

# Astronomy and Basque Language

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Many years ago, at the beginning of a clear-sighted article on Basque names for days of the week<sup>1</sup>, the great Basque linguist Luis Michelena wrote concisely but very precisely about the problem that those people who deal with this kind of thing and other Basque-language related activities have to face up to, and that is simply that as Basque is a language which has neither near nor distant relatives, one is really working in the dark when it comes to drawing conclusions, since there are limited sources and because written texts in and on Basque only appear very late. And yet, I also remember the other, no less true, words spoken by Telesforo de Aranzadi, famous Basque anthropologist: “El vasco no es ningún cuerpo extraño de la Europa Occidental”, words that were also adopted by Antonio Tovar<sup>2</sup>.

Both of these ideas, the one referring to the comparison difficulties which arise from a lack of languages or language families that are related to Basque, and the other the evidence that Basque belongs to Europe’s cultural wealth, come to the fore when we deal with the vast subject that I shall examine. That is why I fear that the title of this article may have raised greater expectations than it will be able to meet. But let us get to the heart of the matter, although I should like to point out that I will not expand upon dialectal points, nor, except on a few occasions, on evident European parallels.

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<sup>1</sup> Michelena 1971:94.

<sup>2</sup> Tovar 1959:62.

## 1. DAYS. THE BASQUE WEEK

Day is *egun* in Basque. Quite possibly its ancient form was *egu*, a word that there are only traces of today. In the eastern part of the Basque Country *egun* also means “today” although in the rest of the Basque Country *gaur*, originally meaning “tonight”, is more widely used. A few years ago I suggested that this *egun* be interpreted as *egu-n*, i.e. with the inessive meaning “during today”<sup>3</sup>. This inessive has become almost totally established and gives the noun. Later, I will show how *egu* goes to make up words such as *Eguberri* “Christmas”, or literally “new day”, *eguzki* and *eki* “sun” and *ekaitz*, “storm”, literally “bad day”. José Miguel Barandiaran wrote that *egu* probably at one time meant “light” and “sun”<sup>4</sup>. It is interesting that “to dawn/to get light” and other weather-related verbs are mainly transitive in Basque, for example *argitu du* “(it) has dawned”. Similarly it is common to say *elurra ari du* “(he) is exercising snow”, etc.

“Week” in Basque is *aste*. Generally, the verbal noun *hasi* “beginning” is recognised, although that is not definite sure, since in ancient Basque this verbal noun is *hatse*. It is commonplace to relate the Basque names for days of the week, and perhaps even this word for “week” as well, with the divisions of the lunar month. I will explain more about this below<sup>5</sup>.

Just as in many other languages, the names for the days of the week vary from one place to another. In the list below, the first version that appears is the one recommended by the Basque Language Academy, and it is also the most commonly used form. The list does not include all possible variants.

Monday: *astelehen, ilen*  
 Tuesday: *astearte, martitzen*  
 Wednesday: *asteazken, eguazten*  
 Thursday: *ostegun, eguen*  
 Friday: *ostiral, bari(a)ku, egubakoitz*  
 Saturday: *larunbat, zapatu, egubakoitz, neskenegun*  
 Sunday: *igande, domeka*

When commenting upon this, a couple of important things should be said:

*Aste*, as I have already said, means “week”. *Astelehen* would therefore mean “the first in the week”, *astearte* “the one in the middle of the week” and *asteazken* “the end of the week”. What conclusions can we draw from all of this? Are we to suppose that the Basques had a three-day week? Much has been written about this problem without a satisfactory solution being reached. Bausani (1982), reflecting a widespread idea in the Basque Country, tried to prove that the names for the days of the week in central and eastern areas of the Basque Country, i.e. *astelehen* (*lehen* = first), *astearte* (*arte* = in the middle) and *asteazken* (*azken* = last) actually do indicate a three-day week. Bausani also believes that these central and eastern Basque names, together with the remaining words for the days of the week are actually even older than the western words. This may well be so, but it is still surprising to see

<sup>3</sup> Knörr 1990:128.

<sup>4</sup> Barandiaran 1972:72.

<sup>5</sup> See Caro Baroja 1948, above all 61-64.

the unaltered and evident nature of the three words; they might be “modern”.

In the western part of the Basque Country, the word *ilen* also exists alongside *astelehen*. Michelena takes (quite correctly, the way I see it) this to mean *(h)il* + *egun*, i.e. “day of the moon”, which exactly correlates to *Monday* with the inclusion of the word for “day” (*egun*).

In the same western area the word *martitzen* (< *martitz* + *egun*), meaning the “day of Mars”, exists alongside *astearte*. This, like *ilen*, is probably a more recently-coined word and arises from contact with neighbouring languages.

Wednesday. Once again in the western Basque country *asteazken* exists alongside *eguazten*, (*egu(n)* “day” + *azken* “last”), “the last day”, the same idea, therefore, as expressed by *asteazken*. Hence, I do not think that Gorostiaga, who initially explained this word to mean “day of lightening” (1947:55) and subsequently “day of station” (1959:89), is right.

Thursday. The first part of the words that are most widely used in Basque to mean “Thursday” and “Friday” include *ost* (or its variant *ortz*), which no longer exists as an independent word, but which used to mean “sky” and which appears in words meaning “lightening” and “storm”. It is striking to see the parallelism with other European languages. According to Bähr (1931:403) *ostegun* means “day of thunder” or “sky”. In the Biscay dialect, the word *eguen*, from *egu-egun*, is used to mean something like “day of day” or “day of light”.

Friday. In *ostiral*, *ost* appears once again, although we do not know what the second part of the word means. Bähr (1931:403) wonders whether *ostiral* might not mean “day of the rainbow”, something which Gorostiaga also supported in 1947, to go on in 1959 to support the combination of *ost* and the Latin term *stella* or *stellare*. The western Basque dialect provides us with the interesting word *bari(a)ku*, which undoubtedly stems from *abari-ba(ge)ko*, i.e. “(day) without supper”, a name which has several parallels in European languages. In western and central areas there is also the word *egubakoitz*, which would seem to mean “unique day”, although this explanation is not entirely satisfactory.

Saturday. *Larunbat*, which some people have taken to mean *laur(d)en* “a fourth”, is more likely the result of *lagunen*, the genitive plural of *lagun* “friend” + *bate*, an ancient verbal noun literally meaning “meeting”, so that the word would originally mean “meeting of friends”<sup>6</sup>. Alongside *larunbat* there is also the word *egubakoitz* for “Saturday”, which, as we have already said, means “Friday” in western and central areas, as well as *neskenegun* “girls’ day”. As far as these two terms, *larunbat* and *neskenegun*, we should not forget that it used to be customary in some parts of the Basque Country for boys to go and spend the evening at their girlfriend’s house and have dinner which the girlfriend would prepare<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Michelena 1990:501. Something like that had had proposed by Garate 1957:50.

<sup>7</sup> See d’Abbadie 1998:40. This part is commented by Thalamas 1977:117-118.

Sunday. *Igande* is taken to mean “(moon) rising/ascent” and some people have even taken it to mean “resurrection”, because of the significance of Sunday, from the word *igan* “to rise”, like the Russian *voskresénèe*, previously “Easter Sunday” and before that “resurrection”<sup>8</sup>. I cannot decide on that one, although I do feel that a verbal noun would be more likely to require the form *iga(i)te*. The western dialect also has the form *domeka*, <(dies) *dominica*, which by the way is feminine, unlike in Spanish and Catalan (remember *diomingo* in the municipal charter of Salamanca, for example, <\*diem dominicum).

## 2. THE MONTHS

“Month” is *hil* or *hilabete* (this one meaning something like “the complete month”). There is absolutely no doubt that this is the same word that used to be used for “moon”, which meant that, just like in the rest of Europe, the Basque Country had a lunar calendar. However, a great deal of debate also surrounds whether this word could also be related to the word meaning “death”. I believe this to be rather difficult, although Caro Baroja and others accept it.

As you can see from the list below, almost all the months have the word *hil*, “month” at the end.

January: *urtarril, urteil, ilbeltz, beltzil, loil*

February: *otsail, zezeil, barantaila*

March: *martxo, marti, epail*

April: *apiril, jorrail, ope, opeil*

May: *maiatz, hostoil, hostaro, orril, lorail*

June: *ekain, udail, errearo, bagil, arramaiatz, garagarril*

July: *uztail, garagarril*

August: *abuztu, agorri, dagonil*

September: *irail, buruil, garoil, agor*

October: *urri, urril, urrieta, bildil*

November: *azaro, hazil, gorotzil, zemendi, lastail, lehen abendu, abendu txiker*

December: *abendu, lotazil, neguil, beltzil, hotzaro, bigarren abendu, loil, gabonil*

A few remarks should be made on the above.

January. *Urtarril* is undoubtedly comprised of *urte* + *berri* + *hil* “the month of the new year”. *Urteil* means “the month of the year”. *Ilbeltz* means “black month”, and *beltzil*, which is probably a creation of the Jesuit Larra-mendi (18<sup>th</sup> century), means “the month of blackness”. Finally, *loil* is the “month of sleep”, perhaps in the sense of hibernation.

February. *Otsail* means “month of the wolf”, with several parallels all over Europe. *Zezeil* probably means “month of the bull”. In both cases, but especially in the latter, we do not actually know the reason behind the name. According to Juan Gorostiaga<sup>9</sup>, *barantaila* is related to the Latin *parantalia*.

March. *Martxo* is obviously of Romance origin. As well as this, in Biscay you have the word *marti*, without palatalization, where we can imagine that

<sup>8</sup> Michelena 1971:98.

<sup>9</sup> Gorostiaga 1958:52 relates *otsail* to the Roman *lupercalia*.

there is the presence of the Latin adjective *martius*, which may simply come from the genitive: *mensis Martii*. The Basque old word *epail* means “month for cutting” and Gorostiaga mentions the Spanish word *marcear* “shear during this month”<sup>10</sup>. However, it is doubtful whether this month is the most appropriate for shearing (at least in the Basque Country).

April. *Apiril* is the most widely-used word. You would have expected \**apirile* to have been more common (< Latin *aprile*), but instead we have *apiril* as an analogy to the other months of the year that end with the word (*h*)*il*. *Jorrail* means “month of the hoe”. *Ope* and *opeil*, both of which are words from the western part of the Basque Country, are thought to come from the word meaning “pie or tart” (*ope*). Gorostiaga translates it as “the month of pies/tarts”, probably thinking of the *solmonath* of the Angles and at the same time quoting Beda<sup>11</sup>.

May. *Maiatz* is the most commonly-used word for “May”. Together with this word which would seem to be a verbal noun (\**maiatze*, “May-kind of weather?”), we find several other month-related words such as *hostoil* “month of leaves”, *hostaro* “time of leaves”, *orril* “month of the leaf” and *lorail* “month of flowers”

June. *Ekain*, the most widely-used word, means “sun up high” and very probably refers to the summer solstice (*egu* “day” + *gain* “high/above”). In Zuberoa, we find a Romance term, *arramaiaz*, which means something like “re-May”. At the same time, there are month-specific/descriptive words such as *udail* “month of summer”, *errearo* “time of burning”, *bagil*, from *baba* “bean” + *hil* “month”, and finally *garagarri*, “month of barley”, which in other parts of the Basque Country is used for “July”. I hardly need to remind you of the parallels here with Germanic languages, where the names of the months are directly related to barley-cutting.

July. *Uztail* means “month of harvest”. I have already explained *garagarri* in the previous paragraph.

August. *Abuztu* is clearly the Romance word. It would seem to be a word which was borrowed very early. Together with this word, you can also find *agorri* “month of drought” and *tagonil*, which perhaps, as Michelena suggests<sup>12</sup>, simply means “the month that is here”, since if we suppose that it is a contraction of *udagoien* “autumn” + *hil* “month”, it hardly fits in with the meaning of “August”.

September. *Irail* means the “month of the fern”, as does *garoil*. It is difficult to find an explanation for *buruil*, one of the other words used for “September”, where you have the word *buru*, meaning “head”. Gorostiaga suggests that it is “month of capitation (poll tax)” since in Rome it was the month that marked the tax year<sup>13</sup>. *Agor* is the same word that appeared before meaning “dry”. There is not enough space to examine other interesting dialect forms such as *autuno* (like the Spanish *otoño*) and *urri lehenengo* “first October”, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Gorostiaga 1958:53. The Dictionary of the Spanish Academy says: “*Marcear*. Esquilar las bestias, operación que en algunos climas suele hacerse en el mes de marzo”.

<sup>11</sup> Gorostiaga 1958:53.

<sup>12</sup> Michelena 1987:305.

<sup>13</sup> Gorostiaga 1958:54.

October. *Urri* is very probably an adjective meaning “scarce”. The same root appears in the dialect forms *urril* and *urrieta*. The word *bildil* “month of harvest” has also been registered. Similarly *urri bigarrego*, “second October”, can also be found.

November. *Azaro* means “sowing season”, which once again has numerous parallels in other languages. The first part of the word, although with aspiration, is in *hazil* “sowing month”. *Gorotzil* is “month of manure”. The word of Romance origin *zemendi* means “seed” without the addition of the word *hil* “month”, as habitually occurs in other languages. Other forms include *lastail* “month of straw”, *lehen abendu* “first December” and *abendu txiker* “little December”.

December: *Abendu* is of course connected with the Latin *adventum*. *Lotazil* is interpreted by Gorostiaga to mean “noviembre de la cuarta temporada”<sup>14</sup>. *Neguil* means “month of winter”. *Beltzil* I have already spoken about as a word which in some places is taken to mean “January”. *Hotzaro* means “cold season”. *Bigarren abendu* means “second December” (see *Anderwinter* mentioned by Nilsson<sup>15</sup>). *Gabonil* means “the month of Christmas”.

### 3. THE SEASONS OF THE YEAR

The seasons of the year (*urtaro* from *urte* “year” and *aro* “season”) are expressed in the following way.

Spring. *Udaberri* means “new summer”. Together with this word, there are other, less well-known words such as *udalehen* “first spring”, *udahaste* “the beginning of summer”, and *bedats* which possibly means “the beginning of grass”.

Summer. *Uda* means “summer”. However, the root of this word is unknown. Variants of it include *udara*, which is simply a morphological variant, and *udaro*, meaning “summer season”.

Autumn. The most usual word for “autumn” is *udazken* “end of summer”. Other words which appear include *larrazken* “end of grazing”, *udagoien* “late summer”, *udondo* and *udaraitze* “after-summer”, *ihartze* “drying of vegetables”, *negulehen* and *neguaitzin* “pre-winter”, *neguantz* “similar to winter” and other words in which *urri* meaning “scarce” (and which we saw before when talking about the month of October) appears, such as *urri* on its own, *urriaro* “season of scarcity” and *urrite* “time of scarcity”.

Winter. *Negu* is “winter”. This is another unexplained word. Perhaps we could speculate that the end of the word is *-egu* meaning “day”.

We cannot avoid the impression, also mentioned by other researchers, that in the traditional Basque way of thinking there were only two seasons: *uda* “summer” and *negu* “winter”.

Throughout the whole of the Basque Country the word used for “year” is *urte*. Usually, this word is taken to be comprised of *ur* meaning “water” and *-te* meaning “time/season”. In support of this theory there are a series of songs such as the one sung on New Year’s Eve with lyrics which go “Ur

<sup>14</sup> Gorostiaga 1958:54.

<sup>15</sup> Nilsson 1969:290.

goiena, ur barrena/Urteberi egun ona” (“water from above, water from below/good New Year’s day”)<sup>16</sup>.

#### 4. SOLSTICE. EQUINOX

Summer solstice is *udaburu* “height of summer”, and winter solstice is *neguburu* “height of winter”. These do not seem to be words which are steeped in tradition, and as far as we know there are no traditional words for “equinox”. We could perhaps suppose that the words for “summer solstice” was *ekain* (which literally means “the height of the sun”), today “June” (vide supra) and the one for “winter solstice” *Eguberri*, which literally means “new day” and nowadays “Christmas”. *Eguzkimuga*, “solstice”, literally “sun’s limit” would seem to be an invention of Larramendi dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 5. COMPASS POINTS

North is *ipar*. Michelena suggests that this word perhaps comes from *ibar* meaning “valley” and in doing so refers to Romance expressions such as the French *vent d’aval*, the Catalan *vent d’avall*, and the Souletin *peko-aide* “northern wind” or literally “wind from below”<sup>17</sup>.

South. The word for south is *hego*. It is difficult to know whether it is pure coincidence or not that *hego* also means “wing”. There do not seem to be any parallels outside the Basque language. There is also *eguerdi*, which literally means “mid day”, i.e. “noon”.

East. *Ekialde*, the word for “east” is comprised of *eki* “sun” and *alde*, “part”. Other forms of this word include *eguzki-alde*, with *eguzki* meaning “sun”, *eki-jalki alde*, from *eki* or *eguzki* “sun” + *jalki* “to go out” + *alde* “part”; *eguzki-ilkitze* is made of *ilkitze* “the going out”, *sortalde* with *sort-* from the verb which means “to be born”, *goiz-alde* with *goiz* “tomorrow” and *goiz herri*, i.e. “the land of the morning”.

West. *Mendeibal* comes from the Romance word *vendabal*. There are also old Basque words such as *arratsalde* from *arrats* “the afternoon” + *alde* “part” and *eguzki-sartze*, which literally means “sun’s entrance”. *Sartalde* “place of entrance” would seem to be of more modern origin.

#### 6. THE SUN. THE MOON

There are two words for “sun”: *eguzki* and *eki*, the latter of which appears in the most eastern part of the country. Undoubtedly both words come from the primitive *egu* meaning “day”. In the first case we should perhaps simply suppose a second element with an instrumental suffix, plus the particle *ki*, “thing”: *egu-z-ki*. The word *eki* is the result of adding the same particle without the instrumental suffix: *egu* + *ki* = *eki*.

<sup>16</sup> Satrustegui 1974:66-68.

<sup>17</sup> Michelena 1988:171.

It is interesting to see how in many villages there is a difference between *eguzki* “sunlight” and *eguzki-begi* “star” or quite literally “sun’s eye”<sup>18</sup>. Some verses have also been found in which people address the sun as a feminine object, by calling it “grandmother”. The following is an example of this: “Eguzki amandrea / juan da bere amagana / bihar etorriko da/ Denpora ona bada” (“Grandmother sun / has gone to her mother/ tomorrow she will come / if the weather is good”)<sup>19</sup>. Azkue found in Navarre two expressions for saying goodbye to and greeting the sun: “Adios, amandre, bihar artio” (“Goodbye grandma, see you tomorrow”) and “Ongi etorri, amandre” (“welcome grandma”)<sup>20</sup>. This means that, just as in many other languages, Basque has traditionally considered the sun a feminine object (as Basque is a language without gender, it is this and other kinds of forms of address that help us realise that). There does exist, however, a saying in which the sun is called *Joanes* “John”, which may well be of more recent coinage (see the Spanish *Lorenzo*). It is also curious to note how the sun is also a feminine object for Basques. What is more, as anthropologists have already noted, both the sun and the moon return to the earth (their mother).

There are several words meaning “moon” in Basque.

*Ilargi*, probably means “month light”, even though the word is traditionally explained as meaning “light of the dead”. From the same word we also get *iretargi*, *iletargi*, where there may well be a verbal noun and which means something like “light from the moonshine”. There is also the ancient word *il*, which is perhaps the same as the word meaning “month”. This word appears in *ilgora* “first quarter”, literally “moon above”, *ilbe(he)ra* “last quarter”, literally “moon below”, *ilberri* “new moon” and *ilbete* “full moon”. Azkue adds a synonym to this last term: *ilzar* “old moon”<sup>21</sup>.

Another word for “moon” from the extreme eastern part of the Basque Country is *argizagi* or *argizari*. Some scholars have explained this word as coming from *argi* + *izari*, i.e. “measure of light”, whilst others see the word *argizagi* as being comprised of *argi* “light” + *zagi* “wineskin”. This is true for Azkue who writes “*argizagi*” (literally “odre de luz”, that is “wineskin of light”)<sup>22</sup>. Neither of these explanations is satisfactory<sup>23</sup>. As Bähr wrote, if we assume the presence of *izari* “measure” in *argizari*, then we come up against the difficulty that *argi* appears traditionally in compound words as *art*<sup>24</sup>. What is more, the element *zagi* is doubtful since it cannot be found as an independent word.

A third word, which is rather less widely found, is *ilaski*, the end part of which is difficult to explain. Another, from the Roncal area, is *goiko*, which quite literally means “the one above”.

The moon is also feminine and just like the sun is greeted by people “*Ilargi amandrea / Zeruan zer berri?*” (“Grandmother moon / what’s new in the sky?”)<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Barandiaran 1960:110.

<sup>19</sup> Caro Baroja 1948:42.

<sup>20</sup> See the quotation by Caro Baroja 1948:42.

<sup>21</sup> Azkue 1959:162.

<sup>22</sup> Azkue 1959:162.

<sup>23</sup> Caro Baroja 1948:47.

<sup>24</sup> Bähr 1929:534.

<sup>25</sup> Caro Baroja 1948:48.

Uhlenbeck put forward the idea that there was a certain “word taboo” attached to the word for “moon” and the one for “sun”, meaning that both had their own specific names, which should be avoided. Caro Baroja supported this idea<sup>26</sup>. This may even explain the case of the word from Roncal, *goiko* (meaning “the one above”) that we mentioned previously.

## 7. ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA

We could now perhaps mention some atmospheric phenomena. You will see again how many of them contain the element *ost-*, *ortz-*, which is probably the remains of an independent word meaning “sky”.

Rainbow: *ortzadar*, *ostadar*. This literally means “sky horn” or, according to other writers, “sky arch”. Bähr noted how in the Gipuzkoa dialect there is a predominance of the word *ostrailaka* and this is probably due to some kind of crossing with the Spanish word *estrella* (meaning “star”). In fact, according to Bähr, this phenomenon is called *estreila* in places such as Ormaiztegi. He also quotes the word *estrelaje* from Guipuzkoa to mean “milky way” (obviously from the Spanish word *estrellaje*). If this is true, we still have to find an explanation for the *-ka* which appears difficult to assimilate to an adverbial element denoting action (e.g. *jo-ka*, “hitting”). As for *ostadar*, Iñaki Camino told me that in Aezkoa the word *otsadar* is used for “rainbow”. It literally means “wolf’s or wolves’ horn”.

Together with this word there are others which include the Romance word *arku* “arch”, such as *San Juaneko arku* “arch of Saint John”, *Jainkoaren paxea* “sash of God”, *ostarku* from *ost* + *arku*, and others. There is also the traditional word *uztai* “arch” and *uztarri* “yoke”, the latter of which appears in the word *uztargi* “light of the yoke”.

In many other words and expressions we find *zubi* meaning “bridge”, such as *zubiadar* “bridge horn”, *Erromako zubia* “bridge to Rome”, *Santiago zubi* “Santiago bridge”, *zeruko zubi* “bridge to heaven”, *San Migelen zubia* “Saint Michael’s bridge”, *San Nikolasen Zubi* “Saint Nicholas’s bridge” and *Frantziako zubi*, “bridge of France”.

Although this is not a complete list, other word forms for rainbow include *euriadar* “rain arch”, *(b)uztarri* “yoke”, *Jainkoaren gerrikoa* “sash of God” and *ostalebi*, *ostebi*, amongst others, containing the element *euri* meaning “rain”. *Euriadar* meaning “rain arch or horn” is also found<sup>27</sup>. Bähr also found *Santiagora bide* “road to Santiago” and *Santiago zubi* for “rainbow”. Similarly, Bähr draws our attention to the word *intxearka* and variants of it, where he claims to see *intze-arka* “arch of?”. He (1931:405) also mentions *Jainkoaren mandataria* “messenger of God”. *Azerien boda* “wedding of foxes” is the name given in some places to the “double rainbow”: see the comments made by Bähr (1931:408-409).

*Itsas adar*, literally “sea horn”, is a curious term. It reminded Caro Baroja of the belief which exists in the province of Asturias that rainbows drink

<sup>26</sup> Uhlenbeck 1928:560 and Caro Baroja 1948:47. Caro Baroja 1995:220 quotes Strabon, who informs about the worship of the Celtibers and their northern neighbours towards an nameless God in full moon nights.

<sup>27</sup> Azkue 1959:165.

sea water<sup>28</sup>. Bähr had also remarked on this and after quoting the passage written by Plauto “bibit arcus pluet hodie” and by Ovidio “Nuntia Junonis varios induta colores / Concipit Iris aquas alimentaue nubibus adfert”, mentioned the belief that the rainbow has its feet in a well or stretches from one well to another or from one river to another<sup>29</sup>. There is also a popular belief amongst Basque people that if you walk underneath a rainbow you will change sex<sup>30</sup>.

There are several words for “thunder”. The element *ortz-*, *ost-* appears, once again in many of them. Such is the case of *ortzantz*, a haplology of *ortz* + *azantz*, meaning “thunder”, i.e. “heavenly thunder”<sup>31</sup>, and *oztots* or *ostots* “sky’s noise”, with *hots* meaning “noise”. The Romance form *trumoi* is also very widespread. There is also an onomatopoeic word *tximist*, which Pío Baroja used to christen one of his characters, Captain *Chimista*, *tximist* has appeared recently as a brand of batteries.

The word for “lightening” also contains the element *ost-*, *ortz-* in words such as *orzpin*, which no doubt comes from *ortz* + *bini*, i.e. “tongue from the sky” and also *ozminarri*, with the final element *harri* meaning “stone”, in other words “stone of the tongue from the sky”. Other compound words have an unidentified first element: *igortziri*, *iruntziri*, etc., the second part of which is probably *ziri*, *zih* “ridge, pin”. However, I cannot work out what lies behind another word *oinastura* and variations of it; Michelena, 1990a: 307, wonders whether the first element is *oin* “foot”. The presence of *ortz-*, *ost-* is also traceable in words such as *ozkarbi*, “serene sky”, with the second element being *garbi* meaning “clean”, and *ostarte* “clear patches in the sky”, or literally “spaces in the sky”.

## 8. STARS. SOME PLANETS

I should like to finish my paper with a few brief notes about stars and constellations.

“Star” is *izar*, undoubtedly an old traditional word. *Izar ozar*, literally “daring star” is how a shooting star is said in Basque.

Great Bear: *bost izarrak* “the five stars”; *sei izarrak* “the six stars”; *zazpi ohoinak* “the seven thieves”, *oilo txitoak* “the hen and her chicks”, *artzain* “shepherd”, *artzaina makoarekin* “the shepherd with his crook”<sup>32</sup>, *itzain* “ox-herd”, *itohoin* “ox thief”. Look at the tale told by Cerquand. Look also at the works by Frank on *Harzkume*, literally “bear cub” and its relationship with Europe’s primitive vision of the cosmos.

Little Bear: *zazpi izarrak*, “the seven stars”, *zazpi ohoinak* “the seven thieves”, *zazpi ahuntzak* “the seven goats”

Orion: *Soldadua* “the soldier”; *Hiru lapurak* “the three thieves”

Cassiopeia: *Mariaren baratzea* “Mary’s garden”

<sup>28</sup> Caro Baroja 1995:36.

<sup>29</sup> Bähr 1931:407.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Azkue 1959:166. In my childhood in Vitoria the belief was very common.

<sup>31</sup> Uhlenbeck 1928:559.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. also *artzai-makoa*, the group of the Three Kings, literally “shepherd’s crook”.

Andromeda: *Hiru ahizpak* “the three sisters”  
 Leo: *Zaldia* “the horse”  
 Regulus: *Zaldi-oina* “horse foot”  
 Eagle: *Arranoa*, id.  
 Altair: *Begi-ederra* “beautiful face or eye”  
 Antares: *Izar gorria* “red star” or *Izar odoltsua* “bloody star”  
 Oxherd: *Itzaina*, id.  
 Arthur: *Lehen izarra* “first star”  
 Lyra. *Bandera* “the flag”  
 Vega: *Begi urdina* “beautiful eye or face”  
 The Waggoner: *Bost kantoinak* “the five corners”  
 The goat: *Ahuntza*, id.  
 The dog: *Izarrora* “the dog star”  
 Sirius: *Begi distira* “the shining eye”  
 Taurus: *Zezena*, id.  
 The fountains: *Iturriak*, id.  
 Pleiades: *Oiloa koloka txitekin* “the broody hen with her chicks”, *Oiloa txitoekin* “the hen with her chicks”. *Izar molkoak* “groups of stars”  
 Cancer: *Argimarra* (“strip of light”). But it seems created by Larramendi, s.u. *cáncer*, by mistake with article (*arguiamarra*). Aizkibel, who always followed Larramendi, mentions the word<sup>33</sup>.  
 Venus: *Artizarra* “light star”, <*argi* “light” + *izar* “star”. Both elements are quite clearly represented and let us not forget the uncontracted form *argizar*<sup>34</sup>. *Dendari-izarra* “seamstresses’ star” has also been found<sup>35</sup>.  
 Milky way: *Esnebidea* comes from *esne* “milk” and *bide* “path/way”; *Erro-mako bidea* “path to Rome”, *Erromesen bidea* “pilgrimme’s way”; *Jondoni Jakobeko bidea*, “Santiago way”<sup>36</sup>, or using the saint’s name in its Castilian version, which is already generalised in the southern Basque provinces, *Santiago bidea* and *Santiago kaminoa*, also have the same origin. *Josafaten bidea* meaning “Josafat way”, has also been found.  
 Planet: *izarbel* which literally means “black star”, with the peculiarity that it has an ancient form of the word for black *bel*, which nowadays is *beltz*.

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<sup>33</sup> Garate 1948:36. But Aizkibel didn’t include the word in his own dictionary.

<sup>34</sup> See the word in tow ancient poems, Michelena 1990:83 and 96-97.

<sup>35</sup> Azkue 1969:287.

<sup>36</sup> Lhande, 1926, s. u. *jondane*.

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LABURPENA

Artikulu honetan Astronomiarekin lotura duten euskal hitzak aztertu dira: egun, hil eta urtaro izenak, eguraldia, e.a. Orain arte esan denaren berri ematen saiatu gara eta iritzi horiek galbahetzen.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se examinan las palabras vascas que tienen alguna relación con la Astronomía: días de la semana, meses, estaciones, fenómenos atmosféricos, etc. Intentamos dar cuenta de las opiniones expresadas hasta la fecha, tratando asimismo de analizar esas opiniones.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article nous avons examiné les mots basques liés avec l'Astronomie: noms des jours de la semaine, des mois, des saisons, des phénomènes atmosphériques, etc. Nous avons essayé de rapporter les opinions exprimées jusqu'à maintenant et d'analyser ces opinions.

ABSTRACT

In this article we examine the Basque words connected with Astronomy: the days of the week, the months, the seasons, atmospheric phenomena, etc. We have tried to take account of the opinions about these items until our days and to analyze these opinions.