

Julen Manterola & Joseba Lakarra

The Royal Academy of the Basque Language; Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour & University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)

Basque etymological studies: Loanwords, roots and a new etymological dictionary

A new era in Basque diachronic linguistics started with Mitxelena. Based on Martinet's work (1950), he extends the reconstruction of occlusives to the whole phonological system (1961–1977); this reconstruction is shaped by 1200 etymologies. He proposes a full reconstruction of the protobasque phonological system, basing his proposal mainly on loanwords from the latin-romance continuum.

This reconstruction has also served as a basis for the phonological reconstruction of the inherited lexicon: the intervocalic change *VIV* > *VrV* is well documented in pairs such as lat. *angelus*, *gula* > basq. *aingeru* 'angel', *gura* 'desire'. This offers us a better understanding of the inherited pairs *euskara* 'Basque language' / *euskaldun* 'Basque speaker', *sari* 'payment' / *saldu* 'to sell', for which original laterals are reconstructed: **euskala*, **sali*. But the information pulled from the adaptation of loanwords is nearly exhausted.

A new model for the reconstruction of Basque lexicon has been proposed by Lakarra (1995), based on the definition of the canonical root: proto-Basque roots are claimed to have a basic CVC structure. Subsequently, many new analyses of old known data have been made, and we have identified new roots and suffixes from the inherited lexicon: cf. the **bel* 'black, dark' root (cf. *beltz* 'black', *bele* 'crow', *arbel* 'slate', *orbel* 'dead leaves'), the **din* 'become' root (cf. *jin* 'come' < **edin*), the *hor* 'dog' root (cf. *hortz* 'tooth'), etc. At the same time, typologically well described grammaticalization paths allow us to identify the etymological source of suffixes such as *-di* (adject. suff.), which has its source on **din* 'become' (Dimmendaal 2011: 129).

The Royal Academy of the Basque language has promoted the elaboration of a new etymological dictionary of Basque, which puts together the latest advances made in the reconstruction of Basque lexicon.

Bibliography

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