

GENDER EXPRESSION AND CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE SURNAMES IN THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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- **ABSTRACT:** The present work aimed, based on a historical rescue, to investigate the occurrence of gender expression in surnames found in Brazilian and Portuguese documents from the late 19th century, alluding to Portuguese immigration in Brazil. The research was inscribed in the terms of Onomastics, a linguistic science that is dedicated to the study of proper names, more specifically Anthroponymy, a branch that deals with the names of people. Based on the theoretical principles of Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff, 1987; Silva, 2008), the analysis focused on dated corpora, namely: a) enrollment records filled out by immigrants between 1887 and 1889. These immigrants stayed to the “Hospedaria de Imigrantes do Brás”, considered the largest Brazilian hostel; and b) passports of the Portuguese who migrated to Brazil between 1888 and 1890. This documentation belongs to the Archive of the University of Coimbra, referring to the Civil Government Fund. By investigating these corpora, it was possible to underline the existence of surnames marked by the expression of the female gender, which justified the interest in discovering the probable motivations associated with this phenomenon. The result, based on data analysis, indicated that the sampling in numerical terms was negligible, which can be explained by several reasons suggested in the specific literature of the area. This study also results in the contribution it provides to the theme - still little explored - by proposing a well-founded collection of explanatory hypotheses put forward in previous works.
- **KEYWORDS:** Onomastics; Anthroponymy; Morphology; Grammatical gender.

Introduction

Onomastics is the area of Linguistics that deals with the study of proper names in their various arrangements, “[...] whether they are directed to their origins, or to their training processes, or to their organization in the lexicon of languages and also in the

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social environment” (Rodrigues, 2016, p. 13¹). Amongst the most studied onomastics items are the names of places and the names of people that correspond, respectively, to the subareas of Toponymy and Anthroponymy. In this paper, we focus our attention on anthroponyms, more specifically on surnames – as they are called in Brazil – or nicknames² – a term that identifies them in Portugal –, that is, all official onomastic items³ that, after the first name(s), make up the orthonym⁴ of an individual.

Onomastic studies are interdisciplinary by nature, engaging with various fields such as History, Geography, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, and Anthropology, in addition to Linguistics. By observing part of the Brazilian anthroponymic lexicon, we have as a theoretical foundation the principles of Cognitive Linguistics, an approach based on the relationship between language and cognition, which perceives the speaker as inextricably linked to his environment, always categorizing the reality that surrounds him from his own experiences. The analyses used will have Morphology and Etymology as bases, in order to understand how the surnames found in the *corpora* behave about possible gender expressions⁵ as an engine for the construction of female surnames, at the end of the 19th century.

This paper is divided in five sections composed of this introduction, followed by the presentation of the *corpora* and methodological procedures, an onomastic anteloquy, the analysis of the data and our final considerations.

Presentation of *corpora* and methodological procedures

Starting from the observation of the great immigration flow verified in Brazil since 1808 until the period known as the “Great Immigration” (final years of the 19th century until the first decades of the 20th century), we have the information, according to the “Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística” (IBGE), that the Portuguese constituted the second largest group of immigrants in Brazil. This fact, added to the fact that Portugal colonized Brazil - and left a good part of its vernacular repertoire in it, but also a personative one - has acquired sufficient relevance to arouse our interest in better understanding how Portuguese surnames behave in the current Brazilian

¹ In the original: “[...] quer se direcionem para as suas origens, quer para os seus processos de formação, quer para a sua organização no léxico das línguas e também no meio social”.

² Literally translated, “apelido” in Portuguese corresponds to “nickname” in English, but the meaning is really that of surname in both cases.

³ The onomastics items recognized as official are those that appear in the civil registry and that are ensured, with regard to the Brazilian legal system, in the Civil Code, Law No. 10,406/2002, chapter II, about personality rights, article 16, which reads: “Every person has the right to a name, including the first name and the surname”.

⁴ The orthonym corresponds to the full civil name.

⁵ We emphasize that whenever we use the word “gender”, we will be referring to grammatical gender and/or individuals who agreed with such gender attribution, at least in the documents researched. We respect all the most complex socio-psychological issues involving the names of people and the term itself.

onomastic framework and whether it is possible to verify morphological information that distinguishes them in terms of gender.

To this end, we consider important to analyze two *corpora*, one Portuguese and one Brazilian, both related to the migratory context, namely: a) identification forms of the Portuguese who registered at the “Hospedaria de Imigrantes do Brás” (the largest hostel in Brazil, later known as the “Hospedaria de Imigrantes de São Paulo”) in the first years of its operation – between 1887 and 1889; b) passports of the Portuguese who went to Brazil between 1888 and 1890, documentation from the Archive of the University of Coimbra (AUC), referring to the Civil Government Fund. We emphasize that the access to a Brazilian and a Portuguese *corpus* acquired special relevance in this research, since it gave credibility to the investigation from not only a linguistic perspective, but also a historical, political and sociocultural one, since hostels and passports were (still are and will continue to be) protagonist sources when we study migratory processes.

Regarding to the first *corpus*, which corresponds to the “Hospedaria de Imigrantes do Brás”, a total of 13,489 registration forms were analyzed for the years 1887, 1888 and 1889 (respectively, 2,985, 7,882 and 2,622 files), accessible for consultation on the official website⁶ of “Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo”. The second *corpus*, containing the Portuguese passports held by the AUC, involved the analysis of five books covering the years 1888 to 1890. These books have, in due order, 890, 840, 840, 874 and 983 records of Portuguese who migrated to Brazilian ports, mainly to the port of Santos, totaling 4,427 passports. Together, then, we analyzed 17,916 orthonyms, which indicates an even larger sample when we consider that orthonyms are often composed of more than one surname. We examined both *corpora* using a consistent four-stage methodological approach.

The first consists of the identification and collection of surnames in the *corpora*, with the Hospedaria’s material collected on the digital platform and the AUC material *in loco*. Once identified, the second step involved searching for each surname in the onomastic dictionaries selected for consultation, recognized as the most important in the Portuguese language, namely: *Dicionário etimológico da língua portuguesa – Tomo II*, by Antenor Nascentes (1952), *Dicionário etimológico de nomes e sobrenomes*, by Mansur Guérios (1981), and *Dicionário onomástico etimológico da língua portuguesa*, by José Pedro Machado (2003). When absent in the three dictionaries mentioned above, we proceeded to investigations in other sources of attested relevance, such as the works *Antroponímia primitiva da Madeira e Repertório onomástico histórico da Madeira (15th and 16th centuries)*, by Nunes and Kremer (1999), and *Antroponímia portuguesa*, by Leite de Vasconcellos (1928). We also consulted the dictionaries of Cunha (2010), Houaiss and Vilar (2004), and Nascentes (1966) regarding common lexicon, in order to contribute to the dissolution of any remaining doubts. The absence of a surname in all reference materials may mean that: a) it is not a Portuguese surname; b) the item

⁶ From the link: <http://www.inci.org.br/acervodigital/livros.php>

was not spelled correctly, given the handwritten nature of the sources; c) it was used in some very specific context of the place or time and therefore did not become frequent and relevant within the scope of the Portuguese and/or Brazilian onomastics framework.

The third step included the preparation of individual onomastics forms for each surname, containing: a) entry; b) bibliographic sources (about the material obtained from consultations with the support dictionaries); c) linguistic data (also considering the determination of the semantic category, graphic variant(s) or any verified linguistic or historical notes); and d) registration information on the form. At the end of this entire process, it was possible to identify, when present, the morphological performance in gender expression that affected some surnames. However, before moving on to the analysis of these items, we consider it necessary to introduce a brief overview of the constitution of the Portuguese onomastics picture and, consequently, of a significant part of the Brazilian picture.

Onomastics anteloquy

In the terms that most specifically affect this study, surnames are items that emerged in the Portuguese onomastic framework and then migrated with their bearers as a lexical inheritance admitted in the Brazilian onomastic framework. To reach the moment of its institution and consecration, however, we will need to go back a few years in order to identify the factors that acted in the conformation of these items.

At the time of the Roman Empire, the onomastic system that prevailed in the Iberian Peninsula among the noblest families was known as *trianomina*, composed of *praenomen* (individual name), *gentilicum* (item that indicated belonging to a clan or *gens*) and *cognomen* (which designated family or family group inserted in the *gens*) (Câmara Jr, 1997). The fall of the Roman Empire brought with it not only social, political, and economic changes, but also led to the disuse of this onomastic organization.

During the period of the High Middle Ages, what is understood as an “impoverishment” of the anthroponymic system occurs, in which the use of a single onomastic item prevailed. In view of the population increase, the result of this simplification was the recurrence of homonymy cases, especially in the most populous centers. It was therefore necessary to promote a more complex organization of the onomastic system, which would minimize future occurrences of homonyms and be able to keep up with the growing population ordering. Thus, the patronymic emerges, a medieval onomastic that, in the 12th century, consecrates the union of the baptismal first name to a form that “[...] represents a genitive derived from the father’s name, which in the Middle Ages indicated filiation” (Vasconcellos, 1928, p. 11⁷). The patronymic still operates in several languages, even if not always with its primary function, which

⁷ In the original: “[...] representa um genitivo derivado do nome do pai, o qual na idade média indicava a filiação”.

was to establish a genealogical relationship (Carvalhinhos, 2007). About its social role, Gonçalves (1999, p. 349⁸) elucidates:

If it is true that, in a certain way, this anthroponymic system fragmented the family into pairs of generations, [...] it is no less true that only in this way did the individual present himself before society, equipped with a complete identification. In addition to his own name, his inalienable patrimony, that other that did not belong to him gratuitously and absolutely and that he could even alienate, but that protected him, framing him in a specific community in which the father was the first and maximum referent.

A good part of the patronymics presented themselves through a morphological modification. Leite de Vasconcellos (1928, p. 101-102, emphasis added⁹) explains the origin of this formation by attributing it to two paths:

[...] 1) or by a genitive in *-i*, which was common to other relations, and also in *-e* (and *-ae*), *-is*, *-onis* (and *-oni*), *-anis* (and *-ani*); 2) or by a genitive with its own suffix, that is, in *-az*, *-oz*, *-uz*, and in *-iz* (what is it after, *-ez*, *-es*, etc.), although not all with equal frequency. Names formed in this way, and added to baptismal names, as significant of paternal lineage, grammarians usually call *patronymics*. They especially call those who have their own suffixes.

In the Portuguese onomastic framework, the ending *-es* prevailed, which “[...] comes from the Latin genitive *-ici* > *-eze* > *-ez*, *-es*: *Ferdinándici* (‘of or from Ferdinando’) > *Fernández*, *Fernandes*, as if the nominative were **Ferdinandicus*” (Guérios, 1981, p. 39, emphasis added by the author¹⁰). There were, however, items that functioned as patronymics, but did not formally express this indication, in many cases due to the difficulty in adjunct suffixes to certain nouns. For this reason, it is not uncommon for first names to be repeated *ipsis litteris*, which today would certainly be read as cases of orthonyms composed of double first names. Therefore, “[...] regardless of whether

⁸ In the original: “*Se é verdade que, de certo modo, este sistema antroponímico fragmentava a família em pares de gerações, [...] não é menos que só deste modo o indivíduo se apresentava perante a sociedade, munido de uma identificação completa: para lá do nome próprio, seu patrimônio inalienável, aquele outro que não lhe pertencia de forma gratuita e absoluta e que até mesmo podia alienar, mas que o protegia, enquadrando-o numa comunidade específica em que o pai era o primeiro e máximo referente*”.

⁹ In the original: “[...] 1) ou por um genitivo em *-i*, que era comum a outras relações, e bem assim em *-e* (e *-ae*), *-is*, *-onis* (e *-oni*), *-anis* (e *-ani*); 2) ou por um genitivo com sufixo próprio, isto é, em *-az*, *-oz*, *-uz*, e em *-iz* (tornado depois, *-ez*, *-es*, etc.), ainda que nem todos com igual frequência. Aos nomes formados d’este modo, e agregados aos nomes de batismo, como significativos de estirpe paterna, costumam os gramáticos chamar patronímicos. Chamam especialmente assim aos que têm sufixos próprios”.

¹⁰ In the original: “[...] procede do genitivo latino *-ici* > *-eze* > *-ez*, *-es*: *Ferdinándici* (‘de ou do Ferdinando’) > *Fernández*, *Fernandes*, como se o nominativo fosse **Ferdinandicus*”.

the patronymic is implied, there are countless examples of names in which it does not actually exist, or because the individual used a proper name as such, especially if the father's name was not linked to the traditional patronymic [...]" (Vasconcellos, 1928, p. 114¹¹).

This new onomastic organization, established in a prenoun attached to a patronymic, quickly also proved to be exiguous due to the growing social complexity, reviving occurrences of homonymy, which required the establishment of new onomastic items. As Vasconcellos (1928, p. 117) confirms: "From all this it can be said that the decadence of the patronymic begins after the middle of the 15th century, and that the system was already disorganized in the 16th century". Like this:

In the face of these difficulties, the basic anthroponymic system, formed by a proper name and a patronymic, was successively associated with other elements of differentiation of individuals, such as the indication of the professions or positions they held, their places of residence or provenance and all kinds of nicknames. [...] The patronymic then lost its primitive function and transformed, at an increasingly accelerated pace, into a family surname (Santos, 2003, p. 230-231¹²).

The patronymics were not swept away from the Portuguese onomastics framework, but were transformed in the face of the loss of their semantic motivation, that is, although they are still part of the register of many individuals, they do not indicate a genealogical relationship, since they are already imbued with a relative degree of crystallization and opacity. Thus, "Currently, no Portuguese speaker understands the meaning of 'son of X' in the ending -es: it has become an integral part of the word" (Menon, 2013, p. 71¹³).

In an attempt to resolve the issue, the indication of particular characteristics - such as place of origin or residence, professional activity, physical or behavioral qualities - was simplified into nicknames, according to Guérios (1981, p. 35, emphasis added¹⁴):

¹¹ In the original: "[...] independentemente de se subentender o patronimico, ha inumeros exemplos de nomes em que ele não existe de facto, ou porque o individuo usava como tal um nome proprio, sobretudo se ao nome do pai não se ligava patronimico tradicional [...]".

¹² In the original: "Face a estas dificuldades, ao sistema antroponimico de base, formado por um nome próprio e um patronimico, foram sendo, sucessivamente, associados outros elementos de diferenciação dos individuos, como a indicação das profissões ou cargos que desempenhavam, dos seus locais de morada ou de proveniência e todo o tipo de alcunhas. [...] O patronimico foi, então, perdendo a sua primitiva função e transformando-se, em ritmo cada vez mais acelerado, em apelido de familia".

¹³ In the original: "Atualmente, nenhum falante de português depreende o significado de 'filho de X' na terminação -es: ela se tornou parte integrante da palavra".

¹⁴ In the original: "1º) Fulano filho (ou da familia, do clã, etc.) de Beltrano; 2º) Fulano de Beltrano; 3º) Fulano do país, da provincia, da cidade, da aldeia, do solar, do monte, da plantação, etc. 4º) Fulano o agricultor, o pastor, o guerreiro, o cavaleiro, o pedreiro, o açougueiro, etc., ou Fulano filho do agricultor, etc.; 5º) Fulano o gordo, o baixo, o coxo, o vêsgo, o moreno, o loiro, o (de olhos) azuis, o (de nariz de) tucano, etc.; 6º) Fulano o esperto, o corajoso, o valente, o briguento, o pacifico, o religioso, o calado, o nobre, o sabichão, o casado, o solteiro, o pai, o filho, o velho, o moço, etc.; 7º) Fulano (parente ou vizinho) do conde, do duque, do padre, etc. Quase todos estes recursos são qualificados alcunhas".

1st) So-and-so, son (or of the family, clan, etc.) of Beltrano; 2nd) So-and-so of Beltrano; 3rd) So-and-so of the country, of the province, of the city, of the village, of the manor, of the mountain, of the plantation, etc. 4th) So-and-so the farmer, the shepherd, the warrior, the knight, the mason, the butcher, etc., or So-and-so the farmer's son, etc.; 5th) So-and-so the fat, the short, the lame, the cross-eyed, the brunette, the blond, the (with blue eyes), the (nose of) toucan, etc.; 6th) So-and-so, the smart, the courageous, the brave, the quarrelsome, the peaceful, the religious, the quiet, the noble, the know-it-all, the married, the single, the father, the son, the old, the young, etc.; 7th) So-and-so (relative or neighbor) of the count, duke, priest, etc. Almost all of these resources are qualified *nicknames*.

By studying the anthroponymic lexicon based on the precepts of Cognitive Linguistics, we agree that language is “[...] based on cognitive, socio-interactional and cultural processes and should be studied in its use (use-based orientation) and in the context of conceptualization, categorization, mental processing, interaction and individual, social and cultural experience” (Silva, 2008, p. 190¹⁵). Therefore, when they “organize” their reality, users activate semantic categories pertinent to it, so that “There is nothing more basic than categorization to our thought, perception, action, and speech” (Lakoff, 1987, p. 5). The categories used in the choice of lexical items that ended up being consolidated as surnames, therefore, permeated particular characteristics of the society of the time. The variety and diverse possibilities that these items offered revitalized the Portuguese onomastic picture.

However, it should be noted that, at first, each item served to particularize only one subject, not a group or family. So, in the same way that the bearer of the item “Rodrigues”, *a priori*, identified himself as the one who was the son of “Rodrigo”, the bearer of the item “Delgado” was certainly someone of thin size, as well as “Machado” certainly referred to some seller or manufacturer of axes. The fact is that:

Not much is known about the genesis and the forms of transmission of surnames in groups, let's say, popular. It is known that, in the medieval period, people's names were generally constituted by their first name and patronymic, eventually by a third element, a nickname, profession or toponym, which served to overcome the frequent homonyms (Monteiro, 2008, p. 53¹⁶).

¹⁵ In the original: “[...] fundamenta em processos cognitivos, sócio-interacionais e culturais e deve ser estudada no seu uso (orientação baseada no uso) e no contexto da conceptualização, da categorização, do processamento mental, da interação e da experiência individual, social e cultural”.

¹⁶ In the original: “Não é muito o que se conhece sobre a gênese e as formas de transmissão dos apelidos nos grupos, digamos, populares. Sabe-se que, no período medieval, os nomes das pessoas eram geralmente constituídos pelo nome próprio e pelo patronímico, eventualmente, por um terceiro elemento, uma alcunha, profissão ou topônimo, que servia para ultrapassar as frequentes homonímias”.

Over time, nicknames ended up being fixed and, often due to the desire of their bearers, they began to be regularly transmitted for generations¹⁷, such as surnames, which gave them opacity in the language. In these cases, “personal nicknames are transmitted from parents to children or relatives [...] and that is why it happens that in the heirs they lose the humorous, rude or other meaning, which they had when they imposed themselves the first time” (Vasconcellos, 1928, p. 178¹⁸). We see, with this conformation, that the nature of surnames is semantically diverse and can come, roughly speaking, from a patronymic (with or without morphological indication) or from a nickname.

Against this backdrop of this general scenario, we will describe below the occurrences verified in the investigated *corpora* regarding the expression of gender in surnames. We do not intend, however, to exhaust the explanations that could come close to a definitive answer to what, in fact, motivated this phenomenon, since we take into account the scarce number of materials and information available on the subject among the researched literature. We will, however, seek to understand it better from the analysis of the data and the hypotheses raised in previous studies.

Data analysis

From the morphological point of view – also historical and cultural – surnames made feminine from masculine do not correspond to a phenomenon widely studied in the specific literature of the area. We know that such gender indication was motivated by and attributed semantic load to surnames that today, when transmitted hereditary and already with a relative degree of crystallization and opacity, are often no longer verified. Thus, before moving on to the presentation of the surnames investigated on this occasion, we wish to undertake a brief review on the subject in order to better support the analysis that we will make *a posteriori*. For this, we go through more specifically the works of Vasconcellos (1928), Boléo (1953), Menon (2013) and Toro (2004).

In a work entitled *Antroponímia portuguesa*, Leite de Vasconcellos (1928) deals with aspects concerning the theme. One of them draws attention when it refers to patronymics. As we explained in the previous section, the patronymic expressed a relationship between father and child – although, in specific episodes, it could also be a

¹⁷ Reinforcing, according to Vasconcellos (1928), that nicknames were already transmitted between parents and children or relatives since the Middle Ages in an informal way, so to speak, before the establishment of the Portuguese registry service. It is also worth remembering that siblings could have different surnames from each other, inherited from the father or mother in an unequal way, as we read in Monteiro (2008, p. 47): “The first surname was usually the paternal one, although they could freely choose from among those used by their parents or by the four grandparents, with frequent cases of siblings who did not use the same surname [...]. In summary, the dominant practices in Portugal were, until then, generically similar to those used in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula [...]”. The disorganization in the transmission of surnames was in force, in official terms, until the Civil Registry Code of 1928, when specific rules for these items came into force.

¹⁸ In the original: “*As alcunhas pessoais transmitem-se de pais a filhos ou parentes [...] e por isso acontece que nos herdeiros perdem a significação chistosa, rude ou outra, que tinham quando se impuseram a primeira vez*”.

bond between mother and child, grandfather or grandmother and grandchild, uncle and nephew, godfather or godmother and godson, etc. – demonstrated by the morphological indication in *-es*, in the case of the Portuguese language. In some cases, however, it did not present a formal change, so that its situation as a patronymic - and not as a second first name, for example - was only confirmed through prior knowledge or access, in documents, to the orthonyms of father and son. In other words, in order to use onomastics items with the same behavior as a patronymic, but without the morphological indication, the users only repeated the first names of relatives. The most interesting thing is that, when they deemed it necessary, they could modify the genre, as shown in the examples offered by Vasconcellos (1928), referring to the first half of the 19th century:

- Aurora Berta, daughter of Berto;
- Berta Julia, daughter of Julio;
- Maria Ernestina, daughter of Ernesto;
- Teresa Caitana, daughter of Caitano;
- Maria Xaviela, Xavier's or Xaviel's wife.

From the examples we can glimpse the first reason for creating female surnames. However, this phenomenon was not restricted to patronymics. In Boléo's (1953) research, we also find information about the indication of gender, mentioning cases in which there was a certain social note, as stated in the following excerpt:

Sometimes the husband's baptismal name or surname becomes feminine. Thus, a *Maria Sebastião* is called *Maria Sebastiãoa*, or simply, in her absence, by *Sebastiana* (who has the flavor of a nickname), and a *Maria do Rosário Simões* will be known as *Maria Simona*. Even in the city, certain family surnames, when referred to more than one lady, are used in the feminine, for example *as Alarcôas* (nickname of *Alarcão*), *as Catalôas* (nickname of *Catalão*) (Boléo, 1953, p. 9, emphasis added by the author¹⁹).

In another passage, Boléo (1953) cites a situation that reflects the ease of creating new surnames based on what the social environment demanded of its individuals:

There are cases in which, in order to know for sure who it is, especially when in the same land there is more than one person with the same

¹⁹ In the original: “Por vezes o nome de baptismo ou o apelido do marido é tornado feminino. Assim, uma Maria Sebastião é tratada por Maria Sebastiãoa, ou simplesmente, na ausência, por a Sebastiana (que tem o sabor de alcunha), e uma Maria do Rosário Simões será conhecida pela Maria Simona. Mesmo na cidade, certos apelidos de família, quando referidos a mais de uma senhora, são usados no feminino, p. ex. as Alarcôas (apelido Alarcão), as Catalôas (apelido Catalão)”.

surname, it is necessary to get the maiden surname. Thus, a woman named *Ana Ferreira* (for having married a blacksmith) was previously called *Ana Galega* (for being the daughter of a *Maria Galega*, so called because she was born in *Vale de Galegos*, a village in the municipality of Lousã, district of Coimbra) (Boléo, 1953, p. 10, emphasis added by the author²⁰).

In the example of “Ana Ferreira”, we see that there was appropriation of the profession of her husband, a blacksmith, with the change of gender. Before, however, her mother, “Maria Galega”, had her surname modified in the same way from the indication of origin, suggesting that this was a common practice at the time.

At other times it is the father’s profession that gives rise to the surname with which sons and daughters are addressed. In relation to these, however, the name of the profession becomes feminine. Thus, the daughter of a logger (a man who deals in timber) will be known as «*a Quitas Madeireira*». (*Quit* is the abbreviation of *Mariquitas*, hypocoristic of *Maria*) (Boléo, 1953, p. 9, emphasis added by the author²¹).

When analyzing data from the *Livro de Linhagens do Conde Dom Pedro*²², written in the mid of 14th century, and the *Livro de Linhagens do Deão*²³, dated 1343 but written between 1337 and 1340, Menon (2013) located occurrences such as “Ervilha” (from “Ervilhom”), “Froiã” (from “Froião”), “Velha” (from “Velho”), “Gata” (from “Gato”), “Ribeira” (from “Ribeiro”) and “Brava” (from “Bravo”). The author demonstrates, through such occurrences, that it is possible to trace a regularity involving the phenomenon, so that:

[...] certain surnames in the masculine could be inflected in the feminine, in a regular way: names ending in *-o*, like Peixoto, Coelho, Galego, Machado, Maldoado, Veloso, Alcoforado, inflected in the feminine with the morpheme *-a*: *Peixota, Coelha, Galega, Machada, Maldoad*, *Velosa*,

²⁰ In the original: “*Há casos em que, para se saber ao certo de quem se trata, mormente quando na mesma terra há mais de uma pessoa com idêntico apelido, é necessário ir buscar o apelido de solteira. Assim, uma mulher de nome Ana Ferreira (por ter casado com um ferreiro) chamava-se anteriormente Ana Galega (por ser filha de uma Maria Galega, assim chamada por ter nascido em Vale de Galegos, povoação do concelho da Lousã, distrito de Coimbra)*”.

²¹ In the original: “*Outras vezes é a profissão do pai que dá lugar ao apelido com que são tratados os filhos e as filhas. Em relação a estas, porém, torna-se feminino o nome da profissão. Assim, a filha dum madeireiro (homem que negocia em madeiras) será conhecida por «a Quitas Madeireira». (Quit* é a abreviatura de *Mariquitas*, hypocorístico de *Maria*)”.

²² José Mattoso was its critical editor, considered one of the most complete lineage books in Portugal in the Middle Ages.

²³ Also known as *Livro do Deão*, or *Segundo Livro de Linhagens*, it is one of the oldest works on the Portuguese nobiliary of the time.

Alcoforada; those ending in a nasal diphthong (whatever the spelling) formed the feminine with the morpheme *-oa*: *Girão/Giroa*; *Leitão/Leitoa*; or with *-ã*: *Churrichão/ Churrichã*; *Froião/ Froiã* (Menon, 2013, p. 72, emphasis added by the author²⁴).

We have found situations in which patronymics and nicknames, referring to the profession or place of origin, for example, have been modified in terms of gender while acting as surnames in general. Considering the lack of rigor that existed at the time of the previous Portuguese registry service, there were certainly not many difficulties for such creations.

Menon (2013) claims not to have found justification for the phenomenon nor could she say whether it was due to a specific social motivation, but raises the following suspicion: it could be a kind of indicator of descent from a noble house through female lineage, compared to what occurs in Italian onomastics with surnames ending in *-e* (“Bolognese”, “Borghese”), while those ending in *-i* indicates a male lineage (“Battisti”, “Olivetti”). In another scenario, it could also involve women who were dedicated to religious life, therefore who were not married, as in the examples she collected about the nuns “Margarida Pinheyra” and from the mother “Brites Leitoa” (Menon, 2013).

Boléo (1953), dealing specifically with matronymics²⁵, points out as probable causes for its use: a) the possibility of its bearers being illegitimate children or widows; b) her husband’s emigration; c) strong qualities of intelligence and management (also financial) of domestic life, agriculture, etc., by women. However, one difficulty is that, at the time of the preparation of the two books with which she worked, most women could neither read nor write. This, added to the fact that their names were often omitted in works of this nature, seen only as wives or daughters, meant that little information has reached the present day, which makes further investigations difficult. Menon (2013) also supposes that certain forms in the feminine were abandoned around the 17th century due to some social change, to which he proposes a possible pejorative evaluation that is not very well clarified. We know, however, that many of them survive to this day both in the Portuguese and Brazilian onomastic framework²⁶.

By analyzing 12 censuses carried out between 1426 and 1444, pertinent to the Municipal Archive of the Spanish province of Seville, Toro (2004) begins his study by stating that, in the Middle Ages, the social condition of inferiority of women in relation to men was reflected in the scarce documentation associated with them. Amongst the

²⁴ In the original: “[...] *determinados sobrenomes no masculino podiam ser flexionados no feminino, de forma regular: os nomes terminados em -o, como Peixoto, Coelho, Galego, Machado, Maldoado, Veloso, Alcoforado, se flexionavam no feminino com o morfema -a: Peixota, Coelha, Galega, Machada, Maldoadada, Velosa, Alcoforada; os terminados em ditongo nasal (qualquer que fosse a grafia) formavam o feminino com o morfema -oa: Girão/Giroa; Leitão/Leitoa; ou com -ã: Churrichão/Churrichã; Froião/Froiã*”.

²⁵ While a surname that derives from the mother’s name.

²⁶ To exemplify, a quick consultation of the list of approved students at the University Foundation for the Vestibular (Fuvest), in 2017, revealed the presence of surnames “Louzada” and “Pedrosa”, to name two of the surnames investigated on this occasion. The list is available at the link: https://acervo.fuvest.br/fuvest/2017/PUBL1_17.PDF

examples he uses, the author ponders that surnames related to physical or behavioral characteristics may present a change in gender because they are still felt as nicknames - to which he cites the cases of “Isabel Cara”, compared to “Fernando Caro”. In other words, “[...] for the original appellatives, however, the process of denotization by which they would become a proper name would not have ended” (Toro, 2004, p. 7, our translation²⁷).

Next, Toro (2004) mentions a case that he considers rare about the transmission of a surname via marriage. In the example in question, it indicates that the wife of a given “Juan Toribio” was known as “la Toribia”. His astonishment lies in the fact that official documents, due to their formal nature, did not usually portray communicative situations of a popular nature. She also observes that, amongst women, it was not common to use a third onomastic item - in addition to the first name and surname - and the use of the expression “wife of” was more common, followed by the husband’s name. Over time, surnames could be feminized through the ellipsis of this expression, as shown in the example “Marina García muger de Pero Martínez gallego” > “Marina García gallega”. For the author, this is further evidence of the subordination to which women were subject in the onomastic field.

Regarding surnames linked to places of geographical origin, Toro (2004) mentions that such items would be connotative elements when applied to men, however, involving women they would indicate marriage, already being inherited under the status of family names. As for the surnames related to professions, the author ponders once again the social aspect, since depending on the nature of the profession it could either indicate a profession actually performed by the woman - as is the case of weavers, midwives or beatas - or inherited from her husband - citing the example of “Marina Fernández”, known as “Marina la carniçera” because she was married to “Fernando Martínez Carniçero”. Toro (2004) believes that the differentiation would be in the use of the article, which he says does not occur in the case of professions considered feminine.

Finally, Toro (2004) alludes to periphrastic matronymics, which occur when men add the preposition “de” (of) to a surname with the expression of the feminine gender or to the surname of their mother or wife, and gives as examples: “Antón”, “Fernando” and “Martín Sánchez de la Gruesa”, probably brothers; and “Pero Martínez de María Serrana”, husband of “Isabel Fernández de María Serrana”. The reason, in line with what Boléo (1953) proposes, would be the prestige of these women in their communities until at least the end of the 15th century. Amongst the explanations proposed by Toro (2004), this seems to be the only one that does not indicate a situation of female inferiority in their social environment.

Having said that, and having these considerations well established, we will proceed to the analysis of the surnames that presented morphological expression of gender in the two selected *corpora*. After carrying out the methodological procedures described in the previous section, we identified 13 surnames, grouped in Chart 1, below:

²⁷ In the original: “[...] para los originarios apelativos no habría culminado todavía el proceso de denotativización por el que se convertirían en un nombre propio”.

Chart 1 – Surnames with gender expression and other informations

Surname	Corpus	Year	Orthonym	Age
Calva	Hostel	1888	João Teixeira Calva	36
Cardosa	Hostel	1888	José Cardosa	25
Fidalga	AUC	1890	Maria Jorge Fidalga	33
Louzada ²⁸	AUC	1889	Miguel Fernandes Louzada	20
	Hostel	1888	Daniel Louzada	23
	Hostel	1889	Miguel Fernandez Louzada	20
Maiata	Hostel	1887	Joaquim da Costa Maiata	46
Morgada	Hostel	1888	Maria Fernandes Morgada	30
Netta ²⁹	AUC	1888	Maria dos Santos Netta	31
Nova	Hostel	1889	José Marques Nova	27
Pavia	AUC	1888	Manuel Marques Pavia	42
	AUC	1888	José Pavia	21
	AUC	1890	Vicente Marques Pavia	21
	AUC	1890	Onofre Pavia	32
	AUC	1890	Antonio Pavia	21
Pedrosa	AUC	1888	José Maria Pedrosa	27
	AUC	1889	Manuel Alves Pedrosa	37
	AUC	1889	Joaquim Ferreira Pedrosa	36
	AUC	1890	Manuel Pedrosa	21
	AUC	1890	Manuel Ferreira Pedrosa	22
	Hostel	1888	João Pedrosa	31
	Hostel	1888	José Maria Pedrosa	27
Roballa ³⁰	AUC	1890	Thereza Roballa	17
Ruiva	Hostel	1887	Manoel da Costa Ruiva	22
Santa	AUC	1890	José Santa	50
	Hostel	1888	Patrício da Piedade Santa	44

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

In the above-mentioned sample, it is possible to observe the distribution of surnames amongst the two *corpora* investigated, with “Louzada”, “Pedrosa” and “Santa” presents in both. From a quantitative point of view, “Pedrosa” and “Pavia” are amongst the most frequent items, corresponding to seven and five occurrences, respectively. In this sense, the 13 surnames listed allude to 26 individuals, four women and 22 men. We also pay attention to the coincidences related to the orthonyms “Miguel Fernandes/Fernandez Louzada” and “José Maria Pedrosa” which, because they appear in both databases, seem to indicate that they are the same person (thus pointing to the movements of leaving Portugal and entering Brazil).

²⁸ The default variant found in the query dictionaries was “Lousada”.

²⁹ The default variant found in the query dictionaries was “Neta”.

³⁰ The default variant found in the query dictionaries was “Robala”.

From a genealogical point of view, we cannot say with certainty whether there were kinship relations between the individuals listed due to the lack of information about it, although this is plausible – as in the cases of “Manuel Marques Pavao” and “Vicente Marques Pavao”, who could have been from the same family and immigrated in different years. In this area, we also did not have access to information about the orthonyms of the parents or spouses due to the very nature of the documentary sources.

Thus, we collect in Chart 2 the surnames analyzed based on the etymological information available in Nascentes (1952), Guérios (1981), and Machado (2003). When necessary, we also resorted to the dictionaries of Cunha (2010), Houaiss and Vilar (2004) and Nascentes (1966), on the common lexicon.

Chart 2 – Surnames with gender expression according to etymological information

Surnames	Etymological information
Calva	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. From feminine noun <i>calva</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 320, emphasis added by the author³¹)</p> <p>“<i>calvo</i> adjective ‘Who has no hair on his head or part of it’ XIII. From latim <i>calvus</i> <i>calva</i> feminine noun ‘part of the head from which the hair fell’ XIII. From latim <i>calva</i> ‘cranium’ ‘skull’ [...]” (Cunha, 2010, p. 116, emphasis added by the author³²)</p>
Cardosa	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. From <i>Cardosa</i> [toponym]” (Machado, 2003, p. 351, emphasis added by the author³³)</p> <p>“[toponym] Feminine of adjective <i>cardoso</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 350-351, emphasis added by the author³⁴)</p>
Fidalga	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. From feminine noun <i>fidalga</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 639, emphasis added by the author³⁵)</p> <p>“Feminine of <i>fidalgo</i>, q.v.” (Nascentes, 1966, p. 325, emphasis added by the author³⁶)</p> <p>“nobleman’s wife; woman of the nobility; ETYMOLOGY <i>fidalgo</i> with thematic vowel -a taken as ending of feminine” (Houaiss; Vilar, 2004, p. 1337, emphasis added by the authors³⁷)</p>

³¹ In the original: “[apel.] Ant. alc. Do s.f. calva”.

³² In the original: “calvo adj. ‘que não tem cabelo na cabeça ou em parte dela’ XIII. Do lat. calvus || calva sf. ‘parte da cabeça de onde caiu o cabelo’ XIII. Do lat. calva ‘crânio’ ‘caveira’ [...]”.

³³ In the original: “[apel.] Ant. alc. De Cardosa [top.]”.

³⁴ In the original: “[top.] Fem. do adj. cardoso”.

³⁵ In the original: “[apel.] Ant. alc. Do s.f. fidalga”.

³⁶ In the original: “Fem. de fidalgo, q.v.”.

³⁷ In the original: “esposa de fidalgo; mulher da nobreza; ETIM fidalgo com vogal temática -a tomada como desin. de fem.”.

Lousada	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. From <i>Lousada</i> [toponym]” (Machado, 2003, p. 898, emphasis added by the author³⁸)</p> <p>“[toponym] Feminine of adjective <i>Lousado</i> (q.v.), to agree with <i>terra, vila</i>, etc.” (Machado, 2003, p. 898, emphasis added by the author³⁹)</p>
Maiata	<p>“[toponym] in the Madeira island (village and stream). Feminine of <i>maiato</i> (q.v.), perhaps in allusion to the local woman from the <i>Maia</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 924, emphasis added by the author⁴⁰)</p>
Morgada	<p>“[toponym] Frequent in the Center and South, except Algarve. Feminine of masculine noun <i>Morgado</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 1023, emphasis added by the author⁴¹)</p>
Netta	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. Is a feminine of <i>Neto</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 1069, emphasis added by the author⁴²)</p>
Nova	<p>“[nickname] [...] sometimes preceded by <i>da</i> (the), but it will not always be the feminine of the <i>novo</i> adjective: in some cases it is for <i>Nóvoa</i> (q.v.), so it has Galician origins [...]” (Machado, 2003, p. 1079, emphasis added by the author⁴³)</p>
Pavoa ⁴⁴	<p>Pavoa: “[toponym] Plural of <i>pavoa</i>, feminine of <i>pavão</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 1144, emphasis added by the author⁴⁵)</p>
Pedrosa	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. From <i>Pedrosa</i> [toponym]” (Machado, 2003, p. 1149, emphasis added by the author⁴⁶)</p> <p>“[toponym] Feminine of adjective <i>pedroso</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 1149, emphasis added by the author⁴⁷)</p> <p>“Portuguese toponymic name: ‘A place with a lot of stone’” (Guérios, 1981, p. 199⁴⁸)</p> <p>“Surname of geographical origin. From latin <i>petrosa</i>, abundant of stones” (Nascentes, 1952, p. 237, emphasis added by the author⁴⁹)</p>

³⁸ In the original: “[*apel.*] *Ant. alc. De Lousada [top.]*”.

³⁹ In the original: “[*top.*] *Fem. do adj. Lousado (q.v.), a concordar com terra, vila etc.*”.

⁴⁰ In the original: “[*top.*] *na ilha da Madeira (povoação e ribeira). Fem. de maiato (q.v.), talvez em alusão a mulher do local oriunda da Maia*”.

⁴¹ In the original: “[*top.*] *Frequente no Centro e no Sul, excepto Algarve. Fem. do s. m. Morgado*”.

⁴² In the original: “[*apel.*] *Ant. alc. É o fem. de Neto*”.

⁴³ In the original: “[*apel.*] [...] *por vezes precedido de da, mas nem sempre será o fem. do adj. novo: em alguns casos está por Nóvoa (q.v.), pelo que tem origem galega [...]*”.

⁴⁴ The “Pavoa” form was not found in none of the dictionaries consulted, only “Pavoa”, in plural, in Machado (2003).

⁴⁵ In the original: “[*top.*] *Pl. de pavia, fem. de pavão*”.

⁴⁶ In the original: “[*apel.*] *Ant. alc. De Pedrosa [top.]*”.

⁴⁷ In the original: “[*top.*] *Fem. do adj. pedroso*”.

⁴⁸ In the original: “*sobr. port. top.: ‘lugar onde há muita pedra’*”.

⁴⁹ In the original: “*Sobrenome de origem geográfica. Do lat. petrosa, abundante de pedras*”.

Roballa ⁵⁰	“[nickname] Old nickname. Feminine of <i>Robalo</i> , applied to women” (Machado, 2003, p. 1266, emphasis added by the author ⁵¹)
Ruiva	“[toponym] [...] In <i>Chão da Ruiva</i> , <i>Ansião</i> , and <i>Monte da Ruiva</i> , Portalegre, it is a nickname becamed toponym. Feminine of adjective <i>ruivo</i> ” (Machado, 2003, p. 1284, emphasis added by the author ⁵²)
Santa	<p>“[nickname] Old nickname. From feminine noun <i>santa</i>” (Machado, 2003, p. 1308, emphasis added by the author⁵³)</p> <p>“Feminine of <i>santo</i>, q.v.” (Nascentes, 1966, p. 673, emphasis added by the author⁵⁴)</p> <p>“ETIMOLOGY feminine noun of <i>santo</i>” (Houaiss; Vilar, 2004, p. 2511, emphasis added by the author⁵⁵)</p>

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Amongst the 13 surnames listed in Chart 2, we found that – with the exception of “Calva”, “Fidalga” and “Santa” – all indicated the information “feminine of”, followed by its corresponding in the masculine gender. As for “Calva”, “Fidalga” and “Santa”, therefore, we added a search in the dictionaries of Cunha (2010), Houaiss and Vilar (2004), and Nascentes (1966) to obtain more complete information about the expression of the genre.

In terms of sampling, the findings indicating 26 individuals and 13 surnames can be considered numerically insignificant in the universe of the 17,916 orthonyms analyzed. This result, however, seems to inform an interesting aspect regarding the near erasure of this phenomenon in the research. Let us remember that our *corpora* are located in the 19th century, while the inflection of surnames in gender loses its productivity after the 17th century (Menon, 2013). Furthermore, it was only in the 19th century, too, that the inheritance of the surname via marriage began to occur with some consistency in Portugal (Boléo, 1953).

We conjecture, therefore, that if the transmission of surnames had already been consolidated at the time of the productivity of the phenomenon in question, more items could have been disseminated in the midst of the Portuguese onomastic picture. However, because they allude to specific situations, in addition to the greater rigor later attributed to the official registration of individuals, certainly the gender-inflected occurrences presented in the materials studied were already just remnants of another

⁵⁰ As additional information, we find: “[nickname] Thus, in 20-VIII-1551 obtained a letter to heal «*males de boubas e corrimentos e chagas*» the Antónia *Robala* [...], certainly the daughter or wife of a man with a nickname, *Robalo* [nickname]” (Machado, 2003, p. 1266, emphasis added by the author).

⁵¹ In the original: “[apel.] *Ant. alc. fem. de Robalo, aplicado a mulheres*”.

⁵² In the original: “[top.] [...] *Em Chão da Ruiva, Ansião, e Monte da Ruiva, Portalegre, é alc. tornada top. Fem. do adj. ruivo*”.

⁵³ In the original: “[apel.] *Ant. alc. Do s.f. santa*”.

⁵⁴ In the original: “*Fem. de santo, q.v.*”.

⁵⁵ In the original: “*ETIM fem. substv. de santo*”.

time, when for various reasons it was possible to modify surnames without further legal impediments.

Final considerations

After the lucubrations undertaken in this text, we sought to gather explanations available in the literature about the reasons that are associated with the emergence of surnames with the expression of the female gender in Portuguese. From the hypotheses put forward by Vasconcellos (1928), Boléo (1953), Menon (2013), and Toro (2004), we highlight:

- a) a simple change of gender to indicate that it was a female individual;
- b) possible indication of descent from a noble house through female lineage;
- c) a context of women who dedicated themselves to religious life and who, therefore, did not change their baptismal orthonyms or pass them on to a future generation;
- d) possible indication that their bearers were illegitimate children or those of widows;
- e) cases of emigration of the husband;
- f) women with qualities so remarkable to society - considering the thinking of the time - such as intelligence and good conduct of domestic, financial, agricultural life, etc., which deserved to be highlighted;
- g) in the case of surnames inherited from nicknames, there could not have been a change of status yet, which involves the officiality of the surname to the detriment of the creative freedom that concerns nicknames; h) the chance that there has been a simplification of the periphrastic expression “woman of”.

The low numerical representativeness of the examples of surnames inflected in the feminine is strongly correlated with the fact that the phenomenon lost its productivity after the 17th century, and the data explored are located in the 19th century. As objects of interest to Anthroponymy, “[...] anthroponyms are capable of revealing an entire conception of the world, since they carry information about values, beliefs and attitudes towards the naming process that make clear their importance for understanding the culture and history of a given society” (Soledade, 2020, p. 474-475⁵⁶). This fact, confirmed in the examination of the expression of the feminine gender in Portuguese surnames, is consistent with the approach in Cognitive Linguistics, which considers that linguistic and extralinguistic factors should not move in a disaggregated way.

⁵⁶ In the original: “[...] os antropônimos são capazes de revelar toda uma concepção de mundo, uma vez que carregam informações acerca de valores, de crenças e de atitudes frente ao processo de nomeação que deixam patente a sua importância para a compreensão da cultura e da história de uma dada sociedade”.

Furthermore, we emphasize the accuracy employed not only in the treatment of the data, but also in the choice of the *corpora* and the importance of the analyzed materials, coming from the largest immigrant hostel in Brazil and from the very rich collection of the AUC. Given the complexity of the topic, the availability of the data and the few associated studies, we instigated its continuity, including from other aspects, such as the issue of number and degree. In the midst of the field of anthroponymic studies - and onomastics, in general - it is known that, despite the constant advances, there is still much to be researched and revealed. New research will contribute to a greater understanding of the history and behavior of the peoples (in this case, Brazilian and Portuguese people). These people who are part of the plots of this immense patchwork quilt that brings us closer together as speakers of the Portuguese language.

RODRIGUES, Letícia Santos; RIO-TORTO, Graça. Expressão de gênero e construção de sobrenomes femininos na língua portuguesa em finais do século XIX. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v. 69, 2025.

- **RESUMO:** *O presente trabalho teve por objetivo investigar a ocorrência da expressão de gênero em sobrenomes encontrados em documentos brasileiros e portugueses do final do século XIX, alusivos à imigração portuguesa no Brasil. A pesquisa se inscreveu nos termos da Antroponímia, vertente da Onomástica que se ocupa dos nomes próprios de pessoas. Embasada pelos princípios teóricos da Linguística Cognitiva (Lakoff, 1987; Silva, 2008), a análise centrou-se em corpora datados, a saber: a) registros de matrícula preenchidos pelos imigrantes que, entre 1887 e 1889, dirigiram-se à Hospedaria de Imigrantes do Brás, considerada a maior hospedaria brasileira; e b) passaportes dos portugueses que migraram para o Brasil entre 1888 e 1890, documentação do Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, referente ao Fundo do Governo Civil. Investigando tais corpora, foi possível sublinhar a existência de sobrenomes marcados pela expressão do gênero feminino, o que justificou o interesse em descobrir as prováveis motivações associadas a esse fenômeno. A amostragem coligida é numericamente irrisória, o que se explica por diversas razões alvitadas na literatura específica da área. Este estudo também tem como resultado a contribuição que fornece ao tema – ainda pouco explorado –, ao propor uma reunião bem fundamentada de hipóteses explanatórias aventadas em trabalhos anteriores.*
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Onomástica; Antroponímia; Morfologia; Gênero gramatical.*

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