

Anthroponyms in Basque Toponymy

Patxi Salaberri Zaratiegi

Spain

Abstract

In this paper we deal with Basque place names that are based on personal names. We first deal briefly with the origin of such toponyms, in addition to putting forth the claim that in most cases these are of Basque or of Latin-Romance origin, even though a handful of toponyms come from Celtic and a couple from Arabic. Furthermore, among anthroponym-based toponyms there exists a small group of place names which originate not in personal names, but in deity names. Moreover, we believe that often the noun *villa* ‘property’ was found in the place name, which in most cases has been dropped across time (not always though; cf. **villa bitiana* > *Villabezana*, *Luni villa* ‘Luno’s property’ > *Nuvilla*): **villa paterniana* > *Paterniana* (Romance), *Baternia* (Basque). The Basque equivalent to said Latin-Romance noun *villa* is western *huri* (eastern-central *hiri*): *Aberasturi*, *Maruri*, *Obekuri*. We finally present a list of suffixes that appear in deanthroponymic toponyms, in addition to a number of place names, as an illustration. There are, all in all, thirteen suffixes, although we believe that numbers ten and thirteen have a common origin, e.g. that both come from the Latin genitive.

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Basque village names can be divided into two main groups: a) toponyms that are based on anthroponyms, theonyms and hagionyms included, and b) toponyms that are descriptive or refer to the place where the village or town in question is found. There are, moreover, some other place names that are obscure and/or can not be classified so easily. Future research should focus on finding out, in such cases, whether they go in the first group or in the second.

A different matter is the origin of the toponyms, in both cases. Most of the toponyms of the Basque Country (this term is used here in the broad sense, that is to say, it refers to the territory where Basque is or has been spoken) are either of Basque or of Latin-Romance origin, but there are, nevertheless, some toponyms that are of Celtic descent.

A toponym from this last group is *Utzama* (< *Utzama*), the name of a valley in Navarre, from **uksama*- < **ups-ama*- ‘the highest one’ (Gorrotxategi 2002: 107), cognate of *Osma*, the name of a village in the Alavese valley of Valdegovía, which has evolved according to the phonological rules of Castilian Spanish. Some other village names that bear the superlative ending *-ama* are or may be related, as well, to Celtic: *Sesma* in Navarre (< **segisama*), like *Zegama* (< **segama*) in Gipuzkoa, probably from the root **seg(h)*- ‘victory’, *Arama* (G), *Beizama* (G), *Berama* (N) and *Lezama* (B) (see Gorrotxategi 2002: 107 and 114).

Arga (a river, N) is also of Celtic origin: it was related by Krahe to **arg-* ‘klar, glänzend, weiß’ (1964: 53). In the same way, *Kanbo* (L) apparently comes from Celtic *cambo* ‘courbe, méandre’ (Delamarre 2003: 99), which is present in Gaulish *Cambo-ritum* > *Chambord* ‘le gué courbe’ (Lambert 2003: 48) and others.

On the other hand, there are only two village names that can seemingly be related to Arabic (García Sánchez 2007: 63, 150, 153), and which have no relation to anthroponymy.

One of them is in the middle part of Navarre and the second one in the south: *Tafalla*, perhaps ‘a portion of terrain’, ‘a cultivated land’, and *Azagra*, from the word meaning ‘rock’.

Apart from those, the other toponyms are, as we have said, of Basque descent: *Ametzaga* (A), *Atxondo* (B), *Buztintze* (NB), *Elizondo* (N), *Larrabile* / *Larrabieu* (Z), *Oiartzun* (G), *Ziburu* / *Ciboure* (L), etc., or of Latin-Romance origin: *Angelu* / *Anglet* (L), *Bithiriña* / *Beyrie-sur-Joyeuse* (L), *Espejo* (A), *Fitero* (N), *Ospitalepea* / *Hôpital-Saint-Blaise* (Z), *Sopuerta* (B), *Villabona* (G) and so on. Nevertheless, these toponyms are not based on anthroponyms and will not be examined here.

Among the deanthroponymic toponyms in use there are some that are based not on a personal name, but on a theonym. There are a handful: *Deba* (G), a village located where the homonymous river flows into the sea, and whose etymon is related to the feminine form of Latin *divus* < **deivos*. It is probably a theotoponym (applied to a river) of Indo-European and perhaps Celtic origin (see Hubschmid 1960: 488, Albertos 2004: 260; García Arias 2005: 753, 781, Villar and Prósper 2005: 237-238, Delamarre 2012: 136). Another one is *Baigorri* (NB), which is related to the theonym *Baicor[r]ixo*, *Baigorixo*, *Bvaigorixe* (see Mitxelena 1954: 416, 438, Lafon 1956: 56, Gorrotxategi 1984: 312-313). A third one is *Larragoa* / *Larraona* (< *Larrahona*, N), where the underlying theonym appears to be *Larrahe* (Salaberri 2007). A fourth one is *Tutera* / *Tudela* (N), from *Tutela* (a goddess), which gave rise to several toponyms (see Irigoien 1974: 224-225; Velaza thinks that the root can be the Celtic **tout* / *teut* ‘so productive in the whole Hispania’ (1991: 81)). Another one is *Garde* (N, documented as such in 1085), which could be, partially at least, a toponym coming from the Aquitanian theonym *Garre deo*, *d[eo] Garri*, whose base is *Garr-* (Gorrotxategi 1984: 327-328). In the case of the Navarrese toponym, the ending could be the locative suffix *-te*, which can become *-de* after a sonorant (Salaberri 2005: 113). Hamlin (1997: 62) sees this topic differently.

The hagiotoponyms or toponyms based on saints’ names abound, as in many other regions in Europe, and a village or town can have a double denomination, depending on the language or languages spoken there. For example we have *Donamartiri* / *Saint-Martin d'Arbéroue* (NB), *Donapaleu* / *Saint-Palais* (NB), *Donostia* / *San Sebastián* (G), *Donibane Lohizune* / *Saint-Jean-de-Luz* (L), *Doneztebe* / *Santesteban* (N), *Doneztebe* / *Saint-Etienne* (Z), *Durruma* / *San Román* (A), etc. All the Basque versions of these hagiotoponyms are based on *done*, coming from Latin *domine*, a word that, apparently due to the pressure of the neighbouring languages, is almost completely left aside in common speech. As a consequence, many hagiotoponyms of the Basque-speaking area bear the component *san*, *santo*, *santa*, instead of *done* or its feminine version *dona*, from Latin *domina*: *San Martín*, *San Isidro*, *San Kristobal*, *Santa Ana*, *Santa Marina*, etc. There is, nevertheless, a hagiotoponym that is used only in its Basque version, that is to say, it does not have a Romance equivalent, perhaps because it is the name of a little village: *Donamaria* (N).

I am focusing now on the village names that have a personal name in the base. Almost all of them are derived by means of a suffix of Latin origin, the exception being *-egi*, of Basque origin (see below). This does not mean that all the toponyms provided with one of those suffixes date back to the Roman period. It must be taken into account that many of them could be used with autochthonous bases, which shows clearly that they had gained autonomy. It is important, as well, to bear in mind that although the origin is Latin, the

evolution has often been only Basque (*Gamarra*, A), or the toponym presents a double form, one Basque and the other Romance (*Audika / Audicana*, A).

Some of the village names, on the other hand, have been formed using the Latin name *uilla* that here, I believe, must be understood in a very broad sense as ‘property’, ‘a bit of land’ or the like. This *villa* can be found in the beginning of the toponym (*Villamaderne*, A) or in its end (*Berantevilla*, A), and the personal name that goes with it can be originally declined and be a genitive or a genitive-like form (*Liceri uilla* > *Lacervilla*, *Luni uilla* > *Nuvilla*, A), once the declension of Latin collapsed. Sometimes the personal name that goes with the noun *villa* itself contains a suffix (**villa bitiana* > *Villabezana*, A). This toponym shows us that the noun *villa* and the ending *-ana* can appear together and that, therefore, the etymological proposals that we make later are not ‘wishful thinking’, but are based on real data.

The Basque equivalent of this *villa* is the western *huri* (central-oriental *hiri*), which always comes in final position, after the personal name: *Aberasturi*, *Erremelluri*, *Giputzuri*, *Imiruri*, *Marauri*, *Maruri*, *Mutilluri*, *Nunuri*, *Obekuri*, *Okerruri*, etc. This and the fact that *villa* in other regions is found usually (but not always) in the beginning of the toponym allow us to conclude that Basque exerted influence on Romance toponyms of this area, in regard to the order of their components.

Very often the original and non-attested *villa* disappeared and did not leave any documental clues. For example, that is the case of *Paterniana*, an ancient little village now empty and found near Araia (A), called *Baternia* in Basque, whose etymon must be **(uilla) paterniana*, that is to say, ‘the property of the so-called Paternius’. The lack of any documental attestation of the mentioned noun *uilla* and the Basque evolution *-ana* > *-a* of the suffix have been the reasons why the authors who have worked within the field of Basque onomastics have not seen that many of the names ending in *-a* were de-anthroponymic: *Abezia* or **Abetzia* (from *Avitius*) (A), *Bera* (from *Verus*) (N), *Etura* (< *Betura*, from *Vetulo* probably) (A), *Oreitia* (< *Oretia*, from *Olitius*) (A), etc.

To tell the truth, there are, once again, some phonetic changes that make things more obscure, for instance the evolution *-tjV-* > *-txV-* present in *Aletxa* (A) (< **(uilla) alletiana*, based on the male name *Alletius*), *Andetxa* (< **(uilla) antistiana*, with *Antistius*, *Antestius* as a base) or *Gometxa* (**(uilla) comitiana*, from the personal name *Comitius*) (A), among others. Another possible change that we see in these toponyms is the fortition or strengthening of the *lenis* nasal of the base, caused by the nasalization of the vowels of the suffix, due to the loss of the *lenis* nasal of the latter, this being regular in Basque. For instance, the toponym *Garona* that designates an empty village (A) and is attested in 1025 as *Garonna*, with <nn> that expresses the *fortis* character of the nasal, comes in our judgement from **(uilla) caronana*, based on the anthroponym *Caron(i)us* (cf. *Velegeno Caroni ffilio*] of an inscription found in Rome), its evolution having been this: **(uilla) caronana* > **GaroNâ* (as it can be seen, the toponym displays, as well, the regular voicing of the initial voiceless velar plosive typical of Basque) > *Garona* (as a result of the lenition of the *fortis* nasal and the regular reduction *-â* > *-a*, after the vowels lost their nasality).

In several cases, on the other hand, only the Romance version of the toponym is known: *Antoñana* (A), *Berbinzana* (N), *Bitoriano* (A), *Escanzana* (A), *Fustiñana* (N), for example, which in Basque ought to be something like **Andoña*, **Berbintza*, **Bitorio*,

**Ezkantza*, **Buztiña*. Sometimes the personal name underlying the toponym is not completely clear: for instance, with regard to the mentioned Navarrese place names, we know only *Verbicius* and *Fustius*, although we need **Verbincius* and **Fustinius* to explain them adequately. In any event, it is possible to derive *Berbinzana* from *Verbicius*, in the same way that the aforementioned *Ultzama* arose, via dissimilation, from the older presumed **Untzama*, and this, in its turn, from *Utzama*. That is to say, we can suppose that **(uilla) verbiciana* ‘the property of Verbicius’ became **Verbinciana* and then **Berbintzana* > *Berbinzana*.

In several cases two toponyms that name two different places come from the same basic anthroponym, but the evolution has been different, due to the language (Basque vs. Romance) spoken in the region: *Ania* / (*Salinas de*) *Añana*, both from **(villa) anniana*, based on the personal name *Annius* attested some kilometres to the south, in Logroño. The aforementioned *Andetxa*’s Romance name is *Antezana (de Foronda)* (A), which coincides with *Antezana (de la Ribera)* (A), of the same origin.

On the other hand, it is possible for the same anthroponym to have produced two (usually) or three (seldom) different place names, depending on the suffix: *Antsoain* (N), *Santsoain* (N) - *Santsoeta* (A) (*Santso*), *Araiko* (A) - *Araitz* (N) (*Araius*), *Auritz* (N) - *Auriain*, *Aurino* (N) (**Auri*, *Aurio*), *Barañain* (N) - *Barañao* / *Barañano* (B) (*Varanius*), *Baternia* / *Paterniana* (A) - *Paternain* (with a variant *Baternain*) (N) (*Paternus*), *Bera* (N) - *Beroitz* (N) (*Verus*), *Beraskoain* / *Belascoáin* (N) - *Beraskoitz* (L) (*Belasko* > *Berasko*), *Gardelain* (A, N) - *Gardelegi* (A) (*Gardele*), *Gerrika* (B) - *Gerriau* (A) (*Gerrius* or **Cerrius*), *Gorozika* (B) - *Grozin* (N) (*Crosius*), *Gorritz* (N) - *Gorrio* (N) (*Gorri* < *gorri* ‘red’), *Lazkao* / *Lazcano* (G) - *Lazkotz* (N) (*Lascius*, **Lascus*), *Urdaitz* / *Urdániz* (N) - *Urdotz* / *Urdánoz* (N) (*Urdan* < **urdani*; *urdaína* ‘pig farmer’), *Urdiain* (N) - *Urdoze* / *Urdos* (NB) (*Urde* < *urde* ‘pig’), *Zangio* (G) - *Zangitu* (N) (*Sancius*), etc.

Even if the suffix and the language used are the same, the results can be different: *Arroi(t)z* / *Arróniz* (N) - *Arruitz* (< *Arroitz* < *Arronitz*) (N) - *Arroze* / *Arros* (NB) (*Arro*, *Arrus*); *Zerio* - *Zirao* / *Ciriano* (*Celius*, *Serius*) (A). In the last case, the difference is due to assimilation and dissimilation, which happened in *Zirao* (*Ceriano* > *Ciriano* > *Zirjano* > **Zirjâô* > *Zirjao* > *Zirao*), but not in *Zerio* (*Ceriano* > **Zeriâô* > *Zerjo*).

Every once in a while, the suffix is the same, but the personal names underlying the toponyms present a slightly different form, that is to say, they are variants of the same anthroponym: *Allotz* / *Alloz* (N), *Aloze* / - *Alos* (Z) / *Alotz* (N), (*Allius*, *Allus*); *Arrio* / *Arriano* (A) - *Arroa* / *Arrona* (G) - *Arroi(t)z* / *Arróniz* (N) - *Arroze* / *Arros* (NB) (*Arrius*, *Arrus* or *Arro*), *Gartzain* (N) - *Gastiain* (N) (*Gartze*, *Gaste*; cf. *Gasteiz*, A), *Garindaine* / *Garindein* (Z) - *Garinoain* (N) (*Garindo*, *Garino*), *Indurain* (N) - *Ündüreine* / *Undurein* (Z) (*Indura*- and *Undura*-, from *Endura*), and so on.

There is a known suffix that has been analysed by many onomasticians: *-o(t)z*, *-oze*, which has been traditionally considered as a Pyrenean suffix related to Gascon *-òs* (*-ossa*) and Aragonese *-ués* (*-uesa*). Without denying completely its Pyrenean origin, I pointed out (Salaberri 2011) that quite often the ‘obscure bases’ of the toponyms that carry this suffix can be explained by means of anthroponyms, most of them used in the Roman period, but some others unknown, and probably autochthonous.

There is no doubt that toponyms like the Aragonese *Biscarrués*, attested as *Biscarruese*, *Biscarrose* in the 11th century, and *Biscarrosse* in Gascony are related and share

the same base, which seems to be modern Basque *bizkar*, *bixkar* ‘ridge’, a common and spread toponymical noun, a metaphor based on *bizkar* ‘back’ (of the human body), in the same way as *buru* ‘head, peak’, or *lepo* ‘neck, mountain-pass’. The suffix in this case seems to be autochthonous, and it is the same perhaps that is found in Aquitanian personal names ending in *-ox* (Mitzelena 1954: 422).

On the other hand, many place names that carry the aforementioned suffix cannot be explained on account of any known root or word, Basque or otherwise, but they have, on the contrary, a quite easy explanation by means of anthroponymy. This is especially clear with toponyms that occasionally present a final *-oi(t)z*, instead of the mentioned *-o(t)z*, whether they name the same village: *Azotz* (*Açoiz* in 1280, N), *Bidankoze* (*Bidangoiz* in 1120 and 1178, N), or whether they are two or three different village names based on the same personal name: *Arroi(t)z* / *Arróniz* (N) - *Arruitz* (< *Arroit*z < *Arronit*z) (N) - *Arroze* / *Arros* (NB).

In my judgement, these toponyms are composed of an anthropomym and a suffix coming from Latin, from the genitive of nouns ending in *-o*, *-onis*, exactly like the spread patronymics that one finds so often in medieval documents. That is to say, the genitive expressed property: in one case, in patronymics, the family name expressed that, for example, the so-called *Auria Enneconnis*, *Garcia Enecoitç*, *Lope Enecotz* (Middle Ages) were the daughter and sons of *Enneco* and, in toponyms, that the field or ground in question belonged originally to the person whose name appears in the base: *Ilurdotz* (attested also written with <ll>) (N) ‘Ilurdo’s field or house’ first, and then the name of a village, like *Beila Illurdotz* ‘Beila the son of *Illurdo*’.

Finally, I will list the different suffixes that have been used with anthroponymical bases. Most of them (the exception being *-egi-*) are in my view of Latin origin, but two of them are rather difficult to analyse. First, the suffix *-eta*, present also in Basque declension (in the so-called ‘place cases’), and second the Pyrenean *-otz*, *-oze*, in which a convergence of more than one source seems to have taken place, as we have seen. We find the following suffixes, in alphabetical ordering (the option behind the slash, when any, indicates that it is the variant used in Romance):

1. *-a* / *-ana*: *Bera* (*Verus*) (N), *Dura* / *Durana* (*Durus*) (A), *Etura* (*Vetulo*) (A), *Foronda* (*Fronto*) (A).
2. *-ain(e)* / *-ein*: *Andrekiain* (*Andreki*) (N), *Garindaine* / *Gerindein* (*Garindo*) (Z), *Gerendiain* (*Terentius*) (N), *Zerain* (*Celius*, *Serius...*) (G), *Zuriain* (*Zuri* or *Zuria*) (N).
3. *-ao*, *-au* / *-ano*, *-io* / *-iano*: *Arrio* / *Arriano* (*Arrius*) (A), *Bilbo* / *Bilbao* (*Vilbius*, **Vilbus*) (B), *Dorrao* / *Torrano* (*Torrius*, **Torrus*) (N), *Erandio* (*Elandus*, **Elandius*) (B), *Labio* / *Labiano* (*Labio*, *Labius*) (N), *Otxandio* / *Ochandiano* (B) (*Otxande*), *Zamudio* (*Samuntius*) (B).
4. *-egi*: *Aperregi* (*Aper*) (A), *Gardelegi* (*Gardele*) (A).
5. *-eta*: *Marieta* (*Maria*) (A), *Santsoeta* (*Santso*) (A).
6. *-ika*, *-ga* / *-ega*, *-iga*, *-ca*: *Gernika* (*Cernius*) (A, B), *Cábrega* (*Caprius*) (N), *Caranca* (*Caranius*) (A), *Sondika* (*Sontius*) (B), *Tertanga* (*Tertianus*) (A), *Zúñiga* (*Vestinius*, **Bestunnius*) (N).
7. *-iko* (*-iku*), *-go*: *Abetxuko* (*Aventin(i)us*) (A), *Araiko* (*Araius*) (A), *Berango* (*Veran(n)(i)us*) (B), *Durango* (*Turannius*) (B).

8. *-ia / -ina, -iu / *-inu*: *Andollu* (< **Antolinu* < **Antoninu*, from *Antonius*) (A), *Azilu* (*Acilius*) (A), *Gulia / Gulina* (*Gullius, Bullius* or *Fullius*) (N), *Okia / Oquina* (*Occius*) (A), *Zolia / Zolina* (*Sollius*) (N).
9. *-ita, -itu*: *Jungitu* (*Iuncius, Iuncus*) (A), *Mandaita / Montevite* (*Mantonius*) (A), *Zangitu* (*Sancius*) (N).
10. *-(i)tz, -(i)z / -ez, -iniz*: *Agoitz / Aoiz* (*Aio*) (N), *Ariz / Aríñez* (*Arius*) (A), *Auritz* (**Auri, Aurio*) (N), *Armendaritze / Armendarits* (*Armentari*) (NB), *Markiz / Marquínez* (*Marcus*) (A).
11. *-o(a) / -ona*: *Abitoa / Abitona* (*Abitus*) (A), *Leioa / Lejona* (*Laedius, Laegius, Leius*) (B), *Zestoa / Cestona* (*Cestius, *Cestus*) (G).
12. *-ón* (< *-oni*): *Arganzón* (*Argentius*) (A), *Comuni6n* (*Communio*) (A), *Marañ6n* (*Maranius*) (N).
13. *-otz / -oz, -oze / -oz, -os*: *Almandoz* (*Alemanto*) (N), *Aloze / Alos* (*Allus*) (Z), *Arzotz / Arzoz* (*Artius*) (N), *Azotz / Azoz* (*Attio*) (N), *Bidankoze / Vidángo* (*Vindacius, *Vindacus*) (N), *Estenotz / Esténoz* (*Stennius, *Stennus*) (N). This one is, in the majority of cases, a mere variant of the suffix(es) seen in (10). The difference lies in the fact that in this case there was a reduction $-o(i)(t)z > -o(t)z$, which often is not attested. The final *-e* is many times a paragogic sound, although this is not always completely clear.

Briefly summarized, we can reasonably affirm that anthroponyms are in the base of many village names of the Basque Country, more often than people (and even some onomasticians) usually believe. Many times, the toponyms are composed of a personal name and a suffix borrowed from Latin, but which, after a time, gained independence and was used, as well, with autochthonous bases.

Patxi Salaberri Zaratiegi
Public University of Navarre (UPNA)
Academy of the Basque Language
Spain
salaberri@unavarra.es

Abbreviations

- A: Araba / Álava
- B: Bizkaia / Biscay
- NB: Nafarroa Beherea / Basse-Navarre, Low Navarre
- G: Gipuzkoa
- L: Lapurdi / Labourd, Labort
- N: Nafarroa / Navarre
- Z: Zuberoa / Soule

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