

On the origins of words and names

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¹ EN. English translation by J. I. Hualde. Notes by J. I. Hualde and J. Manterola. This paper is the text of a talk that Michelena delivered in 1986 at a conference on Basque onomastics. It offers us Michelena’s reflections, formulated towards the end of his life, regarding the contribution that the study of place names, in particular medieval ones, can make to our knowledge of the history of the Basque language, as well as pitfalls to be avoided in these endeavors. It ends with some advice to young researchers in the field. The paper was published in 1991 in the proceedings of the conference, several years after the author’s death in 1987. What was published in this volume of proceedings, and later in Michelena’s *Complete Works*, is a text that Michelena may not have had a chance to fully revise for publication and he certainly did not proofread.

A note about the footnotes: Some footnotes are Michelena’s. When these footnotes are explanations that Michelena gives of the Basque words that he is using, we have added the Basque word at the beginning of the note. We have also inserted some additional footnotes with information that we thought would be helpful to readers. These start with the mark “EN” (editors’ note). Finally, in one case, the editors of Michelena’s *Complete works* or *Obras completas* added a footnote with a reference. This footnote carries the mark “OC”. We have completed incomplete references to the best of our ability and compiled them at the end of the text. Sometimes Michelena refers to a specific work giving only the name of the author, or only the author’s name and year of publication. When we thought we could identify the work, in the references, we have added bibliographical details within square brackets. For references that we have introduced in our footnotes, the entire reference, including the author’s name, is in brackets. Small clarifying additions within the text are also within brackets. This translation also contains an epilogue by the translator regarding translation issues.

1. Lizardi once characterized the land that people possess—because they have made it their own—in the following way:²

<i>Basalurrez bidalari</i> <i>kè urdiña ba-dut nabari,</i> <i>ai nire poza!, uraxe baita</i> <i>gizalur-ezagungarri.</i>	Walking in the wilderness, I notice the blue smoke. What happiness! For that is the sign of populated land.
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Even if that is so, a populated territory (*giza-lur* ‘human-land’) has, among others, another clear feature, although it is one that does not have a color that can be seen [unlike the blue smoke]. It has names, attached to it by invisible ties, that can endure for years and centuries.

Once upon a time there were *terrae incognitae*, places without a name. Those were more abundant then than now. But, is it really the case that those nameless places did not have any name at all, even if they were not the permanent abode of any humans (but, at best, temporarily or seasonally inhabited)? Those lands were mostly unknown, to us or to others, and we cannot know the name of something that we do not know exists.

What I have just said may need to be corrected. This is because unknown and poorly known territories and their geographical features do often get named, instead of remaining nameless. Consider, Seneca, as just one example, who, in his *Medea* (p. 374 & ff.), mentions a Thule, which at a later point would not be a *terris ultima* anymore;³ that is, not if that Thule is the same land that Scandinavian people colonized in the last quarter of the 9th century, leaving aside possible earlier visits from Ireland. And, as soon as they made it their land, those people named it, volcano after volcano and river after river.

2. The topic of this conference, as we have been told, is placenames. But in this talk it will instead be names and their origins. I will thus be concerned with names here. Other words, the words of everyday language, will not be mentioned, except when they are helpful for comparison.

Since one has to start somewhere, let us start with a couple of words about etymology. This task, which has often been much maligned and criticized, and not entirely without reason, must be undertaken from time to time. As a matter of fact, as Schuchardt once said regarding Basque etymology, even though it is a tiresome activity, it is sometimes essential; at least if we are dealing with the history

² A friend and colleague from the Basque Academy asked me recently about the exact source of these words (I hope it was not to use them at this symposium!). He got the wrong answer, as often happens when we are speaking from memory: They are not from Lizardi’s poem “Bultz-leiotik” [‘From the train’s window’], but from the one titled “Etxeko kèa” [‘The smoke from the house’, 1932]. The word *basalur* ‘wilderness’ and the stanza have been collected in *DRA*. And since I have mentioned my errors regarding Lizardi, perhaps this is not the wrong place to correct a worse one. It does not seem that Lizardi ever mentioned Sully-Prudhome, in spite of what I said somewhere. Someone else could not find the reference, and I could not either, after looking for it more carefully (Michelena 1981: 285 [OC, vol. 13: 240]).

³ The verses, which can also be found elsewhere, are these: “Venient annis saecula seris, / quibus Oceanus uincola rerum / laxet et ingens pateat tellus / Tethysque nouos / detegat orbes / nec sit terris ultima Thule”.

of languages—and we [linguists] very often deal with language history, perhaps too often, even when we think otherwise. If we are concerned with the well-known proposal that /elektrik-/ is contained in the underlying representation of the English word *electricity* and innumerable similar examples,⁴ it is from their history, after all, that we know how and why they are as they are.

The toponyms that we are going to be considering are not common nouns, but names; what some people call proper names. Meillet, in 1921, said that explanations of proper names are not very useful,⁵ and he gave a convincing reason for this. In order to understand the origin of a word we need a pair of crutches or props: on the one hand, the surface form, and, on the other, the meaning it contains. Since, even when we have both, we walk with difficulty most of the time, what can we do when the only thing available to us is the form?

It is well known, at least since Frege, that the thought that a word both covers and reveals—if you wish to bestow personal agency to thoughts—has or should have, on the one hand, a sense, meaning or connotation and, on the other, a denotation or reference. And proper names usually only have the latter. When we are dealing with toponyms, we know the place and the name that corresponds to that place. However, the original meaning of the name has become obscure more often than we would like and is something that we may only attempt to guess.

To tell the truth, sometimes we do know the history of the name, and not precisely through Linguistics. We know, for instance, why we find in the Americas placenames such as *Durango* and *Ojinaga*, *Guadalajara* and *Toledo*. If we undertake a linguistic analysis, we will be able to interpret the meaning of the name of the town of *Ojinaga*, which Pancho Villa apparently took by force, and also that of *Guadalajara*, better than those of *Durango* and—excuse me for my boldness—*Toledo*. That is, we can guess⁶ the components of the first two more easily. I am not saying that examining the latter two names would be in vain (more on this later), but that our path will be full of steep slopes and cliffs.

3. I will now move on to time—past time, of course. We know that the written history of the Basque language is rather short, and that, consequently, that of its lexicon is also short. Leaving aside testimonies from Antiquity, we have some documents from the 10th-11th centuries, that are not written in Basque but are full of Basque names; well, maybe saying that they are “full” is a little bit of an exaggeration. In later texts information about Basque is scant, as we know, up to the 1400s. Testimonies of the Basque language are a little more frequent in the 15th century and much richer in the 16th, although not as rich as we would need and like.

We thus have Basque words that we know only because they appear as names in documents written in a span of 400 or 500 years. As it happens, and in the absence

⁴ EN: The implied reference is to Chomsky & Halle (1968) and subsequent work in Generative Phonology.

⁵ EN: “Les explications des noms propres auxquelles on se complaît souvent et dont beaucoup de linguistes aiment à tirer conclusions historiques ont peu de valeur” (Meillet 1921: 31).

⁶ *Igerri* ‘to guess, to divine’. It would have to be the work of an *igarle*; that is, a matter for soothsayers and sorcerers. See what L. L. Bonaparte said in 1884 (Altuna 1985: 339): “Je n’aime pas du tout *igarlia* pour *profeta*, car *igarlia* en Biscaïe ne signifie pas du tout ‘prophète’, mais ‘devin’...”.

of anything else, names are the first attestations of some Basque words; indirect attestations, if you wish. Regarding these topics, one may consult Arzamendi (1985), published by the University of the Basque Country, and before that work, and about earlier names, Gorrochategui (1984), also published by the same press. And let nobody think that that there is nothing that remains to be done now. We still have not gathered all materials and information that one could possibly find about these topics, let alone investigated them. More will appear and more frequently, especially regarding the Middle Ages.

To support what I am saying, a brief demonstration may be enough. As far as I know, in Basque texts we do not find words related to the toponyms *More-* and *Opaku-*. It is clear, however, that we had those words, even if not in the entire Basque Country. Furthermore, we know fairly well what they meant, although regarding one of these two words I once erred.⁷

On the other hand, we do not always need to find those names in writing, since even today we find them strongly tied to the land, sometimes without great changes, and sometimes with interesting changes that tell us about the past. I wish only to allude now to what I have explained many times and in many ways⁸ regarding the oldest forms of some Basque words like *dipula-*, *-gapare*, etc.⁹

4. Without further ado, as was mentioned in the introduction, any name whose etymology we are considering needs two robust supports: it must be rooted with sufficient force and strength both regarding its form and regarding its meaning (which supposedly names do not have).

A name may be able to fulfill the conditions that pertain to the first of the two elements, its form. The form of a name almost always gives us some useful information. We may say that the sounds of names may change in two different ways: sometimes by transformation¹⁰ and other times by disfiguration or deformation.

⁷ EN: Michelena is referring to the toponymic element *more-* ‘swamp, morass’, which he initially mistakenly identified with a pre-Roman word found in Ibero-Romance meaning ‘stone pile’; an error that he corrected later in Michelena (1981, Eng. trans., 2021).

⁸ *Askotan eta askotara* ‘many times and in many ways’. In the *DRA* they attribute the phrase (*askok*) *eta askotara* to me, as if I had created it out of nothing. But, to tell the truth, it is taken, advisedly, from Olabide’s [1931] translation of the New Testament, Hebr. 1.1: *Askotan ta askotara*, in Latin, “multifarius et multis (: multisque) modis” [King James version: “at sundry times and in divers manners”].

⁹ EN: The medieval toponym *Dipulatçe* appears to contain the oldest attestation of modern *tipula* or *kipula* ‘onion’ from Lat *cepula* ‘onion’ (Michelena (1977: 239 [2011: 197]) and Michelena (1974: 206 [2011: 332]) reconstructs **gapare* in the surname *Etxepare* < *etxa-* **gapare*, as an older form of *kapare* ‘Sp. hidalgo’, related to Sp. *cabal*.

¹⁰ *Itxuraldatu* ‘transform’. I have always known and used *tokialdatu* ‘change places’ [*toki* ‘place’ + *aldatu* ‘change’] (not *tokiz aldatu!*) and *lekualdatu* [*leku* ‘place’]. Instead of [Captain Jean-Pierre] Duvoisin’s *itxuraldatu* ‘transform’ [*itxura* ‘aspect’] [in his translation of the New Testament, 1859-1865]. Other authors, such as Erramun Olabide [who also produced a translation of the New Testament in 1931] and Orixe [penname of Nikolas Ormaetxea, 1888-1961] (as well as some others after them), have employed *antzaldatu* [*antz* ‘aspect’]. I do not see why we should not use *forma(a)ldatu* ‘change shape, transform’. Strictly speaking we do not need to create it; it is “there” somehow in our lexicon.

Incidentally, since one word brings another one to mind, what I have just said shows that “suffixes” can be used in Basque to express what in the neighboring languages is expressed by means of “prefixes”

Words are transformed by rules and laws that are regular; or, at least, that we would like to be regular. An example would be the toponym *Gendearia* from Latin *centenaria*; and it does not matter whether the word ultimately has to do with ‘one hundred’ [Lat. *centum*] or with ‘rye’ [cf. Sp. *centeno* ‘rye’], since both were clearly related in late Latin. In Romance, we also find evidence in the placename *Centenero*, not too far from Navarre [in the province of Huesca, close to the Navarrese border]. On the other hand, the name *Alberdi* would be a disfigured word, if it comes from *Arbelidi* (*arbel* ‘slate’ + *-di* ‘place’). A similar example, although through a different type of evolution, is provided by the toponym that is now written and pronounced *Ul(t)zama*, since in earlier times it was always written *U(t)çama*, without any trace of the lateral *l* that we find later. Sounds may affect each other if they appear in close proximity. And this also may happen *in absentia*, when only one of them occurs in the speech-chain, because in the mind of the speaker they are in contact at a higher or lower level.

5. In the medieval documents I am referring to, Basque and another language are mixed, but not both in the same measure. That other language can be one of several, since, in addition to Basque, there is more than one other language in our territories, both around them and within them. It should thus not surprise us to find translations between Basque and the other language, and that, in such cases, the other language has served as the frame for Basque more often than the other way around, things being as they are [i.e. given the sociolinguistic status of the languages].

Sometimes, the translation is provided *expressis uerbis*, even if unintentionally. In documents from Navarre, we find, for instance, *pieça clamada X-soroa* ‘A plot called X-soroa’, etc. Such examples provide us with two pieces of information. First, that in the Peninsular part of Navarre, the Basque word *soro* was known in that form, not as *solo*, as in parts of Araba/Álava. This should not surprise us too much. The second piece of information is of greater importance: In the area around Pamplona/Iruñea and Lizarra/Estella, at least, the word *soro* did not mean ‘pastureland’, as in other places. That meaning was expressed by *Eunce*. No, *soro* is a plot of arable land, in Spanish *pieza de labrar* or *labrantío*. In Landucci’s dictionary as well, we find *soroa* as a translation for Sp. (*h*)*eredad* [Agud & Michelena (1958: 118)].

But usually we do not find translations; it is only that the Basque and the Romance words are similar and it would appear that one strengthens the explanation of the other. Let us take the [Medieval Romance] nickname *Rauia* ‘Rage’ [Mod. Sp. *rabia*]. It seems rather unexpected from the perspective of our current naming practices; much less so, however, when we repeatedly find it next to Basque *Amurru* ‘Rage’ [St. Bq. *amorru*]. Consider now the name *Vizinaya* ‘wish to live’ [*bizi* ‘life’ + *nabi-a* ‘the wish’], which still survives as a surname and was also the name of a plot of land in the 11th-12th centuries. We know or can guess what it means, and

(here, ‘trans-’). In general the same is true of *-berritu* ‘renew’, which is used in *eraberritu* [*era* ‘manner’], *zaharberritu* [*zabar* ‘old’], *biziberritu* [*bizi* ‘life’], and the word *bibotz-berritu* [*bibotz* ‘heart’], which now can be heard and read in certain quarters (= Lat *conuertere*, or so), etc. It seems, by the way, that as the equivalent of *inter-nation-al*, the word *nazio-arte-ko* is now well-established in Basque.

therefore, what it may have meant at that time. Our suspicion becomes certain knowledge if we compare it with the Romance name *Buscavida* found in 1280 in Funes, Navarre: *Las casas de Buscavida son caydas...* (Zabalo Zabalegui 1972: no. 49). I once translated [the medieval Basque nickname] *Beatça* [cf. St. Bq. *behatz-a*] as equivalent to Bq. *eri*, Sp. *dedo*, because that is the meaning that this word has in my own dialectal area; a meaning that includes both ‘finger’ and ‘toe’, and both ‘thumb’ and any other digit. But, as I should have known very well, this is not the case in all Basque varieties. And it was not the case in Iruña/Pamplona in the 12th-13th century, where the nickname that we find over and over in Romance is *Polgar* ‘thumb’ [Mod. Sp. *pulgar*].

6. The task that I have taken upon myself, that of explaining names by means of common words, has taken us into the area of origins: We find ourselves in the realm of etymology, and not just in any way whatsoever. And because what has happened to me may happen to others as well, I would like to offer a piece of advice to my colleagues, ripe as I am in years, if not in knowledge. Among us [in the field of Basque etymology] there is a strange tendency, if it has not ended recently, to flee from what is obvious and fall into bottomless pits.

Once we tried to find one-foot-tall plants, and even better if they were shorter, in Basque names.¹¹ Then, and more and more frequently afterwards, we found rivers, creeks, rivulets, brooks, arroyos and streams for which there is no documentation. But if you tell someone with those ideas that *Busturia* is nothing but *bost* ‘five’ + (*h*)*uri* ‘town’—which is what most of the people from there have always believed—they will laugh in your face. You are doing folk etymology without being aware of it! And the “folk”, the people, it would appear, is not something that should always and everywhere be exalted.

Apparently it is not enough that in the olden times *Busturia* was an entire district (*in territorio Busturi*, later a county or *Merindad*), and that even today, according to its inhabitants, it is divided into five zones or neighborhoods. In addition, it is not enough that similar names are found all over: *Cinco Villas*, *Pinpedunni*, *Pentapolis*, *Pañcapura*, etc., even if we were to forget the *Bortzerriak* that we find on the banks of the Bidasoa river.¹² Nobody denies that these are five, *bortz* - *bost* ‘five’. And closer at hand, we also have another *Bosturia* - *Bustiria* in Treviño, and that *bost* ‘five’ has

¹¹ EN: Michelena appears to be making reference to the work of Isaac López-Mendizábal (1958). In Michelena (1973), he criticizes López-Mendizábal’s etymological proposals regarding Basque surnames and toponyms and summarizes this author’s approach in the following way: “los radicales de los topónimos vascos son, en elevadísima proporción nombres de plantas, y muy especialmente de plantas pequeñas. A su entender, se han visto equivocadamente antropónimos, nombres de núcleos de población o de edificios, etc., en muchos nombres vascos, cuando en realidad se trataba de fitónimos, p. ej., el brezo o el yezgo.” [“The roots of Basque toponyms are, in a very high proportion, names of plants, and very especially, names of small plants. In his view, people have seen anthroponyms, names of towns or buildings, etc., in many Basque names, when in fact they were plant names; e.g., heather or dwarf elder”] (Michelena 1973: 14 [OC, vol. 9: 26]). Other critical comments in this paragraph may also refer to the same author.

¹² *Pjatigorsk*, in Russia, is also something like that, a set of five in any case, but it appears to be more closely related to ‘mountain’ (*gora*) than to ‘town’ (*gorod*). Thus, in Basque it would be *Bostmendieta* (or *Bostmendiak?*), like the one in Zuberoa.

a clear cause, as María N. Sánchez González de Herrero shows beautifully in her thesis. Unfortunately that thesis, which was written under the direction of Professor Llorente, remains unpublished, as far as I know.¹³

Even further down the path of bold shamelessness, once I said, just like many other citizens and countrymen often say, that *Eunate* in Navarre is simply *ebun* ‘hundred’ + *ate* ‘door’. If I said it, I said it. It is true that, as I have just remarked, I was only echoing what others had said, namely, that those doors were an infinite set (which is nevertheless countable). Let us not underappreciate and dismiss the common people, because they also have eyes as sharp as those of the sages. Some years later, when I finally saw Eunate, I could observe what others had seen before: the church and the arches around it. Perhaps it does not have one hundred doorways, counting both standing and fallen, but, it does have, so to speak, “a hundred”, meaning a lot. Is it perhaps the case that there were a hundred wells in *Ciempozuelos*, a hundred fountains in *Cifuentes*, seven palaces or chambers in *Semipalatinsk*?

Even if they are not palaces, this is also like the “ten” that appears in a list of corrals of *Ama Jaureguiaga* in a 1110 document from Leire (Martín Duque 1983: 235a). Incidentally, the passage where this is mentioned needs to be corrected, it seems to me, by moving a comma. I understand it this way: *Leycarduya Cilueticoa, Ama Jaureguiaga Barrena Aurichoa*. That is, one is from Zilbeti [*Cilueti-coa*] and the other from Auritz [*Auriç-choa*].

We do not need to try to avoid what is easy and seems obvious; much less when there is not anything better. Once I said that *Opakua* and the like (*Opako*, etc.) come from Latin; from Latin *opacus*, to be precise. I do not think anybody had said it before, undoubtedly because it was too obvious; because it was immediately apparent. Those who know about the success that that word has had in the Pyrennees, such as G. Rohlfs [1977: 96], did not at all reject this opinion.

7. Regarding the boundaries of the Basque dialects—to the extent that they have boundaries—thanks to the efforts first of L.-L. Bonaparte,¹⁴ and later of R. M. Azkue and others, we may know them, whether well, so-so or poorly. There is however more than a little that Bonaparte heard and knew but now is no longer to be found [i.e. the Basque varieties that were spoken at the time in areas where the Basque language was later lost]. We are lucky that he gathered some information about those varieties. Nevertheless, finding the information that Bonaparte provided in different places is not an easy task, which may prevent us from using that information in our work. F. Ondarra is now searching for these materials and organizing them.¹⁵

¹³ OC: It was published as García González de Herrero (1986).

¹⁴ EN: Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte (1813-1891), a nephew of Napoleon, was the founder of the field of Basque Dialectology. He commissioned a great number of translations into many Basque varieties and published dialectal maps of the Basque language.

¹⁵ EN: Father Francisco (Patxi) Ondarra (1925-2005) was Michelena’s colleague in the Basque Academy and published a number of articles on Basque varieties of areas of Navarre where Basque was spoken in the 18th- 19th centuries, but had later become monolingual in Spanish. More information about F. Ondarra and his work can be found in the Basque version of Wikipedia.

If we go further into the past, however, people were also speaking in Basque in other areas that in Bonaparte's times were already Romance-speaking. Recall, to give an example, Landucci's dictionary, which was so long repudiated.¹⁶ The Basque dialect that we find in those pages would be hard to fit within Bonaparte's dialectal network; perhaps because it was spoken in Araba, in an area that would later become Spanish-speaking. Nevertheless, I must confess that there are problems when we compare this document with other things we know about the Basque of Araba.

Landucci's dictionary appears to us like a giant among dwarves [as a source of information for the Basque of Araba]. There are, nonetheless, not just one or two of those dwarves, but hundreds and even thousands. I am talking about placenames, Basque names in Romance documents; for those are, in their abundance, the remedy for our scarcity; those we can use to fill the gaps in our knowledge.

8. Such dialectal data have been used as a source of information for a very long time; although it would be more exact to say that only a small number of them have been used. Menéndez Pidal [1948], for instance, investigated the distribution of *barri - berri* 'new' and *(h)uri - (h)iri* 'town' (rather, he investigated their traces in placenames), wanting to determine how far they extended, in the conviction that he was marking the boundary between two Iberian dialects. His claim was overly ambitious, as we now know, but we can at least define two Basque dialectal areas using those word variants. It is true, however—since such accidents are always bound to happen—that *(h)iri* has left a large area without any traces, especially in Gipuzkoa. In addition, in the border region between Navarre and Araba (Lana, etc.), some persistent questions remain.

We know that the geographical limits of aspiration—and I am talking about the sound that appears in writing mostly as *h*—used to extend much further than Bonaparte recorded. The aspiration was known and used orally and in writing well into the Low Middle Ages in the Basque of Araba, La Rioja and Burgos. Things are less clear concerning the situation of aspiration in Bizkaia, and we would do well not to say anything about Gipuzkoa, given our ignorance in this respect. It would not be too daring to say, in any case, that we do not have clear traces of /h/ there at the beginning of the 13th century. What we know argues against it both for Gipuzkoa and for High or Peninsular Navarre.

Regarding sounds, most sonorants underwent a great ruination before our Medieval documents and at most we find them only as they breathe their last gasps. That ruination, it goes without saying, was one of those that happen in language evolution; one of those transformations that, at the end of the day, do not destroy anything.

As for the documentation of these changes, even though the texts that we have are written almost entirely in Romance, Basque also has its small place in them. The following well-known pairs may serve as evidence [where the first word in each pair is a Romance placename and the second one is its Basque equivalent]: *Paterniana* and

¹⁶ EN: It was overtly rejected by Manuel de Larramendi and other scholars, because of the many loanwords from Spanish that it contains (although in practice Larramendi used it as a source for his own dictionary). See Michelena's introduction to Landucci's dictionary in Agud & Michelena (1958).

Baternia, *Undiano* and *Undio*, *Eguilaz* and *Hegiraz*, *Ali* and *Ehari*; and in another field, *Bahaeztu*, later *Maeztu* and even later *Maestu*. Regarding the old Basque consonants *L* and *N* (and the capital letters suitably replace the asterisk), in the oldest texts, they are still sometimes written as *ll* and *nn*. The former may be pronounced in Romance like palatal *ll* [IPA [ʎ]], even though a palatal pronunciation *ñ* [IPA [ɲ]] for the latter is not found. This phenomenon has not been sufficiently studied, but I would say that it took place in the western area of the Basque-speaking territory, including Bizkaia and Araba.¹⁷

It is easier to notice dialectal similarities and differences when we compare individual words. To mention Araba again, here we find *bruar* ‘breast’, that is, **burar* [in St. Bq. *bular*], *errexal* ‘tree’, in Landucci’s dictionary as well as in toponyms, and also *inkatz* ‘coal’, as in Zuberoa [in St. Bq. *ikatz*]. The toponymic element *opaku* ‘shaded mountainside’ is found in Araba and Navarre, the element *more* ‘marsh’ (almost) exclusively in Navarre. We could slowly establish the boundaries if we proceeded with some care. It is true, though, that the geographical domains do not appear as clearly defined as we would like. Perhaps we would need to use word lists rather than lines on the map, but we would still learn a great deal, as shown above in the discussion of the *solo/soro* ‘field; pasture’ isogloss. You see more if you have one eye than if you are blind.

9. I have been discussing medieval linguistic boundaries; that is, those found in documents. Language boundaries that are even older than those are also apparent to some extent. As is well known, not all researchers agree regarding language boundaries at different periods, either in the modern Basque Country or beyond. And they are not even in agreement concerning which other languages have been spoken around or within the Basque Country. It would be crucial to collect and classify some materials and, if possible, show them on maps, as M.L. Albertos and J. Untermann, among others, have beautifully done [for the pre-Roman languages of the Iberian Peninsula].

Suffixes deserve special attention in this work. Names that may bear suffixes are found with profusion, although it is often difficult to know if an individual name has a specific suffix or not. Regarding the suffixes that I have now in mind, we may have a strong motive to suspect that they are old when the roots that precede them cannot be explained by means of the Basque language—based on what we know—unless it is by doing violence to the facts.

Here are some suffixes, which have been investigated to different extents, or, in the worst of cases, only mentioned. It is well known, or it should be well known, that the Basque ending *-otz*, *-oze* in names of towns has a clear relative in Romance *-ués*, *-òs*. The Romance ending appears in Navarre, Aragon and Gascony; and, to prove that it is the same suffix as the Basque one, it is enough to remember pairs such as *Navascués* / *Nabaskoze* [two names of the same Navarrese town, in Spanish and Basque respectively]. Rohlfs and Séguy investigated only the Romance area, but

¹⁷ EN: Michelena does not provide examples here, but he appears to be referring to toponyms like *Zaballa* (Bq. *zabala* ‘the wide one; the plain’), *Ollavida* (Bq. *ola* ‘hut’ + *bide* ‘road’), both in La Rioja, etc., where the *ll* in the spelling indicates a palatal lateral.

A. M. Etxaide [Echaide Itarte 1967] has also studied the Basque Country, and it is clear that the suffix *or*, in other words, the town names bearing it, are not found everywhere: the territory over which these names are spread includes only Navarre and the eastern zone of the Basque-speaking area.

Some years ago—quite a few years ago, actually—Caro Baroja [1945] investigated the names in *-ain*; which are also mostly names of towns. Besides in Navarre, this ending appears also in the Northern Basque Country, and, I believe, also outside of the Basque Country. Assuming that Caro Baroja's hypothesis is essentially correct (that is, that what precedes the suffix is a personal name, just as he assumed for *-ués*, etc.), we may immediately conclude that *-ain* is younger than *-ués*, because very often the names that appear with that suffix are very well known to us.

There are several other toponymic endings that would have to be examined in some detail: *-iz*, *-ika*, etc. M. Agud Querol [1973] has a long article about those, with maps and everything. I would not like to go any further, however, without raising an issue that directly concerns this topic of names, namable things and territories: What is what? [i.e., which toponyms are properly analyzed as bearing which suffix?]. That's what we need to ask ourselves before getting any deeper into the topic. Here is an example. There was a time when people thought that all towns ending in *-otz*, *-oze* were cold places [Bq. *hotz* 'cold']. Although things have become warmer now [that is, that view has been rejected, see above for *-otz*, *-oze*], is it really the case that there are no instances of *-otz* meaning 'cold' at all, even some that are not as cool as *Iturriotz* [Bq. *iturri* 'spring, source']? I do not think that *Araoz*, in the neighborhood of Oñati, is related to *Olhoz* or *Zildoz* in its ending. As I read in the work of the late Father Izagirre, it seems that it is pronounced *Araotz* [*(h)aran* 'valley' + *(h)otz* 'cold'].

Something very similar might happen with the ending *-ain*, as Caro Baroja [1945] himself pointed out. After a vowel, it may be the case that *-ain* is an eroded form of *-gain* 'top, summit'. See *Larrasoaña*, even with *-a* [*Larraso-gaina*]. In the 12th-13th centuries we find *Larresoin*, *Larresoina*, *Larresoain*, *Larras(s)oin*; and *Lizasoain*, in 1197, cf. *Lizaso*.

More than once, I have compared *Mundaka* and *Apodaka*, thinking that both might have a suffix *-aka*. This hypothesis would have no value if the latter turns out to be related to Sp. *Cadagua*. It is not impossible; if it is not the truth, it at least has verisimilitude, if I can say so myself [see Michelena 1981].

Above I have mentioned the suffix *-iz*. Once I grouped *Gerricaiz* (I give it in Spanish spelling) with many other placenames in *-iz*: *Lemoiz*, *Lezamiz*, etc. Later I realized, after reading the information provided by Irigoyen [1985, 1991],¹⁸ that, among other things, it does not have the same ending: in the former, *-iz* comes after a vowel; in the latter group, after a consonant. It seems to me now that it is less difficult—even if we are still wandering around in the fog—to propose that *Gerricaiz* is *Gernika* or *Gerrika* + *gaitz* 'big'; cf. *Barasoaingaiz* in Navarre, next to *Barasoain*.

¹⁸ EN: The work by Irigoyen that Michelena is referring to here is most likely a version of the paper that Irigoyen presented at the same conference as the present paper and was later published in the proceedings (Irigoyen 1991). These toponyms are also discussed in Irigoyen (1985). Incidentally, the form *Gerricaiz* is not really the Spanish spelling of this placename, which would be *Guerricáiz*, but it is the spelling that Irigoyen (1991: 164) uses, together with *Gerrikaiz*.

10. Since it does not cost anything to ask (the consequences will remain to be seen), I would like to make the following request to all of those who will be engaged in collecting data. I would beg them to record names exactly as they are, reading literally those that are written and transcribing those that they hear just the way they sound; Basque names in Basque guise, and Romance ones in their Romance form. And not to mix oral data and data from written sources, because the former are becoming corrupted. For instance, in Errenteria and its surroundings, the placenames that I have always heard and pronounced *Galtzaborda* and *Lintzin*, even in Spanish, are *Galzaraborda* and *Linzirin* in the speech of younger people.

And be careful with accentuation! Do not behave like that famous long-bearded man, Valle Inclán, did, according to what the late Joxe Mari Iribarren told us. They took him to the Bidasoa area, to gather information for his trilogy *La guerra carlista*, most likely for the book *Gerifaltes de antaño*. Valle Inclán would start “porque Egozcué...” [“because Egozcué...”], and his interlocutor would always correct him, at least indirectly: “Egózcue, Egózcue...”. “Pero nada—that is how the story ends—no nos hizo el menor caso. El libro está lleno de Egozcués con acento” [“But to no avail, he did not pay any attention to us. The book is full of *Egozcués* with an accent mark”].¹⁹ For those of us from Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, the location of the stress in placenames in Araba and Navarre is often surprising, especially if we do not know about it beforehand.

Translator’s epilogue: What was lost in this translation

Luis Michelena—or Koldo Mitxelena, which is the form of his name he used in Basque—contributed to the creation of a model of contemporary Basque scholarly prose in a decisive way. One reason for this was his unsurpassed knowledge of the Basque written tradition, of which he made use in his own writing, resulting in a style that is rich and nuanced. He rescued numerous words and expressions found in literary and other works from oblivion, adapting them to new contexts. In fact, some of the footnotes that he added to this paper concern lexical matters: the source of a certain word that he is employing or his opinion regarding the best lexical option for the expression of a certain meaning.

Much of the intertextual feeling of Michelena’s prose will necessarily be lost in translation. For instance, in characterizing Landucci’s dictionary as a gigantic source of information about the Basque of Álava/Araba among the thousands of dwarf sources represented by the Basque toponyms in this region, Michelena uses the phrase “*gizandi bat iduri*” within quotation marks. This expression is taken from Lizardi’s 1932 poem *Bultzzi-leiotik* ‘from the train’s window’. Michelena may have expected his readers to recognize the quotation, especially since the paper starts with another poem by Lizardi. This is the only quote of this type that is directly marked

¹⁹ He was talking about ‘Jabonero’, of course, the ‘guerilla-partner’ that Santa Cruz executed so slyly, even though Olazabal denied it. [EN: Juan Egozcue is called ‘Jabonero’ in Pío Baroja’s (1919) novel *Zalacain el aventurero*, which deals with some of the same historical events as Valle-Inclán’s trilogy.]

as such, but in many other cases Michelena's lexical choices and phraseology are also rooted in Basque literature.

To give one example, what I have translated with the prosaic "allude" is in the original Basque *keinuz eta aieruz (atera)*, an expression that at least some Basque readers will immediately recognize as coming from P. Axular's (1643) prologue to his stylistic masterpiece *Gero*. In L. Villasante's Spanish translation of Axular's book, the expression is rendered as "*con guiños y señas*" [with winks and gestures]. Perhaps, in my English translation of Michelena's sentence, "gesture to" would have been closer to the original than "allude to", but it would still have failed to convey the resonance that the original expression would have for Basque readers.

In an expression like *xede hautetsia, helburua, jomuga edo itoa*, which could be translated perhaps as "chosen objective, destination, goal or aim", we find an accumulation of near-synonyms that may also remind Basque readers of Axular's style. I have simply translated it as "denotation or reference", since here Michelena is referring to one of the two notions in Frege's distinction between *sense* and *reference* (in German, *Sinn und Bedeutung*).

Finally, to avoid multiplying examples, here is one of a different type. After referring to folk etymology—in Basque *herri-etimologia*—Michelena writes: *Eta 'herria', ematen duenez, ez da non eta noiznahi gauza goragarria*, which I have translated as "And the 'folk', the people, it would appear, is not something that should always and everywhere be exalted". Here there is a reference to the political slogan *Gora Herria!* 'Long live the People! that is lost in translation.

Abbreviations

ASJU = *Anuario de Filología Vasca* "Julio de Urquijo".

DRA = Manuel de la Sota, Pierre Lafitte & Lino Akesolo. 1976-1989. *Diccionario Retana de autoridades de la lengua vasca*, 9 vol. Bilbao: La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca.

FLV = *Fontes Linguae Vasconum*.

OC = Luis Michelena. 2011. *Obras completas* [Complete works]. 2011. Ed. by Joseba A. Lakarra & Iñigo Ruiz Arzalluz. Donostia/San Sebastián & Vitoria-Gasteiz: "Julio Urkixo" Basque Philology Seminar, Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia/Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa & UPV/EHU.

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