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One Kingdom, Two Languages. Anthroponomastics in Early Modern Navarre

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Navarre, a small kingdom near the French border, which was independent during the Middle Ages. The original language of Navarre was Basque, a non-Romance language, which was also unwritten, as the political powers used Latin, Navarrese Romance, French, Occitan or other languages. In 1512 Navarre was conquered by the Catholic king, Ferdinand, and incorporated into Castile as part of the Spanish kingdom. After the union the Navarrese elite tried to adapt to their new situation by learning Spanish; this was also a way of gaining access to overseas trade. There were cultural as well as linguistic differences between Navarre and Castile for example in the conception of a woman's role in the household and in the transmission of property from one generation to the next. Rules governing inheritance also affected the transmission of family names. The result of the incorporation of Navarre into Castile was a peculiar anthroponomastic system, a mixture of both cultures.

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Navarre: An Introduction

Navarre is strategically located on the European mainland, bordering France and Spain. Extending between the great chain of the Pyrenean mountains and the Ebro river, it encompasses a wide variety of ecosystems; however it is a mainly mountainous country and during the Medieval and Early Modern Ages it was quite poor. Navarre had powerful neighbours, challenging topography and, from 1135, there was no border with Muslim territory, a potential source of income; in addition, from 1200 Navarre had no access to the sea. It was therefore not an attractive territory to the various historical invaders of the Iberian Peninsula. Neither the Romans, Visigoths (a Barbarian tribe), nor Muslims apparently paid very much attention to Navarre because of its peripheral situation, scarce population and poor agricultural resources. On closer analysis, there is a clear contrast between the North and South of Navarre. The Northern sector of Navarre, close to the Pyrenees, is more isolated, covered with forest, has a rainy and foggy climate, and is characterised by small villages dotted throughout the rural landscape, whose populations spoke Basque exclusively, until the 20th century. The Southern sector of Navarre, the sunny Ebro valley, is an area of flat ground with open horizons, whose inhabitants were Romanised early on and lost the Basque language; it was a crossroads for people travelling from Castile and Aragon. The Northern and Southern sectors have sometimes been identified with *saltus* and *ager* respectively (Iriarte López 2000); Southern Navarre was much more affected by Romanisation. The town founded by Pompeius in 79 BC, according to legend – *Pompaelo*, the current city of

Pamplona – was situated at a meeting point between the Northern and Southern sectors. Some historiographers consider that the *saltus vasconum* has preserved the original identity of this kingdom; these scholars argue – and this is a matter for contention – that one can still find all the original features of Basque people in the *saltus*.

One fact is unquestionable, the language spoken by most of the Navarrese, called Basque, was the only pre-Roman language that survived on the Peninsula after a long period of intense Romanisation. The decline of the Roman Empire, which began in the 3rd century AD, the subsequent urban decadence and the ability to come to terms of agreement with invading people instead of confronting them – attributed by some authors to the Basque people – help to explain this extraordinary conservation. The Latin spoken in the *ager*, consisting mainly of the Ebro valley and the Eastern part of the kingdom, bordering Aragon, evolved towards a local dialect, called Navarrese, which had merged with Spanish by the time of the conquest. These processes explain the particularities of the Spanish spoken by natives of this region nowadays; on the other hand, native Basque speakers usually speak a very pure Spanish, because they learn standard Spanish in school, but it is not a language they use in ordinary life.

A Kingdom at the Crossroads

In 810AD a legendary leader, Iñigo Arista, first king of Pamplona came to power in this approximately 12,000 km^2 territory. At that time the Iberian Peninsula was dominated by Muslims, with whom Iñigo's dynasty became related by marriage. The territory had been previously dominated by the Roman Empire (from 2nd century BC until 5th century AD; the era in which Pamplona was founded). After the collapse of the Roman Empire the area was invaded by Visigoths, who dominated from 6th century to 713, and later by Muslims. These conquerors ruled over the native population, mostly *Bascones*, a folk whose origins remain mysterious; it is difficult even to determine exactly where they settled down (Andreu Pintado 2009). Iñigo ruled his small kingdom until 851, and it became one of the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula during the Muslim era. From 1150 onwards his successors adopted the title 'king of Navarre', instead of 'king of Pamplona', changing the more restrictive concept – Pamplona was the bishopric town, the place where nobility lived – to a territorial, broader conception of its dominion. At the same time, in the context of the *Reconquista*, a period of expansion was followed by a retrenchment in which Navarre lost part of its territory, reducing in size from approximately 20,000km^2 to 12,000km^2. One can infer that here, as in other regions of the continent, a variety of languages co-existed throughout this long period: Latin was the language used in most official documents during the Pamplona's kingdom era and afterwards; Arabic, specially in the Ebro valley; Jewish, in the main towns, such as Pamplona, Tudela and Estella.

During the Middle Ages, the discovery of St. James the Apostle's tomb in Galicia was the origin of the road to Santiago – sometimes called the 'high street of Europe'. The massive movement of pilgrims through Navarre had an important influence on art, culture, religion and onomastics. From the urban recovery until the end of 11th century new inhabitants called Franks settled in this territory; some of them – the merchants – spoke Occitan, as we can see

from the documents they produced (García Larragueta 1977). It is clear however that the vast majority of the Navarrese population spoke only Basque during this period, and that the language was rarely written down although it was widely spoken. This was not a bilingual population, with the exception of the priests, notaries and local nobility and, as mentioned before, Basque was a pre-Roman language, the sole surviving example in the Peninsula and one of the few in Europe as a whole. There is therefore no similarity between Basque and Latin or any other Romance language. This probably resulted in the Basque population experiencing a form of social isolation, although they were generally ruled by Latin-speaking powers. This was not an exceptional situation, aside from the fact that communication was almost impossible for those who speak only one of both languages, Basque or Romance. The East and the Ebro valley had a different situation as it had been conquered by Christians before 1119.

Fig. 1. The Road to Santiago (Archivo General de Navarra)

In Navarre the development of Romance languages in the Middle Ages produced a variety called Navarrese which was spoken in the Southern third of the kingdom between the 10th to 17th centuries, approximately. According to González Ollé (1997), Navarrese originated with Basque speakers who were affected by the diffusion of Latin and, as they lived near the borders of other kingdoms which were also Latinised, abandoned their mother tongue. From the 13th century – and to a much greater extent the 14th century – Navarrese became the official language of the court and the royal chancellery, replacing Latin; Basque remained apart from the written culture. The situation was even more complex after 1234; the royal

dynasty became extinct and was replaced by the Champagne family (1234-1274), a French dynasty who were described as 'kings of strange country and strange language' (Miranda García 2012). The new king did not much like having Navarrese Romance used in Court and continued to use his native French, for instance when writing poems. This added to the complexity of the linguistic panorama.

Throughout the centuries, the boundary between Latin and Basque has been social rather than geographical; as a result, both languages have coexisted for hundreds of years, even after Latin became a Romance language; this coexistence has produced a mix of words, including words used in everyday life.

Table 1 represents the complexity of the linguistic history of Navarre – a complexity which is quite typical of Europe – in a simple fashion:

Century	Language(s)
16th – 21st	*Spanish*
11th AD	*Navarrese Romance* *French/Occitan/Arabic/Jewish*
1st BC – 9th AD	*Latin*
? – 21st	*Basque (pre-Roman)*

Table 1. Navarre: Linguistic strata

Of course it is necessary to distinguish between little villages, whose entire population were devoted to agriculture and livestock, and urban milieux; there were some towns where local craftspeople served the surrounding area. The social structure of Navarre thus used to be more complex, as we can see from tax-collector's lists, such as the one dating from 1553 (see Figure 2).

All the local people – a population of one hundred households – appeared in this list under their Christian name and surname, but there was no strict rule about how to refer to individuals. The document reproduced in Figure 2 belongs to a place close to Pamplona, a town called Urroz-Villa at the junction between *ager* and *saltus*. Some of its inhabitants were referred to by the official in today's style: Christian name followed by what might be considered a family name. Sometimes the two names were linked by 'de', for example *Joanes de Erdozain* (this surname is the name of a little village nearby); but sometimes they were not, as in *Martín Zunzarren* (the surname is the name of another village). In this region most of the surnames were taken from the individual's home village; most people left their home village when they married, so the name – usually a Basque name, as in these examples – could be used for individual identification. We also find in this list a few people referred to by a patronymic, in the Castilian style, for example *Pasqual Martínez*. In one case we find a surname which is a patronymic followed by a locative, *Joanes López de Ardanaz*; sometimes only the surname is listed, for example *Ursúa* or *Epároz*. The case of the individual who is identified in the list by the Basque name of his household, *Miguel Joançabalena,* is particularly interesting. Other people seem to have been known only by their profession, such as *Domingo el cantero* (the mason), *Adame fustero* ('the carpenter' in ancient Spanish) or *Mase Martín barbero* ('the barber', his name preceded by 'Master').

Fig. 2. Tax-collector List. Urroz-Villa, Navarra, 1553 (Archivo General de Navarra)

Still others were referred to by their position, *el Alcalde* (the Mayor), *Almirante* (a local officer) or title, such as *Torreblanca*, one of the local noble lineages. The priest is listed under his Christian name only, preceded by *don*, *don Jaime*. In some cases, the way the person was known officially seems quite informal, for example *Joanicot el dulero* ('the cow's shepherd'); *Joanicot* is a common nickname for *Joanes*. In some cases individuals are identified on the basis of their kinship with other local people, living or dead, for example *Pedro, yerno de Hernauton* (his son-in-law); in this instance the father-in-law is referred to by his nickname and is not given a surname. Sometimes it is difficult to determine if the Christian name is followed by a surname or a nickname, such as in *Pedro Andia*, *andia* is the Basque word for 'big' and it is well-known that it is the origin of many surnames. Providing evidence of the urban character of this village, the list contains three individuals characterised by their foreign origins: *Gracián Basco* and *Pedro Basco* would without doubt have been born in the Northern part of Navarre, on the other side of the Pyrenees, a territory abandoned by the Spanish king after the Castilian conquest in 1512 due to the strategic difficulty of defending this small space beyond the Peninsula. In the 16th century, the word *Basco* (Basque), or more precisely *tierra de Bascos* (land of Basques), referred specifically to this part of the old kingdom. There was a traditional migration from the poorer North to the South that explains the presence of people from Northern territories in this Southern village. Another inhabitant was called *Alonso Gallego* (from Galicia), Galicia was a remote part of Castile including Santiago de Compostela, the centre of pilgrimage; even the Christian name Alonso was unusual in the kingdom of Navarre by the date of this list. As we can see, the vast majority of people on the list were men, but two women are also named, *María Ardaiz* and *Catalina Felipe*; although the officer does not explain this, it would have been because, as widows, they were mistresses of their houses.

In summary, this list, written in 1553, 40 years – approximately one generation – after the conquest shows us that there were a variety of ways of identifying people at that time. Before the formation of the modern Spanish state, individuals did not have an official name and a person never used his or her own name; in fact, names changed during the course of life as the individual's role, status or relationships changed. During the Ancien Régime, names told more about the person who called another or their relationship, than about the one being called by that particular name. This may be the reason for the very different registers we have found when analysing this list; it provides a snapshot of one moment in the life of one hundred people.

Passing Hosts: The Household at a Glance

Basque was not only a language; it was also a culture. People living in this region have never been isolated, but they have gradually developed their own culture, through the process of adapting to a difficult natural environment.

The Basque men dedicated most of their time to managing livestock and forestry, activities which took them away from home, sometimes for long periods of time, so women have traditionally played a very important role in Basque households; they were also usually the sole heirs on their parents' death. Our empirical research suggests that during the 16th

century more than 40% of households chose a woman as an heir (Moreno and Zabalza 1999: 279); this implies that in at least some cases parents chose a daughter as their heir, although they also had sons. It is important to note the real content of domestic space during the Ancien Régime, the rise and development of the modern state, were based on annexing skills and capabilities previously developed by individuals. The increasing power of the state has however affected the woman's role in household more than the man's, in my opinion. During the Early Modern period the household was a school, an orphanage, a hospital, an asylum, a bank, a farm, a barn, a cellar, a shop, a weaver's workshop, a haven for pilgrims, wanderers and fugitives and many other things. In Basque culture all tasks associated with birth, life and death were the domain of women (Caro Baroja 1976: 131) and everyone in a household was under the authority of the woman who ran it; this seems to have been true among the upper classes as well as the peasants, especially at the end of the period, as we can see from the *Tratados de Economía Doméstica* (*Treaties on Domestic Economy*), written by the Marquis of San Adrián in 1772 (Zabalza-Seguín 2010). The prosperity of a household and the longevity of the family – the highest goals of a family – had much to do with its mistress. A specific feature of this region is that, in contrast to the practice in other Pyrenean territories such as Catalonia (Barrera González 1989), parents choose their heir freely from among all their sons and daughters, without consideration for their sex or birth order; this may have been because it was important that the person who would rule the property in the next generation had the right attributes for the role. It is also important to note that women entered marriage with much more protection than men; a woman's dowry would be almost double than that of her brother (Moreno and Zabalza 1999: 344) and in consequence, choosing a daughter as heir and disinheriting her brother meant paying just half a dowry, instead of a full one. This might have been sufficient reason for choosing a female heir, but one should also bear in mind that the female heir's husband would contribute a half-dowry to his new household. In any event, personal qualities play a significant role in the choice of heir although parents might come under external pressure such as the sudden availability of a good partner in the local marriage market or – as often happened – the early death of a father, mother or both.

When a woman inherited, there were some limits to her authority, for instance, mistresses never took part in the *concejo abierto* (open council), the local government in which all the local households were represented. However, when a husband who was only master by marriage represented his household at the *concejo*, he did so on the basis of instructions given by his wife, as some documents from lawsuits show. Women never had a political role; external activities were the domain of men, whereas internal matters were managed by women. There were not an interchange of roles, but who was the heir or heiress was a circumstance never forgotten.

The important social unit in this system was the household, and this was the level at which individuals had rights and duties; the household was also the institution that controlled population growth, by ensuring that only one son or daughter inherited the land, whilst the rest were expelled or condemned to celibacy. The heir belonged to the house, rather than the house to the heir. Material and non-material benefits were attached to the household; my empirical research focused on one material resource, land, which was the most important source of wealth in a society which was barely monetarised, and on one non-material benefit,

the family name. Despite their very different natures, both benefits were closely linked. As in most other regions of Europe, during the Ancien Régime land was the real source of wealth and, further, the key to individual and family identity; a proof of its importance is that people used the name of their land as a surname (Moreno and Zabalza 1994). Not until 1870 did the Spanish State have a *Registro Civil*, a public register where all newborns were recorded under their Christian name, family name and the names of their parents. This register obviously helped to fix the use and transmission of surnames, bringing to an end a historical process that produced largely meaningless surnames in the sense that, for instance, *Joanes de Erdozain* only meant that *Joanes*'s father's surname was also *Erdozain*, but it did not necessarily indicate that he had been born in the village of *Erdozain*. Before the *Registro Civil* was established, the names of people living in a region in which the sole-heir system prevailed could change during the course of life, according to circumstance.

Women, as the real masters of the family's house, and more importantly of its land, until the 16th century, could transmit their own surname – in practice the name of the household (at this time the concept of household extended to non-material benefits such as prestige, ancestry etc. as well as material resources) – to their legitimate children, whilst her husband's surname was soon forgotten. To use an expression coined by Klapisch-Zuber, but applying it to men rather than women, these non-heir husbands seem to have been 'passing hosts' (1990: 249).

Relatively few documentary sources have survived from the 15th to the mid-16th century, but it seems likely that this matriarchal system continued to operate until the Castile conquest. The powerful Castilian kingdom had a massive cultural impact on Navarre; the local nobility were the first to adopt new customs, followed by other social groups, first in the towns. In the 17th and 18th centuries Castilian influence was felt even in the mountainous borders of the country. These changes in inheritance traditions were preceded by the adoption of Spanish or the converging of Spanish and Navarrese Romance; it is difficult to determine what happened.

Finally, as we have already seen, in 1512 the Catholic King Ferdinand put an end to Navarre's independence by military conquest. First and foremost this meant the end of Navarre as a kingdom, but at about this time, in 1515, this small country joined the main powers of its time in Europe and the Western world. Navarrese people became Castilians and as a consequence they acquired the privilege of participating in the Monarchy government – previously they learned to speak, read and write Spanish – and also in trade with Spanish America. Very soon Navarrese, who had effectively been driven from their country by the sole-heir inheritance system and the lack of cultivable land, began to establish themselves in other territories, although emigration increased markedly during the 17th and 18th centuries.

As long as only Castilians were allowed to trade with America, it was important to look, as well as be, Castilian. This prompted some Navarrese with surnames that were unpronounceable in Spanish either to translate them – if they knew the meaning – or choose a word which sounded similar.

Basque surnames	Spanish translation or adaptation
Jáuregui	*Palacio* ('Palace'; translation)
Nagore	*Noguera* ('Walnut tree'; adaptation)
Dorrezuri	*Dorre* = Torre ('Tower') *Zuri* = Blanca ('White'; translation)

Table 2. Basque surnames and Spanish equivalents

When Basque surnames were pronounced or written by non-Basque speakers, they often underwent change; this was quite common in America, for example *Belzunce* became *Belsunse* and *Zamalloa* became *Samayoa*, a surname which was widespread in Central America.

The Torreblanca example is particularly interesting. From various documentary sources we know that this high-ranking family translated their surname from Basque to Spanish after the conquest of the kingdom of Navarre and its incorporation into Castile, in order to best serve their new king (Zabalza-Seguín 2011); in fact, the original form *Dorrezuri* seems to be a mixed word, *dorre* is the Basque pronunciation for *torre* (tower), whereas *zuri* is *blanco/a* (white) in Spanish.

In the end, only the members of the Torreblanca family who settled in other parts of the Spanish Empire became rich and powerful, for example branches of the family became established in Andalusia and perhaps also in Chile. The Torreblancas who remained in their native Navarre suffered gradual impoverishment and were divided by family quarrels.

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