The Power of Names: Place-Making and People-Making in the Riojan Wine Region

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Based on longitudinal ethnographic research in the Riojan wine region of northern Spain, this article describes how naming has been used over the past two and a half decades to distinguish people in the wine region. An ecological zone long associated with its most famous product, the wine region straddles three of the country's seventeen autonomous communities, regional political units established since Spain's 1978 democratization. Leaders of the Basque and non-Basque autonomous communities whose territories include portions of the wine zone employ nation-building strategies, including the strategic use of names for place, wine and people, in promoting distinctive cultural identities for their communities. The case illustrates the impacts of competing regional power holders, national and supranational policies, and the global economy on the use of naming in constructing and contesting cultural identities; and calls attention to interrelationships of placenames and product names in shaping ideas and debates about affiliations and name-use rights.

Introduction

The names *Bordeaux* and *Napa Valley* bring to mind landscapes of vineyards, traditions of winemaking, and specific wines. In Spain and Europe, and among wine connoisseurs elsewhere, the name *Rioja* also evokes images of both a wine region and the fine red wines produced there. While such names serve as symbols of places and products for wide audiences, scholars observe that the distinctive human and physical landscapes of wine regions are especially effective in producing a cultural identity among inhabitants as "people of the vine and wine," particularly in long established production areas such as those of Mediterranean Europe (Dickenson and Salt 1982; de Blij 1983, Unwin 1991; Bell and Valentine 1997; Lem 1999, Stanislawski 1970). Associations of wine and place come to be taken for granted, "naturalized,"

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and their social construction obscured over time (Ulin 1996, 52). Naming plays an important role in this process, for naming is key to "place-making"—"the symbolic appropriation of space . . ." (Low 1994, 66). And "placenames mold our perceptions and hence our understanding of places" (Algeo and Algeo 2000, 272). Thus, when place and product names correspond, they become intertwined in connoting place and identity. As Moran notes, "appellations of origin" for wines "also act to publicize the localities and regions that they use for their names: Burgundy gives its name to one of the best known wines in the world but at the same time the region of Burgundy becomes known because of its wine" (1993, 266). In this article, I will discuss the historic naturalization and the recent contested deconstruction of the correspondence of names for wine, place and people in the Riojan wine region.

While Moran (1993), de Blij (1983) and Ulin (1996) describe geopolitical circumstances of the early twentieth century that prompted the establishment of place-of-origin names for certain wines produced only in specifically defined geographic areas in France and several other European countries, the complexities of such naming processes are often submerged with the passage of time (Roberts 1993, 163; Nuessel 1992, 54). It is when naming (or renaming) is in progress, and often contested, that the arbitrariness of the connections between names and what they represent is rendered more transparent (Roberts 1993; Azaryahu 1997; Nicolaisen 1990). The development, then, of an ethnographic onomastics–observing naming processes as they occur–should advance understanding of how names are used in the cultural construction of place.

The work of several scholars demonstrates the utility of this approach: Roberts's (1993) study of place naming in a new town in the Brazilian Amazon, Azaryahu's (1997) account of the renaming of streets in East Berlin following Germany's reunification, Berg and Kearns' (1996) study of efforts to

reinstate Maori placenames in southern New Zealand, and Cohen and Kliot's (1992) analysis of the Israeli government's use of placenames to reinforce national Zionist ideologies all reveal how various kinds of power relations are implicated in naming processes. These findings reflect Bourdieu's observation that those who have the power to control symbolic systems, including names, can thereby impose what becomes the legitimate conception of the social world and its constituent parts (1991, 239). And, by observing controversies attendant upon naming decisions, the authors of these case studies contribute to the development of "a theory which will predict who will win the naming game and why" (Roberts 1993, 164). Hierarchies of class, gender, and race; and programs of state- and nation-building were shown to have variously impacted place naming. In this article, I suggest additional factors to consider in the development of a theoretical framework for understanding place naming processes.

My analysis focuses on the interrelationships of place and product names, and on how these are being used by different sets of power holders to foster alternative ideas about regional places and identities. Debates about names and identities in the wine region have been stimulated in recent decades by broader political and economic changes in Spain, in the European Union (EU), and in the globalizing economy. For example, the increasing powers of Spain's regional governments at home and in the EU, and initiatives to protect the prestigious product name of *Rioja* in the international marketplace, are affecting ideas about names and what they represent. Naming controversies are underscored in the wine region because the area has become an ambiguous ethno-political borderland.[1]

With Spain's 1978 democratization, the government subsequently recognized seventeen "autonomous communities" (*comunidades autonomas)* with their own semi-autonomous governments. While the wine region straddled

sections of three politically weak provinces (Alava, Navarra and Logroño) under Franco's repressive centrist regime (1939-1975), it now includes parts of three more powerful autonomous communities: the Basque Autonomous Community (composed of the provinces of Alava, Vizcaya, and Guipúzcoa and also referred to as the Basque Country) and the autonomous communities of La Rioja and Navarra.[2] Leaders of these units are using nation-building strategies, including naming, to delineate and distinguish people within their territories. Raento and Douglass note that when naming or renaming is used for such ideological functions, or to manipulate cultural hegemony, names can "become a politically contested element of the daily landscape" (Raento and Douglass 2001, 1-2). And, when naming and renaming are employed to distinguish people who had previously shared a placename and cultural identity, as may be the case when political boundaries are introduced or re-emphasized (Nicolaisen 1990, 198-200), these processes may be even more readily observed. Following a brief discussion of research methodology, this article will describe the development of the Riojan wine region as an ambiguous borderland and then examine the impacts of competing regional leaders, national and supranational policies, and the global economy on naming debates there.

Research Methods

My inductive, ethnographic research in the Riojan wine region, conducted during five trips between 1985 and 1999 totaling twenty-two months, focused on the effects of the establishment of the autonomous communities on notions of regional identity (Hendry 1991, 1997, 2000). The political changes accompanying Spain's democratization and the borderland context of the wine region provided fertile grounds for studying identity change-in-the-making. Participant observation in vineyard and other work, in daily socializing, and in local rituals was the primary research

method used to understand the experiences and views of ordinary people. Over the years I lived in four different villages—one in Rioja Alavesa, the section of the wine region located in Basque province of Alava, and three in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. I also frequently visited people in other locales in both areas. Such long-term involvement provides insights about individuals and local communities typically not accounted for in macro-level studies. I also conducted about fifty semi-structured tape-recorded interviews and administered two written questionnaires.

To learn about "official" promulgations of regional identity ideologies, I interviewed regional government officials and other leaders and studied primary and secondary documentary sources. These sources were also used to understand relevant regional, state and supranational policies and agendas. While this paper focuses on findings from 1999 fieldwork, evidence from earlier research is also used, providing for a longitudinal view of changing ideas about names and identities in the wine region.

The Evolution of the Riojan Borderland

The wines which carry on their labels the name *Rioja* are produced in the upper Ebro river valley of northern Spain, an area of gently rolling hills of vineyards and fields interrupted every few kilometers by nucleated town and village settlements, many dating from medieval times. Beginning in 1925, the Spanish government attempted to establish a *Denominación de Origen Rioja* (appellation, or name of origin Rioja) for wines made from grapes grown only within a geographically delimited wine-producing region called Rioja. This region consists of five hundred square kilometers of the upper Ebro river valley, bordered by mountain ranges to the north and south. It includes portions of the provinces of Alava, Navarra, and the former province of Logroño, currently the Autonomous Community of La Rioja

(García Escudero, et. al. 1992, 11). A fully functioning Wine Control Board, able to enforce restrictions on the use of the name Rioja, was not in place until 1953 (Parrish 1985, 170). Subsequent legislation in 1970 and 1982 strengthened the monitoring powers of the Board (Consejo Regulador de la DOC Rioja 2005, 1). These policies emphasize the association of a specifically defined geographic region called Rioja with the wines of the same name. In 1991, the designation of *Calificada* (superior, prestigious) was added to the Denomination of Origin Rioja by the Spanish government (Baró and Zorzano Santamaría 1994, 99). The complete title of the Wine Control or Regulatory Board is now Consejo Regulador de La Denominación de Origen Calificada Rioja (henceforth referred to in this paper as the Consejo Regulador or the Consejo Regulador de la DOC Rioja).

Although wine making is documented in Rioja from Roman times, the modern wine industry was actually established in the middle of the nineteenth century, largely by French, Spanish, and Basque entrepreneurs seeking to replenish supplies after the devastation of French vineyards by the deadly vine pest, *phylloxera*. These developers created what are now the historic wineries of the region but did not, for the most part, invest in vineyards. Even as several multinational corporations established wineries in the area beginning in the 1960s and began to acquire some vineyards, the risky business of growing the grapes mostly was and is left to small family farmers (Parrish 1985, 67-72). About 18,000 of them cultivate approximately 50,000 hectares of productive vineyard land with sixty-five percent of the holdings at less than two hectares (Lasanta Martínez 1995, 57). Most of these growers sell their grapes and/or wine in bulk to the large wineries, which bottle and sell most Riojan wine (in 1999, for example, ten of these large companies sold over 60% of Riojan wine (Pascual 1999,6)).

Despite a history of class conflict between the small growers and owners of large wineries (Parrish 1985, Navajas

Zubeldia 1995), or *bodegas* as wineries of all sizes are called in Spain, the wine's centrality in the social and ritual life of the Riojan communities and the connection of the region to the wines by other Spaniards contributed to identification with the wine and associated landscapes and traditions even among the majority of people in the wine region who do not make their livelihoods from the wine industry (Hendry 1991, Elías Pastor 1981). Wine accompanies most ordinary and festive meals and is a mainstay of the daily socializing in local bars and cafes. Symbols of wine and grapes are evident in local and regional religious and secular rituals and these motifs are found in both ancient and modern architecture and art in the region. Reference to the wine appears in popular proverbs, songs, regional recipes and folk medicines (Elías 1990). In wine-producing villages, families strongly identify with their vineyards and with the viti-vinicultural work (Hendry 1991, 212-226). Thus, during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the corresponding names for place and wine, as well as shared traditions and environment, promoted a sense of identity as *Riojanos*–people associated with vine and wine–among the inhabitants of the wine region.

The congruence of names for place, product and cultural identity has been challenged since the political transitions in Spain beginning in the late 1970s. The name *Rioja* now simultaneously refers to a political territory, the Autonomous Community of La Rioja; to the wine region as defined by the Consejo Regulador, which straddles portions of three of the autonomous communities–La Rioja, the Basque Country and Navarra; and to the wines produced in the wine region. Since only 5% of the wine region is located in Navarra, my research focused on the sections of the wine region located in the autonomous communities of La Rioja and the Basque Country.

In 1987, most people I talked with in Rioja Alavesa, the portion of the wine region located at the southern frontier of the Basque province of Alava, told me that they had more in

common with their neighbors in other sections of the wine region, with whom they shared an environment and famous product, than with other Basques. Separated from the rest of the province of Alava and the Basque Country by the mountainous northern border of the wine region, the 10,000 people of Rioja Alavesa were long isolated from other Basques. The Basque language, Euskera,[3] for example, had not been used there since medieval times, and the area was distant from the mainstreams of Basque nationalism until recent decades (Caro Baroja 1986, Greenwood, 1977). Similarly, people in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja said in 1985 and 1987 that their neighbors in Rioja Alavesa were more like them than like Basques. Over the course of my research, this apolitical regional identity as *Riojanos*, people from the famous Riojan wine region, has been eroded as leaders of the autonomous communities have worked to create distinctive identity ideologies within their territories.

As part of a federated democracy, leaders of Spain's seventeen autonomous communities compete for political, economic, and social advantages. They seek popular support, and recognition of special rights and privileges, by working to validate ways in which their communities are unique and distinguishable from a Spanish national identity, and/or from each other. Nation-building strategies, including the selective uses of language, history, folklore and other cultural criteria (Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm 1990) are employed by political and cultural elites of the autonomous communities to promote distinction and in-group solidarity (Hendry 1991, 1997, 2000). For example, the linguistic policies of the Basque Autonomous Community, led by the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV, Basque Nationalist Party), are aimed at preserving and restoring the Basque language through public and private education, the media, bilingual road signs, and bilingual government documents and transactions. For those who learned Euskera in school (but who did/do not generally use it outside the classroom), and for the majority of monolingual

Castilian (Spanish)-speaking inhabitants of Rioja Alavesa, Euskera is becoming a symbol of distinction, if not a means of communication, which differentiates them from non-Basque neighbors of the Rioja wine region (Hendry 1997).

The wines, vineyard landscapes, and cultural heritage associated with the name *Rioja*–markers that had been used as bases for identification with a wine region that overlapped provincial boundaries–are also being appropriated to promote dissimilarity between the peoples of Rioja Alavesa and the Autonomous Community of La Rioja. And, names themselves–for places, wines and peoples–are employed by leaders of the autonomous communities to bolster identification with, and allegiance to, these units. For, as Jarman notes, "naming . . . is an important part of the act of claiming and confirming possession over space" (1993, 126). Although people continue to shop, work, socialize, conduct business, and marry across the Ebro River boundary separating La Rioja and Rioja Alavesa, elaborations of differences between these neighbors have increased during the 1990s.

Changing Placenames, Changing Identities?

The Franco regime targeted Basque names, of places and people, in a wider campaign to proscribe the Basque language as but one means of subordinating and assimilating Basques (the Basque provinces of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa had sided against Franco during the Spanish Civil War). For example, all Basque names in civil registries and other official documents had to be translated into Spanish. Newborns were not to be given Basque names, and all inscriptions in the Basque language were ordered removed from tombstones and public buildings. One could be arrested for speaking Euskera in public (Clark 1981:93). Rather than promoting identification with a Spanish nation, these policies served to further politicize Euskera as a symbol of opposition to the fascist state (Urla 1987).

Leaders of the Basque Autonomous Community implemented policies to foster the preservation and proliferation of Euskera, as described in the previous section. The language is used as a key marker of Basque identity. Crossing from the Autonomous Community of La Rioja into Rioja Alavesa, for example, signs announce one's arrival into the "Basque Country" in both Castilian—*País Vasco,* and in Euskera—*Euskadi.* In addition, bilingual street and township signs further underscore that Rioja Alavesa is part of Basque territory. These signs serve to distinguish neighbors who live in the Basque and non-Basque parts of the Riojan wine region (Hendry 1997). But I found that the uses and interpretations of the name *Rioja* itself are most controversial.

The name *Rioja* first appeared in the *fueros,* or local laws, of the town of Miranda de Ebro in 1099 (Granado Hijelmo 1993, 1702). From the eleventh century, Rioja can be found on maps and in records to designate part or all of the territory included in the modern Riojan wine region and in areas of the autonomous community of La Rioja which are not part of the wine region (ibid). It is debated whether *Rioja* is derived from the Basque or the Castilian language. For example, some scholars propose the word could have evolved from the Basque words, *erri* or *erria* (land) and *egui* or *oguia* (bread), to mean "land of the bread," said to have been created by Basques from the mountainous north who migrated to the fertile Ebro Valley after the reconquest of the area from the Moors by the Christian-Basque Kingdom of Navarra in AD 923 (Granado Hijelmo 1993, 1700). The Basque language was used, as was Castilian, in both Basque and non-Basque sections of today's wine region until approximately the fourteenth century, when Euskera was eclipsed by Castilian (Merino Urrutia 1978, Echnenique Elizondo 1987).

In contrast to a Basque origin of the name, others posit that Rioja is derived from the Castilian name of a tributary of the Ebro River, the Rio Oja, so named due to the abundance of *hojas* (leaves) of the trees lining its banks (Granado Hijelmo

1993, 1701). The meanings evoked by the name *Rioja* today do not reflect any of the suggested original word meanings of *Rioja* (Rittwagen 1928, García Prado 1952). As Nicolaisen notes, "lexical meaning and onomastic content, word meaning and name meaning" (1991, 10) do not often coincide. But conflicting etymologies of a name, as described above for Rioja, can foster dissimilar notions of ancestry, history and identity.

The use of the name Rioja in the renaming of place has also provoked dissension and ambiguity about regional places and identities. In 1980, leaders of the province of Logroo changed the province's name to La Rioja. When this province gained autonomous community status in 1982, it became the Autonomous Community of La Rioja (Cebrián Ortigüela 1982, 393). One winegrower in Rioja Alavesa expressed the objections of many there to the cooption of a name they feel they rightfully share when he told me: "The Rioja as a province [e.g.: political territory, autonomous community], it's not like that–it was part Navarra, part Alava, part Logro□o, but it wasn't a province, and now, the province of Logro□o turns out to be the Rioja–for the theme of the wine."[4] Indeed, the provincial government of Alava unsuccessfully challenged this name change in court (Granado Hijelmo 1993, 1706-1711). In naming their political unit La Rioja, leaders of this autonomous community aimed to correlate the famous and lucrative Riojan wines with their territory, although only a portion of La Rioja is in the wine zone and although the wine zone includes areas of Navarra and the Basque Country. Thus the placename *Rioja*, which had previously evoked feelings of identification with a wine region which overlapped weak provincial boundaries under Franco, has been used in efforts to distinguish the territories, wines and peoples of Rioja Alavesa and La Rioja.

Basso notes that placenames not only serve as terms of reference, but also function "to muster and consolidate so much of what a landscape may be taken to represent in both

personal and cultural terms" (1996, 76). And, the names for groups of people derived from placenames, whether they are members of a nation state (e.g.: the English, the Italians, the Americans, the Mexicans) or natives of a named place within a nation state (e.g.: in the U. S.: Southerners, New Englanders, New Yorkers; in Italy: Sicilians, Neapolitans, *Meridionali* (derogatory nickname for southern Italians)) function to evoke particular traits and stereotypes. When a region is associated with a product, especially when that product shares the region's name, as in the case of many well-known wine regions, the product, and its name, can also play powerful roles in representing place and people. Thus, when political transitions result in changing placenames, how do the new or revised names serve to symbolize place, people, and in the case of the Riojan wine region, product?

Wines of Rioja? Wines of Rioja Alavesa? Naming Wines and Peoples, Contesting Identities

Cultural products and activities focused on viti-vinicultural themes have proliferated in the last twenty-five years. Many of these have been funded by the governments of La Rioja and the Basque Country. Books, magazines, journal articles, brochures, tourist guides and maps to the *bodegas;* conferences, courses, exhibits and festivals generally do not include those areas of the wine region outside of the territory of the sponsoring autonomous community (Elías 1998, García Santamaría and Martín Losa 1982, Gobierno de La Rioja: no date, *La Prensa del Rioja* 1999, 19,: Asociación para la Promoción de la Rioja Alavesa 1998, Busca Isuzi 1979, Chasco Oyon 1991, Chinchetru 1988, and Arriola Loyola et al. 1996).

These publications and events associate the placenames La Rioja *or* Rioja Alavesa with wines, viti-vinicultural traditions and the proposed distinctive characters of the people of those specific areas. For example, a website tourist guide to the Autonomous Community of La Rioja

proclaims that "La Rioja is the land of wines . . . vineyards have always influenced the history and character of the people of La Rioja." (Riojainternet 2002:1). And, at the 1985 Grape Harvest Festival in La Rioja, the then president of the autonomous community opened the festivities with a dedication of the first *mosto* (unfermented grape juice) of the season in which he stated, "In offering this *mosto,* I lift it to all of you in my hands. . . . I am offering work and joy, rain and sun, fears and hopes, and definitively, that which marks and entitles us as Riojanos." The emphasis in the wine-related publications and events sponsored by the Autonomous Community of La Rioja is not on how the wines of the area differ from those of the other parts of the wine region, but rather, that viti-vinicultural traditions and wine are central to this community's culture, heritage, and identity. The idea is promoted that the people of the new political community called La Rioja are the *Riojanos*–in contrast to the notion that *Riojanos* are the people of an apolitical wine region of Rioja, which includes portions of three different autonomous communities.

Unlike the leaders of La Rioja, Basque leaders cannot use the wine and vine as key symbols of Basque identity since Rioja Alavesa constitutes just a small frontier zone of the Basque Autonomous Community, distant from the linguistic and cultural features generally used to distinguish Basques (Caro Baroja 1986, Greenwood 1977, Hendry 1991). Rather, Rioja Alavesa is portrayed as a unique yet integral part of the wider Basque community. The wine-related publications and activities sponsored by the Basque and Alavese governments and by Basque organizations foster this view. They emphasize the distinctiveness of the wines of Rioja Alavesa compared to wines from other sections of the wine zone and the unity of the people of Rioja Alavesa with other Basques, rather than with people of the wine region who live in La Rioja.

If the Basque people are distinct from the Spanish, it follows that their wines are also different. For example, in a

book about the wines of Rioja Alavesa, Basque author Busca Isusi notes: "We have left for last the most important factor, the man. This is the basic factor, which has made possible the miracle of the wine that is of a very special form in our Rioja Alavesa. The inhabitant of this zone of the Country is, like a good Basque, strong, vigorous, patient and hard working" (1979, 14-15). Such statements suggest that the people of Rioja Alavesa fit well into a broader Basque identity ideology which emphasizes industriousness and independence, in contrast to the conviviality and hospitableness typically attributed to the inhabitants of the Riojan wine zone in general, and now emphasized by leaders of La Rioja as distinguishing traits of the citizens of that autonomous community (Granado Hijelmo 1993, 1564-1565, Hendry 1991).

If the people of Rioja Alavesa differ in character from others in the wine region and produce distinctive wines, some argued that these wines should be distinguished by a special label, or emblem. In 1998, the governments of the Basque Autonomous Community and of the province of Alava (Diputación Foral de Alava), together with an association of the smaller winegrowers in Rioja Alavesa, proposed that a logo with the name *Rioja Alavesa* be added to both the capsules and *contraetiquetas* (the guarantee of origin or certification labels issued by the Consejo Regulador) of bottles of wines produced in Rioja Alavesa (*La Rioja* 1998a). The *contraetiquetas,* which appear on the backs of all bottles of wine approved by the Board, included the Board's logo (with only the official appellation of origin name, *Rioja*), the year of the harvest from which the wine was made, and the age grade of the wine. Another label, affixed to the fronts of the bottles, allows for more detailed information such as a specific brand name, the name of the company that bottled the wine and the location of the company which can be indicated by names of both the town and subzone[5] of the wine region (Garca Escudero, et al. 1992, 67).

Proponents of the addition of a Rioja Alavesa logo and

name to the capsules and certifying *contraetiquetas* contended that this labeling would more definitively distinguish the wines of Rioja Alavesa: "We continue with the campaign of almost twenty years: *Rioja Alavesa, un vino con nombre y apellido* (Rioja Alavesa, a wine with a name and a surname)" (Cuadrilla de Laguardia 1998, 3). Addition of the name *Rioja Alavesa* to the *contraetiquetas* would emphasize that the wines were bottled in the Basque province of Alava and reinforce the idea that this place and the wines and people in it are of the Basque Country, while also associating the wines with the famous appellation of origin *Rioja*. This proposal stirred much controversy (Gil 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, *La Rioja* 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, *El Correo* 1998, Lizarralde 1994).

One of the primary objections to placing *Rioja Alavesa* on the *contraetiquetas* of wine bottled there is that most Riojan wines, including those bottled in Rioja Alavesa, are actually produced through the expert blending of grapes and wines from the three subzones of the wine region delineated by the Consejo Regulador (as described in Endnote 5). For the most part, this blending is done in the large industrial *bodegas* located throughout the wine region (de Blij 1983, Pascual 1999, 6). The chief enologist of one of these *bodegas*, located in Rioja Alavesa, told me: "We sell about thirteen million liters a year . . . Obviously, I can't work with just one subzone. I have to mix [wine and grapes] from all of the subzones . . . in large *bodegas* like ours . . . we need volume." He noted that the micro-climates and distinctive soil types which distinguish the subzones of the wine region result in wines with different characteristics, and that quality Riojan wines depend on a blending of these characteristics (e.g. alcohol and acidity levels, flavors). Of the recent move to add *Rioja Alavesa* to the capsules and *contraetiquetas* of bottles of wine produced there, he said: "You have to understand that the Rioja is . . . a natural region where the wines have always been blended. I fear that the subzone label is becoming a political concept that may at times be exclusionary." Others also thought that the proposal

to put *Rioja Alavesa* on the *contraetiquetas* and capsules was politically motivated, a manifestation of Basque separatist ideology (Gil 1998a, 4). An official of the Basque government responded to this critique, saying, "they have made political interpretations when our intention is purely commercial . . . we are in favor of the *Denominación de Origen Rioja* and its Consejo Regulador . . ." (Gil 1998b, 3).

Another critic of the *Rioja Alavesa* labels, the director of a wine exporters' association, told me that his organization, which represents forty-five medium to large sized wineries from all parts of the wine region, along with the Consejo Regulador, "have worked very, very hard to try and promote the idea that historically *Rioja* is, even though these political divisions exist, *Rioja* is one appellation of origin and it would not be beneficial at all for anyone to go off on a tangent and start calling themselves, for example, *Rioja Alavesa*." After much debate, the Consejo Regulador decided that the *Rioja Alavesa* name and logo could be placed on its official *contraetiquetas*, in addition to, and in smaller letters than, the name *Rioja*, but only on bottles of the few wines produced solely from grapes grown within Rioja Alavesa (La Rioja 1998b, 3).

The most vocal skeptics of the efforts to segregate the wines and people of the autonomous communities tended to be those with vested interest in the success of the traditional "blended" wines of Rioja: representatives of the large commercial *bodegas* and the leaders of the Consejo Regulador de La DOC Rioja. The Consejo Regulador works not only to regulate, but also to promote Riojan wines. In contrast to the wine related information and activities generated by the governments and interest groups of the autonomous communities; the publications, promotional materials, exhibits, courses, guidebooks and internet sites produced by the Consejo Regulador depict a Riojan wine region united by an environment and a common cultural and historical heritage associated with the wine and vine. They portray *Riojanos* as

people of the wine region of Rioja, no matter which political community they live in. The blended wines become a metonym for blended peoples. For example, the text of a lesson plan for a course about Riojan wines offered by the Consejo Regulador notes: "this *singular* [my emphasis] mountain valley, with its peculiar climatic characteristics . . . has brought about a strongly unified unique ecosystem where land, plants, animals and men form a harmonious whole and share a common reality. The love of the land influences the way of life and the sense of identity of the land's people, and constitutes the firm root of their culture" (Consejo Regulador de La DOC Rioja 1996, 6). This portrayal of a cultural identity which corresponds to the Riojan wine region delineated by the appellation of origin *Rioja* and which overrides political boundaries is in line with the aim of leaders of the Consejo Regulador to bring the various political and class interests of the wine region together to protect and promote the wines (González Larraina 1984, 104). This agenda counters the efforts of leaders of La Rioja and the Basque Country to promote distinction of the peoples and wines within the boundaries of their autonomous communities.

While feelings of difference between neighbors in La Rioja and Rioja Alavesa have increased during the 1990s, taken-for-granted associations of names, places and peoples are far from well established. For example, although I found an increase in Basque identity in Rioja Alavesa by the mid 1990s (Hendry 1997), some expressed ambiguity, referring to themselves with such statements as *"no somos vasco-vascos, somos vascos-lite"* (we are not "Basque-Basques," we are "Basques-lite"). These individuals thought of themselves as marginal Basques and told me that the *"vasco-vascos,"* or most authentic Basques, were those from the northern Basque provinces of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa who spoke Euskera.

In the Autonomous Community of La Rioja, I found greater willingness to distinguish people in Rioja Alavesa as Basques in the1990s than I did in 1985 and 1987. Some said

they thought that the *bodegas* of Rioja Alavesa should drop the name *Rioja*. As one man rather angrily told me, "Rioja Alavesa uses the name *Rioja* for the wine–they are *Pas Vasco* (the Basque Country)–they should use the name *Alava*." Such individuals now correlate the name *Rioja* with their own regional political community instead of with the wider wine region and define their neighbors in Rioja Alavesa not as fellow Riojanos but as Basques. But I also talked to many people in both La Rioja and Rioja Alavesa who continue to express sentiments of similarity with each other and who feel that a historical-cultural divide corresponding to political divisions based on autonomous community boundaries is artificial.

As Azaryahu found in his study of the renaming of streets in East Berlin following Germany's reunification (1997, 479), naming debates in the wine region, for places, wines, and peoples, can be emotionally charged and highly debated. Uncertainties about regional placenames and identities are also perpetuated because the autonomous communities' and the Consejo Regulador's powers to name and define places are simultaneously recognized and legitimated at national and supranational levels.

Wider Influences on the Naming Debates in the Riojas

In developing common policies and a common market for wine, the European Economic Community (EEC) adopted France's model of appellations of origin for quality wines, "a style of labeling which gives pre-eminence to place of origin" (Moran 1993, 264-265). The EEC also adopted protective rules for these wines, prohibiting the use of the names outside the defined boundaries of the official wine regions by members of the EEC (Niederbacher 1988). Thus, when Spain joined the European Community or EC (formerly the EEC and now the EU[6]) in 1986, the *Denominación de Origen Rioja* came under this protective legislation. With these policies guaranteeing place of origin and high standards for such designated quality wines

as the DOC Rioja, the European Union aims to gain a competitive edge in appealing to consumers seeking distinction as a globalizing marketplace portends standardization and homogenization of products (Moran 1993: 265). Ulin also describes how the public's wine consumption habits have been historically shaped by the legislation, and subsequent marketing strategies, which associated quality wines with single domains or places (1996).

Leaders of the Consejo Regulador de la DOC Rioja (as well as representatives of many of the large exporting *bodegas* in Rioja) have similarly worked to promote Riojan wines in the international arena. They propose that a united Riojan wine region will be more successful in global marketing, in developing wine tourism, and in protecting the appellation of origin name *Rioja*. For example, the president of the Consejo Regulador represents the wine region in an international organization of historic European wine regions that formed in 1997 to lobby for protective legislation and favorable market conditions at the EU level and beyond (Baró 1997). And, in 1999, the Consejo Regulador collaborated with Spain's Ministry of Agriculture in a successful appeal to the EU Court of Justice. The court agreed to reverse a 1992 EU ruling which had permitted Riojan wine to be shipped in bulk to a company in Belgium, bottled there, and marketed by that company as Riojan wine (Consejo Regulador de la DOC Rioja 1999: 3).

The Spanish and EU viti-vinicultural policies which recognize the Denominación de Origen Rioja; the EU's designation of the Rioja wine region as one of the "Historic" wine regions of Europe; and the international marketing campaigns by the Consejo Regulador and wine industry which promote the image of a unique and prestigious wine region, all serve to legitimate and foster the use of the name *Rioja* to symbolize a wine region which straddles the political boundaries of the autonomous communities. Simultaneously, different Spanish and EU policies accentuate and strengthen the boundaries between the autonomous communities.

Spain's establishment of the seventeen autonomous communities and the EU's subsequent empowerment of these units as the primary regional political entities of Spain legitimate the efforts of leaders of these communities to name and delineate their territories as distinctive places with their own histories, cultural traditions, and, in the autonomous communities of the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia, their own regional languages. Spain has granted these languages co-official status with Castilian within each language's historic territory (Siguan 1988), and the EU has also proclaimed the value of preserving and promoting its minority languages (Euromosaic 1996). Politically, the autonomous communities, along with four Spanish cities, are the units from Spain represented on the EU's Committee of Regions, established as a two-hundred member advisory body with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (European Union 2002). As well, the regions, in the case of Spain the autonomous communities, have been given a more direct role in the administration of the EU's Structural and Cohesion Funds aimed at aiding European regions (Heywood 1995, 164; Riesgo Alonso 1993, 91). The autonomous communities of La Rioja, the Basque Country and Navarra each has its own promotional office in Brussels, where only the wines made within the boundaries of these territorial units are advertised. Thus, the use of the name *La Rioja* to designate a political community that incorporates only part of the wine region is recognized by the EU, as are the names and corresponding political territories of the other autonomous communities.

Conclusions: A United *and* A Divided Wine Region?

The transformation of the Riojan wine region into a contested ethno-political borderland following the establishment of the autonomous communities made it a propitious site for examining processes of naming and the effects of these on "place-making" and "people-making." Here, different sets of regional leaders (those of the autonomous communities and those of the Consejo Regulador

and wine industry) each has power to promote names for places, peoples and winew which connote different ideas about regional identities. And, both of these promulgations—a wine region called Rioja that straddles the boundaries of the autonomous communities, and the autonomous communities called La Rioja and the Basque Country—have significance at national and international levels. As a result, there are indications that tolerance for ambiguity of names for places and wines, and what these names represent, is considered expedient by at least some regional leaders and local people.

While leaders of the autonomous communities have succeeded in strengthening the bases for an ethno-political divide between Rioja Alavesa and the autonomous community of La Rioja, the economic value of remaining united under the single appellation of origin *Rioja* is not lost even on those who advanced the proposal to include *Rioja Alavesa* on the *contraetiquetas* and capsules of bottles of wine produced in that subzone. Basque officials (Gil 1998b, 3) and most of the family winegrowers I talked to in Rioja Alavesa said that they did not want to break away from the famous and lucrative name for the wines, the *Denominación de Origen Calificada Rioja,* nor did most want to establish a separate wine regulatory board for Rioja Alavesa. And, while leaders of the Consejo Regulador and most of the large industrial *bodegas* promote the view of a united wine region called Rioja famous for quality "blended" wines produced through the collaboration of growers and winemakers across the ethno-political divide, the Consejo Regulador agreed to permit the addition of the name *Rioja Alavesa* to the *contraetiquetas* and capsules of bottles containing wines produced from grapes grown there. Not to have done so would have alienated supporters of the Basque agenda in Rioja Alavesa, and many of the zone's family winemakers, thus exacerbating the ethno-political divide which leaders of the Consejo Regulador aim to ameliorate. These examples suggest that such accommodation, influenced by wider policies and practical

concerns, may temper the momentum, if not the rhetoric, of the promulgation of regional division *or* unity in the Riojan borderland at this time.

Observing naming processes, and debates about them, as they have developed in the Riojan wine region since the establishment of the autonomous communities has illustrated how names are intimately connected to varied agendas of place-making and people-making in this contested borderland. And, because more than one group has the power to name places and wines, and to promote different ethnic and cultural identities related to these names, controversies about names and their meanings continue. The ongoing debates perpetuate awareness that the names and meanings associated with them are constructed rather than natural. I suggest that this awareness circumscribes the power of names to symbolize taken-for-granted conceptions of the social world and its component parts at the present time.

In addition to power differentials based on class, gender, race and political authority that have been shown by other scholars to influence place naming (Roberts 1993; Azaryahu 1997; Nicolaisen 1990, Berg and Kearns 1996, Cohen and Kliot 1992), this case study shows that additional factors sometimes impact naming processes. The case clearly demonstrates how nation-building strategies, including naming, are not only used by state-level authorities to promote national identities and loyalties, but may also be implemented by ethnic and regional leaders within states. The ambiguous borderland context of the case, where an apolitical notion of region associated with a particular wine does not coincide with the regional political units whose territories include sections of the wine region, also highlights diversity within sub-state units. The support of different sets of power holders for alternative conceptions of region, and their use of names for places, peoples and wines in promoting these views, indicate that conflicting ideas about placenames and what they represent may be simultaneously promoted. It

should be determined how and if promulgations of various power holders are recognized and legitimated at other levels of authority. These issues are relevant for studies beyond the European Union, as many other world areas experience transitions and tensions between ethnic, regional, national and supranational levels of authority.

Finally, this study paid particular attention to the interrelationships of placename and product name. Such work is important because, in an ever more interconnected global economy, debates about the use of protected brand names which purport to guarantee place of origin and unique character will likely increase. Indeed, at the 2003 meeting of the World Trade Organization in Cancun, the European Union claimed it should have exclusive rights to the use of forty-one food and beverage names, including Chablis and Bordeaux wines and Swiss and Parmesan cheeses. Representatives from the United States, not subject to the EU's restrictions on use of product names, balked at this proposal (Simon 2003). However, the Napa Valley Vintners Association (NVVA) of California has also been working to protect the use of its trademark. For example, the association is concerned that a winery in Beijing recently applied to register "Napa Valley" as the name to be used on wines made from Chinese grapes and sold in China. A representative of the NVVA defended the association's own use of the name *Burgundy*, saying that "over time *Burgundy* has become a generic term that no U.S. consumer would confuse with a fine wine from France's Burgundy region," but that *Napa Valley*, on the other hand, "is well-known as a California appellation and has not become a generic descriptor, so it needs to be protected" (Emert 2003). These examples raise intriguing questions about associations of placenames and brand names, and about how international decisions will be made concerning their use in a global market.

An ethnographic onomastics is well suited to identifying complex interrelationships of naming, place-making and people-making. It is hoped that this case study

makes a modest contribution to that nascent field, whose development will advance the formulation of a theoretical framework for analyzing and understanding the power of names.

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Notes

1. I here use Prescott's definition of a borderland as the transition zone within which a political boundary line lies (1978). Other scholars have found borderlands to be propitious sites for investigations of national and ethnic identities, as these transitional places are areas where processes of identity construction is often most transparent, and most conflicted (Douglass 1998, Wilson and Donnan 1998, Sahlins 1989, Cole and Wolf 1999).
2. There are four Basque provinces in Spain (Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa, Alava, and Navarra) and three in France (Labourd, Basse Navarre, and Soule). In Spain, the province of Navarra declined to join the Basque Autonomous Community in 1979 and the Navaresse formed their own autonomous community in 1982. The Autonomous Community of La Rioja was established in 1982. See Clark (1989) for a thorough discussion of the formation of Spain's autonomous communities. He also describes how the country's democratization has been a gradual and contested process, particularly in the Basque Country. I have used the Castilian spellings for provincial names in this article as these were the terms commonly used in the Castilian-speaking Riojan wine zone.
3. The Basque language is unrelated to any known language family. There are eight primary dialects and Euskera is the Guipúzcoan dialect spelling for the language. Euskera is usually used to refer to

all spoken forms of the language (Urla 1987: iv.).
4. This, and other direct quotes from Spanish sources (interviews from my own research, published materials) are my translations of these sources.
5. The Consejo Regulador has demarcated three subzones of the wine region based on soil and climatic variations: "Rioja Alta," "Rioja Baja," and "Rioja Alavesa." Rioja Baja is located partly in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja and partly in the Autonomous Community of Navarra. Rioja Alta is located in another section of the Autonomous Community of La Rioja and Rioja Alavesa corresponds to the section of the wine zone located in the Basque province of Alava.
6. The European Economic Community (EEC) was founded in 1957. In 1967 the EEC, the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) merged and became the European Community (EC). With the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the EC was renamed the European Union, indicating greater movement towards economic, political and even cultural integration of the member states (Blair 1999).

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