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STEPFAMILIES IN EARLY MODERN BILBAO: FEMALE CONVENTS, ILLEGITIMACY, AND STEPMOTHERS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze the placement of illegitimate and legitimate daughters in convents in Bilbao during the early modern period from the families of men with more than one marital or extramarital partner. More specifically, the article examines the links between fathers, stepmothers, illegitimate and legitimate daughters, as well as their younger siblings and the placement of these daughters in convents. To this end, many documents from several archives have been used and they that have brought to light multiple cases of stepfamily connections within and outside the convent walls.

Keywords: Bilbao, convents, daughters, illegitimacy, stepfamilies, stepmothers

LE FAMIGLIE ADOTTIVE NELLA BILBAO DELLA PRIMA ETÀ MODERNA: CONVENTI FEMMINILI, ILLEGITTIMITÀ E MATRIGINE

SINTESI

L'obiettivo di questo articolo è analizzare la collocazione delle figlie illegittime e legittime nei conventi di Bilbao durante l'età moderna, provenienti da famiglie di uomini con più di un partner coniugale o extraconiugale. Più specificamente, l'articolo esamina i legami tra padri, matrigne, figlie illegittime e legittime, nonché i loro fratelli minori e la collocazione di queste figlie nei conventi. A tal fine, sono stati utilizzati numerosi documenti provenienti da diversi archivi che hanno portato alla luce molteplici casi di legami tra famiglie adottive all'interno e all'esterno delle mura conventuali.

Parole chiave: Bilbao, conventi, figlie, illegittimità, famiglie adottive, matrigne

BILBAO AND ITS RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE[1]

Bilbao was founded in 1300 and it was (and is) the capital city of Biscay that lies precisely next to the Bay of Biscay. It is interesting to see a geographic reference on a region with a leading role in trade, a characteristic shared by other predominant trading areas, such as Venice with the *Golfo di Venezia* on the Adriatic Sea (Pedani, 2008, 156).

Bilbao, like the rest of the Catholic World, was strongly imbued with Christian religion. Catholic rituals and traditions marked the events of every individual's life; newborns were immediately baptized and people were expected to marry in churches, the year was divided by religious festivals, and people prayed to saints for help.

One of the consequences of Christianity is the existence of religious communities. The first Western Monks arose in the fourth century (Lawrence, 2015, 12), and medieval Europe witnessed the expansion of multiple religious orders, such as the Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Franciscans. There were also female communities, like the Poor Clares and the Dominicans, as well as the Beguines, who offered single women of all ages an opportunity to lead a religious life of contemplation and prayers while earning a living as laborers or teachers (Simons, 2001, IX). Not only did this religious landscape last throughout the Middle Ages, but there was a proliferation of female conventual foundations from the second half of the sixteenth century to the seventeenth century (Atienza López, 2010, 235). This vigorous expansion of convents was linked to a post-Tridentine phenomenon that defined Spain's religious landscape (Atienza López, 2003, 18). For example, at the beginning of the eigthteenth century, in Madrid alone there were forty-five convents, and the city had 111,268 inhabitants (Atienza López, 2008, 54). There are many reasons behind this conventual phenomenon such as that the enclosed spaces were seen as a protection of female virginity and chastity. Besides, prestige and sanctity emanated from convents, where the nuns prayed for the salvation of the society (Lehfeldt, 2005, 16).

Claustration was a shared characteristic across Spain. Female enclosure had been practiced since Pope Boniface VIII's 1298 papal bull *Puriculoso*, which Elizabeth Makowski suggests was a watershed in the history of women's religious life (Makowski, 1999, 2). However, at the Council of Trent (1545–1563) the further demand for compulsory enclaustration had profound effects on female monasticism (Wyhe, 2008, 7). Thus, there was a gradual transformation of existing religious female communities into fully enclosed convents despite resistance from many women.

There were seven female convents in Bilbao: the Poor Clares of Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and Purísima Concepción, the Dominicans of La Encarnación, the Augustinians of La Esperanza and Santa Mónica, and the Mercedarians of San José (Intxaustegi Jauregi, 2014, 48–56). All of them had their origin in *beaterios*, which is a concept that refers to female community of semi-religious women

1 This paper is part of the research project Interpretation of Childbirth in Early Modern Spain, University of Vienna. FWF P32263-G30.

who were linked to Catholic Orders, but had not taken the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience (Intxaustegi Jauregi, 2017a, 332). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these seven communities embraced a religious order and ended up becoming cloistered convents. When girls and women entered the convents, dowries were required, and this fact implied a considerable level of disposable income in the families of the entrants (Rapley, 2009, 35). But as not all the families could come up with the expenditure, there was a differentiation among the nuns (Roest, 2013, 240–244). The choir nuns, known as black veil nuns, were members of the richest families and usually monopolized the convent posts, such as that of abbess or subvicaress. The white veil nuns paid a lower dowry, usually one third, and carried out the toughest duties. It would be interesting to know if the girls, the choir nuns and the white veil nuns shared the same areas inside the convent or, on the contrary, if there were differentiated spaces. In this regard, the use of non-destructive investigations is a fundamental support for obtaining knowledge of a building (Rosina, 2012, 540). But since no convent from those centuries has survived in Bilbao (Intxaustegi Jauregi, 2017b, 46–52) it is impossible to know what their interiors were like and what social dynamics were in force among the nuns.

STEPFAMILIES: LEGITIMACY AND STEPMOTHERS

Marriage was considered the best mark of adulthood for men and women (Wiesner, 2000, 75). However, as death was a recurrent guest in early modern Europe (Korpiola & Lahtinen, 2015, 1), stepfamilies became a common phenomenon. When a parent died, a remarriage of the survivor created complex families between stepparents, stepchildren and stepsiblings all over Europe.

This paper focuses on two aspects closely related to stepfamilies: on the one hand, the illegitimate daughters who entered a convent; and on the other hand, the relation between the remarriages of the fathers, the profession in convents of the daughters of the previous marriages, and the role played by the stepmothers. The examples given throughout this paper are focused on the stepfamilies that had a connection with female convents of Bilbao, so not all the stepfamily cases from Bilbao are analyzed in this paper.

The sources of this paper come from the public notaries' records in the collection *Archivo Histórico Provincial de Bizkaia* and *Archivo Histórico Foral de Bizkaia* as well as the baptism and marriage books in the *Archivo Histórico Eclesiástico de Bizkaia*. Unfortunately, due to various military conflicts that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many conventual archives do not exist anymore; however, I had access to the archives of the Santa Cruz Convent. Finally, trials in the *Archivo de la Chancillería de Valladolid*, the upper level court of the Crown of Castile, have also been used. All the documents used in this paper are of public nature, but no diaries or other types of record, which could offer more private and familial details, have been used.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy refers to the status of a child whose parents were legally married, thus the couple and the child had duties and rights that were regulated by law (Ayer, 1902, 22). In the early modern period, many illegitimate children experienced marginalization and stigma (Ferraro, 2012, 64). Spanish illegitimacy rates were around 15% during late medieval period, and that figure began to decline to about at 1% by the eighteenth century (Álvarez Urcelay, 1999, 239). However, the Basque Country continued to witness high rates of illegitimate births of more than 10% at the beginning of the sixteenth century, which only began to fall in the 1700s, but remained above 3% (Bazán Díaz, 1995, 275–276). In the Oiartzun Valley, in the Basque province of Gipuzkoa, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, approximately 15% of children were born out of wedlock, while in the village of Villafranca, also in Gipuzkoa, nearly one-third of baptized children were illegitimate (Poska, 2006, 233).

There are two main reasons behind this reality (Poska, 2006, 233–235). On the one hand, during these centuries, rates of Basque male migration were high. Basque involvement in iron and shipbuilding industries created links with the Indies from the beginning of the Spanish colonization and conquest and, by the late eighteenth century, both Biscay and the neighbouring Gipuzkoa had the most severe dearth of men on the peninsula: there were only 86 men of marriageable age (16–40) for every 100 women. On the other hand, Basque women waited until they were, on average, more than twenty-six years old to marry. They married nearly three years later than the Spanish average, and families invested great efforts, both personal and economic, in the hope of achieving good marital alliances (Morant Deusa, 2011, 445). Clerical control was lax and many couples practiced premarital sex. The aim was to prove that the couple, particularly the woman, was fertile. In fact, it seems that Basque society valued the fertility of single women more than their virginity (Bazán Díaz et al., 2003, 82). The best example of these practices is the painting entitled *Boda de hidalgos en Begoña* (Boda de hidalgos), that is, *The wedding of noblemen in Begoña* by Francisco de Mendieta y Retes in 1607 (Intxaustegi Jauregi, 2019, 419). In the center of the picture it is possible to see that the woman has an obvious pregnant belly. It is clear that a pregnant bride was preferable to a childless marriage.

Many illegitimate daughters entered convents. For example, Pedro Manrique de Lara y Sandoval, I Duke of Nájera, had ten illegitimate daughters, and seven professed as nuns (Coolidge, 2022, 166). Moreover, Ana Dorotea, daughter of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II was sent to Descalzas Reales Convent in Madrid, as it occurred with Mariana de la Cruz, daughter of Cardinal-Infante don Fernando and Margarita de la Cruz, daughter of don John Joseph of Austria. These three women were members of the Habsburgs (Sánchez, 2015, 59).

Records do not specify whether the conventual entries were voluntary or forced. But in view of the tendency of so many illegitimate daughters in convents, one might think that those women were somehow forced to do so. The reason was simple: the cost of placing a daughter in a convent was far lower than a marriage dowry (Evangelisti, 2007, 5). Therefore, many fathers saw disposing of daughters by making them nuns as

Table 1: Identities of illegitimate daughters that professed (AHFB, FCor, JCR0882/099, JCR0032/040; AHPB, FN, DB, Sancho de Zurbano 4323; AHPB, FN, DB, Francisco de Maribi Allende 5112; AHPB, FN, DB, Antonio de la Llana 5206; AHPB, FN, DB, Felipe de Villalantes y Retes 3794; AHPB, FN, DB, Andrés de Echevarría 3397; AHPB, FN, DB, Antonio de Fano 3587; AHPB, FN, DB, Francisco Javier de Recondo 4362).

Convents	Date	Illegitimate daughters	Parents
La Esperanza	1567	Catalina	Juan de Ormaechea (deceased father)
Santa Cruz	1621	Magdalena	Pedro Muñoz (deceased father) and Margarita de Cruz
Santa Mónica	1621	María Jacinta	Pedro Fernández de Zubieta (deceased father)
Santa Clara	1656	María	Miguel de Picaza (deceased father)
Santa Cruz	1665	María Antonia	Antonio de Ugaz and Magdalena de Goiri
Santa Clara	1667	Catalina	Marcos de Arana and Sebastiana de Barcenilla (deceased mother)
Santa Cruz	1700	María Antonia	Juan Bautista de Baquer and Lucía de Echaburu
Santa Cruz	1720	Juana	Francisco de Calante (deceased father) and Magdalena de San Miguel Romaña
Santa Cruz	1721	Serafina	José de Urquijo and Joana Endereta (deceased mother)
Purísima Concepción	1777	Ana	Juan Bautista de Ochoa y Amezaga, and María Cruz Zabala (both deceased)

cheaper, regardless of whether they had any inclination for religious life (Schutte, 2011, 2). It should not be forgotten that in the *Ancien Régime* the influence of the family in the marriage and convent negotiations of their children was fundamental (Roger, 2013, 43). Hence, the daughters used to obey their fathers' orders and entered the cloisters.

Whenever a woman professed, a public notary recorded the personal data of the novice, which allows me to trace the existence of illegitimate daughters and understand some of their circumstances.

First, the profession of nuns of illegitimate birth was closely related to the fact that one of the parents, usually the father, was deceased. For example, when Catalina de Ormaeche professed, her father Juan de Ormaeche had already passed away, while the public notary Antonio de la Llana indicated that María Antonia was a natural daughter of Antonio de Ugaz, also deceased. It would be very interesting to know where those two illegitimate daughters lived before they entered the convent: were they already in the convent, but they did not profess until after their fathers' death?

Or did they grow up in their fathers' houses or in the houses of their unmarried mothers? Unfortunately, nothing more can be added as only the parental death and the status of illegitimate daughter was recorded.

In other cases, the documents contain richer details and show that after the passing of a parent, the daughters had not entered into an orphanage nor been placed with a wet nurse but stayed at their father's home for a while, until they professed. The will of José de Urquijo indicates that he had had a natural daughter called Serafina, '*que la crió y alimentó en su casa*', that is she was brought up and fed at his home, where he had lived with his wife, María de San Martín y Aguirre. The document also reflects that, despite being a natural daughter, Serafina received the same treatment as if she would have been a legitimate daughter, since she was raised at home with her seven half-siblings. Besides, many children of the marriage between José de Urquijo and his wife María shared a destiny since four of them, apart from Serafina, ended up taking religious vows: their son Ignacio José became a Jesuit, while the daughters Ana María de San José, María Benito de San Juan and María Nicolasa were nuns at the Dominican Convent of La Encarnación. The convent was paid a dowry of 1,000 ducats for each of the three daughters-nuns, so the father did not make any discrimination between the illegitimate and the legitimate daughters, because Serafina also brought a dowry of 1,000 ducats to the Santa Cruz Convent. It is said that living and growing up as a stepchild in premodern societies was often considered as disadvantageous or a serious risk factor with regard to survival (Óri, 2022, 454–455), but this example reflects an equality among daughters.

Inheritances also reflect the equal treatment among the natural and legitimate children. In Iberia, some illegitimate children could inherit on an equal basis with their legitimate half-siblings (Hunt, 2014, 15), a fact that was also common in the Basque territories, where, throughout the seventeenth century, and as several testaments reflect, many illegitimate children enjoyed largely the same rights as legitimate children (Lara Ródenas, 1997, 113). For instance, María Jacinta was a nun, who after learning that her father Pedro Fernández de Zubieta had died in the Indies, took legal action in 1621 to collect her inheritance, since her rights were recognized in that matter (AHFB, FCor, JCR0032/040). On the other hand, Juana de Calante was a nun in the Santa Cruz Convent and a natural daughter of the merchant Francisco de Calante, who died in 1690 (AHFB, FCor, JCR1103/003). After her father's death, Juana fought for her rights in the *Real Audiencia y Chancillería de Valladolid*, which was the highest court in Castile. Her father had expressed in his will that Juana was one of his heirs, but his legitimate children did not accept it (AHPB, FN, DB, Pedro de Ojangurezar 4069). Therefore, she did appeal at the highest court, where, in 1720, the judges ruled that she would receive 1,400 ducats. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find more information about this kinship, so we do not know if the legitimate and illegitimate children lived together, or if the natural daughter was raised elsewhere, which could be an explanation for this lawsuit.

Other records reveal more of the family relationships with illegitimate daughters and sisters. As can be seen in Table 1, in 1621, Madalena Muñoz professed in La Esperanza Convent. She was Pedro Muñoz's natural daughter, and due to his death, it was her uncle Sebastián Muñoz who paid the dowry. Even though her parents did not marry, the records

show some level of family relationship since, as the surname reflects, she had her father's last name and the notarial record shows that Sebastián Muñoz, Madalena's paternal uncle, paid 500 ducats for the convent dowry, 30 ducats for the annual food during the novitiate and 20 ducats for a separate bedroom for his niece (AHPB, FN, DB, Sancho Zurbano 4323). In early modern Europe many uncles, brothers or other close family members, due to their role as guardians of the orphans, were in charge of the material care of the orphaned children (Richards & Munns, 2017).

Whether the daughter was born in or out of wedlock, the sums of the convent dowry were quite similar. For example, as we have just seen, the illegitimate Madalena Muñoz brought 500 ducats in 1621, while María Cruz Landaeche professed in the Santa Cruz Convent, and although she was a legitimate daughter, her father paid 600 ducats for her dowry in 1636 (ACSCrB, LP, 22). As can be seen in Table 1, María Antonia de Ugaz professed in 1667 in Santa Cruz Convent and the nuns received 800 ducats for her (AHPB, FN, DB, Antonio de la Llana, 5206), while María de Arteta, who was a legitimate daughter, also professed in that same cloister in 1670 and she also contributed 800 ducats. Finally, the natural daughter Ana de Ochoa professed in 1777 and the convent received 1,000 ducats for her, while Manuela de Orueta in 1756 and Josefa María de Garteiz in 1790 took their vows in the Augustinian convents of La Esperanza and Santa Mónica, and in both cases they brought dowries of 1,000 ducats (AHPB, FN, DB, Bruno de Yurrebaso 4000; AHPB, FN, DB, José María de Esnarrizaga 3499). Thus, all these examples illustrate that being a legitimate or natural daughter did not influence the dowry amount paid at the nun's vows.

On the other hand, illegitimate daughters such as Ana de San Joaquín y Ochoa and María Antonia de Baquer professed as black veil nuns (AHPB, FN, DB, Francisco Javier de Recondo 4362; AHPB, FN, DB, Andrés de Echevarría 3397). Black veil nuns, also known as choir nuns, managed the convent, while white veil or servant nuns served it (Evangelisti, 2007, 30). An administrative position such as Maria Picaza holding an abbess position inside the nunnery (AHPB, FN, DB, Pedro Francisco Garaitaondo 5253) shows that natural daughters could access the governance of the convents.

Finally, as can be seen in Table 1, Juan de Ormaeche, Miguel de Picaza, Marcos de Arana, Juan Bautista de Baquer, and Francisco de Calante had natural daughters who professed in various convents of Bilbao. As merchants (AHFB, FCor, JCR0882/099; AHFB, FCor, JCR0778/007; AHFB, FCor, JCR0544/044; AHFB, FCor, JCR0325/018; AHFB, FCor, JCR1103/003), this social group was in charge of the political and economic life of Bilbao during the early modern period. Therefore, some nuns were illegitimate daughters and had well-off fathers.

Stepmothers

Remarrying was a constant theme during the early modern period. In fact, the number of second and third marriages in Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century was high (Nausia Pimoulier, 2006, 236). From 1598 to 1619 one third of single men aged thirty to thirty-four applied for marriage licenses in London to marry widows (Foster, 2014, 108), while during the eighteenth century in the French Beauvaisis about

60% of the population remarried (Fauve-Chamoux, 2010, 288). In Douai (southern Low Countries), widows and widowers remarried within a few months of the death of their spouse and it was usual for there to be even a fourth marriage (Howell, 1998, 112). However, it was common for widows to be discouraged from remarrying as their husbands and marital families wanted them to stay to raise the children and keep their dowries invested in the patriline (Moran, 2022, 577). In fact, marriage contracts reflect that many widows did disadvantage their heirs when they married for a second or a third time (Warner, 2014, 85). By contrast, widowers remarried more often; for example, after 1760 in France, widowers remarried later in life and in greater numbers than before (Fauve-Chamoux, 2002, 358). The reason was that the stepmothers were introduced into the household in order to care for the half-orphaned children (Warner, 2018, 11). As Grace Coolidge and Lyndan Warner indicate, male remarriage was the most common pattern both in Europe and in Spain; in this way, there were consistently more widows than widowers (4 to 12 times more) in sixteenth-century Castilian villages (Coolidge & Warner, 2018, 238). Men also remarried more frequently in Bilbao, and the documents show that many girls entered convents after their fathers remarried.

Grace Coolidge has studied the female guardianship in the Spanish nobility during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and she states that: 'in Spain, more than 80 percent of noblemen in the period between 1350 and 1750 chose their wives to be the guardians of their children' (Coolidge, 2005, 673). What is more, men used to name their wives as guardians of their young children, even when those wives were not the mothers of the children (Coolidge, 2011, 42); that is, they were the stepmothers of the daughters (some being illegitimate) of their husbands. While this paper does not deal with the customs of nobility, documents show that female guardianship by widows was widely spread across the Spanish Empire. In fact, in other parts of Europe, such as in the Istrian communities, women had the full capacity to act as guardians, to the point where we can speak of a fairly equal status between women and men (Kambič, 2021, 613).

In the late Middle Ages, many girls entered religious communities on their father's remarrying (Van Engen, 2008, 133), a fact repeated during the early modern period. Thus, many stepdaughters from the Portuguese city of Porto were sent to *recolhimentos* (religious shelters) (Lopes, 2022, 524), as it occurred with the Santa Cruz Convent in Bilbao. The documentation does not specify whether the profession was the father's or the stepmother's wish. However, we do know that there were fathers who were very involved in the marriages of their illegitimate daughters, since they were in charge of the negotiations and the payment of the dowries (Coolidge, 2022, 45). The profession was equated to marriage; in fact, the nuns were known as the brides of Christ (Sánchez Hernández, 1998, 88), so we should not rule out that the fathers had been personally in charge of these conventual negotiations or that they had indicated so in their wills. Besides, early modern mentality incorporated the idea that the ideal wife would raise her husband's illegitimate children along with her own (Coolidge, 2022, 111); so there may have been stepmothers who willingly participated in the negotiations for the profession of stepdaughters in convents.

Firstly, Elena and Antonia de Zubiaur, sisters and illegitimate daughters of the deceased Antonio de Zubiaur, entered into the convent in 1654. Following a provision in Antonio's

Table 2: Nuns and their stepfamilies in the Santa Cruz Convent (ASCSCrB, 6; AHPB, FN, DB, Andrés de Echevarría 3397; AHPB, FN, DB, Antonio de Fano 3587).

Year	Nun	Stepfamily
1654	Elena and Antonia de Zubiaur, sisters	Father: Antonio de Zubiaur Stepmother: Ana de Isasi
1663	María Feliciana de Olarte	Father: Juan Antonio de Olarte Stepmother: Antonia de Ibarra Stepsiblings: Martín Antonio, Tomás Antonio, José, José, Gabriel José, María Antonia, Ursola, Agustina, Gaspar, Luis, and José.
1692	María Josefa de Gazitua y Basurto	Father: Pedro de Gazitua Stepmother: Margarita de Mascarúa Stepbrother: Nicolás Antonio
1721	Serafina de Urquijo	Father: José de Urquijo Stepmother: Mariana de San Martín
1757	María Concepción de Guendica y Torróntegui	Father: Bernardo de Guendica y Aguirre Stepmother: María Antonia Larrazabal Ugarte

testament, the daughters professed as black veil nuns and the widow paid for the dowries and the rest of the expenses of her stepdaughters. The documents inform us that the sisters had lived in the family household, where they were raised by their stepmother. The family was well connected to the world of commerce (Zabala Montoya, 2002, 62): their father, Antonio de Zubiaur, was a merchant with a state post related to trade and commerce, while their stepmother, Ana de Isasi, was the daughter of Pedro de Isasi, an important merchant and former mayor of Bilbao. She was a wife, a stepmother and a widow, roles than many women played throughout their life cycle (Coolidge, 2022, 67).

When María Feliciana entered as novice in 1663, she was the legitimate daughter of Juan Antonio de Olarte and the deceased Catalina de Çarate. The couple had married in 1644 (AHFB, FCor, JCR0361/278) and María Feliciana was born in 1654 (AHEB, LB, 0590/003–01), so she was nine years old when she entered into the religious community. Her father Juan Antonio and her stepmother Antonia de Ibarra got married in 1659 (AHEB, LM, 0632/001–02), and marriage books reflect that this was her stepmother's first marriage and that she was younger than Juan Antonio. In fact, widowed fathers tended to choose younger brides who were marrying for the first time and who brought their fertility and potential motherhood to a household already populated with children (Warner, 2016, 481). That wedding took place when Maria Feliciana was about five years old, so the girl lived with her father and stepmother and a growing number of younger half-siblings from her father's remarriage until she entered the convent. Documents show that between 1660 and 1670, eleven more children were born in that second marriage

(AHEB, LB, 0922/002–01). So, taking into account the dates, the nun overlapped with the eldest of the half-siblings for only three years. In 1671, she renounced her inheritance rights to her stepmother Antonia, the second wife of Juan Antonio and then a widow. In exchange, Antonia committed to pay her stepdaughter a life annuity, and so the nun received an annual rent until she died in 1723 (AHPB, FN, DB, Antonio de Fano 3588). As all this information has been obtained from the document that describes María Feliciana's ceremony of taking religious vows and several baptism books, it is not possible to know how the family relationships developed into such a numerous clan. Moreover, it was quite normal for a nun to live together with her sisters and other blood relatives within a cloister (Fairchilds, 2007, 31), but this does not seem to have been the case for Maria Feliciana.

María Josefa de Gazitua y Basurto started her novitiate in 1692 (AHPB, FN, DB, Andrés de Echevarría 3397). María Josefa was daughter of Pedro de Gazitua and his first wife, Luisa de Basurto, married in 1679 (AHEB, LM, 0936/002–02). Luisa died in 1684 (AHEB, LD, 0632/001–03) and Pedro remarried Margarita de Mascarúa in 1689 (AHEB, LM, 0936/002–02), and they had one son: Nicolás Antonio, who was born in 1693 (AHEB, LB, 0661/001–01). As in the previous example, it was also the first marriage of the stepmother. This is not surprising, since a Western European widower was more likely to marry a young woman than an Eastern Central European, who also tended to form a stepfamily with widows (Erdélyi, 2019, 660). Even after the loss of her mother in 1684 (AHEB, LD, 0632/001–03), María Josefa continued to live with her father, then her father and stepmother, and later her half-brother and until she took the vows and her father and stepmother paid her conventual dowry. As a merchant, Pedro de Gazitua owned the ship *Galera de Juan y Lorenzo*, and he paid for the restoration of the altarpiece of Santos Juanes church in Bilbao (Artola Renedo, 2013, 12).

When Serafina de Urquijo professed in 1721, her widowed stepmother, Mariana de San Martín, promised to give money to her stepdaughter because they had lived together (AHPB, FN, DB, Antonio de Fano 3587). In a further example, María Concepción de Guendica y Torrontegui arrived at the convent in 1757, when she was only eight years old. Patrician girls in premodern Venice were sent off to convents as soon as they could walk, speak and eat on their own, and they grew up there (Winston-Allen, 2004, 23); it was therefore not at all unreasonable for a girl of only eight to be in a cloister. María Concepción's father was Bernardo de Guendica y Aguirre, a merchant and owner of the ship *Nuestra Señora de Aguirre* (AHFB, FCon, 0404/001/019), who had married María's mother, Agustina Antonia de Torrontegui y Barco, in 1748 (AHEB, LM, 0923/001–00). María was born the following year (AHEB, LB, 0931/002–00), and in 1754, when María was six, (AHEB, LM, 0688/002–00) her father married María Antonia Larrazabal Ugarte. In 1757, María entered into the convent, while her father continued with his commercial business and had eight more children from 1755 to 1766 (AHEB, LB, 0931/002–00; AHEB, LB, 0931/003–00). Therefore, María barely lived with her stepmother and half-siblings.

It is possible to see that after the second marriage of their fathers, many daughters of the first marriages might enter into a convent. The sample is small and it is not possible to give estimated numbers due to the scarcity of records of some convents, but the examples

discussed open a window to one convent, Santa Cruz. The given examples cover the years 1654–1757, and during those decades at least forty novices took the vows (ACSCrB, LP, 22; ACSCrB, LP, 25). Not all the convent's records have been consulted, so although we have been able to trace five out of forty, we do not know the circumstances of the other thirty-five novitiates and the picture might be bigger. However, the professions of daughters from the first marriage when their fathers had remarried and there was a stepfamily was a practice that cannot be rejected.

Documents do not specify whether the presence of stepmothers influenced the destiny of their stepdaughters as nuns, but it is known that some of those girls lived with their fathers and stepmothers before entering into the convent. In addition, it is also known that some of the stepmothers paid conventual dowries; however, as it is not possible to read all the testaments, we do not always know the reasons behind the stepmothers decision: did they do it just because of the paternal testaments' provisions (as was the case for the sisters Elena and Antonia and the stepmother Ana) or because the widow guardian stepmother herself made a choice? Taking into account that some blood brothers did not pay the expenses of their sisters, as occurred between Juan Antonio Basilio de Carranza and his sister Faustina de San Simón y Carranza, nun in the Santa Clara Convent (ARChV, SV, 3508.0004), it can be said that the actions of some stepmothers were in good faith.

Records also shows that stepdaughters lived with their stepfamilies before professing. However, in keeping with the European trend, we still know very little about the dynamics, characteristics and statistical weight of stepfamilies (Matos & Paiva, 2022, 508).

CONCLUSIONS

As Craig Harline suggested in 1995, 'the study of religious women in early modern Catholicism is indisputably a growth-industry' (Harline, 1995, 541). On the other hand, researchers have focused their attention on stepfamilies, stepmothers and stepsiblings, and on the dynamics experienced in those families. Thus, this paper presents a new perspective: the presence of stepfamilies in the convents of Bilbao.

Although some women really longed for a cloistered life, a woman usually became a nun in accordance with the interests of her family. Besides, the existence of illegitimate children was quite common; therefore, illegitimate daughters also entered into convents. In fact, documents reflect that in Bilbao both nuns of legitimate and illegitimate birth could be black veil and pay the same amount of dowry. So, the marital status of their parents did not influence their social status within the convent.

On the other hand, records also suggest that the stepmothers could have an affective relationship with their husbands' daughters. Many of these stepmothers and stepdaughters had lived together and when the time came to profess, some stepmothers paid the dowries for their stepdaughters, even when they were widows.

Finally, it should be noted that the records used in this paper stem from public archives, so no diaries or private correspondence have been used. Therefore, there is a lack of documentation that would have provided first-hand evidence of the intimacy between the daughters and their stepmothers.

KRUŠNE DRUŽINE V ZGODNJE NOVOVEŠKEM BILBAU: ŽENSKI SAMOSTANI, NEZAKONSKI OTROCI IN MAČEHE

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POVZETEK

Bilbao je bil najpomembnejše pristanišče na severu Španije v zgodnjem novem veku in katoliška tradicija je narekovala običaje in tradicije. Dokumenti kažejo, da so bile vnovične poroke pri moških pogoste in da so mnoge hčere iz prvih zakonov izpovedale redovne zaobljube v samostanih v Bilbau, zlasti, če so ta dekleta in mlade ženske že imele mačehe. Viri tudi kažejo, da je bilo veliko izvenzakonskih intimnih odnosov in da je veliko hčera iz teh stikov prav tako vstopilo v samostan. Lahko bi se reklo, da je bilo za mlade ženske v Bilbau verjetneje, da bodo vstopile v samostan, če so imele mačehe ali so bile izvenzakonske hčere. Ta članek je osredotočen na krušne družine, ki so v Bilbau obstajale med 16. in 18. stoletjem. S pritegnitvijo notarskega, sodnega, samostanskega in cerkvenega gradiva (krstne, poročne in mrliške matice) iz Bilbaa in Valladolida, članek analizira povezave med samostani, izvenzakonskimi in zakonskimi hčerami in mačehami.

Ključne besede: Bilbao, samostani, hčere, izvenzakonski otroci, krušne družine, mačehe

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