's name to *-I* and to add one if there is no final vowel: *Alberto* → *Alberti*; *Pietro* → *Petri*. In some cases, a pet form of the father's name is used: *Paolo* → *Paolino* → *Paolini*; *Domenico* → *Menigo* → *Menegi*. The third way to form a patronymic is to use the preposition *di*: *Christina di Uberto*; *Nicolo di Marco*.

In late period Florence, a more complicated patronymic construction was common. Florentines used a compound patronym with the preposition *di*, followed by the father's given name and his family name: *Fillippo di Piero Baroncelli*; *Luca di Giacomo Albizzi*. It can thus be useful for people wanting a Florentine name to pick up a history of that city and thumb through the index for the name of a leading family.

An additional kind of byname related to the patronym is the family name. A famous family might come to be known by its own name, such as the Medici family, and members of the family might be known by the name. This was done in late period using the preposition *dei*: *Giullano dei Medici*, *Giovanni dei Querini*, though the *dei* was optional: *Cosimo Medici*.

Locatives: In northern Italy, locatives are formed using the preposition *da*, followed by the name of the town: *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Donato da Parma*. There is also an adjectival form of locative: *Genovese* (from Genova); *Ramano* (from Rome); *Fiorentino* (from Firenze, i.e., Florence). When used by women, these forms ended in an *-a* instead of an *-o*.

Nicknames: Nicknames in Italian are not always as easy to explain as those in other languages. Examples of nicknames from 11th century Venice include: *Cappello* (hat); *Denté* (tooth); *Greco* (Greek); *Stornello* (starling); and *Torta* (twisted).

Occupational: These bynames are relatively rare in Italy, but do occur in names such as *Cimator* (cloth-shearer); *Faber* (smith); and *Sartor* (tailor). The name *Medici* also originated as an occupational meaning "doctors."

French: [Given] + [Byname]

When most people speak of French names or French culture, they don't realize that there are two major subdivisions of French culture and language. While what we think of today as standard French was spoken in northern France. In southern France, a variant known as *Occitan*, *Languedoc* or *Provençal* is used. Thus, a person wishing a southern French name should not use name lists from northern France since the two cultures have correspondingly different names.

⁶ See Academy of St Gabriel report #3377, "Alessandro," for a discussion of Venetian naming practices.

A wide variety of French bynames may be found in Colm Dubh's index to the 1292 Paris census.⁷ Unfortunately, the names are arranged according to the given name with which they were recorded, and no translations are given for the bynames. Still, a dictionary and some patience can reap much information from the article. A full list with translations of all occupational bynames was published in the 2000 Known World Heraldry & Scribes Symposium, so presumably other such lists are in the works. There is also a dissertation by **Morlet** (yes, that Morlet, but not that book) on names from Picardy with bynames sorted by kind of byname.

Comment [bpn1]: Are you referring to Jean Morlet, the geophysicist, or someone in the Society?

Patronymics: These are usually just the name using the preposition *de*, followed by the name of the town: *Poulain de Sernay*, or *Richier de Brègi*, although the preposition is contracted to *d'* if the town name begins with a vowel: *Perrot d'Atainville*, *Henri d'Orleans*. Local geographic features take *de le* (which contracts to *du*) or *del les* (which contracts to *des*): *Andri du Louvre*; *Forchier des Granches*.

Occupational: There is no shortage of occupational bynames from Paris. The most densely populated area in medieval Europe was northern France and the Low Countries, and town and their guilds grew large and fast. Some examples of occupational bynames include: *le Charpentier* (Carpenter); *le Marinier* (sailor); *le Tavernier* (barman) ; *le Lavendier* (washer) ; *le Poissonier* (fisherman).

Nicknames : There are not many nicknames given in Colm's article, but there are a few : *la Rousse* (red, russet); *la Noire* (dark); *le Camus* (snub-nosed). Nicknames are more common in other regions, and were as frequent as occupational in Picardy.

Locative: Included among the nicknames are a kind of ethnic locative that indicates the region that the individual comes from: *le Lombart* (Lombard); *le Breton* (Breton); *le Bourguignon* (Burgundian).

Note that nicknames and occupational bynames make frequent use of the article *le* (for men) or *la* (for women). When either article is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, it will contract to *l'*: *Gautier l'escorchéer*, *Florent l'ostellier*.

Spanish: [Given] + [Byname] + [Byname (opt)]

Early Spanish names are as simple as in other places in Europe. The complicated rules for inheriting noble surnames didn't exist until after the Scadian period. Most early records record individuals one given name and only one byname or non at all. These early bynames were literal, but by the 14th century some people were using inherited family surnames.

Also by this time, it is not unusual to find people with two bynames. The first byname is usually a literal patronymic, and the second byname is a locative (either a literal locative or an inherited surname indicating the residence or history of the family: *Maria Gonzalez de*

⁷ Colm Dubh (Scott Catledge), "An Index to the Given Names in the 1292 Census of Paris." (WWW: Privately published) <http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/names/paris.html>.

Luna (Maria, daughter of Gonzalo, of the de Luna family). By the 16th century, triple bynames begin to appear. In these cases, the first byname is usually aptronym, and the other two are locative in origin — though one of them is usually inherited. The other kinds of bynames also appear in Spain, especially nicknames, although occupational bynames were far less common than the other kinds.

The single best source on Spanish bynames is Diez Melcon's *Apellidos Castellano-Leonesa* ("Bynames of Castille-Leon")⁸. The book is in Spanish, and the index to sections is hidden at the back of the book, but a passing familiarity with Spanish and a decent dictionary are enough to wrangle the entries.

Patronymics: There are two ways in which patronymics are formed in Spanish. In most cases, the final vowel in the father's name is replaced by *-ez*, or if there is no final vowel, then it is merely added to the end of the name: *Fernando* → *Fernandez*; *Martin* → *Martinez*. However, there are some spelling changes that can occur, especially when the *-ez* follows a *g* or a *q*: *Diego* → *Diaz*; *Rodrigo* → *Rodriguez*. The other way to form a patronymic is without modifying the father's name in any way. This happens with particular names, rather than at random.

Locatives: Locatives in Spanish simply use the preposition *de*, followed by the place name: *Juan de Córdoba*, *Pedro de Bilbao*. One can find unmarked locatives in Spanish (without the preposition), but they are never common. There are three major kinds of locatives in Spanish. First are those that make a territorial claim, usually related to the rank where a person was born or where he lives. Such names are common among peasants, and do not indicate a territorial claim. Finally, there are ethnic locatives: *Castillano*, *Aragones*, *Navarro*, *Lombardo*. These end in an *-a* when used by a woman.

Nicknames: Early nicknames in Spanish often followed rules of gender, but tended to prefer masculine endings by late period. Nicknames in Spanish usually refer to prominent characteristics of a person's appearance or personality: *Miguel Gordo* ("fat"), *Domingo Barba* ("beard"), *Estaan Negro* ("black"), *Maria Izquierdo* ("left-handed"), *Lope Bueno* ("good"), *Sancio Tristo* ("sad").

Peripheral and Minority Cultures

Slavic: [Given] + [Byname] + [Byname (opt.)]

The Slavs include most of the various peoples of central and eastern Europe. They dispersed across eastern Europe sometime before the 6th century, although there is uncertainty about the date. By the 9th century, three major groups are recognizable: Western Slavs (Poles, Czechs and Slovaks), Eastern Slavs (Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians), and Southern Slavs. The split in Christianity would further split the Southern Slavs into a western Catholic

⁸ Searches of ABEbooks.com, plus other on-line bookstores, have shown no copies available at the time of this writing. You might be able to find a copy through Inter-Library Loan. — *ed.*

group (Slovenes, Bosnians, and Croats), and an Eastern Orthodox group (Bulgarians, Serbs, and Macedonians). The Bosnians and Macedonians converted to Islam after the Ottoman Empire conquered the Balkans. As Russian and Polish are the most popular Slavic cultures in the SCA, only these will be discussed.

The single best source in English on Russian names is Paul Wickenden's *Dictionary of Period Russian Names*⁹, which includes more than 50,000, and which is available in its third edition from Free Trumpet press. The second edition is available on-line, but lacks a significant portion of the latest version. A very full and useful explanation on how to construct Russian names appears in the current edition, with numerous examples of the possible variations.

For Polish bynames, the SSNO¹⁰ (in English, the *Dictionary of Old Polish Names*) is the largest source of information available. Unfortunately, the six volumes are all in Polish and arranged alphabetically. If you're looking for a particular name, the SSNO can be very useful; but if you're looking for a particular meaning, you'll probably need help from someone with good references. There is a book in English on Polish names by Hoffman¹¹, but that book does not date its entries and is primarily for use by descendants of Polish immigrants to the United States in tracing their family history. Still, there is a great deal of information about structure of names, grammar, and so forth in the introductory sections.

One important thing to keep in mind when building a Slavic name is that the byname must match the gender of the person using it. Otherwise, Slavs use the same basic categories of bynames as do the other European cultures. Patronymics are the most frequent kinds of bynames, but locatives are common in many Slavic cultures, and occupations and nicknames are not at all uncommon. In early period names, it is usual to see only a single byname, but by the end of period, double bynames appear in Poland and Russia. In Poland, the second byname is typically a locative, while in Russian the second byname would be a familial surname.

Patronymics: In Russian, the most common means of forming the patronymic is to add **-ov** or **-ev**, depending on the sound of the final letter in the original name. However, there are rules in Russian about dropping letters to add this ending, and if the father's name ends in **-a** or **-yn**. For a woman, an **-a** is added to any of these endings to form her name. In Polish, the basic ending is **-ow** for men, and **-owa** for women.

Locatives: The basic Polish locative adds **-ski** for a man or **-ska** for a woman. There can be spelling changes involved, which are not easy to explain. For Russian, a locative can be

⁹ Paul Wickenden of Thanet (Paul Goldschmidt). *Dictionary of Period Russian Names*, Milpitas, CA: Free Trumpet Press (19 —)

¹⁰ Taszycki, Witold (ed.), *Słownik Staropolskich Nazw Osobowych* (Dictionary of Old Polish Personal Names), vols. I-VII (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, Polska Akademia Nauk, 1965-1987).

¹¹ No full name or author available.

formed by adding *-skil* or *-skata*, but these do not seem as common in Russian as they are in Polish.

Arabic:

Arabic is the common language of the Islamic world. In the Middle Ages, it was spoken in Spain, north Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans, among other places. A good introduction may be found in *The Islamic World*¹². The article on Arabic names in that volume, written by Master Da'ud ibn Auda, has been superseded by an updated version available online.

Many of the same kinds of bynames exist in Arabic as in European names, but they are grouped differently and different terminology is used. There are four major categories of bynames: the *kunya* (name of parentage), *nasab* (name of descent, including patronymics), *laqab* (descriptive nickname), and *nisba* (occupations or locative, tribe or family name).

Arabic names have a greater diversity of form and structure than names in most European names, but they are grouped differently and so different terminology is used. The *kunya*, for instance, precedes the given name, which it would not do in Europe. Master Da'ud's article¹³ will be of much greater use than any summary I could provide here, and you are encouraged to use it.

Jewish

Jews are not the only minority culture, but they are perhaps the most familiar. Jewish names are required more frequently in the SCA than names of most other minority groups, and they will thus serve as an example of what happens to names in a minority culture when it exists within a more populous culture.

Hebrew, as most know, is the national language of Israel today, and it is used to elsewhere to read Jewish scripture and sacred texts. What most people don't know, however, is that Hebrew ceased to be the everyday language for the Jews long before the beginning of the Roman occupation of Israel, and was only revived as an everyday language in the later half of the 20th century. Medieval Jews used the language of the lands in which they lived, and are often recorded with bynames in the local language. While most men used common Biblical given names, women had given names common to the culture in which they lived.

In places where they migrated, Jews often stood out as a distinct local community. They were often known to non-Jews and recorded in documents with the simple byname "the Jew" in the local language. This means that it can often be difficult to assemble a truly Jewish

¹² Da'ud ibn Auda (David Appleton). *The Compleat Anachronist*, No. 51. Milpitas, CA: n.d.

¹³ Da'ud ibn Auda (David Appleton). "Period Arabic Names and Naming Practices." (WWW: privately published), <http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/names/arabic-naming2.htm>

name unless one can find records kept by Jews, or records from a community where the number of Jews was large enough to warrant further distinction in records.

One further distinction important for Jewish culture is that between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic (pronounced "Svardic") Jews. The Sephardim lived in Spanish and Arab lands. In 1492, the Spanish Jews were forced out of Spain, although it was not the first time that members of the religion had been ejected from a country (e.g., King John of England expelled them partly to eliminate the huge debt that he had accrued with them). They also spoke different languages: the Sephardim spoke a variation of Spanish called "Ladino" whereas the Ashkenazim spoke and, to a certain degree still do, Yiddish, which is a dialect of German.

Patronymics: We do find some Jewish patronymics. Sons used **ben** (masculine) and **bat** (feminine) in Ashkenazic plus the father's name; while in the Sephardic dialect, the terms are **bar** and **bas**, respectively.

Acknowledgements and Further Reading

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Recommended Sources on Related Topics

More on Medieval Bynames:

"A Brief Introduction to Medieval Bynames by Talan Gwynek and Arval Benicourer. (WWW: Privately published) (<http://www.panix.com/~mittle/names/arval/bynames/>) **OR** See the copy in this article.

Constructing a Plausible Name:

The Medieval Names Archive of the Academy of St Gabriel (WWW)

<http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/>

The Academy of St Gabriel (<http://s-gabriel.org/>)

An online consultant service for people who truly want an authentic and carefully researched name or arms. Be aware that the best way to get expert help is to do some research on your own first. The Academy can help you better if you've already formed some ideas about the culture and time you wish to recreate, and does their best work if you've already identified a name or names that you are partial to.

Your Local Herald

Most heralds in the SCA have some notion of how to construct a reasonable name, or can point you to someone who can. With the use of email it is also possible to contact an expert if you are interested in a particular language or culture.

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