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Basque Immigration in the United States¹

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While it is my purpose today to discuss Basque immigration in the United States since about the mid-nineteenth century to the present and some of the historiographical issues regarding it, as well as my speculation concerning the future, I feel that it is important to situate this talk within the broader context of Basque emigration worldwide since Columbus's discovery of the New World and the immediate division of it in 1493 into a Spanish and Portuguese sphere of influence by Pope Alexander VI. Basques were quintessential shipbuilders and mariners in fifteenth century Iberia and actually took part in the voyages of discovery and expansion of imperial interests of *both* Iberian powers. The Basque Country itself was a part of the kingdom of Castile and it is therefore not surprising that Basques were well-represented, even disproportionately so, in the New World ventures. It would be a Basque, serving under the Portuguese explorer Magellan, himself in the service of the Spanish crown, that would be the first person to have circumnavigated the globe when Juan Sebastian Elcano returned to Spain in 1522 in command of the bedraggled survivors of the ill-fated expedition. The subsequent centralization in Seville and Cadiz of Spain's trafficking with its expanding trans-Atlantic colonies itself meant that from the outset a considerable number of Basque mariners and merchants relocated from their home area to Andalusia.

It is therefore fair to say that emigration from the Basque Country during the post-Columbine period dates from its very beginning and continued throughout the past half millennium to a greater degree than was the case in the majority of other European sending areas. This trend was both sustained and exacerbated by the inheritance system in much of the rural Basque Country whereby a single heir was named to the farm patrimony in each generation. The disinherited provided many candidates for emigration.

I would begin this talk with the caveat that it is a gross oversimplification to speak of *a* Basque emigration and *the* Basque diaspora. In point of fact, there were many emigrations specific to individual sending areas within the Basque Country, each with its own particular history, just as there was a plethora of destinations or diasporas. Indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to contend that each region, city, town, village, neighborhood and extended family within the Basque Country had its own emigration history and subsequent networks with several emigrant diasporas around the globe. One can even further adjust the analytic microscope to the individual Basque emigrant/immigrant—since no two protagonists shared an identical story.

Nevertheless, there is a heuristic imperative to treat such complexity under a few rubrics if we hope to generalize about it all. Let me therefore deal with three broad types of Basque emigration—colonial, modern and postmodern--before attempting to situate the United States within the scheme.

¹ The present article is an elaboration of the lecture given on October 10, 2013, at Columbia University in the conference "A History of the Basques in New York: On the Centennial of the Euzko-Etxea of New York (1913-2013)."

1. **Basque colonial emigration**--refers to the accessibility and opportunity afforded to Basques by their geopolitical situation within the transatlantic territories of two of Europe's greatest imperial powers—Spain and France. The division of the Basque homeland by the French-Spanish international frontier, one of Europe's longest standing and most stable, itself conditioned the emigration of its respective two Basque citizenries. This meant that the opportunity to emigrate, as well as selection among the likely destinations, was in large measure configured by the international machinations and fortunes of Madrid and Paris.²

In understanding Basque colonial emigration, it is important to distinguish the difference in its magnitude within the two imperial orbits. Hegoalde, or the Spanish Basque Country, was far more significant in terms of size, population, and economic significance than was Iparralde, or the French Basque counterpart. Indeed, even today the population of the latter is scarcely 200,000 persons, making it an insignificant factor within the French national equation. The primary activities of French Basques in the New World during the colonial period devolved primarily on the margins—whether in the guise of cod fishermen and whalers off the Canadian coast or as corsairs and pirates preying upon Spanish settlements and vessels in the Caribbean.

Basque emigration within the Spanish imperial world was quite important, in fact foundational. No Hispanic country within Latin America is without its Basque diaspora. Indeed, in many cases, albeit varying by historical period, Basques have played a key role throughout all of Latin America—particularly within colonial elites. Whether dealing with the region's agricultural or mining frontiers, prominent Basques were disproportionately in the vanguard. Most Latin American countries number Basques among their colonial administrators and post-colonial leaders (both presidents and dictators). Then there were the larger-than-life figures such as the New World's first archbishop, Juan de Zumárraga, in Nueva España and the famed South American liberator Simón de Bolívar, himself a creole of Basque descent.

We can even discern a certain Basque influence during this colonial period within what is today the United States. There was a Basque presence in the Spanish exploration and settlement of Florida—think of our name of Biscayne Bay for the waters off Miami. Then there was the French (and subsequent Spanish) presence in Louisiana, as well as the Spanish domination of the American Southwest³ from Texas to California. For example, in 1598 the creole Mexican Basque Juan de Oñate founded both Albuquerque and the frontier province of New Mexico. The famed explorer Juan Bautista de Anza was of Basque descent, as were several of the explorers, missionaries, and even governors of Alta California.

It is not impossible, indeed likely, that the odd wandering Basque participated in the development of the thirteen American colonies,⁴ but I am unaware of any specific examples. In sum, colonial Basque emigration devolved almost exclusively within the Spanish and French imperial worlds.

² However, there is the caveat that neither the frontier itself nor the spheres of influence that it bounded were impermeable. In the early fifteenth century, after Navarra was finally incorporated by force of arms (in 1512) into "Spain," Emperor Charles V accorded to the inhabitants of Iparralde's (the French Basque Country's) Basse Navarre the right to participate in Spain's imperial venture. In the latter half of the nineteenth century young Spanish Basque males crossed the frontier in large numbers before emigrating (mainly to former Spanish New World colonies or the United States) in order to avoid military service in Spain's bloody wars in Cuba and North Africa—not to mention the Third Carlist War (1872-1876) in the Spanish Basque Country itself (Joseba Sarrionandia, *Somos como moros en la niebla?* Pamplona/Iruña: Pamiela, 2012, 153 and fn 295).

³ To the chagrin of some Arizona historians, I have argued that the name of their state is likely of Basque origin (from *aritz ona*, or "good oak" in the Basque language). Cf William A. Douglass, "On the Naming of Arizona," *Names* vol. 27, no. 4 (1979), 217-34.

⁴ An influence of another sort might be mentioned. In 1779, John Adams, a founding father of the American constitution and future second president of the United States, visited Bizkaia. He later wrote a three-volume work entitled *Defense of Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. The first volume appeared just before the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and was widely read by its delegates. In it Adams wrote,

"In a research like this, after those people in Europe who have had the skill, courage, and fortune, to preserve a voice in the government, Biscay, in Spain, ought by no means to be omitted. While their neighbors have long since resigned all their pretensions into the hands of kings and priests, this extraordinary people have preserved their ancient language, genius, laws, government, and manners, without innovations, longer than any other nation of Europe." John Adams, *The Works of John Adams: Second President of*

2. **Basque modern emigration**--dates from about the time of Napoleon to just after the First World War, and is a part of the overseas departure of what have been termed Europe's "huddled masses."⁵ During the nineteenth century the population of Europe doubled despite the pronounced emigration of tens of millions of lower class urbanites and rural dwellers to what have been labeled the world's "settler societies." These were vast countries with huge agricultural potential inhabited by relatively tiny and dispersed populations of indigenes. The latter were systematically exterminated, their remnants corralled on marginal lands into reservations. Reference is to the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa within the Anglo realm, and notably Brazil and the southern cone of South America (Argentina, Uruguay and Chile) within the Luso-Hispanic world.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, every one of the settler societies developed state policies designed to attract European immigrants--sometimes even actively recruiting and transporting them. There also developed throughout much of Europe an "emigration industry" constituted by bankers willing to finance intending emigrants, private recruiting agents, and the shipping companies. Predictably, the enterprise was prone to periodic scandals--prompted by the revelations of fraud on shore and then overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, inadequate medical care, and inferior rations on the high seas.

From the standpoint of the receiving societies all European immigrants were not equal. There was a marked preference for "kith and kin," persons who were already familiar with the dominant language and culture and were therefore most likely to "fit in" with a minimum of adjustment. Thus, within the Anglo sphere the preferred immigrant was from the British Isles. Then, given British prejudices regarding southern and eastern Europeans, preference was for Germans and Scandinavians. The reverse was true within the Luso-Hispanic realm. For example, by the end of the nineteenth century, in Argentina persons of Italian origin constituted about a fourth of the national population.

If we situate Basque emigration within this framework, beginning about the middle of the nineteenth century and lasting until the Great Depression, emigrants from throughout the entire Basque Country, and drawn from both its urban and rural lower classes, went to virtually every country within the Luso-Hispanic Americas. The southern cone was the biggest attractor and today Argentina has by far the largest Basque diaspora in the world. Even southern Brazil received its contingent of Basque immigrants as a part of that country's desire for southern Europeans.

The massive transfer of Old-World-born Basques to the Hispanic New World during this period was facilitated by an existing infrastructure. There were the established kinship ties with New World descendants of Basque colonial immigrants who were often predisposed to assist the newcomers with housing and employment. Then, too, by the nineteenth century Basques as an ethnic group had a stellar reputation as reliable hard workers. In many Latin American circles they, in the particular, were regarded to be more desirable immigrants than "Spaniards" in general. In sum, in the aftermath of both the colonial and modern emigration of Basques to the Americas, today Latin America possesses as many or more hyphenated Basques--i. e. Argentine-Basques, Mexican-Basques--estimated loosely at anywhere between three and six million individuals--than the present-day population of the Basque Country itself, or about three million people.⁶

the United States/with a life of the author, notes and illustrations by his grandson Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1856), Volume 4, 310.

⁵ The phrase derives from Emma Lazarus's famous poem "The New Colossus" that is inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty. Immigration historian Oscar Handlin employed it in his iconic study *The Uprooted; the Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951).

⁶ Such statistics raise serious definitional issues. Within the Basque homeland nearly half of the population is descended from immigrants of non-Basque descent (with time, and particularly that of the generational variety, some assimilate and become "very Basque"). Regarding the diaspora, the two extreme parameters on the way of counting are, on the one hand, inclusion of anyone with a single Basque ancestor, and, on the other, exclusion of anyone who fails to exhibit personal Basque cultural awareness and sense of personal identity. The exercise is analagous to counting the world's Catholics. Does baptism as an infant make one forever after a member or does one need to be an adult practitioner?

If we narrow the purview further to consideration of Basque immigration within the Anglo world,⁷ and the United States in particular, we can discern the beginnings of a Basque presence there dating from the California gold rush. Basques entered the ranks of the fortune-seeking Argonauts who constituted one of the biggest mining booms that the planet has ever experienced. Some Basques travelled to the American West from Europe, but others arrived from the established Latin American Basque diasporas—Mexico, Chile and, notably, Argentina. It was the latter contingent that would lay the foundation for today's Basque diaspora in the American West.

Prior to the discovery of California gold, Basque immigrants were established as both nomadic and sedentary (or *estancia*-based) sheep men in the Argentine pampas. Some of them dashed to California where, like most of the gold-seekers, they failed. However, certain key individuals in their ranks, founding figures like the French Basque Domingo Bastanchury and the Gipuzkoan Pedro Altube, recognized the opportunity afforded by the vast pastures of southern and central California. They became itinerant or nomadic sheepmen, moving about the public lands with their herds—developing a pattern of sheep transhumance whereby they alternated between summer pasturage in the high mountains and the winter range in the low deserts. As they expanded their operations they attracted to their sides kinsmen and fellow villagers from the Old Country. By the 1870s, the “tramp” operators, as they came to be called by their Anglo detractors, had crossed the Sierra Nevada mountains and were spreading throughout the interior Great Basin region. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century there was a Basque presence in all thirteen states of the American West. By then they were the herders of choice in Basque and most non-Basque sheep outfits alike.

Furthermore, there were now settled Basque ranchers, as well an emerging network of Basque boarding houses or hotels in towns throughout the region servicing the livestock industry. Both San Francisco and Los Angeles developed urban colonies, constituted largely, though not exclusively, by ex-herders. It was there that Basques became prominent in other activities such as dairy farming, baking (San Francisco's famed sour-dough French bread was actually Basque), landscape gardening, and construction in general. In short, there began to emerge a more heterogeneous Basque community in the American West. However, it should be noted that there was, and remains, a close identification between the sheep industry and Basque identity throughout the American West. Even today, the region's professional Basque Americans are prone to remember and invoke their family roots within the region's Basque sheepherding tradition.

We can draw a sketch of the typical Basque sheepherder in the American West during the modern period of Basque emigration. He was likely a disinherited son of a rural Basque farmstead (or, conversely, the owner of one sojourning alone as a sheepherder half a world away in order to save the money to pay off its mortgage). The predominant bachelor herder was young, unmarried, and poorly educated. He was scarcely literate in Spanish or French, let alone Basque, and certainly ignorant of English. His way of life herding a

⁷ Australia and Canada are beyond the purview of the present treatment. But in a nutshell, while there is some evidence of a few adventuresome (and loner) Basques sprinkled throughout Australia during the nineteenth century, it was during the first decade of the twentieth that Basques began to emigrate systematically to Queensland where they became part of the recruitment of southern Europeans (particularly Italians) as sugarcane cutters. Eventually the ex-cane cutters settled in other agricultural districts, such as Mareeba and Griffith, as well as becoming manual laborers (construction) in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne. Today Melbourne, Sydney, and Townsville all have Basque social clubs. William A. Douglass, “Basques.” In James Jupp, ed., *The Australian People, an Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1988), 282-4; William A. Douglass, *Azúcar amargo: vida y fortuna de los cortadores de caña italianos y vascos en la Australia tropical* (Lejona: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad Vasca, 1994); Gloria Totoricagüena Egurrola, *Australia: Vasconia and the Lucky Country* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Eusko Jaurilaritzaren Argitalpen Nagusia, 2008).

Canada developed its own limited and fragmented Basque diaspora. By the early twentieth century, some Basques became involved in logging in British Columbia and there is now a small colony in Vancouver (which has a social club). Others, about the same time, entered the livestock industry in Alberta. Finally, there is the French Basque presence in eastern Canada with its ancient sixteenth-century roots in the maritime and fishing activities off the eastern seaboard and its presence within French agricultural settlement of the province. All of these Canadian-Basque colonies are but dimly understood and await further research.

It is probably safe to say that at no point in their respective histories have the Australian-Basque and Canadian-Basque communities ever exceeded two thousand persons.

band of sheep on the western ranges isolated him from American society--not to mention any human contacts for days at a time. When he went to town he likely stayed in a Basque boarding house and relied upon its hotelkeeper to serve as interpreter in his limited dealings with the wider society (the doctor's visit, the trip to the bank or post office to send money to Europe, the shopping for new levis and boots). He was typically a sojourner intent upon saving up the money with which to return to Europe. There, he likely married and acquired a farm or started a small business with his American stake. In a word, unlike his counterpart in Latin America, almost none of these North American Basque immigrants perceived his future in New World terms.

But, of course, along the way some changed their minds. They became more comfortable in the Anglo world and the object might then become to buy a ranch or establish a Basque boarding house in town. They went back or sent back to Europe for a bride. The hotels became marriage mills in their own right that recruited single women as workers from the Basque Country; they rarely remained single for long (particularly since the cycle of transhumant sheep raising was such that about half of the labor force was laid off for about five months out of the year, during which time the unemployed herders were prone to reside in a Basque boarding house).

We might also make some generalizations about the Basque-Americans of the western United States. While not absolute, there was a marked division, defined in terms of Old-World regional origins, we can distinguish a Bizkayan Basque world in parts of northern Nevada and all of southern Idaho versus the predominance of Navarrese and French Basque in California, Wyoming and Montana. Western Nevada had approximately equal representation of both groups. Until after World War II, the Basques of Boise had very little to do with those of Bakersfield.

Finally, today the importance of the region's Basque-Americans in terms of their visibility as a distinct ethnic group far outstrips their demographic reality. Writers and filmmakers have transformed the Basque sheepherder into a truly romantic western character. Nevertheless, the last American census (2000) to give a detailed profile of the Basque Americans⁸ estimated that there were about 58,000 persons of Basque descent in the entire United States. California, with approximately 21,000, or 36 percent of the total, had by far the largest Basque presence of any state, but that figure represented only .000560 per cent of California's population.

It should be stated that the colonial and modern periods of Basque emigration were not entirely discrete, but rather were overlapping (at least to some degree). If the independence movements on the American mainland during the early decades of the nineteenth century removed the so-called Hispanic settler societies from Iberian control, the same was not true of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—all of which were traditional destinations of considerable Basque colonial emigration. During the remainder of the 1800s, or until Spain lost the Spanish-American War (1898), these colonies remained the destinations of the elitist Basque colonial emigration of professionals and administrators, as well as church prelates, while at the same time experiencing their own influx of lower class Basques departing Europe as part of the massive overseas movement of the huddled masses.

3. Basque postmodern emigration--post-dates the Second World War down to the present, and remains open-ended. Were we to follow the fashions of the day, it would be tempting to call this "Basque globalized emigration." However, I resist doing so since one might argue that Basque emigration has been globalized for half a millennium. Furthermore, the term "postmodern" works for a couple of compelling reasons. The recent emergence of what has been termed postmodernism within the humanities and social sciences

⁸ In the three censuses between 1980 and 2000, Basques were treated separately from Hispanics and were further subdivided into Spanish and French Basques. This unprecedented refinement of an extremely small population within the nation's ethnic makeup was a boon to Basque immigration researchers. (Cf William A. Douglass, "Ethnic Categorization in the U. S. Census: The Basque Example," *Government Publications Review*, vol. 12 (1985), 289-96. Unfortunately, the approach was abandoned in the 2010 census.

references a focus upon two issues (among others⁹) that are of direct relevance to the present analysis. There is a fascination with identity formation and maintenance, on the one hand, and the configuration of new realities (including both virtual ones and even magical realism), on the other. Both are discernible, even dominant, trends within recent Basque emigration/immigration—whether regarding the formation of new diasporas or reconfiguration of Basque ethnic identity within the old ones, and the inclusion of both within cyberspace.

But where are we to begin? First it is critical to invoke a plethora of world events and technological innovation that reshaped the global stage—the new playing field as it were. There is the emergence of the American imperial age, the end of the Cold War, creation of the European Union, the rise of the BRICs, and the invasion and current pervasiveness of the Internet within almost every realm of human affairs. There is also the reversal of the thrust of emigration. Today western Europe is more a receiving than sending area of migrants—in the guise of both legal ones from the central European member states within the European Union and illegal ones from throughout the Third World.¹⁰ Then, too, there is the transformation of Spain from dictatorship to democracy accompanied by the creation of the current federal state within which there is now the Basque Autonomous Government (*Eusko Jaurlaritza*) capable of pursuing agendas that differ from those of Madrid—such as sponsorship of this conference, for example.

Regarding identity formation, we might note that the bulk of associational and cultural activity within the traditional Basque diasporas corresponds to the postmodern period. During the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, and World War II, European overseas mass emigration was simply interdicted by first the economic crisis and then the political one. Besieged economies around the world closed their doors to newcomers and the global conflict made civilian transatlantic travel all but impossible. Nor did the settler societies revert to their former immigration policies in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The economies of all of them had matured to the point that they no longer sponsored unfettered immigration.¹¹ Rather, they debate and regulate that which is still allowed. This development, along with the dramatic recovery of the Spanish and French economies during the 1960s and 1970s, all but eliminated the earlier *Indiano* (Indian)¹² alternative afforded by the Americas.

Once unfettered immigration into the traditional Basque diasporas ceased, activists within the individual collectivities—both concerned Old-World-born persons and hyphenated New World descendants of former immigrants—perceived a palpable threat to the very survival of Basque identity within the host society. They therefore founded social clubs and cultural associations (ranging from dance and choral groups to publishers of newspapers and journals). Beginning in the late 1980s, newly formed *Eusko Jaurlaritza* and (to a lesser degree) its Navarrese counterpart reached out to their respective established diasporas around the globe. The Basque Government created what is today known as the *Dirección para la Comunidad Vasca en el Exterior* (Directorship for the Exterior Basque Community) within its Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. The scope of the Directorship's activities is impressive. There is a program for providing economic assistance to

⁹ It would be fun to engage in another postmodern game (or is it obsession?), namely the “deconstruction” of any text regarding Basque emigration, *including the present one*. But I fear that that particular exercise would take us far afield and is better reserved for another day.

¹⁰ There is now a factory in Etxalar (Navarra) that employs dozens of Bulgarians who reside in the village. When I conducted anthropological field research there in the 1960s the only “outsiders” were a few non-Basque Spaniards stationed in that frontier community as border and customs guards. Today, South Americans and sub-Saharan Africans are fixtures of the street scene in any Basque city.

¹¹ Australia was an exception in this regard in that the fear of the Asian “yellow peril” informed a new liberal immigration policy designed to increase the national population dramatically (and particularly its European component) as a part of national defense. For the next few decades, the immigration of southern and central Europeans was openly encouraged, establishing the base of Australia's present large Italian, Greek, and Serbian communities. The greatest single influx of Basques into the country transpired between 1958 and 1960 when about one thousand men were recruited in the Basque Country to cut sugarcane in Queensland.

¹² Reference is to the term within Spanish and Basque society used to designate the successful emigrant to the New World. He was a fabled figure. While the emigrants who actually made spectacular fortunes were always in the minority, there were enough who did so to inform the dreams and fire the imaginations of many generations of intending Basque emigrants.

truly needy Basques of the diaspora.¹³ There is a weekly publication, *Euskal Etxeak* (which means literally “Basque Homes” but refers here to “Basque Social Clubs”), with news of the Basque Country sent around the world in hard copy to 30,000 subscribers and electronically to 7,000 more. There is the *Gaztemundu* (World Youth) program that subsidizes summer travel to the Basque Country of the hyphenated youth of the diaspora, designed to provide them with first hand exposure to the homeland. There is an annual competition for a literary prize (*Premio Andrés de Irujo*—named in honor of a prolific editor and publisher who lived as a political exile in Buenos Aires) that is given to the author of the best book on some aspect of the Basque diaspora. There is a publication series entitled *Urazandi* (From Overseas) that has published to date 25 volumes dealing with Basque diaspora studies. Every four years there is a gala international conference, or *Mundu Batzarra* (World Congress), attended by delegates of Basque associations around the world who are brought to the Basque Country by *Eusko Jaurlaritza* to spend several days deliberating about the present and future of the Basque diaspora (including specific strategic planning for its survival). There is also a competitive grant program that provides direct financial assistance to Basque social clubs and cultural associations throughout the planet.¹⁴

In order to access most of these programs and their resources you must pertain to a Basque entity that is formally recognized by the Basque Government. Currently, that list includes 187 names and, with but a few exceptions, is a comprehensive roster of the institutional organization of the world’s Basque diaspora. By far, Argentina leads the way with no fewer than 84 entities—or 45 percent of the total. That includes FEVA or *Federación de Entidades Vasco-Argentinas* (Federation of Basque-Argentine Entities) that overarches most of the country’s Basque social clubs and provides them with common activities such as a periodic national festival, sponsorship of touring performing artists from the Basque Country, and a national *mus*¹⁵ tournament to determine Argentina’s representative to the world championships.

Much of the Basque Government’s activity (particularly *Gaztemundu*, the international congress, and both the *Euskal Etxeak* and *Urazandi* publications) has facilitated and stimulated lateral networking among the Basques of the several diasporas. This is an entirely new development since, until quite recently, the Basques of the United States and Argentina were largely ignorant of one another. Regarding Basque identity formation and maintenance, we can also now speak of a sort of Virtual Basque Country that exists in cyberspace; one that can be accessed equally by Old World Basques and those of the diaspora (imparting to all a sense of shared legacy and common purpose). In unimagined ways all Basques on the planet (and fellow travelers) can now consume, constitute, and sustain Basque identity.

If we analyze the 38 entries for the United States in the Basque Government’s list of eligible Basque social clubs and cultural associations, excepting for a handful of the latter—such as the New-York-based Society for Basque Studies in America and Boise’s Basque Museum—social clubs predominate and many post-date

¹³ This represents internationalization of the concept of the mutual aid (beneficent) society that informed the original creation of some of the earliest Basque associations in places like New York City, Boise, Havana, and Buenos Aires.

¹⁴ The Secretariats of Culture and Education also have a history of promoting Basque culture abroad, particularly through assistance to universities. In the United States the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno, Boise State University, and the University of California, Santa Barbara have all received such support. *Eusko Jaurlaritza* also finances the *Fundación Dechepare* (Dechepare Foundation) that provides episodic support for Basque pedagogy at universities such as Stanford and the University of Chicago. Nor is the relationship one-directional. UNR’s Center for Basque Studies serves as translator and publisher of the scholarship of many academics from the University of the Basque Country. It also publishes Basque classical works and Basque literature in English translation. It receives a visiting Basque scholar annually who organizes a conference with papers given by established authorities within his/her field. The results are then published by the Center. UNR also offers a doctorate in Basque Studies (attended primarily by Old World Basques). There is also the University Studies Abroad Consortium that currently sends American students to more than thirty university venues around the world. USAC was conceived at UNR as a program designed to send American (primarily Basque-American) students for semester and year-long study at the University of the Basque Country. While it subsequently expanded both its scope and membership (it currently has more than thirty member American universities), it has sent, and continues to send, more students to the Basque Country than to any other destination. USAC alumnae are likely to return to the United States with enhanced knowledge of, and dedication to, their Basque heritage. Many go on to assume leadership roles within their local Basque-American club and/or cultural association.

¹⁵ Reference is to a Basque card game that is not unlike poker (both involve considerable bluffing). It is usually a contest between two teams each with two players.

a watershed cultural celebration held in Sparks, Nevada, in 1959. Reference is to the First National Basque Festival. It was an event that drew 3,000 participants to the Sparks Nugget Casino¹⁶ for a weekend celebration of Basque heritage. Attendees came from throughout the entire Basque-American diaspora, including New York City, and some even travelled to Nevada from the European homeland.

Two years earlier, in 1957, Robert Laxalt, son of a Nevada French Basque shepherd, published his book *Sweet Promised Land*—the story of his father’s four decades in the American West and an account of his first trip back to the Pyrenees. It became not only a best-selling American classic, but also *their* story for the majority of Basque families of the American West. Laxalt was now the Basque Americans’ literary spokesman and would remain so for the rest of the century. Laxalt received hundreds of letters of appreciation for his first book and their return addresses provided the core of the National Festival’s mailing list. Robert himself became a key member of the organizing committee.

The format for the two-day festival included both Old-World and New World cultural elements. In this sense the festival was an invention of its organizers.¹⁷ It also became the model for the subsequent summer Basque festival cycle throughout the American West.

In the aftermath of the First National Festival there was a burst of organizational energy. Enthusiastic veterans of the Sparks event returned home to initiate their own local Basque club. Arguably, there was further fallout from the Laxalt book and the Sparks festival. Given the new public exposure and interest in the region’s Basques, in 1962 the University of Nevada’s nascent Desert Research Institute committed to creating a Basque Studies Program within the scientific agenda of its new Center for Western North American Studies. It was launched in 1967. By then Robert Laxalt was director of the University of Nevada Press, and he advocated creating a Basque Book Series within it that was launched in 1969.¹⁸

Then, in 1973, the Basque Studies Program hosted a meeting in Reno for representatives of the region’s strongest Basque collectivities (Boise, Elko, Reno, San Francisco). Jon Bilbao proposed that they create NABO, or North American Basque Organizations, Inc., patterned after Argentina’s FEVA. Today, most of the social clubs of the United States belong to NABO and it operates much like its Argentine counterpart. It, too, organizes *mus* elimination competitions to determine North America’s representative to the World Championships. It facilitates the performances of touring artists from the Old Country. It also sponsors an annual “Udaleku” or Basque culture summer camp at which Basque-American children learn a bit of the Basque language, some folk dances, and possibly to play the *txistu* (a flute-like traditional Basque musical instrument).

Another major development within the Basque-American experience was the decision of Boise Basques to organize a periodic major festival (as opposed to, say, Elko’s annual National Basque Festival) called *Jaialdi*. While it offers the standard Basque-festival fare, it also explores other possibilities—including sponsorship of academic lectures, a Basque film festival, and inclusion of performing artists brought to Boise from the Basque Country. The first *Jaialdi* was held in 1987 and the second in 1990.¹⁹ Since then there has been one every five years (the next is scheduled for 2015 and is already in the planning stage). *Jaialdi* is easily the most elaborate public expression of the Basque-American cultural legacy and attracts spectators from throughout the World’s Basque diaspora and the Basque Country itself. The audience (including many non-Basques as well) is estimated to total about 30,000.

¹⁶ Its proprietor, Dick Graves, was married to a Basque American and his general manager was an Idaho-born Basque. Graves was the prime inspirational and financial force behind the event.

¹⁷ William A. Douglass, “Inventing an Ethnic Identity: the First Basque Festival,” *Halcyon* (1980), 115-30.

¹⁸ I was my privilege to be hired in 1967 to direct the Basque Studies Program and edit the Basque Book Series from their outset. I did so until my retirement 33 years later. Robert Laxalt had recruited me to head the Nevada initiative and I recruited noted Basque scholar Jon Bilbao in 1968. Working in tandem, the three of us devised the Basque Studies Program.

¹⁹ John Bieter and Mark Bieter, *An Enduring Legacy: The Story of Basques in Idaho* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 2-3, 151; Gloria Totoricagüena Egurrola, *Boise Basques: Dreamers and Doers* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Eusko Jauriaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia, 2002), 258-61.

There is now considerable reconfiguration of the demographics of Basque emigration. Since the Spanish democratic transformation, creation of the European Union (with its abolishment of the frontiers between member states and restrictive employment laws within them), and Spain's entry into the EU, Basque emigration to the "traditional" diasporas of both the colonial and modern periods has been eclipsed by the movement of youthful jobseekers within the EU. This is particularly true since 2007, when the world economic crisis began to produce massive unemployment in Spain. As a consequence, we can now discern budding and growing Basque concentrations in such cities as Paris, London, Milan, Rome, Brussels, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen. Many have constituted their own social club. Whether or not they will evolve into true diasporas—defined as ethnically self-aware, multi-generational collectivities capable of reproducing themselves—remains to be seen.

Nor are Basques absented from the effervescent restructuring over about the last two decades of the world economy during which the "multinational" corporations have created their own universe by crawling (at least partially) out from under the regulatory shadow of sovereign states. Then, too, there is the scramble to participate in the national economy of others by erecting manufacturing and servicing industries within their borders, thereby avoiding the protectionist measures that every country erects to some degree against foreign competition. Most notably there has been the scramble by just about everyone to establish a foothold within China—the world's largest society and fastest growing economy.

Hegoalde has one of the two most highly industrialized and robust economies of the Iberian Peninsula (Catalunya being the other). Its private sector was quick to respond to the opportunities afforded by China. The famed Mondragon Cooperatives Corporation led the way, beginning in 1996. By 2008, there were 107 Basque service and manufacturing industries operating in the Asian giant. About half of the manufacturers were making their products there. Mondragon's Kunshan Industrial Park in Shanghai has ten different production plants. A select number of Basque professionals have settled in China as a part of these developments. Shanghai now has its own (small) Basque social club.²⁰

*Eusko Jaurlaritz*a has also played an active role in this process by sending its officials abroad (often accompanied by entrepreneurs from the private sector) to negotiate economic development agreements with foreign countries (including with state and provincial administrations within them). It has also established physical presences in several foreign venues, China included, but particularly Latin America and the United States. The Basque Government now maintains economic development delegations in Buenos Aires, Santiago (Chile), Mexico City, and New York (with its sub-branch in Boise). Just last month offices were opened in Singapore and Munich. As I speak here today, Basque president, Iñigo Urkullu, and his entourage, are in Wisconsin attending the official opening ceremony of a new factory built there by a Basque enterprise.

Whether dealing with the United States or countries such as Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, or Uruguay, such "diplomatic" missions usually incorporate both public officials and representatives of private firms. Understandably, and whenever they are available, the Basque delegations seek to utilize influential persons within the local diaspora that are part of the legacy of Basque immigration during the modern period in order to gain access to the targeted country's business and political establishments.

I might also mention that Basque professionals and technicians, like their counterparts everywhere, now seek out on their own employment elsewhere. When former Basque president Patxi López visited Dubai, he was welcomed informally at the airport by a small group of Basques working in that country.

In sum, whether dealing with the structured agendas of Basque enterprises to send people abroad to mount and administer their foreign operations, the transfer of Basque public employees to staff foreign

²⁰ Oscar Álvarez Gila and Benan Oregi Iñurrieta, "Mass Migration vs. Specialized Migration. Basque Immigrants in China (Late 19th – Early 21st Centuries)." Unpublished paper

delegations, the movement of Basque students abroad for study at a foreign university, or the individual decisions of Basque professionals to relocate just about anywhere, there is a new Basque emigration that is but dimly understood. At present, and despite the enormous geographical diversity of its destinations, it may entail fewer than a thousand individuals annually. Furthermore, it is obviously far too soon to generalize about its likely future structural properties and staying power. Still and all, an educated guess would conclude that this new migration will probably increase over time and, at least in some locales, it might leave diaspora legacies that are simply off the radar of present scholars of Basque emigration.

It should be noted that there is a qualitative difference, a kind of cultural watershed as it were, in the nature of postmodern Basque emigration compared with its modern counterpart. For the latter, emigration entailed profound separation. The means of transportation and communication between the Basque Country and the various receiving areas were slow. The journey might take weeks. The visit home was expensive, as was the telegram or telephone call. It was not at all uncommon for families to lose track entirely of their wandering emigrant sons. Over time, the emigrants were out of touch with the evolving social, economic, and political developments in their European homeland. Those who returned had become anachronisms to varying degrees.

All that has changed. Given the Internet, the postmodern Basque emigrant is likely to be in frequent contact with family and friends. She can stay fully abreast of the daily issues in the Basque Country through the Basque (and Spanish and French) on-line media. Those living within the European Union are but a few hours by car or train from the Basque Country; most travel back and forth regularly between their homeland and their adopted homes. While considerably more expensive, air travel means that today no Basque emigrant on the planet is much more than a day's travel away from the Basque Country.

I would conclude with some observations regarding our knowledge of Basque immigration in the United States, with particular reference to this event today in New York City. In 1975, the University of Nevada Press published the book *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*²¹ that I co-authored with Jon Bilbao. Arguably, it was a pioneering initiative at that time and over time it acquired iconic status within the emerging sub-field of Basque migration studies. We regarded the book to be a preliminary and tentative overview of the five centuries of Basque emigration to Latin America and the more recent move to the United States in comparative perspective. In retrospect, I believe that the influence of *Amerikanuak* upon subsequent Basque immigration research was excessive—at least in some cases. We expected its argument to be improved and even transcended by future investigation—including our own.

Since *Amerikanuak* resulted from the main research concern at the time of the newly founded Basque Studies Program of the University of Nevada System, namely Basque settlement in the American West, I now realize the extent to which its focus was upon its shepherding tradition. Fair enough. But it also meant that our treatment was woefully inadequate of such important narratives as that of Florida Basques (comprised primarily of professional Jai Alai players and refugees from Castro's Cuba), on the one hand, and the history of Basques here in New York City, on the other.

Fortunately, at least in the case of New York, there has been important additional research—some of it in print, such as Gloria Totoricagüena's monograph²² in the Basque Government's *Urazandi* collection, as well as the subsequent investigation of Koldo San Sebastián, Anna Aguirre, and Pedro Oiarzabal that remains to be published as yet. *Amerikanuak* pretty much treats New York City as a port of entry and transit point during which the famed Basque hotelier Valentín Aguirre met certain arriving vessels to collect their intending Basques shepherders before putting them on a train to the American West a few days later, each with a paper pinned to his lapel indicating to the conductor where he should be offloaded. There is a little bit of discussion of the founding of a Basque neighborhood on Cherry Street, as well as the oldest

²¹ William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1975).

²² Gloria Totoricagüena Egurrola, *The Basques of New York: A Cosmopolitan Experience* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Eusko Jaurlaritzan Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia, 2003).

Basque mutual aid society in the United States and one of the country's first Basque clubs. Mention is also made of the residence here (following the Spanish Civil War) of exiled Basque president José Antonio Aguirre, and his entourage, after the Second World War as part of their efforts to gain U.S. and United Nations recognition of the Basque cause.

What we failed to do was to explore the complexity of a Basque collectivity that was constituted primarily by seamen and ex-mariners but then developed a plethora of occupational and entrepreneurial niches—the latter being primarily of the small-business variety within the restaurant and shop-keeping sectors. Furthermore, if many New York Basques had kinsmen in the American West, others were just as likely to have kinship, friendship, and business ties in Liverpool and Havana. More than in any other U.S. setting, New York City's Basque collectivity was embedded within a larger Iberian immigrant community (Catalans, Asturians, Galicians, Andalusians, Castilians) most of whom had their own ethnic press and social clubs. All, including Basques, had access to an over-arching Spanish institutional framework. If the Basques of Boise and Reno were practically the only Iberian immigrants in their region, the American West in this regard constituting a kind of "Big Euskalherria," or Basque Country, New York City Basques were but one of many components within that city's "Little Spain."

Then, too, there was the city's cosmopolitan influence upon every one of its immigrant groups. Daily life in New York, one of the world's most ethnically, socially, economically, and culturally diverse metropolises, was quite different from that of Boise or Reno. From the outset, in New York City many Basque immigrants arrived as bachelors but then contracted marriage with non-Basques. Among the Basque Americans of the American West there was a greater tendency to marry within the ethnic group. Growing up in a major metropolis meant that a NYC Basque-American child received a superior education—likely supplemented by regular exposure to some of the world's great museums and concert halls. Unsurprisingly, he or she was far more likely than Basque-American children in the largely rural American West to get a college education. That, in turn, created a great deal of socio-economic mobility among the first-generation of American-born New York Basques, many of whom entered the professions.

There were several evident consequences of the foregoing, ones that would configure the New York Basque experience quite differently from its immigrant counterpart in the American West. New York City Basque immigrants remained far more informed and involved in social and political issues of the Basque Country, and the twentieth century world in general. The mariners, in particular, were likely to have had a personal history, not to mention a possible continuing involvement, with organized labor. Many of the colony's founders had jumped ship in some American port and lived with the challenge of rectifying their illegal alien status.²³

New York's Basques felt profoundly the major conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century—socialism versus capitalism, democracy versus fascism. They debated and sometimes disagreed over these issues—particularly regarding the ways that they played out in their Iberian homeland. The divisiveness there was reflected in New York, both as factionalism within the Basque collectivity itself and between it and other "Spaniards." The leftist leanings of some New York City Basques made them leery of Basque nationalism—not all were thrilled by the presence of the Aguirre delegation in their midst. In New York virtually every Basque initiative was either imbued with conscious social and/or political purpose, or was at least subjected to such interpretation. Many New York Basques took sides in the Spanish Civil War, some volunteering to fight in it while others sent aid to Basque political organizations (particularly the Basque Nationalist Party).

²³ It is interesting to consider this "history" within the context of America's current national debate over the status and future of its illegal aliens. Their number is estimated (no one really knows) to be eleven million people. Historically, not only did Basque mariners settle in New York, after the United States tightened its immigration laws in the 1920s hundreds of Basques jumped ship in an American port and made their way to the American West where they disappeared into the woodwork as sheepherders on the isolated range. Today's illegal immigrants in the United States are obviously largely Latin Americans; but there are also significant contingents from parts of West and East Europe, as well as Asia. Nevertheless, I am unaware of a single illegal Basque immigrant in this country at present. This is particularly remarkable given today's significant level of unemployment in the Basque homeland.

In Boise, despite the fact that most of its overwhelmingly predominant Bizkaians had relatives in that beleaguered and besieged province, the Basque Americans limited their involvement to sending humanitarian aid to the victims of the conflict. Similarly, as Basque social clubs spread throughout the American West during the second half of the twentieth century, several prohibited political activity of any sort in their by-laws. Among most Basques of the American West there is an evident desire to avoid entanglement in the contentious politics of the homeland. In particular, few wish to be identified with ETA in the eyes of their American neighbors. Indeed, display of the American flag is never lacking at a Basque celebration and the annual “national” Basque Festival in Elko is held on the Fourth of July weekend. The “Sweet Promised Land” that serves as the title of Laxalt’s classic work refers to the United States.²⁴

Another difference between western Basque-Americans and their Eastern Seaboard counterparts regards the timing of organizational activity. I have noted that much of the formal organization of most Basque-American social clubs and Basque cultural associations postdates the modern era’s mass immigration. New York City is the exception. This weekend we are here to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the founding in 1913 of this city’s *euskal etxea*. Similarly, throughout the first half of the twentieth century there were several initiatives to found cultural associations and publications in New York—ranging from the folkloric to the radicalized political. Indeed, it may be argued that Basque associational activity in New York City actually waned during the postmodern period,²⁵ or at the time it flourished throughout the American West.

I would also note the extraordinary difficulty of even identifying the Basque collectivity in this city. New York is a world magnet for professionals, entrepreneurs, academics, financiers, artists, etc., including some from the Basque Country. Similarly, it attracts aspiring new residents (particularly young people) from throughout the United States—including the Basque Americans of the American West.²⁶ Many Basques therefore arrive in New York City without any awareness of its existing Basque-American colony. Nor are they for the most part predisposed to become involved in it. After all, for many newcomers the move to New York was the supreme act of self-liberation from former lives.

In 1995 I was asked to give the inaugural address at the First Congress of Basque Collectivities in the World held in Vitoria-Gasteiz. I entitled my remarks *Nora Goaz?* or “Where are We Going?” It was my way of raising the issue that Basque emigration had shifted dramatically away from the traditional destinations that were represented by most of the delegates in the hall. They could no longer expect to be reinvigorated by an ongoing movement of new arrivals from the Basque homeland. They would therefore become exposed geometrically to the assimilatory pressures in their host society (intermarriage, socialization and acculturation of successive generations within the host society, etc.). While there had been an evident recent explosion of voluntary associations throughout the traditional diasporas, that in itself might represent an Indian summer before a wintery demise. Above all, I underscored my belief that the future of Basque identity outside the homeland resided with future generations of diasporic young people. They would be the C-generation, as in “(C)hoosers,” those who would retain some degree of Basque awareness and cultural involvement by choice more than birth.²⁷ Then, in 1999, I was again invited to give the opening

²⁴ There are also historical New World explanations of such attitudes. Prior to federal regulation (in the 1930s) of the public lands, the itinerant Basque sheepman was viewed by settled Anglo ranchers as a scourge on the range who competed for *their* rightful grazing. Another factor influencing Basque-American attitudes was their residence in small towns and their rural hinterlands of the American West—settings that tend to be politically conservative and patriotic.

²⁵ Just prior to 9-11 several Basque activists in the city, launched the idea of a Basque International Cultural Center that would cost millions of dollars to construct. Frank Gehry, famed architect (a Bascophile since designing Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum) agreed to be the architect. The project was also endorsed by Mark Kurlansky—author of the best-selling work *The Basque History of the World* (New York: Walker and Co., 1999; London: Jonathan Cage, 1999).

²⁶ In the 2000 U.S. census the Basque population of New York State as a whole was reported to be 1,252 persons. Even if we assumed that all resided in greater New York City (which some did not), Basques would represent but .0000781 percent of the population of its 16 million residents.

²⁷ Reference is to John Ysursa’s rendering of the ABCs of diasporic identity maintenance, whereby those born in the Old World society (and its emigrants) are “(A)utomatic” Basques, the first generation of their descendants born abroad are the “(B)etweeners” caught between two cultures and forced to accommodate to both, whereas the “(C)hoosers are at liberty to consume the “Basque product” as little or as much as they desire. And, of course, with the passage of time we get C1, C2, etc. generations—each more distanced from

address to the Second World Congress and in it I discussed the elements that characterize what we have termed postmodern Basque emigration in this paper.²⁸

I was, of course, addressing an audience of “true believers.” They took my cautionary words to heart and even made the motto of their second congress *Aurrera Goaz* “We are Going Forward.” Their work, and that of the delegates to the three subsequent World Congresses, is to be admired. However, it also raises certain questions. The estimate in 2000 that there were about 58,000 Basques in the United States was based on projections from a sample of Americans who cared enough about their Basque heritage to specify it when responding to the ancestry question. Obviously, they cared—the question is how much? The combined membership of Basque social clubs constituting NABO was about 5,000,²⁹ or less than one-eleventh of the estimate for Basques in the census.

I could argue either side of the prospects for Basque social clubs in the United States over the short term (say the next fifty years)—*the long term is anybody's guess*. On the positive side, the fact that fewer than one in ten Basque Americans presently belongs to a Basque social club might suggest that there is ample room, indeed an opportunity, to recruit new members to existing *euskal etxeak* and found new ones. But there is the negative possibility as well that the present club format may itself have become dysfunctional. The other edge of the sword of the very communications' revolution that has facilitated ethnic solidarity through creation of Basque virtual reality may be its capacity to fragment, individuate, and isolate the actors from one another. After all, if we now shop on-line rather than visiting the big-box store, watch our sports on television rather than in a stadium, and maybe even work out of our homes rather than at the office—what about the effort required to go to a club venue when one could get her Basque fix in front of a computer screen? There are, of course, certain elements that must be experienced rather than imagined. If it might make as much sense to study the Basque language on-line as to attend a class somewhere, the same cannot be said for learning and performing a folk dance. However, the point is that tomorrow's Basque club will likely have to adapt to its times (probably assuming forms that are unimaginable today) if it is to be around to adapt at all.

their founding immigrant ancestor(s). John Yursa, “The Cultural Identity Marketplace & the Selling of Being Basque,” *Aukera*. See http://nabasque.org/NABO/choosing_Basqueness.htm.

²⁸ The ease of travel between anywhere on the planet and the Basque homeland and the capacity of the Internet to facilitate more or less continuous communication among Basques of the several diasporas and those of the Basque Country, on the one hand, and for all of them to access a new Basque virtual reality, on the other.

²⁹ Argitxu Camus Etchecopar, *The North American Basque Organizations (NABO), Incorporated. Ipar Amerikako Euskal Elkarteak. 1973-2007* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia, 2007), 245-46. The total was compiled shortly after the 2000 census and fails to include two more recent Canadian clubs (with a combined membership of 196) that have both joined NABO. I have therefore included the totals for 30 U.S. social clubs (plus the two Canadian ones) while excluding the numbers listed for six cultural associations. The only significant subtraction regards the 517 members of the Boise Museum and Cultural Center. I excluded them on the grounds that many are non-Basque fellow travellers, on the one hand, and practically all of its Basque-American supporters are likely incorporated within the Boise Euzkaldunak, Inc., social club's 830-member total. It is easily the largest Basque association in the United States. It should also be noted that some clubs count a family as a single member. Conversely, there is overcounting as well since some Basque Americans pertain to more than a single club. FEVA is even more difficult to analyze. Its website lists 98 Basque clubs in Argentina—the vast majority of which belong to FEVA. The Argentine census has never counted its “Basques” as such. Depending upon how they are defined, estimates for Argentine Basques range from the hundreds of thousands into the millions. FEVA claims that ten percent of the national population is of Basque descent. That would produce a number of 3,850,000 Argentine Basques. Yet in all there are currently but 15,519 members listed in FEVA's combined entities.