

Basque ethnogenesis, acculturation, and the role of language contacts

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INTRODUCTION

The formation of the Basque nation and the emergence of the Basque language have puzzled scholars and laymen for centuries. In particular the isolation of Basque which, obviously, is unrelated to any European or non-European language, has challenged generations of linguists to investigate possible genetic affiliations. It is noteworthy that the results of the investigations made so far have been controversial, and that they have created a situation in which scholars gravitate towards one of two camps, the “believers” in the one, the “sceptics” in the other. There are those who accept the ideas of distant relationships of Basque with Berber, Caucasian or Paleo-Siberian languages as serious hypotheses. For the sceptics, comparisons with distant languages remain within the realm of speculation (see Morvan 1996, Trask 1997 for recent surveys).

One of the elements of self-identification which has enjoyed popularity among the Basques for long is the notion that the Basques are a very old, if not the oldest, people in Europe and that their language is the oldest of the ancient languages to have survived. High age is an element of prestige in many cultures around the world, and it may even possess universal value (Müller 1987: 54 ff.). Until recently, the notion of the antiquity of Basque culture has been categorized by many scholars as a cultural stereotype with no substantive value for anthropological or linguistic research. Surprisingly, the stereotype of the high age of Basque ethnicity and language has been nourished by recent findings in the field of human genetics. Although the

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claim of high age cannot be substantiated in its totality, confirmation of extremely old components in the Basque ethnic stock exists.

The genetic determination of Basque ethnicity, of its specificity and relative isolation, and of its genetic links with distant populations (i.e. with those in the Caucasus region) has opened new horizons for a re-assessment of data which have been produced by scholars in the humanities (i.e. archaeology, anthropology, linguistics) and for their reconciliation with the findings from human genetics. When reconciling data from different fields one can not only confirm the validity of some older hypotheses, but also find new incentive for re-assessing the nature of ethnic and linguistic fusion which is evident in Basque. Some of the novel perspectives resulting from such a reconciliation will be discussed in the following.

ON THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUITY OF SETTLEMENT IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

Whoever tries to solve the mystery of Basque ethnogenesis has to address the problem of continuity of Basque settlement. Human genetics has confirmed the high age of continuous settlement in the modern Basque country, that is in the regions of southwestern France and northern Spain. The idea of continuity is a relative concept when applied to European populations. All hominid species who have inhabited Europe (i.e. *homo erectus*, archaic *homo sapiens* = Neandertal man, modern *homo sapiens* = *homo sapiens sapiens*) came to this continent from outside. This means that none of the mentioned species whose remains and artifacts are documented actually originated in Europe. During the Paleolithic Age, hominids migrated to Europe, mainly in east-western and southeast-northwestern drifts. There is considerable justification for speaking of the Paleolithic “settlement of Europe” (Gamble 1986).

The term “continuity” is valid when applied with relation to periods after humans had occupied their primary European habitats. Continuity of settlement in the Basque country refers to the fact that modern man has lived in the area continuously since the Upper Paleolithic. The relationship of the early inhabitants and those of specifically Basque ethnic stock is a complex one. According to a comparative inspection of collective genetic data for the ethnic groups in Europe, the Basques are an “outlier” whose genomic profile distinguishes itself clearly from that of all other ethnicities. “Basques are probably the most direct descendants of the earliest post-Neanderthal settlers of Europe” (Cavalli-Sforza/Piazza 1993: 11). Among the prominent markers of Basque ethnicity are an exceptionally high frequency of the O blood-group and of RH-negatives (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994: 280 f.).

The time depth of these markers in the genomic profile is considerable. There is no older detectable DNA pattern in the Basque country and adjacent areas. Going back in time, the dominance of the O blood-group over other blood types shows a gradation from regions surrounding the Basque country to the modern center of Basque settlement. When associating the location of the genetic gradients with the spread of place-names containing Basque elements, one can recognize the picture of a geographical contraction of the genetic “outlier” from historical times to the present (see Figure 1).

In its maximum extension, the “outlier” covered much terrain which was inhabited by non-Indo-Europeans (i.e. Iberians) and later also by Indo-Europeans (i.e. Celts) (see Figure 2). There are, nevertheless, some scarce linguistic traces of a Basque-affiliated population in the south and east of Spain. In Roman sources, a place-name is mentioned which appears twice: *Iliberris* (**ili berri*, modern Basque *hiri berri* “new city”). This name is attested for the region of Granada (modern *Elvira*) and for the Roussillon on the Mediterranean coast (modern *Elne*). Another ancient name is *Iturissa* (a place on the Iberian coast) which may be related to Basque *iturri* “spring, fountain”. I do not follow Trask (1997: 39) in his opinion that these names far beyond the Basque territory “may be sheer coincidence”.

It would be hazardous, however, to assign the ethnonym “Basque” to the most remote processes in the formation of the genetic “outlier” in question which are discernible in the genetic mapping. It is more appropriate to view Basque ethnicity as the youngest derivation of this Paleolithic genomic profile which is one of the oldest in Europe. Other genomic profiles which are also of high age are found in the southern parts of Europe, one with its epicenter in the Caucasian region, the other on the island of Sardinia (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994: 273 ff., 294 f.). The oldest traces of human occupation in Sardinia date to the tenth millennium BCE. The three genetic profiles of high age (Basque, Sardinian, Caucasian) are to some extent interrelated and, at the same time, unrelated to other European “outliers” which are younger, dating to the Neolithic Age.

Geneticists have made an attempt to reconcile genetic findings with data from historical linguistics explaining the Basque outlying position. They consider it to be the remnant of a very old population (possibly related to the Cro-Magnon type) that once migrated from the east to western Europe. The starting area of this Paleolithic migration may have been the western Caucasus region. This assumption is enhanced by the confirmation of genetic similarities between the Basques and Caucasian populations (Piazza et al. 1988), which, to some extent, supports earlier speculations of a Basque homeland in the Caucasus. The connection of the western population in southwestern Europe with its eastern homeland in the Caucasus was probably hampered or totally disrupted with the southern advancement of the ice-shield during the last ice-age, that is during the time of maximum glaciation about 20 000-18 000 BCE.

As a result, the western “Caucasians” continued their settlement –for long undisturbed by other immigrants–, with endogamous social relations prevailing. Already in the period preceding maximum glaciation, the communities in southern France and northern Spain flourished, economically and culturally (Reynolds 1990, Straus 1990). Most of the caves with Paleolithic paintings are found in that region (see Figure 3). It has been argued that a relatively high level of human adaptation to the environment prompted technological as well as artistic developments. “Late Upper Paleolithic adaptations included the use of elaborate, highly planned, highly technological strategies for survival, with major social and cybernetic components (probably reflected by the explosion of mobile and rupestral art in this part of the world)” (Straus 1990: 297). Undoubtedly, the creators of Paleolithic rock art are remotely affiliated with the bearers of Basque ethnicity.

This, however, does not mean that the Basques created rock art in the Paleolithic Age since Basque ethnicity is a later affiliation of the Paleolithic population in the same region. The Basque genomic profile –as we know it today– emerged most probably in the post-glacial period, in the Mesolithic and Neolithic, and this development is associated with population spread into hitherto uninhabited terrain. During the Magdalenian period (c. 17000-11000 BP) “people penetrated the deep valleys, above the moraines, and had access to the mountain sites. (...) This vigorous expansion took place not only all along the chain, but also in depth” (Clottes 1976: 1221).

The fact that prominent markers of the Paleolithic genetic code have been continued in the Basque country is significant in itself. In the archaeological evidence of the early settlements is revealed the astounding fact that the region was densely populated, almost as densely as it is today. Then, the Basque country was the most populous area in all of Europe. The high concentration of the early population has been preserved on fairly the same level throughout history, and this explains the perpetuation of the outlying genetic markers which still dominate the DNA in the living generations.

ON PROBLEMS OF ETHNIC FUSION AND OF LINGUISTIC STRATIFICATION IN BASQUE

Human genetics has not only produced substantial evidence for long-term continuity of settlement in the Basque country since the Paleolithic, the assumed relationship of the Basques with the peoples of the Caucasus has also been supported by genetic data (see above). Evaluated against this background of genetic evidence, the lexical (and morphological) comparisons of Basque with Caucasian languages can, in principal, no longer be marginalized by sceptics as speculative (as does Michelena in his study of 1968). In the history of Basque studies, Hervás y Panduro (1784) was the first to associate Basque with a Caucasian language (i.e. with Georgian). The Basque-Caucasian hypothesis was further elaborated in the nineteenth century and continued in our century, and many names of well-known scholars are attached to it, such as G.W. Leibniz, J.Chr. Adelung, J. Klaproth, W. v. Humboldt, F. Müller, H. Schuchardt, N.J. Marr, G. Dumézil, C.C. Uhlenbeck, K. Bouda and others (see Morvan 1996: 54 ff. for a historical survey).

All in all, “the volume of work in this area probably exceeds all other work on Basque genetic connections put together” (Trask 1997: 392). The hypothesis enjoyed its greatest popularity at the beginning of this century and, later, with the studies of Bouda (1949, 1952), it reached a climax. However, after the publication of Michelena’s (1953, 1964b) exclusively negative statements on Bouda’s work, the assumed relationship of Basque and Caucasian languages has been more controversial than ever before. Scholars in the Soviet and post-Soviet period, specialized in Caucasian languages, for their part, have always taken interest in the Basque connection (e.g. Chicobava/Sturua 1981 and Ćirikba 1985 for some modern studies). This explains the translation of Lafon’s work (1976) into Russian.

Against the background of genetic findings relating to Basque-Caucasian similarities, there is a solid background for future linguistic research in this field, a fact which does not relieve scholars from the painstaking duty of a ca-

reful and critical revision of older etymologies and a rejection of fantastic comparisons. Of the four hundred Basque-Caucasian etymologies which had been elaborated by Uhlenbeck, Bouda and others, less than one hundred can persuade the critical mind. Comparative work, however, is continuing (e.g. Braun 1994). If morphological comparisons between Basque and Caucasian languages still seem speculative today, the reason for this may lie in insufficient methods of historical linguistics.

There is another possible explanation for the difficulties of comparative research to reach satisfactory results which the scholar of Basque studies should be aware of: the Basque-Caucasian relationship might have linguistically almost disintegrated although it is well discernible in a genetic framework. The terminology used by geneticists refers to a much bigger scale of human evolution than can be covered by historico-linguistic reconstructions. When geneticists speak of a migratory movement from the Caucasus region to western Europe they refer to the phenomenon of a genetic drift. For the Paleolithic one cannot assume any organized long-distance migration. What stands behind the genetic drift in question may be a process of population expansion that took thousands of years before resulting in any genetically significant trend.

The languages of those people of Caucasian ethnic stock who finally settled in western Europe may have experienced substantial transformations in contact with other pre-Indo-European populations in southern and central Europe. The earliest contacts may have even involved interaction with Neandertal communities. "The transition from Mousterian to Upper Paleolithic and from Neandertal to Cro-Magnon, would seem to have been more complex and less monolithic than often imagined, not so much a total replacement as a varying situation of exchanges and resistances, more of a mosaic in time, space and aspect, sometimes abrupt, at other times more gradual" (Straus 1996: 212).

The assumed relationship of Basque with Paleo-Asiatic languages and also with Uralic may be a remnant of these early contacts between people of Caucasian stock with earlier populations (Morvan 1996: 34 ff., 139 ff.). It may be conjectured that before the population drift from the Caucasus, there had been a population speaking varieties of a "Euro-Siberian" family of languages. The modern Paleo-Asiatic languages (Volodin 1997) may be considered a relic of that ancient superphylum. The remote genetical-linguistic ties between these and Uralic languages have been elaborated by demonstrating the affiliation of Yukaghir with Uralic (Ruhlen 1994: 209 f.).

In all probability, those pre-Indo-European populations were neither ethnically nor linguistically homogeneous. Of their languages, only scarce remainders can be traced as they appear as substrate elements in the vocabulary of historical languages as well as in the toponymy and hydronymy of western and eastern Europe. The number of pre-Indo-European items which belong to the substrate layer of the Basque lexicon, is rather small. Of the thirteen substrate elements which Hubschmid (1965) proposes in his final list, several can still be considered problematic (e.g. *pentoka* "little hill", *mu-ga* "boundary").

Some of these words resemble expressions in other languages for which also pre-Indo-European etymologies have been proposed. Resemblances

have been found between Basque and Sardinian, and also some languages in the Balkan peninsula, with Albanian and its repertory of autochthonous elements being a favorite candidate (Morvan 1996: 60 f.). As an example one can mention the root **mal-* of probably pre-Indo-European origin. In Basque there are composites with this root (e.g. *malda* “slope”, *malkor* “precipice, cliff”). In Albanian, the equivalent is *mal* “mountain”, and in Greece there are place-names with this element (Villar 1991: 64 f.).

The similarities in the layer of pre-Indo-European substrate elements of Basque and languages in southeastern Europe are of special interest since, in recent studies, specifically pre-Indo-European features have been highlighted for the Balkans. In the genetic network of ethnic groups in Europe, the Greek genomic profile is an “outlier” as is the Basque one (Cavalli-Sforza/Piazza 1993: 5, 10 f.). This means that the Greeks (including some of their Slavic neighbors) differ genetically from the rest of Europe. The Greek “outlier” is also referred to as the “Mediterranean” genotype.

According to the commonly held view of geneticists, this genotype is a reflection of the spread of the Greek population in antiquity, in Greece, in the coastal area of Asia Minor and in southern Italy (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994: 293 f.). However, archaeological evidence of Greek settlement is found in an area which is much more restricted than the core area covered by the “Mediterranean” genotype. In other words, the central “Mediterranean” genotype extends far into regions where Greeks never settled (Haarmann 1997).

It is much more probable that this genomic profile is a reflection of the pre-Indo-European population (Villar 1991: 57 f.), bearers of the so-called Old European civilization (ca 5500-3500 BCE) and who later intermingled with Indo-European migrants to the region (Gimbutas 1991). Archaeolinguistic considerations also speak in favor of an identification of the “Mediterranean” genotype as representing pre-Indo-European genetic features. The Greek “outlier”, in its genetic composition, deviates from the average European profile.

In several recent studies, an attempt has been made to link river names and toponyms of presumably pre-Indo-European origin to Basque. According to Vennemann (1993, 1994, 1995), those names found in a vast area north of the Alps can be related to one language which is identified as an ancestral form of Basque. His comparisons, however, are highly unreliable, as is his assumption of linguistic homogeneity. It is more than probable that when Indo-Europeans infiltrated central and western Europe, several languages representing several pre-Indo-European language families (Euro-Siberian, ancient Caucasian, and others) existed. The situation of linguistic heterogeneity there and then would not have been much different from that in areas north and south of the Pyrenees in pre-Roman times.

When speaking of the Paleolithic population in the Basque country and their remote relationship with peoples in the Caucasus, this does not enhance the idea of ethnic homogeneity. The western populations might have been as ethnically heterogeneous as the eastern populations in historical times. In fact, Basque ethnogenesis did not evolve in a monoethnic or monocultural environment. On the contrary, the most typical feature of Basque ethnicity in the horizon of time is a permanent fusion process which is on-

going still today. The historical contraction of the genetic “outlier” as evidenced by human genetics provides substantial proof of the gradual Indo-Europeanization of the ethnic stock with which the Basques are affiliated. In this process of ethnic fusion, gene flow from Spanish and/or French sources is the most modern determinant.

Human genetics does not yet provide an answer to the question of the infrastructure of the ethnic stock with Basque characteristics; no genetic data is yet available which would justify statements concerning the individual ethnic groups that participated in the process of ethnic fusion in prehistoric times. So, while the pre-Indo-European character of the basic ethnic stock in the area has been determined by the genetic profile of the Basque “outlier”, the individual determinants of local fusion still remain unspecified. In this regard, the situation of the scholar of Basque, seemingly, is more or less the same as before the sensational breakthrough of human genetics, which means that the discussion about ethnic fusion processes has to rely mainly on comparative research in the field of historical linguistics.

As a general observation resulting from ethnic studies one can acknowledge that wherever ethnic fusion occurs there will definitely be linguistic traces. In the case of ethnic fusion which ultimately produced the Basque genetic “outlier”, we may expect that elements of the languages of the groups participating in the fusion to be identifiable in Basque. Most of the research has focused on the vocabulary, but grammatical studies have also added to the picture of a multifaceted linguistic infrastructure. In fact, there can be no doubt that the lexical structures of Basque are multilayered, resulting from the contacts with various local languages spoken in the area where the Basque “outlier” originated.

A multitude of linguistic layers have been proposed for Basque. In addition to the problematic character of much of the linguistic evidence that has been offered as proof of prehistoric or historical language contacts, there was a major problem of interpretation which was produced together with the linguistic material. Many questions arise to which one can not (yet) give a definite answer. Was the Aquitanian language, of which there are scarce remains from Roman times and which is “so transparently Basque” (Trask 1997: 35), a twin language affiliated with Basque or an ancestral form of the latter? Is the Iberian element in the Basque lexicon a reflection of a significant ethnic fusion of Iberians with proto-Basque groups (a linguistic amalgam) or does it represent an adstrate influence which a fully developed Basque language absorbed in contact with the urban Iberian civilization in pre-Roman times (see Castro 1995: 312 ff. for the “Graeco-classical appearance” of Iberian communities)?

ON THE NATURE OF ACCULTURATION AND ITS REFLECTION IN LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

If language is involved in processes of ethnic fusion, then acculturation, the adoption of foreign cultural patterns, is the major determiner of this involvement. In contact settings it is difficult to establish a reliable boundary between what is acculturation and what non-acculturation. Therefore, it is easier to interpret the arbitrary role of culture in interethnic contacts as fo-

llows: the essence of acculturation, which is an ingredient in any contact resulting in linguistic interference, lies in that it displays different grading. A wide array of acculturational features may find a reflection in linguistic structures. These range from the adoption of fashionable terms related to modern life-style to a restructuring of the lexical inventory of social and intimate relations. The former is an expression of a superficial acculturation, while the latter is a reflection of a massive influx, with the consequence of a linguistic reconstruction of the cultural environment.

In its colorful history, Basque has experienced most of the stages which can be theoretically distinguished in the gradation of acculturational influences. Since Basque is a language under no immediate linguistic threat, it lacks the sociolinguistic experience which has led to the virtual extinction of many minority languages. Examples of dying languages in Europe are Livonian in Latvia, Votic and Izhorian in Ingermanland, a historical landscape between Estonia and St. Petersburg, and Karaim in Lithuania and Poland. Their linguistic structures have been massively reformulated under the influence of the dominant contact languages to which the minority typically assimilates. Total assimilation as the result of complete acculturation is a process which numerous Basque communities on the periphery experienced whose members have assimilated to French or Spanish in the past. Acculturation of this kind is continuing in the Basque country, although in a more moderate form than before the achievement of cultural and administrative autonomy in the 1980s.

There is evidence for acculturation in association with massive language contact and interethnic social relations in the Basque area since antiquity. The longest and best known processes of acculturation are those in the Latin-Romance continuum. A tendency toward high-grade acculturation can be observed since the times of an increasing Roman influence in the region. The number of Latin loan-words is not decisive for establishing the degree of acculturation, although it adds information to understanding the proportions of influence. Determining any exact number is not possible since, in the Latin-Romance continuum, clear-cut boundaries can hardly be established. Numbers of Latin borrowings vary in the sources. A critical minimum of 674 lexical items is listed in Haarmann (1979: 35, 131 ff.).

Among the specific features of the inventory of Latin borrowings in Basque is a core of 58 items with no parallels in Romance languages. This means that these words have been adopted in Basque dialects as common expressions while, in Romance languages, these have no equivalents. To this group belong Latin terms such as ANIMU, AUREU, BURSA, COMPUTARIA, FAMA, VELAMENTUM, VINATA, and others. Several items have continued as popular expressions in Basque, while in Romance languages, their phonetic development shows the typical features of learned borrowings and they form part of the vocabulary of high culture. This is true for DISCIPLINA, FIGURA, GLORIA, INDUSTRIA, LIBRU, NATURA, OMEN, SANCTU, SPIRITU, and others.

As for acculturational features, it is the distribution of borrowings in the lexical domains, not their numerical strength, which provides clues to the categorization of influences associated with the changing and shifting of cultural patterns. Among the sensitive domains of linguistic interference which

point, on a social level, at interethnic contacts, on a cultural level, at trends of a shifting of indigenous cultural patterns and, on the linguistic level, at a restructuring of traditional lexical patterns, there are the following: numerology, kinship and body part terminology, and elements of the deictic system (i.e. conjunctions, interjections, particles, pronouns, modal adverbs); (see Haarmann 1986: 160 ff. for a general overview). There are other lexical domains which are also indicative of acculturation although pointing at a more moderate intensity: e.g. terminology for time relations and measures, religious world view, directional orientation (Haarmann 1991: 210 ff.).

The distribution of word classes according to their grammatical functions is another indicator of the intensity of language contacts and, indirectly, of the quality of acculturation. In cases where only technical terminology is borrowed, most loans will be substantives. The greater the degree of acculturation which is associated with linguistic interference, the greater the probability that other word classes will also be represented in the repertory of borrowings. In the list of Latin loans in Basque, three word classes are represented: 551 substantives (81.8 per cent of the total), 89 verbs (13.2 per cent), and 34 adjectives (5.0 per cent). The percentages in this distribution resemble those of Latin borrowings in Breton (Haarmann 1979: 38). Albanian shows an even greater variety of Latin word classes than Basque, with the inventory of Latin loans also including adverbs, prepositions, numerals and conjunctions.

Another domain of formal-grammatical relations where foreign influence reflects the working of a situational pressure of a dominant language in its role as a vehicle of acculturation in social relations is the system of formative elements as a part of syntactic morphology. In Basque grammar, several formative techniques of Latin origin have become productive. Among them are the following: Latin -ARIA > Basque *-era* (e.g. COMPUTARIA > *konde-rra*), -ARIU > *-ari* (e.g. *MERCATARIU > *merkatari*), -ARIUM > *-airu* (e.g. MORTARIUM > *mortairu*), etc. (Haarmann 1979: 17 f.). Compared with other peripheral languages in the Roman cultural sphere, Basque has adopted fewer formative elements than one finds in Welsh, Breton, Albanian or Byzantine Greek.

Language contacts as a reflection of acculturation have long been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Historical linguistics has added its share of confusion with the glottochronological method. Glottochronology is based on a set of axioms of which the assumed existence of a “pre-cultural” vocabulary is one. This idea is highly problematic, since it infers that there are two separate sections in lexical structures, a core repertory which does not undergo any or little change, and another (“cultural”) which may be influenced by borrowings and may be restructured. What makes vocabulary “basic” (= “pre-cultural”) is “that certain semantic classes of words are much less likely to be borrowed than other words” (Trask 1996: 23). What “less likely” actually means remains a mystery.

Comparative research in the field of bilingualism and contact linguistics has produced ample evidence for the cultural embedding of all lexical structures. There is nothing “pre-cultural” in the vocabulary of any language. As the premier signifier, language covers all sections of human culture, and its lexical structures reflect the speakers’ overall communicative needs to orient

in their cultural environment. Borrowings affect not only the lexicon but may penetrate any other partial system of language (i.e. phonetics, morphology, syntax; see Campbell 1993 for a modern survey).

Depending on the specific conditions of a local language contact, practically any term in Language A may be replaced by one borrowed from Language B (see Haarmann 1990 for a discussion). This is true not only for technical terminology in a professional field (e.g. English terms in the field of automobile industry in Japanese) or for fashionable vocabulary (e.g. French terms for female haute couture in German) but also for the most basic concepts of human experience such as “mother”, “hand”, “bird” or “night”. As criticism of the shortcomings of glottochronological terminology grew stronger, historical linguists called for “a serious effort to define and delimit the concept of basicness” (Bynon 1977: 271) in relation to items of lexicon.

Efforts to reach such a goal are likely to remain unsuccessful since cultural relations determine the quality and extent of basicness in the lexical structures of any given speech community. Therefore, the result of any attempt to elaborate a list of basic items, claimed to be universal, can only be a theoretical construct with little value for the investigation of lexical structures in contact. For instance, in a random list of 100 lexical items, claimed to be “basic”, there are 59 borrowings in Hittite (mainly of Sumerian and Akkadian origin) and, in Cambodian (Khmer), 61 lexical loans (of Sanskrit, Pali and Thai origin); (Haarmann 1991: 232 ff.). The proportions of indigenous and borrowed terms reflect the acculturational level of local language contacts, but for determining the chronological split of Hittite or Cambodian from their corresponding proto-language basis this list of lexical items is of little help.

Many elements in the 200 or 100-item list of basic concepts which have been applied by glottochronologists belong to lexical domains which are sensitive to acculturational influences. “Basic” has been traditionally understood as meaning a concept denoting a thing that is known from any speaker’s natural surroundings (e.g. “sun”, “water”, “brother”, “animal”, “tree”). In the traditional view, expressions for concepts which are known are not borrowed. This mechanism, however, does not work in intensive language contacts. In many settings one can observe that borrowings are also readily adopted for known concepts which means that an indigenous term is replaced by a borrowed one.

This process is indicative of acculturation at work in the social patterns of speakers (e.g. members of the Basque speech community) who interact with speakers of the influencing language (e.g. Latin as the cultural vehicle of Roman lifestyle). The language which conveys acculturation is usually one which enjoys prestige. The circumstantial evidence of the prestige functions of Latin in Iberia may be found in the broad manifestation of urban Roman culture which flourished from the first century BCE to late antiquity (Keay 1997).

As for the Latin loans in Basque, one can observe considerable uncertainty in the assessment of their motivation still today. Trask (1997: 259 f.) evaluates the existence of some borrowings as “one would expect”, others the motivation of which is seen as “less obvious” and again others which are “decidedly surprising”. Basque *gorputz* “body” (< Latin CORPUS), *denbora*

“time” (< TEMPORA), *bago* “beech” (< FAGU), *golde* “plow” (< CULTER “plowshare”) and others fall into the latter two categories. The list of Latin loans in Basque for which no “obvious” motivation from the standpoint of glottochronology can be given, is long, and lexical items of Latin origin have been adopted in various acculturational domains.

The following list of Latin elements in Basque body part terminology would be surprising only according to the obsolete notions of glottochronology. In the light of continuous Basque-Roman social interaction, with widespread Basque-Latin bilingualism in an atmosphere of Roman prestige values, the existence of Latin-based terminology in a personal and partly intimate domain of Basque language use is conclusive, rather than surprising.

Basque equivalent	Latin loan
<i>berna</i> “calf (of the leg)”	PERNA
<i>bilu</i> “single hair” (with interference from VILLU)	PILU
boronte “forehead”	FRONTE(M)
<i>eskurr</i> “gland” (Soul./Nav.)	(A)ESCULU
fuin, muin, (h)un “marrow”	FUNE(M)
golko, kolko “bosom”	*COL(A)CU for COL(A)P(H)U
gorputz ‘body	CORPUS
<i>kaiku</i> “eagle-nosed” (Lab., Nav.) e.g. <i>sudurr kaiku</i> “eagle-nose”	CAUCU
<i>khoro</i> “(dorsal) spine”	CORONA
<i>kikirista</i> “crest (of a bird)” (Lab., Nav.)	CRISTA
<i>kukulu</i> (Nav.), <i>kukula</i> (Guip.) “crest of a rooster”	CUCULLU
<i>magina</i> “vagina (Nav.)”, “hymen (Guip.)”	VAGINA
<i>makila, makhila</i> “long, thin leg (ironic)”	BACILLA
<i>mamul, manbul</i> “female breast” (synonym of Basque <i>ugatz</i>)	MAMMULA
<i>masaila, maxela, matraila</i> “cheek”	*MAXELLA/MAXILLA
<i>maskulu</i> “bladder”	VASCULU
<i>menatura</i> “vulva” (Basque <i>eme</i> “woman” < Occitan + Latin NATURA)	
<i>mizpira</i> “nostril” (Lab., Nav.)	MESPILA
<i>musu, mosu</i> “face”	*MUSU

<i>pantika, mandika</i> “stomach”	*PANTICA(M) for PANTICE(M)
<i>puxika, bixika</i> “bladder”	VESSICA
<i>tekadi</i> “finger” (synonym of Basque <i>hatz, er(h)i</i>)	DIGITU

(Abbreviations: Guip. - Guipuzcoan, Lab. - Labourdin, Nav. - Navarrese, Soul. - Souletin/Zuberoan)

Latin influence can be observed also in the domain of terminology for body functions (e.g. *gorotz, korotz* “animal dung” < CROCEA). In his evaluation of the proportions of indigenous and borrowed terminology, Trask (1997: 283) tends to marginalize the influence from the Latin-Romance continuum: “... body part names are generally native and seemingly ancient, though there are a few Romance loans, such as the words for ‘leg’ and ‘cheek’”. In addition to the Latin borrowings mentioned above, there are a number of Romance loans in Basque body part terminology, altogether twenty-one. Among them are common expressions such as Basque *berga* “penis”, *hanka* “leg”, *kasko* “skull”, *nerbio* “nerve”, *solomo* “loins” and *zola* “sole”.

Basque is not the only language which, in late antiquity, experienced an acculturational influence from Latin. Body part terminology has also been restructured, under Latin influence, in Celtic languages such as Welsh or Breton, and in Albanian. It is significant that Latin borrowings in the body part terminology of those languages are highly varied (Haarmann 1970: 181 ff.). This means that there are few loans which are common to all contact languages. Welsh and Basque share the following terms: CORPUS, CORONA and PANTICE(M)/*PANTICA(M). Albanian-Basque parallelisms are CORPUS, CRISTA and VESSICA. So, Latin CORPUS is the only body part term common to all these languages. The scarcity of parallels, on the one hand, and the abundance of individually borrowed terminology, on the other hand, are indicative of specifically local conditions of acculturation in the Basque country, as compared with those in Celtic Britain and in Illyria.

Acculturation was locally specific also with respect to interethnic marriages. In Illyria, the area of Proto-Albanian settlement, and in the southern parts of Britain, among the Celtic population, some key terms of Latin kinship terminology were borrowed. However, in the area with Proto-Basque population, kinship relations have not significantly been influenced by Latin terms. The few loans of Latin origin are Basque *mutil* “boy” (< Latin PUTILLU) and *agure* “old man” (< AVULE(M)). In the extended Latin-Romance continuum of influence, several Romance kinship terms entered Basque (e.g. *tia* “aunt”, *tio* “uncle”, *komai* “godmother”, *konpai* “godfather”).

To sum up, on the one hand, there are clear linguistic traces of how certain elements of Roman lifestyle and ways of using specific terminology (e.g. body part terminology) were adopted by the Basques. On the other hand, interethnic relations were not characterized by close social intermingling. As the difference in proportions of Latin and Romance loans suggest social relations intensified rather late, at a time when spoken Latin had already developed to assume phonetic features of Romance. Thus, despite extensive Basque-Latin (Proto-Basque-Latin, to be more precise) bilingualism, a precondition of the kind of acculturational influx we find in Basque, intereth-

nic marriages were, obviously, only a minor factor in late antiquity so that Basque kinship terminology is predominantly structured using indigenous elements (Michelena 1969, Trask 1997: 268 ff.).

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LABURPENA

Euskal Herrian gertatutako bategite etnikoen eta hizkuntzen arteko harremanen prozesuak aztertzen dira ikuspegi disziplinarreko batetik. Giza-genetikak Euskal Herriak oso aspaldidanik izan dituela biztanleak adierazten du. Euskera eta euskaldunak bategite etniko batetik sortuak dira; bategite horretan herri aurreindoeuropar batzuek hartu zuten parte, haien artean kaukasiar herriekin afiliazio genetikorik zuten batzuk. Aintzinaro berantiarrean euskera-egitura lexikal batzuk eraldatu ziren latinaren – prestigio-hizkuntza - eraginez eta epe luzerako akulturazio-prozesuak gertatu ziren euskaldunengan. Harreman sozialak oso urriak ziren erromatarren garaian, baina oso handitu ziren ostean. Euskal ahadeitasun-terminologian euskerarenak ez diren elementuen jatorri erromatarra da horren guztiaren lekuko.

RESUMEN

En perspectiva interdisciplinaria se investigan procesos de fusión étnica y de contactos lingüísticos en el país vasco. Los datos de las pesquisas genéticas modernas confirman la larga continuidad de población en el país vasco. Los vascos y su lengua emergieron de una fusión étnica en la cual participaron varias poblaciones pre-indoeuropeas, entre otros grupos de afiliación genética con pueblos del Cáucaso. En la tarda edad antigua se inician procesos aculturadores en los naturales vascos, resaltando del influjo constructivo del latín, lengua prestigiosa, sobre el léxico vasco. Contactos sociales, aún minimales en la edad romana, se intensifican en tiempos post-romanos. Los elementos non-indígenas de la terminología de parentela en vascuence son de origen románico.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans une perspective interdisciplinaire, on recherche des processus de fusion ethnique et de contacts linguistiques dans le pays basque. Les données des recherches génétiques modernes confirment la longue continuité de population dans le pays basque. Les basques et leur langue émergèrent d'une fusion ethnique à laquelle participèrent plusieurs peuples pré-indoeuropéens, entre autres des groupes d'affiliation génétique avec les peuples du Caucase. Vers la fin de l'Antiquité, commencèrent des processus privant de leur propre culture les basques d'origine, à cause de l'influence constructive du latin, langue prestigieuse, sur la langue basque. Les contacts sociaux, encore restreints à l'époque romaine, s'intensifièrent à l'époque post-romaine. Les termes étrangers existant dans la langue basque et possédant une racine latine témoignent de cette relation entre basques et romains.

ABSTRACT

In an interdisciplinary approach, processes of ethnic fusion and of language contacts in the Basque country are investigated. Human genetics has confirmed the long continuity of settlement in the Basque country. The Basque people and their language have emerged out of an ethnic fusion in which several pre-Indo-European populations participated, among them groups affiliated to the Caucasian genetic stock. Processes of a long-term acculturation in Basque-speaking communities started in late antiquity when, via the influence of Latin as a language of prestige, the lexical structures of Basque were partly reshaped. Social contacts between Basques and non-Basques were minimal in the Roman era but intensified in post-Roman times. Evidence of this are the foreign elements in Basque kinship terminology which stem from Romance sources.

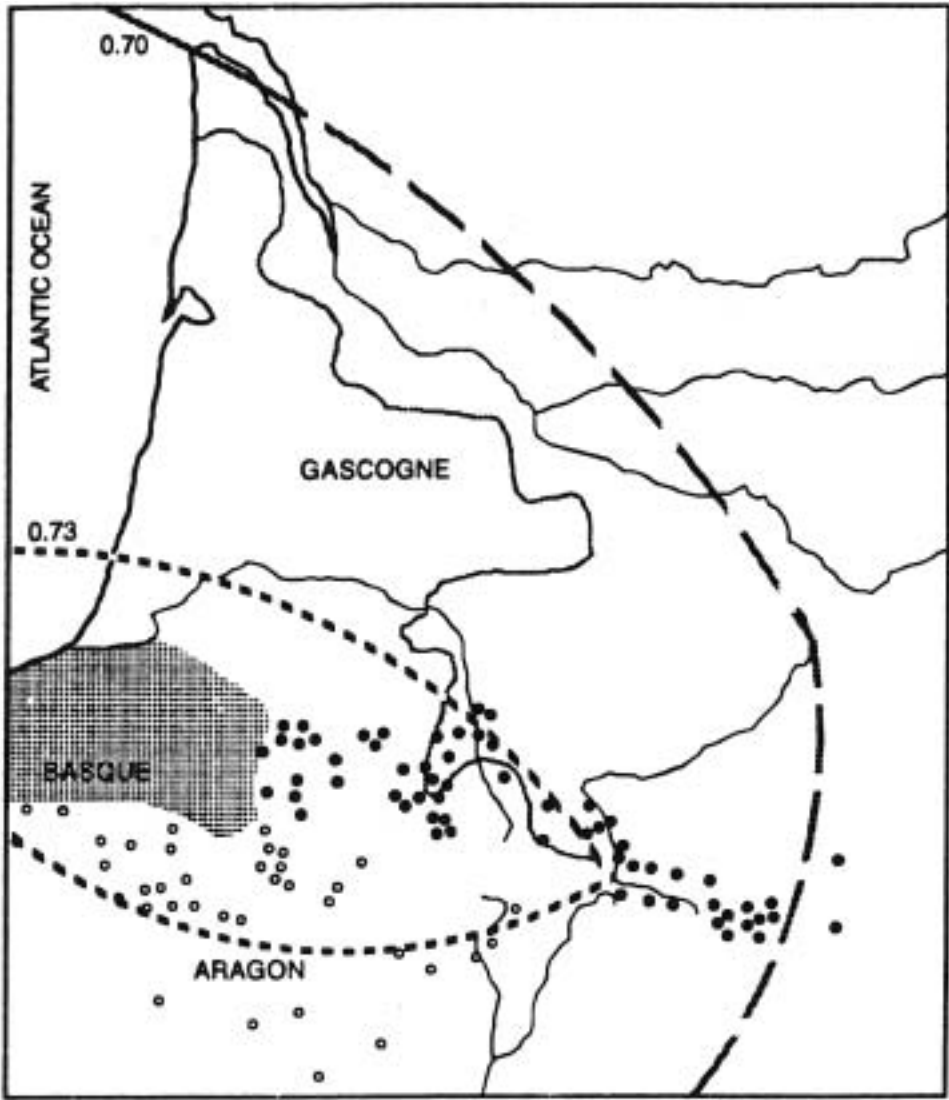


Figure 1: Place-names containing Basque lexical roots and blood-group O distribution (after Bernard/Ruffié 1976)

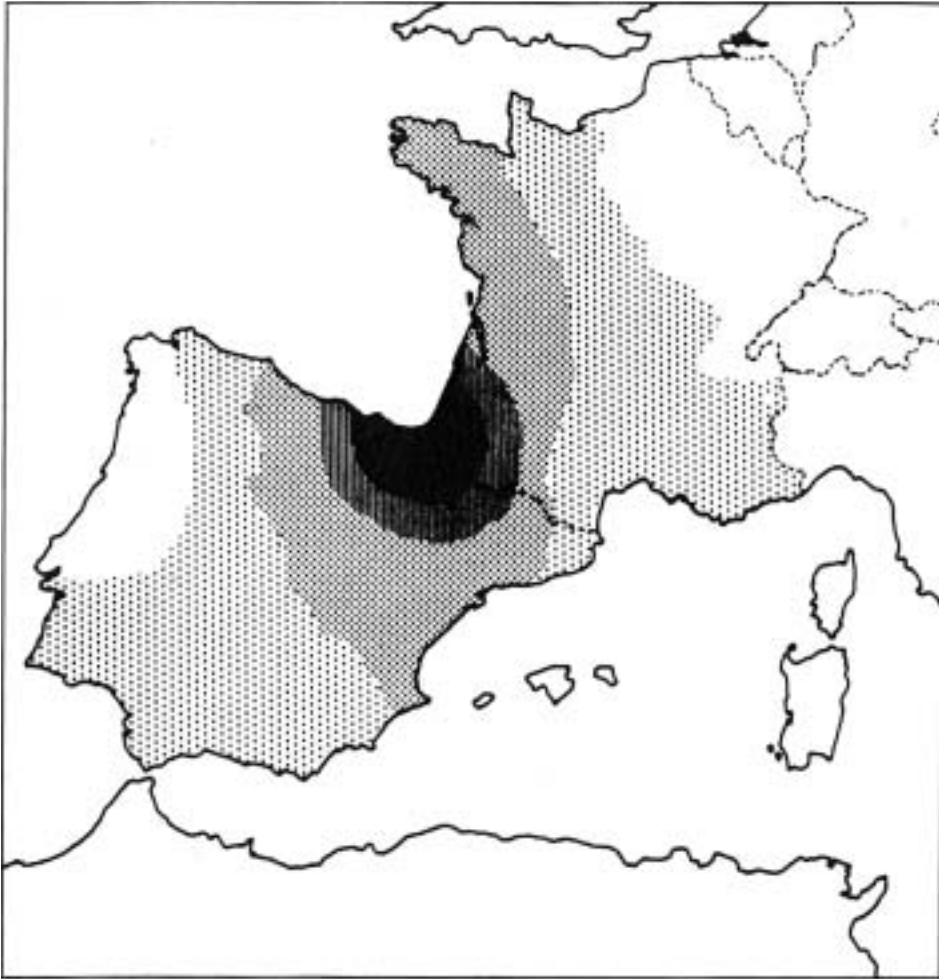


Figure 2: The Basque genotype and its gradients (after Cavalli-Sforza/Cavalli-Sforza 1995: 235)

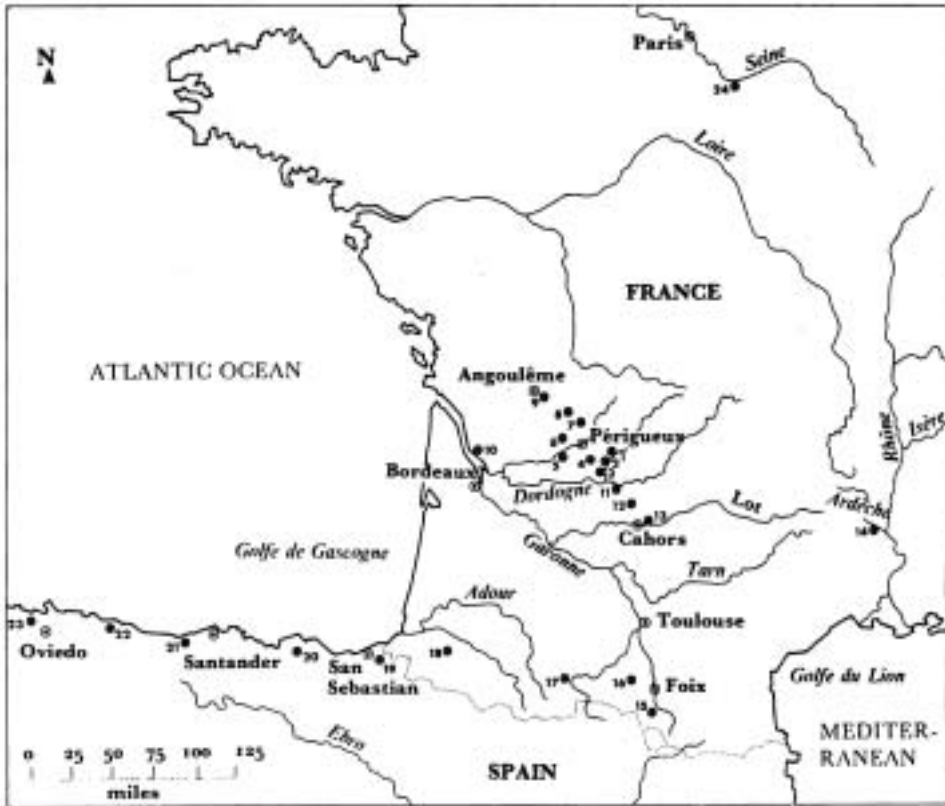


Figure 3: Sites of Paleolithic cave art in southern France and northern Spain (after Ruspoli 1987: 203)