

Colonial Latin American Historical Review

Volume 2

Issue 1 *Volume 2, Issue 1 (Winter 1993)*

Article 4

1-1-1993

Basque Names, Nobility, and Ethnicity on the Spanish Frontier

Donald T. Garate

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr>

Recommended Citation

Garate, Donald T.. "Basque Names, Nobility, and Ethnicity on the Spanish Frontier." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 2, 1 (1993): 77. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol2/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colonial Latin American Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Basque Names, Nobility, and Ethnicity on the Spanish Frontier

DONALD T. GARATE

The study of ethnic communities and minorities in the vast expanse of the Spanish colonial empire is a subject that has been largely ignored by historians. Over the last couple of decades, however, historians have come to view Spanish colonial frontiers as areas comprised of complex mestizo cultures coexisting with divergent Native American cultural groups. Despite new perspectives, however, old concepts die hard. The assumption persists that everyone who went to Spanish America from the Iberian peninsula was a Spaniard. To a large extent, the contrary is true. Although *mestizaje* has generally been applied to the racial mixing of Spaniards and indigenous groups, it is also a historical process that belies the mixtures between Castilians, Basques, Galicians, Andalusians, and other Spanish ethnic groups.

Regarding the Basques, the process was even more pronounced, because of their linguistic, cultural, and historical differences. In New Spain, especially in the north, their participation in the development of a Spanish frontier culture was more notable given their propensity to remain separate. To understand the development of frontier cultures within the Spanish empire, it is important to examine the dynamics of ethnic groups that existed in New Spain throughout the colonial period. The Basques were unique because of their distinct language, customs, laws, and lore. The historical identification of Basques in New Spain, for example, can be achieved because of the application of their language in their surnames.

In ancient times, while other areas of Europe were generally using a patronymic naming system, whereby the child took the father's given name as a surname (Martínez was the son of Martín, Sánchez was the son of Sancho, etc.)¹, the Basques used toponymic surnames

¹ The editors wish to point out that standard Castilian accents are included for consistency in this article; however, as the author says in his closing remarks, the Basques prefer not to use them.

in which the individual was known by the area in which he lived.² A few of the Basque surnames mentioned in this paper that were prominent on the Spanish frontier and their meanings follow:

Anza - rolling grassland spotted with dwarf elder trees.³

Ibarra - the valley.⁴

Mendinueta - the little mountains,⁵ a contraction of *mendi* - mountain, the Navarrese dialectal suffix *-ño* meaning small, and *-eta* which is used to designate the plural form in names.

Oñate - low mountain pass,⁶ a composite of two words, *oin* - foot or base, and *ate* - gate or entrance way (opposite of Garate, or high mountain pass).

Vildósola - sheep pasture,⁷ contraction of *bildotz* - sheep or lamb, and *-ola* - place (similar to Vildostegui - sheep corral).

Zubiate - gateway to the bridge.⁸

Zumárraga - elm grove.⁹

To the average English-speaking person (or Spanish speaker, for that matter), these names are indistinguishable from Spanish names. This is probably one reason researchers and historians have lumped all *peninsulares* into the classification of Spaniard.¹⁰ As the reader can see, however, these and other Basque names have very specific meanings in the native language and consequently jump right off the page at the Basque speaker.

The first task in determining Basque ethnicity in the New World, then, becomes one of separating the Basque names from the other Spanish names. Although the separation, in and of itself, is a

² José A. Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 3^o ed. (Bilbao: Editorial EDILI, S.A., 1968), 115-16.

³ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴ Luix Mari Mujika, *Hiztegi orokor-teknikoa*, 2 Euskara-Gaztelera (Bilbao: Ediciones Vascas Argitaletxea, 1977), 299.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 399.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 135. See also Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 149.

⁸ Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 194.

⁹ Mujika, *Hiztegi orokor-teknikoa*, 580.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the lack of material written about Basques in Latin America and the insensitivity of authors toward the historical importance of regional differences, see William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 2.

rather simple task, there are two inherent problems that make the determination of cultural continuity much more difficult if the research is to be completely accurate: 1) Some Basques (though probably a minority) had emigrated to other areas in Spain several generations before their descendants came to America, and even though those descendants still carried the Basque name, they were more culturally Spanish upon arrival in the New World than they were Basque,¹¹ and 2) there were some Spaniards, with very distinct Spanish names, who migrated to the Basque country and became culturally Basque, before their arrival in New Spain.¹² So it becomes necessary to link families on this continent to their ancestors in the old country before an ethnic tie can be made.

An infinitely more difficult task in determining ethnicity, in the case of the Basques, is to determine if they spoke the language. This difficulty stems from the fact that Basque, among the general populace, was not a written language until the present century¹³ (something that is still being refined). For at least a century before the discovery of the New World, Spanish had been the language of government in the Basque country.¹⁴ Though granted that it was an infinitesimally small

¹¹ An example would be Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of New Spain. Although the Mendoza family was an ancient and very noble line of Basques, some of them had been aristocrats performing noteworthy services for the king for many generations in various places throughout Spain and other parts of the known world. The condes de Tendilla, of which Antonio was one, were a branch of this family. Born in Granada, as far from the Basque country as one can get and still be in Spain, he probably could not speak the language and very well might have had no cultural ties with the people of his ancestry. See Alberto y Arturo García Carraffa, *El solar vasconavarro*, 6 vols. (San Sebastián: Librería Internacional, 1967), V, 111-12; and Robert Ryal Miller, *Mexico: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 109.

¹² One example among many would be the name Castro. Although the name is not of Basque origin, it is very extended throughout Spain, including the Basque country. There are some Castros who are *puro vasco* (pure Basque) and others who have no connection with the Basque country whatsoever. See García Carraffa, *El solar vasconavarro*, III, 48.

¹³ Stanley G. Payne, *Basque Nationalism* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 104, 116 n49. This statement needs qualification. Although early on there were few writings in Basque, there was no uniformity and the number of people who could read and understand them was almost nil. See Rodney Gallop, *A Book of the Basques* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970), 75.

¹⁴ Payne, *Basque Nationalism*, 22.

percentage of Basques who could speak and/or write *castellano*, if they were going to be allied with Castilla, their politicians had to be able to communicate in that language. If they were going to communicate in writing, whether priest, lawyer, or military officer, they had first to learn the Castilian language so they could be taught to read and write. Thus, almost without exception, historical documents written by Basques, whether personal, political, or ecclesiastical, on either continent are written in Spanish, giving little or no hint as to what language was spoken in the home.

All other considerations which help to determine ethnicity necessarily have to fall back upon these two elements—culture and language. If members of a community were living like *Euskaldunak* (Basques) and speaking *Euskera* (the Basque language), then it would be safe to assume that they were an ethnic minority living as a unit in a nation made up largely of other cultures. If this community were to draw up sides in a conflict with another cultural group or groups, it would again be safe to assume that the disagreement was at least partially ethnic in nature. Determining numbers as related to Old World family ties depends upon showing how many people left the old country culturally and linguistically Basque, and how many continued that way of life in the New World.

There is, however, ample evidence to suggest maintenance of Basque ethnic boundaries in the New World, probably to a greater degree than ever before imagined. Before giving specific case histories, however, there is one other element that played a significant role in the interactions of Basques and their fellow Spaniards in the New World that must be examined and understood. It can be a valuable tool in the identification of Basque ethnicity. In the Spanish realm it was unique to the Basques and can be used as a criterion in gauging their collective personality. It is the notion of universal nobility.¹⁵

Various authors have pointed out that all Basques had royal recognition as noblemen, a fierce pride in their Basque heritage, an

¹⁵ B. y M. Estornes Lasa, *¿Cómo son los vascos?* (San Sebastián: Editorial Añamendi, 1967), 97. See also Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 77 and D. Florencio Amador Carrandi, ed. and comp., *Catálogo de genealogías: archivo de la casa de juntas de Guernica* (Bilbao: Gráficas Ellacuría, 1958), 4.

"ill-concealed sense of superiority,"¹⁶ and what appeared to others to be an "ethnic group elitism."¹⁷ If all this is true, nothing could be more causative both of ethnic group maintenance in a new land and conflict with members of other societies. Again, in order to understand this component in light of specific examples on the frontier of New Spain, a rudimentary knowledge of how it came about in Spain is necessary and how Spanish law enforced and maintained it.

In brief, in the very beginning of recorded history, the Basques were a fierce and independent people living in the general area of the Pyrenees.¹⁸ For centuries they fought off various invaders, but eventually were forced to form alliances with other larger nations for self-preservation.¹⁹ Because of their warlike nature, their abilities and resources, and their strategic position on the peninsula, many were the kingdoms that desired to have the Basques in their sphere of influence.²⁰ Navarra became its own kingdom in the ninth century,²¹ but Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa, and Alava eventually allied themselves with Castilla.²²

In the aforementioned alliances, political autonomy and the retention of their *lagi zarrak*, or old laws, figured highly.²³ In the mid-fourteenth century, these laws were codified into what would later be known as *fueros*, the designation given to all such rosters of law throughout Spain. They regulated, among other things, noble status, both in the Basque country and abroad.²⁴ As has been pointed out by the Basque historian, Juan Carlos de Guerra, in his work *Heráldica vasca*, "There did not exist in the Basque democracy the ridiculous

¹⁶ Marc Simmons, *The Last Conquistador: Juan de Oñate and the Settling of the Far Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 13-4.

¹⁷ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 114-15.

¹⁸ Gallop, *A Book of the Basques*, 9.

¹⁹ Payne, *Basque Nationalism*, 10-20.

²⁰ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 20-43.

²¹ Rachel Bard, *Navarra: The Durable Kingdom* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), 19.

²² Payne, *Basque Nationalism*, 16-8.

²³ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 34n, 48, and 63-5.

²⁴ Payne, *Basque Nationalism*, 20. See also Laws IV, XII, XIII, and XIV printed in Amador Carrandi, *Catálogo de genealogías*, 39-43. See Juan Francisco Iramategui, 81-5, *Prueba de Nobleza*, 1739, Archivo de la Casa de Juntas (hereinafter cited as ACJ), Guernica, Vizcaya, reg. 40, gen. 617.

haughtiness centered in a nobility in which the claimant, from his grandparents and generations beyond, did not have to work for a living....Basque nobility was general and collective [and]...the noble Basques lived satisfied with natural simplicity in their agricultural, industrial, and commercial labors."²⁵ Basically, in any kind of alliance, the Basques insisted on everyone being noble (i.e., able to own land, hold honorable jobs, be free from paying taxes assessed on the peasantry, etc.).²⁶ This idea of universal nobility was recognized early on by kings of Castilla who were anxious to have the Basques on their side in any fight and desired to exploit Basque abilities and resources.²⁷

Probably the first written recognition of universal Basque nobility, aside from what was recorded in their own *lagi zarrak*, was the royal privilege granted by Don Fernando of Aragón²⁸ in the city of Burgos on September 20, 1470, which states that "...since nobility won for everyone is of greater value than that gained for a single person, the title of Very Noble and Very Loyal is granted to Vizcaya."²⁹ Earlier that same year, Enrique, king of Castilla, had infuriated the Basques in what they considered a breach of their *fuero*. They had denounced him and made his sister, Isabela, *señora de Vizcaya*.³⁰ This, obviously, was one of Fernando and Isabela's earliest political moves to keep the Basques on their side.³¹

In 1474 when Enrique died, a war of succession ensued between Isabela and the king's daughter, Juana, who was backed by

²⁵ Quoted in Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 78. This and all other direct translations from the Spanish or Basque are the writer's own.

²⁶ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 63. See also Laws, footnote 24.

²⁷ Payne, *Basque Nationalism*, 17. See also Amador Carrandi, *Catálogo de genealogías*, 5-34.

²⁸ Fernando, heir to the throne of Aragón, married Isabela of Castilla in 1469 and himself became king of Aragón ten years later.

²⁹ Real privilegio dado por Don Fernando, en la Muy Noble y Muy Leal ciudad de Burgos, el 20 de septiembre de 1470, quoted in Amador Carrandi, *Catálogo de genealogías*, frontispiece.

³⁰ See Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 65 and D. Jesús García Gutiérrez, *Sinopsis genealógica de los reyes de España* (México, DF: Biblioteca del Licenciado Guillermo Romo Celis, n.d.), 120.

³¹ For an example of this privilege given a Basque individual, see Manuel de Ibarrola, 80, Prueba de Nobleza, 1768, ACJ, reg. 3, gen. 2781, est. 8, carp. 13.

forces from France and Portugal. The Basques furnished a third of the troops that defeated the Portuguese trying to establish Juana on the throne of Castilla. Other Basque forces in Guipúzcoa stopped a French invasion at the frontier, and Basque mariners completely disrupted shipping between France and Portugal. When the invaders retreated, Isabela, *la señora de Vizcaya*, was pronounced queen of Castilla. In 1476 Don Fernando went to Vizcaya to reaffirm the universal Basque nobility and other laws and liberties in Guernica,³² and in 1483 Isabela made a similar reaffirmation in person at the same location.³³

From this time forward, Basque names began to be recorded with a designation of nobility. This was done by placing the Spanish preposition *de* (of) in front of the person's surname to show that he or she was of that noble lineage.³⁴ Unfortunately, in the Spanish language there is no distinction between "of a family" and "of a place." Had the names been recorded in Basque, the suffix *-tar* would have been used, a designation that shows a person to be a member of a particular family, a very precise distinction from the suffix *-ko*, which shows a person to be from a particular area. Little could the scribes, lawyers, priests, and court officials have realized the confusion this would cause with historians several centuries later. The title of Juan Bautista de Anza—soldier, explorer, and expedition leader of Sonora, Arizona, and California fame, and governor of New Mexico—is here used as an example. His given name was Juan Bautista Anza. Nevertheless, like certain other frontiersmen of Basque descent, Anza was of mixed New World ancestry. His *casa solar*, or noble ancestral home (all Basques were from *solares* because of the universal nobility law) was Anza. His official title of nobility then was Juan Bautista de Anza, or Juan Bautista Anza of the *solar de Anza*.³⁵

English-speaking persons are at a loss as to what his name really was. One eminent author/historian even refers to him part of the

³² Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 65.

³³ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁴ See any of the documents listed in the notes or any Spanish document recording Basque names.

³⁵ Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 77. See also García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, II, 65.

time as Anza and the rest as de Anza.³⁶ To one who was raised speaking Basque, the idea of putting a little Spanish *de* in one's surname is totally ludicrous, but again, because of the unwritten language problem, all Basque surnames were recorded that way. After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), when the church was mandated to record all baptisms, marriages, and deaths,³⁷ without exception, every Basque baby was given the title of *de* added to their surname.³⁸ Since only a very small percentage of the population could read, write, or speak Spanish, few ever knew that *de* was recorded in front of their surname.³⁹

Again, in the case of Anza, had his name been recorded in Basque, and had the desire been to show that he was a member of the celebrated Anza family, it would have been written *Juan Bautista Anza'tar*. On the other hand, if the desire was to convey the idea that someone named Juan Bautista was a resident of one of the dwarf elder-covered grasslands, it would have been written *Juan Bautista Anzako*. Historians need not be confused by the *de* if they will read beyond the titles of reports and the official signatures at their conclusions. Official titles and signatures always denote the person's nobility. For example, in their diaries, Padres Francisco Garcés and Pedro Font, both intimate acquaintances of Juan Anza, referred to him in their opening remarks as the "expedition leader, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza." Yet in the body of their diaries they refer to him as *Señor Anza* or *Capitán Anza*, not de Anza.⁴⁰ In the case of the Basques, *de* universally designates nobility; it is not part of the name.

³⁶ Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962), 108, 195, and 264.

³⁷ See *Spanish Records Extraction: An Instructional Guide* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981), 1-1.

³⁸ See any of the parish records listed in the notes or any parish record of any town or village in the Basque country.

³⁹ Donald T. Garate, *Dionisio de Lariz: Noble Ancestor* (Unpublished manuscript, on file Reno: University of Nevada, Basque Studies Library, 1991), 6.

⁴⁰ Francisco Garcés, *Diario y derrotero del muy reverendo padre fraile Francisco Garcés, octubre de 1775 hasta 17 de septiembre de 1776*, Bancroft Library. See for example día 21 de octubre. Font as quoted in Herbert E. Bolton, *Anza's California Expeditions*, 5 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), I, 417.

This brings up two items of consideration in researching Basque ethnicity through nobility in New Spain—one an advantage, the other an affliction. We will first examine the advantage—that being the fact that the use of *de* was a universal designation of nobility among the Basques (and probably most other northern Spaniards, as will be shown in the next paragraph). If there is a *de* recorded in front of the name it would seem that the person was making use of his noble status and was still closely enough tied to the old country and its customs to be culturally Basque, and possibly even speak the language. In tracing families through parish records in Mexico, one finds that the first two or three generations use the *de* in front of their name, but after that, the whole idea of nobility in the developing new culture seems to disappear and that distinction is no longer used.⁴¹

Further, however, persons not understanding this fact have tried to place other meanings on the little *de*, namely that it designates where the person is from. A case in point is the non-Basque frontiersman and priest, Francisco Silvestre Vélez de Escalante, co-leader of the famous Domínguez-Escalante expedition in search of a route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Monterey, California in 1776. Auerbach and Bolton called him Escalante; in an attempt to clarify what his name actually was, some historians thought Vélez was his surname and that Escalante was the birthplace of his father.⁴² However, an examination of baptismal records in the village of Treceño in Santander shows at least three generations of the good padre's ancestors being born there. None of them was from the town of Escalante. The surname is more properly written as Vélez Escalante without the use of *de*.⁴³

⁴¹ The writer has traced Basque names through parish records in the towns of Culicacán, Zacatecas, Alamos, Janos, Altar, Arizpe, and Ures. The trend seems to be that when the parents are *peninsulares*, the *de* is used, and usually it is placed in the name for a generation or two afterwards, but then is dropped.

⁴² Herbert S. Auerbach, "Father Escalante's Journal, 1776-1777," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 11 (1943): 1-132; Bolton, *Pageant in the Wilderness: The Story of the Escalante Expedition to the Interior Basin, 1776* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Association, 1972); and Fray Angélico Chávez, trans., and Ted J. Warner, ed., *The Domínguez-Escalante Journal* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), xvi.

⁴³ Libro de Bautizados y Cazados, 1665-1781, 1, 13, 14, 21, 29, 37v; Índice por el año 1755; and Libro de Bautizados, 1686-1737, 7, 14, 73, 80-80v, 80-84v, Treceño, Santander.

Juan Baptista de Ansa -
 Juan Baptista de Ansa, hijo legítimo de Antonio de Ansa y de
 Lucía de Sassoetta, siendo Padrino Don Theodoro de Ansa
 de Ansa, de Sassoetta, Clero aduado de paragonico de la Cap. spiritual
 de Ansa, de Sassoetta.

Baptismal certificate of Juan Baptista de Ansa (Anza), the senior, taken from Book 3 of Baptisms, p. 115, of the parochial church, San Juan Bautista, in the village of Hernani, province of Guipúzcoa, Spain. Almost without exception in the Basque country in those years, babies were baptized either the day they were born or the day following. So, we can assume this baptismal date is very close to, if not his actual birth date. Certificate from Elizbarrutiko Artxiboa, Donostia, Hernaniko, 3, 115.

Translated: **Juan Baptista de Ansa**. On the twenty-ninth of June of the year 1693, I baptized Juan Baptista de Ansa, legitimate son of Antonio de Ansa and Lucia de Sassoetta. Godparents were Don Theodoro de Inarazabar and Josepha de Yrigoten, and I advised them of their relationship and spiritual obligation.

Don Domingo de Sassoetta

This brings up another myth, especially in the case of the Basques, which says that some of them took their names from the town where they lived or were born.⁴⁴ Though the case may never be proven to the satisfaction of everyone, it is this writer's contention that towns took their names from the families that lived there. It may be another proverbial case of which came first. In the case of towns, however, it is beyond the ability of anyone to show where a town ever sprang up before people arrived. Towns are always started by people and those people often give the town their own name—not the other way around.

In this study literally hundreds of Basque family names have been traced through parish, civil, and military records, and proofs of nobility in the Basque country. With the exception of a very small number of *expósitos*, or unknown orphans, a single case is yet to be found where an individual has actually taken his surname from the town where he was born.⁴⁵ Many name changes can be seen for a variety of reasons, but never to reflect a person's home town. There are claims made for such but they are always unjustified.⁴⁶ What they show is that the name has been traced back to a specific town, and since there are no historical documents relating how either the town or the person got their name, it is generally assumed that people took their names from towns.

Once again, a few specific cases on the frontiers of New Spain will show this type of theory formulation to be preposterous. Before the individual case histories are looked at, an examination of this particular difficulty becomes necessary. It seems that for hundreds of years in the

⁴⁴ See, for example, Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 14-5.

⁴⁵ *Expósitos*, deposited on the church steps or at the door of some individual, generally carried the name of *expósito* without the benefit of the *de* in front of it for the rest of their lives. (See Donald T. Garate, *Echandia: The Unique Story of a Basque Immigrant* [Susanville, CA: Lassen County Historical Society, 1980], 2-3, and almost any parish record book from any town in the Basque country). Only infrequently would *expósitos* be given the name of the town with *de* recorded in front of it. Further research in this area is needed before it can be said that the *de* signifies "of that town" or "of that noble lineage." Since it happens so rarely, it would seem that possibly the priest knew more about the particular individual than he was willing to write down and used the *de* to signify that it was known that the child was of noble Basque lineage.

⁴⁶ See, for example, García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, IV, 120.

Basque country (and New Spain, also) there have been two types of Basque people—the warriors and the pacifists. Soldiers and politicians have always boasted of their heroic feats on the battlefield or in the council room. They often wanted a more glorious and fitting title than maybe their simple Basque surname denoted. And so they changed names, not to designate the town they came from but to acquire a more prestigious title.⁴⁷ Of course, there is more written about any one of these individuals than there has been about the hundreds (or thousands) of common Basques who came to New Spain with the goal of bettering their lot in life and who were perfectly happy with the name handed down to them by their parents and grandparents. Of necessity, however, for the time being at least, since there is more written about soldiers and politicians, they can be used to further a better understanding of the mood and personality of the Basque population of New Spain as a whole.

Juan de Oñate, José de Zubiate, Pedro Fermín de Mendiñeta, and Gabriel de Vildósola exemplify soldiers, officials, explorers, and colonizers of Basque descent on the frontiers of New Spain. Of these Basque soldier/politicians, only one was born in New Spain. The others came during different historical periods, from Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya, and Navarra.

Juan de Oñate was a *criollo*, probably born in Zacatecas, with roots in the town of Oñate in Guipúzcoa.⁴⁸ Genealogies of the Oñates differ, depending on whether they were researched in Spain or in Mexico. Spanish historians have researched and compiled accurate and voluminous ancestral information about many individuals, but the accuracy is apt to diminish as they move into New Spain.⁴⁹

One thing that scholars agree on, however, in the case of Oñate, is that the original surname was changed from (and here we use the Basque spelling) Naharriaondo. Postulating that it was done by Juan's grandfather to designate the town he was from, Simmons tells us that Anza's father, Cristóbal, was born in Vitoria, the capital of

⁴⁷ Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 77.

⁴⁸ Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 14, 15, and 32.

⁴⁹ Compare Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 15 and 33 with García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, V, 180-81.

Alava.⁵⁰ It would seem that the family would have chosen Vitoria as a surname in that case because it is a much larger and more illustrious town than is Oñate. Of course, all of this is in disagreement with Oñate's *prueba de caballero*, filed in Valladolid in 1625, which states that Juan de Oñate's father, Cristóbal de Oñate, was born in the village of Oñate as was his paternal grandfather, Juan de Narria. For clarification, *narria* means a stain or deterioration in Basque; *narrriaondo* means a good stain or deterioration.⁵¹ Again, we are looking at nobility, not towns. The Oñate family is one of the oldest and most noble families in the Basque country. As far as can be traced, the family has its roots in the same place as the town of Oñate, and there have always been many branches of the family living there.⁵²

It is much more probable, when all of the high-level military and governmental dealings of Cristóbal and Juan de Oñate are taken into account, that they used the name Oñate rather than Naharriaondo to gain favors that might not have been granted otherwise. They may have never even used Oñate as a name, but strictly as a title of nobility, which would, of course, show up on all the formal documents that historians read and quote. Like some modern people's middle names, however, Naharriaondo might never have been recorded on anything except the man's birth certificate, which has never been found. This is borne out by the fact that Juan had at least one grandson who went by the name Naharriaondo, not Oñate.⁵³

José de Zubiata, a name that is unknown today except among a few of the most dedicated students of the Spanish colonial era, was well known on the frontier in his day. Born on May 29, 1659 in the village of Escoriaza, Guipúzcoa,⁵⁴ he was the youngest of five chil-

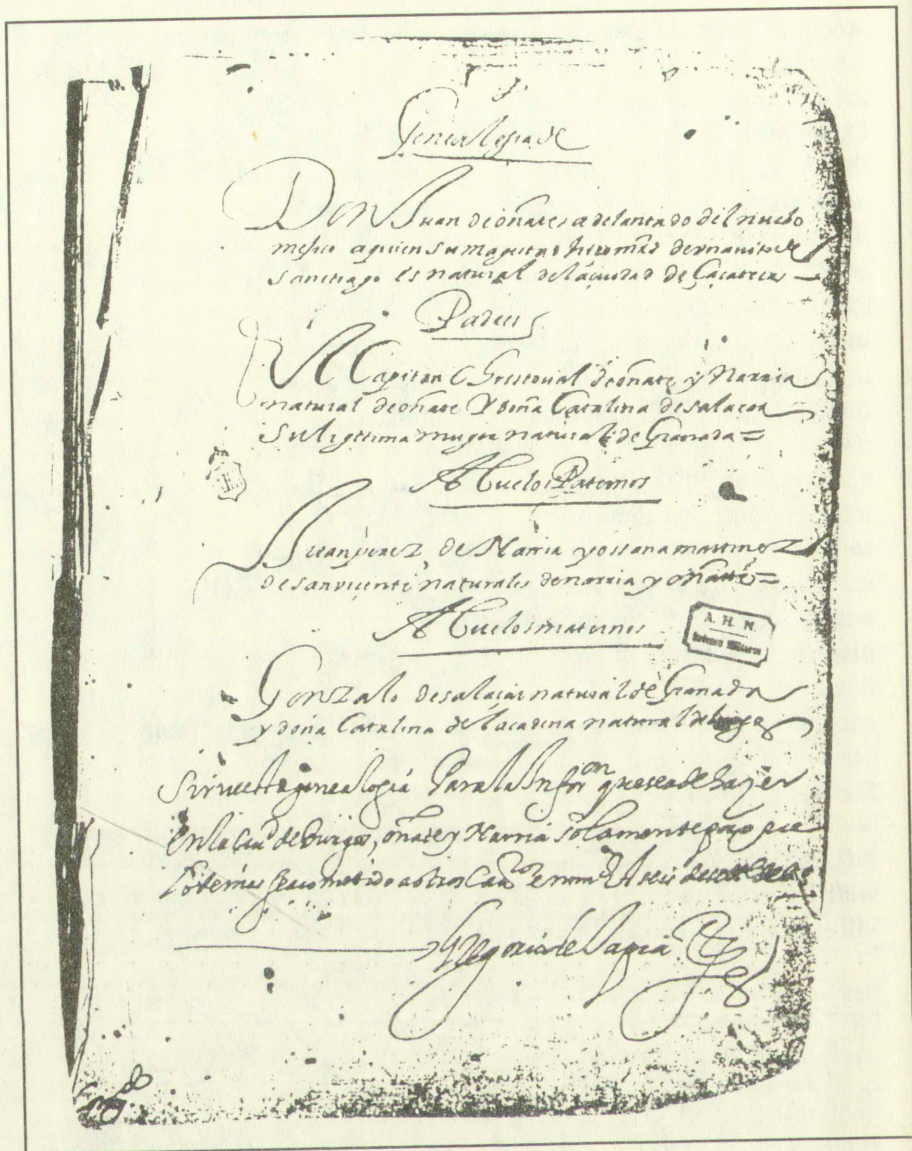
⁵⁰ Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 15.

⁵¹ Juan de Oñate y Salazar, Zacatecas, Méjico, Pruebas de Caballeros, 1625, Archivo de la Real Chancillería (hereinafter cited as ARC), Valladolid, Ordenes Militares Santiago, caja 1131, exp. 5925. Also on microfilm at Family History Library (hereinafter cited as FHL), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Nogales, Arizona, 1649244, item 2, unnumbered pages.

⁵² García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, V, 245-46.

⁵³ Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 33.

⁵⁴ Libro de Bautismos, Casados, Finados, Confirmaciones, 1548-1655, 357, 363v, 370v, 375v and Libro de Bautismos, 1655-1742, 10v, Escoriaza, Guipúzcoa, on microfilm at FHL, unnumbered pages.



One of three identical copies of the genealogy of Juan de Oñate contained in his *prueba de caballero* filed in Valladolid in 1625. It clearly states he was born in Zacatecas. His father, Cristóbal de Oñate y Narria, was born in the town of Oñate. His paternal grandfather, Juan Pérez de Narria, was born in Narria, a *barrio* of Oñate, and his paternal grandmother, Ossana Martínez de San Vicente, was also born in Oñate. For source see footnote 51.

dren. He and all of his siblings were given the surname of Orio, because their father's name was Baltazar de Orio y Cubiaur. Their mother's name was María Ruiz de Cubiate y Ocaranza. Her father's name was Domingo de Cubiate and his father was Lope de Cubiate.⁵⁵ José chose to use his mother's surname, spelled Zubiata, instead of Orio.

A word should be said here about the spelling of Zubiata. Again, Basque was not a written language in those years. Spaniards, or Basques who had been taught to write Spanish, were guessing as to how to spell these Basque names. When it is considered that *c*, *s*, and *z* all make the same *s* sound in Basque, it is irrelevant which one is used. The accepted way of spelling Anza, mentioned above, is with a *z*, and that is the way Juan Bautista de Anza spelled it.⁵⁶ Most of his contemporaries spelled it Ansa.⁵⁷ However, his father spelled their name Anssa.⁵⁸ With the present example, some authors spell the name Zubiata⁵⁹ and others Subiate.⁶⁰ Yet the same name is spelled Cubiate by the priest who recorded the person's baptism. However, Zubiata is the accepted Basque spelling today.

So why did José change his name from Orio to Zubiata? By the age of twenty-one, he was well established in the royal mining district of Parral, where he remained until 1690. He became *capitán general* and *alcalde mayor* of the province of Ostimuri⁶¹ and as a rancher,

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Libro de Bautismos, 1548-1655, 111v, 211v.

⁵⁶ John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown: The Pecos Indians and New Mexico, 1540-1840* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1979), 410.

⁵⁷ Letter of Pedro Font to Friar Diego Ximénez, July 18, 1776, from Friar Marvellino de Civezza Collection, Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano Archive, Rome, on microfilm at University of Arizona Library, Special Collections, Tucson, index 201, 78, pp. 1, 2, 4, film 881, roll 1.

⁵⁸ Juan Bautista de Anssa letter to Nicolás de Oro, July 11, 1729 and Juan Bautista de Anssa to Andrés Nietto, July 28, 1729, from Archivo General de la Nación (hereinafter cited as AGN), México, Archivo Histórico de Hacienda, Pimería y Sonora, leg. 17, no. 11, on microfilm at Tumacacori National Historical Park, Tumacacori, AZ (hereinafter cited as TUMA).

⁵⁹ See, for example, Francisco R. Almada, *Diccionario de historia, geografía y biografía sonorenses* (Chihuahua: Talleres Gráficos del Estado, 1952), 846.

⁶⁰ John Augustine Donohue, S.J., *After Kino: Jesuit Missions in Northwestern New Spain, 1711-1767* (St. Louis: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1969), 21.

⁶¹ Almada, *Diccionario de historia*, 846-47.

introduced the first cattle into parts of the province of Sonora. Because his large herds of cattle trampled down mission lands, he quarreled with the Jesuit, Daniel Januske. Even though he lost the fight, it seems that he used fellow Basques in high places to present his case.⁶²

He obviously changed his name to gain a little more prestige and power, for Zubiate was a better-known *casa solar* than Orio. The word *orio* is a dialectal form of *olio*, which means oil,⁶³ but José Mugica states that when used as a name it is derived from and means "the town."⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it is an uncommon surname. Zubiate on the other hand is a very ancient and illustrious *casa solar* with its roots in Bedia, just across the provincial line from Escoriaza in Vizcaya.⁶⁵ It was not totally uncommon in the Basque country in the seventeenth century for a person to take the mother's rather than the father's surname. Usually, however, that was decided by the parents and/or the priest performing the baptism.⁶⁶ In this instance, as with many in New Spain, it appears that it was the person himself who changed his name upon arrival in the New World, and the reason appears to be one of power and prestige.

Another well-known frontiersman who neither used a different surname upon arrival in the new country, nor did he need to, was Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta, governor of Nuevo México during the late eighteenth century.⁶⁷ The Mendinueta family of Navarra had a long and distinguished record of service to the king. Probably the oldest traceable line of Mendinuetas sprang up in the area that is still called Mendinueta near Itzagaondoa, just east of Pamplona, Navarra. The family branched out from there, one line going north to the village of Elizondo in the Baztán valley.⁶⁸

⁶² Donohue, *After Kino*, 21-7.

⁶³ Mujika, *Hiztegi orokor-teknikoa*, 441.

⁶⁴ Mugica, *Apellidos vascos de Iberia*, 177.

⁶⁵ García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, VI, 356-57.

⁶⁶ See parish records in most villages in the Basque country, generally prior to the eighteenth century.

⁶⁷ Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown*, 342.

⁶⁸ García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, V, 104-05.

At the time of the birth of Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta y Garro on July 5, 1725,⁶⁹ there was already an ancient *casa solar* called Mendinueta in Elizondo. Ironically, this house was so old that it was not even owned by the Mendinuetas any longer. The Elizèche family lived there.⁷⁰ Of the two famous Mendinueta families that lived in Elizondo then, one owned the house of Eizcorena⁷¹ and the family from which Pedro Fermín sprang owned the *casa de Micheltorena*. It had been handed down to his father and mother, Bartholomé de Mendinueta and Ana Cathalina de Garro, by Ana's parents, María de Micheltorena and Juan de Micheltorena.⁷²

The house of Micheltorena was evidently a fairly large establishment as there were other families living there and probably working for the Mendinuetas.⁷³ The glory of the name could probably be traced even farther back to the *casa de Michel*. By translation, Micheltorena was the house to which the Michel family came, but there was also a *casa de Michelandia*, or the large Michel house.⁷⁴ Yet Pedro Fermín did not choose to associate his name with that famous family, but rather retained his given surname.

The reason for this is probably because the Mendinuetas were themselves famous at the time, having been in the service of Spain for generations. Pedro Fermín was only one among many Mendinuetas who were *caballeros de Santiago*.⁷⁵ He even had a distant cousin, also from Elizondo and also named Pedro, who became a caballero of the same order just one year after he did.⁷⁶ Regardless of the surname by which he chose to be called, in reading his *prueba de caballero*, or

⁶⁹ Segundo Libro de Bautismos 202, Elizondo, Navarra, on microfilm at FHL, 1361237.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 181v, 194.

⁷¹ Tercer Libro de Bautismos 6, 9, Elizondo, Navarra, on microfilm at FHL, 1361237.

⁷² Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta y Garro, Elizondo, Navarra, Pruebas de Caballeros, 1755, ARC, Ordenes Militares Santiago, caja 975, exp. 5140. Also on microfilms FHL, 1606626, item 19, and 1606627, item 1, unnumbered pages.

⁷³ Tercer Libro de Bautismos, 25v, 32v, FHL, 1361237.

⁷⁴ Segundo Libro de Bautismos, 195, FHL, 1361237.

⁷⁵ García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, V, 104-05.

⁷⁶ Pedro de Mendinueta y Múzguiz, Elizondo, Navarra, Pruebas de Caballeros, 1756, ARC, Ordenes Militares Santiago, caja 967, exp. 5143. Also on microfilm FHL, 1606627, item 1, unnumbered pages.

proof of knighthood, one has to believe Mendinueta had a tremendous understanding of his ancestry. Being raised in northern Navarra he undoubtedly spoke Basque. If all the statements that have been made about the Basques' fierce pride in their heritage can be taken as true (and the writer believes from personal experience that they can) then it would seem logical that this man came to Nuevo México culturally Basque and remained so until his dying day.

The final example presented here is Gabriel Antonio de Vildósola, presidial captain at Fronteras, Sonora, who was born in the village of Elejabeitia, Vizcaya on November 28, 1722.⁷⁷ Gabriel's father was Juan Antonio de Vildósola Gamboa.⁷⁸ Gamboa is an ancient Basque name⁷⁹ that is seen often on the Spanish frontier from the earliest days as the conquistadores and colonizers moved northward. Gabriel did not choose to go by that name, however, choosing rather to use Vildósola, another illustrious name in his ancestry, or Vildósola Gamboa. What is interesting about this case is that Gabriel had to go back six generations to pick up the name of his choice. It was his fourth great-grandmother, Catalina de Vildósola, who married Pedro de Gamboa. Her great-grandfather was the famous caballero, Martín Ochoa de Vildósola, owner of the ancient and renowned *casa solar de Vildósola* located on the eastern outskirts of the village of Elejabeitia in Vizcaya.⁸⁰ A bronze statue and plaque that commemorates this gallant cavalier at one time marked his grave at Vildósola, but is now on display in the Archaeological Museum of Bilbao.

So what does all this have to do with Basque ethnicity on the frontiers of New Spain? It shows, for one thing, that the Basques, and especially Basque soldiers or politicians with a desire to make a name for themselves, used their heritage as a means of leverage in gaining their desired goals. They could pick and choose as to which of their ancestral names or titles they wanted to use, a luxury not afforded any other Spanish cultural group.

⁷⁷ José Luis de las Torres, *Prueba de Nobleza*, 1793, ACJ, reg. 133, gen. 1593.

⁷⁸ García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, VI, 272.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 331.

⁸⁰ Manuel Palanco García, *Mapa de Vizcaya* (Bilbao: Caja de Ahorros Municipal de Bilbao, 1965) and García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, 271-72.

It is probable that there were cultural conflicts between the Basques and other ethnic groups. A hint of such conflicts can be seen in the struggles for power in the frontier presidios. On the surface, the effort to oust Gregorio Alvarez Tuñón Quiros from his position as presidial captain at Fronteras seems to have been nothing more than an attempt to expel an unscrupulous and defrauding individual from public service. Even though that is true to some extent, it is interesting to note that the leaders in the opposition to the man, including Juan Bautista Anza and José Goicoechea, were Basque.⁸¹ After Tuñón Quiros at least the next three captains in charge of Fronteras were Basque—Juan Bautista Anza, Francisco Bustamante, and Gabriel Vildósola. The history of the second captain is not known, but Anza and his son-in-law, Vildósola, were both born in the Basque country.⁸²

Another case on the other side of the coin in which *el vasco*, Agustín de Vildósola, was removed from office as governor and captain general of Sonora and Sinaloa, also seems to draw up sides along ethnic lines. Manuel de Huidobro charged that Vildósola owed his position to his "countrymen, the captains of the northwest presidios." Once again, when one takes into consideration the fact that the majority of those captains were Basque, the accusation is very ethnically charged. This is brought to light even more strongly when one examines what happened as those captains were replaced by a new generation of leaders. Of all the new presidial captains whom Vildósola had charge of, the only one with whom he got along was Uzárraga, a Basque.⁸³

Yet we find these Basques to be typical soldiers, placing country and king first above local or regional values. One example of this was during the expulsion of the Jesuits. It will be remembered that at least two of the founders of the Jesuit order were Basque, Ignacio Loyola and Francisco Xavier—both saints by the time of the expulsion.⁸⁴ Basques everywhere held the order in high regard, and yet many of the presidial captains on the northern frontier who were required to carry out the royal decree were Basque. Juan Anza rounded

⁸¹ Donohue, *After Kino*, 26.

⁸² Torres, *Prueba de Nobleza*, ACJ, unnumbered pages.

⁸³ Almada, *Diccionario de historia*, 825-26 and Donohue, *After Kino*, 106-11.

⁸⁴ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 45.

up and arrested the Jesuits in the San Xavier chain of missions, Gabriel Vildósola executed the order in the Martyrs and Borgia districts,⁸⁵ and Bernardo Urrea reluctantly oversaw the expulsion in the Pimería Alta.⁸⁶ Another Basque, Baltasar Aguirre, was responsible for retention of the Jesuits in the barracks at Guaymas and loading them on the ship when they were sent into exile.⁸⁷

From reading the writings of these men, it is obvious that they were not excited about their task, but shrugged it off as duty. What the Basques as an ethnic group on the frontier thought about the expulsion, however, is a subject that has not yet been studied. Considering the rate of illiteracy among the common people on the frontier, their thoughts may never be known, but using these captains as a gauge, two disparate assumptions can be made. The average Basque, who was not religious and was busy making a living, probably did not care what happened. On the other hand, if the loyalty of the Basques to their heritage is taken into account, one would assume that those who were religious were seething.

It is obvious from the writings and actions of leading soldiers of the era that the Basques held together and used their heritage to their advantage. But what about other government employees and the common people? Basically, one finds the same situation. Law XIX, Title I of the Vizcayan *fuero* granted a supreme judge in court in the *chancillería* of Valladolid to all *vizcaínos* living outside their native land to protect their rights of nobility.⁸⁸ The chancery was filled with petitions of *vascos* living in Nueva España desiring to prove to officials on this continent that they had the right to own land, not pay *pechos*, and exercise all their rights as *hijosdalgos* and *infanzones* (noblemen). The sheer number of *pruebas de nobleza* of Basques living in Nueva España, recorded in Valladolid, Bilbao, San Sebastián, Guernica, and other archives in the Basque country, is testimony to the fact that their neighbors were piqued by their special treatment and/or the way they acted about it.

⁸⁵ Donohue, *After Kino*, 151.

⁸⁶ John L. Kessell, *Friars, Soldiers, and Reformers: Hispanic Arizona and the Sonora Mission Frontier, 1767-1856* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 19.

⁸⁷ Donohue, *After Kino*, 152.

⁸⁸ Iramategui, 84, Prueba de Nobleza, ACJ, unnumbered pages.

There are hundreds of such cases, but we will examine only a couple here: first is that of Juan Francisco de Iramategui of Ondarroa, Vizcaya, and second, that of Manuel de Ibarrola of Oquendo, Alava. Juan came to the Guanajuato area and soon found himself rich from his ventures in the mining industry.⁸⁹ In 1737, there arose a dispute requiring that he prove his nobility and *limpieza de sangre* (proof of pure blood and noble lineage), before he could continue living the life of the privileged. It was a very real concern to him and his neighbors. It was a contest that he could win only by showing that he was a pure *vizcaíno* from generations back and that Iramategui was a legitimate *casa solar*.⁹⁰ The Iramateguis of Mexico today probably have never heard of, let alone seen, the noble house of Iramategui on Santa Cruz mountain above Ondarroa where Juan came from. The present owners of ancient Iramategui, Ildefonso and Vitoriono Urruzuno, have no knowledge of the history of their beautiful rock home or what one of its owners went through to prove to the crown that he was a noble Basque.

On the other hand, Manuel de Ibarrola, who was living in San Miguel el Grande in 1767, did not have to be a rich, non-tax-paying Basque miner to bring about a dispute with his neighbors. As an official of the Inquisition, his neighbors found plenty of other reasons to dislike him. Here was a man who was sending people into exile or a life of shame because they could not show that they were free of Jewish or Moorish blood. Some would consider it very fitting that his neighbors brought about enough opposition to force him to file his own expensive, 250-page proof that he had a right to his lofty position because he was Basque.⁹¹

This raises the question of Basque involvement in the Inquisition in Nueva España—another topic that is in need of analysis. Historically the Basque country was a bastion of Catholicism.⁹² Their own laws did not allow Jews or Moors to take up residence in *Euskalherria* (the Basque homeland).⁹³ Above and beyond that, even

⁸⁹ Hacinto Suárez, *Diccionario biográfico vasco-mexicano* (Reno: Basque Studies Library, unpublished manuscript, 5 vols., n.d.), unnumbered pages.

⁹⁰ Iramategui, *Prueba de Nobleza*, ACJ, unnumbered pages.

⁹¹ Manuel Ibarrola, *Prueba de Nobleza*, ACJ, unnumbered pages.

⁹² Gallop, *A Book of the Basques*, 55-6.

⁹³ Law XIII, quoted in Amador Carrandi, *Catálogo de genealogías*, 40.

new converts to Catholicism were not allowed in the Basque country.⁹⁴ As previously mentioned, Basques were known for their aloofness and racial purity. Here was an opportunity for Jews and others in the New World to hide from the Inquisition by changing their names to that of a well-known Basque title. Professor Abraham Chanin of the University of Arizona, an eminent authority on the Sephardic Jews of the Southwest, explains that it happened more than once, but more research is needed before concrete conclusions can be drawn.

The subject of language may be the most elusive of all, and circumstantial evidence may be the best that can be found to prove that Basque cultural minorities spoke it in the New World. It is well known that Basque is an extremely difficult language to learn.⁹⁵ It may be assumed that it would be just as difficult for a Basque to learn Spanish as it is for a Spaniard to learn Basque. Even the famed Juan de Zumárraga of Durango, Nueva Vizcaya, first bishop of Mexico, speaking of Spanish made the statement that "...I did not suckle this romance language."⁹⁶ Zumárraga appears to be saying that he spoke Basque among family and friends, for he was well known for his use of Basque connections⁹⁷ and his bringing to the New World countless numbers of his family and friends.⁹⁸

Undoubtedly, it is a safe assumption that Bishop Zumárraga was not the only Basque who imported others of his race to be with him. In the more heavily populated areas these people formed brotherhoods and confraternities for mutual economic, spiritual, and cultural support.⁹⁹ Even the merchant guild of Chihuahua in 1783 seems to have been made up primarily, if not exclusively, of Basques.¹⁰⁰ It is

⁹⁴ Law XIV, in *ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁵ Gallop, *A Book of the Basques*, 80.

⁹⁶ José Malea-Olaetxe, *Juan Zumárraga, Bishop of Mexico, and the Basques: The Ethnic Connection* (Reno: University of Nevada doctoral thesis, 1988), 242.

⁹⁷ Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 14.

⁹⁸ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 76.

⁹⁹ William A. Douglass, Richard W. Etulain, and William H. Jacobsen, Jr., eds., *Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao* (Reno, Nevada: Desert Research Institute, 1977), 59.

¹⁰⁰ Max L. Moorhead, *The Presidio: Bastion of the Spanish Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 215, 216, and 216n. At least five of the six merchants supplying the presidios of Nueva Vizcaya in 1783 were Basque—Amesqueta, Urguidi, Iribarren, Ugarte, and Guizarnotegui.

easy to speculate that these people were speaking their native tongue. But how extensive was the use of the language and how many generations did it last?

One example that may or may not be unique is that of José Luis de las Torres, son of a *criolla*-Basque mother and an Andalusian father. Born at Cucquiarachi, the northernmost Opata mission near Fronteras, Sonora, he was the grandson of Gabriel Vildósola and Josefa Gregoria Anza. Some of his Basque ancestors had been in Nueva España for several generations. The closest ties he had with the Basque homeland were through his grandfather Vildósola and his great-grandfather Anza, both of whom were born in the Basque country. His father, Joaquín Torres, a soldier at Fronteras, died before he was born. When José was five years old, he, his mother, her sister, and his maternal grandparents all moved back to Vizcaya to the ancestral home in Elejabeitia, a small town where only Basque was spoken.¹⁰¹ It could be argued that he and his mother, aunt, and grandmother, Señora Anza, all learned to speak the language after they got there, but it is more probable that they all grew up hearing and speaking it in a frontier community that had a numerous Basque population.

Later Torres was living in Ceanuri, Vizcaya, the local district of his Basque ancestors. On February 12, 1792, a group of twenty aldermen, merchants, and prominent citizens met in the cemetery of the village church of Ceanuri to lay out the course of action that would determine if the twenty-year-old Torres, born in Mexico and only half Basque at best, was to be considered a *vizcaíno*. Much like his Basque neighbors in Nueva España who had to prove their noble lineage in order to maintain their old country status, he found it necessary to prove he was Basque in order to continue living there and owning the ancient *casa solar de Vildósola*.

Of the Ceanuri town leaders judging him, seven were literate enough to sign their own names. The royal scribe, Thomas de Bergara, explained the requirements of the law to them, describing it as follows: "...les di a entender en lengua vulgar que es la Bascongada...." ("...I gave them to understand in the common language which is Basque....")¹⁰² This particular proof of nobility is graphic evidence of

¹⁰¹ Torres, *Prueba de Nobleza*, ACJ, 218, 222, 245, 697, 702, 705, 725.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 34.

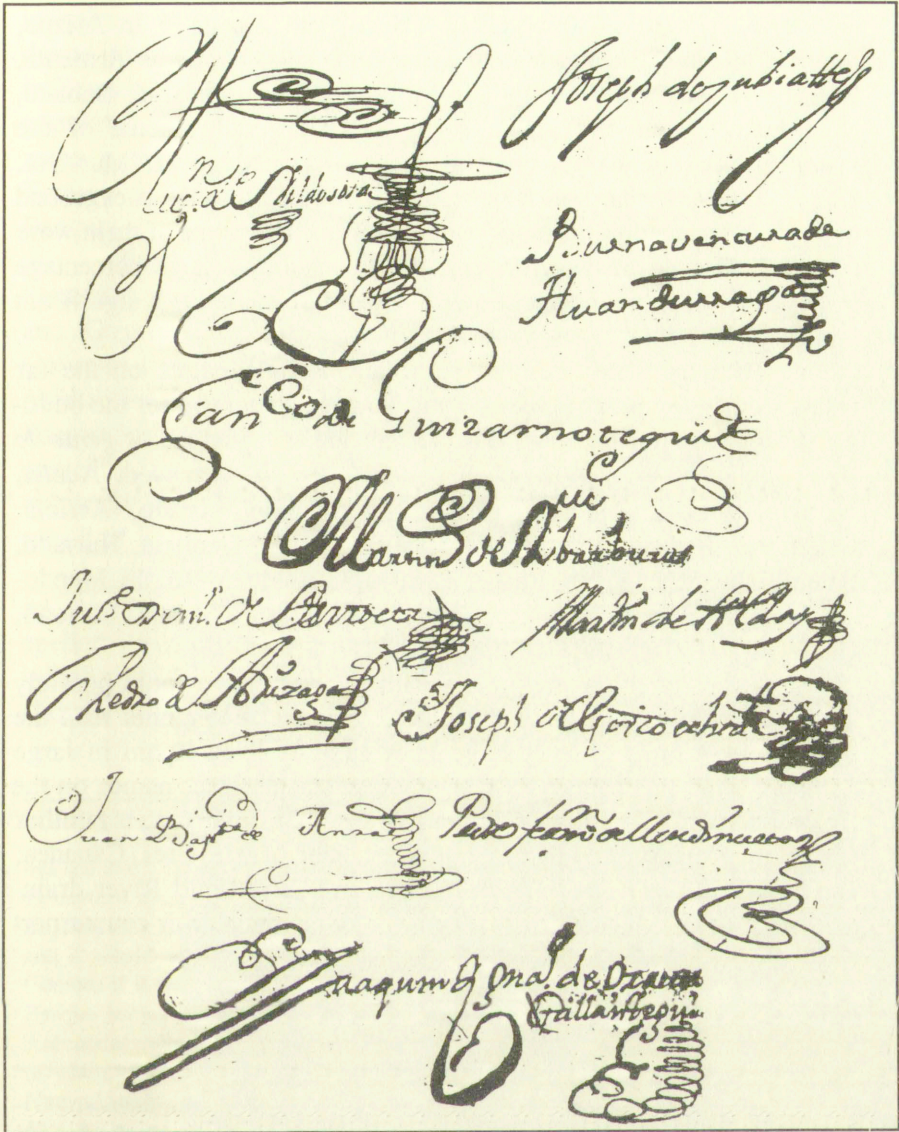
the fact that in certain circles Basque was spoken while Spanish was written. Even though in this case the document is recorded in the old country, it might give an idea of what to watch for in future research in which the attempt is being made to determine which language was being spoken.

For years one of the major misconceptions among some historians, both Spanish- and English- speaking, has been that Basques did not settle in the New World in large numbers until the approach of the twentieth century.¹⁰³ One author states, "...another Spanish contingent deserving mention due to their number are the Basques, although they arrived long after independence from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The first party arrived at the time of the 1850 California gold rush...."¹⁰⁴ This is a rather startling statement when one analyzes the index of the book. Of some 1,500 entries covering subjects from John Abbot to George Washington, Alabama to Wisconsin, and Agriculture to Voting Rights, there are over one hundred seventy-five New World Basque names listed, most of whom were in America prior to the American Revolution. Again, one possible explanation for this misunderstanding is that even Spanish-speaking people generally do not recognize Basque names. Aside from the hundreds of soldiers, sailors, and government and church officials who were prominent in the exploration, conquest, and settlement of not only Nueva España, but also of South and Central America,¹⁰⁵ there are thousands of Basques to be found in village, mission, and presidio records. For example, Basque names common in Culiacán in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are Abiles, Aguirre, Albestrain, Amesqueta, Barrera, Beltrán, Castaños, Echave, Echevarría, Egurrola, Escobar, Espinosa, Gaviria, Ibarra, Ibarracoa, Iturrioz, Lizarraga, Liziaga, Mendazona, Mendoza,

¹⁰³ As an example, see Simmons, *The Last Conquistador*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Carlos M. Fernández-Shaw, trans. by Alfonso Bertodano Stourton and others, *The Hispanic Presence in North America: From 1492 to Today* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), 17.

¹⁰⁵ Unzaga, Mendoza, Urdiñola, Zumárraga, Oñate, Elcano, Ibarra, Tolosa, Mendiola, and Zarate are but a minute sampling of the hundreds of Basques who were important enough to have their names recorded in Spanish colonial history. Here must also be included Sebastián Vizcaíno, who sailed up the coast of California in 1602, christened San Diego, and discovered and explored Monterey Bay.



Basque signatures of Chihuahua and Sonora from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Augustín de Vildósola, Joseph de Zubiate, Buenaventura de Huandurraga, Francisco de Guizarnotegui, Martín de Ibarburu, Juan Domingo de Berroeta, Martín de Alday, Pedro de Arizaga, Joseph de Goicoechea, Juan Baptista de Anza, Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta, and Joaquín Ignacio de Ozaeta Gallaistegui. Note the use of the Spanish "de" and accents added by editors. From Biblioteca Nacional de México, Departamento de Manuscritos, Estampas e Iconografía, 28-706, 67-705, and 85-763; and various documents in Archivo General de la Indias, Guadalajara, 169; AGN, Hacienda, Sonora, leg. 278 and Pimería y Sonora, leg. 17.

Ochoa, Sala, Oztia, Tapia, Urrea, Zabala, and Zazuta.¹⁰⁶ In Arizpe, Sonora, in the eighteenth century one finds such names as Armenta, Barcena, Bustamante, Mendible, Moraga, Ochoa, Salazar, Subiate, Velarde, Velasco, and Zubia.¹⁰⁷ In the Altar valley some of the prominent Basque names are Gastelu, Gortari, Mendoza, Murrieta, Ochoa, Urias, Urrea, and Unzarraga.¹⁰⁸ Not knowing the background of any of these people, it is still safe to assume that some of them were culturally Basque, maybe not enough to constitute a large percentage of the town population, but certainly enough to make up a significant minority population.

Although one does not see many Basque names on the far reaches of the frontier at Guevavi and Tumacacori until after the building of the presidio at Tubac, Basques labeled as *españoles* or *gente de razón* suddenly were everywhere when the soldiers arrived. Acuña, Aguirre, Albizu, Algorri, Amesqueta, Amurrio, Arbulo, Arriola, Belderrain, Bezerra, Bustamante, Castillo, Durán, Gamarra, Hurtado, Iguera, Iguenza, Irigoyen, Iturbe, Lagarra, Larralde, Mendiola, Mendoza, Munguia, Ochoa, Orozco, Pamplona, Salazar, Sarobe, Serrano, Urzanea, and Zuñiga are a sampling.¹⁰⁹

Even though a few of the names listed above could possibly have their origins outside of the Basque country, one cannot read the list without knowing that the Basques came to New Spain in large numbers. And one cannot look at obvious Basque place names on the frontier and think that some Castilian named them. Everyone is familiar with Nueva Vizcaya and Durango, but consider Arizpe, Ures, Cananea, and Horcasitas, towns along the Sonora and San Miguel River drainages in Sonora. All, with the exception of Ures, have their counterpart

¹⁰⁶ Partidas de Bautismos, 1690-1746; Bautismos, 1731-1752; Matrimonios, 1731-1755; Entierros, 1731-1756; and Casamientos, 1755-1771, Culiacán, Sinaloa, on microfilm at FHL, 0665425 and 0665426.

¹⁰⁷ Información Matrimonial, 1767-1800, Arizpe, Sonora, on microfilm at FHL, 1389122.

¹⁰⁸ Libro de Bautismos, Matrimonios, y Difunciones, 1771-1774, Altar, Sonora, on microfilm at FHL, 1389122.

¹⁰⁹ Libro de Bautismos, 1773-1825; Matrimonios, 1771-1825; Entierros, 1769-1825, Sonora (Arizona), on microfilm, TUMA.

in *solares* and villages in Vizcaya.¹¹⁰ Ures, unless by some coincidence it has a meaning in the Pima or Opata language, refers to water in Basque, a rather obvious connection in a fertile river valley that is populated by hundreds of Basque descendants.¹¹¹ Another intriguing name is the ancient royal mining town of Basochuca near Arizpe.¹¹² Though it would appear to be an Indian name it means finches in Basque.

Furthermore, Basque place names are certainly not unique to Sonora. Among examples elsewhere consider Jaso, Velarde, Chavarría, and Goycoechea in Chihuahua or the Sierra de Arratia between Culiacán and Durango. There are many other instances, but there is no need to belabor the point. Sailing to New Spain in large numbers, the Basques came early on and left a tremendous legacy in the places they settled. After many generations in Mexico, their descendants today are culturally Mexican but many know they have a Basque surname and are proud of it.

Before concluding, a short analysis of accent marks may be necessary for those who feel that names such as Vildosola should be spelled Vildósola, in the Castilian way. Once again, this is a subject in which right and wrong are not worth arguing about. Basques, including Gabriel Vildósola, who spelled his name without the accent mark,¹¹³

¹¹⁰ For Arizpe see García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, II, 169-70. For Cananea see *ibid.*, III, 23. For Horcasitas see *ibid.*, IV, 120 and Palanco García, *Mapa de Vizcaya*. It is claimed by Donohue that Horcasitas was named after Viceroy Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas. He gives no indication as to how he came to that conclusion and it would seem more probable that the town (presidio) would have been called Güemes if it were named for the viceroy. Even so, both Güemes and Horcasitas are Basque names having their origins in the villages of Gueñes and Horcasitas in the Arcentales valley of Vizcaya. Some of the Horcasitas y Peña family of Carranza, one of whom obtained his *prueba de caballero* in the *chancillería de Valladolid*, came to Nueva España, and could also have been the source for the name. See García Carraffa, *El solar vasco-navarro*, V, 251.

¹¹¹ Libro de Matrimonios, 1657-1857; Libro de Bautismos, 1768-1816 (some in the 1690s); Libro de Bautismos, 1843-1850; Libros de Bautismos, 1850-1864; Libro de Bautismos, 1864-1883; Libro de Bautismos, 1883-1885, Ures, Sonora, on microfilm at FHL, 0719840, 0683041, 0683044-7.

¹¹² Torres, *Prueba de Nobleza*, ACJ, 243, 717.

¹¹³ Gabriel Antonio de Vildósola report from Río Yaqui, July 3, 1776, AGN, Archivo Histórico de la Hacienda, Pimería y Sonora, leg. 17, on microfilm, TUMA.

generally pronounce all their words without accent. Spaniards, on the other hand, whether in Spain or their descendants in Mexico, feel a need to accent one of the syllables in each word. It appears that if the accent cannot be distinguished as falling on the next to the last syllable, which is the most common in Spanish, there is a tendency for the Spanish speaker to place the accent on the next syllable back. Thus, Basque names like Vildosola, Uzarraga, Jauregui, and Zumarraga become the Spanish names Vildósola, Uzárraga, Jaúregui, and Zumárraga.

Mestizaje is a process that took place not only between Spaniards and Native Americans, but also between Spaniards and Basques and continues to take place today. It is not only exhibited in the color of the skin, but in how people talk, think, and act. Accents and accent marks may be one way of determining Basque ethnicity in Nueva España. It is a method that will not be totally foolproof because ancient writers were not systematic in their use of such symbols, but careful analysis shows Basque speakers not using them to the same extent as Spanish speakers. It is only by careful analysis of all such indicators that the intricate interactions that took place on the colonial Spanish frontiers may be better understood.