HOUSE NAMES AS METAPHORS FOR SOCIAL RELATIONS IN MALLORCA

In Deià, the mountain village in Mallorca in which I have done fieldwork and lived for many years, people are referred to by different names in different circumstances. Each person has at least one or two Christian names, two surnames, a diminutive, a nickname and a house name. When people talk about one another, Christian names are always accompanied by descriptive names - a house name, a profession or some other attribute which distinguishes that person from any other. Throughout the village vernacular we hear references to En Joan de Ca'n Marc (John from the house of the Marc family), Na Joana de'l Metge (Joan the doctor's daughter), En Toni Tronar (Tony from the house of thunder) and Toni Ferrer (Tony the ironmonger's son). Personal names acknowledge one's membership in a family, a church, a particular social dimension, that place to which one is born. The house names which associate people to previous generations become metaphors for social relations past and present. The place is the combination of all these words and names that give it life and meaning. These conceptual constructions form the worlds of meaning which are shared by and determine the members of a community.

Children are given a Christian name usually based on the name of a grandparent. First-born sons are given the name of their father's father, second-born sons their mother's father's name. A first daughter is named after her father's mother and the next after her mother's mother. Additional children are named after saints or godparents. If a child dies, his or her name will be given to the next child born to that family.

The names used in each village are those derived long ago from

the saints most revered by that particular village. In Deià, the patron saint is St Joan (St John); Joan and the feminine form Joana are among the most common names in the village. Then the Virgin Mary, the Virgin of Lluc, St Francis of Assisi, Santa Catalina Tomas, St Anthony, St Peter, St Bartholomew, St Michael and St Sebastian are the most significant in Deià experiences.[1] The Virgin of Lluc is a small stone Marian figure housed in the chapel of the seventeenth-century monastery at Lluc in the north of the island. A yearly celebration held there is one of the few occasions shared by people from all the villages on the island. Lluc has been named by some 'the peasant capital of Mallorca'. Many men and women pledge to make the annual pilgrimage to Lluc by foot, if their prayers are answered. St Anthony and St Francis are the protectors of animals. Santa Catalina was a girl from the neighbouring village of Valldemosa who, it is said, escaped from the Devil by hiding in the trunk of an olive tree. St Sebastian protected the village from the plague (which killed some forty per cent of the island's population in the eighteenth century). The passing of each year in a person's life is celebrated not on one's birthday but on one's saint's day, acknowledging the fact that one's life on earth is a celebration of those who went before and those who will follow.

Since at least grandparents and grandchildren, and probably a number of first cousins, share the same name there are innumerable diminutives or adaptations used so that each one has a personal reference albeit based on a shared generational name. So we have Francisco, Xico, Xesc, and Paco all based on Francisco; Xesca and Paquita for Francisca; Toni and Tonita for Antonio/a; Cati and Tina for Catalina, and so forth. Sometimes the parents or, on occasion, the priest will make the distinction by baptizing a child with two Christian names: one recognizing the grandparents and another from the name of the saint on whose day the baptism takes place. So we have Catalina Maria, Maria Magdalena, Maria Rosa or Joan Josep. A name like Maria del Carmen usually means that the girl's father or grandfather was a fisherman: St Carmen is the guardian of the seas. In the 1980s some young couples are 'breaking with tradition' and giving their children names of popular members of royal families or well-known film or television personalities: Vanessa, Elizabeth, Carolina and Stefania have become popular names for girls, and Carlos has been given to many boys in families where this name was previously unknown.

A person is addressed by his or her Christian name or its diminutive, but the Christian name which all children are given at birth, and with which they are welcomed into the community of God at baptism, and the surname, which recognizes their parentage, are only

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[1] There are similar saints worshipped throughout Spain (and in other Catholic countries) but the particular combination is different in each village or town.

part of a person's social identity. Each person has at least one *malnom*, literally 'bad name' or nickname, and is also recognized by a *renom*, a house name that places him or her within the social context known as 'the village'; for example, Miguel Coll Jaume is the official name of Michael the son of Mr Coll and his wife Margarita Jaume.[2] He is also referred to as Miguel Maleter (Michael the porter), a nickname based on his first job of lifting heavy cases on to the daily mail coach to Palma. He is also known as Miguel de Sa Fonda (Michael from the Inn [that his parents owned]).

The nickname is an individualizing as well as a socializing device. This can be based on a distinguishing physical characteristic, idiosyncrasy or action that is associated with a particular person, or in some cases one of his ancestors. A boy or girl is often nicknamed by sibs or his or her school-mates. As Michael Kenny wrote, 'nicknames help to personalise relationships but there are no fixed rules for applying or transmitting them. A nickname can be used as a form of social satire behind which lurks scorn and sometimes envy but it is not an insult except when used in the recipient's presence' (Kenny 1961: 89).[3] The nickname also has a social dimension. It is a sign of inclusion in the community that a nickname is coined and used by everyone (except the individual), and members of that community are those who understand the reference. Nicknames are not necessary for someone from another village or town who can be recognized by their Christian name - Alfredo, Esperanza, Roberto - or by their surname - Gimenez, Chicano, or Apestinguia. These are names that identify people from other towns, and although they may have married villagers their names will continue to identify future generations as descendants of someone from another town or village.

Nicknames seem to be given more to men than to women. Married women can be individually identified through reference to their natal house, their husband's name or his nickname, and unmarried girls are described by their Christian name followed by their mother's or father's house name. A few women will be marked out by nicknames to reflect some significant aspect of their personality or achievements, for example one older woman is called Radio Popular - she is the richest source of gossip in the village. Another woman, who has recently entered politics as the Cultural Minister of the village, is referred to as Na Thatcher.

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[2] Women do not change their names at marriage.

[3] I cannot agree with David Gilmore (1983), who sees nicknames as being used to express envy and aggression. On the contrary, I would suggest that by acknowledging with a nickname idiosyncratic characteristics, behaviour or appearance, the society is socializing that which could otherwise become destructive to social relations.

Deià is similar to other small communities in that each person living there knows every other person and his or her antecedents. This is quickly evidenced when you ask one person for the name of another and you are told: 'That is Miguel Figuera'. Then I use his name: '*Bon dia Sr Figuera*', and am told: 'My name is not Figuera; my name is Miguel Ripoll Colom'. After many inquiries, I discover that Figuera was the name of Miguel's grandfather's house, and although Miguel lives in a different house, he is known in the village by Figuera rather than by the name of the house he actually lives in. Now this may be just one form of a nickname, as many writers (e.g. Lison-Tolosana 1983; Pitt-Rivers 1971; Kenny 1961) of Spanish ethnographies suggest, but in Deià a person may have a nickname and a house name.[4] A house name used to describe a person acknowledges that person's relationship to other people in the village.

The house name identifies an individual in relation to a family (past or present) and functions as a surname in conversation. The actual cognomen is reserved for official papers and is very often not used by many in the community. There are twenty-two typical Deià surnames used in innumerable combinations, which present no lack of cognomen variation by which to identify people, but house names and nicknames are far more informative. Young men commented that they were never referred to by their cognomen until they entered military service. After thirty years of relying on the *telephonista* (the local switchboard operator) to connect them with En Miguel Fornes (Michael from the baker's house) or Joanina Fidivella (Joan the noodlemaker's daughter) the villagers were most concerned when they had to remember one another's surnames in order to find a telephone number in the book.

Every house (Catalan *casa*) in the village has a name.[5] This name may be selected by the owners but more often house names are created by the village. House names can be based on the occupant's surname, e.g. Son Bauza, or profession, e.g. Ca'n Mestre (the teacher's house), or trade, e.g. Ca'n Fuster (the carpenter's house), or his

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[4] This is obviously a very provocative subject, and the similarities as well as the differences between the authors' interpretations are an indication of the variety of approaches possible.

[5] The contraction *Casa* (*de*), meaning 'house of', combines with the definite article and is reduced first to *Ca* and then contracted as follows: *Ca'n* before a name introduced by *en* (personal article, masc.); *Ca's* before a name introduced by *es* (reference pronoun); *Ca'l* before a name introduced by *el* (in Mallorquin this only applies to substantives except in the town of Pollensa where, as in Catalan, it precedes masculine names); *Son* before the names of large estates (from Catalan *co que és d'en* 'that which is of' [masc.]); *Ses* before plural names, e.g. *Ses Casasnovas* 'the new houses'.

Christian name or nickname, or the physical characteristics of the location of the property, e.g. Casa D'amunt (the upper house), or it can record some special occurrence in the life of the occupant, e.g. Ca'n Dotze (the house of twelve), which was built with the money won in a card-game where the winning hand was a ten and a two. Most house names hold a depth of local history and geography; for instance, Sa Tanca means 'the enclosure' and is a house built in an area of the village where sheep were enclosed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. House names are occasionally altered to reflect the living reality of the village: the house of a tradesman whose grandson becomes a doctor will become 'the doctor's house' in the village idiom, and that name will be passed on to the future generations.

In Deià, however, the word *casa* does not mean just a house but also the people associated with it and family members. A named house can be made up of a number of separate households (domestic groups). 'One house' may mean a related group of people all with the same patronym, or merely a nuclear family, or it can mean a solidly structured and socially recognized organization as in the estates of the past. The grouping together of different households under the name of 'one house' points up the shared property which binds them together and sometimes drives them apart. The house encompasses the smaller parts which are the various households that have developed from a core house. Usually only one child stays in the natal or core house and works with the parents. At marriage the wife or husband is brought to that house. Other brothers and sisters either marry into other core houses or set up their own households. Each new household is part of one or both core houses.

When one moves house, one's house name usually moves with one. Miguel de Ca's Fornes (Michael of the baker's house) moved into Ca'n Pere Juan (the house of Peter John), his wife's maternal great-grandfather's house, at marriage. He and his wife are each referred to by different house names, but we find his brother, his sister, and another sister, all of whom live in different households, referred to as de Ca's Fornes. Therefore one can say that a house is made up of many households. Ideologically the members are perceived as one house despite the fact that it may be composed of many different and independent physical structures.

Everyone in the village is associated with a named house and identified in the village idiom by that house name. Unlike surnames which are transmitted patrilineally, house names can be perpetuated by men, women, or adoptive members. One's house name links one with genealogically or economically related households. The village labels people as descendants or kin (in the broadest sense) of a known family by a house name. Often house names endure beyond the life of the owners and their kin. They are usually carried on by the new owners because it makes the transfer of deeds much simpler but, more importantly, it is maintained by the village as a means of placing newcomers into the existing idiom and not having to acknowledge the loss of its members through death and migration. Many foreigners who reside in the village are identified by the name of the house they rented or bought many years ago,

giving them a kind of fictive kinship within the village idiom. House names acknowledge the attachment of each person in the village to someone else either living or dead and represent a continuity of people, land and families - 'the community' - over time. Each generation manages to identify the most dominant personalities and activities of their period by the selective perpetuation of some house names, the altering of others and the re-allocation of existing names to new domestic groups (newly married locals or foreigners). House names used by the village might be changed if someone in a future generation attained professional status, accomplished some memorable action or somehow became identified as different from the house with which their family had been associated.

There are few instances today of people actually living in the house with which they are associated. Most house names go back at least three or more generations. This system of identifying and associating each person in the village with others by house names that evoke tales of generations of associations, activities and occupations maintains a sense of continuity despite the changing actors. Newly built houses may be given names which have a special meaning to their owners, but the village will inevitably identify the people that live in those houses with the names of their family houses, or if that is lacking (if they are newcomers or foreigners) they will soon be dubbed with a village nickname, or their Christian name of trade will be used if it is different from any other in the village. The writer Robert Graves built his house in 1929 and wanted to call it 'the distant house' because it was built outside the main village. Few people then knew how to write Mallorquin so names were spelt phonetically, and Graves's house is called Cañellun although it should have been Ca'n A Lluny. Both names are irrelevant to the local Deìanencs, who have always referred to it as Ca'n Graves.

When the people living in a house are identified by the profession, name or trade of one of the actual occupants, this usually indicates that it is the achievements of the living person which give the name to the house; e.g. Ca'l Metge (the doctor's house) or Ca'l Bisbe (the bishop's house). In these examples the doctor and the bishop are both respected public figures, and the names of the houses they occupy (whether by purchase or lease) will be elevated to those of the present occupants' position and carried by the doctor's family and the bishop's employees into future generations. By looking at changes in the house names used to label groups over time, one gains a sense of the accomplishments of individuals which affected village membership and the social status values in operation at any particular period.

Maria Coll was always known as Maria de sa Casa D'amunt (the upper house at Son Coll - the estate her father and grandfather managed). At the age of thirty-five, about ten years after she had been working as a dressmaker, she became known as Maria la Modista (Maria the dressmaker).[6] Had Maria married as well as becoming a

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[6] Maria's new descriptive name is in Castilian rather than Mallorquin, an indication that her dealings are mostly with foreigners.

dressmaker it is unlikely that her trade name would have replaced her house name. Had she had children it is more than probable that at least the girls would have been known by the house name of Casa D'amunt. Without husband, children, sibs, aunts or uncles with whom she can share the Son Coll connection, Maria's inherited house name stops with her. It could be said that the village has relieved her socially and idiomatically of the obligation to carry on the family name, marry or have children, and they have given her a 'here and now' existence. Married women who combine dressmaking or hairdressing or business with their family life are not recognized in the village idiom by these references. After women marry, the family-bound character of their lives puts a limitation on individuality, and all the metaphors used to describe them are related to reproduction and nurturing. The life-cycle expectations for women are clearly articulated in references such as 'daughter of', 'wife of', 'mother of', and culminate with the use of *Madonna* or *Doña*, the most respectful terms reserved for women who have fulfilled all of the above roles.

The most common practice in the marriage of two local people is that each keeps their own natal house name. Male children will carry on the father's house name and daughters their mother's. If both children are known by only one of their parents' house names, it indicates that that house is more significant in village life than the other house. If a local woman marries someone from another village or town, her husband and the resulting children will be known by her family house name unless the profession or trade of her husband is more unique or prestigious than the house name she carries. The change of focus in village values and activities can be seen in the house names used to describe people at different periods.

For example, Toni Ferrer married Magdelena Burote; they named their house Ca'n Antoinette but the village refers to it as Sa tanca d'en mitge. This tells us that Toni the ironmonger's son married Magdelena the official's grand-daughter; they named the house they built after their daughter, who was born in France (so Antoinette instead of Antonia), but the village called the house after its location in an area that was once a sheep enclosure. The names used by people to describe this household are indicative of the information that is transmitted through the use of house names: lineage, occupations, endogamy or exogamy, place of birth, geographic and economic developments over time etc.

The names that people and houses are known by present a social and economic history of the village. The practice of grouping together people who share blood, marriage or merely employment ties brings history into the present. The first settlers in Deià were Cistercian monks and nobles who were given these lands by Jaime I for helping in the conquest of the Moors and the creation of the kingdom of Mallorca in 1229. All those who came to live and work in Deià, as well as any Moors who were captured and made chattels of these estates, were given house names as a means of identification. Of the twenty-two most prevalent surnames in Deià only five are not derived from the names of nobles who arrived with the conquest. The largest estates that once formed the core of the

village and gave employment to most of the people bear the surnames of their first owners. Each estate had a contracted tenant farmer and his family living on the premises in separate quarters of the main house; *missatges* were workers regularly employed and housed on the estate, and *jornales* were daily labourers. Owners were referred to as ets Senyors de Son Moragues (the owners of the estate of the Moragues family), the tenant was l'amo de Son Moragues, and the employees were known by their Christian name and the estate name, e.g. en Lluc de Son Moragues.

A house built in the village by the tenant would be referred to by his Christian name followed by the name of the estate he managed, e.g. Ca'n Lluc de Son Moragues (the house of Lluc from Son Moragues), Ca'n Jordi de Son Canals (the house of Jordi from Son Canals). This name and means of identification would be carried by tenants, employees, their children and into further generations. In the past, seating at church services was by houses with the senyors in the front rows, then the tenants and behind them any other men who were employed by that estate. The wooden benches they sat upon were donated by the estate owner and bore his house name. Women sat at the back of the church with their children, mothers, sisters and neighbours on stools they carried from home. The seats of the stools were embroidered with the initials of the woman's Christian name and her surnames.[7] The woman's social identity was derived from her parents' house or from her husband's house or his house of employment, depending on which was most significant in the village reckoning at that time.

Large estate owners contributed to the maintenance of the church and sent their employees to carry out repairs. Builders employed by large estates had a lifelong commitment to that estate. It was always two of the builders of the large estates that volunteered to dig the grave for a deceased member of any of the households associated with that house. The *maestro* (master builder) would notify the priest to announce a death by ringing the church bells, he would order the coffin from the carpenter, and then go to the house and attend to the preparation of the deceased for the coffin. The builders would dig the grave, and after the burial they would make a new cement covering and carve the name and birth date of the deceased on it. Later, a tombstone bearing the patronymics of the husband and the wife of a house was placed over the grave and marked the family or house burial plot, in which at least three generations could be buried.

When a woman marries and has children she can be buried in her parents' tomb or in her in-laws' tomb. The decision is often based on space and the quality of the tomb, status symbols rather than altruism (the tombs closest to the church denote those families which held wealth and power when the cemetery was built; later

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[7] Today people say that 'everyone sits together in kin groups on any benches that are free', but observation shows that there is still a tendency to leave the benches in the front of the church (those which bear the names of the estates of the past) free for older men and those who arrive late.

small family chapels were built by the most able and influential). If there are no children there is no new surname composed of each parent's patronym. Women do not change their surnames at marriage, and only through the surname given to children is the union of the two families recognized. People say that if there are no children there is no blood connection to join the two families, and they remain separate even in death.[8] The wife will be buried in her family plot and the husband in his family's plot. The occasional exceptions to this practice are seen to coincide with the preference for matrilocality at marriage. The woman's house more readily extends the term family to include the husband of a daughter than does a man's house to a barren daughter-in-law.

Connection with a house is also a person's only access to the political sphere. Participation in village decision-making comes through being a member of a household which makes one a *vecino*, literally 'neighbour', and gives one legal rights in the village. New members of old houses have ready-made support if they want to enter politics. People say: 'We vote for a family - a house - not a particular candidate. Each house knows its own friends.' A house name does not refer to just a building and the ground it occupies but is a metaphor for social relations past and present which guarantees a place within village life.

Conclusion

One's heritage is indicated by the house names with which one is associated, but one's physical characteristics or other distinguishing elements are the basis for the nickname. Most people have both a nickname and a house name, and although it is the surname that acknowledges parentage, it is not the means by which people are grouped together in the village idiom. A nickname is an individualising device which acknowledges a person's accomplishments or idiosyncrasies and momentarily separates them from the social matrix to which all people are connected; it also identifies the members of a group for those who understand the references. A house name is a reference to a person and their connection to other people past and present. When one house name is perpetuated and another no longer used, it suggests that the remaining name refers to a house that is better known or esteemed for one reason or another in the present village circumstances. The use of house names stimulates an awareness of each house's place in the local hierarchy. A selective process subtly prunes away the names of less significant activities and personalities at any particular period and replaces those with more relevant names, so that the village idiom continues to be updated without altering the overall size and continuity of the vocabulary.

House names are the means by which the village clusters people together into meaningful social groupings that go beyond day-to-day

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[8] Campbell (1976) describes a similar concept among the Sarakatsani.

social and economic concerns and identify individuals in relation to a series of households that have developed over generations from a common core. This recognizes some sort of bilateral lineage or descent group, based on rather ephemeral criteria but is nevertheless a descriptive and selective device which acknowledges this generation's connection with previous generations and maintains the basis by which individuals are always associated with a collectivity and can perceive themselves and others as members of their own community. These house names which associate people with living groups and to previous generations become metaphors for social relations past and present.

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