

WAS MY AUNT HER GRANDMOTHER'S NIECE? A GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIP TERMS IN MEDIEVAL LATIN

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the meaning of family relationship terms in medieval Latin as used in 11th to 13th century European documents, the correct translation of which presents researchers with challenges. It explores (1) whether a statistical approach to analysing such kinship terms used in primary sources can better help ascertain precise meanings in particular documents, and (2) whether usage varied between different medieval western European territories.

Foundations (2015) 7: 25-53

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Introduction

Confused? You should be. Relationship terms in medieval Latin are a minefield. This article will try to steady the researcher's nerves and provide some safe pathways through the obstacles.

Latin family relationship terms are usually considered either in straight-forward translated word lists (sometimes accompanied by relationship family trees) or by more detailed articles which provide examples and propose general conclusions drawn after analysing usage. Neither approach leads to a wholly satisfactory result. The former are usually based on classical Latin and do not consider the differences in medieval Latin.² The latter provide exhaustive detail with case-by-case illustrations but provide little insight into the frequency with which terms are used with their different meanings, so are of limited use for a researcher who must assess the correct translation in an actual case.³ For example, it is clear that "avunculus", strictly translated as maternal uncle, was also used to indicate paternal uncle, but it would be useful to assess whether this usage was common or exceptional. Answering such questions is essential to help researchers decide between different meanings when interpreting a particular document. The present article explores how far a more statistical approach to the subject can be of practical use to the student.

Methodology

A complete statistical survey of all examples of Latin kinship terms contained in all surviving European primary sources is impractical. In order to keep the scope manageable, it was decided to list all references to Latin relationship terms which are included in the documents published in the *Medieval Lands* project. Given the broad range of *Medieval Lands*, it was anticipated that such references should be reasonably representative of different usage throughout western Europe and would

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² For example, J E Sandys, *A Companion to Latin Studies* (1910), 173, which is strictly classical Latin.

³ For example, J Depoin, "Les relations de famille au moyen-âge," *Mémoires de la Société Historique et Archéologique de l'arrondissement de Pontoise et du Vexin*, Tome XXXII (1913): 27-85.

therefore provide a meaningful statistical sample for analysis. Another advantage of using sources extracted into the *Medieval Lands* documents is that actual family relationships have in many cases been corroborated with a variety of documentation so the correct translations of Latin terms can be identified.

The study was limited to the three hundred year period between AD 1000 and 1300. Before 1000, the data is more sparse, and after 1300 it is distorted by increasing use of vernacular languages in primary source material. The data extracted was dated to ensure that any changing trends in use of particular terms over time could be noted.

Each document in *Medieval Lands* was read and details of all the more unusual Latin relationship terms were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to enable the data to be manipulated more easily. The study comprised just over 1,050 entries. This probably represents considerably less than 10% of all the primary source extracts in *Medieval Lands*, most of which refer to straight-forward parent/child/sibling/grandparent relationships which were only listed if the Latin term was used in an unexpected sense. The low number also highlights how infrequently some of the more obscure terms were used in primary source documentation.

Information was extracted from the British, French, German, Iberian and Italian documents in *Medieval Lands*. The data was broken down geographically to ascertain different usage patterns in different parts of the continent. It was soon decided not to include the Balkan (including Byzantine), Eastern European, Eastern Mediterranean and Scandinavian documents in the study as they contained insufficient data points from which to draw meaningful conclusions.

The precise English translation of each term was added to the spreadsheet when an individual's exact family relationship was corroborated from other primary source documentation. Cases of doubt were noted as "uncertain": for example when the chronology dictated that grandson was an impossible translation for "*nepos*", but there were insufficient indicators to decide between nephew and a more distant cousin relationship. Cases where no corroborative information was available were marked as "unknown".

Approximately 90% of the 1,050 entries were taken from medieval charters. As charters were probably written contemporaneously with or soon after the events which they recorded, there is some confidence that Latin relationship terms were used with their then current meanings. Later confirmatory charters, which copied the wording of earlier documents, were not included as such duplication would have skewed the results.

So far as chronicles, annals and similar documentation was concerned, it became apparent after starting work on the study that including too many extracts from these sources would distort the statistical picture. The meaningfulness of the study results depended on the randomness of the data. The more exact chroniclers (like the *Annalista Saxo*) used Latin terms with regular consistency. While this means that the text is easier for researchers to interpret, the study results would have been distorted by including too many extracts from a single source which (for example) consistently used "*patruus*" in the sense of paternal uncle. Other chroniclers, such as Orderic Vitalis and Alberic de Trois Fontaines, used the same terms with glaring inconsistency ("*avunculus*" for "*patruus*" provides a good example), so adding too many extracts from these sources would also have diluted the statistical reliability of the study results. In any case, chronicles compiled many years after the events which they recorded would have used Latin terms

with meanings current at the time of writing not contemporaneous with the events in question.

A similar problem arose in the case of documents such as necrologies and saints' *Vitæ*, often compiled long after the deaths of their subjects. These documents have also been omitted from the study. Papal documents were also ignored, as they were more likely to use Latin relationship terms with their strict canonical meanings which, by the 11th century, in many cases no longer reflected everyday usage as will be seen below.

Study results

The study highlighted 30 different Latin family relationship terms, with their feminine equivalents, the meanings of which are discussed in the present article. The results of the study are summarised by region in Table 1. Where a box is blank, in this and all other tables in this article, no examples of the term were identified in that region during the study. The blank box does not exclude the possibility that the term was used in other source documents which were not extracted into *Medieval Lands*. One example is provided by Latham, in his comprehensive *Revised Medieval Latin Word-list from British and Irish Sources*, which lists "*filiolus*",⁴ a term which was not found in any of the British primary source extracts in *Medieval Lands*. The term "*filiolus*" also provides a good example of a term of which only very small numbers are found: Latham lists only a single example (dated to c.1115) during the period 1000 to 1300 found in the numerous documents which he studied.

Each of these medieval Latin terms is discussed alphabetically below, illustrated by examples from the study which are elaborated with further explanations and comments.

As will be seen, there is danger in assuming that the meanings of such terms in medieval times were the same as those attributed to them in classical Latin. My otherwise excellent Latin/English dictionary, like many other similar books, includes a complex 'Family Tree' of Latin relationship terms, with "*tritavus*/greatx4-grandfather" at the top, down to "*pronepos*/great-grandson" at the bottom of the chart, and "*consobrinus*/maternal first cousin" to the side.⁵ These classical Latin terms were adopted into medieval canonical law with their original meanings. Depoin transcribes a manuscript (9th century, he suggests) from Notre-Dame de Laon which sets out the degrees of canonical relationships which closely follow the meanings of kinship terms in classical Latin.⁶ However, the results of the study show that this was only the starting point: by the early 11th century at least, practical usage had departed significantly from the original canonical meanings.

⁴ R E Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-list from British and Irish Sources* (2012 reprint), 191.

⁵ D A Kidd, *Collins Latin Gem Dictionary* (1962), xx-xxi.

⁶ Depoin, *op.cit.* (1913), 34-5.

Table 1: Summary of extracted data by region

Latin term	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
<i>Abavus</i>		1				1
<i>Affinis</i>			2			2
<i>Amita</i>	6	23	4		4	37
<i>Atavus</i>		3	2		1	6
<i>Avunculus, -a</i>	30	105	44	13	4	196
<i>Avunculus sive patruus</i>		1				1
<i>Binepta</i>				1		1
<i>Bisavus</i>					1	1
<i>Cognatus, -a</i>	13	28	13	8	10	72
<i>Cognatus germanus</i>		1				1
<i>Congerianus, -a</i>				6		6
<i>Conmater</i>			1			1
<i>Consanguineus, -a</i>	6	41	30	7	11	95
<i>Consobrinus, -a</i>	4	13		4	5	26
<i>Consobrinus frater</i>					1	1
<i>Filiolus</i>			1			1
<i>Fratruelis</i>		1	8			9
<i>Matertera</i>	6	5	2		1	14
<i>Nepos, neptis</i>	60	231	38	60	31	420
<i>Nepotula</i>			1			1
<i>Patrua</i>			1			1
<i>Patruelis</i>			5			5
<i>Patruus</i>	11	48	41	2	5	107
<i>Privignus</i>		2				2
<i>Proavus, -ia</i>	2	4	1	1		8
<i>Pronepos, proneptis</i>		3				3
<i>Propinquus</i>		3			1	4
<i>Sobrinus, -a</i>				20		20
<i>Sororius</i>		2				2
<i>Tio, tia</i>				6	1	7
Total:	138	514	191	128	76	1051

In addition, the survey shows that terms were not applied consistently with the same meanings, either within each region or between regions in medieval Europe. Few of the classical relationship translations can be accepted without further thought in 11th-13th-century medieval Latin documents. Each usage should be considered in its own context. Concerning Depoin's article, most of his examples are from pre-11th century chronicles. His observations may still be valid so far as Latin from that earlier period is concerned, but his conclusions must be nuanced when applied to terms used in later charters.

Abavus, abavia

Greatx2 grandfather in classical Latin. Only two examples were found in the study of use of the term "abavus", one in Savoy and the other in the duchy of Burgundy:

- "*Thomas...Mauriannensis comes et marchio Italiæ*" (Thomas I Comte de Maurienne et de Savoie) confirmed the donations made by "*pater meus...[et] domini comitis Humberti...abavi mei*" (presumably Humbert "*blancis manibus*/of the White Hands" Comte de Maurienne) to the canons of Saint-Jean de Maurienne, with the advice of "*B. matris mee et...tutore meo Bonifacio marchione Montisferrati*", by charter dated 12 June 1189.⁷ In this case the term is used in its original sense as Humbert I was the greatx2 grandfather of Thomas I.
- "*Guillelmus Montis S. Iohannis dominus*" confirmed the donation of annual revenue "*de Poilliaco*" to Pontigny abbey, made by "*domina Dammeruns abava nostra et domina Bura mater nostra*", by charter dated March 1229.⁸ In this case it is harder to determine the precise relationship between the confirmant and his "*abava*", as "*domina Dammeruns*" has not been identified. The name Damerons was used in the family of the comte de Saulx, which suggests a connection with the Mont Saint-Jean family but this cannot be proved.

The reason for the infrequent use in medieval charters of terms denoting remote ancestors, such as "abavus", is not hard to find. After the succession of a new suzerain, religious houses encouraged the new title-holder to issue written confirmation of earlier donations made by his predecessors, with a view to avoiding fresh disputes or reviving old disputes which may long since have been considered settled. In most cases, referring to donations made by the confirmant's father, and maybe his grandfather, would be sufficient to complete the required link. Earlier ancestors might be referred to, but not named, by using general terms like "*antecessores*". The text of the two charters referred to above do not reveal the precise circumstances of the two confirmations, but naming such distant ancestors suggests a particular difficulty relating to the donation. This could simply have been that no confirmations had been issued by more recent generations, which necessitated going back to the original source, or it could have involved a more fundamental challenge raised by a collateral family member who claimed a share in the property donated.

⁷ D Carutti, "Il conte Umberto I e il re Ardoino," *Documenti del libro primi*, XXXVI (1888), 204.

⁸ A du Chesne, *Histoire généalogique de la maison de Vergy* (1625), 169.

Affinis

In classical Latin, an imprecise word indicating "kindred". Depoin states that the term in medieval Latin indicated relationships by marriage.⁹ This opinion appears supported by the two examples of this term which were identified in the study, both of which were in late 13th-century charters in Germany:

- "*Hermannus et Otto fratres comites de Orlamunde*" renounced all rights in "*castrum Zwerniz*" in favour of "*Friderico Burggravio de Nurenberg affini nostro*" by charter dated 2 May 1292.¹⁰ Friedrich Burggraf von Nürnberg was married to the sister of the paternal grandmother of Hermann and Otto Grafen von Orlamünde.
- Richard King of Germany (brother of John King of England) referred to "*E. Coloniensi archiepiscopi*" (Engelbert [II] Archbishop of Köln, installed in 1261) as "*affinis nostri*" in a charter dated 13 September 1271.¹¹ The relationship is clarified by the *Annales Halesiensibus* which record the (third) marriage in 1267 of "*rex Riccardus Alemannie*" and "*Beatricem cuius avunculus fuit archiepiscopus Colonie*".¹² No source has yet been found which confirms the parentage of Richard's third wife precisely, but it is supposed that she was the daughter of Dirk [II] Heer van Valkenburg who was the archbishop's brother.

This limited number of examples of "*affinis*" revealed in the study results shows that the term was not commonly used in medieval charters, maybe because the need to refer to a husband/wife's relations precisely did not arise frequently.

Amita

In classical Latin, the father's sister. The results of the study, summarised in Table 2, reveal some overlap with "*matertera*", the strict meaning of which was mother's sister. This is similar to the confusion in medieval Latin usage between the equivalent masculine terms "*patruus*" and "*avunculus*", which will be discussed later.

Table 2: Amita

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Maternal aunt	2	4	1			7
Paternal aunt	3	12	1		4	20
Half-sister?		1				1
Uncertain	1	6	2			9
Total:	6	23	4		4	37

⁹ Depoin, *op.cit.* (1913), 45.

¹⁰ R M von Stillfried, *Monumenta Zollerana, Quellensammlung zur Geschichte des erlauchten Hauses der Grafen von Zollern und Burggrafen von Nürnberg*, Erster Theil (1843), CXL, 176.

¹¹ T J Lacomblet, ed., *Urkundenbuch für die Geschichte des Niederrheins*, Band II, 618 (1846) 365.

¹² G H Pertz, ed., *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica, Scriptorum*, Tome XVI, *Annales Halesiensibus* 1267(1859, 1925), 483.

Some uncertainty is introduced by the single exceptional case of "half-sister" shown in Table 2. This was the charter dated 1082 under which William I King of England donated various properties to the abbey of La Trinité de Caen, including "*burgum de Hulmo*" with the consent of "*Adelisa amita mea...cujus hereditas erat sed et comitissa A. de Albamarla...in vita sua*".¹³ "*Comitissa A. de Albamarla*" is identified as Adelais de Normandie, illegitimate daughter of Robert II Duke of Normandy and half-sister of the donor. The words "*sed et*" could be interpreted as meaning either "as well as/and also" or "who was also called" (as a synonym of "*vel*"). If the former is the correct meaning, two different persons are indicated, although no other reference to an "*amita*" of King William called Adelais has been identified. If the latter, the two references would be to the same person, but in that case it is unclear why the donor would refer to the countess as "*amita mea*" unless she was significantly older than King William. The chronology of their father's life suggests that their age difference could not have been significant.

Assuming that this case is anomalous, we are left with a fairly straightforward choice between paternal and maternal aunt as the correct meaning of "*amita*", with more examples of the former than the latter in the study. This is a simpler result than with many other Latin terms. The absence of cases of "*amita*" in documentation from the Iberian peninsula is explained by the use of "*tia*" in Spanish charters, a local Latin variation which has survived intact into present-day Castilian Spanish (see below).

Atavus, atava

Great³ grandfather in classical Latin. Six examples were found in the study, in charters dated between 1034 and 1147. In only one case can it be confirmed that "*atavus*" was used to mean great³ grandfather. This is the undated charter (maybe dated to the 1140s) under which "*Jordanus filius Jordani filii Ainardi*" (Jourdain [VI] de Chabanais) donated property to Lesterp abbey, naming "*atavus meus Jordanus filius Jordani et uxoris eius Diæ*" (Jourdain [II]).¹⁴ The existence of Jourdain [I], father of Jourdain [II], and his wife Die is corroborated by the charter dated to [1032] under which "*Jordanus filius Abonis et uxor mea Dia*" founded the abbey of Lesterp.¹⁵ The descent from Jourdain [I] to Jourdain [VI] is corroborated by a manuscript genealogy which names all the intervening generations,¹⁶ confirming that Jourdain [II] was great³ grandfather of Jourdain [VI].

In four other cases, "*atavus*" was used to indicate great-grandfather (strictly "*proavus*" in classical Latin). As an illustration, under a charter dated 24 June 1147 "*Gonnarius...Turritanorum Rex et Dominus*" (Gonnario Judge of Arborea in Sardinia) confirmed rights of Cassino monastery, in memory of "*atavus meus Baraso Rex et Marianus avus noster, Constantinus...genitor noster...*" and several other family members.¹⁷ This charter appears to represent the only surviving reference to Gonnario's paternal great-grandfather about whom nothing else is known.

¹³ *Gallia Christiana*, Vol. XI, Instrumenta, V, (1759), col. 68.

¹⁴ *Gallia Christiana*, Tome II, *Instrumenta Ecclesiae Lemovicensis*, XXXIX, col. 195.

¹⁵ *Gallia Christiana*, Tome II, *Instrumenta Ecclesiae Lemovicensis*, XXXIX, col. 194.

¹⁶ *Gallia Christiana*, Tome II, *Instrumenta Ecclesiae Lemovicensis*, XXXIX, col. 194.

¹⁷ L A Muratori, *Antiquitates Italicae Medii ævi*, Tome I (1773), 417.

In two other charters the precise meaning of "atavus" is difficult to ascertain:

- "*Milo comes castri Tornodori*" (Milo [V] Comte de Tonnerre) donated property to Saint-Michel de Tonnerre, for the souls of "*Milo atavus meus*" (founder of the monastery) "*Wuydo proavus meus...Milo pater meus...Wuydo frater meus...et Wuydo filius meus*", by charter dated 29 September 1046.¹⁸ The omission of the donor's grandfather ("avus") from the list suggests that another omission, between "atavus" and "proavus", is also possible, in which case the former could have been the donor's great-grandfather. This interpretation is not beyond doubt.
- "*Matthildis ancilla ancillarum Christi*" (assumed to be Mathilde, daughter of Louis Comte de Mousson) confirmed donations to the abbey of Sainte-Croix, Wolfenheim made by various family members by undated charter (maybe dated to the early 1090s), the document stating that "*domnus Hugo attavus meus*" built the monastery.¹⁹ The ancestry of Louis Comte de Mousson is uncertain. In any case, the wording of the document may indicate that "*domnus Hugo*" belonged to the family of Mathilde's husband, Hugo [X] von Egisheim Graf von Dagsburg, whose early ancestry is difficult to reconstruct with confidence.

Given the demonstrated inconsistency in applying the term "atavus" in medieval documents, it would be unwise to posit definite family connections based on the information in these two charters.

Avunculus, avuncula

In classical Latin, the mother's brother/sister. The survey results in Table 3 show that this meaning was correct in fewer than half the cases noted.

Table 3: Avunculus

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Maternal uncle	13	27	26	2	1	69
Paternal uncle	10	50	7	5	1	73
Maternal great uncle		1	1			2
First cousin			2	2		4
Maternal first cousin's husband			1			1
Uncertain	5	24	5	2		36
Unknown	2	3	2	1	2	10
Total:	30	105	44	13	4	195

The table reveals some interesting differences by region, with the French primary sources favouring paternal uncle as the correct meaning of "avunculus", the German sources maternal uncle, and the British evenly balanced. It is recognised that the real situation in France may have been distorted by the large number of

¹⁸ M Quantin, ed., *Cartulaire general de l'Yonne* (Auxerre), Tome I, XCIV (1860), 180.

¹⁹ J D Schoepflin, ed., *Alsacia Diplomatica* (Mannheim), Tome I, DCLXXX (1772), 477.

"uncertains", although even if all of these actually represented maternal uncles it would only balance the result evenly between maternal and paternal.

If the study results are representative, it should not be assumed that "*avunculus*" in primary source material indicates maternal uncle without other corroborative evidence. Depoin suggested that when "*avunculus*" was used in the sense of "*patruus*" (paternal uncle) it indicated the father's half-brother born to a different mother. The few examples which he cites are all pre-11th century.²⁰ It is clear that all 73 examples in the study could not fall into this category, so presumably this meaning no longer applied from the 11th century onwards.

Table 3 shows seven cases in which "*avunculus*" indicated a more distant family relationship. These were mainly relationships on the maternal side of the family, for example:

- maternal great uncle: "*Gilius quondam comes Durachiensis*" (Gilles Comte de Montaigu, Duras et Clermont in Lower Lotharingia) donated property to the Knights Hospitallers, naming "*Petrus frater meus comes de Monteacuto et Cono frater meus comes Durachiensis...et avunculus noster domnus Bruno archidiaconus*", by charter dated 1175.²¹ Archdeacon Bruno was the uncle of the donor's mother.
- first cousin: the marriage contract of "*Th. filius comitis Clivensis senior*" (Dietrich, son of Dietrich [IV] Graf von Kleve) and "*Henricus dominus de Heimesberg...Aleide filia sua*" (Aleidis, daughter of Heinrich Herr von Heinsberg) is dated 22 September 1255 and names "*Henricus comes Seynensis suus avunculus*" (Heinrich von Sayn Graf von Sponheim in Starkenburg).²² Heinrich von Sayn was the son of Johann [I] Graf von Sponheim, whose brother Heinrich was Aleidis's father.
- husband of first cousin: Berthold Bishop of Bamberg (son of Friedrich von Saarbrücken Graf von Leiningen in Franconia) confirmed that "*avunculus noster comes Henricus de Kastel et uxor sua Adelhedis matertera nostra*" (Heinrich [I] Graf von Castell and his wife Adelheid, daughter of Friedrich III Burggraf von Nürnberg) renounced their rights in the property of "*avunculi nostri Friderici Burgravii de Nurenberch*" (the same Burggraf Friedrich) and promised not to sell "*castra Kastel...et Halleberch*" without the permission of "*Fr[iderici] de Nurenberch Burgravii soceri sui*" (the same Friedrich) by charter dated 1 September 1283.²³ This is a complicated document with two different references to "*avunculus*", each with different meanings. It can only be explained if Bishop Berthold's mother was the sister of Burggraf Friedrich, whose daughter Adelheid married Heinrich Graf von Castell.

These cases represent a small proportion of the results, but they do provide a reminder that other more remote family relationships should not be ignored in considering the meaning of "*avunculus*" in medieval documents.

Two cases were identified where charters used the unusual feminine equivalent "*avuncula*", instead of the more usual "*amita*" or "*matertera*" for paternal and maternal aunts respectively. One of these is the charter dated 1201 under which

²⁰ Depoin, *op.cit.* (1913), 64.

²¹ A Miraeus (Le Mire), *Opera diplomatica et historica*, 2nd edn. (1723), Tome II, Supplement, Pars III, LXVIII, 1181.

²² *Niederrheins Urkundenbuch*, Band II, 419, 226.

²³ *Monumenta Zollerana*, CXVIII (1843), 153.

"*Mauricius Montis Acuti dominus*" (Maurice [I] Seigneur de Montaigu en Poitou) donated property to Commequiers priory for the souls of "...*Herberti, Hugonis avunculorum meorum et Gunnodis avuncule mee...*" and other named individuals.²⁴ The listing of the names together suggests that Herbert, Hugues and Gunnodis were siblings, maybe paternal uncles and aunt of the donor although no other source has been found which confirms the relationship.

In addition to the survey results shown in Table 3, one charter dated December 1233 used the double term "*avunculus sive patruus*", presumably acknowledging the doubt about the precise meaning of these two terms: "*Bernardus dominus de Turre*" (Bernard [II] Seigneur de la Tour in Auvergne) confirmed the bequest to Clermont Notre-Dame du Port made by "*bonæ memoriæ Guillelmus de Turre quondam decanus Portuensis avunculus sive patruus noster*" for his anniversary.²⁵ Guillaume was Bernard's paternal uncle.

Avus, avia

Grandfather, grandmother. These terms do not normally cause problems. However, two examples were noted while reviewing documents for the study in which "*avus*" and "*avia*" indicated a great-grandparent.

- In Castile, Queen Urraca granted "*villa...Coruellos, territorio Legionensi, inter duo flumina, Turio et Porma...extra hereditates que fuerunt de Alvaro Citiz*" to "*Tellus Telliz et Fernandus Telliz*", adding that the property "*fuit de vestro avo commite Munnio Munniz*", by charter dated May 1112.²⁶ A reconstruction of this family shows that Munio Muñoz could not have been the grandfather of Tello Téllez and his brother Fernando Téllez, but was probably their great-grandfather although this precise relationship has not been confirmed by another primary source.
- In Maine, Gervais Archbishop of Reims wrote concerning the relics of Saint Mélaïne to Even Abbé de Saint-Mélaïne, dated to [1055/67], naming "*Rorans avia mea*" and recording that she had been granted the domaine of Argentré "*in Cenomanensi pago*" by way of dower, specifying that the property was transmitted to "*nepoti suo, quem de filio suscepit, Haimoni patri meo*"²⁷. This last explanatory phrase clarifies that "*Rorans*" was the writer's great-grandmother not his grandmother as might otherwise have been indicated by "*avia mea*".

These cases indicate that nothing should be taken for granted when interpreting medieval Latin family relationship terms.

²⁴ P Marchegay, *Cartulaires du Bas-Poitou (département de la Vendée)* (1877), VI, 145.

²⁵ S Baluze, *Histoire généalogique de la maison d'Auvergne* (1708), Tome II, 490.

²⁶ J M Fernández Catón, ed., *Colección documental del archivo de la Catedral de León* Vol. V, 1336 (1990), 24.

²⁷ Société des Archives Historiques du Maine *Cartulaire de Château-du-Loir, Archives historiques du Maine* Tome VI (Le Mans), 22 (1905), 8-9.

Bineptis

An unusual term, of which only one example was identified in the survey which was used to mean great-granddaughter. This was the Spanish charter dated 6 January "Era I.C.XI" [1073] under which "*Ermesenda...prolis Nuñiz, qui fuit binepta de comite Ero Ordoniz et coniuge eius Adosenda...*" donated property to the monastery of San Salvador de Chantada, adding that "*ipsos [referring back to Ero Ordoniz and his wife] relinquerunt filios uno comite Pelagio Erotiz*" whose only child was the donor's mother "*doña Onega*".²⁸ Fortunately the document sets out this precise explanation of the family relationships, which otherwise would have been difficult to elucidate. Incidentally, this charter provides a good example of shaky Latin which must be interpreted creatively without too much heed for strict grammar, which is quite a feature of medieval charters.

Bisavus, bisavia

Only two examples of this term were identified in the survey, one each in Iberia and Italy, both used to mean great-grandfather:

- A charter dated 15 August 1075 involved the Galician family of Ordoño Vermúdez: "*Marina...cum duabus filiabus meis...Fronilli et Xemena*" donated property "*in Val de Lampreana villa Regini...[et] villa...Cavatello quod mater mea in ipsa comoratur*", previously held by "*Pelagio Ruderiquiz...bisavus meus Fredenando Veremudiz*", to León Cathedral.²⁹ Pelayo Rodríguez was the father of Ordoño Vermúdez's wife, and so was the donor's great-grandfather.
- A charter of Monte Cassino dated 1028 records a donation made by "*Atto comes*" (Atto [IV] Conte di Chieti in central Italy) for the souls of "*Attonis comitis que fuit bisabio meo et...Trasmundi dux et marchio...avio meo et...Trasmundi comitis...genitor meo...et Landolfi comes...germano meo et...Sikelgarde...avia mea...et Marocza comitisse...genitrix mea*".³⁰ "*Attonis comitis...bisabio meo*" was Atto [II] Conte di Chieti, the precise line of ancestry from the donor being traced in the document.

While Iberian and Italian documents often use Latin relationship terms which were not commonly applied in the rest of western Europe in medieval times, the charters often included detailed lines of ancestry which explain the relationships as shown above.

Cognatus, cognata

In classical Latin, "*cognatus*" signified a relative in the general sense, probably related by blood not marriage, derived from "*con*" and "*natus*" and signifying that the individuals were born "together" i.e. into the same family group. The term probably most closely resembles the English "kinsman". Not surprisingly because of this general meaning, the study results show eleven different family relationships which are indicated by the term, on both the paternal and maternal sides of the family (see Table 4).

²⁸ A de Yepes, *Coronica General de la Orden de San Benito*, Tomo VI, Apendix, IV (1617), 450.

²⁹ León Cathedral, Vol. IV, 1195, 453.

³⁰ T Stasser, *Où sont les femmes?* (2008), 365, quoting *Archivio dell'abbazia de Montecassino*, caps. 111, fasc. 8, no. 79.

Table 4: Cognatus, cognata

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Brother's son		1	1			2
Paternal first cousin	1	5	2			8
Maternal first cousin	1	4				5
Sister's husband		1				1
Niece, paternal			1			1
Paternal half-sister	1					1
Paternal half-sister's husband					1	1
Husband's brother				1	1	2
Wife's brother					4	4
Maternal first cousin, once removed	2	1				3
Maternal uncle's wife			1			1
Uncertain	5	5	2	3	1	16
Unknown	2	11	3	3	3	22
Total:	12	28	10	7	10	67

The main difficulty with "cognatus" is that insufficient examples were noted in the study (only 29, apart from the "uncertains" and "unknowns") to identify trends or draw meaningful conclusions about predominant meanings. However, even with this proviso in mind, it is interesting to note variations by region even with this small sample selection.

The few British examples of "cognatus" were all relatives by blood. The most interesting case is the undated charter in which Alexander II King of Scotland confirmed the donation made by "Malcolmus comes de Fyf" to Balmerino abbey of "terras de Petgornoc et de Drundol in Fyf", which had been given by the donor to "Marjerie cognate nostre...quas dominus Willelmus Rex pater noster dedit predictae Marjerie in liberum maritagium"³¹. The wording of the charter leaves little room for doubt that "cognata" Marjorie was the sister of the donor. The only explanation found is that the term was used to reinforce the difference in birth between the two, as Marjorie was their father's illegitimate daughter.

In the French charters surveyed, "cognatus" signified cousin, a blood relative either on the maternal or paternal side of the family, with only one exception. The single exception, from Auvergne, refers to the husband of the donor's sister: "Petrus Raymundi de Montelauro et...Guillelmus frater eius et...Raymundus frater eorum" (Pierre Raymond de Montlaur and his brothers) donated property to the abbey of

³¹ Abbotsford Club, *The Chartularies of Balmerino and Lindores, Liber Sancte Marie de Balmorinach* (1841), 10, 10.

Sylvanès, with the advice of "*sororis nostre Marie et viri eius Guillelmi de Marsili cognati nostri*", by charter dated 1163³².

By contrast, in the Italian charters all examples of "*cognatus*" signified relationships by marriage, in five cases referring to the brother of the husband/wife of the donor. Even more surprisingly, the Italian examples can be narrowed geographically as they all came from documentation issued in the Lombard principalities of southern Italy, suggesting a strictly localised variation in use of the Latin term. The reason for this local development has not been found, but it may be connected with the terms used in Lombard legal codes (which have not been checked).

In the case of Iberia, few examples were found of the use of "*cognatus*", and only a single case where the relationship could be confirmed (a relationship by marriage, brother of the donor's husband). As noted elsewhere in this article, Spanish charters were often more specific in their explanation of family relationships than was the case in other parts of western Europe. It is possible therefore that "*cognatus*" was generally rejected in local charters as being too indefinite for their purposes.

Cognatus germanus

One example of this composite term was found in the survey results. This is the charter dated 1175 under which "*Johannes de Gisortio*" (Jean de Gisors) exchanged a donation to Pontoise Saint-Martin made by "*matrem meam dominam Mathildam de Gisortio*", for the souls of "*Hugonis de Gisortio patris mei et venerabilis Dne Mathildis matris meæ*", witnessed by "*Dnus Engelramnus Aculeus cognatus meus germanus, Domnus Galo de Calvomonte sororius meus...*".³³ "*Engelramnus Aculeus*" is identified as Enguerrand [II] "Aiguillon" de Trie, whose mother Marguerite de Gisors was the donor's paternal aunt and who was therefore the donor's first cousin on his father's side. Presumably the word "*germanus*" was added to indicate a relationship through the full blood at all stages, in a similar way to how the term was used between brothers (see below).

Congerminus, congermana

This term was exclusive to the Iberian charters in the study. Six examples were found in the survey, of which four refer to maternal or paternal first cousins and two are "uncertain".

Conmater

Normally translated as godmother. The term "*conmater*" was only identified in one charter in the study, but the chronology of the individuals named in the document indicates that this translation cannot be correct. Dietrich Archbishop of Trier (son of Dietrich/Theoderich Graf von Wied), at the request of "*Walerami ducis de Limburg et comitis de Lutzelimburg*" (Waleran III Duke of Limburg), granted "*feodum suum...de Arluns et Luzelliburg*" to "*uxori sue et conmatri nostre Ermegardi* [Ermensende de Namur Countess of Luxembourg], *prolibusquoque suis Henrico, Gerardo filiis, Catharine etiam filie sue*" by charter dated 23 November

³² P A Verlaguet, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Silvanès* (Rodez), 173 (1910), 142.

³³ J Depoin, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Martin de Pontoise*, CLXXVII (1895), 140.

1223³⁴. Ermensende was born in 1186. The date of birth of Archbishop Dietrich is unknown. However, he witnessed a charter dated 1189 (probably as an adolescent) so must have been older than Ermensende and could not therefore have been her godson.

No blood relationship has been established between Ermensende and the archbishop, although this is not surprising as very little information is available on the marriages of the Wied family (neither the mother nor paternal grandmother of the archbishop have been identified). If there was a family relationship it could not have been close.

Another possibility is that "*conmater*" in the 1223 charter designated some sort of mutually shared identical relationship. This possible interpretation is suggested from similar words used in present-day Castilian Spanish. For example, "*suegra*" is mother-in-law in Spanish, while the mothers of a husband and wife can refer to each other as "*consuegra*" i.e. because they are both mothers-in-law of the same couple. It is difficult to imagine such a mutual family relationship involving a childless archbishop. However, it could indicate a shared relationship with religious significance, for example if the archbishop and Ermensende were both godparents of a third unknown person.

Consanguineus, consanguinea

Another non-specific family relationship term, indicating a blood relative in general. The study results for "*consanguineus*", shown in Table 5, identified fifteen different family relationships which were indicated by this term.

These relationships range from the closest possible, sibling, to a very remote cousin. There was even one case where "*consanguineus*" indicated a relationship by marriage, which is completely illogical considering the etymology of the word. Looking at the breakdown of the study results by region, no pattern emerges from which any particular conclusions can be drawn. In addition, several cases were found of documents in which "*consanguineus*" was used (in the plural) as a convenient umbrella term within which individuals with several different family relationships were grouped. While it may be interesting to quote detailed examples from the study results as a matter of curiosity, the exercise would serve no real purpose as the correct translation of each example should be determined individually. There is clearly no safe pathway through the minefield of "*consanguineus*".

³⁴ S P Ernst, *Histoire de Limbourg*, Tome VI, CXXV (1847), 200.

Table 5: Consanguineus, consanguinea

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Brother			1			1
Sister				1		1
Half-sister's husband					1	1
Maternal aunt			1			1
Maternal uncle						1
Maternal first cousin	1	3	1	2		7
Paternal first cousin		4			1	5
Sister's child			3			3
Second cousin		1				1
Maternal first cousin, once removed		1				1
Second cousin		1	3			4
Second cousin once removed		1				1
More remote cousin			1		1	2
Brother's son			2		1	3
Brother's grandson				1		1
Collective description for several close relations			2	1		3
Uncertain	4	14	5		1	24
Unknown	1	16	11	2	5	35
Total:	6	41	30	7	10	95

Consobrinus, consobrina

The clue to the original meaning of "*consobrinus*" is provided by present-day Castilian Spanish, in which "*sobriño*" means nephew. The term "*consobrinus*" should therefore indicate the shared relationship between two individuals, both of whom are nephews of third persons and are therefore first cousins of each other. The addition of the prefix "*con-*" describes a mutually shared identical relationship, similar to that discussed in respect of "*conmater*". Such a relationship could be on either the paternal or maternal side of the family. Table 6 shows the study results for "*consobrinus*".

Table 6: Consobrinus, consobrina

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Brother's son		1		1		2
Sister's son	1					1
Brother's grandson	1					1
Maternal first cousin	1	5		1		7
Paternal first cousin	1	1			2	4
First cousin once removed		1				1
Second cousin					1	1
Uncertain		3			1	4
Unknown		2		2	1	5
Total:	4	13		4	5	26

As can be seen, in six of the total cases "consobrinus" was used either in a restricted sense to indicate nephew or great-nephew, or with an extended meaning to indicate a more remote cousin relationship, either first cousin once removed or second cousin. As the precise relationship meaning of "consobrinus" could be firmly corroborated in only 17 of the total 26 cases, these exceptional examples represent a significant proportion. Assuming that the survey results are representative of a broader trend (and it is recognised that a sample of 26 is not a large number), researchers would be unwise to assume that the term "consobrinus" is most likely to indicate a first cousin relationship in medieval documents unless corroborated by other information.

Consobrinus frater

One case of "consobrinus frater" was found in southern Italy, which at first sight appears to represent another belt-and-braces term similar to "cognatus germanus". The *De Rebus Gestis Rogerii Siciliæ Regis*, written by Alessandro Abbot of Telese, names "Simon comes Sancti Angeli Montis Gargani [Simone del Vasto Conte di Policastro]...consobrinus frater regis...filiusque Henrici comitis...regis avunculi" among the supporters of Roger King of Sicily, dated to [1134/35] from the context³⁵. It is usually accepted that the family relationship between Simone and King Roger was through Simone's mother, who was the half-sister of the king. If that is correct "consobrinus frater" indicates nephew, although in that case adding the word "frater" contributes nothing. The generally accepted relationship is also difficult to reconcile with the chronicle describing Simone's father as "avunculus" of the king, when he was actually the king's brother-in-law. The choice is therefore between accepting a relatively meaningless term as is, or

³⁵ G del Re, ed., *Cronisti e scrittori sincroni Napoletani*, Vol. 1 (Napoli), *Alexandri Telesini Cœnobii Abbatis de Rebus Gestis Rogerii Siciliæ Regis*, III.XXVI (1845), 141.

reassessing the family relationship between Simone's mother and the kings of Sicily.

Familia

The interpretation of this Latin word appears obvious. However, given the organisation of a medieval noble household around a castle which housed a variety of individuals, the term could also indicate any household members, including courtiers, officials and servants who were not necessarily related to the noble family.

Filius, filia

Usually a straight-forward term indicating an individual's children. The synonym "prolis" was frequently used. An individual's "filii" would normally include his children by all his marriages, not just his living wife, unless this was specified in the document. With that thought in mind, it should not be forgotten that a charter may conceal an earlier marriage of an individual when it names his "uxor" and "filii" (unless the document specifies "filii eorum"). As a more general comment, when a document qualifies a "filius" as "primogenitus" or "unicus", the possibility should not be ignored that these adjectives indicate the oldest surviving or only surviving son.

Filiolus

This term, literally the diminutive of "filius", could presumably represent several relationships in which a person was described affectionately as someone's "little son". Various on-line Latin dictionaries translate the word as "young son" and "foster son". Presumably the word provided the etymology of the modern French "filleul", meaning godson which is therefore another possible translation, as suggested by Latham (although he only found two examples (British/Irish sources only) dated c.1115 and 1410).³⁶

None of these possibilities could be verified in the study, as only a single example of the term was found (from Limburg). Henri Bishop of Liège confirmed the donations made by "*domina Jutta, nobilissima matrona uxor ducis Walrami de Lemburg*" (Jutta von Wassenberg, widow of Walram II Graaf van Limburg) to Rolduc abbey by charter dated 1151, which records the presence at her burial in Rolduc of "*filii eiusdem Henricus et Gerardus et filiulus Domini Heinrici...*".³⁷ The unnamed "filiulus" was presumably the grandson of the donor, assuming that his father "Domini Heinrici" was the same person as the donor's son "Heinricus" who is named in the same phrase in the document.

Frater/soror, germanus/germana

Terms indicating a sibling relationship. "Frater" and "germanus" were in most cases synonymous, with one nuance. While both terms indicate brother, the term "frater" could include brothers by different fathers or mothers as well as brothers sharing both parents. On the other hand, "germanus" in its strict sense would indicate only a full brother born to the same parents. It should be noted that Depoin took a different view of "germanus", stating that it could indicate brothers

³⁶ Latham, *op.cit.* (2012 reprint), 191.

³⁷ Ernst Tome VI, LIV (1847), 142.

sharing the same father but not the same mother. The examples he cites are all pre-11th-century.³⁸ In reviewing the post-11th-century primary source extracts included in the *Medieval Lands* documents for the present study, no cases were noted in which Depoin's interpretation applied.

Rare cases have been found where "*frater*" was used to mean brother-in-law. A possible example is the charter dated 1149 which names "*Walterus Berthold, Gerardus frater eius, advocati...Grimbergensis ecclesiae*".³⁹ The reconstruction of the Flemish Berthout family raises some difficulty, but it is likely that "*Gerardus*" in this document was Geraard [II] van Grimbergen, whose sister may have been the wife of Walter [II] Berthout. This possible interpretation should not be ignored in documents in which the usual meaning otherwise presents difficulties.

It should also be noted that "*frater*" may have been an honorific indicating an individual's affiliation to a religious house, in which case no family relationship whatever is implied.

A single case was identified in the study in which "*germana*" indicated a relationship by marriage. Sancho IV King of Navarre granted "*unas casas en la ciudad de Calahorra*" to "*germano meo domno Sancio* [the grantor's illegitimate half-brother Sancho] *et uxori vestra vel germana mea domna Constanza*" by charter dated 29 Nov 1074.⁴⁰ This unusual example led Salazar y Acha to hypothesise that there might also have been a blood relationship between the grantor and his brother's wife. He suggested that Constanza was the daughter of Stephanie de Foix, wife of García V King of Navarre (King Sancho's father), by an otherwise unrecorded earlier marriage.⁴¹ His hypothesis appears unlikely to be correct because Stephanie does not name Constanza in her testament dated to [1066] which names all the queen's other known children.⁴²

Fratruelis

The diminutive of "*frater*", the term would normally signify the son of a brother. In the study, nine examples of "*fratruelis*" were identified in the study. Eight of these were in German charters, suggesting that the term was favoured in the Latin used in Germany more than in other western European states. Of these eight cases, six were corroborated as indicating brother's son, while one was "uncertain".

The "uncertain" case in Germany was the charter dated 31 March 1205 under which "*Emicho comes de Liningen et Fridericus fratruelis meus comes iunior*" confirmed the grant made by "*Conradum filium Merbodonis militis de Wartenberg*" of dower to his wife⁴³. The confirmants are identified as Emich [III] Graf von Leiningen (who is last mentioned in a document dated 2 June 1208) and Friedrich [II] Graf von Leiningen (who died between 1217 and 1220). The precise

³⁸ Depoin, *op.cit.* (1913), 60-2.

³⁹ A Wauters, *Histoire des environs de Bruxelles* (Brussels), Tome II, p. 162, quoting Miræus *Opera diplomatica*, t. IV (1855), 380.

⁴⁰ R Rodríguez, ed., *Catálogo de Documentos del Monasterio de Santa María de Otero de las Dueñas*, 191, 60, quoted in J Salazar y Acha, "Reflexiones sobre la posible historicidad de un episodio de la Crónica Najerense", *Príncipe de Viana*, Anejo no.14, (1992), 152 & 153.

⁴¹ Salazar y Acha, *op.cit.* (1992), 154.

⁴² M Cantera Montenegro, ed., *Colección documental de Santa María la Real de Nájera*, Tomo I (Siglos X-XIV), 18 (1991), 34.

⁴³ M Frey & F X Remling, *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Otterberg in der Rheinpfalz* 6 (1845), 5.

chronology of their lives is difficult to ascertain, but it is possible that the relationship between the two was that of first cousins, rather than uncle/nephew.

The ninth example of "*fratrueis*" in the study was in a French charter. Hugues Archbishop of Tours (Hugues de la Ferté-Arnaud) confirmed the donation of woods to Chartres Saint-Père made by "*fratris mei Willelmi de Firmitate*", who was about to leave for Jerusalem, in the presence of "*fratrueis meus Ernaldus... eiusdem fratris mei filius*", by charter dated to [1136].⁴⁴ The wording of the document clarifies that the confirmant's "*fratrueis*" Ernaud was the son of his brother.

Gener

The term "gener" indicates son-in-law. It was also used occasionally to mean brother-in-law. An example is the charter dated 3 May 1275 under which "*Bernhardus nobilis et dominus de Lippia cum consensu nostre uxoris Agnetis et filii nostri Symonis*" [Bernhard [IV] Herr zur Lippe, his wife and son] donated property to Kloster Marienfeld, sealed by "*...generi nostri comitis de Ravenesberg*"⁴⁵. The last-named is identified as Otto [III] Graf von Ravensberg, whose wife was Bernhard's sister.

Matertera

"*Matertera*" is normally accepted as meaning maternal aunt. The results of the study, set out in Table 7, show that insufficient numbers of the term were identified to draw reliable conclusions about its precise use. With that proviso, three cases were found in which "*matertera*" was corroborated as meaning paternal aunt and one case where it meant maternal first cousin. This suggests doubt about use of the term in medieval times, despite the obvious etymology from "mater", and that it should not automatically be assumed that "*matertera*" always indicated maternal aunt without additional corroborative data.

Table 7: *Matertera*

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Maternal aunt	4	2				6
Paternal aunt	1	2				3
Maternal first cousin			1			1
Uncertain	1	1	1		1	4
Total:	6	5	2		1	14

Nepos, neptis

The classic discussion about "*nepos/neptis*" revolves around its dual meaning of nephew/niece and grandchild. In addition to these two possible translations, the study highlighted 21 cases where a more distant family relationship was indicated by the term, as shown in Table 8. Depoin provides an interesting insight into the

⁴⁴ M Guérard, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Père de Chartres* (Paris), Tome II, Liber Quartus, CXXI (1840), 610.

⁴⁵ R Wilmans, ed., *Westfälisches Urkundenbuch*, Band III (Münster) 964, (1871), 496.

origin of the confusion between the several meanings of the term “*nepos*”. He suggests that the word derives from “*ne-*”, the negative, and “*pos*”, derived from “*possum*” (I am able), which together indicated a minor who had no capacity to act legally other than through the agency of the relative in whose guardianship he was placed, which could have been his grandfather, uncle or a more remote relation.⁴⁶

Table 8: *Nepos, neptis*

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Nephew, niece	24	116	17	25	16	198
Grandchild	6	16	5	27	6	60
Wife’s grandchild		1				1
Great nephew		9		1		10
Paternal first cousin		2	1			3
Maternal first cousin	1	1				2
First cousin once removed				2		2
Second cousin?			1			1
Third cousin?	1					1
Paternal uncle		1				1
Uncertain	26	73	11	4	8	122
Unknown	1	13	3	1	1	19
Total:	59	232	38	60	31	420

When considering the significance of the data in Table 8, it is helpful to amalgamate the results by generation. This is shown graphically (both raw numbers and percentages) in Table 9, in which “Generation 1” includes all same-generation cousin relationships, “Generation 2” relationships in the same generation as nephews/nieces, and “Generation 3” grandchildren. In the case of Iberia, an adjustment was made by adding to Generation 2 the twenty cases of “*sobrinus/sobrina*”, a term only used in the Spanish kingdoms in medieval Latin to signify nephew/niece as will be discussed later. In Table 9, the 122 “uncertains” have been placed in Generation 2: in all cases the chronology suggested a choice of translation between nephew/niece and another more remote relationship in that same generation, i.e. none of the uncertains could have been grandchildren. The single anomalous paternal uncle case has been omitted from Table 9.

⁴⁶ Depoin *op.cit.* (1913), 67.

Table 9: *Nepos, neptis, by generation*

	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Generation 1	2 (3%)	3 (1%)	2 (5%)			7 (2%)
Generation 2	50 (85%)	189 (82%)	28 (74%)	50 (63%)	24 (77%)	341 (78%)
Generation 3	6 (10%)	26 (11%)	5 (13%)	29 (36%)	6 (19%)	71 (16%)
Unknown	1 (2%)	13 (6%)	3 (8%)	1 (1%)	1 (3%)	19 (4%)
Total:	59 (100%)	231 (100%)	38 (100%)	80 (100%)	31 (100%)	439 (100%)

The results in Table 9 are remarkably consistent. It is a reasonably safe conclusion that the percentage breakdown of the study results between the three generations averages at approximately 3%, 80%, 17%. No significant variation in these broad percentages are observable when the data is categorised by time periods, as shown in Table 10, although the proportion of nephews/nieces over grandchildren peaked somewhat during the first half of the 12th century.

Table 10: *Nepos, neptis by 50 year time periods*

	1000-1049	1050-1099	1100-1149	1150-1199	1200-1249	1250-1300
Generation 2	33 (87%)	50 (76%)	97 (91%)	67 (83%)	55 (87%)	17 (68%)
Generation 3	5 (13%)	16 (24%)	10 (9%)	14 (17%)	8 (13%)	8 (32%)

Each case of translating "*nepos/neptis*" must be decided on its own merits in the context of the document in which it is used and the overall chronology of the family in question. However, the conclusion drawn from Tables 9 confirms the view that statistically "*nepos/neptis*" is more likely to indicate a Generation 2 relationship.

Leaving the study results to one side, another useful area of speculation is considering why charters include so many references to individuals who are referred to as "*nepos/neptis*". Several different cases can be distinguished:

- A donor donated property jointly with his named children and his "*nepos/neptis*". In that case, the "*nepos/nepta*" must have shared an interest in the donated property which was presumably inherited from his/her deceased parent, who was probably a sibling of the donor.

- A donor donated property for the souls of his named children and his "*nepos/neptis*". This case suggests a particularly close relationship: maybe the "*nepos/nepta*" had been adopted by the family because his/her parents had died. Another possibility is that the "*nepos/neptis*" represented the senior line of the family (the child of a deceased older brother of the donor) and that he/she was included out of respect for his/her seniority.
- A group of brothers/sisters donated property jointly with their "*nepos/neptis*". Presumably the same as the first case.
- A donor's "*nepos*" witnessed a charter. The individual would presumably have enjoyed a position of some importance in the donor's household or family group, the higher in the subscription list the higher the position. This could have depended on the individual's own personal capabilities rather than the closeness of the family relationship.
- A testator bequeathed property to his "*nepos/neptis*". The beneficiary would probably be a close family relation, maybe the grandson or the child of a deceased favourite sibling. If the testament included numerous bequests to different "*nepos/neptis*", the relationships may have been more remote.
- "*Nepos*" associated with ecclesiasts, for example a bishop naming his "*nepos*" in several charters. Clearly there was a close family relationship. Maybe the bishop had appointed the individual as his heir, or was grooming him as his ecclesiastical successor. In many of these cases no reference can be found to the individual's parents and there is some suspicion that "*nepos*" may have been used diplomatically to indicate the bishop's illegitimate son.

Nepotula

The diminutive of "*neptis*", indicating that the term should mean either great-niece or granddaughter given the debate about the meaning of "*nepos/neptis*". Only one example of "*nepotula*" was found during the study: "*Methildis nobilis matrona domina de Holte, relicta quondam nobilis viri Gerardi Burgravii Coloniensis*" (Mathilde von Holte, widow of Gerhard von Arberg Burggraf von Köln) sold property to "*viro Alberto dicto Schalle civi Coloniensi, sororio nostro*" to solve the financial difficulties of "*Mathildis nepotula, heres nostra, filia quondam...filii nostri nobilis viri Johannis Burgravii Coloniensis*", with the consent of "*domine Richarde comitisse Juliacensis avie dicte nepotule necnon...Katherine domine de Arberg, matris...eiusdem nepotule*", by charter dated 28 Jun 1287⁴⁷. Fortunately, as can be seen, this charter provides explicit information about the family relationships, from which we can conclude that "*nepotula*" indicated granddaughter in this case.

Noverca

Step-mother in classical Latin. No example was identified in the study where the term "*noverca*" indicated any other family relationship.

Pater, mater

No example was found in the study where these terms indicated anything other than a straight-forward parental relationship. Common synonyms used

⁴⁷ *Niederrheins Urkundenbuch*, Band II, 827, 490.

throughout Europe included "*genitor*" and its female equivalent "*genitrix*", which clearly indicated the parental relationship by blood.

The collective term "*parentes*" is less common. It would normally indicate both parents. An example is the charter dated 1126 under which Adalbert Archbishop of Mainz confirmed the donation made by "*religiosa...domina Ludgardis*" to Kloster Bleidenstatt for the souls of "*Ludwici comitis et Sophie parentum suorum...*" (Ludwig Graf [im Rheingau] in Franconia) and others.⁴⁸ There is some possibility that "*parentes*" could also be used more generally to indicate family members in a wider sense, similar to the old-fashioned use of the word "*parents*" in modern French.

Patruelis

Presumably originally the diminutive of "*patruus*", this term must mean son of the "*patruus*". Only five examples of "*patruelis*" were identified in the study, all of which were in German primary sources. Of these, the family relationship was corroborated in three cases as first cousin, son of the paternal uncle, while the remaining two examples were "uncertain".

One example of first cousin is the charter dated to [1207] which records a dispute between "*Remboldo de Isenburg*" (Rembold Herr von Isenburg und Kempenich) and Kloster Himmerode relating to property "*de Kilwalt*", which states that "*pater meus et pater Remboldi cognati mei*" had divided their inheritance between them, that "*patruus meus prepositus Bruno*" used the property "*permissione fratris sui qui erat patruus et tutor noster*", that "*defuncto patruo nostro...tutor noster*" the property was inherited by Rembold and "*frater meus*", while the document was witnessed by "*patruelem Remboldi...Gerlacum de Kouerne*".⁴⁹ This document also provides an interesting study of use of the terms "*patruus*" and "*cognatus*".

Patruus, patrua

In classical Latin, paternal uncle. As can be seen from Table 11, all the corroborated cases in the study confirmed that this translation of "*patruus*" was correct in all the geographical areas covered, with only a single exception. In no case did the term indicate maternal uncle, providing an unusual example of certainty among the various Latin relationship terms.

The exception was the charter dated 1 October 1043 under which Heinrich III King of Germany granted property to "*Adalrammo fideli nostro*" on the request of "*Gebhardi episcopi patruis nostri*" (Gebhard Bishop of Regensburg).⁵⁰ King Heinrich III was the grandson of Adelheid von Metz, by her first husband Heinrich Graf im Wormsgau, while Bishop Gebhard was Adelheid's son by her second marriage. The bishop was therefore the king's paternal great-uncle. "*Patruus*" may have been used in this charter to describe the family relationship because the bishop would have been considerably younger than the king's paternal grandfather, and so of a similar age to the king's uncles.

⁴⁸ K Menzel & W Sauer, eds., *Codex diplomaticus Nassovicus*, Band I, Part 1, 174 (1885), 103.

⁴⁹ H Beyer, L Eltester & A Goerz, eds., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der, jetzt die Preussischen Regierungsbezirke Coblenz und Trier bildenden Mittelrheinischen Territorien*, Tome II, 229 (1865), 267.

⁵⁰ H Bresslau, ed., *MGH Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniæ*, V, *Die Urkunden Heinrichs III D H III* 110 (1931), 139.

Table 11: Patruus, patrua

Translation	Britain	France	Germany	Iberia	Italy	Total
Paternal uncle	11	45	34	2	5	97
Great uncle			1			1
Uncertain		3	4			7
Unknown			1			1
Total:	11	48	40	2	5	106

One case was identified where the feminine equivalent "*patrua*" was used instead of the usual term "*amita*". "*Matthæus...dux Lotharingiæ et marchio*" (Mathieu I Duke of Lorraine) confirmed the possessions of the abbey of Bouxières-aux-Dames donated by "*pater meus Simon et avus meus Theodericus*", at the request of "*patruæ meæ dominæ Haræ abbatissæ sanctæ Mariæ de Monte*", by charter dated 21 March 1156.⁵¹ The relationship between Hara and the Lorraine ducal family is confirmed by the charter dated 30 March 1130 under which "*Simon...dux Lotharingiæ et marchio*" (Simon I Duke of Lorraine) donated "*ecclesiam...de Pixerecourt...partem decimarum villæ...de Margeville et Augecourt*" to the abbey of Bouxières-aux-Dames, in the presence of "*soror mea domina Hara abbatissæ*".⁵²

Privignus

Step-son in classical Latin. Two examples of this term were found during the study, both in French charters, where this meaning of "*privignus*" was confirmed.

Proavus, proavia

Great-grandfather in classical Latin. The study showed eight examples of "*proavus*" and its feminine equivalent in all western European regions except Italy. Besides two "uncertain" examples, all cases could be corroborated as great-grandfather, either on the maternal or paternal side of the family.

One example is provided by the charter dated 23 July 1144 under which "*Henricus dux Saxonie*" (Heinrich "der Löwe" Duke of Saxony) confirmed the privileges of Kloster Bursfeld, founded by "*comes Henricus filius Ottonis ducis, proavus meus*" (Heinrich Graf von Northeim, son of Otto von Northeim Duke of Bavaria).⁵³ Heinrich's daughter Richenza was the maternal grandmother of Duke Heinrich. Another interesting case is the charter dated March 1231 under which "*Theobaldus Chabot miles, Girardus et Seebrandus fratres eius*" (Thibaut [IV] Chabot, who died after May 1251) confirmed donations to the abbey of Châtelliers made by "*Margarita...proavia nostra, uxor Theobaldi Chabot et Theobaldus Chabot filius eorum, et Seebrandus pater noster*".⁵⁴ Fortunately this charter describes the family relationship explicitly.

⁵¹ A Calmet, *Histoire de Lorraine*, Tome V, Preuves (1757), col. ccclviii.

⁵² Calmet, *op.cit.*, Tome V, Preuves (1757), col. clxxii.

⁵³ K F Stumpf, ed., *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Erzbisthums Mainz im zwölften Jahrhundert* (Acta Maguntina Seculi XII) (Innsbruck), 28 (1863), 31.

⁵⁴ L Duval, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye royale de Notre-Dame des Châtelliers*, XLVI (1872), 54.

Pronepos, proneptis

The usually accepted meaning of "*pronepos*" in classical Latin was great-grandson. Three examples emerged in the study, all from French charters and all meaning great-nephew or great-niece, recalling the confusion between nephew/grandson in relation to the meaning of "*nepos*". It is assumed that a donor would rarely have had a living great-grandson in medieval times so cases where the term was used in its strict sense would be unusual.

Propinquus

Similar to "*affinis*" and "*consanguineus*", this non-specific relationship term can best be translated as relative. Depoin assumed that the term was used to indicate a family relationship by marriage⁵⁵. Only four examples were found during the study, three in French charters where the precise family relationship could not be ascertained, and one in an Italian charter which appears to indicate first cousin by blood.

One example is the undated charter which records the donation made by "*Emma Acquitianorum comitissa...propinquo suo Aloiensi Eballo*" and the confirmation after his death by "*Isembertus filius eius*".⁵⁶ Presumably "*Emma Acquitianorum comitissa*" was Emma de Blois, wife of Guillaume IV "*Fier-à-Bras*" Duke of Aquitaine, but no family relationship has yet been traced between her and Ebles de Châtelailon.

Sobrinus, sobrina

The study showed 20 examples of "*sobrinus*" or its feminine equivalent, all in Spanish charters. Apart from one "uncertain" case, all these examples could be verified as meaning nephew/niece, which is the same as the present-day Castilian Spanish "*sobriño*". As noted above, the absence of many examples of "*nepos*" used in Spanish charters suggests that the term was superseded locally by "*sobrinus*" in medieval documentation.

Socer

Father-in-law in classical Latin. Several examples of "*socer*" were noted during the study in all geographical regions, all with this same meaning.

Sororius

Only two examples of this term were found in the study, both corroborated as sister's husband.

Tio, tia

Equivalent to "*avunculus*" and "*patruus*", the same word as in present-day Castilian Spanish. Seven examples of "*tio*" and its feminine equivalent were noted in the study, four from Spain and three from Italy. Six of these cases could be corroborated as meaning either paternal or maternal uncle. The remaining case

⁵⁵ Depoin, *op.cit.* (1913), 48-9.

⁵⁶ Société des Archives Historiques du Poitou, *Cartulaire du prieuré de Saint-Nicolas de Poitiers, Archives historiques du Poitou* Tome I, 24 (1872), 30.

was the charter dated 6 August 1031 under which Vermudo III King of León named "*tia mea Urraca regina Garseani regis filia*".⁵⁷ Queen Urraca, daughter of García IV King of Navarre, was the second wife of Alfonso V King of León and therefore the stepmother of King Vermudo.

Uxor

Wife. Synonyms used in medieval documentation throughout Europe include "*sponsa*", "*collateralis*", "*coniunx*", "*consors*", "*conthoralis*", and "*contectalis*". In addition, "*consocia*" was noted in charters from the Iberian peninsula, and "*jugalis*" and "*mulier*" in northern Italy. According to Depoin, relying on the classical Latin meaning, the term "*sponsa*" was restricted to "betrothed".⁵⁸ This restriction is not reflected in the 11th-13th-century documentation reviewed during the study.

The masculine equivalents "*vir*" and "*maritus*" are supplemented, particularly in Spain, by "*senior*". This latter word is tricky as it can also indicate the suzerain in the feudal sense without any hint of a marital relationship.

Vidua, relicta

Widow. "*Relicta*", from which the old-fashioned English word "relict" is derived, is frequently encountered in charters as a synonym for "*vidua*" throughout Europe. The past participle of the verb "*relinquo*" in its feminine form, it indicates that the widow has been "left" by her deceased spouse but no case has been found where the word indicates a wife who was abandoned by her husband during his lifetime. No examples were noted in the study of the masculine form "*viduus*" meaning widower, presumably because a man was rarely defined by this status in medieval times.

Vitricus

Step-father in classical Latin, the term "*vitricus*" appears to have been used consistently with the same meaning in medieval charters.

Conclusions

The most important conclusion of the study is the confirmation that many Latin relationship terms were in practice used with meanings which had departed from the strictly canonical definitions during the 11th to 13th centuries. There are few rules to help with interpretation, but nevertheless the study results provide some sign-posts in cases of doubt. This conclusion may seem surprising considering the precision of early canonical law, but it is possible that the precise ecclesiastical definitions of family relationship terms were no longer widely known by scribes who composed charters in later centuries. It is also likely that the scribe would copy what he was told by the lay people with a direct interest in the transaction, who would be even less familiar with precise meanings. It should also be borne in mind that the impact of canonical law on most of the documents surveyed was limited: few examples were found of charters which dealt with complex issues

⁵⁷ Luis Núñez Contreras, "Colección diplomática de Vermudo III Rey de León", *Historia, Instituciones y Documentos* (1977) doc. 7, cited in J Salazar y Acha, "Una hija desconocida de Sancho el Mayor reina de León" *Príncipe de Viana* 49 (1988), 183-92, 184.

⁵⁸ Depoin, *op.cit.* (1913), 51.

arising from marriages between relatives within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity and affinity.

Another obvious conclusion of the study is that a particular Latin relationship term should not be interpreted in isolation but considered in the context of the document in which it is found. Understanding the underlying purpose of a charter is essential to interpreting the meaning of the term correctly. Whether a particular relationship term was used in a document presumably depended on how precisely an accurate definition of a person's family relationship was needed in line with the document's purpose. For example, in a donor's limited family circle, two individuals may have shared the same given name, maybe his son and his "*cognatus*". In that case, defining the precise relationship signified by "*cognatus*" may have been irrelevant for the purposes of the document provided the text distinguished him sufficiently from the donor's son. If that is correct, use of imprecise terms like "*cognatus*" may in some cases have been descriptive rather than definitional. Information available in other sources should of course also be taken into account, as well as using common sense particularly in light of the chronology of the families concerned: as noted earlier, the chronology should demonstrate whether an individual's "*nepos*" could have been his grandson.

A third conclusion is that different terms could be used in different documents to indicate a specific individual's family relationship. For example, the following three entries show that "*neptis*" and "*consobrina*" were used interchangeably to denote the same family relationship between William I King of England and Judith, wife of Earl Waltheof, who was the daughter of the king's half-sister. Orderic Vitalis records that King William I granted "*comitatum Northamptoniæ*" to "*Guallevo comiti filio Sivardi*" and "*Judith neptem suam*" in marriage.⁵⁹ The same chronicler records in a later passage that David King of Scotland married "*filiam...Guallevis comitis et Judith consobrinæ regis*".⁶⁰ Robert of Torigny also records that the wife of "*David [rex Scotiæ] frater [Alexandri]*" was "*filiam Gallevi comitis et Judith consobrinæ regis*",⁶¹ although in this case "*consobrinæ*" is in the masculine so would in a strictly grammatical sense apply (incorrectly) to Waltheof.

The fourth conclusion relates to the evolution of meanings over time and regional variations. All entries listed in the study were dated, as noted earlier. On the basis of this information, it had been expected that tables could be produced to illustrate how the meanings of particular terms changed over the three hundred year period of the study. However, in the case of all the relationship terms considered, the dating results were completely random with no evidence of any pattern emerging. In no case was it possible to conclude from the data that a particular meaning variation emerged at any particular point in time. As an illustration, the examples of "*nepos*" meaning grandson or nephew were scattered throughout the period, as were the different meanings of "*avunculus*" and "*patruus*". By contrast, there were safer grounds for concluding that particular terms were used with different meanings in different parts of Europe, for example "*cognatus*" indicating relationships by marriage in the southern Italian Lombard states in contrast to the usage of the same term in other regions. Another example is provided by terms such as *sobrinus* and *tio* whose use was restricted to the

⁵⁹ A le Prévost, *Orderici Vitalis Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ* ("Orderic Vitalis (Prévost)"), Vol. II, Liber IV, VII (1838-55), 221.

⁶⁰ Orderic Vitalis (Prévost), *op.cit.*, Vol. III, Liber VIII, XXII, 402.

⁶¹ L Delisle, ed., *Chronique de Robert de Torigni, abbé de Mont-Saint-Michel* (Rouen), Tome I, 1125 (1872), 172.

Iberian kingdoms. It is not surprising that a universal language such as Latin should have developed geographical variations in medieval times, considering that the same phenomenon can be observed across different English- or French-speaking countries in the present-day.

Overall, the study has helped define the range of different meanings attributed to different relationship terms and provide some guidance about which meaning is statistically more likely to be correct. The question remains whether a total sample of 1,050 examples is sufficiently representative. I would suggest that it is, especially considering that Latham's more extensive study of Latin terms shows that only a handful of examples emerge of the more uncommon kinship terms. Statistics will not provide the definitive answer in actual cases, but they will point a researcher in a particular direction which he may not already have considered.

And what about my aunt being her own grandmother's niece? In English that is nonsense, but my "*matertera*" could have been the "*neptis*" of her "*avia*", provided the wily researcher interprets these terms correctly to unlock the real family relationships.

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