

### Commemorations of Francis Xavier's Heritage on the Fifth Centennial of his Birth, 2006

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Commemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation. (John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship")<sup>1</sup>

The celebration of Francis Xavier's 500<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2006 was a premier event in a number of communities around the world, but especially in Navarra, Spain. As the birthplace of the saint, Navarra distributed a considerable wealth of information about him through numerous publications, websites, journal articles, conferences, and commemorative exhibits.<sup>2</sup> Though a significant part of this publishing effort had a nationalistic tone, one might think that the wealth of information it provided is justified, since Francis Xavier was the forerunner of Navarre's current regional identity; or, at least, that through his participation in the tremendous political turmoil that engulfed the region in early sixteenth century, Saint Francis participated decisively in Navarra's transformation from an independent kingdom to one of many French and Castilian feudal domains. But the fact is that Francis Xavier was absolutely absent from these political tensions from the moment his father sent him to study in Paris, where he decided against his kin's will to become a forerunner of the Jesuit Counterreformation. This engagement would definitively remove him from further contact with the former kingdom of Navarra and its *vizcaíno*-speaking culture. Today, however, prejudices are imbedded in the question of his significance to Euskadi and Navarre's communities, identities, and history. For instance, in 2006, websites and paper-based publications alike celebrated the figure of Saint Francis in different ways, as if he had always been an inspiration to Navarre's diverse political parties, as he has been for centuries to the religious community. In fact, during the 2006 celebrations of the five hundredth anniversary of his birth, partisan wrangling emerged again in Navarre, as conflicting political parties pressed their own agendas through their representations of this historical myth and religious icon.

All the above, in fact, belongs to the very well-known phenomenon of building national sentiment through the appropriation of more or less constructed historical legacies. Different schools of thought about nationalism have distinct points of view regarding the functionality or essentiality of historical heritage in nationhood. For the

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<sup>1</sup> See Gillis (5).

<sup>2</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to Kimberly C. Borchard from Randolph-Macon College for translating this article into English as well as for her editorial work.

so-called modernist school, historical legacy tends to be founded on a “foundational myth.”<sup>3</sup> In the case of Spain, the neo-gothic myth would be the one to construct the image of Spain as a single, “old Christian” nation since the time of the Goths. According to this view, Muslim rule of Spain was nothing but a temporary fall into shame, ultimately serving as a necessary humiliation on the path towards rebuilding a stronger, unified, Christian nation. In that sense, for instance, the supposed Francoist continuity between the Iberian Goths, Cid Rodrigo de Vivar, the Reconquest, the Catholic Kings, the emperor Charles V, and Franco’s dictatorial regime would be a construct, as well as an experiment in social manipulation. In early modern Spanish culture, the neo-Gothic foundational myth was present in pre-modern Spanish historiography, in Golden Age theater, and in politics (Ryjik 9-15; Álvarez 2001, 37-51; Marx). The Goths, from this perspective, are the dignifying forerunners of Catholic Spain, even though they were, in their beginnings, until 589, barbarians and heretic Aryans (Wolf 1). This fantastic genealogy was useful in building an ethno-linguistic national project, where Sephardim and Muslims were the irreconcilable “other” who could not be recognized as *ours* until the late twentieth century.

On the other hand, other scholars refer to historical memory, ethnic identity, and linguistic links as the main reasons that justify the existence of modern national community. In this respect, Anthony D. Smith contends that the perennialist school “recognizes in ethnicity, language and religion the historical and structural bases of nationhood” (Smith 2010, 109). Somehow, the modern success of some European nations cannot be understood without the existence of some sort of structural base forged during pre-modern European history.<sup>4</sup> This point of view has been and is exploited by all sorts of ideologues, social arrangements, and identity definitions. As a matter of fact, during the Spanish civil war, and during the post-war decades, stamps and bank notes echoed imperial glories and unity that emphasized the unquestioned continuity between the Iberian Goths, Cid Rodrigo de Vivar, the Catholic Kings, the emperor Charles V, and Franco’s dictatorial regime. During Franco’s regime, these connections were totally accepted as reality for the education of the *españoles*, and were represented as such in the meager textbooks of the early years of the dictatorship. Without question, the common glories of the gothic and imperial past were set as an example to emulate in the reinvigorated nation after the new *Reconquista* against the

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<sup>3</sup> See Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson, among others, who analyze the nation as a phenomenon of modernity. Hobsbawm emphasizes the connection between market economies and nations, and has serious difficulties accounting for national realities before 1830 (1992, 18). Anderson argues that new communities became imaginable through the interaction between capitalism, print, and linguistic diversity (42-43). For a criticism of this school, particularly of Hobsbawm’s seminal work *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, see Anthony D. Smyth’s *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (95-128).

<sup>4</sup> Even Benedict Anderson, in his notorious essay on imagined communities, recognizes that Latin American nations sprang from preexisting administrative divisions during the Spanish empire, and comments on “the striking fact that each of the new South American republics had been an administrative unit from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century” (Anderson 52).

dreaded left: a liberated nation, described after Charles V's imperial motto as "una, grande y libre" ('one, great, and free'). This new victory over anarchists, Bolsheviks, homosexuals, etc., had to be justified as a reenactment of the glorious Spanish past. Franco's presentation of the Spanish nation recalls the Renanian understanding of national time as grounded in a "heroic past, of great men," in which the people's past "common glories" must be emulated in the future (Hutchinson 17).<sup>5</sup>

Between the relativism of the foundational myth paradigm (modernist theories) and the essentialism of unquestioned historical identities (perennial theories) there exists so much distance that the national discussions based on these two points of view turn bitter, confrontational; and conflicting, emotionally charged messages are spread by the media. Both paradigms have been applied to the case of Navarre and Francis of Xavier. As we will see below, Xavier is presented as a child to be imitated by local preteens; and he is simultaneously (de)constructed by a variety of historians and pseudo-professional authors.

Since both modernist and perennial points of view –in addition to the religious one– have been applied a number of times to the life and heritage of this early modern man, the studies on Francis Xavier seem to be in a gridlock. As a consequence, redundancy dominates the discussion of Francis of Xavier and his place in the symbolic past of Navarre. For the purposes of this essay, one reason for this weak academic discourse lies in the fact that nationalist theory has rarely been applied to the myths and truths of Xavier's heritage and life. Hence, this article is dedicated to analyzing the cultural production surrounding Xavier's figure in 2006. The analysis of websites and blogs spreading a variety of representations of Francis of Xavier, as well as a number of books and exhibit catalogues, constitute the bulk of the materials to be analyzed.

1. Before addressing the new media material, we will summarize some historical and historiographical facts. In the early sixteenth century, the kingdom of Navarre became a battlefield between the French and the Castilian crowns; as a result, the kingdom was divided into two different regions. The area north of the Pyrenees became French, while Castile annexed southern Navarre. All of this has been interpreted as part of the broader geopolitical schemes in the context of the Italian Wars. Since the nobles and crown of Navarre were already very integrated in the political spheres of France, Aragon, and Castile, their assimilation into the new crowns was relatively easy. Francis Xavier's family was one of the most influential of these families, with deep ties in all the surrounding kingdoms. Several members of his family took different sides in this conquest war, and as a result the family did not lose all their importance in the region. But, according to historical documents, Francis Xavier could not have been more distant from that matter. At an early age, he was sent to study in Paris, so

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<sup>5</sup> In his 1882 lecture at the Sorbonne, he asserted that "avoir des gloires communes dans le passé, une volonté commune dans le présent; avoir fait de grandes choses ensemble, vouloir en faire encore, voilà les conditions essentielles pour être un peuple" (Renan 54).

that he would be away from internal tensions of the disintegrating kingdom. From Paris, he travelled to Italy, to Portugal, and finally to Asia (Fortún 2006, 96-98).

This missionary, despite the fact that he spent most of his life away from his native land and genetic, political, and linguistic heritage, has today become a complex symbol of contemporary cultural and linguistic nationalism.<sup>6</sup> These complex struggles to establish a heritage justifying modern political interests condense in the Babelian tower of Francis of Xavier's name. Different spellings and last names are used to name him –San Francisco de Javier, Francisco de Xabier, Francisco de Jasso y Xabier, Francisco de Jassu, Francisco Xabier Jaso y Azpilkueta, etc.–, in order to emphasize differing political and religious affiliations.<sup>7</sup> The variations in the naming of this missionary reflect the political stances of the authors, pointing at the fundamental fact that Francis is a dynamic icon for the creation of different strains of political and cultural heritage. Since he was physically and intellectually absent from the local quarrels, his figure as a forerunner of modern Navarrese identity is totally fictitious and based on misappropriation based on an anachronistic displacement of discourses.

Partisanship is reflected not only in different renderings of Xavier's name, but also in the biographical retelling of his deeds. Most biographies of his life, for instance, are neither scientific nor adequately objective. Until 1880, Francis's life was narrated as a hagiography (Leoné 80). Later on, between 1880 and 1941, his representation was at the mercy of warring nationalistic political agendas (Leoné 110). During the early years of Francisco Franco's dictatorship, Francis of Xavier was associated with Franco's political regime, and religious conservatism appropriated his figure. After Franco's death, Xavier's image came once again under scrutiny, and a debate ensued between "navarristas" and "abertzaleak."<sup>8</sup> The devotional aspects of his biographies,

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<sup>6</sup> This is not only a parochial case of warring over symbolic power. It is relevant in the national and even international spheres as well, since in Spain, as well as abroad, tensions between central and regional powers and discourses of heritage are constantly shaping the political map in the area where postcolonial thinking, globalization, and new media are transforming the sociopolitical role of minorities. Postcolonial thought is very present in the publications of a group of intellectuals –amateur and professional– whose work is currently disseminated by the Pamiela and Txalaparta publishing houses. The new media are reshaping the world, as on-line corporations and groups are breaking the international news make-up, with a global impact.

<sup>7</sup> Xabier is his birthplace, and his family last names would be those of his parents, Jaso and Azpilkueta.

<sup>8</sup> In Navarra, this debate is epitomized by the following quotes from two different 2006 publications. The first expresses clear animosity towards any hint of Basque nationalism in Xavier's biography: "A pesar de la aclamación universal que recibió la obra cumbre de Schurhammer, hubo un número concreto de críticos con determinadas cuestiones de la obra (...). Defendió fervientemente su conclusión original de que la lengua maternal de Javier era el vascuence. Toda su obra tiene un ligero tufillo vasquista, seguramente por la influencia que pudo ejercer en él, el primer traductor al castellano de sus libros, el P. Félix Areitio (...) de conocida y manifiesta tendencia nacionalista." (Añooveros 2006, 72). On the other hand, there also exist readings of Xavier as a highlight of Basque history: "En definitiva, tal vez no veamos en Francisco de Xavier al mejor representante de nuestra sociedad actual, ni siquiera sirva como un referente político de la resistencia de los navarros frente al invasor; pero es *nuestro*. . . lo más importante para nosotros debe ser que Francisco es un referente necesario, otro más, de nuestra historia nacional, la historia de Euskal Herria" (Pescador 368; emphasis mine).

centered on his miracles, evolved into the presentation of selected passages from his writings, and from there, into an emphasis on historical details such as his genealogy, early modern politics, wars, and cultural life in Navarre, Castile, and France. Nevertheless, the link between the *agramontes* politics of his brothers and twenty-first-century Basque nationalism enters the category of a foundational myth, just as Spain's neo-gothic foundational myth—a fictitious connection between the Goths, the Catholic Kings, and even Francisco Franco. Xavier belonged to the Jesuit order by his own decision, which did not recognize proto-national adscriptions; he worked within the patronage system of the king of Portugal and reported to him; and there is not historical proof of his involvement in his brothers' wars.

Historians of early modern Navarre eroded Francis's religious and devotional aura: as a result we now have an intensely secularized and politicized saint. His increasing secularization stimulated a counter-reaction among Catholic academic groups, with economic help from the government of Navarre, which around 2006 fostered the publication of a number of studies of the religious images and texts related to Francis of Xavier.

Critiquing the un-academic use of Xavier's life, Santiago Leoné Puncel rejected in 2000 the tendentious agendas behind most publications concerning the devotional, textual, and family life of Francis Xavier.<sup>9</sup> Leoné grounds his rejection in literary criticism and historical analysis. He concludes his argument by exhorting writers and academics to cease producing unscientific constructions of the saint.<sup>10</sup> But his article had little effect on the 2006 debates surrounding Xavier's identity. In fact, the debates followed familiar historical patterns as scholars and institutions once again sought visibility for partisan agendas. In 2006, a large propaganda machine repeatedly emphasized the image of this early modern man either as a perfect Jesuit missionary or as an excellent model for young, committed Catholics, as well as the forbear of a number of nationalistic ideologies and Navarrese identities.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the manipulations of Xavier's image critiqued by Puncel, portrayals of the saint have undergone transformations homologous to those seen in evolving theories of nationalism since the late nineteenth century. According to broader analysis of nationalism history, it is in the 1880s that classical liberal national thought

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<sup>9</sup> "Representar a Javier como expresión de la religiosidad navarra o como fiero agramontés no supone una verdad histórica. Es el resultado de una práctica discursiva que puede fecharse y que responde a la necesidad de poblar de personajes el imaginario de una comunidad" (Leoné 11).

<sup>10</sup> "Francisco de Javier como signo de identidad para Navarra. . . es un producto reciente, el resultado de los esfuerzos de todos, del nacionalismo español de Mérida y del nacionalismo vasco de Campión, así como del navarrista Esparza. Es hora ya, quizá, de decir algo nuevo sobre Javier. O mejor, de no hablar más sobre él" (Leoné 11).

<sup>11</sup> For instance, the conflicting political agendas of *navarrista* and *abertzale* historiography do not allow us to accept Francis as a *vizcaíno* speaker without a politically charged bias, even though he himself asserted: "como ellos no me entendiesen, ni yo a ellos, por ser su lengua natural malavar y la mía vizcaína" (Francis of Xavier, Cochín 15 de enero 1544, 20<sup>th</sup> letter). But the sensitive question of his mother tongue—according to Xavier himself, *vizcaíno*—is not the main focus of this paper.

evolved into cultural-linguistic nationalism (Hobsbawm 1992, 107). This cultural-linguistic nationalism created its own historical symbols and landmarks. In our study case, it is not until the last decades of the nineteenth-century that nationalistic exploitation of the figure of Francis of Xavier appears. In fact, until 1880, Xavier's biographies were limited to unscientific hagiographies, because conservative cultural-linguistic movements in the Navarre and Basque Country did not have a strong presence yet.<sup>12</sup>

2. A number of on-line narratives helped to reaffirm the various heritages of Francis Xavier during the 2006 celebrations. Several websites were created under names such as *Web Católico de Javier* (López). Their content was devotional and grounded in a hagiographic narrative, as in the textual representations of Francis of Xavier until 1880. Some of these sites emphasized a Christian-centered worldview, promoting an image of the crusades and the conquest of the "heathen," as was the case of one site entitled *SAN FRANCISCO JAVIER, Patrono de las Misiones*. At the bottom of the homepage, an additional subtitle read: *Gran Conquistador de Oriente, Navarra, 1506 - Costa de China, 1552*. This link between missionary work and conquest originates in Xavier's own letters, several of which condemn the spiritual leaders of the "heathen:"

Y vos, mi Dios, me hicisteis a vuestra semejanza, y no los pagodas, que son dioses de los gentiles en figuras de bestias y alimañas del Diablo. Yo reniego de todos los pagodas, hechiceros, adivinadores, pues son cautivos y amigos del Diablo. (Javier 1996, 84)

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<sup>12</sup> See Leoné's article for bibliographical details on the biographies.



San Francisco Javier, Patrono de las misiones  
(1506 -1552)



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**SU VIDA**

Breve  
Biografía  
Cronología  
Su vida  
Su época  
San Ignacio de Loyola  
Sus viajes  
En Japón  
Su muerte  
Su entierro  
Canonizado

**SU LEGADO**

Misiones  
Sus enseñanzas  
Compañía de Jesús  
Javerianos

**ORACIÓN**

Novena de la Gracia  
Oraciones  
Himnos,  
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### Vida del Santo

Francisco nace el 7 de abril de 1506 en el castillo de Javier, cerca de Pamplona (Navarra, España). Su padre, jurista, es entonces consejero del rey Juan de Albit, su madre pertenecía a la nobleza. Sus dos hermanos tuvieron parte activa en las guerras que marcaron la infancia de Francisco.




Huérfano a los tres años, Francisco crece en un clima de división y guerras, en su propia morada sujeta a la tiranía moral y material, de parte del lado navarro como del castellano. Cuando a los 18 años se firma un convenio de paz, Francisco elige entonces su futuro, continúa sus estudios de humanidad en la famosa universidad de Sorbona en París. Es aquí donde, compartiendo su cuarto con Ignacio de Loyola, y después de un camino de discernimiento mutuo, Francisco es tocado muy profundamente por una frase de Ignacio de la cual no se olvidará jamás, y que determinaría desde entonces el rumbo de su vida: "¿de que sirve al hombre ganar todo el mundo si pierde su alma?". Francisco elige desde ya ganar su alma y la de muchos.

Martmartu 1534: en compañía de siete compañeros, Francisco pronuncia sus votos de pobreza, castidad y peregrinación a Tierra Santa, según unos preceptos estrictos de Ignacio de Loyola.

Así comenzó la "Compañía de Jesús" aprobada por el Papa. El 24 de junio fueron ordenados sacerdotes, pero la guerra de Venecia y los Turcos hizo imposible la realización del deseo de estos apóstoles de ir a Tierra Santa.

Así el 7 de abril de 1531, Francisco parte para las lejanas tierras de la India junto con uno de sus compañeros. Llegados a Goa, se ven confrontados a miles de males entre ellos, la peste. Francisco se dedica a dar confianza y a descubrir a todos el amor de Dios, a curar y hasta hacer milagros. Evangelizando jóvenes abre escuelas, colegios, dispensarios, bautiza sin descansar jamás aceptando por amor miles de sacrificios y llevando a todos a la oración y a la conversión.

En 1543 vuelve a Goa, y llega a Pesquerías cuando se declaró la guerra entre el reino de Comorín y el de Travancor. Enfrentándose solo a las fuertes tribus, armado íntimamente de un crucifijo en la mano y de su palabra, pone fin a la guerra milagrosamente.

<p><b>Estampas, Postales Calendarios Láminas Artesanía Libros CDs Mercadillo</b></p> <p><b>ESTE SITIO WEB</b></p> <p><b>Quienes somos Proyectos Cuentas del site Sellos Donaciones</b></p>  <p><b>Amigos del site Info</b></p>	<p>En 1546, parte Francisco para Amboino, isla en la cual entra hablando y cantando en el idioma popular como si hubiese vivido siempre ahí. Desde allí emprende la visita de todas las islas de Oceanía. Después de esta larga expedición, Francisco decide volver a Goa para encontrarse con sus compañeros llegados a Europa, asignarles el campo apostólico y prepararse para llevar la fe cristiana hasta Japón. En Malaca, en el año 1547, se encontró con Magno, un japonés insatisfecho con la religión que le habían enseñado sus bonzos (sacerdotes Budistas). Magno invitó a Francisco a ir a predicar la doctrina de Cristo a sus paisanos. En abril de 1549 emprendió el viaje hasta Japón junto con su amigo. Adoptando el estilo oriental Francisco conversaba con el pueblo mientras Magno le servía de intérprete. Después de un año en Kangoshina, en donde escribieron un catecismo, partió por Yamaguchi y luego hacia la costa, aguantando miles de pruebas y rechazos. De allí aprovechó la salida de un barco portugués para ir a visitar las misiones de la India y preparar su viaje a China. Habiendo aportado un regalo muy rico para el rey de China, llegó a una isla desierta a 150 kilómetros de Cantón. Era a los fines de agosto de 1552. Allí Francisco espera en una total soledad y pobreza una embarcación para entrar lo más directamente posible a la China. Pero se enfermó y es aquí, a 150 kilómetros de esta tierra tan soñada de China, que entregó a Dios su alma, el 3 de diciembre.</p> <p>En estos tiempos sedientos de conquistas y de poder, Francisco abrió los ojos, los brazos, y por sobre todo los espíritus, de todos aquellos que recibieron su mensaje evangélico. Su corazón, madurado por 11 años vividos en el oriente, acepta y recibe entonces toda diferencia de cultos, de razas, de civilización, sembrando por donde Dios lo manda, la Buena Noticia del Amor.</p> <p>El Santo de la amistad, del compartir, de la apertura a los demás, fue canonizado el 12 de marzo de 1622, ya declarado patrón de las misiones. Su fiesta se celebra el 3 de diciembre.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">SAN FRANCISCO JAVIER, Patrono de las Misiones, Gran Conquistador de Oriente Navarra, 1506 - Costa de China, 1552 · <a href="mailto:info@sanfranciscojavier.com">info@sanfranciscojavier.com</a></p>
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### Saint Francisco of Xavier, Patron of Missions (1506-52)

Of course, Xavier's words here must be read in the context of the religious intolerance that defined the colonization projects and wars of early modern Europe. For Iberian missionaries and explorers, idolatry lurked everywhere. And yet it is also true that the adjective "religious" is anachronistic when we describe sixteenth-century missionary travel literature. Saint Francis speaks of laws, not religions. Islamic, Jewish, and Christian laws concerning social arrangements and collective practices were well known to Francis. The rest of the world's inhabitants formed the fourth nation and were viewed as idolaters, heathens, and pagans (Masuzawa 47). In Xavier's letters, "evil" becomes a common epithet for Muslims, Brahmans, and Bonzes who, in addition to the corrupt Portuguese, were the deadly enemies of his mission (Ruiz 85). The crusading spirit of this sixteenth-century man is very palpable in a number of popular websites.

Another prominent tendency in today's constructions of Xavier is to build his image according to modern social sensibilities, despite the intrinsically colonial and western-centered nature of his attitudes toward India and Asia. These images overlook the undeniable fact that, at least according to his letters, Francis of Xavier was a man



of his time. His writings reflect acts and judgments that would today be deemed racist, intolerant, and antinationalistic. For instance, a letter written in Cochin on 15 January 1544 provides details about his encouragement of children to denounce their parents for idolatry, inciting the destruction and desecration of local idols (Javier 1996, 109). These practices were not particular to Xavier and were commonly used in a number of missionary efforts in the New World. Xavier's cultural insensitivity and harsh criticism in his description of the Brahmans of the Malabar Coast proves equally distasteful to modern sensibilities. He describes them in turn as idiots, comen, uneducated, and evil. Paradoxically, he also asserts that the Brahmans are his confidants, and that they believe him to be wiser than all of them (Javier 1996, 112-15). From his unwaveringly traditional theological standpoint, Xavier portrays the Brahman elite of India as an "other," through this act of alienation suggesting that south Asian culture and high-caste Asians are inappropriate rulers for the new Christian flock that he is creating.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the textual evidence of his letters, however, Xavier has taken on an entirely new identity in the Navarrese imaginary. The Department of Education of the Government of Navarre created a website directed at middle- and high-schoolers. Entitled *El mundo de Javier*, the site is committed to familiarizing students with life in the sixteenth century, as indicated in the subtitle: *Una vision del siglo XVI a través de la vida de San Francisco Javier* (Álvarez). Francis appears as a child, wearing a

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<sup>13</sup> Concerning the theological contents of his Xavier's writings, it has been said that "no debemos proyectar sobre Francisco y sus catequesis nuestra mentalidad y nuestras preferencias. Si en algo se distinguieron los Maestros de París en su predicación no fue, de ninguna manera, en su actualización teológica ni en su apertura a nuevas formulaciones dogmáticas, sino por su escrupulosa fidelidad a las formulaciones teológicas tradicionales... Nos gustaría encontrar en la teología de Francisco atisbos de modernidad que respondieran a nuestras concepciones teológicas. Pero no hay nada de eso en sus escritos. Lo revolucionario de Francisco está en su vida pobre, su atención a los marginales y sus métodos catequéticos, no en los contenidos teológicos que son los usuales en el Occidente católico romano de su época" (Ruiz 85-86). According to Frédéric Conrod, the historical irony is that Xavier dogmatism has finished in the assimilation of his image into the Hinduism pantheon: "It is frequent to encounter his miniature plastic statue or that of Christ next to that of Ganesh in people's cars or houses. Xavier has been integrated into cultural Hinduism as the reconciler between West and East, but certainly not in the terms that the saint established in his spiritual narrative and registered throughout his correspondence with Loyola, Rodriguez, and the King of Portugal. Xavier's binary cosmology was therefore interpreted against its own conditioning. But the abundant visual representations of the saint, combining a reassuring feminine gaze with a youthful man's body, have served to present another, partial aspect of the saint among many that complete one another. Xavier's image is another medium of the Hindu *darsan*, the direct communication with the image in which the deity expresses emotions and love, and then presents himself in order to bless the viewer. Perhaps the highly pictorial nature of the Roman Baroque and that of Hinduism had too much in common.<sup>13</sup> In spite of potential theological contradictions, the *darsan* is a Hindu practice compatible with the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises*" (Conrod 110-11).

wooden sword as if he were starring as himself in a school play. This gentle and modern portrayal of Saint Francis informs countless pedagogical works.<sup>14</sup>

**XAVIER'S WORLD**  
A view of the XVI century through the life of Saint Francis Xavier

Gobierno de Navarra

V Centenary of the birth of Saint Francis Xavier. 2006  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Government of Navarre (Spain)

**Life and world of Saint Francis Xavier**

- The castle at Javier and its history
- The castle's inhabitants
- A student in Paris
- In Italy
- First voyage: to India (1541)
- Second voyage: to Indonesia (1545)
- Third voyage: to Japan (1549)
- Fourth voyage: to China (1552)
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### Xavier's World

In this website for young audiences, Xavier is constructed mostly as a traveler and is situated in the context of his time: humanism, Rome's architecture, Indian customs, etc. The site content follows the usual chronological highlights of the traveler's life: birth in Navarre to an aristocratic and extremely well-connected family, academic studies and conversion in Paris, dedication to the destitute in Italy, trips to and within Asia. Each section of the website presents cultural information about the sixteenth century. Since *El mundo de Javier* portrays Xavier's century from a variety of historical perspectives and with a large number of cross-cultural references, it recalls the groundbreaking works published between 1880 and 1941, which began to situate Francis within his historical moment, as opposed to earlier representations locating him within series of divine wonders.

<sup>14</sup> Concerning children's education, see the account of Francis's biographies for children given by Xabier Añoveros Trías de Bes (2006, 68-69).



*Saint Francis of Xavier: Five Hundredth Anniversary*

Several other institutional websites followed the same structure: *Javier 2006, encuentro de cultura universal* from the government of Navarre, and *San Francisco, quinto centenario* by the newspaper *Diario de Navarra*. As we see above, the government of Navarre used Xavier as a tool for gaining visibility by presenting him –a figure familiar to a number of cultures across the world– as the region’s forefather. The information that it provides is fairly accurate and straightforward. In contrast, the *Diario de Navarra* contains eye-catching features such as Google Earth journeys along Xavier’s travel routes, as well as contentious information about the saint’s life and appropriation by Basque nationalism. On the left side of the *Diario de Navarra* website, under the title of “Aspecto político” (‘Political aspect’), there is a historiographical analysis by Luis Javier Fortún de Ciriza to confirm ideological standpoints:

Una percepción de la historia desde posiciones políticas actuales, trufada por tanto de anacronismo y desprovista de la sucesión cronológica que la vertebraba, ha incidido últimamente en una visión política de la figura de San Francisco Javier. (*Francisco, quinto*)

This affirmation regarding the historically, contextually correct understanding of Xavier's life brings us back to the nationalistic debates surrounding him. These debates concern everything from Xavier's native language to his political affiliations and family connections.<sup>15</sup> Fortún de Ciriza takes issue with all of these points. He minimizes the importance of Xavier's mother tongue, since there is not much proof for this debate beyond one reference Xavier makes to *vizcaíno* as his own language, and because "vizcaíno" could also refer to a local romance language. Though possible, such a hypothesis is very tenuous, given what we know about the meaning of *vizcaíno* in the sixteenth century, which is a native speaker of one the varieties of the Basque language, at the south of the border with France. Furthermore, *vizcaíno* was used as a slender term in many instances.

The Basque speaker is a literary humoristic character in early modern literature, which is referred to as *vizcaíno*. Without doubt the most famous *vizcaíno* of the times is the character in *Don Quixote* that fights with the eternal knight of *La Mancha*. Both of the fincers, Don Quijote and the *vizcaíno* are ridiculed in the text by Cervantes in a way that was normal at the times. The provinciality of Galicians, Catalanians, Andaluzians, as well as *vizcaínos* seems to have been an effective humoristic trick:

Sabido es que en las colecciones de cuentos chistosos de Melchor de Santa Cruz y Francisco Asensio, divididas por secciones y temas, hay una sección de cuentos sobre vizcaínos, pero todos hacen hincapié en su simplicidad o falta de expresión idiomática en castellano. (Caro 213n67)

*Vizcaínos* as unarticulated and simple-minded peoples have appeared in jokes of all type in the written and the oral traditions.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, other author's representations of *vizcaínos* and their languages cannot be understood as humoristic; giving us unvaluable insights on linguistic definitions of language, xenophobic uses of ethnicity, and ideological struggles for power. In fact, *vizcaínos* are easy hostile others which help to define the selves and the texts of a large cultural production.<sup>17</sup> For Joxe Azurmendi, in *Epainolak eta euskaldunak [Españoles y vascos]*, the long history of ethnical slurs against northerners of non-Castilian language, would have started with the Germanic kingdoms established in Castille and France after the destruction of the Roman Empire.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The prominent Jesuit authority Schurhammer identifies Xavier's mother tongue as the Basque language and Xavier's family's political views as anti-Castilian, or *agramontés*.

<sup>16</sup> Véase M. Herrero García, *Ideas de los españoles del siglo XVII (249-74)*; y *Floresta española de apotegmas I*, 5a parte, cap. I; vol II clase IV, cap I; III, clase IV, cap. I; al igual que la publicación de "panfletos antivasquísimos" titulada, *Castellanos y vascongados*, Madrid, 1876.

<sup>17</sup> Conforme a H. Aram Vesser, "selves and texts are defined by their relation to hostile others (despised and feared Indians, Jews, Blacks) and disciplinary power (the King, Religion, Masculinity)" (xiii).

<sup>18</sup> Traditional historiography considers that Visigoths are Spaniards.

As for Francis's political ideas, Fortún de Ciriza remakes a historical hagiography of Francis's life, elevating his lineage from the human to the otherworldly.<sup>19</sup> To that end, he promotes the idea that once he was converted in Paris, the saint found the local political quarrels of Navarre to be meaningless. Yet, consistent with other historians, Fortún de Ciriza recognizes that there is not enough written documentation to conclusively identify Xavier's politics as either pro-French or pro-Castilian. Finally, Fortún stresses the fact that Xavier's siblings and parents pursued opposing courses of political action. Undoing, Schurhammer's image of Xavier. Two of his brothers waged wars against Castile, while his parents aligned themselves with the invading military powers (if true, possibly, this was a strategy to preserve the family's aristocratic power).<sup>20</sup> As a closing remark, Fortún indicates that the Jasso family's history is too complicated to be understood in modern political terms.

Nevertheless, in an online chat discussion also hosted by the *Diario de Navarra*, Fortún de Ciriza emphasized that what is truly worth remembering are the efforts of this unique saint beyond today's political ideologies. Both Basque and Spanish nationalists fit under the umbrella of Xavier, since the truly crucial issue at hand is the understanding of his work and image:

A la sombra de Javier cabemos todos, nacionalistas y no nacionalistas. Lo verdaderamente importante es entender su figura y su obra. (“A la sombra”)

For me, the questions implicit in this seemingly apolitical assertion are how Xavier's figure and work are constructed, and what they might lack in terms of universality, which leads us back to Leoné Puncel's claim, quoted above, that the image of Xavier is a text recreated over the centuries.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See the chapter “Huellas personales: del linaje humano al linaje espiritual” (Fortún 2006, 95).

<sup>20</sup> “La actitud política de los hijos mayores de Juan de Jaso, Miguel y Juan, fue diferente a la de su padre. Se separaron de su trayectoria y se rebelaron contra los nuevos reyes castellanos, tanto en 1516 como en 1521. Mientras tanto su madre, María de Azpilcueta, jugó la carta opuesta, pues proclamó su fidelidad al rey castellano, postura que le permitió atemperar las consecuencias negativas derivadas de las rebeliones de sus hijos” (Fortún 2006, 51).

<sup>21</sup> Under the subtitle “Superación de visiones” in the *Diario de Navarra* website, Fortún de Ciriza continues to explain the unfortunate association between Xavier and certain early modern politics, some of which are based on simplistic suppositions: “La figura de San Francisco Javier se considera indisolublemente ligada a las posiciones políticas que había defendido su linaje hasta 1524. Ésta es, por ejemplo la visión del Padre Schurhammer, su principal biógrafo, quien llegó a escribir: «Describo las luchas de Navarra desde el punto de vista de la familia de Javier, desde el partido agramontés». Es evidente que Javier comenzó a percibir el mundo y la vida política desde una visión agramontesa, pero en su propia familia existieron comportamientos diferentes entre el padre y los hermanos y cabe preguntarse a quién siguió. En lo que respecta a la trayectoria vital siguió a su padre cuando se encaminó hacia los estudios universitarios. En cuanto a la visión de la realidad política, probablemente también. Incluso cabe pensar que esa herencia paterna y, sobre todo, el ambiente universitario de París forjaron en Javier un hombre nuevo, muy desligado de las divisiones políticas de su tierra natal. Desde

When Leoné Puncel analyzed Francis of Xavier as a textual construct,<sup>22</sup> he pointed to the historical evolution of Xavier's image in his biographies: an image that evolves from hagiographies to textual and sociopolitical analysis. Furthermore, there is the problem of the primary sources, which present a problem. All these problems further emphasize the fact that Francis of Xavier is today the construct of his biographers. Leoné's arguments connect with diverse schools of historical criticism outside Navarre. Kamen, for instance, describes the region's patron in this way:

Xabier, a noble from Navarre, spent his entire career as a missionary within the orbit of the Portuguese *padroado*, and both wrote and spoke Portuguese during his work. His achievement did not form part of the history of Spain's religious enterprise... Jesuits never restricted their membership by nation... [they] were beginning to build an empire for Christ in [the Pacific]. (Kamen 232)

Kamen's historical perspective could be deemed accurate, but it would not be applicable to the case of the Navarrese community. The quarrels about the language, family, and politics of Francis of Xavier boil down to a war about the historical interpretations of the details of the life of Xavier, and his family. Those details are put together in order to build a Navarrese historical legacy. From these reconstructions of Navarre's historical heritage, a common imaginary has developed. Imagined communities need imagined reference points; and these imagined points of reference become the basis for a sense of belonging, allegiance, and ultimately of nation. A similar phenomenon operated in the Ancien Régime: imagined genealogies were the primary justification for the imagined ancestral existence of a dynasty, as well as its right to the kingdom and its vassals' loyalty. For instance, as shown by Marie Tanner, the Hapsburgs' symbol was the Golden Fleece, which connected them genealogically with the heritage and authority of Aeneas. In fact, today, Navarrese nationalism is what most stirs memories of Xavier, who, ironically, belonged by choice to a non-nationalistic project, the Jesuits.

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la Universidad de París estas cuestiones se reducían hasta convertirse en insignificantes. Los pequeños problemas locales o regionales se desvanecían ante la contemplación de los grandes retos y problemas de la Europa del siglo XVI" (*San Francisco, quinto*).

<sup>22</sup> Leoné Puncel describes the methodological approach of the article as follows: "para comentar toda esa bibliografía, no he buscado las claves personales de cada autor para, a continuación, intentar establecer lo que él quería decir. La apuesta metodológica de este trabajo consiste en considerar la figura de Francisco de Javier como un único texto atravesado por diversos discursos, susceptibles de ser comentados por separado. Lo que he buscado, por tanto, es la presencia recurrente de una serie de cuestiones en el texto de procedencia ideológica distinta, pero coincidentes en el deseo de utilizar a Francisco de Javier como personaje que pueda poblar un imaginario colectivo" (Leoné 79). Leoné works with hagiographies and biographies as discourses, and his main theoretical reference is the poststructuralist work *S/Z* by Roland Barthes.

The 2006 publications studied here continue to exert an effect on our interpretations of the saint. In some of these publications the importance of the saint's image to art history was emphasized. To a certain extent, the literary tradition serves as an important genealogy: from man to saint, from Francis of Jassu and Xabier to Saint Francis of Xavier. Xavier's religious dimension throughout the history of art and letters is a daunting project for research, as evidenced by a number of publications and exhibits. *San Francisco Javier en las artes: El poder de la imagen* is a very well-edited book, published to accompany an exhibit hosted in Xavier's castle (located on what, at the time, was border with the kingdom of Aragon). Both book and exhibit display a wealth of information about art and history. Seven articles deal with visual representations of the saint in the visual arts in Europe, America, and Goa. Providing an introductory framework to the interpretation of the visual representations of the saint, we find once again Luis Javier Fortún Pérez de Ciriza's biographical work, which ought to be read in conjunction with an article by Xabier Añoveros Trías de Bes. In his article, "La vida del santo contada a través de los siglos," Añoveros contributes to the historiography of the saint's biographies, stating that "hagiography is a branch of historical sciences" whose objective is "to convert a saint into a cultural model, shaped according to different categories established by the Church, such as martyrs, virgins, confessors, eremites, monks, founders, etc." (55-56).<sup>23</sup> While Añoveros's definition of hagiography is at least debatable, the author is correct in his assertion that Saint Francis's hagiographies create a "cultural model" based on the narration of his life, and documents.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it is a cultural model under siege and much disputed throughout the celebrations and publications honoring the five hundredth anniversary of Xavier's birth.

Biographers have created an imaginary forerunner for the various strains of Navarrese nationalism. Considered from this perspective, supposedly scientific claims regarding the "true" political history of Xavier seem dubious and disingenuous. The intellectual and popular debates about Francis of Xavier cannot be easily quelled by further historical, devotional, or political argumentation. Xavier entered the realm of symbols centuries ago.<sup>25</sup> For instance, in Latin American visual art, misplacement and

<sup>23</sup> "Toda historia es, o intenta ser, un conocimiento científico del pasado y la hagiografía como una rama de las ciencias históricas no es menos" (55). "La hagiografía diseña y da vida, a través de un lenguaje perfectamente codificado, a una serie de modelos preestablecidos. Su objetivo es menos demostrar la existencia histórica de un santo que la de convertirlo en un *modelo cultural* de acuerdo con las distintas categorías establecidas tradicionalmente por la Iglesia como mártires, vírgenes, confesores, ermitaños, monjes, fundadores, etc." (Añoveros 2006, 56, emphasis mine)

<sup>24</sup> Añoveros, a business law specialist, has contributed to shaping the interpretation of Xavier's bibliography, biographies, and letters-documents with at least three articles.

<sup>25</sup> Xavier was used as a symbol throughout history. In the Jesuits' *Colégio do Espírito Santo*, "pagaentry was intended to impress and edify the people of Évora, the collage students in particular." In 1622, "the students staged a reenactment of heroic episodes from the two saints' lives. Francis Xavier's labors in exotic locales made for impressive tableaux vivants. At one point, the Apostle of the Orient battled Idolatry herself, who was clothed in silk and jewels and riding atop a crocodile. Shortly before the climax, Xavier crossed paths with Buddhist monks who were worshipping a 'monstrous idol of Japan

abstraction abound. Xavier appears in Hispanic-American representations baptizing indigenous peoples and children, as if he had been a missionary in New Spain and Peru.<sup>26</sup>

As a symbol, Xavier exerts enormous evocative power but also exhibits the weakness inherent in the polysemy of all symbols appropriated for different and often mutually exclusive ends. However, the importance of ideological exploitations of Xavier as a symbol lies in the fact that he has become part of the heritage of Navarre, a cornerstone of a broad array of regional identities:

In domesticating the past we enlist it for present causes. Legends of origin and endurance, of victory or calamity, project the present back, the past forward; they align us with forebears whose virtues we share and whose vices we shun. We are apt to call such communion history, but it is actually heritage... But Heritage, no less than history, is essential to knowing and acting. Its many faults are inseparable from heritage's essential role in husbanding community, identity, continuity, indeed history itself... I seek to resolve the conundrums that encumber heritage when it is misconceived as history. Because heritage concerns are passionately partisan, they are also seamed with paradox. (Lowenthal xv)

This declaration concerning the paradoxical uses of “heritage” with political, economic, or religious aims, explains the interest of the symbolic status of different visions of Francis of Xavier. That is why arguments about Xavier’s nationality, psychological make-up, and religiosity will continue to be partisan issues in Navarre, as they have been since 1880.

Furthermore, this reality has to do with well-known facts in the construction of nationalism. The 1880s constitute a landmark in the history of nationalistic discourses, corresponding to the widespread creation of national “traditions” between 1870 and 1914 (Hobsbawm 2008, 263). The case of *fuerrismo* and nationalism in Navarre and the Basque Country is not exceptional in this regard. In the 1880s, local literature shifts from religious topics to secular imaginaries, and portrayals of Xavier shift emphasis from the religious realm to the human world, from hagiographies to biographies (Olaziregi 176-77; Leoné 80-81). The association of Xavier with political agendas persisted during the twentieth century. For instance, from the 1940s onward, Xavier’s castle would be the destination of increasingly well attended pilgrimages, which in the beginning had a charged political tone, since the attendees wore political, military and religious attire, as well as commonly used Francoist paraphernalia during nationalistic celebrations in the 1940s and 50s. Photos of these victorious groups

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twenty-two palms high’ and intoning strange chants. He quickly vanquished them all with a burst of the invincible light of the gospel” (Brockey 207).

<sup>26</sup> See Jaime Cuadriello’s work, specially the two paintings where Xavier is baptizing the Aztec emperor Moctezuma, and the ruling Inca (224-26).



marching towards the rebuilt medieval castle were disseminated promptly through the regime's print apparatus.

Scholarship in the current century does not seem any less tendentious. Websites are of increasing importance in our analysis of nationalism and its competing narratives, since a tremendous part of the written and visual culture currently consumed in our society is digitally-based. Somewhat striking about the materials consulted for this article is that a *fuerrista* agenda, combined at times with religious fervor and/or analysis, predominates in most of the websites and blogs about Francis Xavier published for the 2006 commemorations. While some books were published with a pro-Basque approach, their number was considerably smaller than the *fuerrista* oriented books.

It is not that either of these images of Xavier –*fuerrista*, or pro-Basque– is more accurate than the other, since both of them are carefully constructed symbols. The question is why the *fuerrista* perspective was more present in the commemorations. A combination of three reasons might explain it. The *fuerrista* stance is older, and probably existed from the 1880s onward. During Spain's twentieth- and twenty-first century democracy, the *fuerrista* politics in Navarre have been a bastion against the "Basquization" of the territory, and the influence of both Euskadi and E.T.A in its politics and administration. In fact, the government of Navarre –el Gobierno Foral– funded most of the publications and websites with a *fuerrista* approach, analyzed in this article.

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