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Neighborhood disputes in the Village of Bilbao at the beginning of the sixteenth century

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Abstract

In 1515 the inhabitants of the Village of Bilbao demanded from their municipal authorities, through loud voices, to intervene in a situation detrimental for the community' health, as a result of the exercise of shoemakers's trade.

Keywords

bustle in the street; claims; announcement ; Zurbano (Mayor); Ochoa Saes de Capitillo (provost lieutenant); Sancho Martínez (alderman); Juan Saes de Catelinaga (alderman); Juan Martínez de Salsido (deputy); Pero de Arys (deputy); Diego Pérez de Barzena (deputy); shoemakers guild; cordwainers guild; town crier

Título

Disputas vecinales en la Villa de Bilbao a comienzo del siglo XVI

Resumen

En el año 1515 los habitantes de la Villa de Bilbao reclamaron a sus autoridades municipales, por medio de altas voces, que se intervenga sobre una situación perjudicial para la salud de toda la comunidad a raíz del ejercicio del oficio de zapatero y borceguineros.

Palabras clave

bullicio en la calle; reclamos; pregón; Zurbano (alcalde); Ochoa Saes de Capitillo (teniente de preboste); Sancho Martínez (regidor); Juan Saes de Catelinaga (regidor); Juan Martínez de Salsido (diputado); Pero de Arys (diputado); Diego Pérez de Barzena (diputado); gremio de zapateros; gremio de borceguineros; pregonero

The urban space of Bilbao's Village was transformed since the moment of its foundation at the end of the thirteen century, when from a small population of fishermen and ferrones it became a commercial and industrial village of importance to the kingdom. In the foundational letter granted by López de Haro, three pre-existing elements are

mentioned in this territory: a population, a church and a port. Its genesis is part of the general process of creating villages in the Vizcaya' lordship, which completed the construction of a south-north vertical economic axis that linked the interior of Peninsula with the European Atlantic pediment. In this circumstance, the Vizcay'a territories went from having a peripheral position to having prominence in the kingdom. Bilbao came up as a result of the necessity to articulated the Vizcaya' space within the framework of the centrality that the lordship begun to have since the twelve century.

Since the late Middle Ages, the economic growth of the Village – in tune with the dynamics that occurred in the rest of the Peninsula – had an impacted in the space and population, creating a deep attraction for people around and from distant places in search of the opportunities offered by urban life. This movement modified the urban layout of Bilbao which was structured through seven main streets: Belosticalle, Carnicería Vieja, Barrencalle, Barrencalle Barrena, Cal Somera, Artecalle y Tendería. As a consequence of this process, the activities carried out became more complex and the practices and actions were multiplied by the inhabitants who demanded a response from the authourities through the municipal legislation to order coexistence. There was a particular zeal in implementing hygiene measures around three basic aspects: provision of drinking water, maintenance of the streets, and elimination of waste and garbage. This latest aspect was problematic since it was not only neccesary to attend to residential waste, but also to those resulting from certain trades that were higly detrimental to urban health. Therefore, the council authorities paid special attention to regulating the conditions under which these activities should been carried out in the urban space. However, the documentation of that time shows us that citizen life became more complex than the ideal that it wanted to impose, and situations of tension were generated, manifested through a particular sound. In the session of the Bilbao council on June 4, 1515, the "bachiler de Çurbano, alcalde en la dicha villa, e Ochoa Saes de Capytyllo, teniente de/ preboste, e Sancho Martines de Viluao, fiel, e Juan Saes de Catelinaga, regydor, e Juan Martines de Salsido e Pero de/ Arys e Diego Peres de Barzena, deputados, e Juan Lopes de Retes, syndico", attended a neighborhood conflict that occurred around the activity of bookkeeping. According to the aldermen, los "çapateros e barzyguineros" were responsable for dumping the waste or their trade in the churchyard of Santiago "e aquello hera cosa desaguisada e grrand desobedençia de la yglesia/ porque echaban de los cueros mucho poluo". This fact not only occassionated a great detrimental in the health of the village but also occassionated "muchos debates e grrytos" among the inhabitants. These sonic claims caused the authorities to send announcements through the usual places (in those with the highiest concentration of people) that "ninguno non sea osado de partyr nin echar nin cueros/ en el dicho çimiterio de Santiago para partir nin en otra manera alguna". Disobedience of this sentence involved the payment of a sentence of two hundred Maravedis to "cada/ vno por cada bez".

Bilbao's intense economic activity during the late Middle Agles caused important changes in its space and in the practices of its inhabitants. The development of certain trades, such as shoemakers had the unwanted consequences of the presence of waste detrimental to the health of every community in the fields of the church of Santiago. This negative situation caused the reactive cry of the citizens of Bilbao, that is, the vocalization of the necessity of express their discontent and thereby highlight the sound power of the voices of the community that forced the authorities to listen to their

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complaint. The cry supposed, as loudspeaker technology, the sound medium by which the council power realized that the citizen dynamics and practices of its inhabitants ran faster than the desire to impose an urban order through legislation.

Source

Enríquez Fernández, Javier et. al. Libro de Acuerdos y Decretos Municipales de la Villa de Bilbao (1509 y 1515). Donostia San Sebastián: Eusko Ikaskuntza, 1995, 236-237.

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Resources

Bilbao Map (G. Braun and F. Hogenberg, 1575)

External link

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